



APRIL – JUNE 2021

SITTING IN THE DARK

The following is a chapter from Kwong-roshi's forthcoming book, Mind Sky, to be published in 2022.

Twice a year at Genjo-ji we have a thirty-day intensive practice period called ango, which means “peaceful dwelling.” This tradition dates to Buddha’s time, when he and his followers would retreat from their travels and practice during the monsoon season. Traditional ango periods in Japanese monasteries last for a hundred days, but ours are only one month long. During ango, there are longer periods of zazen, beginning very early in the morning, sitting in the dark. The candle on the zendo altar is the only light. This allows us, in fact obliges us, to look inward, making zazen before sunrise a moving experience.

Our thinking minds are created in two ways: we look either in or out. If we are always looking out, we start chasing ideas and projections from the moment we get up in the morning. Thoughts start accumulating; if we go on doing that, we may eventually create a small life filled with anxiety and fear. Meditation practice is basically a matter of looking inward, allowing all thoughts to become one.

Little by little, as we sit in the zendo, the darkness becomes light. Eventually the sun shines through the door, casting light on the dark redwood walls, the glowing hardwood floor, revealing a beautiful color of warmth.

During ango we take three small meals a day together. Since we eat in silence, we begin actually to taste the food and enjoy it for what it is, and what it brings forth in ourselves. These meals are served in the zendo in formal oryoki style, from which the Japanese tea ceremony originated. Sometimes the tenzo, the head cook, may serve lasagna, and though we might prefer to have a big plate and forks and knives, our lasagna serving is limited to one small black lacquer bowl. Oryoki means “just the right amount.” Eating in oryoki means that we receive just the right amount of food.

In every activity during ango, we need to be aware of the right amount. Perhaps we can carry only one log of firewood, while the next person manages three, and someone else even more. We each need to understand our own right amount. This isn’t a matter of better or worse, as the conditioned mind asserts. In Zen terms, everything in this zendo has equal value, or toji. This is discriminating awareness, prajna awareness. Prajna awareness means simply being fully, 100% present, open to receive. This doesn’t take years of training. Prajna awareness is in everything we do, wherever we are.

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I remember Suzuki-roshi serving us tea on his hands and knees during sesshin long ago. We were only twelve naïve young students, but he believed in us and honored our true nature. Years later, in Poland, I served all sixty sesshin students tea this way, and I realized how still and calm it felt to be kneeling and offering wholeheartedly, fully present.

If you are serving an oryoki meal, you kneel, you pour, you serve. You give. The person before you receives an intimate gift. You'll find the ritual very moving, whether you're serving or receiving. It is so moving it may bring tears to your eyes. And you see clearly that we are all the same buddhas and sentient beings. Discrimination has no relevance.

When the head server carries the Buddha offering to the altar before a formal oryoki meal, we are venerating Buddha, so he is served first. When the ino says, "Please pause" at the end of meal, we may still be cleaning our oryoki bowls, but being aware of the server entering the zendo, we stop at that moment to restore our buddha nature—not thinking, just sitting here. That is practice. That's what we do. Put the bowl down and just sit there. That's all.

Ango is led by a senior student called the shuso. At the end of the retreat, there is a dramatic closing ceremony in which students are urged to challenge the shuso by asking questions in mondo, or "Dharma combat." This is the opportunity for everyone to step forward in real debate! Each student has a different question and may continue to question the shuso until satisfied with his reply. Mondo encounters can be utterly serious or wildly humorous. Anything goes, but there's always great depth of feeling.

One literally becomes the question one asks.

It may be called "combat," but the mondo invariably turns out to be a win-win situation, since it occurs in a Dharma context. No one is concerned with who asks the best question or receives the best answer, and everyone wins. At the end, when the exchanges are over, it's as if the questions have been answered by shuso and students together, each rising to the moment and engaging with the other, each ascending to the way of Dharma.

The formal words the abbot says before and after the mondo resemble a traditional address to Buddha's great assembly. He addresses everyone as "Dragons and Elephants." In Asia the dragon is a symbol of realization, holding the bright jewel within its jaws. And elephants, sturdy and steadfast, show a deep constancy as they move majestically across plains and forests. Just so, in Zen we can realize ourselves in each activity by practicing steadfastly, with constancy and awareness. ❖

Our thinking minds are
created in two ways: we
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SHUSO INTERVIEW

WITH ANIA EKO MILLS

by Genzen Cadman



Ania Eko Mills at Winter Ango Closing Ceremony

Did serving as Shuso give you any new perspectives?

This was first of all an opportunity to meet people from Sonoma Mountain Zen Center who practice regularly. I try to visit there when I can, but I don't have so many opportunities to practice together. I enjoyed meeting people whom I've never met before. This was new, and this was the part that made it very fresh for me. I felt like this was the first Ango ever. We were online, and I was meeting new people.

What was your experience like leading the Ango over Zoom?

I needed time to learn Zoom. At the beginning, I was only seeing myself, so I needed to learn how to see everyone else. It was very important for me to see everyone. Every time I would log in I would switch from Speaker view to Gallery view. Even if I didn't look at the computer even once, I still wanted to know I could see everyone—even into the little windows. It made a big difference for me. I could still see and connect with the posture the others had, and with the stability of their practice. I had the surprising sense that Zoom was really supporting me.

Did you receive a new perspective of your understanding of Zen practice?

Even though I had been practicing for some years, this was a completely new place, and a refreshing experience for my practice. I had to forget all the ideas and assumptions about what Ango should look like. To be thrown into the unknown and having to forget the assumptions was very good and refreshing. And also, remembering my previous experience as being shuso, back then I always had lots of daily organization to consider. But here, a lot of those details didn't need to be taken care of. Usually during Ango we would have daily short meetings, and now we had fewer of those and I could throw myself more into practice.

How did you handle the time difference between Poland and California?

This was not so much an issue for me. Of course, it was confusing for me because I didn't know if it was morning or evening. But during Ango we live in a kind of un-time anyway. Once I got into the rhythm, it didn't matter so much what day or what time it is because the practice is just continuing anyway. The Ango has its own clock. I had the sense that the time was supporting me; it helped me really continue the practice throughout the day. I also heard this from other participants of Ango—everyone was originating from somewhere else. We were so far away from each other, and we were in the same clock at the same time. I had to throw away the idea of, "Is it the morning sitting or is it the evening sitting?" It was just sitting together. In that way I think it was good to be thrown off the clock.

Did you get enough sleep and have regular meals?

Yes, I tried to clear my schedule except for five days of work, and devote this whole month to Ango. I was teaching and there were some classes that I needed to do.

Also during that time, I'm a mom, so I was cooking meals and supporting my daughter and talking with her (she is in school online now), so that was part of my day. I did manage to get enough rest and have time with her. I'm very grateful that she was supporting me with her life.

She knew that this was an important month for me to be taking part in this Ango. I was taking care of her, she was taking care of me.

Did Kwong-roshi give you any specific guidance as you were going along?

Yes, I was receiving support from Roshi. Whenever I needed, I could approach him and ask him a question, mainly through email. I didn't email him so much, but I always had the sense that I could if I needed to. During Ango, Roshi did need to get extra rest, but I had the sense that it was OK without him present for a few days—it's part of us growing up, being able to be there and to lead even if Roshi is not able to be there. I, of course, prefer that Roshi is in the Zendo, but at the same time, through the practice of everyone, the Ango went really smoothly. Having Shinko, Nyoze, Kashin, and several other people who sat throughout the Ango, that was the key. That was creating the core.

Could you tell us more about your interaction with Nyoze and Kashin?

We were having regular meetings when I could ask them questions, or we could make decisions together about the practice. They were always asking me how they could help. I had plenty of support. Also here in Poland, a



*Roshi, Shinko, and Ania Eko Mills at
Winter Ango Opening Ceremony*

few times when I had questions about forms or interviews, I was talking with Uji (leading teacher of Kannon Zen Center in Warsaw) and also with Myoju, who was the previous Shuso. I had the sense that I was supported by the whole Polish Sangha who know me and care about what's happening.

Before the beginning of Ango, I had met with Kashin on Zoom and we consulted about what the visual aspect should be—what my altar should look like, for instance. Several days after Ango began, I hung a piece of calligraphy above the altar. I received it from Hoitsu Suzuki-roshi when he visited Poland about ten years ago. The Polish Sangha was celebrating its 20th anniversary, and a lot of students received calligraphies from him at that time. A monk translated my gift as, “Listen to the sounds of nature.” I remember that I was very happy when I received it. I very much like the meaning of it.

While you were Shuso you spoke to many people in one-on-one practice interviews. What was your feeling about doing that? Was it connecting for you?

I have the sense that the exchanges were very important. I realized how much I missed the connection with people. When we sit together physically in the Zendo, we don't talk, but we have our body language, we move in a certain way, and we are experiencing the same room together. So that kind of connection was missing this time. Therefore,

having those interviews helped me to get to know the other people and be connected to them. Also, giving talks is quite challenging for me, so I found it easier to speak to one person instead of thirty or forty people, to have a dialogue. To me that's the more natural way to connect with people.

Could you tell us more about how you settled on the story of Chiyono for the Ango theme?

The first time I remember encountering this poem was during the previous Ango, last August. Myoju was reading it during one of her morning readings. When I was preparing for Ango, I was really interested in this topic of women's presence in the practice. So when I came across this poem, not just that it was written by a woman, but I was really inspired by her words. I felt that what is most important for me in the Ango theme is something that continues to inspire when I read it, to come back to the same sentence or two over and over again that will be a constant inspiration. This was most important for me in choosing the theme.

In your opening remarks you quoted from Shunryu Suzuki-roshi: “To feel something from the bottom of your heart, it is necessary to be silent.” Could you comment more on your choice of these words?

This has always been an important question for me. Our Zen practice is quite a rigid practice. It has a strict part to it. And at the same time, the more I practice, the more I have a sense of the softness and intimacy and open-hearted part of practice. The oppositions have always been interesting to me. Sometimes I have found that certain forms we have are helpful, especially at the beginning of my practice. But I realize more and more this other aspect is more important. Being rigid can cause the heart to shut down. Now I'm focusing more on this part of trying to be really honest, really open, and really soft. I think now this is the aspect of practice that is more inspiring for me.

Can you give us an example of being soft in your practice?

During Ango it was definitely taking care of my body, cooking and eating food that is good for me, getting enough sleep, going for a walk, spending time with my daughter. I would call these things “taking care.” This was very supportive in my practice. Working with my breath was very important. In my zazen, to let go and relax with the practice is this gentleness and softness quality.

In Chiyono's poem, which was your Ango theme, you quoted, “Understanding nothing, I too am one with the moon, water, and floating clouds.” Could you talk to us about your own feeling of what enlightenment is, as illustrated in the story you chose?

My understanding of enlightenment is just continually being in intimate relationship with the world and with

ourselves. So I realize, for me, this is about remembering, about being in this intimate way with ourselves and others.

On the final day, how did the Dharma Encounter go for you, receiving questions from people and making quick responses?

During the ceremony I just enjoyed meeting everyone—having questions and hearing the answers. But before that I was very nervous. I knew that everything was going to be OK, and still I was very nervous. Roshi and Nyoze told me, “It’s good that you are very nervous.” The one-on-one connection with people is more natural for me. Having a question-and-answer was a dialogue for me. I enjoyed that.

We here in America wonder what it’s like to be practicing Zen in Poland. During the Ango, we read that in Poland there were marches in protest of strict abortion laws, for instance. Does practicing Zen in Poland affect you with what is happening politically?

It’s hard to show a direct link for me, but definitely what is happening on the streets is affecting us, and it’s part of the practice. Just as we speak right now (March 8, 2021) there is a holiday in Poland—it’s a woman’s day, a very controversial holiday. There is a big demonstration happening in the center of Warsaw. It is an ongoing movement not only about women’s rights but generally about democracy and changes in the political situation in Poland. Of course I am asking myself the question, “How is that connected with the practice?” Similarly the topic of climate change: How is that present in our practice, or how can our practice affect the situation? Because it is, to me, connected—women’s rights, political democracy, climate issues—they are very connected.

One of the things we do here in Poland is organize sittings on the streets of Warsaw in front of the Polish Parliament. Around the 21st of March, we will have another sitting. We have been organizing these sittings quarterly for a few years now. Our Sangha started this initiative together with other Zen groups. Many members of the Warsaw Sangha and people from other meditation groups come and sit together on the streets.

And now that the Ango has concluded, would you like to add any other comments about your Shuso experience?

I want to express my gratitude to Sonoma Mountain Zen Center for having the courage to do the Ango online, for making that decision. I have heard from so many people how much having this Ango online was supporting their life. It was a brave decision, and I’m grateful we did it. ❖

Everyday Zen:

Zazen nourishing study

study nourishing zazen

both nourishing Shoaku Makusa.

Shoaku Makusa:

Refraining from evil,

carrying out all

sorts of good,

clarifying the mind,

becoming a responsible

human being.

Shoaku Makusa

nourishing everyday zen.

Putting on our socks...

the heart/mind

of just this!

—Doshin Steven Yoder

RESIDENT REPORT APRIL 2021

by Susan Gesshin Frey

SPRING IS HERE

We are getting ready to have you back! Major updates have been accomplished—cabin demolition, Sangha Cabin construction, a new Shop building, a new tractor and even the garden got a few new raised beds built. Vaccinations for everyone here are in progress. We will be ready to resume our regular morning and evening zazen together in the Zendo this coming May.

NEW RESIDENT

MYOJI KWONG ADOPTED

BY EJO KWONG

Myoji, formerly one of several barn cats belonging to a neighbor, had wandered away and was living wild and solo for several months. She showed up at Genjo-ji just before last year's winter Ango. She appeared to be less than a year old. In the beginning we would see her as just a white streak rushing by. She would climb the tree over the Bonsho platform and sit on its roof. If someone came by she would immediately leap off the quite high roof and hit the ground running at full speed for the nearest cover. She also liked to hide in the garden bamboo next to the greenhouse, watching for mice. After a while she began to look more relaxed, and on sunny days could be seen rolling in the warm gravel of our parking lot and stretching out for a nap. Eventually she began to make eye contact with us, meowing softly, maybe saying "please feed me!"

Ejo took the lead with a can of tuna. That was all it took! He was able to contact the original owners after taking the cat to the vet and discovering that she had a microchip. They were more than happy to find out she would have a permanent home with Ejo as a pet rather than a barn cat!

Since then, Ejo and Myoji have become nearly inseparable (see Ejo's article on page 18). They take walks together all the time, and this kitty needs no leash. She watches the passersby from her porch on Sonoma Mountain Road and entertains everyone with her street smarts and playfulness. Occasionally she says hello to the Sangha during morning zazen on Zoom, sometimes with a meow or sometimes with a silent tail held high...Welcome Myoji!

You may have heard on Zoom the sound of many birds here on the mountain. There seem to be more migrating birds this year than usual, and a greater variety. Although we have lost some blossoms in the garden to these hungry chirpers, having them here brings a feeling of being much closer to nature, of being part of the whole.



We have also noticed that the deer stay very close by. Perhaps it is because of less traffic and fewer visitors since the pandemic. Last summer one of the fawns took to entering the garden through a missing board on the gate. She was still nursing, so she wouldn't eat anything, but she liked to lie down and sleep in the flower beds. We have since been watching her grow up. Of course, we had to replace the board, and she is now too big to fit through it anyway, but she still gazes at the garden through the gate once in a while.

Perhaps the biggest benefit of this pandemic year has been seeing the greater sangha sit zazen every morning. Although we know that others are sitting at home, it still is motivating to observe each other's practice and feel welcomed into each other's homes. It is like seeing others as ourselves, or seeing ourselves through others. Also, it has been encouraging to see so many new people, many from other countries.

Looking forward to again hearing footsteps on the creaky zendo floor. ❖

ANGO/SESSHIN ONLINE USING ZOOM

by Dan Kajin Landault



This is a big thank-you to all those at SMZC who organized and supported the online Zoom Winter Ango. It appears to have been an incredible success, especially considering the logistics, time differences, and language requirements. It seems to attract many more people than would otherwise be able to attend in person.

Covid-19 also has positives if we look at things in the right light. Then again, everything does.

Winter Ango, using Zoom as the connector, is a perfect example of how we must practice in life...in place, no escape, no excuse.

Living 1,000 miles from the Zen Centre, I humbly ask that events be continued on Zoom where possible, including and especially but not limited to Ango. Once covid-19 is no longer an issue and SMZC reopens, Zoom could still be used as the glue to support students at a distance by equipping the Zendo with camera and microphones. This would encourage others to join the SMZC family and become full members.

Would I rather attend Ango in person? Certainly—but online opens up many possibilities for both SMZC and participants. Those who cannot attend in person might be asked to register and donate based on their online attendance, which does not include eating or sleeping at the Centre. This would allow many more people to be active participants while providing financial support for SMZC.

Thanks again to everyone involved. ❖

Theme for Winter Ango 2021 Shuso – “Eko, Prajna Fragrance” Eko Ania Mills



No Water, No Moon

“With this and that
I tried to keep the bucket together,
and then the bottom fell out.
Where water does not collect,
the moon does not dwell.”

—Adachi Chiyono

13th century Japan

Rinzai Zen nun Mugai Nyodai (1223-1298) was the first Japanese woman to receive dharma transmission and founder of the first Zen Buddhist convent in Japan.



SONOMA MANDALA – PROJECT PAUSE

MARCH 2021

by Shunryu Kwong

At the start of the pandemic, the Zen Center closed its doors to keep the Sangha, members and residents safe. It is working! As more people get vaccinated, the Zen Center is preparing to hopefully open its doors this summer. Being closed has had a great impact on the Zen Center's and Sonoma Mandala's financial situation.

To help focus energy towards our operations fundraising efforts and to limit Sonoma Mandala spending, the Zen Center board voted in November to complete the Sangha Cabin, water system, cabin demolition and pathway projects. The rest of the Sonoma Mandala Phase 1 projects will be put on hold until January 2022. When the new year arrives, we will restart the Sonoma Mandala fundraising efforts and begin work on the remaining two projects of Phase 1.

The Sangha Cabin floor and trim work has been completed. Angus will begin work on the cabin gravel pathway and steps to the Sangha House back porch. We are looking forward to the completion of the Sangha Cabin in late spring.

Work to complete the water system pump house roof and door installation is underway. This work will be followed by a state water board inspection in May.

Koten has coordinated and completed most of the demolition work on the cabins. In late spring, the demolished cabin foundation concrete will be gathered and moved. We are in the process of renewing the demolition permits to allow for the Sonoma County Building Department to conduct final demolition inspections.

The Sonoma Mandala projects scheduled for this year should be completed this summer. From these projects the Zen Center will turn its attention to various building and land maintenance projects. Following the Zen Center safety guidelines, we welcome volunteers to come and help with the various projects.

With the coming vaccinations we are looking forward to seeing all of you! ❖



SMZC member and volunteer Bryan Flaig had helped demolishing Kanzeon cabin every Friday over a couple of months.

SANGHA MEMBERSHIP

by Erik Zenjin Shearer

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Thank you to everyone who has responded to the annual membership email sent out last month. If you have not received your annual renewal notice, please let us know. We have modified the membership levels and updated the benefits at each level, including rates for overnight stays in our new buildings once we reopen. Members at the Sustaining level are encouraged to consider donating more than the monthly / annual baseline amounts to show support for SMZC. We are reaching out to members who were in the General membership category, since that level has been merged with the Practicing level. This year your membership will continue at the amount you established for 2020, unless you ask for a change, and you will receive benefits at the Practicing level.

NEW MEMBERS

As our sangha has continued to practice on Zoom over the winter, many new members have joined us:

Gary Kiehne, Santa Rosa
Alexander Cook, Fort Worth, Texas
Alf Watt, San Francisco
Bryan Flaig, Corte Madera
Itay Sharf, Ramat Hasharon, Israel
Shannon DeJong, Petaluma
Shawn Hickey, Santa Cruz
Zach Kolp, Nairobi, Kenya

Welcome everyone!

We are delighted that you have chosen to join the Wisteria Wind Sangha at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center and look forward to practicing with you. ❖

A WORD FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

by Lizbeth Myoko Hamlin

SMZC is moving ahead with developing our strategy to open in the near future. We had not anticipated that vaccines would roll out as fast as they have. The latest news is that everyone living at SMZC, will be fully vaccinated by the end of April 2021. What this means is that it could be possible that small groups of 10-15 fully vaccinated pre-registered members could practice and participate in programs on site by this June! The details of this are very much on our minds and any updates as they are known will be on our website.

As far as our financial standing, we are staying afloat with the great sacrifices of those residing at SMZC. We also are forever grateful for the generous outpouring of our sangha members, contributors and affiliate centers. Our gratitude for how Zoom has allowed us to be a worldwide center for the practice through morning/evening sitting periods, guest lectures, Ango, study groups and Saturday community talks. Keep it coming as we have much to accomplish in the coming months. ❖

May 1 **“Entering the Gate” One-Day Sitting Online**

Deepen your practice and join us from 6:30 am to 12 pm. An introductory retreat for both beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. For more info, visit the online zendo.

May 3 & 10 **Sangha Round Table Online**

7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online).

We are hosting an informal Zoom get together for Sonoma Mountain Zen Center’s sangha members. This is an opportunity for members to connect, give feedback and hear about SMZC’s direction and plans for the upcoming year. We know that it has been a challenging time for many of us, and we want to make sure that we are all staying connected.

We are offering two different nights with a maximum of 30 participants each night. Please come to one of the gatherings below. We would love to see and hear from you. Please register to sign up and a link will be sent to you.

May 4–25 **Spring Study Group Online**

Tuesdays 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online.)

An opportunity to explore the fundamental teachings of Buddhism and build a foundation for daily practice through discussions on the book *“DOGEN’S GENJO KOAN with Three Commentaries”* by Eihei Dogen. We invite newcomers to join us. Contact office@smzc.org to register. / BY DONATION

May 8 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk: Jakusho Kwong-roshi**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

May 15 **Saturday Community Student Talk: Sheryl Gyonyo Hamilton**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

May 22 **“Beyond A Dream” Dedication, Celebration, Reopening and Return**

May 22 10:30 am to 11:30 am PST.

Join us for this special and joyous online event sharing the panel discussion by Roshi, Nyoze, Tim and Kashin at the zendo while being Zoomed live. We will be featuring the online film premiere of *“Beyond A Dream: Father & Son Conversations.”* It is dedicated to Suzuki-roshi’s 50th anniversary of his passing and transmission of this sacred lineage. It is also to celebrate Vesak (International Buddha’s Birthday) together with our worldwide sangha and to mark our transition into reopening and returning to our on-site practice. Questions and answers with the sangha following the film. Registration required (\$20 Admission)

May 28 **Kid’s Community Overnight: Night Under the Stars**

May 28, 3:00 pm to May 29, 9:00 am.

Bring your family, tents, and sleeping bags for a night of camping up on Sonoma Mountain. There will be time to explore the forest and guided meditation for the whole family.

May 29 **Saturday Community Student Talk: Dan Kajin Landault**

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

June 2 **Introduction to Zen 4-Week Course**

Wednesday, June 2, 9 & 16, 7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST (Online)



Saturday, June 26, 1:00 pm to 2:30 pm PST (On Site)

An online course for new practitioners to go deeper into the teachings of Zen. In four weeks, you will learn the basics of meditation, Buddhist thought, and the history of our lineage. The fourth week's offering is a socially-distanced guided tour of the grounds of the Zen Center. This course is designed for newcomers and anyone looking to build the foundation for a spiritual practice. Experience the person-to-person transmission of Buddhist teachings and cultivate the stillness of Zen inside your own home. Register Online / BY DONATION.

June 5 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk:**
Jakusho Kwong-roshi

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

June 10–13 **"Returning to the Ground of Being"**
3-Day Sesshin Online

June 10, 7:30 pm to June 13, 5:00 pm PST.

Sesshin, literally "to touch the Mind," is a period of time set aside for an intensive meditation retreat to let go of the conditioned self and resume our original nature. Please join us online for this special event. The schedule with links to come. Register Online / BY DONATION

June 12 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk:**
Uji Markiewicz

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen.

June 14 **SMZC Closed**

June 19 **Saturday Community Student Talk:**
Kashin Julie Kwong

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

June 26 **Saturday Community Student Talk:**
Annie Seiken Hammang

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen.

July 3 **"Moment to Moment"**
One-Day Sitting Online

An introductory retreat for both beginners and experienced sitters to plunge into the heart of Zen practice. Retreatants will experience a moderate schedule of zazen (six periods of sitting meditation). Register Online / BY DONATION.

July 9 **Ordinary Beauty Online**

1:00 pm to 2:00 pm PST The heart of Zen is in everyday action. It permeates our waking life in simple acts. Kashin Kwong will continue her exploration of ordinary beauty in our daily lives. Register Online / BY DONATION.

July 10 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk:**
Jakusho Kwong-roshi

10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

July 14 **Special Guest Teacher Dharma Talk:**
Rev. Daitō Tom Wright

7:30 pm to 9:00 pm PST.

Free Registration Required | COVID FUNDRAISER (\$20 suggested donation).

July 16 **Temple Stay: Rest in a Restorative**
Environment and Experience Soto Zen
Buddhism at SMZC

Temple stay is an opportunity to experience the rituals and spiritual practice of authentic Soto Zen Buddhism. Take the backward step and illuminate the jewel within yourself. Friday, July 16–Saturday, July 17. Non-Member: \$90

July 17 **Saturday Community Student Talk:**
Nancy Seiko Reder

11:00 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen

July 18 **Summer Workfest**

8:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Breathe new energy into the center with friends and family of the Sonoma Mountain Sangha. Come and join us in maintaining temple grounds in the spirit of together-action.

July 19 **SMZC Closed**

July 24 **Saturday Community Dharma Talk:**
Nyozō Kwong

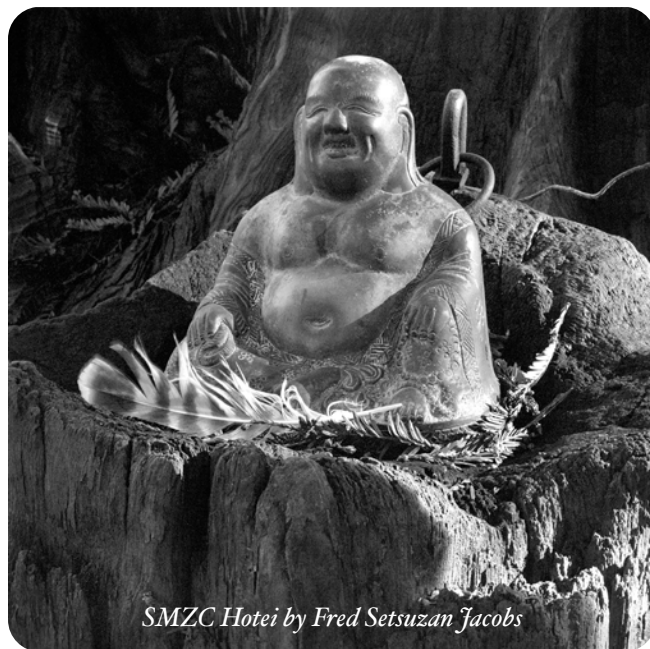
10:30 am to 11:30 am PST, following 10:30 am zazen.

July 24 **Board Meeting**

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm PST

July 31 **Summer Ango Opening Ceremony**

11:00 am to 12:00 pm PST, following 10:30 am zazen. SMZC's Summer Ango Practice Period begins. Kevin Shindo Souza will take the position as Shuso (head student). He is a student of Kwong-roshi and a SMZC sangha member.



Morning Zazen: Monday – Saturday 6:30 – 7:00 a.m.

Evening Zazen : Tuesday – Friday 7:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Ongoing online Zazen on Zoom. For more info, visit the online Zendo at <https://www.smzc.org/online-zendo>.

RECEIVING SHUNDO AOYAMA-ROSHI'S NEW YEAR'S CALLIGRAPHY

by Kashin Kwong

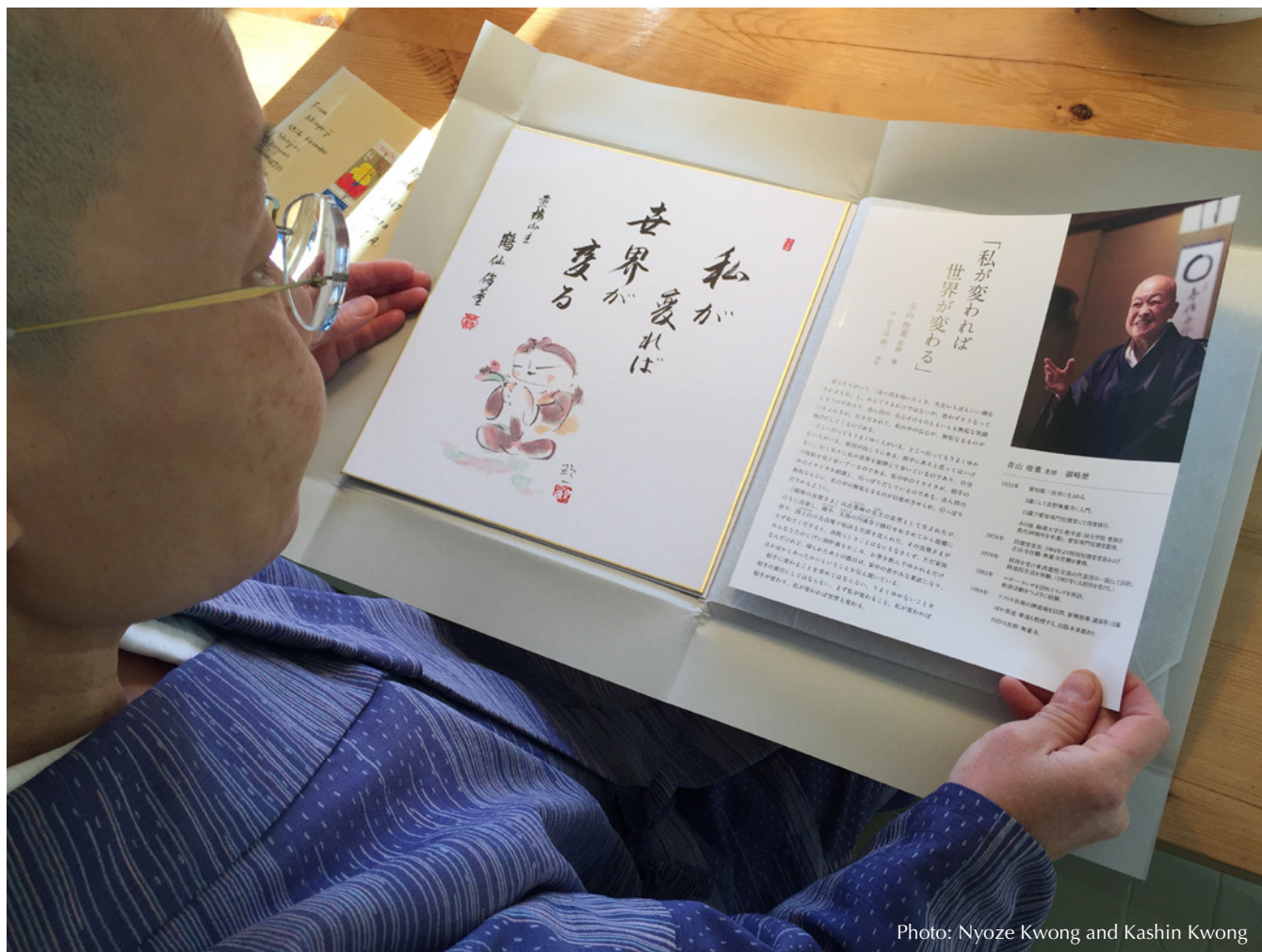


Photo: Nyoze Kwong and Kashin Kwong

Kashin receiving Aoyama-roshi's calligraphy in the mail

I was looking at some pictures of my training at Aichi Senmon Nisodo nunnery in Nagoya, Japan on a Saturday during Winter Ango. I was inspired by the talk that Eko Ania Mills gave on Raihai Tokuzui, "Prostrating to the Marrow of Attainment." Dogen Zenji mentions in this fascicle that prostrating oneself is attainment of the marrow, to have sincere reverence for what has the truth no matter whether it is woman, man, child, animal, or stone.

Auspiciously on that same day, Nyoze came home from SMZC's office with a large envelope addressed to me from Shundo Aoyama-roshi's temple, Muryo-ji. Opening the envelope with excitement, I found inside a beautifully wrapped shikishi in silver paper, Aoyama-roshi's

New Year's calligraphy, "When I change, the world changes."

I was so moved when I read it. Receiving this calligraphy brought up many deep memories of my time practicing at Muryo-ji. Aoyama-roshi divides her time between Nisodo's rigorous Soto Zen training and keeping up with important events and services at Muryo-ji, her home temple, throughout the year. During my five months training at Nisodo, I had the great honor to visit Muryo-ji with three other nuns from Nisodo for a week to help with preparations for obon (annual return of the ancestors). I had the rare opportunity to experience everyday life within Muryo-ji, where Aoyama-roshi grew up and works so selflessly to help others. On my last day at the temple, Aoyama-roshi asked if I could prepare lunch. There were seven of us, and I was really nervous, but managed somehow to pull it together and serve a piping hot meal. I deeply remember Aoyama-roshi looking at me during lunch with her characteristic smile and warm laugh. She looked pleased!



Photo:
Nyoze
Kwong
and Kashin
Kwong

CALLIGRAPHY BACKGROUND AND COVER LETTER TRANSLATION

As you can see, the picture contains Aoyama-roshi's beautiful calligraphy with the kakizome, or First Writing of the New Year: "When I change, the world changes," signed Shundo Aoyama (Yellow Plum), the name of her temple. The drawing is by painter Sakuma Kenichi. Nyoze asked Tessen Abe, student of the late Daigyo Moriyama-roshi, to translate the letter that came with the calligraphy. Here is his rough, literal translation:

Disciples often say, "Teacher, you have the best face when you hold a baby." I do not try to do so. It naturally comes up. Baby's innocent smile, which may be Buddha mind itself, brings out the innocent part of me, Buddha mind within me. Some people can do well wherever they go. Some people cannot. You should not think that the cause lies in other people. Your world unfolds as you walk. You see your projection when you walk. My irritation triggers and draws out the other person's irritation, as the baby's innocent mind wakes up and draws out my innocence.

Ryokan (Zen monk/poet, 1758-1831) of Echigo was the eldest son of a village headman in Izumozaki (Niigata prefecture), later ordained and practiced in Entsuji in Bicchu Tamashima, then returned to his home village. He lived a simple and refined life in Gogoan (his residence) in Kugamiya (Niigata Prefecture). When Ryokan visited a village family, he did not give a lecture or the like. He just sat around an irori (open fireplace) and enjoyed tea together with the family. It was said that the family members became more honest and felt the warmth for several days after his visit.

Do not ask other people to change. Do not blame other people for the things that don't go well. First change yourself. When I change, other people change. When I change, the world changes. ❖



Photo by Dorien Roling

Biography

Shundo Aoyama-roshi was born in 1933 at Ichinomiya, Miyagi prefecture.

Her mother brought her to Muryo-ji in Nagano prefecture at age 5.

She was ordained at Aichi Senmon Nisodo at age 15.

She completed graduate studies in Buddhism at Komazawa University, and the Soto Propagation Studies Center, and worked in Aichi Senmon Nisodo.

1976 Abbess of Nisodo, concurrently Abbess of Tokubetsu Nisodo, Shobo-ji, and Muryo-ji starting in 1984.

1979 Invited member of the delegation for East-West Spiritual Exchange. Visited Europe and stayed in a monastery. (Invited again in 1987.)

1982 Visited India to meet Mother Teresa and experienced her salvation activities.

1984 Visited Zen centers around the United States, taught Zen practice and gave lectures. Aoyama-roshi also teaches tea ceremony and flower arrangement, and has published many books.

She currently lives at Muryo-ji in Nagano.

HONORING MARIAN SCHMIDT

By Katsuzen King



Marian and Roshi at Uji's Abbot Installation Ceremony in 2015

The stunning portrait of Kwong-roshi (opposite page) was taken around 2007 by Polish photographer Marian Schmidt during an Ango practice period in Poland. Marian, who died on March 7, 2018, had a deep admiration and lasting respect for Kwong-roshi. The events that led up to their first meeting began at a lecture given by Marian in 2005 at the Warsaw School of Photography, an institution he founded. Polish sangha member Krzysztof Porzeżyński, a student of the school at the time, learned that Marian was interviewing and photographing well-known spiritual figures. Krzysztof told Marian about Kwong-roshi, who was scheduled to give a lecture in Warsaw. Marian attended the lecture and afterwards spoke with Roshi, expressing his interest in creating a portrait.



Roshi invited Marian to the month-long Ango being held that summer in Wilga. At first, Marian tried to

take photos in the zendo, but there was not enough light. Later, in a cabin prepared with a black backdrop, Marian was able to get the shots. Apparently it had been cloudy out, but the sun appeared for a brief moment, and the wind (often associated with Suzuki-roshi) began to blow through an open window.

Gosia Myoju, who worked for Marian at the photography school following her residency at SMZC, described Marian's continuing connection with the Polish sangha: "It was most likely Marian who encouraged people from the WSF school to come once a week for meditation at our Warsaw zendo. Later on, he organized meditation at his school. We kept some of our mats and pillows there. He encouraged the students to practice Zen by pointing out the connection between meditation and photography. After that, he appeared sporadically at various events and retreats. He let us use his school to organize Roshi's lecture. There was such a good turnout that not everybody who showed up could get inside the room. There were over 100 people. Marian also came for Uji's Abbot Installation Ceremony in Kąćiki in 2015. His son Arthur now carries on Marian's work."



Marian considered spiritual development and a “pure” way of seeing, without intellectual mediation, essential for a photographer to express visual poetry.



Marian was a multi-talented individual who drew on numerous fields of study during his lifetime. According to his biography:

Marian Schmidt (b.1945) was a Polish photographer and founder of the humanist photography renewal in Poland. He is considered by many—next to Henri Cartier-Bresson—to be a master of image composition. He believed that the most important content in photography is visual poetry and transcendence, thus his admiration for Edouard Boubat and Paul Caponigro.

Born in Żyrdów, Marian spent his childhood in Venezuela. He came to the U.S. to study mathematics at the University of California–Berkeley and later Brandeis University, where he obtained his Ph.D. in 1969. He left this career to devote himself to photography and filmmaking. He also studied phenomenology of music with the conductor Sergiu Celibidache in France in the 1980s.

Marian considered spiritual development and a “pure” way of seeing, without intellectual mediation, essential for a photographer to express visual poetry. He acknowledged Jiddu Krishnamurti and Hermann Hesse as the greatest influences on his life and creative work. ❖

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

by Katsuzen King

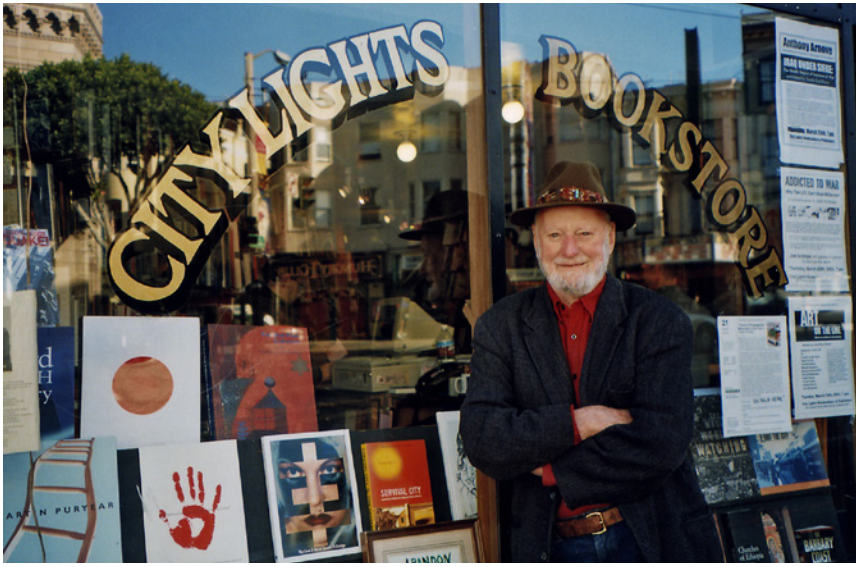


Photo by Stacey Lewis, City Lights Books

We are honored to celebrate the life and work of poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti in this issue of *Mountain Wind* by featuring two of his poems. Ferlinghetti, a legendary benefactor to Beat poets throughout his lifetime, died on February 22 at the age of 101.

In 1953, three years after arriving in San Francisco, he and Peter Martin opened a small bookstore on Columbus Avenue called City Lights Books. Each of them put in \$500 to set up shop, and the bookstore quickly became a lively meeting place for local Beat poets and emerging writers. Ferlinghetti went on to establish City Lights Publishers, which gained notoriety by publishing Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and *Other Poems* in its Pocket Poetry Series. Not long after the publication of *Howl*, Ferlinghetti was in court defending poets' free-speech rights and helping to make himself, and the Beats he had adopted, famous in the process.

While he was older and not a proponent of their unrestrained ways, Mr. Ferlinghetti befriended, published, and spotlighted many of the major Beat poets, including Allen Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, and Michael McClure, who died in May. Ferlinghetti's long-lasting connection to their work became clear to the public in 1956 with his publication of Ginsberg's most famous poem, the revolutionary *Howl*, an act that led to Ferlinghetti's arrest on charges of printing "indecent writings." In a major First Amendment decision, he was acquitted, and "*Howl*" became one of the 20th century's most recognized poems.

Ferlinghetti wore many hats during his lifetime, literally and figuratively. Aside from being a poet, he was a dedicated painter and photographer. He also had a long-time interest in Buddhism and Zen as expressed in his poetry and art. Many of the writers and authors he befriended and published were well-respected in Buddhist circles.

Age brought Ferlinghetti many honors. In 1998 he was named the first poet laureate of San Francisco; in 2005 the National Book Foundation cited his "tireless work on behalf of poets and the entire literary community for over 50 years." Ferlinghetti's most highly acclaimed literary work was his collection *Coney Island of the Mind*, which draws partly on his experiences growing up in New York. With more than a million copies in print, it became one of the most successful books of American poetry ever published. ❖

A Vast Confusion

by Lawrence Ferlinghetti

Long long I lay in the sands
Sounds of trains in the surf
in subways of the sea
And an even greater undersound
of a vast confusion in the universe
a rumbling and a roaring
as of some enormous creature
turning
under sea and earth
a billion sotto voices murmuring
a vast muttering
a swelling stuttering
in ocean's speakers
world's voice-box heard with ear to
sand
a shocked echoing
a shocking shouting
of all life's voices lost in night
And the tape of it
somehow running backwards now
through the Moog Synthesizer of
time
Chaos unscrambled
back to the first
harmonies
And the first light

LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

For he's the super realist
who must perforce perceive
taut truth
before the taking of each stance or step
in his supposed advance
toward that still higher perch
where Beauty stands and waits
with gravity
to start her death-defying leap

And he
 a little charleychaplin man
 who may or may not catch
 her fair eternal form
 spreadeagled in the empty air
 of existence

"Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)" from *A Coney Island of the Mind: Poems*. Copyright 1958 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Source: *A Coney Island of the Mind: Poems* (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1958)



Arthur at the beach – photo by Marian Schmidt

MYOJI THE MOUNTAIN CAT

by Ejo Kwong

I would like to tell everyone about my cat Myoji. For more than six months there was a white cat that prowled around the Zen Center, and according to Annie she lived under the Kanzeon cabin as well. Many of us at the Zen Center had seen her before but she seemed shy and usually ran away when we came close to her. One day Myoji was up at my grandparents' house and had brought a dead mouse to my grandfather, but he did not want to be her friend. Hiding in the bushes, I decided to try and feed her in an effort to tame her. I opened a can of tuna and made a tuna trail that led her to my house. That same night she quickly warmed up to me, and before long we became best friends.



Ejo and Myoji hanging out at home
Photo: Nyoze Kwong and Kashin Kwong

When we took Myoji to a mobile vet in Napa, we found out that she came from a house not far from the Zen Center. The previous owners had gotten her as a barn cat, but she eventually ran away. I became friends with Myoji during the 2020 Summer Ango led by Myoju. Her name is a combination of Myoju and Uji, meaning "bright right-on-time." Myoji is a Siamese-Calico mix. She has white fur with parts of her face tinted black and grey. Myoji likes to run back and forth from my grandparents' house, and around the property chasing lizards, birds, moles, and mice. She likes to climb trees, and sometimes she goes on long walks with me on the mountain. I put her outside at night, and in the early morning she comes inside to eat then opens my door and climbs up into my bunk bed to sleep.

Myoji has been a great friend that I get to play with everyday. Since I'm not able to see any of my friends much, Myoji has kept me company for almost a year and has helped me through the strange times of the pandemic. ❖

ZEN DUST NEWS

by Janet Myobo Buckendahl

Despite the lockdown restrictions, we can still meet online on Zoom and attend the on-site volunteer work practices. I have been pleased to resume working at the Zen Dust Store one or two mornings a week, and our online orders are beginning to pick up. Please remember to contact me at janet@smzc.org if you are running low on your favorite incense or are interested in other merchandise. Orders can be shipped or we can arrange for porch pickup at the Zen Center or at my home in east Petaluma. Our full line of merchandise is available.

Zen Dust is in need of one or two volunteers to help make zafus and zabutons. I have been making most items on site for many years, but my hands are no longer as efficient as they once were! If there are any seamstresses looking for some volunteer work, I would be happy to show you how to make some of the items for sale at Zen Dust.

Looking forward to seeing you in person when lockdown restrictions are eased. In the meantime, I hope you all stay safe and healthy. ❖



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In order to continue to offer our programs and ensure the future of SMZC, we are asking for your support. Your donation is tax deductible. Sonoma Mountain Zen Center is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Tax ID #23-7304793

MEMBERSHIP



We invite you to become a member of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center. Our purpose is to offer Soto Zen meditation practice and its basic teachings to people of all religious faiths. The practice of meditation allows us to see beyond our one-sided perception of ourselves and the world so that we are able to participate in society with clarity and peace. We are a lay residential practice center and a non-profit organization relying on membership dues, guest practice programs, Zen programs, and contributions to sustain our operating cost. *Call or visit soon to join us in actualizing the Dharma!* ❖

ONLINE RESOURCES ~ DHARMA TALKS & EVENTS

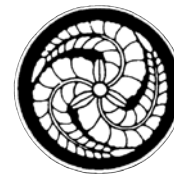
SMZC's website conveys the essence of our practice to others and invites their participation at the Zen Center. It is found at **www.smzc.org**.

A selection of Dharma Talks by Jakusho Kwong-roshi and more are available online in video, audio, and podcast formats.

Roshi's **Vimeo** channel offers several of Roshi's and Shinko's Dharma talks plus other notable events from SMZC. Please check it out! Just go to **www.vimeo.com/smzc**.

"The best" of Roshi's talks are available free through two websites—Podbean and iTunes. Access via **iTUNES**—Open iTunes on your computer; click "iTunes Store" in the left navigation column; click "Podcasts" on the top row; in the small box at the very upper right side shown with a "Q", enter "smzc"; hit the enter key on your computer; in the middle of the page with Roshi's picture, click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" under the heading "Podcast"; and Roshi's talks then appear.

Access via Podbean—Go to **www.podbean.com**; in the box at top right of page, enter "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" (not case sensitive); click "SEARCH"; click on "Sonoma Mountain Zen Center" next to Roshi's picture or on the picture itself. **OPTION 1:** click on the "Listen" button beside any talk or **OPTION 2** (recommended): click on **smzc.podbean.com** beside Roshi's picture; once in the site click on any "Listen" button. ❖



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