

ARCATA ZEN GROUP NEWSLETTER
September, 2000

WEEKLY SITTING

Sundays the AZG meets at 8:10 AM at the Northcoast Aikido Center, located off the public parking lot at 8th & F Streets, Arcata. Two half-hour periods (second sit at 8:50), with kinhin in-between, are followed by reading and discussion. Maylie Scott, Soto Zen teacher, generally gives dharma talks on the first and third Sundays of the month. On the second Sunday, the sangha shares poetry and other readings individuals bring in.

Weekday Sittings are held at Maylie's house (740 Park, Arcata) Monday through Friday at 5:30 AM (second sit at 6:20). Two 40-minute periods, with kinhin, are followed by a short service. Thursday evenings two half-hour periods, with kinhin, begin at 7:30 PM (second sit at 8:10).

Meditation Orientation, at Maylie's on Tuesday evenings from 7:30 to 8:30 PM, offers orientation to Zen meditation through instruction, guided meditation, and a question-and-answer period. This is open to both experienced students and beginners.

The above events are all free; sangha and friends are welcome. If there are any questions, please call Maylie. Parking is limited at Maylie's; carpooling is helpful. Please remember to use the driveway, the areas in front of the house, or Fickle Hill Road; do not park across the street. Also please do not use anything scented (perfumes, deodorants, soaps, hair and shaving products, moisturizers, etc.) before AZG events.

UPCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER SESSHIN

There will be a retreat with Maylie Scott from October 11 through 14 at her home. The retreat will begin at 7 PM Wednesday; daily sitting will be from 6:30 AM to 9 PM. Maylie will give a dharma talk each day at approximately 10:50 AM. The retreat and meals will be in silence. Sesshin meals will be oryoki style; bring three nesting bowls, chopsticks, spoon, towel, and napkin. Both oryoki and sitting instruction will be available. There will be sign-up sheets for the jobs at sesshin as well as for dokusan. On Saturday, the retreat will end at 5 PM, followed by clean-up. On Sunday, the group will meet as usual at the Aikido Center at 8:10 AM; Maylie will give a talk at approximately 9 AM.

The cost is \$20 per day; scholarships are available. Mail checks to: AZG, 740 Park Ave., Arcata 95521. For more info, and to help us estimate the quantity of food needed for each meal, please call Maylie.

NOVEMBER ONE DAY RETREAT

On November 11, a daylong retreat will be held at Maylie's home from 6:30 AM to 5 PM. Bring an oryoki set (three nesting bowls, chopsticks, spoon, towel, and napkin) for meals. Please call Maylie for information and if you plan to attend breakfast and/or lunch to facilitate meal planning. This sesshin is the beginning of the Practice Period (see note below); all those intending to do the practice period should talk to Maylie about attending.

PRACTICE PERIOD

Practice Period will begin at the November sesshin (November 11) and end at the end of the Winter sesshin (December 27). Practice Period is an opportunity to deepen one's practice and to have a rich experience of sangha. Members are asked to make commitments for this limited period of time that are somewhat challenging - more zazen, more zendo attendance, and also to choose a theme, a practice edge to develop and work on. Guidelines: Minimum requirements - members will sit two times a week with the Sangha. They will have two practice discussions with Maylie. They will attend a Wednesday night class that will run for four sessions - November 15, 22, 29 and December 13. They will sit the November 11 sesshin and at least one day of the December sesshin. Participants will meet on November 11, after the sesshin, to state their intentions for the practice period.

SHODO - ZEN CALLIGRAPHY

A class is being offered through HSU from October 10 to December 12 on Tuesdays from 6-8 PM on Shodo. The teaching will include breathing and the nature of mind/no mind, and is being taught by a Japanese teacher who holds a first degree from the Japanese Calligraphy Association. The cost is \$55 with an additional \$60 materials fee. Call to sign up.

LETTERS

DHARMA TALK: Four Bodhisattva Vows
Maylie Scott

Vows express our deepest desire for wholeness and arise from our true self. They are based on a sense of basic

connectedness to one another and to the natural world. This sense of simple being is regularly fragmented by our self habit - the various patterns of attachment. The intention to turn from the desires of self interest towards liberation, the way of vow, is the fundamental turn of practice. Vow is like the strong current that flows in deep water. Surface conditions change with circumstances; we remember and forget, try and fail. The vows are impossible to keep, but the current is constant and, with persistent effort, increasingly powerful. Entering the stream of practice more deeply we are increasingly encouraged and supported.

Beings are numberless, I vow to awaken with them.

Awakening with a being - whether it is one of the myriad beings within the mind or without - means to acknowledge the being's presence and to appreciate the being's place. Whether we like it or not is not so important. How do we help? We are apt to try to understand and give advice. This can be useful, if we don't get fixated on our own advice. But what really helps is the willingness to be with another, just to be there, rooting for them; the good ally. This is bodhisattva work. It is generous, willing not to know the outcome. It is attentive, really respecting the nature of the being and patient, able to wait for as long as it takes. It is compassionate, having faith in the eventual healing ability of the being itself.

Delusions are inexhaustible, I vow to end them.

A delusion is that which afflicts from within. It is rooted in greed, hate, or ignorance and separative in nature, distinguishing "me" from "other." Watching thoughts for just a minute or two, it is usually possible to note at least shreds of delusive thinking. We are normally not very vigilant, and delusions gain in force like a river that starts from small streams. There is no end to the mind's distortions and proliferations but still we vow to end them.

Dharma gates are endless, I vow to enter them.

There is an equal number of dharma gates and hindrances. This is where freedom lies. Each moment is an opportunity to acknowledge, and release. From this point of view life is gift. Rather than taking it personally and getting something, one identifies with the flow and benefit to all. Such an attitude protects against negative mind states and brings deep-seated composure.

Buddha's way is unsurpassable, I vow to become it.

The unrestricted mind includes everything. We sit zazen to rest; to allow the mind waves to come and go. Sometimes the mind is quite quiet. Other times it is busy or sleepy or preoccupied. But even within mind's activities we come to recognize a larger accepting ability. There is room for everything, even for what is painful. As we come to truly believe this our lives manifest harmony and appreciation.

THANK YOU

The AZG would again like to thank the many donors and members who have so generously given donations and/or maintained their commitment to monthly pledges. We would not be enjoying the beautiful new zendo without all of your support. For bookkeeping purposes, we ask that in the future the memo portion of the check be used to designate the purpose of the funds (i.e., donation, pledge, retreat, class, etc.). Thank you again for your continuing generosity.

from Gael A. Hodgkins

A Jungian wrote, "The suffering tree is the epitome of universal pain." On Monday August 7, six AZG persons ventured into the area of last summer's forest fires in the Trinity Alps. Walking farther we encountered a beautiful little lake surrounded by living trees and a giant granite boulder. The rest of the story is dedicated to Dr. William Devall, companion and teacher.

Skinny Dipping at Seventy-Two

Inconceivably, unimaginably, reluctantly, hesitantly,
tentatively, tantalizingly,
irresistibly water invites.

Off come the shoes--I'll just dangle my feet from this log.

Off come the socks--they'll be soggy walking back.

Off come the slacks--they'll be clammy and clinging
retracing our tracks.

Off come the jacket, the blouse, the needless bra
(modesty dictates the pants remain).

In go the feet, the legs, the torso, the neck.

In over my head and even my hair.
Umm good. Umm good.
Rolling over, looking up, arms outstretched,
Water enfolds, upholds, ensouls.

PRESS RELEASE: Brownies Become Girl Scouts

After hours of working on their sewing projects and years of practice, nine Brownies received their merit badges on July 9 and are now recognized as Girl Scouts. Families and friends attended the ceremony, the first of its kind in Humboldt county. Den Mother Maylie Scott read the names of the new Scouts, to the delight and amazement of all present. Representatives from Headquarters in Berkeley, California were also present. The new Scouts are expected to devote years of practice as they seek to earn badges in such areas as breathing, posture, and macramé.

CURRENT AZG DISCUSSIONS

PRACTICE COMMITTEE

August 6; members present: Bill, Gordy, Maylie, Mark, Rob, and Rose

The guidelines for setting up the Aikido Room were revised. They will be posted on the outside of the box of equipment and also handed out to people willing to take the role on.

Kinhin. Some people have difficulty following in step with the person in front. We discussed this and agreed that variation is possible, especially on Tuesday nights when there are a number of new people. We agreed that leaders need to keep the kinhin pace fast enough so people do not have trouble balancing.

Sangha Name Change. After considerable discussion it was agreed that we might consider three names: Arcata Zen Group, Arcata Zen Center, and Forest Heart Sangha. (The temple name is Rin Shin-JI - Forest Heart Temple). The Board will discuss how we reach agreement (see Board Notes below).

Sunday service at the Aikido Room will include bells as they are presently used in weekday morning services.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

On October 8, a General Meeting of the Board of Directors will be held to decide two important issues: the official name of the AZG and approval of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. These matters will be voted on by members of the AZG at this meeting; everyone is invited to attend. Those members who cannot attend are invited to send in the ballot to be found at the end of the newsletter so their vote can be counted. If you are not a member and would like to become one, pick up, sign, and submit a membership card at the Aikido Center on Sundays. To get a copy of the Bylaws etc. before the meeting, pick up a copy at the zendo on Park Ave., at the Aikido Center on Sundays, or call Gordy for a copy and/or with any questions.

ed's note: complete minutes for these meetings are available Sundays at the Aikido Center; practice committee meetings are held at 11 AM the first Sunday of the month at Maylie's, board meetings the fourth Wednesday at 7:30 PM - all are welcome to attend.

SOCIAL ACTION COMMITTEE

On September 3, Bill, John, Mark, Maylie, Rose, Suzanne, and William met to discuss forming a social action committee. We began by going around so that people could describe what they are doing as well as what they hoped from the group. There were a variety of on-going projects - garden for homeless, produce distribution to home-bound after farmer's market, hospice work, prison correspondence, prison activism, and a variety of conservation, environmental work projects. We wondered if the committee might be AZG parented - "AZG social action committee," or whether it might be better to become a BPF chapter. The latter would bring some degree of BPF support and also could include other Buddhist groups in the area.

There was agreement that we all wanted to try to take some collective action on one project. The work should be intrinsically rewarding and, to some degree, fun. The project could be time-limited and hopefully would be wide enough to meet diverse interests - some members like "hands on" work, others like protesting, writing letters, etc.

The big question is how to determine a project. Too much meeting time discussing it will sap group energy. We thought we might begin by engaging in some exploratory work together - taking action-oriented forest walks and otherwise educating ourselves together. It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Sunday, October 29 from 11-12:30 and that we would view a video that Emelia made about the Trinity River. She is about to make another video about water use in California and there could be a possibility of assisting her.

Any questions could be directed to Suzanne.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The next newsletter deadline is December 4. Mail your practice announcements, articles, reflections &/or poetry to Suzanne. Please indicate that your submission is for the newsletter; two spaces after periods and commas inside quote marks would be great.

BALLOT FOR OCTOBER 8TH GENERAL MEETING

If you are a member of the AZG and are unable to attend the October 8 General Meeting to decide the following two issues, please forward this ballot (or a copy) to the Zendo at 740 Park St., Arcata, CA 95521 by October 8, either by mail or by remission to one of the members of the Board or other member of the Zendo who will submit it for you. If you are not a member and would like to become one, pick up, sign, and submit a membership card at the Aikido Center on Sundays. To get a copy of the Bylaws etc. before the meeting, pick up a copy at the zendo on Park Ave., at the Aikido Center on Sundays, or call Gordy for a copy and/or with any questions).

Please vote (circle) for only one choice in each of the two questions :

1) Henceforth, the name of the Arcata Zen Group shall be:

A) Arcata Zen Group

B) Arcata Zen Center

C) Forest Heart Sangha

2) I approve of the new Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws submitted by the Arcata Zen Group's Board of Directors to the general membership:

A) YES

B) NO

It is understood that the name approved in Question #1 (if different from present) will be included in the new Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws (if approved) prior to their official recording.

DATES TO REMEMBER

OCTOBER: 8 - General Meeting: Voting on Sangha Name & Bylaws
11-14 - Sesshin: if attending, call Maylie
29 Social Action Committee Meeting

NOVEMBER: 11 - One Day Retreat: if attending, call Maylie
- Practice Period Begins

DECEMBER: 4 - Next Newsletter Deadline
27 - Practice Period Ends
27-31 - End of Year/New Year Sesshin: if attending, call Maylie

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