

# The *Floating Zendo* News

for the students & friends of Angie Boissevain, Sensei

Winter 2004

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## *The Perfect Place*

from a talk given by Angie on the second day of a seven day sesshin at Jikoji, 8/9/03

Where we are is the perfect place, it is the very beginning. And if we can keep this beginning mind, not knowing what's next, it will serve us very well. We don't know what to expect, we don't know what will happen next, but we can trust. Hopefully we can trust each other. But first we must trust our self before we can trust each other. Zazen itself is an expression of trust in our self. Zazen is our own Buddha activity.

And it takes a while because we are all speeded up. We drove here in a fast car. It takes a while for our bodies, our brains, our minds, and our hearts to even coalesce and feel like one thing. Often the first few days we notice how disjointed we are. Something is going on in my head; something is going on in my belly. Breathing is trying to relax, but this knee is hurting, and the hands instead of being quite like that start folding in like this. There are so many things even in this one tiny, small bag of skin and bones that is going on; to pay attention to.

But little by little, we just keep coming back to being present, we just keep coming back to being this breath. You don't have to count your breath, but sometimes if you are very distracted it helps to count it. Usually you can just let it breathe itself. After all it is a most wonderful and miraculous thing. It is one of the things we don't have to organize or engineer or dictate. We don't have to tell each breath to come and go. If we allow it, it will come and go by itself. But I'll tell you - Kobun said it takes 20 years to learn to breathe in zazen. So that can be your koan for a little while. You can enjoy that one.

Breathing is an interface between the automatic system of us, like the beating of our heart, and the system in which we can ourselves determine how fast we are going to breathe. Buddha's first instruction to his old yogic friends was: when you find yourself breathing fast, notice it. And when you find yourself breathing slow, notice that. Let it be what it wants to be and notice the inevitable - that it will change. Whatever you think you are doing about it, whatever you want to do about it, it will change.

And it is true of whatever is going on in our mind. We can try to set our mind a certain way: I am only going to think about such and such. Or I am only not going to think at all. That is the worst one and it doesn't work. And it creates a very unnecessary tension.

Dogen recommends us to think not thinking. Some people have a hard time with that. But actually it is very good advice. You can't not think. Thinking just keeps on trucking whatever you do. As I always say, if it is measured by the encephalograph and the encephalograph line goes straight, you are dead. There is no way to stop it.

But you can think outside the box and allow your thought lots and lots of room. Our suffering comes when we hook ourselves to a thought... and we do get hooked. It is inevitable. So every time you find yourself hooked and you notice it, just bring yourself quietly back to this very place, this most particular time - and breathe. Sometimes it may feel like sending a letter and nobody answers. Please, please zazen come to me, please. Sometimes this practice takes a lot of patience.



# Angie's 2004 schedule

January 17	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00am
January 26	Casper	Dharma Talk 7:00 - 9:00 pm
February 7	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
February 11 - 16	Jikoji	Parinirvana Sesshin
February 21	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
February 29 - March 6	Arcata	Sesshin
March 8 - 11	Willits	Householder's Retreat
March 13	San Jose	Full Day Sit 9:00 - 4:00pm
March 20	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
April 3	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
April 10	Jikoji	Full Day Sit (TBA)
April 17	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
April 24	San Jose	Jizo Ceremony 9:00 - noon
May 1	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
May 8	San Jose	Half Day Sit 9:00 - noon
May 29	San Jose/Virtual	Study Group 9:00 - 11:00 am
June 12	San Jose	Half Day Sit 9:00 - noon
July 10	San Jose	Half Day Sit 9:00 - noon
August 14	San Jose	Half Day Sit 9:00 - noon
August 27 - September 3	Hokoji	Sesshin
September 11	San Jose	Full Day Sit 9:00 - 4:00pm
October (TBA)	CA Bay Area	Sesshin
November 5 - 7	Arcata	Sesshin
November 8 - 11	Willits	Householder's Retreat
November 13	San Jose	Half Day Sit 9:00 - noon
December 11	San Jose	Rohatsu Sit 9:00 - 4:00pm

Dokusan (discussion of one's practice) with Angie is offered during 1/2 and full day sits.