

the Floating Zendo News

For the students and friends of Angie Boissevain, Sensei

Winter 2006

Cultivating Wholesomeness

Excerpt from a sesshin focused on the Precepts. Arcata 3-3-04

Well, I promised last night that I would talk a little bit about the reason for the Precepts. It's mysterious, actually. Buddha said that we come into this world with the possibility of all good and all evil, or, all wholesomeness and all un-wholesomeness. The Precepts don't come from some large bearded parent in the sky trying to force us into obedience like bad children, but arise from our basic goodness and are practiced as we recognize and cultivate what is wholesome and good, and put away what is not.

Buddha's teaching is that from "beginningless beginning" it's been like this. From "beginningless beginning" we have the means to understand and to cultivate the generosity, loving kindness, and awakening that can flourish in us, and to see through the greed, hatred, and delusion that blindly drive us on. These are called the "six causes of action"- actions arising out of unwholesomeness or wholesomeness of our attitudes of mind.

Action, as I said last night, is what we call karma. Not the "my karma" and "your karma" kind of karma, that New Age way of talking about it, but the way of how things are vastly interconnected, and how they deeply affect each other. Sometimes I see it as millions and billions of vectors coming from every direction, arrows of energy-- long ones, short ones-- all converging and de-converging in innumerable ways in this enormous energetic dynamic, so that we could never trace back our own personal karma in any precise way. It's too vast for us to know. But we can, from this place, experience and feel what's converging here. In a sense we can call our self a convergence of many energies as the universe, and a continual expression of them.

Our actions, then, arise out of the un-

wholesomeness or wholesomeness of our attitudes of mind. They're not something we have, but something we do and be. Though we can't directly cut off with a knife all our negative tendencies, we can begin to study and understand them, and to honestly acknowledge how it is with us. Much of our sitting practice is involved with that work as we sit without a goal and simply accept what comes and goes in our meditation.

The Three Poisons-greed, hatred, delusion- are sometimes called the motor that turns the Wheel of Life. The Wheel of Life refers to this *samsaric* world, this world that seems sometimes so bleak and difficult, and that has so much suffering in it. Maybe you've all seen the *mandala* that describes it-a big circle, and in its center-- a pig, a snake, and a cockerel. Cockerel is greed, the snake is anger, and the pig is ignorance. Each is biting the other's tail, going around clockwise. They're the engine that turns this whole Wheel of Life with all that is trial and tribulation for us: the Wheel of Dependent Origination which encircles it and shows human life from painful birth to the many sufferings of old age and death. This whole wheel is in the mouth and grip of a monster, Time. But then, there's a little sitting Buddha way up here somewhere, and a moon. It's a description of our life in terms of unwholesome, self-centered, delusional action, which is full of the possibilities of generosity, compassion, and the full light of wisdom.

So, we don't have to say, "Oh, alas, alas, life is so horrible!" Actually life is quite amazing. It's quite spectacular. Practicing sincerely with the inherent wisdom of the Precepts, unsticking ourselves from our endless delusions and illusions, not being caught for too long by any of it, we see that this very world of *samsara* is nirvana itself in which we live whole-ly and completely, fulfilling every moment.

Transcribed by Jane Jasper

Study Group on the Precepts

The Floating Zendo sangha will be offering a study group again running this October 2006 until May 2007. This time our study will be the Precepts. Meetings are held at Jane Macdonald's home. Please contact Jane for directions and with any questions (408) 507-8558 or janemacdonal@gmail.com. The dial-in number remains the same: (985)



Emily Bording and Angie smile after Emily receives the precepts at her Jukai ceremony this spring, 3/11/06.
photo & article contributed by Jane Macdonald

425.2622, ext. 318

The format will be as follows:

9:30 - 10:00 - 30 minute sit

10:00 - 11:30

- out-lying members dial in to join discussion

- round-table "check-in" by participants

- comments on the month's chapters offered by a sangha member

- open discussion

11:30- end of meeting

Each month we will discuss 2 chapters from John Daido Looi's book "The Heart of Being." It is a wonderful book on the Precepts, and participants are encouraged to obtain their own copy, whether they plan to attend one or all of

the Study Group meetings. Angie Boissevain Roshi will be joining us.

Study Groups are the 3rd Saturday of every month, curriculum as follows:

18 November	(chapters 2 & 3)	Leader: Julian West
16 December	(chapters 4 & 5)	Leader: Wendy Graham
20 January '07	(chapters 6 & 7)	Leader: TBC
17 February '07	(chapters 8 & 9)	Leader: TBC
17 March '07	(chapters 10 & 11)	Leader: TBC
21 April '07	(chapters 12 & 13)	Leader: TBC

People Who Keep the Floating Zendo Afloat in 2007

Jane Macdonald—Coordinator. Jane has offered to continue her service for another year. The coordinator works with Angie to develop the calendar of events, leads the business meetings, and secures site, staff for sesshin.

Samia Clark—Ino. Samia has committed to perform *Ino* duties for 2 months. *Ino* arranges for rental of the Meeting House, calls for volunteers to be Doan, to help set up & close, and makes announcements on Tuesdays.

Britt Wash—Secretary. Britt will continue for another year to maintain our address & e-mail lists, plus keep minutes at the business meetings.

Wendy Graham—Treasurer. Wendy will manage bank account & report to Sangha on income & expenditures for 1 year.

Dan Miller—Web Master. Dan will continue to administer both the Yahoo group and the website for another year.

Communications Coordinator—Open. Submits announcements to Mercury News. Updates our information on other websites. Newsletter Editor.

Shika—Open. Greets newcomers and orients them.

Many thanks and deep gassho to Lorne Temes for his service to our sangha as Treasurer in 2006. Thank you Lorne! Anyone interested in serving the Sangha, please see Jane Macdonald or the *Ino*.

Welcome to FloatingZendo.org

FloatingZendo.org web site debuted in August 2006. We look forward to your contributions to the online community and discussion among the floating zendos headed by Angie, our teacher.

The site is organized around a "blog" (web log) design, where recent postings are listed at the top of the home page. The site also includes basic information about Floating Zendo, including:

- * Intro to Floating Zendo (zazen practice, etc.)
- * Soto Zen Tradition
- * Our teachers: Angie and her teacher Kobun Chino
- * Locations and Schedules
- * Recommended Zen Reading

Postings to the main blog can be made by any FZ member, using a generic login available from the web administrator (Dan, dhmmhd@yahoo.com). FZ members may respond to existing postings without login. The range of content of blog postings is evolving. We have already used the blog for postings about sesshin and upcoming study topics. Possible new topics include practice questions (addressed to Angie and by the sangha). Please respond to the Topics for This Blog" posting on the web site with your inputs.

In addition to discussions, the "FZ Photo Gallery" provides categorized photos. Please contact the web administrator about photos you would like to contribute.

Note: We are retaining the Floating Zendo Zazen Yahoo Group for rapid one-way time-sensitive announcements, such as monthly sits, business meetings, guest speakers, sesshins, etc.

Article contributed by Dan Miller

Handmade Zafus for Sale

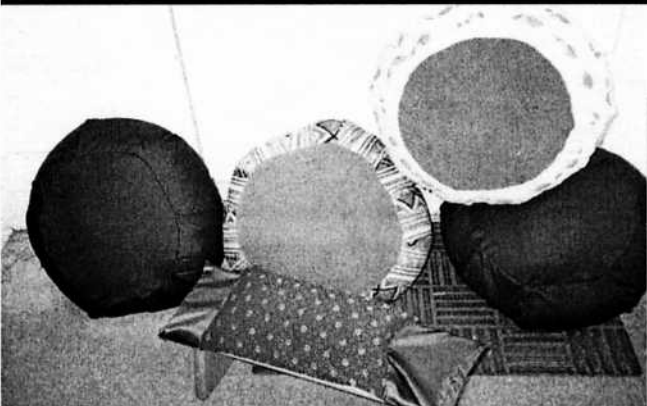


Photo by donnalynn chase

Zafus handmade by Emily Bording offered for sale. Proceeds to Floating Zendo. Handmade in 100% cotton casing, silk floss kapok filling. \$50 plus shipping costs. In traditional black or a fabric of your choice. Pads for benches are also available. Contact: Emily Bording 831-722-8500. Make checks payable to Floating Zendo and mail to: Floating Zendo c/o donnalynn chase P.O. Box 320433, Los Gatos, CA 94032. Please write "Zafu" on the front of your check. Expect 3 – 4 weeks' delivery.



dawn to dusk five times -
gathering body and mind
with the forest mist

Haiku by donnalynn chase

Dana

Floating Zendo depends on the generosity of the sangha to stay afloat. Sangha members have generously offered dana in the past, which has been put toward, among other things, scholarships for attending sesshin and defraying costs for all participants. Your dana will be greatly appreciated. Checks may be made out to Floating Zendo and mailed to the PO Box of donnalynn. (see below)

News and Information

Beth Goldring visited the San Jose group on October 3. The Cambodian project now has a website - www.brahmavihara.cambodiaaidsproject.org. Donations are always welcome. Send to Empty Hand Zendo, 45 Lawton St., New Rochelle, NY. 10801. Be sure to mention the Cambodian AIDS Project on your check.

donnalynn chase is currently studying with the Sati Center Buddhist Chaplaincy Training Program. The program began in September and lasts one year. This study will complement the volunteer work she has done for the Center for Living with Dying for 2 years. donnalynn will also accompany Angie to Felsentor, Switzerland and Puregg, Austria this December, serving as *Jisha*.

Once a month **Jane Macdonald** has been going up to SFZen Center to learn to be a sewing teacher under the guidance of Blanche Hartman. This knowledge will certainly be valuable for the sangha.

Carolyn Dille talked about Impermanence as part of a series offered at the Insight Meditation Center in Redwood City. Her presentation was on Nov. 30.

The August Sesshin at Villa Angelica, Carmel provided deep yet comfortable meditation experiences. We have voted to return to Villa Angelica for the August 2007 sesshin. All are invited to attend. Contact Jane Macdonald.

We would love to share your news with the sangha! If you have any special events related to your Zen Buddhist practice, send them along to the return address below. Indicate the submission is for the Floating Zendo Newsletter.

The next issue of *The Floating Zendo News* will feature creative writing by Sangha members. Submit your contributions to Jane Macdonald sometime before February 2007.

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