



Walk in the Mountains

By Ken Tetsuzan Sensei

Spring finally arrived and summer has come trundling along behind. They took their sweet old time this year. But at last the trees have leafed out, flowers are blooming, fish are spawning in Crown Hill Lake and the prairie dogs are popping out of their burrows. The snow is melting in the mountains, and the trails are becoming accessible.

I hope everyone in our sangha takes some time this summer to walk in the mountains or in parks and woods and by lakes. Walking is not just good exercise. Walking is our natural upright state, even more than standing.

I find that walking, whether in a local park or a mountain trail, is a profound healing experience. Whatever problems I'm wrestling with, whatever the slings and arrows that outrageous fortune has been throwing at me, the trees, the grass, the mountains put it all back in perspective. It is said that mountains are so big that they cause a slight local distortion of gravity, and somehow we sense that—it is part of the awe we feel.

The natural world, especially mountains, has great significance in Zen. In ancient China monasteries were located on mountains, and the abbot took the name of the mountain. A mountain rises up from the bones of the earth and touches the sky. A mountain is a metaphor for practice/realization. Whether we see it or not, whether we hike it or not, the mountain remains. The mountain does not depend on anybody to climb it.

Master Changsha liked mountains. Case Number 36 in the Blue Cliff Record:

One day Changsha went for a walk in the mountains. When he returned to the gate [of the monastery] the head monk said, "Master, where have you been?"

Changsha said, "I have come from walking in the hills."

The head monk asked, "Where did you go?"

Changsha said, "First I went pursuing the fragrant grasses; then I returned following the falling flowers."

The head monk said, "You are full of the spring, aren't you?"

Changsha said, "It even surpasses the autumn dew dripping on the lotuses."

[Xuedou comments, "Thanks for your reply."]

Changsha goes walking in the mountains. There were Zen monks who walked many hundreds of miles on pilgrimage, or to visit a famous master or shrine. Our kinhin, walking meditation, is a small piece of this kind of walking. Imagine a walking practice that lasts, not just for 5 or 15 minutes, but for months, maybe years. For the monks of the Tang, this was just being ordinary. In our post-modern culture, the only walking many of us do is from the couch to the refrigerator and back.

Changsha walks in the mountains. How far does he walk and for how long? When you walk, how far do you walk and for how long? Is it the distance from a parking lot to a nearby lake? Around a lake? Or is it many days into the high mountains? The distance doesn't matter if you truly walk, every step is an eternity and spans the universe; it is just this moment.



Photo by Rob VanHyfte

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returned following the falling flowers."

He pursues the fragrant grasses and the falling flowers. If you ever watch a dog following his nose, the dog is totally fascinated, totally involved; so is a child exploring a new environment. So is Changsha in the mountains. He is interested in grasses, flowers, mountains, walking. Changsha is not hiking; he is not walking from point A to point B. He roams the mountains, he explores the mountains, and he practices the mountains. Dogen speaks of mountains walking. If you understand your own walking you understand that mountains walk. If you truly practice mountains, mountains practice you in the same moment.

The head monk said, "You are full of the spring, aren't you?"

I think that the head monk admired Changsha. Maybe he was even a little bit envious. The great master wanders and explores like a child. He pursues fragrant grasses, trees, birds, butterflies, flowers, the shade and the sun.

Changsha said, "It even surpasses the autumn dew dripping on the lotuses."

Changsha loved the spring, the coming forth. It is even better than fall, the traditional symbol of enlightenment, the realization of emptiness. In autumn the flowers are gone, the grass withers, the leaves fall. Nothing is left. The moon appears in the cloudless sky. All is silent. In the long night watches of sesshin, we may experience this, everything falling away. But what then? Is that where we stay? Is that nirvana? It is certainly a powerful temptation. How can we surpass this vast emptiness that we strive for in our zazen?

Changsha shows us. Let us join Xuedou in thanking him for his answer. Our practice is not just about sitting in silent splendor in the zendo, or attaining a particular state

of mind. The universe comes forth as it will.
Our Buddha nature comes forth as it will.
Mountains, trees, flowers and grasses come
forth as they will. And none are separate.

There's a bumper sticker that reads, "Life is
uncertain—eat dessert first." Life is
uncertain. Enjoy (take joy in) the moment.
The great outdoors makes it easy. Go into
the mountains this summer, go to a park,
walk the neighborhood. Pursue the
fragrant grasses; follow the falling flowers,
the trees, the birds. Walking, pursuing and
following are pure, natural enlightenment.



Chasing a Miracle

By Jackie St. Joan

Morning light widens across the valley floor
In the land of the Blue Sky People
Edged by juniper and pine

We climb the dusty path under a single sun
Like frightened rabbits and busy birds
We chase water of dharma

Ring the bell. Chant like distant thunder
We send out tea and cookies
For the Elk People, coyote and bear

*May happiness rain down on this dry place
Where in a cloudless sky at mid-day
A rainbow crescent appears*

Fires blaze. Bees drink.
For a moment, even the ants stand still
In the fragrance of pinon

No seed no branch no tree this jewel
Is as close as the stone in my shoe
How can you lose what was always there?

The circle appears blown away again and
again
You want to see a miracle? The lama asks
Just watch a bird fly

Sangha News

This might be old news for some and new to others but, Angelique DeSilva and Mark Roddy were officially married on December 14, 2012. Congratulations and best wishes to you both!

Ivy Ivanna, Yunita Keeton's 17-year old daughter has come to visit from Indonesia for part of the summer. The Keetons are providing many adventures for her, including going to Mt. Rushmore, Dinosaur National Park and the Uncompaghre Park and Ouray. This is her first time to the United States. She returns home mid-July.

Brett James is taking 14 students to Senegal Africa for 15 days. They will be visiting the capitol city Dakar, but will also be living in Dindéfelo, a remote village in southeast Senegal to finish building a lower school library that 14 other students from his school started in 2011. They will be doing home stays, living with families, completely off the grid. In addition to home stays, they will spend a day on Goree Island, a slave trade island. They will visit a slave house where slaves were processed before being shipped off and sold. They will also visit schools on the island.

Public Instruction Change

Note that the Tuesday evening instruction for the public is being changed to occur twice a month beginning in July. Each month will host one Tuesday and one Thursday evening. The times will remain the same: arrival at 6:45 pm with instruction beginning at 7:00 pm.

Sangha Discussion Sundays

This summer, two Sunday teishos will be replaced by sangha discussions. The discussions will be facilitated by Francine Campone, Head of Zendo, who is an organizational consultant. The first will be held on July 21 and the second on August 4. Each will be preceded by a round of zazen beginning at the usual time of 8:00

am and we will try to finish by 10:30 am. The purpose of the discussions are to help us clarify our direction as a community going forward. Please plan to attend and take part in these important planning sessions.

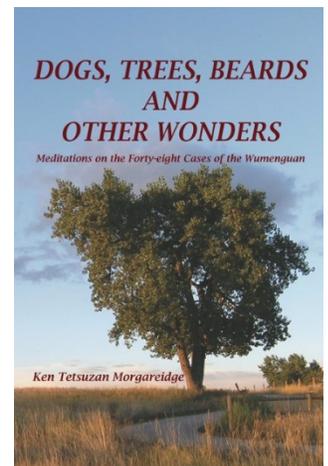
Samu Sunday

The teachers have planned a samu on Sunday, September 8. This will encourage those who otherwise are unable to make our Saturday samus to take part in this important practice. Giving ourselves to our work, whether it is cleaning a bathroom or preparing the noon meal, can only serve to deepen us further. It has been said that "we" (Buddhists) enjoy everything we do, and samu is how that is cultivated.

Dogs, Trees, Beards and Other Wonders

By Ken Tetsuzan Morgareidge

Now available on Amazon.com in paperback form. And very soon, in the ZC Store. *Dogs, Trees, Beards and Other Wonders*-- An irreverent and sometimes humorous look at a major classic of Zen literature. Ken Tetsuzan, a third generation American Dharma teacher, brings the Zen koan into the Twenty-first Century. Zen has always refused to be bound by the letter of Buddhist teachings but still remains true to the spirit. This book is no exception. It will not only help the Zen student of today see more clearly into the nature of the questions and their relevance in a post-modern world, it will appeal to the general reader who is looking for a first-hand introduction to the Zen koan and all the questions embedded there.



Summer Zendo Sitting

Due to the heat, the lower level of the Temple will be used for our Zazen practice until the summer heat subsides. Zazen instruction will take place in the upper Zendo.

Mountain Sesshin

The sesshin will be held August 6-11 and the application deadline is July 8. Space is limited, and it often fills. Please be timely with your application submission!

Diamond Sangha Teachers' Circle



Karin and Peggy Sensei's attended the International Diamond Sangha Teachers' Circle meeting in Argentina this winter. Above is a photo taken just before the closing circle.



Prior to the meeting Peggy and Karin took a side trip to Machu Picchu, where they managed to scramble up Wayna Picchu above the clouds and come down without falling.

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