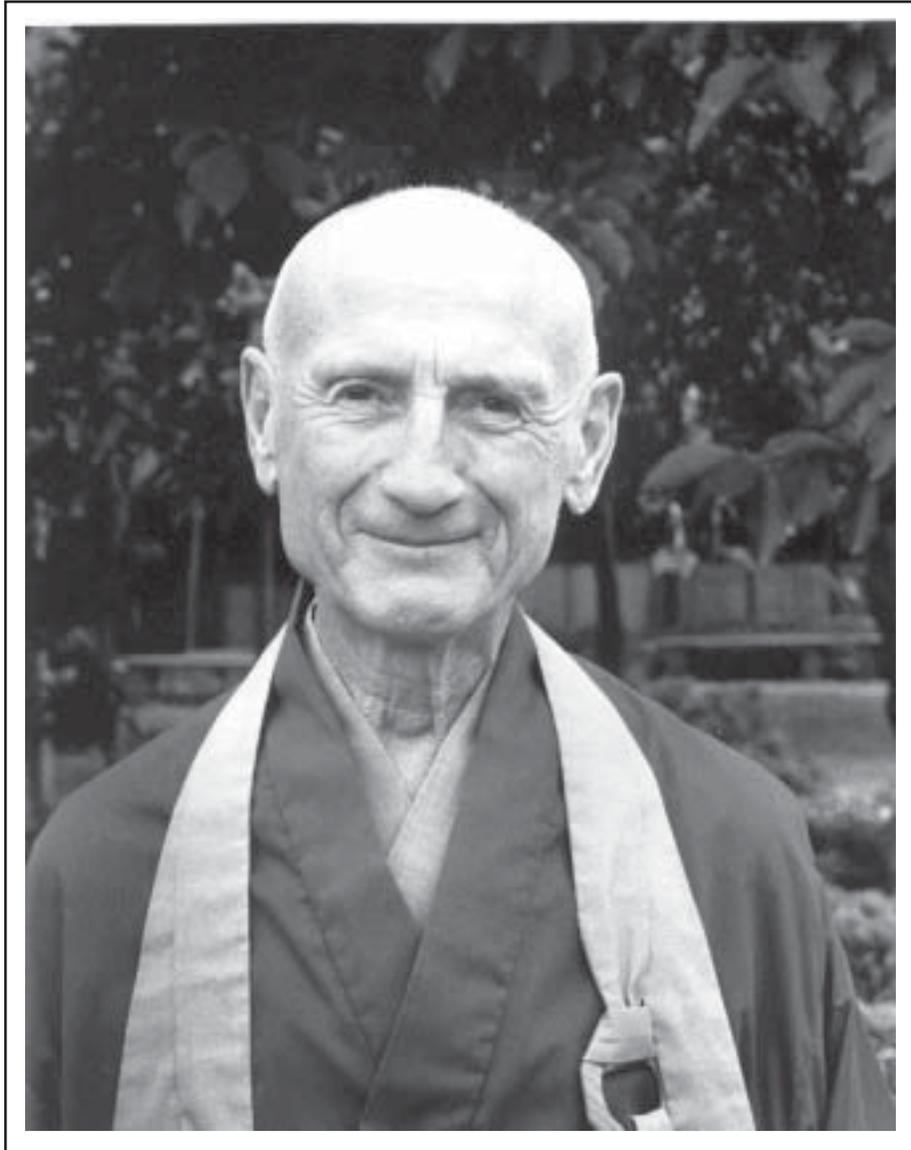




Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Summer 2004



Philip Kapleau Roshi

August 20, 1912 - May 6, 2004

By **Danan Henry Sensei**

Philip Kapleau Roshi, my first teacher, died peacefully at the Zen Center in Rochester, New York on Thursday, May 6th at 3:30 pm. Rafe Martin, a close friend from Rochester, sent me the following description of Roshi's passing: ***Continued inside...***

Philip Kapleau Roshi, Continued...

"He was seated in his wheelchair in the afternoon sun beneath the tree in the backyard, surrounded by a small circle of friends. How very Roshi. Like the Buddha beneath the twin Sala trees. Birds sang, the breezes blew... We sat quietly and chanted. We whispered farewells in his ear. His passing was the most peaceful thing, the transition between life and death almost imperceptible.

"Rose (Martin), Sunyana (Graef Sensei), and Jean, his caretaker, washed the body and put him in his robes. On the evening of May 6th we held the first service in the zendo. He lay in his open coffin. When the ceremony began thunder boomed outside and a gentle rain fell. The zendo was open all night and remained so through Saturday."

Arriving in Rochester on Saturday morning, I went directly from the airport to the zendo, stood by the open coffin and gazed at my teacher for some time. I spoke my farewell softly to him and sat in zazen next to my teacher, dead in his coffin yet living vigorously among us.

On Saturday evening there was a memorial service attended by many of his long time students. At that time most of us spoke to him in gratitude for his gift of the Dharma to each of us. The next day his coffin was lowered into the earth at Chapin Mill, the Rochester Zen Center's beautiful country property, as hundreds chanted the Heart Sutra. There was another memorial service at the zendo that evening after which many of us sat late into the night and spoke together of the good times, the difficult times, the triumphs and failures in the life of our teacher.

I returned to Denver the following day. As I looked down on the green Rochester landscape from the air, the words of a friend profoundly evoked the spirit of this final visit and farewell to my teacher, Philip Kapleau Roshi: "In the end we all loved him and owed him."

What is a Zen teacher?

In the weeks following, I have been reflecting on what it means to be a Dharma teacher. I believe this is a good time to shape these thoughts and feelings as a personal vision. What follows is an ideal. I have never met such a person but I shall try to be such a person. As Robert Browning said, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp or what is heaven for?"

A real teacher is someone who is able to set aside his comfort, preoccupations and attachments to strive, with all his mind, heart, and body, for realization and perfection. He is willing to work tirelessly with anyone who wishes to join him on the journey.

A real teacher is one who has some genuine understanding of reality (Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya,



Nirmanakaya*). She is disciplined, settled, steady, bright, energetic, kind, supportive, and inspiring. She understands what it means to be alive and lives out of that understanding creatively and joyfully. She is free of sentimentality in her teaching and capable of wielding the sword of compassion to help her students when necessary. And she is one in whom her teachers have confidence.

A real teacher is aware of himself and his imperfect, incomplete insight and failings, and works ceaselessly to uphold the precepts, deepen his understanding, and correct his shortcomings.

A real teacher puts others before herself. She is compassionate. She hears the cries and suffering of others, does not exclude anyone or anything from her heart, and does her best to bring a spiritual perspective to the social, political, economic and environmental problems of the world.

A real teacher is modest, humble and patient, with a good sense of humor. He does not take himself too seriously. He lives without reluctance and is contented and happy.

*A Buddha has three "bodies" or planes of reality, which in actuality are one interrelated whole. The first is called Dharmakaya (law body) which is the experience of Essential Nature, of oneness that is beyond every conception. The unconditioned Dharmakaya is the substratum of completeness and perfection out of which arise all animate and inanimate forms and moral order. The second body is called Sambhogakaya (bliss body) which is the experience of the rapture of enlightenment, Mutual Interdependence or Interbeing. The third body is called Nirmanakaya (body of transformation) which is the experience of uniqueness and variety.

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Sangha News

New Zendo

The new zendo has proven to be a beautiful and magnificent place to practice. There is a great sense of openness and light. The pale colored wool carpet is very pleasant to the touch and far easier to look at than the mottled green carpet in the old zendo and lower level. The transition into the new space has been relatively seamless, with only minor adjustments necessary to our usual forms and ways of doing things. One such change is the placement of baby wipes for cleaning feet on the landings of the stairs leading up to the zendo. It is not necessary to wipe your feet every time you enter and leave the zendo; do so only if your feet are dirty, or you have been outside or in the basement without shoes. This will help us keep the carpet clean and preserve its life for many years.

Much work and planning went into the creation of the new zendo, and further refinements are still under way. These refinements include improving the audio system for teishos and other talks, low walls to define the zendo space, and the creation of dorm rooms for residential training. The architect and design committee are hard at work on this project, and anyone interested in joining the committee and helping out should speak with Dennis Tesar or Sensei.

Fundraiser a Success

The recent fundraiser, which asked for \$30,000 to complete the raising of the zendo and provide seed money for future renovation work has been a great success. Thanks to everyone who contributed, we have exceeded our goal. Pledges received currently total \$31,560, of which over \$16,000 has already been collected. The fundraising committee would like to give their warmest thanks to everyone for coming forth so quickly and generously.

These pledges are a commitment to the growth of the temple, ensuring that we can meet the financial demands of our current project and to lay a firm foundation for the future. Please do your best to follow through.

Robes for Supporting Members

Supporting members should make an effort to acquire their own sitting robes, leaving the guest robes for associate members and others who might need them. Having one's own robe shows a commitment to sitting practice at the temple. Robes can be ordered from The Endless Knot, a robe sewing company owned by long-time Rochester Zen Center member Urszula Sapeta. Order forms can be found in the foyer. Where the

cost of a new robe is prohibitive, a guest robe can be purchased. Please contact Shonen in the office if you would like to do so.

Sesshin Setup Change

For several years we have made it a policy that regular sesshin attendees who are not attending the current sesshin be responsible for the sesshin setup, so that participants might have the evening free to spend with family. However, due to insufficient participation, we are now reverting to our former policy of all in-town sesshin participants being required to attend the setup. Besides being able to complete the setup in a timely fashion, another advantage of this is to allow participants to familiarize themselves with their work and room assignments in advance. Also, those attending sesshin for their first time can borrow and study the sesshin guidelines, making entrance into sesshin smoother.

Sangha Picnic

The Sangha picnic will take place on Sunday, July 4 at Peggy Sheehan's house, starting around noon. Family and friends are welcome. Please bring food and or beverages to share.

Sangha Work Weekend

The Sangha work weekend will take place on July 10-11 at Becky Wethington's mountain property outside of Lyons to continue with the construction of a zendo and retreat facility. The focus of the weekend will be to raise the straw bale walls, and should be a very educational experience for anyone interested in this kind of construction. When completed, the zendo will be available to any Sangha members wishing to have solitary or small group retreats in a natural setting. Participants can come for one or both days, and are welcome to bring family, friends, and dogs. The property is on 40 acres of forested land with beautiful rocky cliffs and scenic views. There is a well and a trailer with kitchen facilities, and many excellent spaces for camping. Detailed directions will be available in the foyer, and if you have any questions, please contact Becky.

Continuation of Paramitas Discussion

The discussion of the paramitas begun during the last sila angu will continue on alternating Tuesday evenings. The paramitas covered during this period will be prajna (wisdom), upaya (skillful means), pranidhana (aspiration), bala (spiritual power), and jnana (knowledge). Each discussion will focus on one of the paramitas. There will be two rounds of sitting

and then a member of the Lay Order will give a short talk on the paramitas and facilitate a discussion. Those interested in studying the paramitas beforehand are encouraged to read *The Practice of Perfection* by Robert Aitken. Copies are available in the bookstore.

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

The Temple will once again hold a Mountains and Rivers backpacking sesshin. This is a sesshin that combines zazen with backpacking and camping that harkens back to the pilgrimage practice of wandering monks in ancient China. The sesshin has been revised from last year to follow more closely the format developed by the Ring of Bone Zen Center. Noteworthy changes include communal meals (rather than participants bringing their own food), more emphasis on solitude during hikes, and expanded social interaction. As the sesshin takes place away from the center, the regular weekly practice schedule will continue without interruption.

New Calendar Items

Several new activities are listed on the calendar for the Sangha to experiment with:

Zen Games are special mindfulness games led by Sensei that invite us to use our whole body and mind in an exploration of awareness in activity. Some of these are currently

being used on the last day of sesshin to help us make the transition into ordinary daily life. Zen Games will take place on Saturday, July 31st and Saturday, August 28th from 9 am to 12 pm.

Temple Cleaning: A short period of cleaning after the morning sitting is a traditional practice form in many zen temples and monasteries. On Thursday, August 5, anyone who is able to stay and do some cleaning around the temple for about an hour after the sitting is encouraged to do so.

Wind and Sky- A Day of Play will be a day of outdoor recreation held on Saturday, August 14th. As the name suggests, the emphasis will be on play as practice. The event is being organized by Jason Polk, with details to be announced at a later date.

Gassho Corner

The following individuals have made contributions to the temple “beyond the call of duty”, and deserve our deepest gratitude:

- Kenneth Rickman, who owns a landscaping company, has on several occasions mowed and manicured the lawn around the temple and parking lot.
- The Architect and Design Committee, particularly Dennis Tesar, Mike Tabor, and Geoff Keeton, for their ongoing efforts in developing and refining the new zendo space.

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