



# Mountains Talking

Fall 2015

## Leaving Our House

By Ken Tetsuzan Morgareidge  
From a teisho on June 20, 2015

This is the last extended sitting we will have here in this temple building. We are leaving our house. At the end of August we will leave this building, this particular manifestation of our true nature. But our practice is not more for being in this beautiful space, nor is it less for being elsewhere. So please, do not put your practice on hold. It's very easy to think, maybe I'll just wait until there is a "real" temple. To do so is to lead a provisional life, a life based in a non-existent future rather than in the here and now, something we all do too much of anyway. So how do we remain true to our practice lacking a "center" to come to, a location on which to focus? We dive in. We dive into the change, the uncertainty, the inconvenience, the hassles, even as we dive into our practice on the mat here today. Case four in the *Shoyoroku* reads:

*When the Buddha was walking with his disciples, he pointed to the ground with his hand, and said, "Here would be a good place to build a sanctuary."*

*Sakadevendra (that's Indra, the emperor of the gods) took a blade of grass, stuck it into the ground, and said, "The sanctuary is built." The Buddha smiled.*

So there it is. We plant our blade of grass wherever we find ourselves. We sit together wherever and whenever we can. This sangha began as a small group sitting in Alan Clevenger's living room. A lot of centers begin that way, sitting in living rooms, garages. There's no reason we can't do it again for a while. After all, wandering, homeless practice, has a long and honorable history in Zen. A passage from the biography of Jiashan in *Entangling Vines* reads:



*[On the advice of his teacher, Daowu,] Jiashan went to the river Wujiang, where Chuanzi had his boat. It is said that he and Chuanzi had an immediate meeting of the minds, and that Chuanzi, after sanctioning his understanding, advised him to dwell in the mountains and devote himself to finding even just a single true student to maintain the Dharma. Chuanzi then capsized his boat and was never seen again. Jiashan followed Chuanzi's advice, secluding himself in the mountains for over thirty years.*

In all that time, where was Jiashan's sanctuary? Where is it in this moment?

After parting from his teacher Soyen Shaku, Nyogen Senzaki lived in obscurity in San Francisco for twenty years before he rented a hall and gave his first lecture on Zen. Where was Nyogen's center? Where is it in this moment?

After leaving Caoshi, the sixth ancestor, Huineng, lived in the mountains, consorting with hunters and herdsman for fifteen years before coming forth to

*Continued on Page 4*



## Saying Farewell

On Sunday, August 30th, about thirty members gathered to participate in a farewell ceremony to express our gratitude and formally take leave of our temple home of seventeen years.

We had moved everything out the day before, so the temple was clean and empty, free of ornament and clutter, yet clearly showing all the loving work that restored and maintained it over our years of stewardship. Even more palpable was the sense of so many hours and years of zazen and practice.

The ceremony began with strikes on the han, the lighting of candles and incense on the small altar, and three prostrations to each of the four directions. Our Maha-kinhin was led by Ken holding our incense offering. We processed through the entire temple chanting the Kanzeon sutra accompanied by bell and umpan.

On returning to the main zendo, we stood in a circle in silence as the densho tolled 108 times. Peggy read the “Song of the Grass Roof Hermitage” by Shitou Xigian, followed by a special dedication and the bell-and-block ceremony. Finally, Karin performed the formal closing of the eyes of the Buddha.

## Farewell Dedication

by Bill Hamaker

*As we leave this place, our practice home of many years,*

*We offer our gratitude to this sacred space:*

*To our temple that has nurtured us and given us sanctuary and sustenance,*

*To the temple of the earth and sky, the temple of fire and water,*

*And to the wisdom-temple of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.*

*May we go forward knowing that the temple is always within us, around us, wherever we are.*

*May we keep the temple ever open to:*

*All beings throughout space and time*

*All bodhisattva-mahasattvas*

*The Great Prajna Paramita.*



“People of the present day  
see this flower as though  
they were in a dream.”  
- Nan-ch’uan

Photos by Geoff Keeton



From page 1

teach. Where was Huineng's center? Where is it in this moment?

Where is your center in this moment? Where will it be when you leave the building this afternoon? How about tomorrow at work, at home? Where will it be in a few weeks when we walk out of this building for the last time? Can you ever be away from your center? Can you ever be away from your self? The three refuges are Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. They have nothing to do with a building or location.

This is not to denigrate the importance of the physical setting for practice. Design and situation can create a very inspiring place, an encouragement to practice. But never ever mistake such a home for your true home. Something we learn in our practice of Everyday Zen is just that: everyday Zen, every moment Zen, everywhere Zen. Case 18 in *The Blue Cliff Record* reads in part:

*Emperor Suzung (Dai-so) asked Huizhong (Zhukokushi), the National Teacher, "After a hundred years (after you have died), what do you want me to do?"*

*"Build a seamless tomb for this old monk," replied the National Teacher.*

*"I ask the National Teacher, please show me the design of the tomb," said the Emperor.*

*The National Teacher sat quietly for a while, then asked, "Do you understand?"*

*"I do not understand," replied the Emperor.*

Do you understand? Is there any place or time that is not our sanctuary, our refuge, our monument? Our practice is not limited to any time or place. We have nowhere to dwell, so everywhere will do.

In case 11 in *The Blue Cliff Record*:

*Huangbo addressed his assembled monks and said, "You are all eaters of brewer's lees. If you go about on pilgrimages like this, when can you meet today? Don't you know that in all the land of Tang, there is no Zen teacher?"*

*A monk stepped forward and said, "But surely there are those in all regions who reform monks and govern assemblies of disciples."*

*Huangbo said, "I didn't say there is no Zen, only that there is no teacher of Zen."*

Now let's engage in a minor heresy here and change a few words.

*Huangbo addressed his assembled monks and said, "You are all eaters of brewer's lees. If you go about on pilgrimages like this, when can you meet today? Don't you know that in all the land of Tang, there is no Zen temple?"*

*A monk stepped forward and said, "But surely there are places in all regions where monks and assemblies of disciples gather."*

*Huangbo said, "I didn't say there is no Zen, only that there is no Zen temple."*

No Zen temple, no Zen teacher, only Zen.

Zen temples, Zen teachers, even Zen teachings come and go. Like all phenomena they are transient and empty. They are just momentary manifestations of the great reality, waves upon the surface of the ocean. Each of us is like that, transient and empty. But then there is that deep, silent place that we touch in our zazen. It has no size, shape, color, sound, smell, taste. It is not concerned with times or places, existence or non-existence. And yet it is completely accessible. It is here and now. How could it be anyplace else? We do not have to seek for it.

Certainty, predictability, is a myth we use to tranquilize ourselves, to convince ourselves that somewhere, somehow there is something permanent. Embrace the uncertain, the transient. Embrace the inconvenience, the hassle, the scheduling mix-ups, the longer commutes. Let go of the tranquilizers. It is in that letting go that we wake up. How? Throw yourself away into zazen, into samu, into the moment, whatever it is. Throw yourself away into this one moment. For this, our last sesshin here, let us all throw ourselves away into the practice, into the Mu, into the breath, the koan, into just sitting. And then we keep throwing ourselves away into our lives.

We will convert whatever structure we end up in to our own practice, even as we converted this Christian Science Church to our practice. The point is not what we have done or what we have built. It is what we do now, what we build now together as a sangha. Every time we enter one of our rented spaces, lay out mats and cushions, set up an altar and sit together we are building our temple. The important aspect of sangha is not where we come together, but that we come together. It is not about what we have built, but what we are building here and now in our practice. This is the temple. This is the seamless monument.

# Instructions for the Cook

## Moroccan Chickpea, Carrot and Date Salad

This salad always seems to be the right thing to make - at once light, subtle and satisfying, combining the sweetness of caramelized carrots and dates, the pleasing warmth of cumin and cayenne, and the refreshing coolness of mint and lemon juice.

### Ingredients:

1 small head green or red leaf lettuce  
1 2/3 cups chopped carrots  
1 can chickpeas, drained  
1/3 cup dates, chopped small  
1/3 cup chopped mint  
1/4 cup slivered almonds  
1 lemon  
1/3 cup olive oil  
1 tablespoon cumin  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
cayenne pepper to taste

Makes 2 large dinner salads or 4 medium salads.

Wash the lettuce and cut into bite-sized pieces.  
Place in large salad bowl.

Cut the carrots into small pieces by either quartering or halving them lengthwise, and then slicing them thin. Heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil in a large saute pan and add the carrots. Cook on medium heat until they begin to caramelize, that is, turn completely soft and begin to brown. It will take at least 20-25 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain the chickpeas and chop the dates, and set them aside. When the carrots look and taste like they're ready, add the cumin and continue to saute for 1 minute to release its flavor. Add the chickpeas, dates, salt and a little cayenne pepper and cook for another 2-5 minutes, until everything is hot. The cayenne should provide just a dash of spiciness.

Turn off the heat and let cool another 5 minutes. Meanwhile, chop the mint. When the chickpea mixture has cooled a little, add it to the lettuce along with the mint, the remainder of the olive oil, and lemon juice to taste. Top with slivered almonds, and enjoy!

## Gassho Corner

Our warm thanks to everyone who helped with the moving committee, including George Mathews, Francine Campone, Connie Lane, David Lee, Bob Knott, Laura Menzer and many others. Our smooth and orderly exit is due entirely to their efforts.

## Calendar Highlights

**Nov. 7**, 9:30 a.m. - Introductory Seminar (RMMC)

**Nov. 15**, 8 a.m. - Fall Sangha meeting (RMMC)

**Nov. 22**, 8 a.m. - Teisho on the Precepts (RMMC)

**Nov. 29**, 8 a.m. - Taking Refuge ceremony (RMMC)

**Dec. 5-11** - Rohatsu sesshin (Shambhala Mountain Center)

**Dec. 20**, 4 p.m. - Holiday party (Karin's & Peggy's house)

**Dec. 21 - Jan. 1** - ZCD closed for the holidays

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