



Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation Inc. Newsletter Win/Spr 2006

ZASEP TULKU RINPOCHE

Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation has a long-standing relationship with the Venerable Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, a meditation master of the Gelugpa Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. Rinpoche received his training under some of the most competent Buddhist masters in Tibet prior to the Chinese invasion of that country. Later on in India he graduated from Varanasi Sanskrit University with an Acharya degree and spent 18 months in Thailand at the request of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He first came to Australia in 1977 and taught for three years before leaving for Canada. He has established Buddhist centres and taught throughout North America. Rinpoche has also been the Spiritual Director of Dorje Ling Retreat Centre (formerly Illusion Farm) in Tasmania for many years. He is recognised as the 13th incarnation of the great Kagyu teacher Lama Chabdak who lived in the Kham region of Eastern Tibet and founded Zuru Gompa 600 years ago. Rinpoche is known for his gentle compassion and good humoured wisdom.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.



Hello dear friends

I am not really in a position to make much of a business report this newsletter, as I have been away in New Zealand (see story on page 3) and preoccupied on another, though very Dharmic, concern. I will let the items in this issue speak for themselves.

I do hope that your Dharma practice and Sangha experience flourishes and that you see the Buddha in the forest if you bump into her!!
What more could we ask for?

Big love

Guy Turnbull

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A long journey / Goodbye Ariane

(Guy's report on the recent
death of his mother
- see page 3)



UPCOMING RETREATS WITH MAURICE OLIVER

Weeroona North Hobart

On the weekends September 23/24 and November 11/12. See enclosed brochure.

Maurice has just arrived home from 4 weeks pilgrimage in Tibet and sends his greetings. He has some thankas and statues to offer Dorje Ling Retreat Centre, which he brought back from Lhasa. We are very grateful to him for this.

Teachings in Hobart will consist of a seminar for practice oriented people spanning Saturday & Sunday morning two sessions and afternoon two sessions about an 1 1/2hrs each session the subject would be Three Principles of the Path: Renunciation; Bodhicitta; Wisdom of Emptiness

MAURICE OLIVER - REPORT ON RECENT TRIP TO TIBET

Having long considered meditation retreat to be the best holiday for body and mind I now believe pilgrimage to be the best way to travel. The opportunity to go to exotic places such as remote rural China and Tibet presents an appeal that many of us find tantalising, the opportunity to make visiting these places a pilgrimage at the same time was a very special way to travel. Geshe Khejo Rinpoche (an amazing scholar and yogi, and a close friend of Zasep Tulku Rinpoche) led 35 of his students from Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Beging to his monastery 'Detsang' in the Gelrong region of Seczhwan Province, China.

We were treated to tours of the monastery's chapels (rebuilt since the 1990's) and a six hours Mahakala puja by the resident monks on the following day. As well there were opportunities to circumambulate and spin the 1000 prayer wheels around the outer wall of the monastery. It was a joy to join with the local people from villages around who are now able to again come to create merit in this prayer practice just as people have done for generations. It is wonderful to experience how spiritual practice and growth so beautifully outshines the efforts of the cultural revolution even in the many who were born after it.

The mountain meadows provided a fabulous opportunity to climb and enjoy the scenery from 4000 meters with yak and sheep being herded beyond the farms of terrace slopes to the hills festooned with stupas and prayer flags.

After 3 days in this corner of heaven we flew the two hours to Lhasa over continuous mountain ranges, on a such clear day it was awesome. Most of the city has been transformed with new buildings surrounding the monuments and monasteries, it was as well to have given thought to arriving in Lhasa of the 21st Century. There are though such special places in Lhasa that it is still a holy place. The Chapel of Palden Atisha's stupa is such a special place that several of us were so moved and overcome with weeping of great joy at its palpable spirituality, this was further enhanced by the prayers offered in that place by Geshe Khejo Rinpoche, Kensur Rinpoche and Acha Rinpoche who had all joined us.

The following days visits and prayers at the Jokhang Cathedral, Sera and Drepunga Monasteries were equally rich in their own unique ways. It was especially heartening to experience the living spirituality brought to these places by the large number of monks and local people who were doing their own practices apparently without other concerns. The Potala Palace was an interesting place to visit, though of tremendous significance; it seemed more like a museum for the many special texts and beautiful statues.

Nothing can really prepare one for the rigours of travelling to the Northwest of Tibet though I must admit it must have been extremely difficult for the many who went there by horse in the distant past, or even in the cold and dust outside of the summer. There's a lot to be said for the Toyota Landcruiser. However a skilled driver is a must as the roads are in a constant state of giving way to muddy quagmire. Trekking around Mt Kailash is the most surprising of the many mountain treks I have done. I struggle to express what was different about this place, of course there is nothing tangible but the feeling is beyond description and term holy mountain certainly not well understood till after being lucky enough to go there.

May all our travels take us to a special place and be the cause for growth.

Maurice Oliver.

KIRSTEN MAYER - TRIP TO TIBET PART 2

This will be held over to our next issue.

2006 COMMITTEE

TASHI CHOLING DHARMA FOUNDATION COMMITTEE consists of:

President: Guy Turnbull

Secretary: Maria Grist

Treasurer: Keith O'Hara

Public Officer: Margaret Steadman

Committee: Roslyn Alexander,

Tony Dix, Anna Crotty, Annie Will-

ock, Kate MacNicol, Andy Macin-

tosh (welcome Andy!).

NEW INTERSTATE

COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

We welcome three of Rinpoche's students to our extended Committee. These members have volunteered to help us in areas concerning Dorje Ling. Their names are: Maurice Oliver (NSW), Amanda Buckley (NT) and Trish Ray (WA).

REGULAR MEDITATION MEETINGS

Our regular meditation meetings are held at 7.30 - 9.00 pm every Tuesday above Gould's Naturopathica in Liverpool St Hobart. All welcome. Sadhana practice is held every first Tuesday in the month. On other Tuesdays, meditation and discussion will be led by members of the local Sangha. Those who wish can stay for a cuppa and a chat after our meetings.

LIBRARY BOOKSHELVES.

Miranda has kindly agreed to build some bookshelves, and also Shani has found some at her Glenorchy tip shop. We look forward to having our books finally sorted so they are easier for borrowers to find. Thanks Miranda and Shani.

... I CAN'T BRAIN TODAY ...



... I HAVE THE DUMB ...

Vajrayogini Tsog Dates:

Calculated from day 10 and day 25, the new moon being day 1.

September (Sat 2, Sun 17)

October (Sun 1st, Mon 16th, Tue 31st)

November (Wed 15, Thu 30)

December (Fri 15, Sat 30)

Initiates who wish to practice together, please contact Rosie 043 999 5655

A LONG JOURNEY / GOODBYE ARIANE

Monday July 31st 2006. Early morning phone call alerting me to the news that my mother, Ariane, has just had a major stroke and is in Waitakere Hospital in Auckland, New Zealand. There followed a day of focused tidying up loose ends and preparing for a time by her side...how long I wondered?

Many years ago, as she told us on more than one occasion during the past few years, two clairvoyants independently told her that she would live until the age of 83. Her 83rd birthday was celebrated on July 6th (shared with H.H. Dalai Lama and George Bush!) at her favourite Ubud (Bali) homestay. The predictions looked to be coming true.

Tuesday September 1st . A plane to Sydney and a Wednesday booking to New Zealand on the same flight as my brother Simon, sister Lizzie and various other family members. We arrive late at the hospital and are shocked to see the extent of the paralysis and difficult state of our dear mother.

Thus began a long extended stay by her bedside at two hospitals and through a gradual but inevitable decline in her strength and ability to communicate with us.

Initially she was quite alert at times and she participated in some of our most difficult decisions with remarkable lucidity and humour...to her grandchildren she says..."I was almost a grandmother!" And to the nurses, after being told by Seymour that she was a "cool grandmother", "that's the best compliment I have ever had". However, the decision of whether to introduce a feeding tube to prolong her life was met with a very clear and definite No! Lizzie and I had met with her and Peter, her second husband, in January 2006, to write a Living Will in which her express wish was to not be resuscitated in the event of a heart attack and to be allowed to die peacefully when the time came. Now that the time was nearing we had to bear these wishes in mind and honour her courage in the face of the inevitable consequences. It is difficult to communicate the depth of feeling I experienced during these last days of this wonderful lady's life.

During our January visit to NZ, Roslyn Alexander and I went to stay at the Whangarie Centre of Geshe Sangye Thinly. There we met a wonderful Dharma sister by the name of Kaari. .

I asked my ma if she would like Geshela to come down and see her

at the hospital and she gave a strong yes to this enquiry. We phoned Kaari and arranged for a day for them to come. Ariane was very pleased to see Geshela and particularly requested that we invite the Registrar, Mark, to come into the room as he said some prayers for her. He was delighted to do so and recognized that something unusual was afoot. All in all the day was quite remarkable and when Ariane asked Geshela where she would be going he simply replied "to Chenrezig pure land".

Days flowed into days and soon I had spent nearly four weeks in this impromptu death and dying retreat. As was commented during that time, 'birth and death have their own timing'. We cannot know just when the event will happen so a simple preparedness is the best way to be...a moment by moment awareness meditation.

Being somewhat of a constant visitor at the hospital gave me the sad chance to witness a few very heart touching moments when dear friends and relatives said what they felt to be their last goodbye's. And yet even now, more than a week since Ariane died, I can't put my finger on the feeling that she is gone...her body was cold to the touch...the life not in the face and skin...and yet the world feels still whole...her passing like the sound of a wave breaking on a nearby shore... maybe nothing really gone except her ability to remain in that old decaying body...

A request was made to the private hospital staff for Ariane's body to be allowed to remain undisturbed for a few days until we felt that her consciousness had departed. We had determined to take care of all the proceedings ourselves even to the point of transporting her body home from the hospital when the time came. I asked a friend for some help in his woodwork shop and we made the coffin ourselves too.

On the evening prior to the cremation we had Ariane's body laid out in her bed and invited family and friends to join us for a puja, led by Geshela and attended by Anila, a nun who resides at the Whangarie Centre. This, together with all the prayers offered by all our friends all over the world, Ariane's great good karma and the placing of sand from a Chenrezig sand mandala on her crown chakra seems to have ensured that she has indeed gone to a pure land. Her 'vibe' after death was very peaceful and she was seen in places as far afield as Launceston, Tasmania, where she was visiting her very dear friend Joan Horne, on a final visa-

free journey in her new light body. A mother, when alive, is like a fixed point throughout most of our lives. Contemplating the impermanence of her life helps me get a real feeling for the ungraspability of my own and everybody else's as well. No fixed point in a sea of moving energy. Viewed this way the whole world is like a wave of energy ever changing form and function but never really solid. Trying to hold on to anything is like a hand grabbing water...the hand itself dissolving before our eyes if we look clearly and deeply enough.

And yet it all hangs together...there is literally a seamlessness to experience at this level that speaks of the beginningless and endless nature of existence. There is also a sense of a 'place' where mind and energy meet. And maybe that is 'where' we spring from and disappear to in the endless dance of life and death.

Thank you everyone who sent your good energy across the Tasman Sea these past few weeks. I am still a bit 'out there'...probably doing a bit of traveling with me ma! I look forward to sitting and discussing the wonders of Dharma with you all again soon.

Big love

Guy

#1
peace chatter pain
sun wind rain
always once again

#2
tilopa was my father
naropa was my mother
they're fucking up my head
I don't mind!
-Guy

Mind – the sum of all
experiencing.

Here and now
clear sky.

-Margaret

mind
is
a **potential**
to

evaluate
interpret
translate
compare
record
retrieve
recollect
imagine
-anon

Infinite space into which thought
arises giving form
-Francis

(These reflections on "What is Mind?" were written by retreatants during the course of the recent Easter Mahamudra Retreat with Zasep Tulku Rinpoche at Dorje Ling.)

THE GYUTO MONKS OF TIBET VISIT TO HOBART

Notes collected by: Jill Wright, Kate MacNicol, Kirsten Mayer

The Gyuto Monks of Tibet visited Hobart from 21st – 30th July this year, and conducted a series of talks, meditation sessions, art classes, and ceremonies. There were a good number of attendees, all delighted to enjoy the presence of Gen Phende, the 77 year old head monk, and the other 6 monks.

The following is a summary of notes collected by attendees of some of the talks given by Gen Phende.

Teaching Series: Looking for Meaning - Understanding One's Life Purpose

Friday 28 July: 'Good Karma'

If you don't feel certain about Karma, use the concept of Karma as a tool. If it helps you to think that your suffering may be caused by bad actions in your past or past lives, then do so. This will help you to see the real situation, THAT WAS IN THE PAST. Therefore there is nothing you can do. You can not change the past. You can behave in a better way now and in the future however. If there is something you can do about it, THEN DO IT!

Use belief in Karma to release yourself from worrying or feeling bad about your current circumstances. If that doesn't work, pray that your pain may not be experienced by another living being. Suddenly you feel good, so you have changed your bad karma to good karma.

Daily Talks

Monday 24 July: 'Anger Management'

Thinking about it logically, if someone hurts you, or something makes you angry, you have two choices: anger and bitterness; or forgiveness. Forgiveness makes you feel better. Choose forgiveness, to be kind to yourself, and reduce your anger.

Tuesday 25 July: 'Dissolving Self Blame'

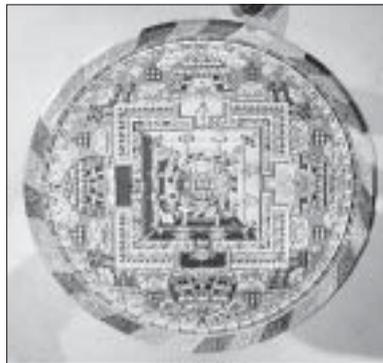
Genuine self-acceptance attracts acceptance and approval; while self-consciousness attracts criticism. Genuine self-acceptance contributes to boost self respect, which produces greater ease with your self. Have self respect and a conviction in yourself.

Don't give the customs of your culture power as independent umpire – eg. Fat, thin standards.

If you are stuck in an abusive or negative situation pray "may this end the suffering of all sentient beings". This boosts self-respect.

Wednesday 26 July: 'Healing Relationships'

Western couples expect their partner to fill their needs more than traditional societies.



One person cannot provide everything. Each must trust the Other. In a good relationship one must not try to control the Other.

In a relationship you may get hurt, but that possibility is just reality. It is the nature of humans not to be perfect. "If a snake bites you it's not its fault, it's what snakes do. Do not blame the snake."

If you are not too dependent on the Other, you will not be destroyed if the Other should let you down. Do not afterwards be in the Victim's Role for the rest of your life. You took the chance.

Thursday 27 July: 'Patience and Peace'

Firstly, realize the nature of cause and effect. That anger makes you feel bad, while patience and peace make you feel good. Secondly, living your life spiritually means knowing how to make yourself feel good. Acknowledge this. It is a valid approach. Thirdly, try to manage your life so you don't need to resort to your patience and peace too much; for example, have your hunger and security needs fulfilled.

Deal with difficult situations using the 6 perfections; giving gives us strength, ethics allow you to concentrate.

Friday 28 July: 'The Courage to be Happy'

Happiness is a very selfish business. It comes from the courage to acknowledge yourself and your good qualities; and to associate yourself with your future Buddha.

You need courage to be happy. It can be dangerous. It can lose you the kind of friends who obtain status from you being less happy than them.

Suffering is to see something that is simply not there. How can something that does not exist make you happy and satisfy you? We are experiential beings. We have to experience what is. The sheer joy of non-duality is attained when you have a thirst and you drink actual water. If you can see the simple truth, then you can be happy.

Sunday 30 July: 'A Wish to Make a Difference'

Inspiring Others: Handle yourself and your disappointments in a good way in order to inspire. Remember that life will have problems. That is not unfair, that is not disappointing, that is reality.

Daily Meditation Sessions

Monday 24 July: 'Letting go of Loss'

On Death: Everyone wants Happiness. We want happiness for the ones we love. A loved one dies. We have loss, therefore we are upset on our own behalf. The deceased one is OK.

One wants happiness for the ones we love, therefore the deceased one who loved us wants the living ones to be happy. We want the deceased one to be happy. We can do this by giving them what they want; which is our happiness. We should give them what they want and try to be happy.

Tuesday 25 July: 'Long Life and Good Health'

That lovely monk spoke of aging, of which we were talking about just before his talk. Thanked us for the opportunity to teach because it made him feel useful.. and not just an old man with nothing to offer!! That's humility for you.

Wednesday 26 July: 'Dealing with Depression and Hurt'

Live in the moment. Think of others and how you can relieve THEIR suffering. Do not let the suffering of others get you down however, as you will then become a burden. Letting the suffering of others get you down is egotistical as in "Look at me! Look at how upset I am"

To think that we can fix someone else is arrogant, exhibiting a desire for power.

Questions from the audience

How can we help Tibet?

"Hold Tibet in our hearts; talk very nicely to your politicians; and help Tibetan culture and beliefs to continue and have a new home."

Comments from the audience

"He's really cool! And the wrinkles make it better!"



A LETTER FROM PAMELA MEARS

Dear All,

I hope that you are still enjoying the benefits of this wonderful program and the blessing from these beautiful people.

I have been meaning to sit down and write a letter of appreciation for some time now, but work commitments have prevented me from doing so until now.

So here goes!

First of all a great BIG thank you for your contributions in making this wonderful tour so successful. Without your thoughtfulness, money, kind actions, bedding, flowers, food, crockery etc the tour would not have gone so well. I especially loved and appreciated the spontaneous acts of generosity which came in many forms!

I know that Maureen, Sonham and the monks had a great time here. They felt very well loved, looked after and especially well fed! Maureen thought that if they had stayed any longer, they would have had to pay excess baggage for themselves!

She also commented that in her 12 years of touring with the monks that this was the most spectacular Mandala that she had seen them do. So we in Hobart, were especially blessed.

On a practical level, I still have some crockery and cutlery left, a rice measurer, some doonas, sheets, 2 scarves, and a knitted beanie.

I am also aware that I have some more receipts to write. If you donated money and would like a receipt and as yet have not received one, please contact me with your postal address and full amount and I will get onto it!

As for the monks, on the Tuesday that they departed, they had breakfast in Hobart, lunch in Melbourne and dinner in Mornington Peninsula. They began a 5-day program the next day, completing the same Mandala in the same amount of time. Currently, they are conducting their last program at Moonee Ponds before they depart for India on the 28 August (2 days after they finish at Moonee Ponds)!

Meanwhile, Gurmey has had his gall bladder successfully removed and has been grinning widely ever since. Tenzin Karma has had surgery on his foot (he is still immobilised). Gay Phende was reassured that he was not having a stroke, but has arthritis in his neck and unfortunately Phusong has been diagnosed with Hepatitis and his liver is in very poor shape. They are of course taking it all in their stride (except for Tenzin of course), and using it all as a teaching. Their greatest concern now is how to get their monumental kilos of excess baggage on the plane without having to pay! (This is always one of the greatest challenges for Maureen).

Anyway, it was wonderful to have them here and it will be wonderful to have them return one day. If you would like to think about how we can organise another one where all the costs are covered easily and well, then please contact me.

It was great to work with you. Thank you for making my job as easy as you did. I feel very privileged and blessed. Catch you next time!

Much love
Pamela

CHAI MANIA

The Chai Stall at the Gyuto Monks was an interesting experience (to say the least). Anna has written an account which we have put up at our web site. You can read it here:
<http://www.tashicholing.net/chai.htm>

The Chai Stall made in excess of \$900 after costs. The money will go towards a possum-proof fence for Dorje Ling. I can't wait for the first retreat at which we can eat those lovely local home-grown veggies!



Fern Valla and Sue Willey serving chai

Consciousness & unconscious
form & formless
interconnected
(WHAT IS MIND? - anon)

WHAT IS MIND?

More reflections by students:

Sometimes mind is happy
sometimes mind is sad
Sometimes mind is angry
an everchanging parade
-anon

the cinema
of the mind
projections of
heaven or hell
 watching
-Shakti

Fire
Creating more fire
Consuming itself
in heat and light
-Amanda (from Darwin who was trying to
keep warm)

Mirrors reflect
the cat in the hat
at a distance.
-Don

What is Mind?
High & wide & hard to define,
mind, my shining & rippling interface with life.
At times a jester
at times a jinx.
My confusing and comfortable home.
-Wendy Leewood

OBSERVER, TRANSLATOR, AUDIENCE, CRITIC
BLOODY BULLDOG
-anon

Experience in the moment,
Fruition and creation both.
Influenced by-
 interconnections
like the tides.
-anon

Just as a mirror reflects the world around
but cannot reflect itself
so mind can not perceive itself except in
terms of what it perceives around it.
-Maria

Mind is like
full of young child potential
innocent, beautiful and vulnerable.
Have to take care
-Rinpoche

Rinpoche asks:
What is mind?
I don't know
A coarse mind
I think I glimpse
but I have no idea
what's below.

Rinpoche asks - What is mind?
I haven't got a clue
perhaps this reflects
the poverty of my view.

As space is filled with matter
My mind is filled with chatter
As empty space, unobstructed
Mind, I think, empty, unconstructed.
-Stuart Lord

(These reflections on "What is Mind?" were written by retreatants during the course of the recent Easter Mahamudra Retreat with Zasep Tulku Rinpoche at Dorje Ling.)

ON DORJE LING

By Diarmuid Cronin (from Brisbane)

There is being and there is doing and Dorje Ling is all about being. Dorje Ling doesn't ask much of you when you visit and experience her being. All she does ask is that you leave your conditioning and preconceptions at the main entrance. You may or may not like to collect them again on your way home.

Leaving your attachments aside allows you to experience Dorje Ling in all her fine majesty. Here you are. In the valley that embraces you tenderly. Amongst the trees that bend gently in the wind that whispers love through their leaves. With the plant life that reaches skyward each day with bliss and joy in their very being. Dorje Ling invites one to sit and be. No more and no less. She evokes peace and compassion in our hearts. Here you are. There is healing in the earth here. There is wisdom too in the air. Here you may breathe. Here you may be. Here the sounds of the forest gently chant "I am".

CARETAKER'S REPORT

By John Beck



Greetings from the valley of magic.

For those who have not made their way to Dorje Ling for a little time, not so much has changed on the 15 kilometre road in, other than the council has graded the road from the community hall right up to Damien's front gate and as such the access is no longer so narrow and dangerous.

The centre is looking as lovely as ever with the daffodils now in full bloom. It has been very cold and wet of late and I remember last year when the daffs were around we had snow. It had all melted by the afternoon but the morning was quite a sight, a blanket of white, with yellow flowers poking through.

I am quite keen for it to snow again. Being used to the warmer climate, it is a very unique experience for me. The daffs are about all the possums won't eat and I have to announce that all my gardening efforts have amounted only in a very healthy gang of possums. (I don't know if you can have a gang of possums but really that is exactly what their collective identity signifies). The last time when I lost my whole, very advanced crop of silver-beet, I was thinking many not so Buddhist thoughts that night, and subsequently the purple palace's front porch was totally covered with excrement the next morning. I understood it to be their reaction to my thoughts and just a gentle reminder of who's boss.

I did hear a little rumour that there may be some funds for a possum proof fence to be erected soon. That would be great news

but I also understand the prudent nature of collected monies and so will assume nothing, while praying for its allocation.

On a personal level I have had some training in the use of the chainsaw, with the upshot being that I now feel more confident about its use. I was not sharpening the tool properly and was making the job far harder than it needed to be. Instead of being such hard yakka it is now like slicing butter and does not leave me physically exhausted. Well done to me. I've even managed to borrow a pair of chaps and so look quite the pro.



I have had a few day visitors and a few of the locals call in but other than that it has been a quiet winter. I make it a point to involve myself with the local community and as such have been able to stave off any hint of cabin fever. It has been a wonderful time and I thank all those precious entities that have made this all possible. My daily meditation is to always be in the now and to appreciate the moment always and in all ways. Being at Dorje Ling makes this creed so much easier to achieve in comparison with the insanity of the outside world.

Spring will soon be upon us and the place will come alive and blossom up more and more. Come and help me appreciate it.

Till then, Namaste from me.

John Beck.

N.B. The Committee wish to thank John for his care of the Centre. We have agreed to make funds available for the fence.

DVDs AVAILABLE FOR SALE

DVDs are now available of all of Zasep Tulku Rinpoche's teachings from the retreats and public talks in April 2006.

Public Talks: Why Meditate? and Healing The Mind (1 DVD each)
Three Principals of the Path (set of 5 DVDs)
Mahamudra (set of 13 DVDs)
Chod (set of 6 DVDs)



DVDs are available for \$10 each. If you are buying a large number, discounts may apply, please ask for details.

Send your order, along with your cheque for payment, to: Tashi Choling Dharma Foundation, PO Box 593, North Hobart, TAS 7000.

NEWS FROM QUAAMA NSW

LONG WEEKEND MEDITATION RETREAT

Sept 30, Oct 1 &&2

Tenzing Ling will be having another opportunity to gather together and practice Dharma led by Maurice Oliver.

Bring your food and bedding or camping gear, and a donation, which will be sent to our kind teacher Zasep Rinpoche's health care projects, that we support.

Subject, yet to be decided, but as it is the Holy Dharma, superb, sublime and special and relevant to our daily lives..

Consider fitting attendance into your holiday plans, as you may attend for part of the time, or all of the 3 days as suits your commitments.

Tenzing Ling is situated half way between Melbourne and Sydney in the Far South Coast region of NSW.

Ring 02 64938344.

Email tenzingling@netspeed.com.au

Tenzing Ling

Last long weekend in June was a meditation retreat at Tenzing Ling.

Feed back was very positive from those that made use of this teaching of the foundations of mindfulness led by Maurice Oliver.

Basically people enjoyed discussion between fellow students and they found the Dharma particularly accessible with the leader being a Westerner with familiar background to themselves.

"Mindfulness Foundations" was a subject immediately useful and provided new insight into applying the knowledge to increase positive energy and benefit our lives.

People particularly remarked on their enjoyment of the simple approach in which this was presented, as this fostered deeper understanding and felt unencumbered and unadorned, and therefore very achievable...

We thank Maurice for his time and energy...

Tenzing Ling has a retreat hut available for short or longer retreats
Ring Jan, 02 64938344. For more information

Going against the Current of our own Desire: Reflections on my Journey as a Zen Monk

By Ekai Korematsu

(A retreat with the Soto Zen monk Ekai is being organised for the extended Australia Day long weekend (26/1 - 31/1/07). Somewhere close to Hobart. Ekai has been living in Melbourne for a quite a few years and a solid group of meditators who appreciate his quiet and profound approach has been growing around him. Attached an article by Ekai that I liked. Tom Vincent is organising the retreat (tom@dw.com.au). - From Andreas Hack.)

In Zen, when we talk about a journey, the analogy of a boat, the image of a boat floating on the ocean and moving with the wind is often used. Without the wind there's no movement; it is the wind that carries the boat in the direction that it wants to go. My master, Ikko Narasaki Roshi, often used this analogy of a boat, a sailboat. I don't think that he had any actual sailing experience [laughing] but he used the analogy very well to express the nature of our practice.

He often said that the wind doesn't hinder the sailboat, it can go in any direction and he especially emphasised that the boat can even go against the powerful head wind. Of course, in terms of the direction that one has planned, the helpful wind is the tail wind but sailors know that the excitement of sailing is in going against the head wind. The head wind comes and the boat may be almost capsized but it can catch the head wind and be spun around back on course. That was an analogy my teacher often used to illustrate the movement of our practice, especially the practice of a monk.

In other words, we not only have to be able to go against what the world demands, but also, and almost more importantly, we have to be able to go against our own personal intentions, our very own desires. This movement against the current is not to be seen as a fight against something, but rather it is the carry the boat forward and the means to move from our limited personal ideas of reality into the natural flow of reality itself.

For the first couple of years he served in the northern part of China, Manchuria, on the Russian Front and for the other two years he was in New Guinea, the closest point to Australia. And because he was educated and a Zen monk he was given a position of authority, fortu-

nately he wasn't involved in any active duty but he witnessed a lot of suffering.

When he returned to Japan and saw the devastation he didn't want to go back to Zuioji, he just wanted to quit, but his master, Konyo Hojo had passed away and the monastery searched him out because his master, the Abbot, had designated my teacher as his successor.

In the Japanese training system the relationship between master and disciple is such a binding relationship, so intimate, that if your master wishes you to do something you just can't deny it, especially a final wish like that, you have to come, at least to pay your respects, offer incense and so on. So my teacher had to return to his monastery, he really had no choice. The directors of the monastery were waiting for him, as they needed a successor to restore the monastery and its training system. So at the age of 28 my master took on this heavy responsibility and he had to really go against what he was feeling. He made the decision to give himself to service and from then on, he put everything into this, especially training the monks and building educational systems for the next generation. The kindergarten that he started is still there, still running - the earliest in the prefecture.

He also sought to improve his own training so he went to the Rinzai temple in Kamakura and to the head monastery for lectures. He then needed to invite someone to train monks and he invited Eko Hashimoto Roshi, one of the three great Soto teachers of those days. The other two being, Kodo Sawaki Roshi and Ian Kishizawa Roshi. Those three great teachers had three distinct emphasis's on practice and teaching: Kodo Sawaki Roshi emphasized sitting individually, Ian Kishizawa Roshi emphasized prostrations and the teaching aspect of practice and Eko Hashimoto Roshi emphasized monastic training, the group training of monks. We could say that these three aspects, these three focal points are the three pillars of practice.

Of course, because my teacher was the abbot of a training monastery he wanted Eko Hashimoto Roshi to come. And he thought that the little zendo at Zuioji would be appropriate but Hashimoto Roshi wouldn't come because the zendo was not sufficient to practice in Dogen Zenji's way. It didn't have the proper layout and wasn't built to Dogen Zenji's specifications. Hashimoto Roshi told him "I'll only come if you build the correct zendo." So my master worked very hard, raised money and built a zendo to Dogen Zenji's specifications and then Hashimoto Roshi accepted his invitation.

My master always put his personal ideas and intentions aside for the sake of Dharma, especially if it were a case of reviving and restoring the practice, and by practice I mean community level practice. This made a big impression on me. My first meeting with him happened in Eiheiji, right after I was admitted. On the first or second day after I was admitted to the monk's hall I was just sitting with everyone else and from where I was sitting the teacher's place was to the back of me, I couldn't see the teacher. On this day Ikko Narasaki Roshi was giving a talk on a poem by Daichi Zenji as a kind of farewell to the community of monks because on that day he was leaving Eiheiji and returning to his own monastery, Zuioji after serving for three years as Godo, a head training teacher at Eiheiji.

I didn't know what the poetry was but it was so wonderful and his voice was so clear and that made a strong impression on me. It was the custom that when a teacher exits finally not to return, all the monks gather at the main gate. After the teacher finishes making three prostrations facing the Buddha Hall all the monks recite the Heart Sutra with him. When he did this I saw that he was just wearing the monk's gear, the travelling gear, so I knew that he had entered and was leaving as a monk does and that really impressed me because I went through that entering process as a novice monk a month earlier and it was tough! For a teacher like him and a person of some 60 years of age to do that! That was impressive!

At that time I didn't even know his name but after that I heard about him and I became interested in him and his teachings. He emphasized Dogen Zenji's teachings, the level of practice that he fostered was community level practice and training, especially the study of Bendoho, the zendo at Zuioji was built for that and that was of some interest to me. Later on I went to his monastery, Zuioji, and I had one year of training there. That was my third year in Japan, at that time, in 1980, I was a permanent resident in the United States so my practice base was not Japan but California and I could only stay one year at a time in Japan.

My connection with him became very important to me and our relationship developed to such a degree that after returning to Japan in 1982 for the three month practice period he offered me the position of head monk, the Shuso, the head training monk for the three month practice period from May 15th to August 15th 1982. This step was very important because it established my practice at the next stage, the adult stage, you could say. This stage of practice prepares you to receive Dharma transmission so, naturally, it was very important to me.

Shuso is a level of training where you practice as a leader for the community; you are totally responsible for the spirit of the trainees' practice for that period. And that is a very important period, as I said it's like becoming an adult, you receive rights and responsibilities and you can really function in society, so this time is a crucial period in a monk's training. And I was so grateful that I was given that opportunity in a training monastery where practice is on a community level. Nowadays, if Shuso training happens in a local temple it is often done in an abbreviated way, more like a ritual, but in a training monastery the three month period is undertaken fully and no one leaves the monastery for the entire practice period.

From 1983- 1986 I was going back and forth from the United States to Japan and I met with my teacher during these trips. I was developing my own small community, Kojinan Zendo in Oakland and sometimes I was practicing at San Francisco Zen Center. In 1987 I was at Tassajara and my master called from Japan and said, "Ekai could you come back to Japan for six months" " Why?" I asked, and he answered "because I want you to come to my temple in the mountains Shogoji. I'm also abbot of that temple and it's very run down and small and I want to turn it into a training monastery. No monk is there right now but I was planning to send two monks from Zuioji. I want to prepare it for American monks to come and train, to make it into an international training monastery. We need you. Can you come back?" And I said "yes" I didn't think anything. That answer came totally out of nowhere - yes! That was quite contrary to my own wishes because I was starting my small kind of practice, establishing the zendo in Oakland, meeting people, making ties and I said yes! Once it's said there's no taking it back and then after that I had to figure out how to do it - well six months is not so long... [laughing]

My teacher's idea of discipline was from his training in the prewar period so it was very strict. Once something was set there was no changing it and he expected his disciples to be the same. What I saw in the United States, where my practice started, was kind of like an opening, the possibility of opening up the path. Like a birch tree whose branches go this way and that way, my ideas were fluid and developing so the thought of going back to that rigid training system was difficult! I knew that I had to be prepared to become a Bonsai, [laughing] a Bonsai tree with all my branches cut down and my roots confined to the shape my master wanted. That was the kind of image I had, going back to Japan was quite contrary to what I wanted but I said yes, yes for six months [laughing].

The first monk I trained was Nonin Chowaney who now has the Nebraska Zen Centre. But after six months it was necessary for me to stay on as it was an important period in his training "How could you leave now?" Then I had to stay until he finished his training and Nonin came for a minimum of two years training. This was a great commitment on his behalf following his teacher Katagiri Roshi's wishes. So then six months was turning into two years! I knew that if I didn't return to the States within two or three years I would lose all the connections that I had made with the community that I was starting and all my previous work would be gone. That was another big decision but I said yes! I had no choice actually! [laughing]

Things always seemed to be going backwards - I felt I wanted to go one way and I was continually pulled the other way, a way that pulled me in another direction. Three years later, in 1989, Nonin's training was pretty much finished and the Japanese monks had some understanding of working with Westerners so the format that we had set up at Shogoji to accommodate foreign monks was working. I then said to my master "Hojo-san, three years have passed. I need to go back if I don't go back my work in the United States will be finished" and he just gave me a surprised look and said "Ekai, aren't you settled enough? Are you still wandering?" He was thinking that after Shogoji was properly set up and working that he would retire and that I would take care of it. He was offering me a carrot! That's the way he presented it!

We worked hard together, my teacher and myself, to build that old run down temple into a fully equipped monastery. He committed so much energy and

time to frame the practice structures and the local people supported him. He started lay practice sessions on Sundays, robe sewing groups and all those things so once again I had a big decision to make and once again I said yes! And that time I just gave up any ideas of establishing a practice community in the United States. The only time I returned to the United States was to see how the monks were doing - each year I would go back to the States to visit San Francisco, Minneapolis because Kitagiri Roshi's students kept coming, and Nebraska Zen Center where Nonin was. Aftercare service! That was actually my idea because they needed to keep the connection to the practice forms that they had received. Cultural differences are so great and if the practice forms are adapted to other cultures too quickly, without being properly digested then those adaptations won't work and practice doesn't shift in appropriate ways.

I was at Shogoji seven and half years - from that original six months! In the sixth year a change occurred. At the head temple, Eiheiji, the Abbot, Niwa Zenji, passed away and the advisory committee (of which my teacher was a member) nominated my teacher as vice-Abbot. The previous vice-Abbot, Miyazaki Zenji, automatically became Abbot. Instead of going to the meeting at Eiheiji, my teacher made his usual monthly visit to Shogoji and in his absence the committee unanimously decided that he, Ikko Narasaki Roshi, should become the next vice-Abbot of Eiheiji.

He didn't want to do this - he was really enjoying Shogoji, he could be relaxed there. Even at his own training monastery, Zuioji he had to be very stiff and formal but at Shogoji he was totally different, he enjoyed practicing calligraphy, greeting the visitors, the lay practitioners, laughing and working in a personal kind of way. I think that something he had wanted to do for a long time was beginning to happen at Shogoji and he was enjoying it.

The news from Eiheiji went to Zuioji first and they received it while he was travelling to Shogoji so I then received the call that a messenger from the Eiheiji advisory committee was at my master's monastery and was formally asking for him to accept the vice-Abbotship of Eiheiji. That was the message I had to give him. I picked him up from the station, drove him back to the monastery and as soon as we sat down together, I said that I had had a call from his other monastery and that the Eiheiji advisory commit-

tee had unanimously nominated him to be vice-Abbot He said "Komatta!!!" Which I suppose you could translate as "Oh my God!" I had never heard him say this before, three times he said this and he become so quiet and small. I understood what he was feeling very well and I asked, "What do you want to do Roshi?" "Ummph" he answered "Ummph."

We both knew that he couldn't say no, it's part of the training, the discipline in a way. Monastic practice was the most important thing to him, it was really where his heart was and he wanted to help in any way that he could, so he dropped his personal dreams and accepted the vice-Abbotship of Eiheiji. He went against all his own kind of desires, wishes and intentions. The current, the wind of Dharma, you might say, shifted and turned his boat completely around.

Since I was also in his boat, when his boat shifted I had to shift too! [laughter] We were in relationship. So we can plan our journey but the journey sometimes overtakes us and it doesn't necessarily take into account personal preferences! It's only at the end that we discover what our journey is all about.

After my master went to Eiheiji he worked so hard, because the Abbot was very old, 96 years old, so a lot of responsibilities and duties fell on my master. Being Abbot of Eiheiji is an enormous amount of work- there are almost 15,000 local temples under the Japanese Soto Zen School's jurisdiction. So every month there were many functions that the Abbot (in this case the vice-Abbot) had to travel to and stay sometimes for up to a week, performing ceremonies, meeting people and so on.

This was very tiring work and after doing this for one year my teacher's health deteriorated and he developed leukemia. He passed away in 1996, on July 20th 1996 when I was at Eiheiji. (Actually, I, along with some of his other disciples, were with him at the time of his death).

At that time I knew he was dying and I felt kind of thrown off the boat! What could I do? - That's not the way I wanted to go! That was a crucial period to really meet with my teacher, to really understand his wishes for me. What did he want me to do? That was hard. I had to tell him that he was dying, others didn't have the courage to actually tell him - the doctors were trying hard and trying to be kind but nobody had actually told him that he was dy-

ing. My teacher didn't give up he was there until the last moment, he couldn't believe that he was dying he tried so hard to keep going. He was in the hospital for almost one year.

So I asked " After Eiheiji (because I was at Eiheiji) what do you want me to do?" He was very sensitive he knew what I was saying. I continued, "I've thought about it for a long time and these are the things I would like to do. I have to begin from scratch because all my connections are now broken". And that was such a hard thing for me to say. When I said "after Eiheiji" it was saying to him in an indirect way, you are dying and that was so hard. I saw a muscle twitch in his face almost like "How could you say such a thing? But he just took it in. And I slept right beside his bed in the hospital and talked to him like that.

He said, "My hope is that you don't leave the practice place. After Eiheiji, I hope to see you in a place where there is a practice structure, a zendo, and community practice is going on and I think that your idea is wonderful." My idea was to share zazen practice with as many people as possible and to try to develop something from that. My master said, "Practically it's very difficult to do this if you are out of the supportive monastic structure but it would be good if you could find some place."

It was very fortunate that at that time I had a friend, Togari Hojo, a disciple of the late Niwa Zenji, who could offer a practice place and a role as Tanto, a practice director. He had a beautiful sodo, a zendo, and although he didn't have a community he was still tied with the practice structure, the forms, and his zendo was noted for practice. So I told my master that there was an offer of a place and he said accept it but he told me, "I don't want you to become like Shoko Asahara, a cult leader, I don't want you to become like him!" He worried about those things like a father!

And then the focus of our discussion became a little clear and I could ask "Who among your disciples do you think (he had 11 disciples and I was the 6th one, the middle one) I could get advice from, go to from time to time?" Which of course means after you are gone and that was very hard for me to say. But I had to make sure that I was following his instructions and he thought and said softly "Who do you think?" I said "Hokan-san." He was a Dharma brother who was a Jisha for a long time so he had a good understanding of my master. "Yes," he answered, "I thought that too."

Then I clearly told him my plans more specifically "I'd like to formally exit from Eiheiji at the beginning of September" and his eyes opened wide, very quickly he gave a start "What are you going to do?" he asked "I'd like to do the pilgrimage in Japan again, henro, just like the way I did before I returned to Eiheiji for training." And he thought about it and said "You've done it once, once is enough" I didn't say it, but I thought "Well I did Eiheiji training twice!" He then said "Go to India and do a pilgrimage to the Buddhist sites. I have done this twice and it's a place that you should go to." India wasn't my idea at all! It didn't attract me at all! For some reason my mind was to the West to share zazen practice in the West, not to go to Bodh Gaya! But, once again, I had no choice and I followed my master's wishes and a whole new possibility of sharing zazen practice opened up for me.

You see, as a Zen monk, as a Zen practitioner, you are going into the wind. Your journey doesn't go straight it goes up and down and round and round. And the boat sways and tips as much as it can take without tipping over. Navigating that journey, is the bravery, the skill of a Zen monk. His journey is not a great epic with heroes and heroines but it is a journey that pushes one to the limit without inflating an idea of self, without inflating one's own personal kind of inquiry. My master's teaching and life example of going against the current of his own desire, of going against his own intentions was a great teaching. A teaching that I appreciate more and more.

Transcribed and edited by Leesa Davis.
<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~jiki/going.htm> 10/08/04

The next Mindfulness Retreats @ Gordon have been pencilled in for:

- 3-5 Nov 06 (Fri nite - Sun pm)
- 5-7 Jan 07 (Fri nite - Sun pm)
- 23-25 Feb 07 (Fri nite - Sun pm)

If you haven't been before and are interested, please talk to Andreas first ... 6238 2947 work ... 6227 8735 home (weekdays before 8pm pls).