

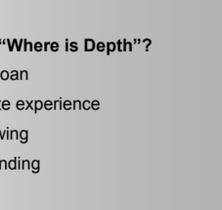


Mat Chat

Welcome to Mat Chat!

October 2012

Mat Chat is the (new) Newsletter for Sun Mountain Zen. In it, you can find out about all the SMZ happenings and events, read views and opinions of our members, be inspired by our (now three) teachers, learn new recipes to cook and maybe even have a laugh.



Congratulations to Sue Topolov who had the inspiration to come up with the name "Mat Chat" and thank you to everyone who took the time to submit an article. I hope you enjoy Mat Chat.

"Where is Depth"?

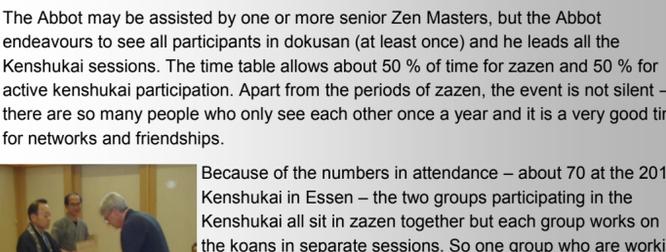


Life is a Koan
An intimate experience
Water flowing
rocks sounding

Seeing and drawing
Emptiness
Who and Where is the one with the brush

Glen Wolter.

About the Annual Sanbo-Kyodan Kenshukai



Attendance at the annual Kenshukai ('Training school') is by invitation of the Abbot, Yamada Ryoun Roshi. It is offered to all Sanbo-kyodan Zen Teachers and also to senior students who have essentially completed the Denkoroku book of koans. The group has a wonderful international heritage and it has expanded over the last two decades to broadly and informally develop into a somewhat fluid structure. There are still a few of Yamada Kyoun Roshi's original students (all now Associate Zen Masters) who sometimes attend. These have come to be called Group 1 or the First generation. (Our teacher, Roselyn Stone Roshi is one of these). Then there are the Second generation students, the students of the first generation teachers. It has been subdivided into Groups 2A (Mervyn and Cecilie) and now Group 2B (Arno and more recently Sue Wolter).

The Abbot may be assisted by one or more senior Zen Masters, but the Abbot endeavours to see all participants in dokusan (at least once) and he leads all the Kenshukai sessions. The time table allows about 50 % of time for zazen and 50 % for active kenshukai participation. Apart from the periods of zazen, the event is not silent – there are so many people who only see each other once a year and it is a very good time for networks and friendships.



Because of the numbers in attendance – about 70 at the 2012 Kenshukai in Essen – the two groups participating in the Kenshukai all sit in zazen together but each group works on the koans in separate sessions. So one group who are working on the koans sit in the inner circle and each person has a responsibility to show their understanding of a koan. The other group members who are remaining in residence may sit in the outer circle largely as observers. Then the two groups change positions for the second half of the kenshukai and so each group has a turn in participation and in observation.

At the close of the Kenshukai, new Associate Zen Masters, Teachers and Assistant Teachers may be formally appointed by the Abbot. It was our delight that this year in Essen, Arno was formally appointed a Zen Teacher of the Sanbo-Kyodan. Glen and Sue were there with us to witness the ceremony. Congratulations *Shu'un-ken!*

It has been an enormous privilege to attend many of these Kenshukai.

Thank you to all SMZS members for your support for us – Mervyn, Cecilie, Arno and Sue – to attend Kenshukai in Essen in 2012.

Gō'un-ken Mervyn and Gō'en-an Cecilie

Cecilie penned these lines while sitting in the outer circle in Essen 2012!!

KENSHUKAI

Inner and outer circles
Each with its own freedom.
Gratitude!

INNER CIRCLE

Total offering
Naked questioning
Heart laid bare
What's the point?
Whoops!

OUTER CIRCLE

Curious, smug
Safe from frenetic activity
Supreme immunity
Wallowing in mud!

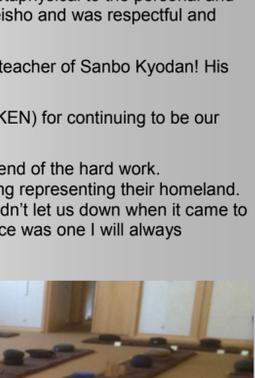
FIRST KENSHUKAI EXPERIENCE

Sue Wolter

As I recall the experience of the kenshukai in Essen I have been grateful for the journal notes I kept. Firstly, however, I want to thank the Sun Mountain sangha for supporting my attendance. Profound gassho to you all.

Sitting with about 80 longtime Zen practitioners is a deepening experience in itself. No favourite stool, no choosing where to sit and yet somehow place and time evaporated especially during the two hours sit before breakfast.

Being a first timer meant I was in the second group of participants for the koan study sessions. As an observer of the first group during the first three days I kept telling myself that these advanced "older" ones aren't any different! A Canadian sitting beside me observed that it was good to see some "get the sweats too!" Presentations were voluntary but in the end it was just best to jump in, no right or wrong! Laughter became more spontaneous as the koan sessions progressed. The acting of some participants was very creative! However the Roshi often pushed for just that little bit more to test authenticity and some of the responses were very insightful and clear.

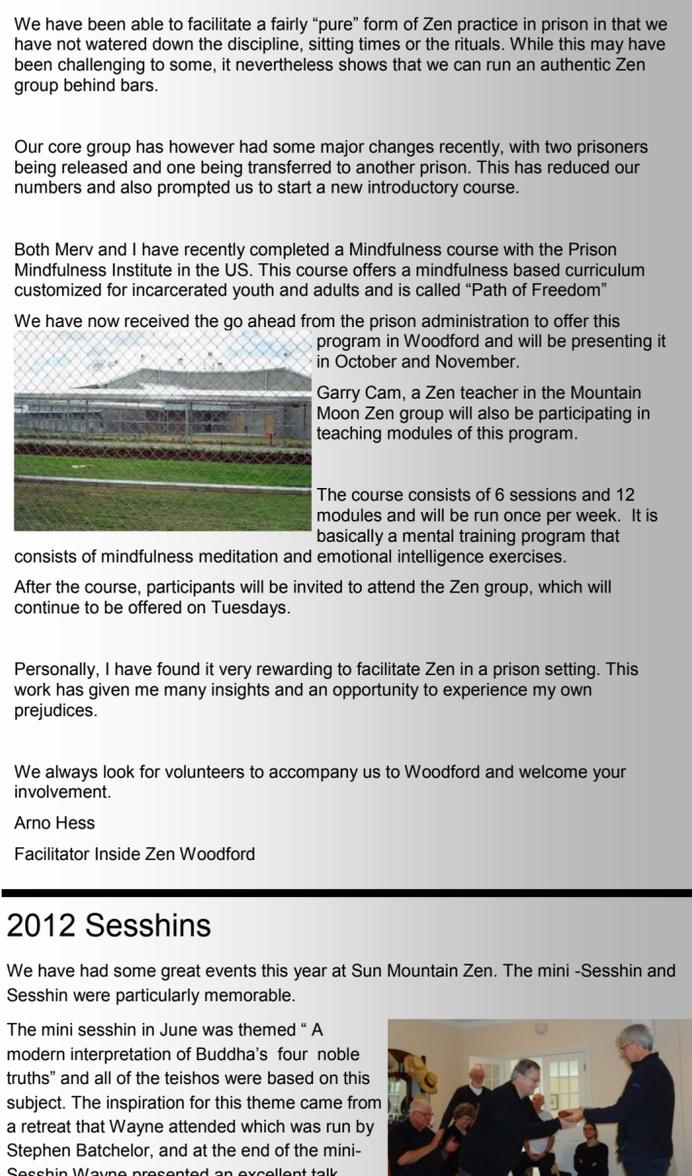


Four teishos were given by teachers apart from the Roshi. Although each teacher chose a koan for the occasion the approaches varied from the erudite and metaphysical to the personal and passionate. The Roshi commented at the end of each teisho and was respectful and frank in his remarks.

It was hard not to cheer when Arno was confirmed as a teacher of Sanbo Kyodan! His commitment to the way of Zen is a model for us all.

Thank you to Cecilie (GO'EN-AN) and Mervyn (GO'UN-KEN) for continuing to be our guides.

A party was held on the Saturday night to celebrate the end of the hard work. Participants from each country were invited to sing a song representing their homeland. Arno got caught up with the German renditions but he didn't let us down when it came to singing "Waltzing Matilda!" This first kenshukai experience was one I will always remember.



Inside Zen



It has been two and half years since we started the Inside Zen group at the Woodford Correctional Center.

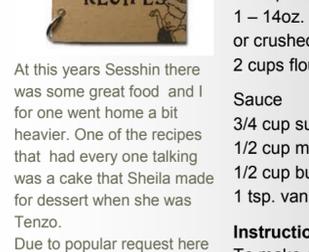
During this time, we have established a Tuesday morning sitting group consisting mainly of a few regulars and quite a few curious visitors that have drifted through the door. Some have stayed for only one sit, others for a few weeks.

In many ways, the "inside" group mirrors the format of our "outside" groups in that only a small core of people stick with a meditation practice consistently.

We have been able to facilitate a fairly "pure" form of Zen practice in prison in that we have not watered down the discipline, sitting times or the rituals. While this may have been challenging to some, it nevertheless shows that we can run an authentic Zen group behind bars.

Our core group has however had some major changes recently, with two prisoners being released and one being transferred to another prison. This has reduced our numbers and also prompted us to start a new introductory course.

Both Merv and I have recently completed a Mindfulness course with the Prison Mindfulness Institute in the US. This course offers a mindfulness based curriculum customized for incarcerated youth and adults and is called "Path of Freedom"



We have now received the go ahead from the prison administration to offer this program in Woodford and will be presenting it in October and November.

Garry Cam, a Zen teacher in the Mountain Moon Zen group will also be participating in teaching modules of this program.

The course consists of 6 sessions and 12 modules and will be run once per week. It is basically a mental training program that consists of mindfulness meditation and emotional intelligence exercises.

After the course, participants will be invited to attend the Zen group, which will continue to be offered on Tuesdays.

Personally, I have found it very rewarding to facilitate Zen in a prison setting. This work has given me many insights and an opportunity to experience my own prejudices.

We always look for volunteers to accompany us to Woodford and welcome your involvement.
Arno Hess
Facilitator Inside Zen Woodford

2012 Sesshins

We have had some great events this year at Sun Mountain Zen. The mini -Sesshin and Sesshin were particularly memorable.

The mini sesshin in June was themed " A modern interpretation of Buddha's four noble truths" and all of the teishos were based on this subject. The inspiration for this theme came from a retreat that Wayne attended which was run by Stephen Batchelor, and at the end of the mini-Sesshin Wayne presented an excellent talk based on that retreat.



We were also privileged enough to be able to welcome Arno as an official SMZ teacher. Arno has been a member of SMZ since its conception and the Dharma transmission ceremony appointing him a teacher was both memorable and moving for those of us lucky enough to attend. Of course, since then Arno has been appointed an official teacher of the Sanbo-Kyodan!

Congratulations Arno, from all of us.

The full Sesshin in September, although slightly shorter this year, was also an excellent experience. As usual—we ate like royalty, encountered sage and thoughtful teaching and got sore knees. The teachers did a marvelous job after such a quick turnaround from the Kenshukai and the whole event ran like clockwork thanks to Anna's faultless co-ordination

Next year we plan to have the Sesshin at the Mercy centre in Bardon from the 5th to the 9th of August. If you have never been to a Sesshin, please think about attending they are extremely worthwhile.

And don't forget the flexi-Sesshin in January 2013 from the 20th to the 26th.

Matt

Sanbo-Kyodan News

Mrs. Yamada, wife of Yamada Koun Roshi and mother of Ryouin Roshi celebrated her 100th birthday on the 23rd September.

This celebration took place at her home (and the site of the zendo) with family and four of the long-time western teachers who live in Kamakura.

Mrs. Yamada was a zen teacher in her own right and with support Koun Roshi in his teaching of zen in Kamakura and to Westeners.

We both have fond memories of meeting Mrs. Yamada at her home(and the zendo) in Kamakura when we participated in sesshin.

She invited us to have a meal with her and sent us off with some oranges.

Our teacher, Roselyn Stone always spoke very warmly of both the Roshi (her Roshi) and Mrs. Yamada.

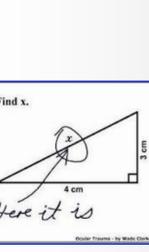
An important consideration of the SKI project is to ensure that the Sanbo Kyodan lineage continues, and that we show gratitude to the vision and practice of the Roshi and Mrs. Yamada.

We have expressed these sentiments to Ryouin Roshi on behalf of the sangha of Sun Mountain Zen inc.

Arno likewise met Mrs. Yamada at sesshin in Kamakura.

Gassho,
Cecilie and Mervyn

Tenzo Recipe



Cake:
2 eggs
1 1/2 cups sugar
2 tsp. baking soda
1/2 tsp. salt
1 – 14oz. can fruit cocktail with juice 398mL or crushed pineapple
2 cups flour

Sauce
3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup butter
1 tsp. vanilla

Instructions:

To make cake: Beat eggs. Add all ingredients, except flour, and mix. Add flour and mix again. Grease a 9 x 13" pan and pour in mixture. Bake at 350F for 45 minutes.
To make sauce: Heat sugar, milk and butter in saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Pour over hot cake. (Makes a lot, but use all of it! The cake will absorb it.)
Serve warm with whipped cream or frozen vanilla yogurt. Keeps for several days refrigerated (if no one knows it's there).

Jokes

Thanks to Catherine Uhr!

The Higgs boson particle that provides weight to everything, now having been discovered, turned up at the local Catholic Church.

Following all the publicity, of course the Priest recognised instantly this new member of the Parish. However he was a tad bemused, after all Higgs boson is also known as 'The God Particle'. With that in mind the Priest goes up to Higgs boson and asks why the particle is at the Sunday service.

Higgs boson immediately replies 'Why, without me there is no mass.'

Boom-Boom & groan!

And some more ...

What did the Higgs boson say to the quark [discovered late 20th Century and smaller than an atom]?
"You are SO 20th century."

.....
A Higgs boson walks into a bar and orders a drink.

It's about to pay and the barman refuses, saying "For you; no charge"

.....
Jenny Craig rumoured to be funding a Larger Hadron Collider in quest to better understand the Higgs boson and help clients lose mass.

.....

Dates to remember!!

24th November: Aspley Zenkai

9th December: Xmas party

20th-26th January 2013: Flexi-Sesshin

5th-9th August 2013: Sesshin 2013

If you would like to submit an article for Mat Chat please email it to m_williams@bigpond.com.

To remove your name from our mailing list, please send a return email with unsubscribe in the subject box.

Questions or comments? E-mail us at m_williams@bigpond.com

