



Where have you been?

by Eddie Nantz, Dharma Teacher

I used to sit a lot more than I do right now. I was single, a full-time student, a part-time worker, did not have a large social calendar and I lived at the Zen Center. While it is probably never easy to maintain discipline in our formal practice schedule, my situation was certainly more conducive to consistency than some others.

Then suddenly – as they always will – circumstances changed. My workload at school became heavier, the level of business at my job declined (requiring more hours to earn the same money), and most importantly – I fell in love. Soon, not only was my time not entirely my own, but I often wasn't even sure where the time went! Pulled along by twin currents of increased responsibility and the bliss of sweet affection and companionship, after having been on my own for such a long time, it became increasingly easier to put off sitting and more difficult to "find the time."

In the midst of such joy, an undercurrent of guilt and fear was brewing. I was afraid that I was losing my vow and that maybe I would never be able to practice "enough" again. I struggled to reestablish a consistent sitting schedule and wrestled with the weight of guilt over failing to save all beings, provide a good example as a Dharma Teacher and to meet my own expectations. I came to Poep Sa* and told him that I felt like my practice was falling apart. "It's disappearing!" I said. "No," he reassured me. "It's not falling apart, but things are changing a lot right now. After all, you are still here."

Several times since I became a student of Linc Poep Sa, he has cut through my spinning cycle of thoughts/emotions with a simple, plain phrase or two, bringing me back to the essence of the situation, which is always quite mundane. I try to remember the gentle, simple way he teaches in my daily life and practice. After all, self doubt is really just more ego-clinging.

Since that time, I have continued to work with discipline in practice, but I have found that there is no greater mirror for my mind and practice than mindful, intimate relationship, and I am very grateful for mine.

Shortly after my interview with Poep Sa, I sat down one morning to practice. There on the cushion I felt the familiar welcoming openness of my breath in my body, the straightening of my spine, the accommodation by my mind of what I fear and what I love.

— Welcome home. I missed you.

* Ji Do **Poep Sa** Nim: Dharma Master given *inka*— teaching authority
Linc Poep Sa: Lincoln Rhodes, JDPSN *Guiding Teacher of Indianapolis Zen Center*

Help Bring Zen Practice to Indiana

The Indianapolis Zen Center is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization. For more than a decade, we have brought authentic Zen practice to the central Indiana community. We depend on donations to continue to offer introductory classes, retreats and weekly practice, as well as to publish this newsletter. Please consider making a donation to the Zen Center. Your donation may be tax deductible.

You may mail checks payable to "Indianapolis Zen Center" to:

Indianapolis Zen Center
3703 North Washington Blvd.
Indianapolis, IN 46205

Abbot's letter

Robert Blender, *Senior Dharma Teacher*

Sitting in the darkness at my home altar is the first thing in my day. I put on loose clothing, brush my teeth, and stumble downstairs to the mat and cushion. I light candles, do bows and sit meditation. My wife is upstairs asleep. At some point, my neighbor's truck starts and crunches the gravel in his driveway as he pulls away to go to work. Breathing in, breathing out. What am I? Don't know... The egg-timer that I have been using for years to time myself beeps and I go to boil water for coffee.



This has been my routine for years now. A simple, early morning home practice is a constant when other life circumstances are changing, changing, changing. It is a quiet start, even if the day becomes noisy and hurried later. It is always the same, and there is reassurance in that sameness. Doing nothing for a brief period each day, I find myself more able to do the other tasks in my life: work, relationships, etc.

Home practice has a different flavor than practice at the Zen Center. In some ways, it is easier; there are no interpersonal tensions, there is no traveling across town, there is no obligation to take on a role within the group. I am just practicing—without a sangha, a teacher, a building to take care of, board meetings, or conflicting opinions. Home practice brings me back to why I began practicing in the first place.

But, home practice also has its challenges and its limits. When I go to practice at the Zen Center, the expectations of others sometimes get me there when I don't feel like it. Home practice is easy to blow off—nobody is watching. Practicing by myself does not present me with as much grist for the mill either: without all the distractions, perceptions of my role, opinions different than my own, I don't have as much to work with. In a sense, home practice is very comfortable; practice at the Zen Center is not tailored to my preferences and is less comfortable.

Zen practice with others seems like it is designed to be uncomfortable. My wife often asks me during retreats: "Why do they have to start so early!" And, part of me shares her question and her frustration. The sleep deprivation of retreats, the bodily pain, perplexing kong-an* followed by perplexing kong-an—all of it not particularly to my preference but also something that I'm choosing to do. In fact, Zen is something that I have gone to great lengths to pursue over more than 20 years.

In our modern society, there is an unspoken assumption: "I should be comfortable." Zen practice in a group is not necessarily consistent with this assumption. Home practice is more consistent with this expectation. The discomfort of Zen is a tool that helps us to see our "small I"—the one that prefers this over that. Zen practice is what it is, and so are the rest of our experiences. The narrative that we create about our lives is extra: legs painted on a snake. So, home practice is home practice; it is comfortable, reassuring and can easily fall by the wayside. Practice at the Zen Center is practice at the Zen Center; it is full of distractions, interpersonal dynamics and the support of others. Both are helpful in their way, as we continue to learn together.



kong-an (*Korean; Japanese: koan*): a paradoxical or irrational statement used by Zen teachers to cut through students' thinking and bring them to realization.

Dharma Talks Available Online as Digital Audio Files

On the Web at: www.kwanumzen.org/talks

Calendar of Events

November 8

Foundations of
Zen Class

1 PM to 4:30 PM

*no charge,
registration required*

December 1-7

7-Day Retreat with
Linc Rhodes, JDPSN
*morning and evening
practice open to all:*

6 AM and 6:30 PM

December 7

Buddha's
Enlightenment
Day Ceremony

12:30 PM

January 3

Foundations of
Zen Class

1 PM to 4:30 PM

*no charge,
registration required*

*Disclaimer: All events are subject
to change. Please contact the Zen
Center at 317-921-9902 before
coming to an event. All events take
place at the Indianapolis Zen Cen-
ter, unless otherwise noted.*



Hamilton County Sitting Group

SOURCE YOGA CENTER

8609 E. 116th Street

Fishers, Indiana

Across from Fishers Government Center

Tuesday Evenings 8:15 p.m.-9:15 p.m.

Informal practice – sitting meditation, walking and chanting

Residential Opening

The Indianapolis Zen Center has an opening for a resident. This is a chance for in-depth Zen practice and to help in the development of the Zen Center. The Indianapolis Center has a regular weekly schedule of practice, four retreats a year, training programs, and classes. The Center is located near downtown Indianapolis with many opportunities for employment, accessible to several universities, and close to cultural and entertainment offerings. There is off-street parking, and the Center is within a few blocks of city bus lines. The potential resident would need to agree to certain practice requirements, as well as some care-taking responsibilities. The monthly training fee is \$400. Utilities and internet service are provided by the Zen Center. Any Kwan Um School member interested should contact Robert Blender at 317-921-9902.

December YMJJ Retreat

The December Yong Maeng Jong Jin (YMJJ), "to leap like a tiger while sitting", is a 7-day intensive meditation retreat, with a 3-day weekend retreat option. It is a silent retreat with formal four-bowl meals and Kong-an (koan) interviews with the Teacher leading the retreat.

The Indianapolis Zen Center offers four YMJJ retreats each year, all lead by our guiding teacher, Linc Rhodes, JDPSN. The weekend retreats include an optional third day on Friday and the December retreat is a full week, Monday through Sunday, with additional entry points for those not able to sit the entire week. All retreats include meals and overnight accommodations are available.

December 1st through 7th—Monday through Sunday or Friday through Sunday. There are several ways to participate—full week, weekend retreat and daily morning and/or evening practice.

Retreat Fees

Both weekend and one-week fees apply to the December retreat, depending on the number of days of participation.

Fees for Weekend Retreat

Non-members: \$100

Members: \$80

DT/DTIT: \$65

Fees for One-Week Retreat

Non-members: \$250

Members: \$200

DT/DTIT: \$165

Practice Schedule

Monday

6:30 p.m.

Special chanting

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Evening bell, chanting, sitting

Wednesday

6:30 p.m.

Orientation to practice

7:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.

Evening bell, chanting, sitting

Saturday

6:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m.

Sitting & walking meditation

9:00 a.m.-10:45 a.m.

Bows, morning bell, chanting, sitting

Sunday

8:30 a.m.

Orientation to practice

9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

*Bows, morning bell, chanting, sitting,
Dharma talk, discussion & socializing*



*Kwan Seum
Bosal
at Indianapolis
Zen Center*

Also known as
Avalokitesvara in
Sanskrit,
the bodhisattva of
compassion

About the Zen Center

The Indianapolis Zen Center offers authentic Zen practice in the lineage of Zen Master Seung Sahn and is a member of the Kwan Um School of Zen. Membership is \$25/month for individuals and \$35/month for families. Becoming a member supports both the center and Zen practice in the community. Members receive a monthly calendar, the local and Kwan Um newsletters, discounts on retreat fees, and have the right to vote at the annual meeting.

For more information, call 317-921-9902, email director@indyzen.org or access our Web site at www.indyzen.org

