

# Walking Mountains

“The green mountains are always walking” — *Daokai*

*Dear Sangha and Friends,*

With the thirtieth anniversary last month, we now have thirty years behind us and certainly more than thirty before us with so many new members showing their commitment to practice. Both “beginner’s mind” and the wisdom of elders make us a stronger Sangha.

And we are grateful for the work to do ahead of us. The annual yard, bake, and craft sale brings the Sangha together in a burst of energy that engages the entire community around us and supports our work for months to come. The Water Baby Ceremony taking place this month—a solemn letting go. We gather in the dining room to sew garments, place them ever so mindfully on the Jizo figures, and return them to the Jizo garden in honor and remembrance of the children lost in our lives. Whether they be known or unknown, we let them go. Please join us.

— *Joan White*



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Right In Front of Me	1
Food as Compassion	3
30th Anniversary	4
Calendar	5
Annual Yard Sale	5
Water Baby Ceremony	6
Workday	6
Rakusu Requests	7
Term Student	7
Garden Mowing	8

## Right In Front Of Me **by Aylie Baker**



**A** year ago my friend Joan White came to visit me.

My partner Miano and I were in Maine for the summer working as caretakers on Damariscove Island off of Boothbay Harbor. Joan and I worked together for a year at the Vermont Folklife Center in Middlebury back in 2011. I had seen her only once since then, though we had written letters back and forth for years.

(continued on page 2)

*The Vermont Zen Center’s mission is to create a peaceful and inviting environment to support those who seek wisdom, compassion, joy, and equanimity within a Buddhist context. The two-fold practice of the Center is to overcome the causes of suffering through spiritual development and to alleviate the world’s suffering through outreach activities and the cultivation of a caring attitude to the earth.*

(continued from page 1)

As a child I visited Damariscove many times. My parents are sailors, and each summer we would anchor in the harbor for a night or two and go ashore to explore. My mother would pack a picnic and we would spend the day walking through fields of rugosa roses, tracing the foundations of old houses and admiring the migrating birds who stopped to preen themselves in the freshwater pond. But mostly I remembered the Lifesaving Station at the mouth of the harbor, where for many years officers stood on lookout in the tallest tower, on alert to help any passing ships in distress.

When the opportunity arose to serve as caretakers, I jumped at the chance. It seemed like the perfect way to introduce my partner, Miano, who is from a tiny island in Micronesia, to the Atlantic and the United States.

I remember the first day of our season. We arrived by boat in the early morning, unloaded our things and stood at the pier to wave goodbye to Gerry and Michael, who delivered us. As we walked up towards the cabin we both yelled "freedom!" into the quiet. Freedom! I felt the word roll around in my mouth, not really sure what it meant. And then the fog rolled in, and we were alone. Miano set off to begin clearing the trails and I stayed back to unpack our things.

It took me three days to clean the cabin. I would walk a few paces and then fall to the ground thinking. I couldn't complete any task. In the muffled quiet my mind grew louder and louder and with each tide more thoughts rushed to the surface. When I got stuck I would read but that didn't help. Hours would pass and then I would burst into tears, get frantic, and rush off to do something else.

Open the cabin, clean the museum, remove the poison ivy and loosestrife, clean the public restrooms, clear the trails, keep a logbook, right a foundation, build a shed. Each day the list loomed larger and I began to feel more and more miserable. "Open your mind," Miano said one afternoon as we gathered stones for the foundation. "Keep one thing in your mind." But I couldn't.

We arranged for Joan to hitch a ride out to see us with a local lobsterman we knew. She arrived on a sunny afternoon just in time for a walk out to watch the sunset near the old quarry on the western side. When Miano and I awoke the next morning Joan had already finished breakfast and gone for a walk. We found her sitting on the front porch watching the swallows dip in and out of the shade.

As we walked the trails, Joan listened to my worries. Listened even as I repeated myself over and over, interrupting only to say, "Look at

“Open your mind,  
Miano said one  
afternoon as we  
gathered stones for the  
foundation. 'Keep one  
thing in your mind.'  
But I couldn't.”

this!" at a vein in the rock, a cluster of bluegrass, the black-backed gulls all facing into the wind. One night on the porch she turned to me and said, "I hear worry and anger and fear." When I pressed further, she said, "Just do what's right in front of you."

The next morning we set out for the museum at the head of the cove with rags and cleaning supplies. As we lifted the dust from the shelves, cleaned salt from the windows, and swept rust from the floor, the fog began to lift and I could hear the quiet. "I'd love to see what a group of Zen students would do here," Joan said, laughing. "They'd give this place a thorough-going cleaning."

A year later, I am in Vermont. Morning sittings, working in the garden, cleaning up after Costa Rican breakfast. I am learning to do what's right in front of me. —

# Food as Compassion

by Jim Kahle

I am involved with a local charity in the Rutland, Vermont, area, and every year on the second Saturday in May we help with the Letter Carrier Food Drive to help stamp out hunger in our region. This is a national event and our community has been an active participant for over 25 years. For many years, this effort has been spearheaded by Chris Greeno from the National Association of Letter Carriers #495.

The food drive has become a Rutland tradition over the years. There is quite a bit of promotion that goes on beforehand. About a week before the drive proper, yellow plastic bags are distributed by the letter carriers to the houses in their working area. On Saturday morning people fill up their bags with food, and put them out on their mailboxes to be picked up by the letter carriers as they deliver the mail later in the day. On this particular Saturday, I participated in the workshop at the Zen Center in the morning, and then headed to the Rutland post office parking lot, arriving in the afternoon. Initially the workload was spotty, but by 4 p.m. the mail trucks really started rolling in.

There was much to be done. The totes that are filled with bags of food have to come off the trucks. They are taken out of the bags and sorted. The sorted food goes back in the totes and is weighed and then distributed among the three food shelves in the area. There were plenty of volunteers, and everyone worked busily and cheerfully, trying to keep up with the seemingly never-ending avalanche



of food. At first I had all I could do to just keep up with my assigned job which was to empty the bags into totes to help with the sorting process.

But something happened. I began to experience the most amazing feeling: a growing sense of wonder, filling up like a helium balloon. The donations I was working so hard to process became something more than just food. They became concrete examples of the compassionate heart of the community, of humanity. Empathy took the form of a jar of peanut butter. The Mind of the Bodhisattva was seen in cans of soup. Dana Paramita was made manifest in boxes of spaghetti.

And for a long time it just kept coming. This loving heart seemed infinite, unbounded. Usually when I donate to this event, I just put a couple of cans of soup in the bag and take it out to the mailbox. When I was opening up the bags at the post office, however, they were very often filled to the brim — a dozen cans of soup, boxes and boxes of pasta. People gave so generously. It was very inspiring.

Everyone worked so hard. This is a very long day for the letter carriers, but they seemed uplifted, just like the rest of us. Towards the end of the afternoon, there was often some down time between truck arrivals. I was tired and would often stop and take a

break. Chris never stopped working. He was perpetual motion and set a great example for the rest of us.

Much has been written about love and compassion. When we go to sesshin we chant the following words from "The Way of the Bodhisattva" every morning:

*May a rain of food and drink descend to clear away the pain of thirst and hunger, and during the eon of famine may I myself change into food and drink!*

*May I become an inexhaustible treasure for those who are poor and destitute; may I turn into all things they need and may these be placed close beside them!*

We all see and feel this mind and heart of compassion every day. It's who we are. This is the first time in my life, however, that I can ever remember actually being able to hold it in my hands. This experience at the food drive strongly reinforced my understanding of how central the desire for giving is in all of us. It also showed me how compassion comes alive most strongly through our actions; for it is in the midst of those times when we throw ourselves into working for the greater good that our inherent Buddha nature really shines through. I am so grateful that I was able to play a small part in this wonderful event. —

# 30th Anniversary Celebration



# August 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
7/29	7/30	7/31	1	2	3	4
Vermont 7-Day Sesshin 7/28-8/4 <b>ZEN CENTER CLOSED DURING SESSHIN</b>						
5 <b>ZC CLOSED</b>	6 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI <i>Finding Your Seat Meeting</i>	7 PM ZAZEN Chanting	8	9 PM ZAZEN	10	11 Ceremony Workday
12 Water Baby Ceremony	13 <b>ZC CLOSED</b>	14 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	15	16 Work evening for yard sale	17	18 Annual Yard & Bake Sale and Craft Sale
19 Taped Teisho by Roshi Kapleau (in honor of his birthday)	20 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	21 PM ZAZEN	22	23 PM ZAZEN Chanting	24	25 ROSHI IN CR
26 Taped Teisho	27 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	28 PM ZAZEN Chanting	29 Metta Course 1	30 PM ZAZEN	31	
Costa Rica 5-Day Sesshin 8/26–31						

## Annual Yard and Bake Sale PLUS Craft Sale – Saturday, August 18

Our Annual Yard, Bake, and Craft Sale will be on **Saturday, August 18**. Donations for the sale may be left in the basement common room after the August sesshin. This is a wonderful fundraiser for the Center, as well as a great way to clean out your unwanted, unused, and unneeded stuff.

This year, for the second time, we will have a Craft Sale running concurrently with the yard sale. Actually, the yard sale will be more of a house sale since it will be indoors as it was last year. The craft sale portion will be in the living room; the bake sale in the kitchen; the ‘yard’ sale in

the Sangha Building basement and first floor.

Having the sale indoors makes the setup much easier than outdoors and eliminates the uncertainty of weather as well as the need for expensive tent rentals. With the sale indoors, we can begin the setup on **Monday, August 13**, or even start after the Water Baby Ceremony on Sunday, August 12.

The only downside to an indoor yard sale is the havoc it wreaks on the house. **A lot of help** will be needed after the sale for clean-up. Although many

portions of the Center are off-limits—the upstairs of the Sangha Building, the whole of the Buddha Building, and portions of the Dharma Building—nonetheless, the areas that are used are left in a state of disarray after the sale. This places a huge burden on house residents, especially if there are not enough volunteers to help with the take down and clean up. So, we hope you can sign up to volunteer some time to restoring the Center to its temple state. Sign-up sheets are posted on the bulletin board in the Dharma Building. Please lend a hand to make this the best sale ever! —

# Water Baby Ceremony

## Remembering Lost Children



On **Sunday, August 12**, the Zen Center will hold a Water Baby Ceremony after a one hour sitting with a short talk.

The Water Baby Ceremony is a Buddhist service for adults who have lost an infant or young child through still birth or early death, have lost a fetus through miscarriage or abortion, or have lost a child of any age, in any way. It is also appropriate for people who wish to remember a child who has passed, even if it is not their own, to attend this ceremony.

Jizo Bodhisattva presides over the Water Baby Ceremony. He is considered to be the protector of women, children, travelers, the helpless, and the needy. In Japan, there are thousands of Water Baby shrines. Often many figures are placed together in a garden or on a mountainside.

For this ceremony we will gather in the dining room after the sitting. The ceremony itself takes

place in the Jizo garden, weather permitting. Everyone is asked to bring some scraps of fabric (red, with or without pattern, is the traditional color, but you may bring other bright colors) as well as scissors, needle, and thread. The Center will provide these items for those who don't have them. In silence, working together, each of us will sew a small, simple garment such as an apron, cape, bib, or hat which will be placed on one of the many Jizo figures at the Center. The garment represents the being we are remembering, and thus commemorates a death and rebirth, a passing from one form of life to another. Those who wish may also write the name of the child or a verse on a piece of paper which will be placed between the rocks in the Jizo garden.

While we work in silence, anyone may speak about his or her experience of loss. When we have finished sewing, we will carry the figures to the Jizo garden where we will chant the Prajna Paramita, the Kannon Sutra, and the Sutra of Jizo Bodhisattva, followed by a special Eko to return the merit of the ceremony to the children. Each person or couple will then offer incense and put their garments on a figure.

Participants are welcome to stay after the ceremony to talk or just sit quietly. This ceremony is not limited to members of our Center. However, everyone who comes should participate. While many people who attend do so to mourn for a personal loss, it is also appropriate to come if you wish to mourn for children not individually known to you – for example, children who have died from starvation or through violence. Such disasters touch us all, even if we have never met those who died. This is the only ceremony at the Center where we ask that you not bring young children. *Om Ka Ka Kabi Sam Ma E Sowa Ka* —

### Workday for the Water Baby Ceremony

Please help set up the dining room for the Water Baby Ceremony during a workday on **Saturday, August 11**. The work period begins at **1:30 p.m.**, after the workshop, and will last an hour or two depending on the number of people who lend a hand.

# Rakusu Request Form



**Please Return to the Vermont Zen Center by August 20**

**Requirements:** If you have been a member of the Vermont, Toronto, or Casa Zen Sangha for a minimum of three years, have become a formal student of Roshi Graef or Henderson through participating in a New Student Ceremony, and have previously taken Jukai, you may request a rakusu and a Buddhist name. Rakususes are presented only during Fall Jukai, which this year is on **Sunday, November 11.**

**Please Note:** To receive your rakusu from Roshi, you must attend the November Jukai in Vermont (Vermont and Toronto students of Roshi) or the Jukai in Costa Rica (Casa Zen members). *Do not request a rakusu if you cannot attend Jukai.*

**Payment:** Please complete this form and mail it to the Center with a \$175 U.S. check or money order payable to the Vermont Zen Center. If you are paying in cash, place it in an envelope at the Center with your name and this form. If you use PayPal the cost of the rakusu is \$182.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Rakusu Measurement \_\_\_\_\_

**Measuring for your Rakusu:** Sit in your usual zazen posture, in your sitting robe, with your hands in the zazen mudra. Have someone drape a cloth tape measure from the base of your thumb to the base of your other thumb over the back of your neck. The measurement needed is this length. For most people, this will be between 40-50 inches. Measure more than once and use a cloth, rather than metal, tape measure. For greater accuracy, have someone help you. If in doubt, go with a longer, rather than shorter measurement. Too long rakususes can be shortened. Too short rakususes cannot be lengthened.

## 2018 Term Student Program Begins September 11

The first of the three Term Student Programs will begin on **Tuesday, September 11**, and end on **Tuesday, November 13**. If you want to strengthen your Zen training, invigorate your sitting, and learn how to incorporate practice into your daily life, consider joining this program. You will find that it is a shortcut to deeper concentration and greater understanding of Zen. As well, you will discover that you are capable of working far more intensely than you had ever imagined. Whether you are a new student or a long-time practitioner, there is a Term Student Program that will fit your needs. This program is an unsurpassed way to strengthen your commitment to the Dharma and deepen your practice.



## Vermont Zen Center

Post Office Box 880  
Shelburne, VT 05482

802-985-9746  
www.vermontzen.org

Nonprofit Organization  
U.S. POSTAGE

**PAID**

Shelburne, VT  
Permit No. 60

---

*The voice of the bell,  
As it leave the bell,-  
The coolness!  
-Buson*

---

### CONTRIBUTORS:

- Aylie Baker
- Roshi Sunyana Graef
- Jim Kahle
- Greg Sheldon, *copy editor*
- Kelly Story, *production*
- Joan White, *editor*
- Maria Delia Crosby, *design*



**If you have time this summer or fall to help with mowing, weed whacking, or gardening, please get in touch with Nōwa Crosby or Jim Kahle.**