

# Walking Mountains

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

*Dear Sangha and Friends,*

A storm raging with 70-mile-hour winds ravaged the Champlain Valley in early May, taking down ten trees at the Vermont Zen Center. We lost young and old alike, and it was sad to say goodbye, not to mention a lot of work, both physically and mentally. In this world of impermanence one of the greatest teachers of change is the garden. How does the saying go? “The best laid plans of mice and men...” Plants are lost to the winter’s cold; overgrown ones need dividing; erosion; suckers erupt every which way; weeds rapidly gain ground; and yes, storms rage.

It’s also a tremendous opportunity to practice not falling into a stormy mind of impatience and frustration. We dig. We plant. We sow. And we do so again and again, because a garden is never complete. Just like our practice.

Let’s recall Zen Master Hyakujo’s words: “A day of no work is a day of no eating.” It makes our practice and our Sangha and the world we live in strong. If you have ten minutes or an hour, don’t hesitate to check in with Louise, grab a hoe, a trowel, and dig in. Please join us.

— *Joan White*

## A Mother’s Gratitude



by **Gerry Farrington**

*H*ere at the Zen Center, our work is never done. My work is never done! But that’s not to say that I have not made progress during the time I have been practicing here.

I was twenty-two when I had my first daughter, Ava. When she was born I had been sober from drugs and alcohol for one year,

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*Celebrating*  
**30<sup>th</sup>**  
*Year*



*Anniversary*

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*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.*

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had a full-time job working as a behavior interventionist in a small local school, and had been married for two years. Even though I was young, I really wanted children, especially a daughter. So when I became pregnant, I was very happy. But I was young, working full time at a very hard job, and not prepared for some of the difficulties of parenting. I was still me and I had not begun the work I so desperately needed to do. That is, the work we do here at the Center – the work of *zazen*, so that our lives are clear and true, and following the precepts to the best of our ability. And for me, keeping anger in check.

I am not now, and was not then, a perfect mother. I loved my daughters, though, and I wanted to treat them better. I didn't want to lose my temper as was happening too often. College classes in early



childhood as well as training at my employment as a behavior interventionist left me thinking I knew what I was doing. But I was still struggling with my behavior. One day Ava drew a picture at school, but it was not the kind every mother wants to get where the child shows a picture of them together holding hands. It was a monster with glasses and red hair, and it was definitely me! It made me so sad.

My first time at the Zen Center was attending a workshop. I was newly pregnant with my second daughter, Kimari, and Ava was three years old. I loved being at the Center immediately. It really was the most amazing place. With that said, no matter where you go you still bring yourself, and I had a lot of work to do. I knew that I had to change

for my own sake, for my daughters, and for everyone, so I started going to the Center and practicing regularly. There were friends waiting to be made, too, who would become my Dharma brothers and sisters. And there was steadfast help from my teacher and the Sangha.

Today, my daughter Ava is fifteen years old and Kimari is eleven. I know that I have made progress. I'm a much less angry person and more loving. Of course, I still need to work at things and I mess up, but recently a couple of things have happened that are evidence that I am on the right path. For example, not long ago Ava, who is taking a Spanish class, came home from school and told me in Spanish that I was fantastic! Wow!

I am so fortunate to have found the Zen Center – not even looking, and there it was. I have so much to work on, but I'm so fortunate to have this gift of practicing, messing up, and trying over and over again. Thank you so much for all of your help!



# Introducing Our Solo Retreat Cabin

by **Nina Thompson**

I am happy to announce that plans are underway for the Vermont Zen Center's first solo retreat cabin! Many years in the dreaming, the solo retreat cabin will be an important addition to our practice offerings, and will support us in our mission to help people overcome suffering through spiritual development and social outreach.

Our solo retreat cabin will be an extension of our wish to provide a place of refuge. While we have hosted many people on retreat in our existing facility, we have been unable to provide a completely private and secluded space. The ideal retreat is one in which there are minimal outside influences, no structured activities, and no schedules. As well, some people choose to maintain complete silence during a retreat. For this, privacy and seclusion are essential.

The retreat cabin will be situated near the Zen Center, but by itself. Although the proposed location is not remote, the cabin will be self-contained. Unlike many retreat cabins, our space will have electricity, a kitchen, and a bathroom. The size, 18' x 24', will be large enough for walking



meditation and exercise so that a retreatant has the option to remain indoors for total seclusion.

Solo retreats are an important part of many spiritual practices. In Buddhism the practice goes back to the Buddha himself when he made the decision to leave his companions and work by himself on the final portion of his journey to awakening. It is also believed that he encouraged his disciples to undertake solo retreats in the forest. I have read these retreats were so important that the risk of being killed by cobras and tigers was a risk worth taking. I can assure you these hazards will not be present in our retreat cabin.

A solo retreat can be a powerful and important addition to a serious

meditation practice, but it is not just for the seasoned practitioner. Retreats are for everybody, for anyone at any time in our lives. While many retreat goers seek spiritual development or renewal, you don't need to be religious or in a spiritual tradition to go on retreat.

This cabin will be one of the only solo retreat cabins available in our area. We are excited to bring this opportunity to Chittenden County and will be steadfast in our work to encourage all who wish to take advantage of the deep practice of solo retreating, to join us.

Roshi recently recounted to me her first solo retreat which occurred when she was in her early 20's. She mentioned how important

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solo retreats have been to her over the years, and clearly stated her intention to be the first to test out our new cabin once we open the doors.

During a year of intensive practice last year, I used solo retreats to keep the momentum going in between sesshins. Though I was somewhat able to seclude myself in the zendo and the basement of the Buddha building, it was at times challenging to focus when Sangha members were around. I look forward to the built-in solitude of the solo retreat cabin so I can focus on my practice without distraction.

The dream is to begin construction on a solo retreat cabin at the Zen Center, possibly as early as this summer; however,

we will need your help to make it a reality. The cabin will cost around \$150,000. We have already raised almost \$83,000 and need to raise another \$67,000 to make this happen. We can't do it without your support.

Recently you received a fundraising letter in the mail. Please consider helping us make the retreat cabin a reality by donating today. No gift is too large, or small, and every dollar helps! You can do that online at [www.vermontzen.org/retreats/index.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/retreats/index.html). You can also send a check to the Center with the words "Solo Retreat Cabin" in the memo line.

I am very motivated to help create what will be a beautiful sanctuary for our Sangha and our community at large. In these trying

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In Buddhism the practice goes back to the Buddha himself ... It is also believed that he encouraged his disciples to undertake solo retreats in the forest. ”

times, to have new ways to devote ourselves to practice, and to offer a safe and peaceful place for quiet reflection— what more could we hope for? —

## Groundbreaking and the 30th Anniversary

*W*e've just received the news that we need to apply for a new Act 250 permit (Vermont's land use and development control law). This means groundbreaking cannot take place for four to six weeks. For many reasons we had hoped to begin the foundation this month, but now it looks like it will be some time in July. The good news is that the permit is assured—it's just a formality—and it also means that when we do break ground, it will be closer to the celebration of our 30th anniversary.

The 30th anniversary celebration will be a low-key event. All are welcome to visit the Center, have some light fare and desserts, and tour the temple and gardens. The Zen Center will be open from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. We hope to see you!

## June 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					VT Garden Work Intensive	
3	4 <b>ZC CLOSED</b> <i>Finding Your Seat Meeting</i> Tai Chi Course 5	5 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	6	7 PM ZAZEN Chanting	8 ROSHI IN CR	9 Tai Chi Intensive CR
10 Taped Teisho	11 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI Tai Chi Course 6	12 PM ZAZEN Chanting	13	14 PM ZAZEN	15	16
Costa Rica 7-Day Sesshin 6/9-16						
17 Taped Teisho	18 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	19 PM ZAZEN	20	21 PM ZAZEN Chanting	22	23 Flower Arranging Course
24 Taped Teisho	25 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI	26 PM ZAZEN Chanting	27	28 PM ZAZEN	29	30

## July 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5 PM ZAZEN Workshop Prep	6	7 Workshop Sesshin Deadline
ZEN CENTER CLOSED						
8 Sangha Workday for 30th Anniversary	9 AM ZAZEN MON-FRI <i>Finding Your Seat Meeting</i>	10 PM ZAZEN Famine Relief Ceremony	11	12	13	14
				30th Anniversary Workdays		
15 VZC's 30TH ANNIVERSARY	16 <b>ZC CLOSED</b>	17 AM ZAZEN TUE-FRI PM ZAZEN	18	19 PM ZAZEN Chanting	20	21
22 Teisho & Lay Ordination	23 AM & PM ZAZEN	24 AM & PM ZAZEN	25 AM & PM ZAZEN	26 AM & PM ZAZEN	27 AM ZAZEN	28
Vermont Training Program (Sunday morning – Friday afternoon)						Sesshin
29	30	31	8/1	8/2	8/3	8/4
. . . Vermont 7-Day Sesshin 7/28-8/4 <b>ZEN CENTER CLOSED DURING SESSHIN</b>						

# Training Program Sunday, July 22 through Friday, July 27, 2018

For five days this summer, the Zen Center will offer a residential Training Program. Training Programs are a way to experience the discipline of Zen training through total immersion similar to living in a monastery. During Training Programs, trainees live at the Center and participate in all aspects of traditional Zen training. A core element of the Training Program is learning how to bring Zen practice into everyday life is. Each day there is:

- Zazen
- Chanting
- Work practice
- Dokusan
- Teisho (Zen talk by the teacher) or talks by senior students

Participating in a Training Program can help anyone, regardless of age, occupation, or previous exposure to spiritual disciplines, learn more about Zen practice, strengthen their spiritual training, and learn to practice meditation in the midst of everyday life.

The cost is \$175 for members (non-members \$275). Applications are available on line. **Please read "Information for Trainees,"** on the Zen Center's website before applying.

The Training Program begins on **Sunday, July 22 at 9:00 a.m.** and ends on **Friday, July 27** after lunch. **Please note that the Training Program begins Sunday morning.**

Local trainees can arrive at the Center in time for the morning sitting. Out-of-town trainees should arrive at the Center by Saturday evening.

Applications for the Training Program are on-line at:  
[www.vermontzen.org/training\\_programs.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/training_programs.html)

## Daily Schedule

5:30 am	Wake up
6:00	Zazen
7:00	Chanting
8:00	Breakfast
8:30	Work
10:30	Tea break
10:45	Work
12:15	Lunch & break
2:15	Work
3:45	Chanting
4:45	Supper
6:30-8:30	Zazen



*Celebration of the Buddha's Birthday and Roshi's 70th birthday.*

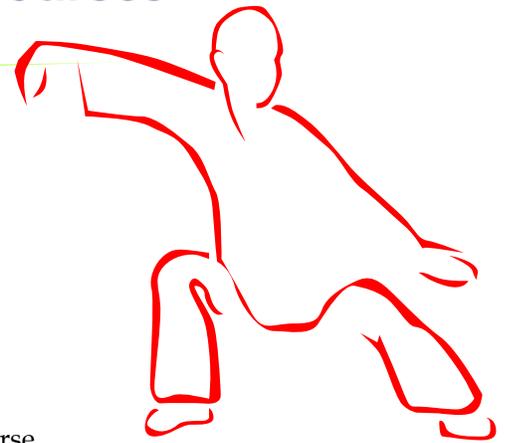
# Upcoming Summer Courses



## Tai Chi Intensive

The Zen Center is offering a half-day Tai Chi intensive to help participants expand their knowledge and practice of this gentle martial arts form. The course is open to those who have completed a six-week Tai Chi course at the Center or are enrolled in the course at the time of the intensive. Dr. Peter DeBlasio, Dr. Eric Berger's teacher, will be the guest teacher leading this class.

Activities will include warm up exercises, review of previously learned Chi Kung postures as well as instruction in new postures,



practices for learning to contact and develop chi, prolonged push hands instruction and practice, question and answer periods, and further instruction in the Long Form.

Date: **Saturday, June 9.** See website for more information and registration: [www.vermontzen.org/taichi\\_intensive.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/taichi_intensive.html)

## Flower Arranging

Learn basic Ikebana and flower arranging elements used at the Vermont Zen Center: triangulation, depth, placement, color, container size and materials. Through understanding the interaction between spiritual practice and flower arranging, participants will gain an appreciation of the deeper meaning of flowers as offerings and as a way to bring a sense of tranquility to one's environment.

Date: **Saturday, June 23.**

See website for more information and registration: [www.vermontzen.org/flower\\_arranging.html](http://www.vermontzen.org/flower_arranging.html)



Donations for the sale may be left in the basement common room anytime after the August sesshin. This is a wonderful fund-raiser for the Center, as well as a great way to clean out your unwanted, unused, and unneeded stuff. The yard sale will be on **Saturday, August 18.**



## Vermont Zen Center

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*A great wind*  
*Suddenly arose,—*  
*The banner!*  
*— Shiki*

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