

# Upper Valley ZEN CENTER

58 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT 05001 [www.UVZC.org](http://www.UVZC.org) 603.448.4877

## Newsletter winter 09/10 NO. 4 Vol 3



Zen Center Bell

Brian and Becca's wedding '08

(picture by a wedding guest)

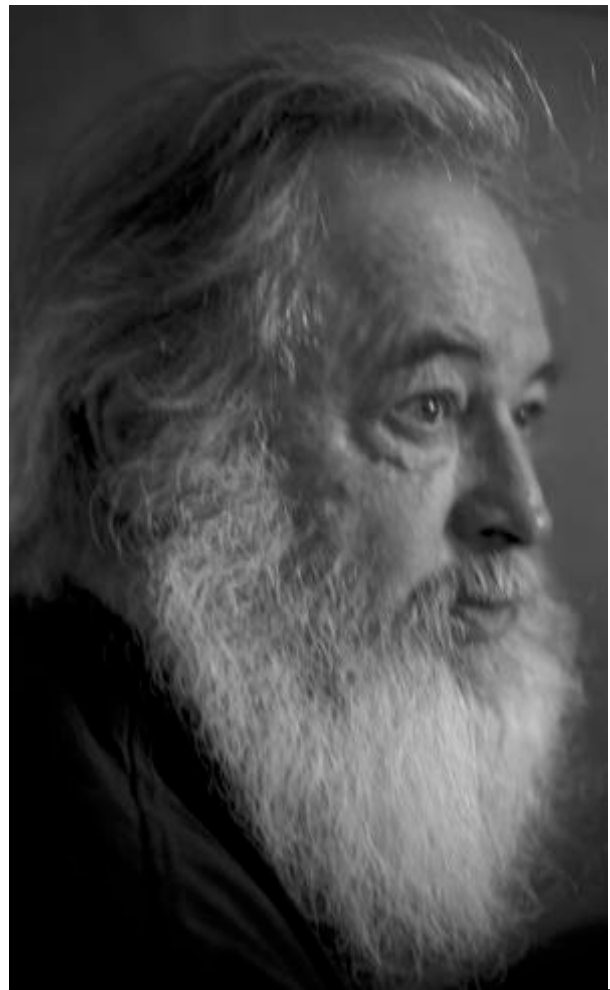
*The Upper Valley Zen Center in downtown White River Junction Vermont sits at the junction of two big rivers and roads, at the boarder between Vermont and New Hampshire. We are a Buddhist practice center, in the tradition of Rinzai Zen, led by Gendo Allyn Field, lay ordained monk in the community of Joshu Sasaki. Our schedule is enclosed. Join us anytime, no experience necessary. Donations pay our rent. Support your local Zen Center (details on page 7).*

## News

**ANNIVERSARY DINNER.** Carolyn Lorie reports: The Zen Center celebrated its fourth anniversary on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009 with a morning snowfall, homemade dinner and visit from Red Pine

More than 30 people gathered to mark the occasion. The meal - spinach salad, nori rolls, Thai stew and dessert - was made by Nancy Griffin, Laura Foley and myself.

While I usually love the quiet and stillness of the zendo, I took great pleasure in seeing it crowded with people, eating, talking and laughing. Dinner was followed with a talk by Bill Porter, the translator and Buddhist scholar known as Red Pine. He discussed his translation of the Platform Sutra, a teaching from the sixth patriarch of Zen, Hui-neng. (The book can be purchased at the Zen center.) In addition to expounding on the text itself, Red Pine, who was once a graduate student at Columbia, a radio reporter in China and is now an expert on Buddhist text, explained the finer points of being a translator. Translation, he told us, is more art than science, and his view on the same text can change with the passing of time as well as

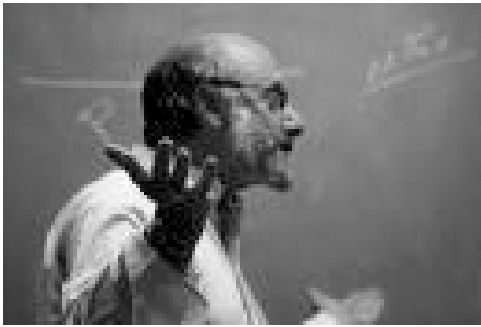


Red Pine. Photo by Jay Garfield

the imbibing of bourbon! His talk was a fabulous mix of scholarly exploration and irreverent humor.

People came from all over the Upper Valley as well from across Vermont and even a few from out of state. Not everyone was a practitioner of Zen, but it seemed that everyone came with a curious mind and an eagerness to explore. I left thinking about people's questions and comments as much as about Red Pine's talk.

**VIMALAKIRTI SEMINAR.** The Zen Center and affiliated Dartmouth Zen Practice sponsored a three day seminar at Dartmouth College May 8<sup>th</sup> to 10 on the Vimalakirti Sutra.



Jay Garfield

The format, like other seminars we have held, paired academic talks with a practice schedule.

Lectures were given by Professor Jay Garfield (Smith College, Central University of Tibetan Studies, India), with commentary by Yoshin Radin (Ithaca Zen Center) and Acharya Michael Greenleaf (Karme Choling, Barnet, VT)

80 people registered, with, at most, 60 seated at one time. Audience evaluations were positive:

*"I thought the seminar was well planned with meditation leading into study. We were able to use our practice and the teaching*

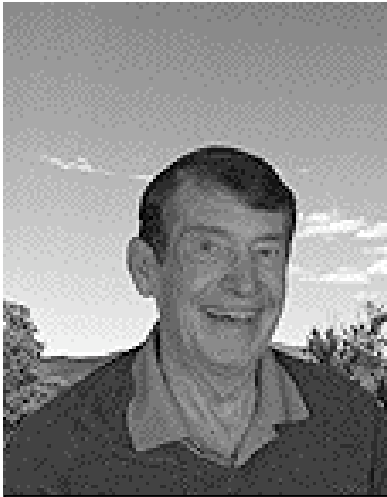
*during it to guide our understanding of the material."*

*"I couldn't have asked for more accessible and adept presenters."*

*"Dr. Garfield is clearly an amazing academic with a deep knowledge of the sutra. Both Yoshin and Michael are inspiring and thoughtful practitioners and leaders. I really enjoyed learning from all three of them."*

The Seminar was made possible by a grant from the Dartmouth Undergraduate Himalayan Project. Also contributing were the Leslie Center, the Dartmouth Religion Department (lecture only), the Bildner Endowment, and Tucker Foundation. Practice cushions were loaned by Valley Insight Meditation Society, White River Shambhala Center, Mindfulness Practice Center, and Ancient Healing Arts (Charles Meyers).

**JOHN LINCOLN.** Friend and ardent supporter of the Zen Center, John Lincoln died this summer. A Buddhist memorial was held for him in Rollins Chapel at Dartmouth, Gendo officiating, with help from Suitei Chas Meyers and David Kano. Gifts to UVZC in his memory are an ongoing



John Lincoln

reminder of his generosity and spirit. John was an inspiring English teacher in 1965 in Connecticut and Gendo (Allyn Field) his student. Later in life, John became a student of Zen and made formal commitment to lay practice in 2003. His love of books is reflected in the many he gave to our Zen Center library.

### **HALLOWEEN ZAZENKAI.**

As always, it was a pleasure to spend time with Gentei Sandy Stewart, seasoned teacher/leader of the North Carolina Zen Center.

This year's retreat with Sandy took place over Halloween weekend and was held in the woods of Etna, NH in the newest Dartmouth Outing Club Lodge, a two story log building, tightly built, easy to heat with two wood stoves and equipped

with sleeping mats. Running water was a stream in the front yard, toilets were a two seater outhouse and lights were gas mantles hung from the ceiling.

Provisions, including 45 gallons of water, were hauled by cart and backpack over a mile of woods trail. Special thanks to tenzo (cook) Chas Meyers and helper David Kano for keeping us well fed under the conditions.

Eighteen people attended the retreat with between eight and fourteen in the zendo and at any time. One was heard to promise that, if the Zen Center were to move permanently to this Lodge, he would drop everything and become a monk.



Sandy. Picture by David Kano

## Practice

*Comment by Gendo, based loosely on talks at the Zen Center this month.*

There is a panel in our Zen Center, a gift from brother monk Kyonen. It is calligraphy by Kajiura Itsugai, head of Myoshin-ji, the Japanese home temple of my teacher, Joshu Sasaki.

The message is taken from the Blue Cliff Record, an old Chinese text of Zen stories and commentary, translated by Thomas Cleary this way: "Reach an impasse, then change; having changed, pass through."

I have been a monk for seven years, still trying to answer my teacher's questions. We are warned not to get caught up in wordiness and intellection. But here are some words. What to make of them?

Zen training, says Sasaki Roshi, is to study the self. That is hard to do when you and your mind are racing from one thing to the next. First step: sit, be quiet, stop moving. Notice wandering mind. Watch, without judgement thoughts arise and disappear. Watch breath, in and out.



Watching breath, notice that you experience first one kind of breathing (out, say) and then another (in). Between them is a moment of rest.

A self arises that says, "I am breathing out," and a self arises that says, "I am breathing in." In between there is a moment where both have disappeared.

People generally think of self as something fixed: this is me, my body, who I am. But the exercise of noticing breath suggests that self arises in context, in relation to an object of perception, dissolves and arises over and over



again, a natural process without will.

We try to solidify self, holding on to accomplishment or loss. But self is formed, disappears, changes and reappears moment by moment. It is the effort to thwart change, to establish the self, that

Buddhism identifies as the cause of suffering.

In every moment, the old teachers say, we must throw ourselves away. It is the way things are. It is true compassion, "the love of no-self."



Kajiura Itsugai, in circle lower right. Joshu Sasaki in circle upper left. Extreme upper right, background, is Gentei Sandy Stewart. Picture taken at Mount Baldy Zen Center, 1977.

*Twitter Poem* by Colin Momeyer

At some point, Christ dies, the Buddha kills and you are born. Why? Living and dying, like breathing in, and breathing out.

*Poem* by Suitei Chas Meyers

waking at night  
a thin sheet of low clouds  
and the milky way quilt  
listening to the cold edge of winter  
wrap itself around trees rocks and buildings  
in the cacophony of deep silence  
ten thousand things to do  
and not one person to do them

# DONATIONS

Our Zen Center depends on donations of time and effort and, from those who are able, cash for rent.

This month we are also raising money to replace a broken tea pot with one by the artisan potter who made our cups, Sarah Heinmann.

Thanks to all who keep us going! We are TAX DEDUCTABLE. Use the page below or pay online at our web site ([www.UVZC.org](http://www.UVZC.org)). No gift too small. All can join us regardless of contribution.



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Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of

\$25\_\_\_\_\_ \$50\_\_\_\_\_ \$75\_\_\_\_\_ \$100\_\_\_\_\_ Other\_\_\_\_\_

**Send to: Upper Valley Zen Center, 58 Bridge Street, White River  
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