

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2009

# Dragon Gate

RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY



## ***Sweet Plum Blossoms***

***Unless a plum is chilled to its core, how can its blossoms smell sweet all over the ground?***

***—Eihei Dogen, 13<sup>th</sup> C***

I'll be 70 this June! How did I get here? Impermanence is swift. Time waits for no one. It sends a certain chill to my core. It's sobering! And yet there's a sweet smell.

My life is 70 years past gone! I have maybe 10 - 20 - 30 years. Ha! We'll see. We're never ready! There's always something else we would like to get done, even if it is to find our shawl.

When I was 50 I was three years in Japanese monastery. As you approached the monastery, the front entry walk was lined with plum trees. Even in February and early March the plum trees provided an umbrella of sweet blossoms. They say in Japan that it is the chill that makes the blossoms smell sweet all over the ground.

There are always chills to life. These are the chills that help us to grow, that soften us, that produce a fragrance in our lives that we would never otherwise have. In the moment we wish the chill wasn't so chilling. But in time we grow to appreciate the sweet smell of ensuing days.

I was sad when both my parents died. My mother was 67 when she died, my dad 91. But in their deaths I found a new part of myself. I now was the senior generation. The chill produced a fragrance that I could never imagine.

In the chill of the cold winter there is just living in vow. If you attach to desire, you come to resent the chills. Living in vow is just to get up in the morning. "The truth to live is just to live." (Katagiri Roshi.) Be alive in the moment. Embrace the ten directions. Little by little blossoms appear. Chills produce the fragrance that makes the blossoms smell sweet.

In the morning just get up. Go to the zendo of your life, whether feeding babies, working on the computer, or chopping wood. Sit up straight in the moment at hand. Chant the Heart Sutra—in joy or in sorrow—in appreciation for all those beings who have lived before with the chills. Their continuity produces a fragrance to pass on to others. What more could be asked for?

Let's continue to walk together hand in hand. We walk under the umbrella of plum blossoms that smell sweet all over the ground.

In gassho,

## Ryumonji Zen Monastery 2009 Schedule

<b>Apr 17-19</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>May 2</b>	<b>Spring Work Day</b>
<b>May 15-17</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>June 19-21</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>June 21-Aug 16</b>	<b>Summer Ango</b>
<b>July 17-19</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Aug 15</b>	<b>Summer Work Day</b>
<b>Sep 18-20</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Oct 4</b>	<b>Taste of Ryumonji</b>
<b>Oct 16-18</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Nov. 6-8</b>	<b>Women's Retreat</b>
<b>Nov 20-22</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Dec 1-8</b>	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>
<b>Dec 31</b>	<b>Year End Sesshin</b>

**PLEASE NOTE:** To register for sesshin, please e-mail [office@ryumonji.org](mailto:office@ryumonji.org) or call 563-546-1309

### Weekly Schedule

<p><b>Sunday Mornings</b> 9:00 a.m. Zazen 10:00 a.m. Dharma talk</p>	<p><b>Tuesday Evenings</b> 7:00 p.m. Decorah Zen Center (510 Baker Avenue)</p> <p><b>Thursday Evenings</b> 7:30 p.m. Ryumonji Zen Monastery</p>
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### *Springtime at Ryumonji*



*Photo by John Taiyu Robertson*



On Saturday, March 14, 2009, Rev. Kalen McAllister was honored by the Buddhist Council of the Midwest. She received the Women and Engaged Buddhism Award for 2009 at the annual Buddhist Women's Conference in Chicago.

She is the founder of Inside Dharma, which facilitates Buddhist practice groups inside correctional facilities and assists released individuals with integration back into society.

Kalen was ordained in 2007 by Rev. Shoken Winecoff at Ryumonji.

Congratulations to Kalen on this well-deserved recognition for her committed work with prison populations in Missouri.

## Ryumonji Happenings

**Ryumonji Winter Gala**—Ryumonji held its second Winter Gala on Saturday, March 14. About 50 guests enjoyed mocktail hour, lasagna dinner, silent auction, and performances by local musicians. The unseasonably mild weather encouraged celebration of winter's ending and the possibility of spring.

**May Work Day**—Ryumonji will host a spring workday on Saturday, May 2 (not Sunday, May 3 as previously published) from 9:00 to 5:00. Please come and join us!

**Shoken's Japan Visit**—Shoken will visit Japan during most of May and early June. He will fundraise for the new proposed monastery buildings and will attend the Shogoji International Practice Period.

During Shoken's absence, activities at Ryumonji will continue as scheduled.

**Shuso Ceremony and Summer Ango**—Beginning with the June sesshin (June 19-21) there will be a two month Summer Practice Period. Full or partial participation can be arranged. Rev. Eido Bruce Espe will be Shuso for the Ango. The Shuso Ceremony will be Saturday, June 20, 11:00 a.m.

**Future Building Development**—This past Fall landscape preparations were completed for the new Sodo and Shuryo buildings which will be built adjacent to the Buddha Hall. These are meditation and study halls for residential training. We hope to begin construction in 2010 depending on finances.

**Women's Retreat**—Rev. Ryoten Mary Lehmann will conduct a weekend retreat for women November 6-8, 2009. More information will be forthcoming later in the year.

## Ryumonji Bell Project-Update

Ryumonji is moving forward with plans to cast a new outside bell for the bell tower. It will be a 300 pound bell and will be cast in bronze. The "bronze pour" will take place at Ryumonji in late summer of 2009. It will be an all-day community event. Everyone is welcome.

The clay pattern for the bell, based on traditional Japanese temple bells, has been completed by sangha members under the supervision of Carl Homstad. The clay model will be transported to the Twin Cities where it will be used to create a mold for the bronze pour.

Kelly Ludeking and Jack Raddatz will oversee the casting of the bell. They will bring portable furnaces to Ryumonji. Bronze will be melted in these furnaces and poured into the top of the bell mold. The melting and pouring will take approximately half a day. The cooling process will take several days.

This is the first pouring for a traditional Japanese temple bell of this kind in the U.S. Donations to this project are gratefully accepted. The date will be announced when finalized. We hope you will be able to join us.



*Photo by Chris McConnell*

# RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY



## **Please consider a Pre-authorized Monthly Donation to Ryumonji.**

It is a convenient method of direct bank transfer from your account to Ryumonji's account. It helps very much in the budgeting for our monthly mortgage payment. We appreciate your support of Ryumonji Zen Monastery. Donors and receivers both benefit. Please complete and return the form below to authorize your monthly donation.

## **Authorization for Pre-authorized Monthly Donations**

I authorize **Ryumonji Zen Monastery** to initiate debit entries in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of each month, beginning \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ (month/year), to my \_\_\_ Checking/ \_\_\_ Savings account indicated below, and to initiate credit entries or adjustments to correct any debit entries that may be made in error. This authorization will remain in effect until cancellation is received in writing..

**Please attach a voided check.**

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