

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 1

SPRING 2011

# Dragon Gate

RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY



## *Letter from Japan*

I recently received a letter from a friend who is teaching English in Sendai, Japan. This is one of the cities where the huge earthquake and tsunami hit. I know Sendai. I visited there many years ago.

She says, "Things here in Sendai have been rather surreal. But I am very blessed to have wonderful friends who are helping me a lot. Since my shack is even more worthy of that name, I am now staying at a friend's home. We share supplies like water, food and a kerosene heater. We sleep lined up in one room, eat by candlelight, and share stories. It is warm, friendly, and beautiful. During the day we help each other clean up the mess in our homes. No one has washed for several days. We feel grubby, but there are so much more important concerns than that for us now. I love this peeling away of non-essentials. Living fully on the level of instinct, of intuition, of caring, of what is needed for survival, not just of me, but of the entire group.

"The Japanese themselves are so wonderful. I come back to my shack to check on it each day, I find food and water left in my entryway. I have no idea from whom, but it is there. People talk to complete strangers asking if they need help. Somehow at this time I realize from direct experience that there is indeed an enormous cosmic evolutionary step that is occurring all over the world right now at this moment. And somehow as I experience the events happening now in Japan, I can feel my heart opening very wide. I feel part of something happening that is much larger than myself. This wave of birthing worldwide is hard, and yet magnificent."

This letter speaks for itself. In the face of death we come back to the essentials of what matters.

It reminds me of Katagiri Roshi's statement about building monastery, "I wish to build a place and an environment to promote the quiet sangha life in unity. I want to construct a building to practice the Way revering the old ways. Modern life is artificially protected. When the artificial environment collapses, for instance in a natural disaster or an economic calamity, people suffer severely. Modern people, therefore, need to live in direct contact with nature and find a practice method in tune with nature's rhythm. Old ways of life fit this purpose. Therefore I am convinced we must build such a practice place in America."

We forget what it means to "live in direct contact with nature." We might wonder if the nuclear power plant in Fukushima is in tune with "nature's rhythm". I have a priest friend who has a temple in Fukushima City. I called him a few weeks ago. He said the tsunami wave did not reach them, but they are now really concerned about the nuclear power plant. I could hear a soberness in his voice that struck to the core.

Narasaki, Tsugen Roshi, abbot of Zuioji Monastery in Japan, gave a talk once at a dedication of a nuclear power plant. In his talk he said, "We should live one day without electricity." We should appreciate what electricity is and how it comes to us. It's easy to take things for granted.

Progress is neither far nor near.

In gassho,

Shoken Winecoff

# Ryumonji Happenings . . .

**Rev. Jikan Paula Kondrick** passed away on February 15, 2011. Jikan-san was Vice-Abbess of Ryumonji and resident priest of the Decorah Zen Center.

She is deeply missed. There will be a memorial service and internment of her ashes following the Sodo Dedication ceremony on June 26, 2011.



*Photo by Taizen Dale Ver Kuilen*

## **Jukai Lay Ordination Ceremony**

There will be a lay ordination on Sunday, Oct. 23, 2011. Lay ordination includes receiving the Precepts and sewing the rakusu (a small Buddhist robe) , Please speak with Rev. Shoken Winecoff or Rev. Ryoten Lehmann if you are interested.

## **Annual Women's Retreat**

Rev. Ryoten Lehmann will offer a retreat for women on the weekend of November 4-6. This will be a time for women to come together. Mark your calendar!

## **Ryumonji's Winter Gala**

The Winter Gala was held this March. Everyone enjoyed the "walking dinner", music, silent auction, and especially the chocolate fountain!

## **Winter Ango Practice Period**

The winter there was a five week residential practice period, Thirteen people participated, including Rev. Ryutoku Kato from Eiheiji Monastery in Japan.

## **Sodo Dedication Ceremony**

**Sunday, June 26, 10:00 a.m.**

Ryumonji will officially dedicate its new Sodo. This is the first Sodo in the U.S. to be built according to ancient specifications. Rev. Daigaku Rumme, Director of North American Soto Zen Buddhist Association, will officiate.

## **Shuso Ceremony**

There will be a Shuso Ceremony on June 26. Rev. Myoshi Thomson will be head monk for the Summer Ango of 2011. Rev. Shohaku Okumura will be in attendance as representative of the Soto Zen International Community. He will give a dharma talk on Saturday, June 25 at 7:30 p.m. for the Shuso Tea.

### **SESSHIN**

**"Sesshin" literally means "collecting the mind".**

**Sesshins are on the third weekend of each month. They are structured meditation retreats which include oryoki meals, work period, and dharma talks. Sesshin schedule is from Friday evening, 7:30 p.m. to Sunday lunch. Beginners are welcome.**

# Ryumonji Zen Monastery

## May-December 2011 Schedule

**SAVE THE DATE!!**  
Sunday, June 26  
10:00 a.m.  
Dedication of Ryumonji Sodo

<b>May 7</b>	<b>Spring Work Day</b>
<b>May 20-22</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Jun 15-Aug 21</b>	<b>Summer Ango</b>
<b>Jun 17-19</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Jun 26</b>	<b>Sodo Dedication</b>
	<b>Shuso Ceremony</b>
<b>Jul 15-17</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Aug 20</b>	<b>Summer Work Day</b>
<b>Sep 16-18</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Oct 21-23</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Nov 4-6</b>	<b>Women's Retreat</b>
<b>Nov 18-20</b>	<b>Sesshin</b>
<b>Dec 1-8</b>	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>
<b>Dec 31</b>	<b>Year End Sesshin</b>

**Public Sitzings**

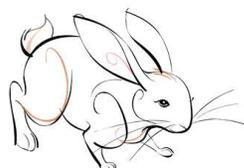
**Thursday Evenings**  
7:30 p.m.

**Sunday Mornings**  
9:00 a.m.

For orientation  
arrive 15 minutes early

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

*If you would like to receive future issues of the newsletter electronically, please e-mail:  
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# RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY



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## SODO-SHURYO CONSTRUCTION

The Ryumonji Sodo is substantially complete and ready for occupancy. Landscaping will be complete in time for the dedication ceremony in June. Work will begin on the infrastructure for the Shuryo building this year. This will include installing a septic system and pouring concrete footings for this building. The Shuryo is a complementary building attached to the Sodo. It provides study quarters and bath facilities for those residing in the Sodo for residential practice.



Front Entry of Sodo Meditation Hall



Raised Meditation Tans