

RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY

Deep in the Mountain

When people come to visit Ryumonji I often hear them say, “Oh, how quiet it is here!” Sometimes it's just the sound of peepers, or a coyote's howl, or a hoot from the great horned owl. You could say Ryumonji is located “deep in the mountain” of the driftless area of northeast Iowa. The nearest town is almost twenty miles away, and you can see in every direction for about as far as the eye can see. In ancient times those who aspired to the Way entered mountain recesses in order to lead calm lives and find quietude. But where are the mountain recesses and where is *deep in the mountain*?

Deep in the mountain is right under your foot. Zen master Dogen said, “Do not say the streets, a brothel, or a garbage pit are not mountain recesses.” Quietude is wherever you are. The Buddha said, “Those who are content may sleep on the ground and still consider it comfortable; those who are not content would be dissatisfied even in heaven.”

This winter we had to take someone to the airport up in Minneapolis. The ride to the airport was about thirty minutes from where we were staying. It was early morning. When I was loading the car I heard meowing coming from somewhere up under the car. It sounded like a kitten in distress. I reached up but couldn't reach the kitten. I tried everything, but he/she wouldn't come out. Finally we had to leave for the airport. The kitten rode all the way to and from the airport. I couldn't believe it. Finally we were able to get it out. It was stuck, straddled over a gas line on top of the gas tank. Where's quietude when you're speeding along, inches from the highway in the midst of traffic on a super dark morning in freezing cold temperatures?

When I lived in Minneapolis a long time ago, our founding teacher Katagiri Roshi was dying with cancer. He did not have long to live, but his life was just going on. I learned a lot about quietude from him. At that time he asked me if I'd be interested to go to Japan to study there in a monastery. I told him I didn't know Japanese. He said, “It doesn't matter, just taste the root.” To taste the root, you have to be with whatever situation you find yourself. Sometimes there's no escape. So just bring yourself wholeheartedly to your life and to your death. This is to go deep in the mountain.

One of the first things that happened when I entered the monastery was that my bag was searched and my bag of candy corn was confiscated. Nothing's sacred. Sometimes things do not go our way. To taste the root is to bring yourself to the whole thing. I really thought I needed that bag of candy corn.

I was three years in the monastery. We got up at 4:00 a.m. We sat zazen. We ate breakfast. We cleaned our bowls. When it was time to go to bed, we went to bed. When it was time to get up, we got up. It was a matter of everydayness. To taste the root is to take care of everyday life. It isn't always peaceful. I just kept my boat pointed into the waves. Little by little, I returned to a quiet place deep in the mountain.

The Japanese word for monastery is *sojin*. *Sojin* is “multiple trees and bushes all living together”. The practice in monastery is to live in one place in peace and harmony with all who gather there. It's learning how to open your heart. To open your heart is to be without judgment. Usually we see just on the surface, and then we judge who we like and who we dislike. But if you knew people's histories and could see beneath the surface, you'd have a much deeper understanding of where people are coming from.

So to go deep in the mountain requires deep spirit. It is to see all things as *thusness*. Every atom contains the whole Universe. To see things in this way is like a small stream being able to pierce a rock if it continues to flow. It is sometimes called the wind of Buddhism which turns the great rivers golden. It's getting beyond discriminating mind which just swims on the surface based on personal desire. These are the days of everydayness, which we call Zen practice, entering mountain recesses. It is to dwell deep in the mountain.

Shoken Winecoff

Abbot, Ryumonji

Ryumonji Happenings . . .



2018 Ryumonji Summer Ango

Ryumonji will offer a two-month Summer Ango during 2018. Ango will begin on June 15 with a two day sesshin and conclude on August 19. (Summer Work Day will take place on Saturday, August 18.)

Several of Shoken Roshi's dharma heirs will be in residence at different times during the Ango to offer teachings.

Ango is open to partial participation if full time attendance is not possible. Please register on Ryumonji's website, www.ryumonji.org, if you wish to attend.

Upcoming Ryumonji Retreats

Ryumonji will host its annual Men's Retreat on August 24-26, 2018 and its annual Women's Retreat on November 2-4, 2018.

Registration for the Men's Retreat is now open. Information about the Women's Retreat will be forthcoming.

Ryumonji also recently completed its annual Family Weekend for sangha families.

Ordination of Genpo Michael O'Neal

On Sunday, May 20, long-time zen practitioner and guiding teacher of Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center in Minneapolis, Genpo Michael O'Neal, received priest ordination (shukke tokudo) from Rev. Shoken Winecoff. This ceremony was attended by students, friends, and family of Rev. O'Neal, including his wife Joen Snyder O'Neal, who co-leads Compassionate Ocean Dharma Center.

Michael studied with Katagiri Roshi, founder of Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Katagiri Roshi was also Shoken Roshi's teacher and is the honorary founder of Ryumonji.

2017 Jukai Lay Ordination

Ryumonji held a lay ordination ceremony on Sunday, November 19, 2017. This is the traditional precept ceremony and receiving of rakusu and kechimiyaku lineage papers presented to lay disciples.

Six members of the local community participated in this ceremony with Abbot Shoken Winecoff as preceptor.

Ryumonji will offer lay ordination again in the fall of 2019.



2018 Ryumonji Calendar

Jun 15-17	Sesshin & Summer Ango Opening
Jul 20-22	Sesshin
Aug 19	Summer Ango Closing
Aug 24-26	Men's Retreat
Sep 21-23	Sesshin
Oct 7	Taste of Ryumonji
Oct 19-21	Sesshin
Nov 2-4	Women's Retreat
Nov 16-18	Sesshin
Dec 1-8	Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec 31	End of Year Sesshin New Year's Eve Celebration



Public Sittings

Thursday Evenings
7:30 p.m.

Sunday Mornings
9:00 a.m.

For orientation to zazen
please arrive
15 minutes early

*To receive future issues of the
newsletter electronically,
please e-mail:
office@ryumonji.org*

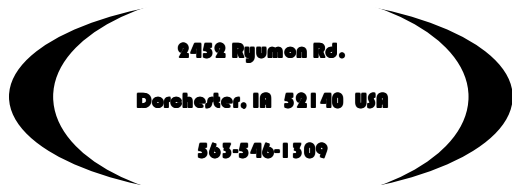
2018 Ryumonji Work Days

Ryumonji work days begin at 10:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m. A pot luck lunch is served at noon. Work days are a great sangha activity and support for Ryumonji. Below are the remaining dates for 2018. Please join us if you can!

Jul 7	Sep 1	Dec 15
Aug 4	Oct 6	
Aug 18	Nov 10	

To register for sesshin or angos
please complete the
Event Registration Form
at
www.ryumonji.org

RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY



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Ryumonji's Solar Project

As summer begins, Ryumonji is in the process of installing the fourth and final set of solar panels for the monastery buildings. We will be asking for your support for this effort in the upcoming capital development fund drive.

Ryumonji also plans to install solar panels to support the existing residential farmhouse and the well pump that serves the monastery. Ryumonji has already added solar panels to the roof of the guest cottage.

Ultimately, these panel arrays will serve to minimize Ryumonji's dependence on fossil fuel now and in the future.

Thanks to all who have helped bring this undertaking to fruition.

Donations for the solar project may be sent to:

**Ryumonji Zen Monastery
2452 Ryumon Road
Dorchester, IA 52140**

Ryumonji is a 501(c)3 non-profit tax-deductible organization.