



Carl Homstad 2014

RYUMONJI ZEN MONASTERY

The Ride of Life

Have I ever told you the story about my ride for life? It happened in an old blue pickup truck - with no emergency brakes. I was at Hokyoji, the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center's retreat center.

This life and death ride happened during construction of a burial site for Katagiri Roshi's stupa and ashes. He died in 1990. A ledge was cut into a steep hillside which was behind Hokyoji's temporary temple buildings. We were in the process of constructing a retaining wall on the upper side of the burial site to hold back the steep hillside. We were using the old blue pickup truck to haul stone up to the burial site from a semi-truck parked below.

We finished the last load of the day. I jumped into the old blue pickup truck and popped it out of park to drive it back down the hill. But within moments of taking it out of park, the old truck reared backwards and began racing down the hill! And I couldn't get the truck started! And without the engine running there is no power brakes! There I was! Just me and a very long, steep hillside! In reverse! At 40-50 miles an hour!

I immediately thought of whipping the truck around to get it parallel to the hill, but I was already moving way too fast! I knew the truck would have flipped over and tumbled down the hill! I was moving so fast. It was like driving a race car - in reverse! My neck was cranked backwards peering through the rear window, my hands clenched to the wheel and grasped the back of the seat. It was definitely a "Hail Mary" call!

The bottom of the hill raced towards me and it

curved sharply to the left. It was just like a stock car racing track. I hit the curve at what must have been about 50 mph and zoomed around it to some level land, only to find myself heading straight for the outhouse! This was not going to be good! So I whipped the steering wheel around. The truck spun around on a dime, flipped up on its side, teetered, and then flopped back down on all four! Everything screeched to a stop! I jumped out and felt like Evel Knievel.

I don't remember a thing after that! I must have been in shock. There were some people standing outside the zendo, cleaning zafus and zabutons. They saw the whole thing! Everyone was aghast! One of them said, "This is going to be a "911 call"! Another said, "Oh my gosh, something is awry!"

So life does not always go our way! It's not always what we expect! Our job is to take up the wheel. Life has its own twists and turns. Zen practice is to be alive in the moment that is! This is to merge with situations as they arise. Sometimes this is called "non thinking". It's beyond any intellectual commentary, like "this shouldn't be happening", or "I should have gotten the emergency brake fixed". All this is true, but in the moment of things as they are, now is now! Deal with it!

Zen Master Dogen says in his introduction to Zazen (*Fukanzazengi*), 'Life is a matter of everydayness. It requires being like a dragon that gains the water, and like a tiger that enters the mountain'. In other words, wake up! Attend to what's under your foot, even if there's no brakes!

Shoken Winecoff, Abbot
Ryumonji Zen Monastery

Ryumonji Happenings . . .



Shuso Ceremony for 2023 Winter Ango

Ryumonji held its Winter Ango Shuso Ceremony and Hossenshiki Tea on the weekend of March 3-5, 2023. Rev. Kinho Bokushu Tolan served as Shuso. Rev. Tolan practices at Milwaukee Zen Center.

Rev. Reirin Gumbel, Resident Priest at Milwaukee Zen Center, served as Jokeshi for the Shuso Ceremony and presented a lecture on the case *Nan Chuan's Circle*—Case 69 from the Blue Cliff Record.

100th Anniversary of Soto Zen Buddhism in North America Part 2

Rev. Shoken Winecoff, Abbot of Ryumonji, will travel to California in May to participate in the second portion celebrating of the 100th Year of Soto Zen Buddhism in America. The first portion was held during summer of 2022. Shoken Roshi will also attend the annual meeting of Association of Soto Zen Buddhists.

Spring Fling and Open House



On May 6, Ryumonji held its second annual Spring Fling to celebrate the coming of

Spring and warmer weather. Guests enjoyed fellowship, food, and music provided by Pine Wilson. In addition to the traditional craft sale, a silent auction was offered. A large number of guests attended the event and greatly enjoyed themselves.

Summer Ango Practice for 2023

Ryumonji will continue offering 90 day Ango practice for Summer of 2023. This will allow more opportunities for both full time and part time participation.

Summer Ango will begin with June Sesshin on June 16 and conclude with September Sesshin on September 17, 2023.

If you wish to register for either Ango or Sesshin, please complete the Event Registration form on Ryumonji's website.

2023 Ryumonji Calendar

May 19-21	Sesshin
June 10	Family Day
Jun 16-18	Sesshin & Summer Ango Opening
Jun 16 –Sep 17	Summer Ango
Jul 21-23	Sesshin & Shuso Ceremony
Aug 11-13	Men's Retreat
Sep 15-17	Sesshin & Ango Closing
Oct 15	Taste of Ryumonji Fall Festival
Oct 20-22	Sesshin
Nov 3-5	Women's Retreat
Nov 17-19	Sesshin & Jukai Ceremony
Dec 1-8	Rohatsu Sesshin
Dec 8	Lay Entrustment
Dec 31	End of Year Sesshin & New Year's Eve Celebration

To register for any event, see Event Registration on the Website.

Ryumonji Volunteer Work Days 2023

Work days are a great sangha activity and support for Ryumonji. Below are work day dates for 2023. Please join us if you can!

MAY 13

JUN 3

JUL 1

AUG 5

SEP 2

OCT 7

NOV 11

DEC 9

Public Sittings

Thursday Evenings

7:30 p.m.

Sunday Mornings

9:00 a.m.

Public Sitting is available virtually and in person.

Please check the web site under *Virtual Practice* for the Zoom links.

Sunday morning Dharma talk recordings available on website.

**RYUMONJI ZEN
MONASTERY**



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Newsletter Transition to Mailchimp

Dear friends of Ryumonji:

Ryumonji has made the decision to move to paperless distribution of our newsletters and other communications. Our hope is to reduce our carbon footprint and expand newsletter availability.

This process will require you to complete a simple form that is located on our website. Go to the link below to make the transition to our electronic mailing list. It's easy and will just take a minute.

Here's the link: www.ryumonji.org

We will be using a Mailchimp distribution service which many institutions have successfully used. Your information will remain private and secure.

We hope you will make this transition with us.

In Gassho,

Rev. Shoken Winecoff

Abbot, Ryumonji Zen Monastery