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Leaving A Mark Forever

A Record of the Volunteer Work of BAOCP

The hot weather began at the end of June and continued until the middle of July. Sudden afternoon thunderstorms brought cooler temperatures to the East Coast. On July 18 the members of the BAOCP (Buddhist Association of Central Pennsylvania) joined by their president, Alice, came to our temple to do volunteer work. Although it was raining, the enthusiasm of the members wasn't dampened. They completed many projects in just a short afternoon that made a tremendous difference in the appearance of our temple.



*Volunteers working on the restroom
inside the Zen Meditation Center*

Around 11:00 a.m., more than ten volunteers began arriving by car at the temple. They not only brought a delicious vegetarian lunch for all to enjoy but they also brought a hitchhiker, a large turtle for the Releasing Life Ceremony. The arrival of this large turtle at our temple was a miracle of causes and conditions. The turtle was living in a private lake enjoying many delicious meals of the schools of fish in that lake. Because

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of that the owner of the lake was at his wits end. He had used every method conceivable to try to catch this turtle without success. Someone suggested to him, "If it is possible we could relocate the turtle on our trip to the Vairocana Monastery and release it". Ironically the next day the turtle came out of the water allowing itself to be captured by the owner. And therefore, becoming the welcomed hitchhiker on the trip to temple.



*Volunteers taking down the lights to
paint the ceiling of the walkway*

Before lunch everyone toured the Zen Meditation Center. The simple and clean layout of the Zen Meditation Center was refreshing to everyone's body and mind.

The Releasing Life Ceremony started after lunch. The large turtle was put in a bucket on the bridge. Everyone circled the bucket and followed Venerable Ta Yu in reciting the Heart Sutra and the Great Compassion Mantra. We hope that by the power of the Buddha's perfect compassion and wisdom and everyone's praying, the turtle would be liberated from the Animal Realm as soon as possible and be reborn as a Human, able to hear the Buddha Dharma and eventually attaining Buddhahood. Venerable Ta Yu told the turtle not to harm the living creatures in or near the river. Let everyone live together peacefully on the temple's property

and practice the Buddha Dharma. Before releasing the turtle back into nature, Venerable Ta Yu asked the turtle to stretch out his neck, raise his head and open his eyes and remember all the Bodhisattvas who released him this day into the sanctuary of our lake. As conditions arise he should repay his gratitude on his Path to practicing the Buddha Dharma in his future lives. It continued raining but the inner light of compassion showed through the raindrops on all the compassionate faces attending the ceremony. These faces were more beautiful than the lotus flowers in the lake. The merit of releasing life is incomparable and surpasses all others.



Volunteers repainting the door of each room

In preparation for today's volunteer project, although it was raining, Bill and I washed the whole walkway and stairs at the back of the Retreat House in anticipation of Everyone's arrival to help paint it. The plan had to be readjusted because of the heavy rain. I divided the volunteers into three main groups. Inside the Zen Meditation Center, Alice and Olivia were given the task of painting and laying down new vinyl flooring in the downstairs restroom. Keith was given the task of replacing the old door lock with a new one. And Mrs. Liu helped to stir the paint and offer encouragement. The second group was given the task of taking down the lights and painting the ceiling and wall of the walkway. The third group was given the task of repainting the door of each room. Sara removed the damaged doors from the last four rooms at the back of the

building. Neither the rain nor anyone's busy hands stopped. The entire volunteer project was completed around 4:00 p.m.

Thanks to the manpower of BAOCP, our temple's renovation took a big step forward. Everyone's dedication to the renovation of Vairocana Monastery will remain in our records forever.

Earth-womb Ceremony

Wendy Wu

The Earth-Womb Ceremony was held on Saturday, August 21 at the Vairocana Monastery. The initial ceremony to bestow food and to assure the Lotus Seats of the deceased to be reborn in Amitabha's Pure Land was held the night before. Grace, Kim, Lisa, David, Ben, Bee-Mei, Kevin, Wendy and Mrs. Yuan and her family arrived at the temple to attend the initial ceremony. Shu-Chuan brought an abundance of fruit to the temple the day before for the shrine offering in the Earth-Womb Ceremony.

Venerable Ta Yu told us a true story: "A young man had the same dream on the same date year after year. In his dream he came to a house in a village. He would walk into the house and find a bowl of celery noodles on the table. He would wake up as soon as he finished the bowl of noodles. The young man continued to have the same dream for many years. This year he again had the same dream on the same date. But this time, he clearly saw the address on the house. Again as he entered the house he saw the bowl of tasty celery noodles on the table. After eating the bowl of celery noodles, he awoke. The taste of the celery noodles was still in his mouth.

He decided to search for the house in his dreams. He finally located it in a village. The house and the address

were exactly as they appeared in his dream. He knocked on the door. An elderly woman opened the door for him. He explained to her that each year on this same date he would dream that he entered this house and would eat a bowl of celery noodles that were on the table. After listening to the young man's story the elderly woman said to him: "I had a son who passed away when he was very young. Because he liked celery noodles so much when he was alive every year on the day he passed away I cook a bowl of celery noodles and place them on the table". From this story we have proof that in a previous life this young man was the elderly woman's son. We also have proof that the merits of dedication is unimaginable. The power of delivery will cause those who passed away to be born in the Good Realms.



The ceremony to bestow food and to assure the Lotus Seats of the deceased

The Ceremony continues at 2:00 p.m. Everyone recited the Sutras and Mantras sincerely. The Earth-Womb Ceremony ended at 6:00 p.m. All attendees were full of Dharma joy.

The Teaching on Patience

**Taught by Venerable Lama Migmar
Recorded by Wendy Wu**

Practicing patience is necessary. Due to undesirable conditions we become impatient and that impatience causes unhappiness. Or we cannot get what we want and become frustrated. The

frustration magnifies into anger and then creates more violence. The best antidote for unhappiness is the practice of patience. Patience is the most powerful tool to resolve revenge, criminal acts, violence and any form of anger.

There are several ways to practice patience:

The first is forgiveness. For example, if someone harms us, instead of revenge, we practice patience to forgive that person. By forgiving we put an end to the anger and discontinue any violence. So forgiveness is the best way of practicing patience.

The second is tolerance. Tolerance is another form of practicing patience. We should try to tolerate conditions causing unhappiness. For example, today's weather is bad. We should understand that nature is changeable. Instead of being unhappy about this situation, we should meditate on it and try to practice tolerance. There are many situations in our lives that will cause unhappiness. As an example, one of our friends continues to annoy us. This is the best time for us to practice tolerance.

The third is to realize the realities in this world. This is the most effective way to practice patience. For example, we should understand that most people by nature are selfish. Because whatever they do, they do it for their own self-interest. Many of them are good at hiding that part of their nature. For example, when we go to a shopping mall or restaurant, the store clerks or waiters/waitresses show us unlimited hospitality because they want us to make a purchase or they want us to give a bigger tip. After we understand the nature of people, when someone is unhappy or angry with us, instead of shouting angrily at that person we have self-control and not react because we know why he/she is unhappy or angry. Therefore, practicing patience when realizing the realities in the world will benefit our

personal lives. The more wisdom we have, the better we will practice patience. The more wisdom we have, the more we will understand the realities in the world. By practicing patience with everyone we encounter we will become a better person.



*The teaching on Patience,
October 2003*

The main purpose of practicing patience is to make us more peaceful. Society is so tense, so frustrated, so stressful and so aggressive and people are so impatient. If we realize this and practice patience we will be happier and remain peaceful. Nowadays, we are always rushing and competing with machines. The more we depend on machines the further we are away from nature. If one of the machines break we become frustrated because we cannot do anything without this machine. We end up doing more than less. When we become wiser and have more wisdom, we realize we need to grow and improve ourselves. We cannot always go according to the rules of society even though society requires us to do just that. Society is not always right. I will tell you a story.

Once upon a time a poisoned rain fell in a kingdom. All the ordinary people in that kingdom did not cover and protect their wells from that poisoned rain. All the wells of the ordinary people were polluted by the poison. After they drank the water from the polluted wells, they all went crazy. Only the king had the wisdom to cover his well and protect it from the poisoned rain. Therefore, only the king did not go crazy. But all the

ordinary people who went crazy said that "King is crazy". So the king started to wonder; "Am I really crazy? Because everyone says that I am crazy."

Sometimes society's rules are not always correct but the majorities consensus can affect you and others. Sometimes it is a challenge to go against rules and majorities. Wisdom can protect you from those effects. This is what the Buddha did. If we use the ordinary views to look at the Buddha's life then we would say that he is kind of crazy. Just look at the life of the Buddha who had everything we pray for--a kingdom, a queen, power, luxury and everything befitting a prince. One day, he left everything behind and practiced under a tree without anything.

Buddhist teaching and practice is to make us more peaceful and more independent. That is, we will not be affected by any objects and get emotional. In today's society, we are so aggressive and impatient because we are affected by all the objects in our lives. If we practice patience and try to clear negative thinking from our thoughts we will be able to react to adverse situations with wisdom becoming more relaxed and impartial.

There was a Zen master who had a female attendant. One day, the attendant was pregnant. The attendant's parents accused the Zen master of being the father of the baby. They were very angry and confronted the Zen master as father of the baby he should take care of their daughter and the baby. The Zen master answered "It is so." After many years had passed the real father came forth. The parents of the attendant said to the Zen master "We are so sorry, we had wrongly accused you." The Zen master again said to the: "That is so."

When your mind reaches a certain level you can accept good or bad conditions with equality. You will then have more tolerance and forgiveness. You need to attain a

certain level of realization to forgive people. It is not easy to convince an accuser. A scholar once said "I can have a discussion with one hundred scholars but I cannot talk to one ignorant person." Therefore, to practice patience is very important. The more wisdom you have, the easier you can practice patience. The more wisdom you have, the clearer you will see things. Then you will know what is best for any given situation. Once you see the whole picture, you will know how to forgive people. After practicing patience, it will bring peace to your personal life. You will be healthier, happier and live longer. It will also help you to develop your special practice. If we are strong enough the practice of patience can be used as an antidote for anger. Twenty years of friendship, marriage or your love for your children can be destroyed by one moment of anger. When you have the quality of the Buddha you will have peace and joy and all things you do will become part of your practice. Therefore, practicing patience is the antidote for anger and will make you happier.

Wisdom in Six Perfections

Taught by Venerable Ta Yu
Recorded by Wendy Wu

November 9, 2003

In America there are good points and there are bad points. Americans let go very easily. They will not be tied down to anything. They will let go of everything just to enjoy their leisure time. However, this good point can easily become a bad point. Americans are not bound to their work and can easily set it aside and never finish it. But they cling to their leisure time.

One day I saw a news item while surfing the web. It said that

Taiwanese are the hardest working people in the world. They work an average of seventy-two hours per week. Most of the time they work without taking any breaks. This report was based on an American company's survey. Yet, if you work too hard, then you are clinging too much to your work and not having much time to spend with your family. Therefore, it isn't good to work too little or too much. It is similar to playing a string instrument. If the string is too loose it will not produce a tone. If it is too tight it will break. Likewise Buddhism is neither "too tight" nor "too loose" but emphasizes the "Middle Path".

There are many confusing situations in our lives. Today's topic "Wisdom" shows us how to manage things clearly. Having wisdom is like holding a lit candle in a dark room. It lights your way. Practicing Buddhism is not to pray for Buddha's blessings but to reveal our wisdom. Having wisdom enables you to face any difficulty and resolve any adverse situation in your life.

Wisdom in Sanskrit (or Pali) is Prajna. If we understand the empty nature of the interdependent origination that is "Ultimate Emptiness," then we will see things clearly. Some people misunderstand the meaning of the empty nature as nothingness (i.e. nonexistence). Others think that getting enlightenment means nothing exists and there is nothing to care for. If this is true, are those who don't want to work and those who are homeless liberated and full of wisdom? Wisdom is the empty nature of interdependent origination. That is "All things begin from Causes and Conditions and all things end because of Causes and Conditions". For example, you may see many flowers blooming today and you wish these flowers wouldn't fade away. But the flowers will fade away sooner or later. If we do not realize the reality

that flowers will fade away then our lives will be miserable. The fading away of flowers is a normal process. Flowers are dependent on the related causes and conditions. This includes the seeds, water, air and the proper timing to plant and grow the flowers. Wishing that flowers would not fade away is an abnormal reaction. It is not the flowers fault that they fade away.



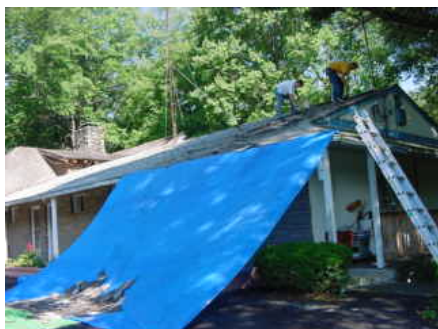
The teaching on Wisdom In Six Perfections, November 2003

Many people said I could not survive without my spouse. We are easily led to this assumption not realizing that each of us is an individual. No matter how long you and your spouse are together when your present lifetime is ended you and your spouse will be separated. All things begin and end based on causes and conditions. Many things are out of our control. Just like those of a fortuneteller, if they could change their fate they would not have to earn a living by telling fortunes.

Chinese practicing Feng Shui believe that if they buried their deceased parents in the dragon cave (the best place to bury the deceased) their descendants would then have a very bright and prosperous future. If it were in ancient times then the descendants would become emperors. In the present time the descendants would be elected as presidents. Therefore, many Chinese spend an enormous amount of money to hire a Feng Shui teller to find a dragon cave to bury their deceased parents. I told these people that "If this were true, then the Feng Shui

teller would save the dragon caves for themselves to ensure the prosperity of their descendants. They would not find the dragon cave for you." This is not the right way to change your causes and conditions. If you want your child to become a president someday spend your money on the best schools available, encourage your child to study diligently and to develop good moral conduct.

A lady told me that her employer is trying to bring her friend onboard to replace her. Therefore, her employer is making her working conditions difficult and pushing her to quit her job. She said her employer is like an evil witch. Her employer continually finds fault with her and reprimands her. At one time her employer's daughter was going to have a birthday party. This lady bought several birthday gifts for the daughter. Her employer then displayed her gifts to everyone on the desk in her office. Her employer also opened her office door and speaking loudly so everyone could hear: "You only purchased these gifts to flatter me". Her employer also requires her to come to work early and leave late. Sometimes she is asked to locate information during her lunchtime making it impossible for her to eat her lunch. Because of this, she is suffering greatly.



Replacing the roof

I told the lady: "The economy is not good right now. You have to keep this job to make a living but you must be careful not to let this hardship become a mental problem." This lady also told me: "I am growing older and it is hard to change jobs. If I lost my

job and health insurance it would create a great hardship for me. Therefore, I have to keep this job."

This lady was reciting many Sutras and Mantras everyday even more than the monks and nuns do. She asked me: "Shi Fu, it has been two years since I started to recite Sutras and Mantras and dedicating the merits to my employer. Why hasn't the situation between us improved?" I told her: "This is because there is a problem in the way you recite the Sutras and Mantras. Reciting Sutras and Mantras is very effective. You said that your employer is like an evil witch? " She replied: "Yes, she is a very disgusting and very hateful person. She is just like an evil witch". I told her: "If you had a good practice, your employer would not be a disgusting and hateful person in your mind. You would have a pure and compassionate mind. You would not dislike your employer".

She then asked me: "What should I do?" I replied: "It's very simple. When you are busy with your job you become tired and reciting so many Sutras and Mantras is creating stress. Under these circumstances you won't get any results from your practice. All you have to do is sincerely recite one Mantra. You can recite this Mantra while you are driving. You can recite it in your heart while you are working. You can also recite this Mantra while you are in bed. You can recite this Mantra anytime you want while walking, sitting or lying down. And especially, when your employer is reprimanding you. This Mantra is so simple that you can memorize it just by reciting it twice.

While your employer is being difficult, you can recite your Mantra. The most important thing is that you have to visualize your employer as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. While you visualize your employer as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, then the words that

are coming out of your employer's mouth are transformed into the Sutra of the Universal Door of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara. You will be very happy that every sentence spoken by your employer is the Dharma Voice. As long as you visualize your employer as the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, sooner or later your mind will be transformed into a compassionate mind.



Fixing the chimney

The spiritual response of Buddhism is that as long as you are compassionate toward others; you, in turn, will receive a compassionate response from others. Sometimes the power of your mind is stronger than the power of your words. You can change anything as long as you have a compassionate mind. Within these two years, whenever you saw your employer, you hated her in your mind. She would sense the hate in your mind and would, in turn, hate you too. Therefore, the relationship between you and her will never improve. According to Buddhism, your outward appearance is transformed by your mind. If you don't like your employer, then your appearance will be transformed to reflect your feelings towards her. How can she like you"? Finally I gave her this piece of advice: "You have to thank your employer because she has given you this chance to practice patience. It's like practicing Kung-Fu. You have to practice it everyday to attain its ultimate results".

The Buddhavatamsaka-Mahavaipulya Sutra says: "If we would like to understand the true meaning of all the Buddhas in the three times, then we

should realize that all the phenomena in the Dharma Realm are created by our mind". There are many methods of practice in Buddhism to suit the different needs of sentient beings. When we practice we should focus on one method and practice its tenants diligently. It isn't the recitation of many Sutras or Mantras or having long sessions that makes our practice effective. This is only a link in the emergence of our wisdom. With practice our wisdom gradually unfolds. And with wisdom, we can attain the most effective results in all our endeavors.

There are Eight Sufferings in our lives. Meeting with whom we dislike and parting with whom we love are two sufferings among the eight. The person you dislike, you have to face every day while the person you love usually lives far away. As long as you try to like everyone your mind will be transformed and you will be very happy. Therefore, those Buddhas who have become Buddhas are very thankful to those people who have helped them on their way to becoming Buddhas. It is because of good and bad causes and conditions from those people that contributed to the practice of those Buddhas.



Painted staircase at the back of the Retreat House

There is a girl who comes to the States not for sightseeing but to visit her brother who is in prison. Her brother has a friend who was an international drug dealer. Once her brother's friend was caught while dealing drugs. His lawyer told him that he would receive a lighter

sentence if he told the court that someone else told him to smuggle the drugs into the country. Therefore, he told the court that her brother was the head of the drug cartel. When this girl's brother entered the United States again, the FBI arrested him. His family knew he was innocent. Even so, he was still sentenced to ten years in prison. Because of this, she started Buddhist charity work. She mailed many Buddhist books to her brother in prison. Her brothers mental outlook changed after he read those books. Her brother thought this was an opportunity for him to have a retreat in prison. "I don't hate my friend. This is my karma. My mind is very peaceful. I saw some people in prison who are unbalanced and full of hatred. If they were released from prison, they would not have a healthy mental outlook. They are pitiful. Sister, I think that it was the Bodhisattva who sent me to prison". Because her brother's English and Chinese are very good, he volunteered to be a translator for the Chinese in prison. His days are very busy. He worried about his friend who had framed him. He hopes that his friend is well. After I heard this story, I said: "Your brother is such a special person!" Although we have karma, if we have wisdom we can see the light in the darkness.

If you thoroughly understand the empty nature of the interdependent origination that all things begin and end based on the causes and conditions, then you have wisdom. The True Emptiness and the Transcendent Existing are two sided of one entity. If you understand the True Emptiness, it is as though you are awakening from instant enlightenment. You are no longer clinging to anything anymore. You are free from delusion. You are peaceful. This is the True Emptiness. The Transcendent Existing is the rebirth after awakening from the instant enlightenment and realizing the True Emptiness.

Coming Events

Every Tuesday
7:00 p.m.
Group Meditation
Ven. Ta Yu

10/10/04, Sunday
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Dharma Talk
Mind Training Part 4
Ven. Lama Migmar

10/23/04, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. –
10/24/04, Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
One-day Zen Retreat
(Intensive)
Ven. Ta Yu

11/7/04, Sunday
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Dharma Talk – Attaining the
supreme Buddhahood
Ven. Ta Yu

11/25/04 – 11/27/04
Thursday – Saturday
10:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
11/28/04, Sunday
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Confession Ceremony of
Empire Liang (Chinese)
Ven. Ta Yu

12/11/04, Saturday, 10:00 a.m. –
12/12/04, Sunday, 10:00 a.m.
One-day Pure-land Retreat
Eight Precepts (Casual)
Ven. Ta Yu

January, 2005
Winter Break – No Activities

For the latest update of AZBT activities, please visit the website at:
<http://www.evenlink.com/~azbtnews>

The Enlightened Garden

Ven. Ta Yu

Translated by Wendy Wu

Edited by Leona J. Maury

This Summer

"TODAY IS THE XX DAY OF 2004. THERE ARE XX DAYS LEFT"

"TODAY IS THE XX DAY OF 2004. THERE ARE XX DAYS LEFT"

We often see this reminder caption on television. When I was young I was ignorant and didn't understand how quickly time passes. Whenever I saw an elder shaking his/her head sighing because time was passing so quickly, I would always shout and say something opposite: "It is so boring! I have nothing to do! Why does time pass so slowly?" Ha! I don't know when I became silent instead of shouting. Likely a few gray hairs appeared on my head and reflected in the mirror. It seems that the gray hairs have followed in the footsteps of the rapidly changing seasons. If it weren't for me shaving off my hair so often, those gray hairs would become more noticeable on the top of my head. These gray hairs are not the result of youth. They are the sign of the beginning of my middle age. Life is so short. It is truly as the Buddha taught: "Life is between the inhale and the exhale."

Colorful leaves and pumpkins, the summer season is gone again! Someone asked me: "What have you done during this summer?"

This summer...

I have been in the States for four years. It was the first time I had gone back to my country to visit with the Abbot, my Dharma brothers and sisters, my friends and my family. A short one-month visit passed quickly and left me a little tired!

This summer...

We finally had the old leaking roof on the Zen Meditation Center and Retreat House replaced. The new brown roof blends well with the color of the main building. It looks magnificent!

This summer...

I put the strength of nine-oxen and two-tigers in painting the whole stairway that leads to the small bridge in the back of the Retreat House. The clean and clear stairway is an excellent place to view the beautiful scenery.

This summer...

No! No! These are not the accomplishments of this season. And these are not the answers that I want to share with you when you asked me.

After returning to Taiwan, I saw my mother whom I haven't seen in a very long time. My mother's age is becoming more evident. Her footsteps aren't as sure as before. How far has my practice advanced in this time frightens me. When impermanence comes, will I still have the ability to keep the vow I took in front of the Buddha: to liberate my parent from the Cyclic Existence of the Six Realms. In my Master's temple. I heard that one or two middle-aged Dharma brothers have turned into an urn of ashes residing in the Seven-Buddha Stupa. I had deeply experienced the illusionary and impermanence of human life.

I started the roofing project as soon as I returned to the States. Searching for reliable contractors, signing the contract then finally the roofing project started. Concerned about the quality of the workmanship. I became a frequent visitor on the roof. Recalling the first time I stepped on the roof, it was as though my feet were glued to the roof. I just stood in the same spot without moving. Then, I began to move around one step at a time to overcome my fear. I told myself that: Everywhere is a safe place as long as I have awareness at all times. The outer environment is not dangerous but a mind without awareness is very dangerous.

After replacing the roof, cleaning the gutters became my next project. It has been four years since the gutters located at the backside of the roof have been cleaned because of my fear of heights. The debris left from the roof replacement caused the gutters to become completely blocked. While the weather was still warm and sunny, I climbed on the roof and my adventure began. The two-story height plus the sloping hillside by the creek made me dizzy. I sat down and calmed my mind. I avoided looking down and did not look back. I concentrated on the present moment and working at a steady pace, neither too fast nor too slow, and completed the job...On our journey through life, living in the present moment is precious.

Since I had decided to paint the staircase at the back of the Retreat House, the stairway was always in my mind during my daily activities. What color paint should be used? From which side should I start? How many days would it take? I asked myself: "Why is this so complicated? Why do I have so many thoughts? This tiny job caused enormous thought to arise. How can I then face any tests in the way of my practice? Just do what I should do in the present moment".

This summer...

I was very fulfilled.