

Open Secret

No 4 March 2005

“Sixteen names for water”

In his play, *Sixteen Names for Water*, playwright Billy Marshall Stoneking, has the poet Ezra Pound talk of the Wanjina people of Australia.

Pound, incarcerated for treason and increasingly at odds with his world, talks longingly of the Wanjina, who with sixteen names for water “...knows the sacred places, is fluid and is capable of exactitude precisely because he knows he is in his place - the land is alive it has everything to do with his life.”

Social commentator, Hugh MacKay, has pointed out that 25 per cent of Australians now live alone and that loneliness and isolation are common themes in our lives. A strong sense of place may be one antidote to that, and surely the companionship of the sangha is another.

Each week in our Friday sitting, safe among friends, we make our vow to save the many beings, including each other, and looking at our world that means there's a lot to do.

There's also a lot to appreciate. We may not have sixteen names for water, yet, but the ZOC community offers us a place that is ours and we open it to all by sharing its news.

Welcome to the first edition of *Open Secret* for 2005.

Bring me the rhinoceros...



The rhinoceros didn't make it, but there are lions and giraffes, stalking the pages, with an article from Deborah Chadwick and Herb Peppard who spent several weeks in Africa in 2004.

Sleepy zazen -
stay sweet with it.
Even with a foggy mind
you'll find your way
home

Tanto's words

now and Zen

Zen Open Circle sits
every Friday from 6-8pm
at the Buddhist Library,
90 Church Street,
Camperdown NSW 2050
T: 02 9519 6054.

The seven day Autumn
sesshin (retreat) will be
held at Gorricks Run
between 17-24 April.

The next **zazenkai** will
be held at the Buddhist
Library on Sunday 29 May
(from 9am-3pm) Bring
lunch.

The ZOC Council will
meet at 8pm Friday 27
May at the Buddhist
Library. All are welcome.

Membership of ZOC is
open to everyone. There
is an annual fee of \$50.
Membership forms are
available from our
secretary Jacqui Godwin.

If you would like to **join our
email list**, please email
[jacquelinegodwin@dodo.
com.au](mailto:jacquelinegodwin@dodo.com.au) and put ZOC
Mailing List in the
subject line.

The first of Nigel
Bowen's interviews with
well-known Buddhists
can be found on
page 2.

Barnesy the Buddhist

An interview by Nigel Bowen

Mention the name Jimmy Barnes and the image of a gentle, teetotal Buddhist is not one that typically springs to the mind of anyone familiar with the vodka-fuelled performances of Cold Chisel. But, as I discovered, there is a lot more to Australia's archetypal rock'n'roll wildman/working-class hero than meets the eye.

What kind of religious environment did you grow up in?

"My earliest recollections are of the Salvation Army. It was joyous - lots of singing, lots of celebration. At that point I didn't pay much attention to the fire and brimstone aspect.

How did you get involved in Buddhism?

"I met my wife Jane in 1979 and she'd been bought up as a Thai Buddhist. I didn't consider myself involved in the religion at that point - I was in a rock band. But I would watch Jane meditate, light incense and give alms to monks. Around 1989 someone invited Jane to a forest monks' monastery in Bundanoon. She found it a good place and suggested I learn meditation there.

What appealed to you about going there?

"They were really compassionate, good people. I went to learn about meditation not Buddhism but the more I learnt about Buddhism the more I learnt it wasn't about religion - it was about life itself. It wasn't about something you were aiming for in the afterlife it was something you were aiming for in this life. That for me was very attractive.

Do you consider yourself a Buddhist?

"I see myself as a Buddhist but I don't see Buddhism as a religion - I see it as a way to live your life. It is about growing personally, about becoming a better person.

How has your Buddhist practice changed you?

"I meditate every evening and, when I'm not touring, every morning. I find myself leaning towards a gentler lifestyle because of it. I'm completely straight and

sober and I find that helps me stay focused on what I'm doing with my spirituality. I'm leaning more towards being a vegetarian... there are a lot of changes in my life that are in the process of happening. I follow the Buddhist precepts as much as I can. I choose not to mess people around. I choose not to try and have sex with everyone I see. I choose not to kill people. I choose to be a more compassionate person. I choose to try and respond rather than react. Not always am I successful at that but that is what I try and do.

What do you make of Buddhist concepts like reincarnation and karma?

"I don't think you're here in this life and that's it. I don't know if I die and come back as another human being but I think my energy... well energy goes on forever. I believe in karma. If I do the right thing good things seem to happen to me. If I do the wrong thing, I can't live with myself, so it hurts me.

Why did you, who has all the things that are supposed to make you happy, feel this spiritual hunger?

"I had an awakening over a period of a few years. I realised I wasn't happy. I had cars, houses, horses, dogs, cats, people depending on me, I was making money hand over fist but I wasn't any happier - there was still turmoil.

What are your thoughts on fame and wealth these days?

"Money and celebrity has its benefits. One of the great things about my work is that I bring joy to people. Being artist, that is what you do. I can make people forget about their troubles, I can inspire people, I can make people laugh, make them think about themselves, about serious political or social issues.

"But it is a double-edged sword - you can really lose your self in amongst it. I made a heap of money but when I lost it and walked away I realised I still had everything I needed. It was a great load off my shoulders to realise that all that money and all that fame wasn't that important to me. It was just about being able to do what I love to do and having my family and loved ones near me and safe."

Why do you think so many people from a Christian background are embracing Buddhism?

"When we were in Bowral Jane and I started a soup kitchen. The Salvation Army lent us their hall to do it and there was a Catholic Church across the road. People would come from the church to help but when they found we were Buddhist they'd say, 'It is really great you're doing this but unless you become a Catholic you're going to burn in hell'.

"People are fed up with organised religion because it seems to be all about controlling the masses. Spirituality seems to be more about the individual and Buddhism seems to fit more into that individual path. It is not about the fear factor. It is about now, it about change, it about growing whereas a lot of religions seem to be stuck in the Dark Ages. The Catholic Church is getting a big bashing at the moment because of paedophilia and that stuff but I think it just has to open up its heart, open up its teachings and see why it started. Religion over the last few thousand years has developed into a way of control and spirituality is not about control, it is about opening up.



Giraffes in the Masai Mara

Brushing up

Nell has an exhibition at Roslyn Oxley Gallery in May 2005.

Being at ease is the gift

Yunyen asked Daowu, 'How does the Bodhisattva Kuanyin use those many hands and eyes?' Daowu answered, 'It is like someone in the middle of the night reaching behind her head for a pillow.' Yunyen said, 'Ah, I understand.' Daowu said, 'How do you understand it?' Yunyen said, 'All over the body are hands and eyes.' Daowu, 'Beautifully expressed but that is only eight tenths of the matter.' Yunyen said, 'How would you say it, older brother?' Daowu said, 'Throughout the body hands and eyes.'

I may take the last bit first. It's important to know that these are two elder brothers in the sense that they are brothers, they learned and studied together. Daowu is more senior in the lineage but they are both sitting here in a sort of dusk, a deep contented dusk. They are equals and they are enjoying lazing about in the dusk. This is not a contest. *This*, right here, is not a contest!

When Daowu says, 'Beautifully expressed, but only eight tenths of the matter,' please remember that one autumn leaf is the entire autumn. Never doubt it. Eight tenths is a hundred percent of the matter. So lay down any thought of right and wrong, of eight out of ten. It's eleven out of ten every time. In a sense this part of the koan helps us check in at the door of that pesky Protestant work ethic, the 'A' student complex, the 'good better best' syndrome. Like the koan as a whole it is a deep instruction in the fact that there is nowhere to go and nothing to do. We're standing in it. We cannot advance towards it. I hope each moment of sesshin will give you a new and deeper appreciation of the word lazy. You've earned it. . .

The Bodhisattva Kuanyin is the human fleshing out of your Zen insight. She asks you, how do you convey that heart-mind in all the actions of your life? The koan implies that touching this possibility might give you many hands and eyes. Our particular Kuanyin is not a many-armed Kuanyin but you may have seen one with eight arms - eight representing a beneficial eternity of sorts - and in each hand, an eye. How strange and lovely - an eye in the palm of the hand.

This points to the endlessly skilful means that are born of simple, open, clean love. It's endlessly creative. It can reach to every corner of a moment and it reaches into every corner of time and space. It's an unlimited touching and being touched. And it's very simple experience. By simple, I mean as simple as those stones and rocks up there on the cliff. They are not complicated by any complaint at all. They have not yet found any fault with the way things are. It's as simple as catching a ball. How is it that you can shift your hand up and catch a ball suddenly appearing from somewhere, before the chance for thought? It's as mysterious as the skateboard kids with their skateboards sticking to their feet even though it can't happen. It's as simple as picking up a child. With no thought of self or child. And in this koan it as simple as reaching in the dark, before and beyond thought, for what you need. A great working description of what practice comes down to, by the way. Daowu says, 'It's like someone in the middle of the night reaching her hand behind her head for a pillow.' Not even waking up. Not even needing to search for a pillow.

When you sleep, who takes care of things? Once it was your mother. Who is it now? Who was it then really? When you're not there in deep sleep, who is that? When you head into sleep, remember that you are entering a mysterious koan - which is, who is sleeping? who is taking care of this strange little entity called 'I' which somehow with luck will be there in the morning but in the meantime where is it? Where did it go? So in the dark, in the night, without a thought of reaching for anything, finding the pillow and pulling it under your head, this is what the bodhisattva of compassion does, with the precision and effortlessness of her many hundreds of thousands of hands and eyes. It's pointing to that state that is non-thinking, the deep ease that may turn out to open there. All the extra pillows you'll ever need.

Consider the hands in your life, consider all the hands in your life, and consider them when you were born. You were born into a pair of human hands. Somebody caught you. Somebody cradled you. You fitted into a pair of hands. That was entirely enough at the very original moment of your consciousness in this life.

You were received as a baby. Think about all the times in which you have been touched by hands that see you, that truly see you. Feel in your heart for those moments when you have touched another with hands that really see them. You know how beautiful that is, that kind of touch. We need it to live. When you touch with hands that see the other, that is Kuanyin. When you touch with hands that directly see the other, and do not see yourself first - hands that take in the other as yourself.

And spare a moment's thought, as we did in morning sutras today, for all the mothers of the world. Perhaps that's why Kuanyin gravitated gradually from being a male bodhisattva - they all try to start out that way, at least in the last three or four thousand years! - to being a more definitely female bodhisattva. Just as Mary made her way back in the Christian pantheon after being a mere nobody for a long time. The mothers of the world in a sense take care of the ten thousand things so that you will be OK. OK really means at one. Complete. I think about my mother making lunches for us kids, in among the hundred things to be done in the morning, and hardly thinking of herself, just juggling that kind of endless complexity with her many hands and eyes. The thousand hands and eyes of your mother. It will be so if you look, even if you have acquired a certain attitude about your mother!

Try dropping that. Sometimes it breaks through suddenly. One time I remember opening my play-lunch and it was the usual old thing, a date sandwich one side, and maybe a Vegemite and cheese on the other side, and I started eating the interesting bit and leaving the crust as usual, and then suddenly as I was about to screw the rest up and chuck it in the bin and go play, suddenly it just reached me, that 'My mother made this.' It suddenly reached right into me. My mother who loves me made this because she loves me, not because I have to have a play-lunch and she has to get that out of the way but because she loves me and her love was right there in my hand, and I just sat there crying for a while. And I did eat my crusts that day, but obviously not often enough!

So that's the way the universe provides us with an inkling of compassion - sudden

and whole. It's not unlike the way the universe just gives us our lives. If you've been at a birth you'll know the revelation of complete giving that the arrival of a baby is. It comes from nowhere. There it is. Complete. Amazing. When you look into a baby's eyes you see that the whole universe has just been delivered into the universe. And if you're with a dying person you're there completely with the fact that the universe asks everything of us, it takes us back in. And that's the marvelous fantastic thing. Everything given. Everything asked.

It's like yesterday afternoon during Jukai. An eagle was provided overhead, a blessing. It's like after Jukai, rain is provided. Another blessing. The rain last night, if you needed any reassurance about the nature of blessing, told the whole story. Nothing needed until it happened.

Another lovely example of non-thinking - I heard about the 2002 World Series baseball final. World Series, of course, means American! So the American baseball final called the World Series. The rest of the world not invited! But a very fine player called J T Snow was making a complete home run having whacked the ball forever and was running, running, running, and his team had as a mascot a little three year old bat boy who had seen the bat got flung to the ground. It had rolled into the field. And he knew he was programmed to think - go get bat - and his little legs were running right into the melee of people flinging themselves after the ball to chuck it to a base before JT Snow arrived there, and J T Snow deviated his home run into a curve, picked the child up and ran the rest of the home run with the child under his arm. A true home run. Later on they probably said, that was quick thinking. I would have said, that was non-thinking. It ended up being a fine thing that that little child ran on to the field. Mistake revealed as miracle.

So if you're ever busy being kind you may just miss the natural kindness hiding out in the moment. You may even trample on it by accident. Each moment is actually your home run. This moment may open a way to see into the true brilliance and wisdom of compassion. How it springs from non-thinking, how it is the most skilful form of non-thinking in fact. It's as

natural and sudden as lightning. Look for the unsuspected kindness in the odd corners of an event. You'll learn a lot. Because we are all on the home run, nothing can stop it anyway. That's where we are. We don't have to add glory to it.

The koan opens a wonderful glimpse of compassion's action in the night. When Daowu says, 'It's like someone in the middle of the night reaching behind her head for a pillow,' it's an action in the dark of the night and of the self dropped away. He's pointing here to the dark of not knowing, of non-thinking and there the natural action of the heart mind is so immediate, so subtle, you can't be sure it isn't a mistake. Miracle or mistake? You can't tell. And you can't even be completely sure that a mistake is not a miracle, the case is always open. It's open. The heart and ears and hands of Kuanyin and eye in the palm of each hand, always open. That's the nature of the case. . .

Excerpts from Being At Ease is the Gift a teisho, presented 30 September 2004 Sesshin, Gorricks Run

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Bukowski's Dog -

The dog walked down the street.
He didn't think of himself,
instead sniffed everything out
in the open.

Old piss, and last night's bottle -
he passed the hyacinth over.

If the dog thought of anything
it was no-thing. Not a mere
concoction

of anybody's making. Walking
freely, giving birth to things.....

the dog walking.

The street didn't think -
it walked itself open, as wide as it
was.

Christopher McLean

African Highlight #1: Bitten by wild animals



Serengeti lion

We had just put up the tents and were gathering around the table to load our plates with dinner when the young lady jumped onto that table and took all her clothes off. Soon we would all be compelled to join this wild celebration.

Fourteen of us, none over thirty except for the senior citizens from ZOC, had been bouncing around some of the biggest pot holes in the world for a few days. We were 4 days into a 14-day safari to some of Kenya and Tanzania's most famous Wildlife Parks (or Game Parks in the charming jargon of the hunter). We had spent 2 days camped in the Masai Mara filling up our cameras with lions, zebras and giraffes. And now, at the end of another long day inside the washing machine (converted truck with a pop top for animal viewing) we'd arrived at a perfect grass and tree covered campsite. It was deserted, small and intimate and miraculously had a sit-on loo. Unfortunately no showers and no hot showers - hot showers weren't indigenous to the parts of Africa we visited.

Each evening when we arrived at a campsite we would put up our two person tents. These tents went up remarkably easily, could take lots of punishment, and didn't need any pegs. They would be ideal for Sesshin. So here on the edge of Lake Nakuru we hauled the tents out of the truck and claimed our spots under the soothing reach of one of the inviting trees.

Seven tents up and mats rolled out and gear chucked in. And hungry. Costa (our Tanzanian cook who specialised in meat

garnished with meat - turn away oh you of little meat) was preparing some more flesh. A couple of fast tent putter-upperers were helping put plates and condiments on the table when it all started.

Kate - we hadn't seen much of her but that was to change - bolted from the tents past those hovering appetites. She jumped on the table and stripped to her panties (Bonds) and bra (couldn't catch the brand) and frantically danced from foot to foot while rhythmically slapping different parts of her body. Every few seconds she would chant at the top of her vocal range - Ants! Ants! Ants! And then Ouch! Ouch! Ouch! Along with a few words from the Christian tradition. We laughed of course.

"Our tent is covered in ants inside and out," she managed. We grabbed our torches and headed for our tents to prove she alone had been the unlucky one to pitch on the ant's nest. She hadn't.

My torch beam fell on the outside of our tent which had achieved a life of its own. Inside the ants poured from the tent's peak like molasses. And five minutes later 14 people in underwear were dancing around the campfire trying to pick off huge killers with mandibles the size of your thumb and forefinger. Aussies, Canadians, Irish and Germans in a bizarre African survival dance.

It took two desperate hours for grim, coordinated teams of Terminators to shake out the tents and gear, move them to safer ground and pour barriers of kerosene around them.

By midnight Deborah and I were gratefully asleep though we heard a few Irish bush cries (Lord jumping Jesus there's millions of the buggers - helllllllp) in the Twilight Zone. The morning found the Irish and the Germans had abandoned their tents to the local fauna. They were in truck, in their sleeping bags twisted into agonies of sleeplessness. And they were covered in bites. There were no ants in the truck - just SAS mosquitos. The European Union was rethinking its African aid.

Tents and food went down in a flash and the morning at Lake Nakuru was magic. The lake shimmered vibrant pink with millions of flamingos and its shores were blessed with Thompson gazelles and white Rhino.



Flamingos at Lake Nakuru

Stay tuned for African Highlight #2: Eating Goat with the Masai. And Egyptian Highlights on request.

Herb Peppard

Steps on dry grass

'Hi Yvonne ... just come round this way where the ground is a bit drier and you won't sink in,' directed Ginger, the templekeeper. I walked across the lush grass at the front. The cab disappeared back down the valley splashing through puddles full with early morning winter rain. 'C'mon in. Good to see you.' We got no further than the kitchen where we stayed talking for ages over tea. There was no hurry.

It was my first visit to the Palolo Zen Center, about ten minutes out of Waikiki, and home to the Honolulu Diamond Sangha. I arrived just after rohatsu, a time when the Center's schedule was a little more relaxed and visitors could stay.



Temple bell

I settled in to the daily schedule of zazen and samu. So much so that I found myself taking courier deliveries, answering the phone, and greeting visitors! Quite a few people called in to drop off Xmas gifts, rehearse the New Years Day drama, come for lunch, enquire about the practice or book a room for NYE, or just call in to say hi. We laughed until our stomachs hurt

and spent many precious and quiet moments together.

I was able to spend a little time with Roshi (Robert Aitken) one morning. Although recovering from ill health, his mind was still sharp and active (at 87). He was working on translating some Chinese poetry. Many boxes containing Roshi's tapes, writings, photos, books 'n' stuff were stored in one of the rooms. They were in the process of being catalogued before the boxes went off to the Archive Department at the University of Hawaii.

On New Years Eve we sat from 7.00pm to midnight. I took a quick nap in the middle so that I could stay awake and enjoy the party after midnight. Firecrackers echoed up all the valley and got closer and louder as midnight approached. By then the zendo was full. At 12.00 the jiki started a slow beat on the taiko drum on the deck followed by a sounding of the densho (the big temple bell) 108 times - very loud! Then it was party time - drinks and good food outside by candlelight! One of the guys gave an amazing performance of taiko drumming on the front deck.

It proved to be a significant moment for me in many ways as I journey along the path. I'm glad I found that dry grass to walk on.

Yvonne Hales



Palolo Zen Center, Hawaii

Just arrived

Patrick Hobbs and Lis Surbey have a son, Ryan Peter Hobbs, born at 3.05am on 4 March. He weighed 3.3 kg, or 7½ pounds for the imperially minded. Mother and baby continue to do well. Patrick says he is achingly beautiful.

He does not know the last word

Don't fight the heat - that's stinginess.

Your circumstances are not an enemy until you make an enemy of your circumstances.

If you do so, then let them defeat you entirely.

Happiness - strictly speaking - means *what is happening*, right now.

Accord completely with what is happening, and it will not hinder you. It will not ever be happening to you in any personal sense. *You will step free.*

The winds of circumstance – not cold, or comfortable – as always, are blowing across nothing. When can they harm? Who can they harm?

What hurts, is what we add to that. The trees add nothing. They are completely honest with their circumstances.

This is true compassion for the self - the compassionate action of the Bodhisattva Kuan Yin with her many hands and eyes.

So let go.

Letting go is giving, dana, the first and greatest Paramita, the source of all the others.

Then every moment is fresh and full of surprises: A tiny sneaky breeze. A lull or a wave in the insect song. A strange lightness of being.

So be generous with yourself. Accept the offer of the heat.

Generosity turns out to be not being afraid to receive a single thing.

It is a great thing to sit here in steady companionship with the forceful heat of our ancient continent - enduring like rocks and trees, happy with what is happening, practising the happiness that cannot be bought or sold.

Keeping close company with the land, every beat of light that falls on it from dawn to dark, every waft of breeze, every cloud shadow, every new movement in the insect symphony.

(An atonal masterpiece)

And - yes - keeping close company with the marvellous persistence of flies in their brief season here.

Forgive them their desperate love of moisture, and their tickling feet.

All over the body are hands and eyes!

So see if you can meet each thing that happens with the most pure kind of attention, sheer attention - attention that is not effort, and not habit.

It's like each moment you are stepping from a newly landed spaceship on the Blue Planet. Let each thing break out of its old habit of your consciousness and be a glimpse of your own original face.

Lose your names for things. Shed your own name. Let everything - in the slow spell of the heat - well back up alive, brand new.

When you let go of your fear of what may happen next, you are left with the natural courage you enjoyed as a child. A child does not lean very far into the future, and does not waste much time fearing it.

Just rely on the course of events, as you knew to do as a child. That reliance brings happiness and clarity at every step.

And then every mistake is just another miracle of being.

So keep up your practice with the sheer persistence of these tiny and unceasing flies.

It's a great adventure. And you know the motto: *Never give up on an adventure.*

Great Heat Summer Sesshin - Gorricks Run, 2004

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Open Secret is edited by Ann Williams and Patrick Hobbs with ZOC

Please send your words, random thoughts, stories of the way, jokes, puns, suggestions and pictures to: Ann Williams
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African photos by Herb Peppard and Deborah Chadwick. Hawaiian photos by Yvonne Hales.

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