

# ROOT & BRANCH

Newsletter of the Original Root Zen Center  
May 2009



*ORZC's  
Peace  
Pantry  
opens!  
See page 4.*

*Photo/  
Darin  
Zimpel*

## Let me start over

*By Mathew Somlai*

As I write this I read  
that Ashton Kutcher challenged CNN  
to see who will be the first to get one million twitter followers  
whatever that means.

Wait, let me start over.  
No true poet would begin with a throw  
to twitter and celebrity  
unless they wished to tear it down.

Who would listen to such blahgging  
as I write this  
who would be interested in such blasé ideas  
with throws to clichéd discussions of mass media.

Wait. Let me start over.

Pass the Dutchie on the left hand side is playing  
on iTunes radio as I prepare for class  
and wonder how and why one million people  
can be driven to focus on the passage of electrons.

Another student of mine plagiarized  
another idea from the stream of electrons cluttering energy space  
and I feel sick wanting to discuss the one electron theory  
and receiving an eye roll and another's words basically saying,  
"LEAVE ME ALONE."

Wait. Let me. Start over.  
Should that have been a period or exclamation mark:  
Am I wasting time.  
This poem is making me feel like I am 13 ruminating in my room?

Time is passing so quickly.  
There is so much to do  
And I really want to do it all, but I am tired, but I am running out of page  
space and do I really want to finish on such an angst?

Wait! Let me start over! Wait please! Please just one more second please. Please!

Let me start over

# Garden Tender's Invocation

By Linda Somlai

See. Hear.

Smell. Taste. Touch.

Create.

Not for me.

Make and keep an intention  
to bring no harm.

Be mindful of your body.

Step with care and  
offer a gentle touch.

Reflect simple beauty as  
it mirrors the love within.

Express without judgment.

Aspire to pure effort.

This garden is not owned, so  
nothing

to crave or hold.

Act with respect, kindness and  
be joy.

Carefully

observe the natural  
balance and harmony.

Heal where possible and

let your effort

ease

another's task.

This garden provides

infinite shelter

and

peace.

Everything fits

and there is a place

for all.

# Breakout

By Tony Somlai

Originally, this piece was titled humility. My limited research found that there was not much written about this wonderful human trait. As I investigated the idea further it became clear that human attachment to a sense of self does not lead to being simple or ordinary. There does not seem to be much interest in going to a weekend "humility" workshop where the only thing to learn is how to become humble. Therefore, I was pretty sure that you (the reader) would quickly skim over a piece titled "humility." The title "Breakout" is something everyone could find interesting. Most human beings want to break free of their struggle with this suffering world. Few people realize the gate is a simple and modest one.

I woke up the other day alone in a strange land. Oh no, it wasn't some sort of psychic awakening in a metaphysical Disneyland. Instead, I woke up in Warsaw, Poland knowing only the words kielbasa and pierogi. To the average Pole I had no title, no skills, nothing that was particularly valued by Polish society. I decided on a simple plan - obey the rules and flow with the consciousness of the Polish people. I

found them to be beautiful, kind, and compassionate. They viewed me as ordinary, just another human being walking down the street. It humbled me to know people without any identification of who I was or should be. I had attained by true calling; an expert about nothing.

Humility is a strength not a weakness. It is a difficult virtue to teach our children if we have failed to attain it ourselves. In an environment of competitive aggression, modesty is not worth much. We compete for attention, grades, love, jobs, and money. Self-effacing perspectives on life are not commodities that can be traded for anything of great value. Instead, selfish thoughts and actions are the currency of modern life. We spend an inordinate amount of time constantly reviewing how we are doing. Obsessively, we check to make sure our needs are being met in the hopes of a safer tomorrow. This constant repetition of fear gives a false, and deluded, sense of control over reality. Round and round, we lock ourselves into intensifying the very karma that creates suffering. We find meaning in our own personal harm, in an ego that grows larger in isolation and loneliness.

Self-effacing and self-deprecating humor are the playground where respect plays

Karma is a  
beautiful tool  
because it will  
always point to  
what needs our  
attention.

Breakout see page 5

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## Early Spring Kensho

(for Abbot EHM)

Ice and snow still.

Robins hop between drifts.

-Kim House

# The Revival of the Renaissance of Rummage

*By Sr. Rev. Teacher and Elder, Sue Jaimes*

After a lengthy hiatus; it was time for the Renaissance of Rummage to be re-born in 2009. Many years ago, we had an idea (rather innovative for more conservative Zen Centers) to have a rummage sale. It was a way to give back to the community where we live and practice. The name was suggested by our current MT Linda Somlai. Sure, if we could make a few bucks; that would be great. But our goal was to sell cheaply or actually give away high quality items to those folks who had a need. We had a bakery booth; and served free coffee to early morning bargain hunters. We always held our sales in March; when the earth starts to give birth to itself and cabin fever is at its pitch. It gave a new meaning to the words, "March Madness." We actually had many repeat customers who would ask us, "Do you have a date for next year's sale?" For 4 years we developed an earnest following of clientele, scavengers, and those in real need.

But somehow, our energy for this huge endeavor waned. We had other more pressing issues at hand. There were no rummage sales for five years. And then....."Hey, we've got some great baby items we want to get rid of...and furniture....and household stuff...and tools...and fishing equipment.....and books ...and CD's and videos.... STUFF, etc, etc.

And so, this year with a team of tireless ORZC volunteers, we revived the R of R on March 21st. Our admission price was a non-

perishable food pantry item to be donated back to the community. We put up flyers and placed ads in various papers. Our sale rules were simple: sale from 9-1:00. 1:00-2:00 was half price. And 2:00-3:00 was free with any donation. Homemade bakery items were priced reasonably or given away to those who were hungry.

Need I tell you that the sale was a tremendous success? Many folks affected by the current economy took advantage of our freely offered gifts, cast-offs, and delectable goodies.

So here's the catch: Our MT's, Abbot, SRT, T's, and TNT's voted overwhelmingly to keep the Renaissance going. There will definitely be another R of R next March. Start putting aside your unwanted stuff NOW. Spring-cleaning means help for those in need!

(No clothes, appliances, exercise equipment, t.v.'s, outdated electronics, please.) We are able to store a limited supply of items in our basement and at private homes. If you have nice stuff, please consider a donation to ORZC. Because we are recognized as a 501 (c) 3 charitable institution, you can receive a donation slip for your taxes. Contact Sue with any questions or concerns (262-637-3885).

Thank you for your generosity to our community and to our Zen Center. And please pass the word around. 2010 sale date to be announced shortly.

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## The Plumber

*By Paul Reese*

The plumber's wife  
Displeased with his job  
Readies □  
She's kind of a snob.  
"Why just a plumber  
People laugh at your work  
Under broken sinks  
Is where you will lurk. □  
Your hands are in toilets  
Then you give me a hug  
The thought is disgusting  
You're like a gross bug  
Always the butt end of jokes  
People talk of your crack  
The will to do better  
Is just what you lack.  
You get no respect  
Not a thank you, not a tip  
You work all day  
Just to fix a drip."

This happens quiet often  
The plumber stood with a smile

Every once in a while.  
"My dear it's easy  
It is so clear to see  
I love my job

It may not be glamorous  
Or bring me much fame  
I do what I do  
Without any shame  
I don't get much respect  
That much is true  
But its given me a perspective  
That's totally new.  
You got it all wrong  
Standing there hands on your hips  
I fix people's leaks  
In a world full of drips."



*Elder Teacher Sue Jaimes and Rev. Teacher Kim House at the Peace Pantry Blessing.  
Photo/Darin Zimpel*

# Peace Pantry

“Happiness is having more than one full tummy”

– MT Tony Somlai

*By Foodie Master Bethany Zimpel*

April was a busy month for the ORZC Peace Pantry! We had a beautiful opening blessing ceremony led by Master Teacher Linda Somlai on Thursday, April 16th. Abbot Mathew Somlai gave the opening talk, Senior Rev. Teacher Sue Jaimes shared a personal story and five preceptor Darin Zimpel read a poem he wrote for the Peace Pantry. Also, MT Linda offered a mantra: “No Self, No Other, Joyful Effort” while burning sage for the blessing and Peace-keeper Michael Johnson created the painting that is hanging above the Peace Pantry doorway. Everyone was very generous with donations for the Pantry shelves. Deep hapchong to all for guiding the loving energy of this opening ceremony. The Racine Journal Times covered the ceremony and reporter, Lindsey Fiori, wrote an article that appeared in the Friday, April 19th Local section of the newspaper.

The month of April saw not only two families receive help but also give back to the Pantry. The first recipient brought donations when visiting to get some items for her son’s family, which is struggling with a newborn and two autistic sons. Another family went through a box brought to them and sent items they couldn’t use back to the Pantry to help someone else. We have also received outside offers to help raise donations for the Pantry. It is clear that the Peace Pantry’s effort is inspiring others to help.

Also at the opening ceremony the community members wrote a word or phrase on a sheet of paper, and then Darin wrote a poem including all of the words. The following is the Community Peace Pantry poem which will be posted in the pantry room.

Peace Pantry  
 Hope for all  
 And happiness bring joy.  
 Kindness, thoughtfulness and grace  
 Provide hope for all and peace.

From mommy love  
 To means to a full tummy,  
 This pantry is a healing respite  
 Of how sharing brings a full belly.

Yummm.  
 Together we can hit a home run.

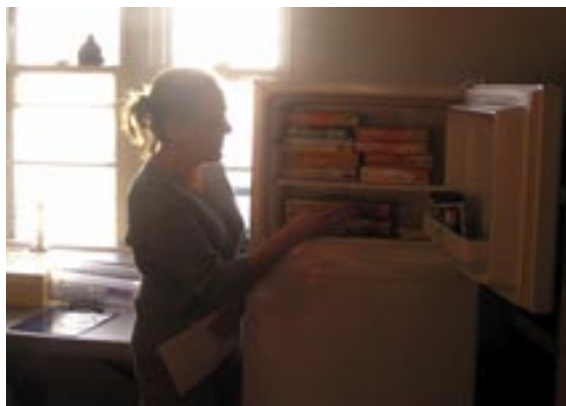
## Feeding Others Begins

*By Darin Zimpel*

With opening your heart  
 And watching the hand follow.  
 Open hearts  
 Leave hands no choice  
 But to reach out,  
 Open  
 And let go.

Motion this moment  
 Causes motion  
 The next moment.  
 It is unavoidable.  
 We can’t know and  
 We don’t need to know  
 How the story ends.

Like feeding birds,  
 The only requirements  
 Are effort and love.  
 And maybe a handful  
 Of hope  
 For the unknown  
 Destiny of seeds.



*Bethany Zimpel, ORZC's Foodie Master, at the Peace Pantry Blessing on April 18,*

# This Life

By Marie Block

Lying in bed, attempting to get rid of excruciating despair and emptiness, darkness swallows everything. No end, no relief, to this torture of living. Thoughts of death cause great sorrow and great relief. This feels like the only way in a pain consumed life.

What came after wakes one up. What came after brought life.

*This life is not about me.*

Images of loved ones appear, seeing their suffering if this was the end.

NO! Darkness rushes out like a strong gust of wind. Light enters your eyes. Taste it on your tongue. You are alive. You are alive to bring joy and happiness. You are alive to love and be

loved. Live. Live. Let hope trickle in. Body, heart, mind, hara, overflowing with love for all - past, present, and future.

This love is what keeps us going every day. Most of the time we do not even think about it; love appears and flows effortlessly. Yet sometimes we get stuck. Stuck in mind. Stuck in past. Stuck in future. Stuck in the mud of ego. Stuck in the shadow of desire, anger, or ignorance. Sometimes all three appear. On those days let fingers run over a mala, "great love, great compassion, only helping." The mantra returns us to love and clarity. "Great love, great compassion, only helping."

Love brings us back. People who love us notice withdrawal, sadness, anger, and ask about it. This takes great love. Honesty. This takes great strength. Talk. Hug. Eat together. Practice together. The mud loosens up. Happiness enters in. Share it with others.

*This life is love.*

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## Breakout from page 2

with humility. Checking my email at the Marriot Hotel business center in Warsaw, Poland I sit next to an Italian businessman also checking his email. I know that he is Italian because he keeps talking to each email with "Mama Mia." His Rolex watch and jewelry are worth more monetarily than my accumulated lack of wealth. He has a noisy apple on a plate with three pieces of smoked cheese. No matter how he tries to bite into the beautiful, red apple there is an ear-piercing crunch. His head must be empty because each chew echoes through his cranium as if knocking around the walls of the Grand Canyon. "Crunch, munch, munch, chew and swallow." "Crunch, munch, munch, chew and swallow." It is a very big apple and he, unfortunately, is a slow eater. He chews cheese with an open mouth and a slight gushing - slurping sound. When he decides to mix the apple with the cheese the business center is a rock arena of crunch, munch, munch, gush, slurp, chew, swallow, and "Mama Mia." Much to my discomfort I've always had a strong mind regarding table manners. It lurks in that part of my brain next to my personal disgust with dirty fingernails. I sit there and wonder what is really loud as this Italian businessman with the Rolex watch consumes my attention. Is it the Italian man, the apple, or my mind? I finish the email, log out, and decide to step outside of the hotel to appreciate the sunset. Unfortunately, the sound of one apple being chomped still distracted me. I exited the main entrance to the hotel and walked about 10 feet there. I glanced across the street and there in three

foot high, red letters was, A-P-P-L-E computers written on the side of a white delivery van.

Karma is a beautiful tool because it will always point to what needs our attention. Humility is deep gratitude for this very life, simply as it is. If we are angry at the situation and condition we find ourselves with no gratitude, no humility, and only the illusion of self. And with ego there is always anger and discomfort because things are not how we want them. Dignity for the human condition and the plight of all beings is based on the acceptance of humility. There is no "I" that has to worry about getting anything. The universe, in its infinite and loving wisdom, will always care and guide you. Good and bad times provide you with the opportunity to reveal this loving-kindness nature. We are students in an incredibly beautiful classroom. It is time to learn how to "breakout" from the idea that this should all be different.

"Breakout" takes discipline, hope, and faith. But even "breakout" is a delusion since we can become trapped in another idea. After all, what is it that needs to escape? This life? This moment? A red apple? Big red letters spelling APPLE? The mind-numbing sense of self-importance can even invade our attempt at waking up. Perhaps, it would be better to view this as a "break-in" where there is complete freedom in directly experiencing this moment with all of our senses. You want enlightenment? No problem. Simply eat a red apple, become an expert on nothing, and attain great gratitude for the gift of this humble life.

# Buddha's Birthday Poem

April 5, 2009

Jeno Somlai, RT and Mathew Somlai, SRT

An ode to beat poetry (snapping allowed)

it all begins with a beat

2/4 into 3/4

but what if the song grows

3/4 becomes 4/4

I want mom, I want mom

turns into ooh candy ooh

and a diaper ends up as a mural of scat

(snap only for your favorite)

Bee Bee Bo's!

and sucking bootys (the dog)

and an unwrapping mummy

and exposed ankle bones

and fraggle rock till 9 (or maybe 14)

and running out of fingers to hold up for the camera

and almost dying in a river

and being told not to drink, with a slur

and shmorn

and silence ... for too long

for too long, unable to know how to talk

or scat!

(snap only for me)

what if family was in front, not behind

where Buddha brothers

come back to when they both stop leaving

what if our stupid stories become strength

rather than embarrassment

and the word uncle

is spoken in 6/4. 10/4. 25/4, 100/4

what happens when the mind scats

(snap away the mind)

what happens when we hear every new beat

as one with ours

and honor the birth of each dharma sister and brother

with each of our beats

until and beyond our beat returns to 3,2,1

(snap)



**Buddha's Birthday!** ORZC held its Buddha's Birthday Celebration on April 5 at the Zen Center. (Top) Elder Teacher Sue Jaimes led the ceremony, which celebrates the birth of the historic Buddha 2,600 years ago. But really it's everyone's birthday, because we're all Buddhas. Teacher-in-Training Marie Block sits behind. (Middle right) Peacekeeper Bethany Zimpel makes a gift bag with Orissa Somlai and Rev. Teacher Jeno Somlai. (Middle left) Rev. Teacher Dustin Block during ceremony. (Bottom - Left to right) Abbot Mathew Somlai, Jeno and Chris Roy make gift bags. *Photos/Darin Zimpel*



# The Bare Bones

*ORZC's upcoming classes, ceremonies and community events*

## **Creative Asylum, starting Thursday, May 14th from 6:45 to 8 pm**

Given the times we live in we need even greater use of our imagination to create new ways of helping each other with limited resources. Here, at ORZC, we have a place where inspiration and imagination find innovative approaches to sharing our creative outlets together in a safe and nonjudgmental environment. Starting Thursday, April 9th from 6:45 to 8 pm we will participate in the fun-art-fest called Creative Asylum. We will meet every 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month right after Peace Grub (which starts at 5:30 and is open to the ORZC Community). So, you can eat and create all in the same night!! Master Teachers Linda and Tony Somlai will be leading Creative Asylum and look forward to a large turnout for this no-cost-2-u event.

## **Garden Work Retreat 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, May 9**

It's been a long season of winter with much cold and snow. Perhaps you've been indoors for far too long. Well, the wind is hanging with a hint of mildness (for us Wisconsinites that's a temp of about 40 degrees and a breeze under 5 mph). Buds are poking, birds are nesting, trees are fuzzed with new growth. So, shake off the dust, wipe away the cobwebs, wear outdoor clothes and sturdy shoes, and bring a garden tool if you have one. Join us for Garden Retreat Day, when we welcome the awakening garden with pruning, raking and tidy-ing. Lunch is provided and daffodils will be blooming! Led by Master Teacher Linda Somlai

## **Women's Retreat Planning Meeting, 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 12**

## **Zen Cooking Class, 4 weeks, Sun. May 17 - June 7, 7 - 8:30 pm**

Why eat? We'll explore this question and many others during this 4-week Sunday evening class. With a love heart and meticulous attention, you can help others through food and cooking. We'll look at seasonality, harmony and balance, and economy when choosing food and recipes. Most importantly, we'll cook together. No cooking skills required. Cost is \$15 for supplies. Register by calling 262-930-1901 or e-mail [ORZC@wi.rr.com](mailto:ORZC@wi.rr.com). Led by Senior Rev. Teacher Holly Johnson.

## **Compassion Fest Planning Meeting, 6 p.m. Wednesday, May 27**

Bring your energy and ideas for this year's celebration of compassion! Compassion Fest is scheduled for Sunday, Oct. 4. Call Holly at 262-930-1901 if you would like to help but can't make it to the meeting.

## **14th Annual Women's Retreat – Lotus Warrior: Gratitude Heart Opens**

*Thursday, June 11-noon Sunday, June 14*

What is woman? What is my strength? How can I connect with my intuitive and joyous self? How can I do this during times of suffering and confusion? Explore these questions and more through creative practices, movement, meditation, rest and ceremony. All women are welcome to attend part or all of the retreat. Retreat begins at 5 p.m. Thursday with opening ceremony and dinner.

## **Compassion Fest Planning Meeting, 6 p.m. Wednesday, June 24**

## **Garden Buddha's Retreat Friday, July 17-Sunday, July 19**

This weekend retreat is an opportunity to practice in ORZC's "outdoor dharma room" – the gardens at the DeKoven Center. No gardening experience is required, just an intention to help all beings (and garden tools if you have any.)

## **Compassion Fest Planning Meeting, 6 p.m. Wednesday, July 22**

## **Sangha picnic 4 p.m. Saturday, July 25**

Celebrate summer with the community! An afternoon of fun and food on the DeKoven grounds. Visit the gardens, play games and share in a famous ORZC potluck. Call or sign up in advance so cooks know how much to bring!

# Daily Schedule

*Meditation practices last about one hour and are held at ORZC, 600 21st St., unless otherwise noted.*

**Monday:** Practice from 6:20-7 a.m.; Dharma talk at 7 p.m. at ORZC.

**Tuesday:** Practice from 6:20-7 a.m.; 10 Direction Energy Helix, Sitting, 7 p.m.

**Wednesday:** Practice from 6:20-7 a.m.; Chanting, 6:30 p.m.; Sitting meditation at 7 p.m.

**Thursday:** Practice from 6:20-7 a.m.; Peace Grub at 5:30 p.m.

**Friday:** Morning Peace Practice from 6:20-7 a.m.

**Saturday:** Bows at 6:20 a.m. practice at 7 a.m. followed by breakfast out with the community; Garden Crew 9:30-11:30 a.m.

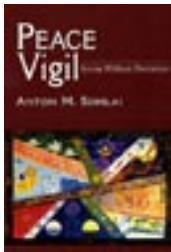
**Sunday:** Class at 7 p.m.

# Monthly Schedule

**Community dinner:** 6 p.m. on the first Friday of each month at a Racine-area restaurant. Sign up at the Zen center.

**Practice dialogues:** Practice dialogues with senior teachers are held on Tuesday and Thursday morning, Wednesday nights and the last Saturday morning of the month. Dialogues are also available upon request. Five minutes notice before practice is often all that is needed.

Original Root Zen Center  
600 21st St.  
Racine, WI 53403



**New Book from ORZC!**

*Peace Vigil - Living Without Hesitation*

by Anton M. Somlai

Available now at:

[www.dragonmountainpress.com](http://www.dragonmountainpress.com)

May 2009

Root & Branch

Original Root Zen Center

## Peace Pantry Recipe

# Butternut Squash Soup

½ cup finely chopped onion  
1 ½ tbsp. peeled, minced fresh ginger root  
3 garlic cloves  
3 tbsp vegetable oil  
4 cups cubed butternut squash  
2 cups vegetable broth  
2 cups water  
2 tbsp lime juice

In large saucepan, sauté onion, ginger and garlic in oil until onion is soft. Add mixture with remaining ingredients except lime juice to large soup pot. Bring to a boil and then simmer until squash is tender, about 15-20 minutes. Puree in small batches in a blender or food processor. Stir in lime juice. This soup may be made 2 days in advance if kept covered and refrigerated. Makes about 6 cups, serving 4.

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