

2007



TENDAI BUDDHIST INSTITUTE

SHINGI

Meanderings

IN THE past twelve years my trusty car Scoobie (a 1995 Subaru Impreza) and I have traveled 165,000 miles together. Scoobie has been reliable for the most part, yet now his age is beginning to show. The radio hasn't worked for more than a year, and he leaks out about a quart of oil between oil changes. The original horn no longer works; it has been replaced by a little horn button on the side of the steering column. In addition to the normal New England Subaru rust around the wheel wells, Scoobie has rust on the frame around the windshield due to a bad seal on a window replacement. And, a few weeks ago he again needed work after being rejected because of an exhaust leak during a state inspection.

Although I am now quite attached to this car, being able to keep Scoobie for this long has sometimes seemed counterintuitive to me. Back in 1995, before I bought Scoobie, I traded in a 1988 Subaru Justy with only 80,000 miles on it. It had a very small oil leak, but other than that it was in perfectly good shape. Since it had spent most of its life in California, it didn't even have any rust. But, that oil leak made me feel uneasy. I could occasionally smell it, and it seemed like the beginning of the end for the car. My conditioning had led me to believe that I couldn't keep driving a car that had a problem with it. I was afraid of the unpredictable, of the idea that my car might break down and disrupt my routine.

My idea that it was irresponsible to drive a car that was too old, unreliable, or unsafe (as defined by ever-improving standards of safety) was formed where I grew up, in the middle class suburbs of Southern California. The tract homes, perfect cars, plastic surgery, and cosmetic dentistry there all suggested that life was not suffering, that we could establish ourselves in a permanent way and find lasting happiness. It was as if all of these material illusions of perfection concealed the suffering of life.

My move to Western Massachusetts was, in a way, like Shakyamuni's initial journey outside of his palace compound. After spending years sheltered from reality, Shakyamuni left the compound and was confronted with images of old age, disease, and death. In my situation, however, it was things and not people that showed me that impermanence and suffering exist. I was confronted with old houses barely held together by haphazard repairs made over the years, with cars that broke down, and with old, dead cars seemingly abandoned in the middle of people's yards. Yet, initially this just seemed strange to me. It took me a while to realize that this is the nature of reality.

When Scoobie started to get old and need repairs, my initial response (conditioned by my upbringing) was that maybe it was time to replace him. But, my friends who (much to my amazement) kept problematic cars and did repairs themselves, frequently pointed out the relative reliability of my car. I eventually saw Scoobie through their eyes. I was forced to confront my attachment to an illusion of control that newer cars provided for me. I began to recognize that decay was a natural process in a car's life and that I would be happier if I could just accept the fact that someday my car might break down.

Recently, after having to rearrange my schedule to fit in all of Scoobie's repairs and after the uneasy fear that Scoobie might not pass inspection next year, my mind started to play its old tricks again. I became convinced that it was time for me to get a new car so that I don't have to experience the uncertainty of the inspection with Scoobie again. Thus, I went to the local Subaru dealership to look at new cars. After listening to the salesman explain all of the new and important safety features on the 2007 Impreza, I was nearly ready to purchase one.

However, the high-pressure tactics of the car salesman had also made me feel a bit uneasy, so I went home to consider this purchase further instead of immediately signing up for a loan. I was fairly certain that I would return in a few days to buy the car. I didn't change my mind about replacing the car until a few days later when I heard an NPR broadcast about global warming. Although my older car is potentially more of a polluter than some newer cars, after weighing the costs and benefits further, I realized that buying an entirely new car would have a huge impact on the environment. According to the Subaru propaganda, Subarus are the only cars made in a zero waste factory. However, the idea of sending a car that is running without problems to slowly decay in a landfill, and depleting new natural *(Continued on Page Three)*

Monthly Bulletin

Tendai-shu New York Betsuin

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Jiunzan Tendaiji and Mahasangha

December Events

❖ **Meditation Meetings every Wednesday 6 p.m., discussion, Meditation Service and pot luck dinner**

- 5 The Role of the Daily Service
- 12 The Fifth Paramita - Dhyana
- 19 *Bonen-kai* (End of Year Observance)
- 26 No Meditation Service
- 31 New Year's Service and New Year's Eve Meditation

❖ **Class**

1 **Morning Service and Sutra Class**, 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. The class begins about 9 a.m. We are starting to examine the *Lankavatara Sutra*. This sutra is a concerns “store house” consciousness (*alaya-vijnana*), and as such is significant in the development of Chinese, Tibetan and Japanese Buddhism. The *Lankavatara Sutra* is a foundation of Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen, The sutra can be found on-line in its entirety at http://lirs.ru/dollanka_eng/lanka-non-diacritical.htm. Another, perhaps more ‘user friendly’ version can be found at, http://www.buddhistinformation.com/lankavatara_sutra.htm. We will probably make it through the first two or three chapters.

❖ 31 **New Year's Service**, 10:30 p.m. – 2:00 a.m.; An especially good time to meditate, contemplating the end of this year and the beginning of the New Year. This year we will also include a refuge ceremony. The last meditation period will begin about 10:30 p.m., beginning with the refuge ceremony and continuing on to the New Year meditation. The service will be over about 12:20 a.m. Following the service we will have a New Year's observance with traditional American and Japanese finger foods, champagne, sake, etc. Join us for this very special service and celebration.

❖ A new web site design will be mounted around the beginning of the year. The domain name (tendai.org) will remain the same. We are redesigning this site to be more responsive to changes and provide a better resource for all members.

Once we have completed the changes to the web site we will cut back drastically on printing the *Shingi*. We would like people to rely upon the web site. The beginning of every month we will send out a broadcast e-mail with a link to the *Shingi* on the web site. The *Shingi* will continue to be published. We realize that not everyone uses the internet, **so if you would like to receive a paper version we will mail it to you. Please notify us by telephone if you would like a monthly *Shingi* mailed to you.**

Onyo Susan Bues will be providing photos of events at Jiunzan Tendai-ji, as well as her beautiful nature scenes, to grace the pages of *Shingi*. Thank you!

Please send your articles, sangha news, artwork and photographs for the January issue of *Shingi* to fitterer@acmenet.net by December 15.

❖ **Coming Events in January**

There will be a January **retreat** from the evening of Friday,

January 25 through early Sunday afternoon, January 27. It so happens that this retreat falls on the anniversary of the founding of Tendai in Japan. The subject of the retreat will be Ekayana: the Gift of Saicho. Ekayana is the round or complete teaching that incorporates early Buddhist (*Shravakayana*) and later Buddhist (*Bodhisattvayana*) teachings. The first temple, founded in 785 by Saicho, on Hiei-zan was *Ichijo-Shikan-in*. In Japanese Ekayana is *Ichijo* and *Shikan* is Shamatha and Vipashyana meditation. We will investigate these teachings and practices that transformed Japanese Buddhism. People of all levels of practice will find this retreat appropriate..



Shoshin Sandy Jacon welcomes new temple assistant Jien Sekiguchi to Jiunzan Tendaiji.

Washington Tendai Sangha

❖ **Meditation Service, 2nd and 4th Sunday of the month, 8 – 10 a.m.; Dharma Class and Meditation, 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month 7 – 9 p.m., Cherrydale Volunteer Fire Department, 3900 Lee Highway in Arlington, VA.**

Please join us for “Dharma Breakfast”, 1st and 3rd Sunday of the month, 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. at a local restaurant for conversation about Buddhism and the Dharma.

News and event updates are available at the sangha web site washingtontendai.org.

There are no meetings of the Sangha on the 5th Sunday or Tuesday of any month.

resources to replace it just didn't sit well with me. I decided to hold off on replacing my car for a while longer.

This decision to keep the car was a big step for me in terms of acceptance of the truth of impermanence. If I were to get rid of my car now, I would not have to stay around for the process of watching the car break down. I would be able to sell the car to someone else and imagine that it continued on, happily chugging away for someone else until the end of time. I could deny the fact that this car will eventually decay until there is nothing of its Subaru nature remaining. Holding onto the car for longer will help me experience this decay firsthand. Then perhaps, decades from now, when I am stuck in traffic on the MassPike, I will be able to look around me and see little bits of Scoobie in all of the other cars on the road.

Gassho,
Shingaku Jenny Henderson



Nyoirin-An (Ekayana Tendai Sangha)

❖ *Meditation Service and discussion every first and third Thursday of the month, Nyoirin-An meditation room in Naubeim near Frankfurt, Germany.*

December Events

- 13 Chih-i's *Mo-ho Chih-kuan*, Chapter 3, part 1
- 27 Chih-i's *Mo-ho Chih-kuan*, Chapter 3, part 2

Higashi Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Monday, 6:30 p.m., East Mountain Retreat Center, 8 Lake Buel Rd., Great Barrington, MA*

December Events

- 3 Ignorance
- 10 A Buddhist Christmas
- 17 Shortened practice and our Holiday Pot Luck Dinner

❖ The month of November, in addition to our customary services, brought us Abbot Monshin Paul Naamon who gave a learned overview of the meaning of our service. This was especially helpful to some of the newcomers who are finding their way in the practice of Tendai Buddhism.

Additionally, this month member Drew led a dharma discussion with a beautifully written essay.

Craig J. and his mother are going through a difficult time with health concerns so we all will keep them in our thoughts.

Lastly, as a reminder, our meeting will be held in the Friends Meeting House starting January 7, 2008. Our last meeting for the winter at East Mountain will be on December 17 which will be our **Holiday pot luck dinner.**



Danish Lotus Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service, every Thursday, 9:30–11 a.m.*

Meditation Service and discussion, every Tuesday, 7:30–9:30 p.m.

December Events

4 **Long Tuesday:** We meet at 4:30 p.m., sit meditation for three hours; at 7:30 p.m. we hold our regular Tuesday service and meditation, followed by a discussion meeting.

31 **New Year's Meditation**, 10 p.m. – 12 midnight.

Nishi Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma Discussion every Tuesday, 6 p.m., Friends' Meeting House, Madison Avenue, Albany, NY*

December Events

- 4 Celebrating Light
- 11 Psychology and Buddhism
- 18 Dinner at Mushin Sam Press's home
- 25 No meeting
- January 1 No meeting

❖ Please save New Year's Eve for the annual festivities at the Dharma Center in Canaan: bell-ringing, meditating and generally celebrating the New Year.

Thank you all for your help and cooperation.

Celestial Drum Tendai Sangha

❖ *Meditation Service and Dharma discussion, every Thursday, 6:30 p.m.; introductory meditation instruction offered at 6:15 p.m.; Indian Lake, NY; e-mail fitterer@acmenet.net for directions.*

December Events

The discussions and practices this month center around the *Six Paramitas*, qualities of being that are manifested by awakened beings, and that are cultivated by those on the path to awakening.

There will be no meditation service on Thursday, December 27.

