

Chasing Wind Mills. Why Not.

...the poetry of "koshin,"
an aging monk
living for justice
and peace for all



Enjoy!



KOSTER

[Handwritten signature]
B. J. Dawson

I share this collection of thoughts at an important turn in my spiritual journey, retirement. I dedicate these musings to my partner and lover, Karen and our wonderful family.

For some reason, I have told myself I want To write poetry someday. My time with Judy and the fine colleagues at Red Bird Studio, a writing place in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, empowered me to find the muse within.

I am beginning to believe you don't write poetry or any reflection. You be it!

Hey, be it!
koshin

© March 30, 2008

Miguel de Cervantes: I'm a poet.

The Duke: They're putting people in prison for that?

Cervantes: No, no, no, not for that.

The Duke: Too bad.

From the movie, *Man of La Mancha* (1972)

Why did you come?

Why did you come
on a dark night in a season when the sun's time was short?
why did you scare the hell out of the people with the flocks,
the preachers of your time, and the leaders
and bring healing & good news to the poor, the bleeding, the dead?
little Zack man, was scared right out of his tree
oh. for me, everyone, right? ... e v e r y o n e!
Awesome
Wonderful
then, why do some humans build walls,
reap violence on "those" people...
the other, or build walls to keep "them" out...
out of the church
out of our minds
out of community
sacred times, now, in this moment,
time to come together, not stand apart

An old man, on his death bed,

Seeing and talking to people of his past
Bob Uecker even visits
Oh, to be ready
Oh, to let go
Oh, to remember

Attending a Memorial Service...

I am not sure I knew this person
And she is not here,
Only a Picture
On a table with a Candle
& some holy book.

Why am I here?

I don't need to be reminded of my own end, do I?
Where did she go?
How did she Go?
Maybe the Priestess will tell us... maybe...
Crap,
Only a bunch of mythical words again.
No answers, again, just stories... maybe stuff
Where will I go?
How will I go?
You want to come?

Bye!



"Mending The Earth"
Photographer, © R. & S. Parkeharrison

Meditation

The chime rings
The candle, incense, the breathing
The body quiets
Can't hear, but I am there

The chime rings
Three times: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha
Falling into Silence
Deepening Silence

The chime rings
A knee pops, my foot's asleep
In the moment
Peace



Walk the Path...

What does it mean to walk the path?

What does it mean to be compassion?

Not dominating but compassionate

Not fear, but acceptance

Not exclusion but inclusion

Not war but non-violence, peace

Not hate but love

Not judgment but open and honest conversation

We no longer need to be lost, but are found,

Is this my karma, or my Path?

The answers, no not answers but this moment

is where I experience all of this and more...then...

Move to the next one, free, open, just a breath away...

Yolanda

You're gone, so young with so much to give, not only what your father gave, but even more.

As I sat, listening, watching, you would talk about your "daddy", how much you missed him.

Yet, I caught myself forgetting you were talking about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Your dancing, humor, singing and compassion,
Reminded all of us of your legacy.

Yet, we too have a legacy,
an inter-connectedness with all beings, all creation.

As you talked, cried a little and laughed about your "daddy" I remembered mine, a humble man, country preacher, but packed a punch, as he witnessed to the presence, yes the presence.

You're gone Yolanda, but continue to be a presence for us who knew you,
As we are all called to be to others, a presence.
Thank you sister, peace...



Photo by koshin

Refuge...taking refuge...

In this moment around the universe, someone is chanting,
"I take refuge in the Buddha"

Some will be offended at this, they keep searching for
something outside themselves, almost a magic power...
to take care of the "Katrinas" in their lives, yet,

in reality, in the moment, taking refuge in the Buddha means

taking refuge in yourself...

what liberation is, is not held
by a dogma, or someone entering this world,
or cleaning up the mess...
but the light within oneself...

yes, take refuge in yourself, and the angels sing!



What's left? Katrina photo by koshin

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*Never in our name,
you say...
War is terrible,
you say...
Forgetting is impossible...
The carnage of war in my arms,
How can I forget
How can I...
Listen to my soul...
Act in peace...
Is it too late?
For a global peace?
Not,
If we listen to our souls...our hearts...*



Peace photo in the public domain

Bridges

What are bridges for?
Sometimes we talk about a bridge
pointing to teeth...
A spanning bridge, no,
Bridge span, pointing to somewhere...
It spans, from one side to the other...
A bridge can hold a community together
a country, a culture
a language or dialect

a symbol of hate, separation
a place of peace and love

the power to transform and change

16th Street Bridge, Milwaukee
is that kind of bridge

South side, mostly white
North side, many blacks

Forty years ago, 1967, a place of separation
“don’t you dare come over my bridge,” one said
“I’m free to come over our bridge,” said another

Yesterday, everyday,
All sides, all people met in the middle
Sang, Prayed, Embraced,
I love Bridges, Bridges of peace.



Where's the Bridge?
Katrina photo by Koshin

Three Neshkoro pops, in the Tradition of Kerouac American pops...

A student asked the master
"Where is the Buddha?"
The teacher responded, "Inside"
"How do I get in?" the student queried
"Open the door, it is open, listen deeply..."

From the Zen Buddhist Tradition, writers name unknown to me...

One wishes for rain and it is a draught
One wishes for love and finds hate
One lives in hope and ends up in fear
One sits in silence and the monkey mind explodes
All there is, is in this moment, now, nothing, do everything...

Babbling brook...cool water
Peaceful
Silent
A deer runs across the path

Oh, for goodness sake!
Surprise, I brought my mom flowers.
She exclaimed: "Oh, for goodness sake!"
The light is out, "Oh, for goodness sake!"
The Twins lost, "Oh, for goodness sake!"
Dad is going to be late, again, "Oh, for goodness sake!"
Yes, Norwegians and Swed's don't say "Oh Shit."
They say, "Oh, for goodness sake!"

From our own Cells, comes Freedom

I stood there, an extremely hot afternoon on this Island off Cape Town SA,
transfixed by the place, the cell.

Its history

Its contact with my life, living thousands of miles from it...

Nelson Mandela's jail cell, decades in a cell,
working in the suffering sun of Robins Island,
digging in the salt mines

Far back in the cave, a university was created, the students
Reformers, revolutionaries, the people's models, leaders...

later, with bad eyesight, weak legs, a heart of gold...
Walking to freedom never looking back

How do we get out of our jail cells?

Or

Maybe it is how do we act in freedom from our cells?



Nelson Mandela's Cell, Robins Island, SA
photo by koshin

Touch the Red Button, 1, 2, 3

Death Row, sometimes we feel like we are there,
But, we are not, but many are,

Rightfully if you believe in legal murder, wrongfully if
You believe in transformation of the human being.

They played a tape that day, of a botched killing
Oh, excuse me, execution

I heard it, a voice on an old tape.
A recording of a death, on death row, Georgia

Through the loudspeaker, the voice said,
"Touch the red button, 1, 2, 3."
I can still hear the drone of the warden's voice

There was an eerie quiet

The client was visibly in pain
Someone did not get those chemicals right.
Three doctors come in to verify the state murder of a human being

Death penalty or legal murder
How can we do this to each other?

A few hours later, after hearing the murder tape,

I sat in meditation in the chapel of Red Granite Correctional Institution
Sangha
With four brothers of the Dharma,
Quiet, in the moment, mindful of the breath...mindful of transformation
in just sitting,

1, 2, 3, touch the red button, running past my mind...
Enlightenment or murder.

I have carried this reflection, poem with me for years and now as I make a new turn on the journey called life, it speaks to me again, in a new way...

From Dag Hammarskjöld, *Markings*

August 24, 1961

Is it a new country
In another world of reality
Than Day's?
Or did I live there
Before Day was?

I awoke
To an ordinary morning with a gray light
Reflected from the street,
But still remembered
The dark-blue night
Above the tree line,
The open moor in moonlight,
The crest in shadow.
Remember other dreams
Of the same mountain country:
Twice I stood on its summits,
I stayed by its remotest lake,
And followed the river
Towards its source.
*The seasons have changed
And the light
And the weather
And the hour.
But it is the same land.
And I begin to know the map
And to get my bearings.**

* *The italics are mine.*

Before enlightenment, I cut wood and carried water
After enlightenment, O cut wood and carried water.

An old Zen saying

There is a TV ad that catches my attention when it's on. A guy sitting in the middle of nowhere, often at a four-way corner, and he says, "What ya think this retirement thing is, a superhighway, no way, you got have a plan."

What's your plan Bob?

What's your plan koshin?

Plan or path?

Why, what for?

Maybe is it a path we need to find, not the plan everyone seems to be hung up about...

I have found my path.

Where is it koshin?

Where does it go?

Who cares my sister, my brother!

I know where the path began to change direction for me. It was at the old old Swedish Hospital on the west side of Chicago. It was a cold week in January 1969, in Room A. I heard a Word I had not heard before. No, maybe I heard the Word in a new way. It set me on a path of being a global citizen and building community.

Where?

Calvary, Brookfield, Hephatha Parish, Milwaukee

The Order Ecumenical, Hartford, CT & Oubari & Fukuoka, Japan

NKH, Fukuoka, Japan & world

Peace, Milwaukee; St. Olaf, Detroit; Interfaith Works, Inc., Syracuse

Unity, Milwaukee St. Johns, Saxeville

I have a hard time putting down on paper

what is happening, in terms of the questions you ask.

I was born into and walked with a community of dogma, doctrine, tradition, and a history of doing things a certain way. There are only relatively correct answers. I have been blessed, by parents, loved ones and you.

But in recent years, maybe since I began the path of Buddhist practice

Becoming aware of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha,

a muse, a light within that needs no guidance but powerfully and quietly leads, empowers and sets one free has been discovered.

These poems, maybe poor examples, but listen please,

they are not Bob, nor koshin, but the muse, the Buddha, the Jesus, the Spirit within...

Oh, that these words, maybe misspelled or in the wrong order,

Might serve you my fellow human beings to find your muse...

Listen, "be quiet," just a moment, this moment, feel, hear, the eternal rhythm that never stops.

Here is a story, a gift for you...

An old sage, after days of silent sitting, took a shovel

And walked up the mountain.

He took a shovel of snow from the mountain,

walked back down, and threw it in the well.

The Sage did this for days and soon other monks and sages joined him.

They did not fill the well.

It was the process, the practice.

An Ancient Story from China

Remember to sing to your camel.

*Many thanks to those who love me, walk with me, and those I know not.
Special thanks to David Dunn who was the organizer and checker of my musings.
Peace, koshin*

Many thanks to Karen, our children, their spouses,
and our wonderful ten grandchildren. Grateful for
the gift of family, friends, and life itself, one takes
the next step, not always knowing where it will
take you. One need not fear the next moment, but
live in this one. Peace, koshin.

