



Sun Do News

Winter 2018 Edition

Volume 34, Issue 1

Jesenka's Journey to White/Yellow Belt

By Jesenka Curac

My first encounter with Taoism was in high school when I read about different religions. I grew up in a socialist country that hasn't supported any religion, so my studies of philosophy intertwined with studies of religions.

From that time, I remember one thing that differentiated Eastern from Western religions: Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism did not exclude but rather supported each other, whereas Judaism, Christianity, its latter iterations, and Islam had structures around them that are exclusive.

And then, there was Heraclitus from Greek philosophy, whom my father often quoted: "Panta Rhei" -- everything flows, everything changes, all entities move, and nothing remains still.

My main fascination was the fact that people living in geographically distant places could come up with very similar ideas. That left me with my everlasting interest in maps, but beside maps, I have always felt there were thousands of invisible threads that connect certain people all around the world and those threads are the reason they discover together as that connection becomes visible to them.

Dear Members,

Retreat Center winter,
snow on the hill.
Evergreen treeline,
holding my eye.
Deep earth energy,
hidden from sight,
Rising to me,
lifting my soul.

-----*Master Ron Catabia*

And why would this be important? Fast forward some 30+ years: war in my country, moving to Canada, my work, family, car accident... I met Lucie who introduced me to Sun Do as a Korean Mountain Taoist practice, one that cultivates tancheon and qi, energy of the universe, through the breathing and exercises.

Recovering from a car accident, I had already contemplated various breathing techniques as something very helpful, accessible, and, at the same time, underutilized in my stressful and commitment-lacking affairs.

I dropped in one Sunday morning to a Sun Do session in January 2016, thinking of it as something that I wouldn't stick to: Sunday?! 7:45am?!

However, after the first practice, I felt intense freshness inside my body, like coming to a stale room and opening the windows to let air in. It was quite powerful and pleasant, like a shower inside the body. What a gift, I thought.

Since then, I have been regular in the Vancouver group headed by Lucie, my fearless teacher, to whom I am ever grateful for motivation and guidance.

In the summer of 2016, I accompanied Lucie to Vermont, the Barnet retreat center, where I met Master Kim, his wife, and other members of the Sun Do community; I walked barefoot on the softest grass, observed with utter excitement three-dimensional spider webs, swam in the river, glided through 500 bows, and breathed force of life into my body through Sun Do practice.

This was my first ever "retreat," and I had some skepticism around it but plunged into it and was rewarded. Still, I am rewarded every time I practice. I am rewarded with the energy of people that practice together. My body is rewarded with oxygen getting to the most remote and lethargic cells.

I notice I can withstand cold much better, my hands and feet are not always cold as before, and my immunity is significantly improved.

The big difference is that my breathing is more dependable and steady, and my body recognizes a new focus, merges with its rhythm. Therefore, for me, Sun Do is the most holistic exercise of all.

I am looking forward to seeing on the site in Barnet a new building, which has been in construction since last summer, a testament of the Sun Do community coming together for the common good. Lucie had also introduced me to the Sun Do group in Lillooet, where we venture every year.

I feel wonderful for my rediscovered interest in Taoism: no deity, no rush, no competition. I grow as I go or flow, supported by grace, wholeness, nature, and the power of the energy that brings back harmony to my life and connects us all.

Jesenka practices in Vancouver.



International Sun Do Association

Grand Master

Hyunmoon Kim

Masters

Ron Catabia

Tora Strawderman

Teachers

Lucie Lambert

Virginia Platt

Betsy Forrest

Senior Instructors

David Delbrook	Al Passacantando
Anne Lee	Ginger Hobbs
Betsy Barstow	Hank Babcock
Brian Quirk	Maria Kim
Pauline White	Christine Ucich

Instructors

Diane Matta	Rich Kramer
Jerry Geier	Kwong Lip Pang
Lucy Young	Bob Felekey
Stephen Holmes	Barbara McCandless
Heidemarie Holmes	Kim Hedegaard
Roy Bushman	Don Zickefoose
Joel Dunning	Theresa Dunning
Stanley Szczabrowski	

Instructor Trainees

Alexander Wolf	Sharon Kamenka
Sharon Meigs	Teresa Lenzen
Sheila Pfeifer	Patrick Studley
Karl Pátek Sr.	Karl Pátek Jr
Yoon Kok Weng	Florin Serbanescu
Andreea Serbanescu	Elizabeth Culligan

. . .And Jez's Journey to White/Yellow belt

By Jez Harrington

I have been practicing Sun Do for a little more than two years at the Montpelier Center. Recently I've tried to increase practice to three times a week -- an effort and a hope to deepen the experience. I find it interesting that some days I feel so certain that I'm observing benefits from the practice (thinking that I'm fully experiencing spiral breathing, for instance). Other days I doubt myself and the practice. My mind wanders, I'm out of synch with the postures, breathing is off... Am I making up these beneficial experiences in my own mind, or am I really encountering them? Is there growth and progression or am I simply standing in place and having a "wishful thinking" experience?

Today, during and after practice, I (once again, yes, recurrence is part of it) came to appreciate that doubt. The readings from the Dao De Jing are a gift. Here's something that struck me from one of the commentaries... "Each step requires a quantum of imagination and inspiration that does not reference the world as it is, but flies ahead of what has already been articulated to forge a new way forward." Beautiful... and meaningful, especially when doubt exposes the inevitable flaws in confidence and belief. So, going back to appreciating the doubt... experiencing it brings with it an effort to resolve it. The Dao helps work through those doubts with insight and deeper perspective. The mystery of the Dao and the practice continue together in an uplifting, comforting, joyful, and ever challenging way.

I look on these two years, and there are so many loose threads of experience: community, conversation, small insights, a good practice (sometimes often, sometime isolated), a reading from the Dao De Jing that is enlightening, one that befuddles... lots of loose threads. But a glance back shows more. I see

them woven together in a fabric of joy, calmness, acceptance, and wisdom that draws me further down this path. Many thanks to Master Kim and all who make this practice possible.

Jez practices in Montpelier



One of Mrs. Kim's delicious Korean meals at the retreat—*photo by Lucie Lambert*



On this winter day, dreaming of swimming in the river at summer retreat—*photo by Lucie Lambert*

Master Kim's Mindfulness Workshop

By Christine Ucich

Last January, West Hartford Sun Do members held an introductory workshop with Taoist Master Kim at Menla Holistic Health, also known as the West End Mindfulness Center, located in Hartford, CT. The event hosted about 30 people interested in learning more about how breathing meditation can lead to optimal wellness. Through a mixture of outreach methods, Sun Do and Menla Holistic Health were able to promote this event to a wide audience, drawing many local residents, several folks from the outskirts of Connecticut, and one person from New York State. Event promotion included the use of both Sun Do and Menla's e-newsletters, Facebook pages, and flyer postings.

Held inside Menla's mindfulness meditation room, participants sat on cushions amidst statues and images of the Buddha. To start his presentation, Master Kim displayed a copy of *Mindful Magazine* showing a Buddhist practitioner on the cover. His first question to the group was to define the word "mindful."



Many answers emerged, ranging from awareness to the present moment, but Master Kim countered with something much simpler: To be mindful means "to be full of mind." Becoming fully aware of what is happening in the mind seems to be the goal of

mindfulness meditation. A complete (or full)

experience of mindfulness takes in all the body's sensory data in each and every moment.

So, if we know the goal of mindfulness, Master Kim explained, then what is the way of Sun Do, a style of meditation that seeks to empty the mind? And are the two styles opposed to each other? On the contrary, he said, there can first be a stretch and then a withdrawal of the mind. Knowing mind and its relationship with the senses is sometimes a necessary step (a stretch) to eventually being able to empty the mind of thoughts (a withdrawal).

In Sun Do, we may start out focusing on breath, only to learn that at more advanced levels, breath focus may actually hinder our practice.



To the beginners at the workshop, Master Kim posed another question: So, is it better to be mindful or breathful? Well, he replied quickly, why don't we all try to stop breathing for two minutes and we'll see who's still around to answer! [audience laughs] In order to fully

live life, we need to care for our breath. Otherwise, we eventually choose death. In fact, Master Kim assured everyone that by having more oxygen in the body, we can make our life secure. How? By increasing our potential, our reach, our capacity, our ability – basically, the breath can help with any life circumstance past or present.

One example used by Master Kim throughout the morning was related to the movie, "Dunkirk." In this movie, the fighter pilots are constantly checking their fuel gauges. because

once their fuel runs out, they know possible death is imminent. In Sun Do our breath, and the oxygen it brings into our cells, is certainly the most premium fuel for greater health and longevity. It is not only a way to feel secure, it is the way to sustain our life far into the future.

Sun Do members or centers are encouraged to work collaboratively with their local meditation centers to begin dialog that connects us across disciplines. For ideas on how to organize and promote interdisciplinary events in your area, contact us at questions@sundo.org.

Christine practices in New Haven.



Mindfulness Workshop photos by Christine Ucich

Thoughts from Olga Botezatu

Sun Do is a practice that trains our mind, body, and spirit. It is a method that integrates and harmonizes our whole being.

At first contact, the center of the Czech Republic is an empty, simple, lifeless space. We are accustomed to living among many details, and most of all we forget that the most beautiful and interesting detail is us, our own being and what is inside us. This Sun Do practice and this center help you to eliminate what is unhealthy in your life and put you in touch with

what you really need for yourself. If the soul has a "house," called our body, this center becomes the home of our body in order to train and make us aware of who we really are, of our potential, and what road we have to follow, giving us clarity. This space brings people closer because you are surrounded by simplicity, and simplicity is the most beautiful way for people to open up, to offer and receive love. It becomes a space full of light because of people who shine and give their energy to others. No one shines more or less than the other; they are all equal because they are different. We discover energies and gifts capable of getting us in touch with ourselves, completing each other, and this is true love. It is a space that has the center of a master's energy; he is the governor of power, dedication, trust, love, and compassion. He is the mirror that reflects the character of all; he is Master Hyunmoon Kim.

Sun Do's practice teaches you to be conscious and connected with yourself, teaches you to get to the essence of your energy.

Olga practices in Romania and the Czech Republic.



Fall retreat in the Czech Republic—*photo by Olga Botezatu*



Sun Do practice center in the Czech Republic—*photo by Olga Botezatu*



Olga and Lucie at summer retreat—*photo by Lucie Lambert*

More Progress on the New Building



Photos by Sharon Meigs



Summer retreat workshop—photo by Lucie Lambert

Promotions

Keon Kon Dan Boup (Yellow belt)

Helena Pátková (Czech Republic)
Roman Pudík (Czech Republic)
Andreea Serbanescu (Romania)
Simona Rasaliu (Romania)

Jung Ki Dan Boup II (White/yellow belt)

Jez Harrington (Montpelier)
Jesenska Curac (Vancouver)
Iva Kopecka (Czech Republic)
Ioana Zbarcea (Czech Republic)
Marciana Ranceanu (Romania)
Zuzana Hollmann (Czech Republic)
Tomáš Dumek (Czech Republic)
Jaroslav Vyhnalík (Czech Republic)
Alena Kolaříková (Czech Republic)
Jitka Kocánová (Czech Republic)
Michal Kocán (Czech Republic)
Dana Kočíšová (Czech Republic)

Retreat Schedule

Spring Retreat 2018 in Barnet

May 25-28

Summer Retreat 2018 in Barnet

9-day retreat: July 27-August 5

5-day retreat: July 31-August 5

3-day retreat: August 2-5

Fall Retreat 2018

October 5-8

All retreats begin at 4:00 PM on the first day and end at noon on the last day.

For more information see <http://www.SunDo.org/retreats/>.



The Sun Do News welcomes stories, articles poems, photos, and announcements. Please send your contribution to Betsy Forrest as an email attachment, if possible, at bforrest777@gmail.com.

Website:

www.sundo.org

Visit the Sun Do website for information on Sun Do history, retreat dates and registration, and much more.

Sign up to receive Sun Do News via email at www.sundo.org.

You may also e-mail questions to us through the website.

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[https://www.facebook.com/Sun Do.Healing/](https://www.facebook.com/SunDo.Healing/)

Editor and producer:
Betsy Forrest

**Poems for the season,
by Ryōkan**

**Written in My Hermitage
on a Snowy Evening**

For more than seventy years,
I have been making
Myself dizzy from observing
men.

I have abandoned trying to
penetrate men's good and bad
actions.

Coming and going is a sign of
weakness.

Heavy snow in the dead of
night—

Under the weather-beaten
window, one incense stick.

Winter Night

Concealed in a dense forest,
My hermitage lies far beyond
the village river.

A thousand peaks, ten thousand
mountain streams, yet no sign of
anyone.

A long, cold winter's night—
slowly a piece of wood burns in
the fireplace.

Nothing can be heard except the
sound of snow striking the
window.

*Ryōkan is a Japanese Zen poet
from the 18th Century.*