

# PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 13.4

Winter 2006-07

## Dear members and friends,

It has been a very eventful quarter. Just after returning from Rohatsu at Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) in New York, the Zen House roof blew off during one of Seattle's biggest windstorms on record. Well not the whole roof, but some very big chunks of it. This left us scrambling to make temporary repairs to prevent major water damage. After the third temporary patch, we got some tarps hammered down to hold until the roof replacement could begin, which is going on as I type this letter. It is a good thing that President Bush has assured us that global warming is just a flawed theory; otherwise, I might be tempted to believe in Al Gore's film, An Inconvenient Truth, that hints that events like Seattle's wind storm, the severity of Hurricane Katrina, and the rapid loss of polar ice are harbingers of catastrophic change in the Earth's climate brought on by human ignorance and avarice.

Going to Rohatsu at DBZ was amazing. First of all, I was joined by Chobo-ji members Rodger (Tozan) Park, Brenda (Zenmu) Nightingale, Bob (Daigan) Timmer, and, of course, Peter (Shinkon) Glynn, who is a resident at DBZ. Together we made a very strong contingent among the 45 participants. Eido Roshi and Roko Ni Osho, Eido Roshi's Dharma Heir, were in fine form and provided excellent leadership. Shinkon was DBZ's Jisha, a very demanding post at a training monastery, and was in charge of caring for all participants. It looked as though it went very smoothly for him. At DBZ's Rohatsu, each morning starts at 3 AM. The final structured sit (period of medita-

tion) in the evening concludes around 10 PM the first couple of nights and then progressively gets later as the week goes on. By the last night, everyone was staying in the zendo (meditation hall) past midnight. The last five nights of Rohatsu



*Eido Roshi with Chobo-ji Participants at DBZ Rohatsu*

included an "Om" kinhin (walking meditation) that I found to be inspiring and invigorating; therefore, we tried it at Chobo-ji's Rohatsu (1/4 - 1/12) with good effect. During the course of Rohatsu, all participants became both exhausted and also somehow full of vibrant fresh energy.

As usual the temple was closed for the week between the Christmas and the New Years and then reopened on New Year's day with our annual chant, bell ringing and potluck brunch. Soon thereafter, we began our own Rohatsu at Camp Indianola on the Kitsap peninsula. We had 27 participants this year, which is a good size for us, not small and not crowded. The first full day we had a Jukai (Precept) Ceremony for Matthew Perez. Matthew has trained with us for some time now, and has also been training at the traditional Japanese Tea ceremony with Rev. Genko Kathy Blackman. We will go into

this further later in this issue. On the morning of the 8th day of our Rohatsu, which celebrates the Historical Buddha's awakening, we had a Tokudo (Ordination) Ceremony for Brenda (Zenmu) Nightingale. Zenmu lives with her husband and family in Saskatchewan, Canada, but has agreed to spend at least half of each year in the States doing formal Zen training for the foreseeable future. We will also have more on this auspicious event later in this issue, but let me say now how pleased I was that Zenmu's dozen guests from up north reported that they felt very welcomed and accepted by our Sangha for the ceremony which began at 5 AM, January 12th.

**B**orrowing from DBZ's Rohatsu, our Rohatsu progressively increased the structured sitting time over the course of the eight days. By the end, we were formally sitting

until midnight with yaza (unstructured sitting) going on all night. If you are new to Zen, you may feel this is extreme, but please read my Dharma Talk in this issue before drawing this conclusion. The Dai-Tenzo (Chief Cook) this sesshin was Charlie (Taishin) Blackman; he was assisted by Bob (Daigan) Timmer. Together with other senior Chobo-ji students they skillfully produced delicious "temple food" three times a day, which is no small feat. Our Shika (host/manager) was Dee (Seishun) Endelman; she kept Rohatsu organized and running smoothly. Holding us punctually to our expanded schedule was our Jikijitsu (Time Keeper), John (Daikan) Green. The Jisha (tea server) for this Rohatsu was Zenmu, backed up by Edward (Daiki) Cadman. With Zenmu's home cooking touch we were served some delectable fare. My assistant (Inji) was

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Scott (Ishin) Stolnack; he got a few more assignments helping with the Tokudo ceremony, and I was grateful for his presence. I was also grateful for Genko's presence overseeing the midday whisked green tea, assisting Zenmu during the Tokudo ceremony, and coordinating our final Dokuson (Dharma Interview) very early Friday morning. The Densu (Chant Leader) was Linda (Muka) Wehnes who performed superbly in this post. Last but not least, Tom (Shodo) DeGroot, one of our most experienced members, was our Jo-kai, Keisaku (waking stick) assistant.

Daiki and I helped lead a well attended half-day sesshin with the Reiun-zan Ellensburg/Wenatchee Sangha at the Ellensburg Ecumenical Church, Saturday, January 20th. Then on the evening of January 24th, Carolyn (Josen) and I made our annual trek to Europe to lead a three-day sesshin in Strasbourg, France. We spent the first night in Zurich, and sat with the Shogen-dojo Sangha and Rev. Shokan Marcel Urech who is also a long time student of Eido Shimano Roshi. Shokan and I have often sat next to each other at DBZ's sesshins, so it was wonderful to sit with him in his hometown of Zurich. We shared a simple meal with him and a few members of the Sangha before retiring after a long day of travel. I'm afraid I wasn't in my best form and knocked over the flowers at the dojo entrance! Of course Shokan was very gracious about it, but I know many of you have knocked over the flowers in Chobo-ji's foyer, and now I know how you feel. Zurich was cold, snowy and beautiful, what little we saw of it. I hope to visit longer one day. The next morning, Friday, Jan. 26th, we caught a train to Strasbourg.

Gabriel Valibouze, Sensei met us at the train station and we arrived at the Stras-

bourg Dojo in time to help with sesshin preparations. Josen was the Tenzo; other Birankai (International Aikido) Sangha took other posts, and I was Jikijitsu. There were 25 participants. At the conclusion of zazen that evening we checked our Seattle email to discover that our dog and



*Participants in Strasbourg Sesshin*

Chobo-ji's mascot Bodhisattva, Bruno, was very ill. Though it was late evening in Strasbourg, it was only the middle of the afternoon in Seattle. At Randal (Daigetsu) Tanabe's suggestion, who is often Bruno's caretaker while we are away, we called the vet where Bruno was brought for treatment. Right when we phoned, the vet was consulting with Daigetsu about Bruno's condition. It turned out that he had a swollen dysfunctional liver, swollen heart and poorly functioning kidneys. In other words, Bruno had no chance to survive and needed to be "put down." This would have been a difficult decision for Daigetsu to make in our absence, so it was quite fortuitous that we called when we did.



Bruno was with us nine years. Though he was 13 years old and his energy was declining before we left, he seemed to have no complaints about life before our departure. The vet said, "It was just his time." Daigetsu wisely called in support.

He reached out to Genko who then made contact with my daughter Adrienne. The three of them then went down to the vet's office to be with Bruno. Bruno was happy to see them and wanted to be picked up and held, which they did in turn. Josen and I knew that night that Bruno's bodily departure was imminent, but we did not know when in the next 24 hours the event would take place. During our sleep that night Bruno came to me in a dream. I was holding him saying my good-byes; he was licking my tears. I awoke aware that this was likely the moment of his bodily release, and Carolyn

agreed. The next morning we were not surprised to learn that Bruno's physical release was at the same hour as the dream. Coincidence? You could say so; I think not.

In addition to what has already been mentioned, you will find in this issue a Fund Appeal for our new roof, an announcement of our upcoming Annual Meeting (3/11), where every year we elect our Board of Directors, an announcement for Spring Sesshin (3/24 - 3/30), and a listing of new posts for Spring training beginning March 1st. As usual we will be having a Spring Intensive beginning at mini-sesshin March 11th and concluding with Summer Sesshin (6/23 - 6/29).

*As many are already aware, Genki Takabayashi Roshi (our founding Abbot) will be in Seattle on April 8th, to celebrate the 2,550 anniversary of the Historical Buddha's birth, and to elevate Genko to Ni Osho (full priest) at a 10 AM ceremony to be held that day. Therefore, our mini-sesshin normally scheduled for that morning will be moved to the following week (4/15) and please note that Genko will give the Dharma Talk that day. If at all possible, please plan to attend these events honoring Genko. She has dedicated a decade of her life to her path as unsui (cloud and water person, i.e. Zen monk).*

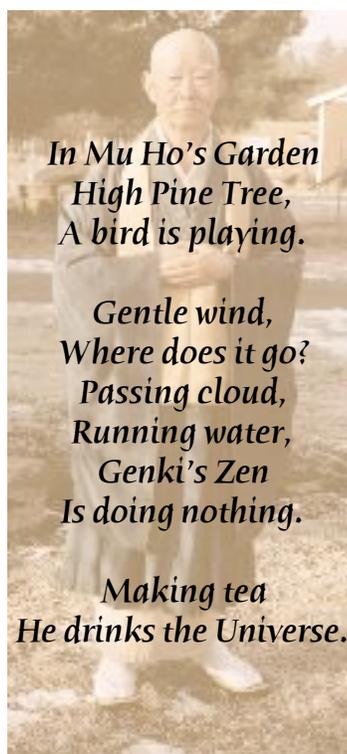
Just before spring sesshin I will be attending another happy event at DBZ. Shinkon will have his Tokudo (unsui ordination) on March 21st. Because of Shinkon's long association with Chobo-ji, Eido Shimano Roshi has asked me to be a co-celebrant, to which I have happily agreed.

Finally, here is a list of some upcoming events in the life of Chobo-ji. Genki Roshi's birthday is coming up Feb. 21st, he will be beginning his 75th year. See Roshi's 74th birthday poem below. I will be the guest speaker at the Center for Spiritual Living on Sunday, Feb. 25th. My topic will be on synchronicity of Dharma Relations. I'll be in San Diego for a three-day sesshin with Chiba Sensei, April 20 -23. There will be a Wenatchee mini-sesshin the weekend of April 28-29. The wheel of Dharma is always turning, and things are hopping in our Sangha. As we move towards spring, please take care and give generously from the bounty of our practice.

With gassho,

*Genjo*

## 74th Birthday Poem by Genki MuHoOn Roshi



*In Mu Ho's Garden  
High Pine Tree,  
A bird is playing.*

*Gentle wind,  
Where does it go?  
Passing cloud,  
Running water,  
Genki's Zen  
Is doing nothing.*

*Making tea  
He drinks the Universe.*

## Annual Meeting Sunday, March 11th

Our Annual Meeting will be held at 11:30 am after the Sunday, March 11th mini-sesshin (5 - 11:15 am). At this meeting we elect our Board of Directors for the year. The Board is the legal and fiscal guardian of the temple. If you are interested in serving, please let Genko know beforehand. The Board meets about four times a year. A quorum of at least half of our active (i.e. dues paying) members is required, so please plan to attend this important meeting.

## Spring Sesshin March 24th - 30th

Please send a deposit by March 11th, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check to Chobo-ji. The cost of sesshin is \$210 (less dues). Sesshin begins promptly at 5 am the morning of Saturday, March 24th, so plan to be there at least 20 min. early. Sesshin will end around 11 am, Friday morning.

## New Zen House Roof Fund Appeal

Seattle had a major windstorm the December 14th. A significant portion of the Zen House's metal roof blew off that night. The metal roof was put on several years before we moved in. Unfortunately for us, the roof was not installed properly; it was put directly on top of several layers of deteriorating roof. As a result, the metal roof became loose as the old sub-layers of roofing continued to deteriorate. This is what allowed the roof to be picked up by the strong wind. Our insurance company is picking up the cost of replacing the missing and damaged segments, but the Chobo-ji Board determined that given the improper installation of the metal roof, that we should get a whole new roof. Therefore the Board got several bids and selected a contractor to replace the metal roof with a new shingle one.



The cost of the new roof with tear down and installation is \$17,000

The cost of new gutters to go with the new roof is \$1,600

The cost of temporary repairs was \$1,600

**Total Cost: \$20,200**

Insurance Claim: -\$5,200

Savings: -\$6,000

**Fund Appeal: \$9,000**

Our insurance company has paid out so far: \$2,264 and we expect to get an additional settlement of about \$3,000. This means the cost of the roof and repairs to us is around \$15,000.

We had \$11,000 in our saving's account, which is held for just such emergencies. In addition, we have sufficient liquid assets to temporarily cover the whole cost. But considering that we do want to continue to pay down our Zen House mortgage and keep a healthy reserve of say \$5,000 minimum, this means that we will need to raise \$9,000.

Chobo-ji has about 40 active dues paying members, if we simply divided the costs that would come to \$225 per person. Of course, at any given moment, some of us are more flush than others, and it may be that a few large donations will be able to cover our expenses and reserve. If you have not done so already, please consider now giving what you can. We would like to conclude the Fund Appeal by Spring Sesshin, March 24th. Any amount will be greatly appreciated.

# Hekiganroku: Seppo's Turtle-Nosed Snake, Case 22

(2rd day, Rohatsu Sesshin, 2007)

Transcription help from Dee Seishun

## Engo's Introduction:

The great universe is boundless. As for how small it is, it is like an atom. Grasping and releasing, developing and declining, are not in others' hands; they are all in your own. If you want to get rid of encumbrances and cut through entanglements, you must transcend form and sound and remove all trace of the activity of mind; then you will be in an impregnable position and absolutely independent, like a thousand-fathom cliff. Tell me, who was ever like this? See the following.

## Main Subject

Seppo, speaking to the assembly, said, "There is a turtle-nosed snake on the South Mountain. You should have a good look at it." Chokey said, "Today, in this temple, there is obviously one man who has lost his life." Later, a monk related this to Gensha, who said, "Only Brother Ryo (meaning Chokey) can answer like that; as for me, I am different." "How are you different?" asked the monk. Gensha said, "What use is there in making use of the South Mountain?" Ummon threw his staff down in front of Seppo and made a gesture as if he were afraid of it.

## Setcho's Verse

Mount Seppo was too steep to climb;  
Only the skilled could try it.  
Chokey and Gensha made nothing of it;  
How many truly lost their lives?

Ummon knew how to beat the bushes;  
The snake—its nature so—was nowhere  
to be found.

The staff, suddenly flung down,  
Opened its mouth right after Seppo.

It strikes like lightning;  
If you try to look for it, you fail;  
Now it is hidden on this peak of Nyuhō;  
If you want to see it, look at it directly.

Second day of our Rohatsu Sesshin and we're beginning to smooth out most of the kinks. However, occasionally I've been finding myself confused by how we do things here at our Rohatsu, relative to how we do things at home in Seattle or at Dai Bosatsu Zendo in New York. Everyone in their posts is doing a very good job, but occasionally there are some slips. For example, before I come to the main altar for a Dharma Talk, there should be a long stick of incense laid across the top of the incense bowl and the powdered incense lid should be already open. That's just part of the ritual of how we do things. And normally the Densu (Chant Leader) takes care of this preparation, but if the Densu doesn't get to it the Shika (sesshin host/manager) or Inji (Abbot attendant) should catch it. These little details are important to be mindful of. In this case, the Shika and Inji are the backup for the Densu. Sometimes, we send a substitute Tenzo (cook) to the kitchen to spell the Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook). We back each other up.

This morning, I missed a step by not doing zazen inspection early enough and this threw the Shika off, so I did the Han (wood striker) myself this morning, which is normally the Shika's job to do. At a break I queried the Shika, "What happened?" She said, "Foolish me! I thought I was to follow yesterday's instructions!" (laughter) That's just the right answer. (laughter) Of course, immediately, I understood that it was my mistake and I said so, "Oh, my mistake!" I knew someone goofed! (laughter) But her answer was perfect. "How foolish of me to think it would be done like yesterday. I'm so sorry not to have picked up on the new cue!" This is the Zen way. We move beyond right and wrong and become free to just do what needs doing under the current circumstances. In this way we are ready to go with the ever-changing flow of the moment. It *is* always changing. There is no intrinsic right or wrong way of doing things. Of course we are all struggling to be more attentive and mindful; on the other hand, no matter how attentive we have been there will be times when we have to just make it up as we go.

Within an hour, you can experience your being manifesting as a bumpkin or a Buddha. Even within one sit (period of seated meditation) you may experience yourself being brightly alert one moment and at other times about to fall over asleep. So,

earlier today I loudly called out Daizan's name because he was sleeping away. But who knows, perhaps when I called out, "Daizan!" the shock of that call might be his moment of Great Enlightenment! I'll have to wait until we are alone together in the Dokusan room to find out! (laughter)

We flip all the time between bumpkin and Buddha! It is as Master Rinzai said about the "the True Person Without Rank," the one beyond self-deluded ego identity. He said, "The True Person without Rank [i.e. that One Shining alone] is *always* going out and coming in through *your* face." Bumpkin, Buddha, bumpkin, Buddha, bumpkin, Buddha. All the time!

One side of a coin cannot be separated from the other. Both sides together make one coin. Likewise we cannot separate Buddha from bumpkin. Therefore, we're not here at sesshin trying to become Buddha and avoid bumpkin, we are here trying to realize that we are already whole! Trying to realize and accept that Buddha and bumpkin are always going out and coming through our face all the time. Sometimes we feel like a nut, sometimes we don't.

It is true that with practice we indeed become more skillful performers. In the readiness of time, we mature into more fully articulate artisans of life, we become more able to accept and manifest the True Person without Rank. Itzhak Perlman, the world-class virtuoso violinist, makes it look so easy. Even in the midst of his own maladies and suffering, his performance reveals effortlessness. And, how is that? Only through lots of practice! Think of how many dark nights he must have gone through to make it look so easy. Think about how much pain and suffering he must have faced to present as such a virtuoso.

We're already whole and we're never complete. And, in the short time allowed to us, we continue to train. This is all we can do. Life itself requires us to practice and train. You should think of the whole earth as a monastery. Just to meet life requires Great Determination, training. Life is always presenting new challenges. When we realize this much, we come to a place like Rohatsu to turn up the heat a bit, to see if by amplifying the suffering we can learn what we need to learn a little sooner than later. Rohatsu is like running a marathon; it stretches our endurance and puts us on our growing edge. You

may run everyday but there's a difference when you run a marathon. Or, if you're an Aikidoist, you go to a seminar, where most of every day is spent exhausting oneself on the mat. We're exhausting ourselves in zazen (seated meditation). Exhausting ourselves so that we are totally spent. There's something right about getting totally spent, throwing everything into it!

**Eido** Roshi, Abbot of Dai Bosatsu, is fond of saying (and it's so true), "Don't pace yourself. Exhaust yourself completely!" The neat thing about this is, if you exhaust yourself completely, *self* is exhausted. And when self is exhausted then, without a doubt, there will be a release into what we call great freedom or emancipation. As Zen Master Hakuin told us the other day, it is as easy as hitting the floor, it can't be missed. So, remember that you have come to Rohatsu to exhaust yourself completely!

It's a little like a runner who pushes past their sense of physical limitation and reaches what is referred to as "the second wind." When we start to cruse, it feels as though we can just go on and on. This is what we are shooting for when we talk about Samadhi in Zazen.

One time I made a commitment to do an entire Rohatsu with every zazen period in full lotus (both legs crossed). I think it was probably 1979, the year before my Tokudo (monk ordination) ceremony. I was trying to prepare myself for going off to Japan, so I thought, "Okay, I'll do sesshin in full lotus." Sometime during the third or fourth day of this sesshin, I felt pretty exhausted! There was lots of pain but I continued to throw myself into it. Not trying to pace myself, just giving it my all to see what would happen. My knees got swollen. At the start of a certain sit, I pulled up one leg and then I began to pull up the second leg over the first and went, "OW!" (laughter) Spontaneously this shout came out of me, I laughed and said out loud "not this one" and put the sore leg down for half-lotus. Now this was not a defeat or surrender. It was simply, "Well, this body isn't doing full-lotus this sit."

**H**ow do you learn to trust yourself? Well, that's a good one. You must take good care of your body, but you must also strive not to pamper yourself. How do you know the difference? I don't know. I

can't determine this for you. I might challenge you on it, but I also trust you to be your own master. You must determine this for yourself; no one can determine it for you.

We know that Genko has some very complicated health issues. It's truly amazing that she can walk from one end of the room to the other. And at this Rohatsu, she may have to say, "That's it, won't be doing this sit!" And though she must also face her own doubts, I will completely trust her determination. If she's not here in the zendo with us, we'll completely understand. No question. Her call. The same goes for everyone else in this room.



**H**owever, if you're protecting yourself, you cannot hope to exhaust yourself. Won't happen. Absolutely guaranteed. There's a difference between protecting yourself and taking care. Zen master Rin-zai often concluded his discourse with, "Take care." He meant, take care to practice and then take care to practice more! Go straight on, and give your all! Occasionally, we'll run into a brick wall. The body just will not go. Oh well, that's fine. If you need to move then just move, if you need to bow out, then bow out.

**L**ast night doing Yaza (unstructured sitting), I realized everyone else had gone to bed. It was about 11:30 p.m., maybe someone returned after that, but for a while I was alone in the Zendo and it felt good. It feels good to exhaust yourself completely. The first night at 10 p.m., I was so exhausted, I couldn't drag myself to Yaza. I don't know if anyone else was here in the zendo or not; I was asleep. After 30 years of Zen training I'm now confident that without trying to pace, save, or protect my energy I can throw myself into practice and still take care. I don't know how this sesshin will go, but I'll bet that, as time goes on that most of us will pick up energy, and Yaza every night won't be a problem. Then again, we don't know how it will go. There could be a night when it's just a brick wall; can't crawl to Yaza. Okay, no right, no wrong. Do your best! But WATCH OUT for the snake of self-deception!

**T**he notes about today's koan say that after Setcho made his verse, all of a sudden he gave a shout and said to the assembly, "Look out beneath your feet!"

**S**eppo was a very prominent Zen Master in 9th Century China during the peak blossoming of Chinese Zen. He had many Dharma Heirs including Zen Masters Chokei, Gensha and Ummon. So what is this turtle-nosed snake that Zen Master Seppo is talking about? He said, "There is a turtle-nosed snake on the South Mountain. You should have a good look at it." This is one of those places where it is necessary to have access to some good footnotes on Chinese mythology. Evidently, a turtle-nosed snake is one ugly, old, venomous snake that swallows you whole. It represents in Zen literature the Great Death we must all face in the course of Zen training. Whether we face our "mortality" through dropping our corporeal bodies, or prior to this, by being swallowed by the Great Death, this great matter will be met one way or the other. This great matter challenges, tests and devours us, and—through the process of training—eventually spits us out minus our shell or cocoon of a separated self-hood.

**W**hat we call "self" is an important cocoon but if you stay in there too long, it gets rather smelly. We want to come out, we want to be free of our cocoon, but we

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are afraid to lose our “self.” The snake of life and death is always lurking near by; realizing that we are going to be swallowed one way or the other, and not wanting to die having never really lived, we risk breaking through. Breaking through sometimes appears as a “Shit wiping stick” as Zen Master Ummon one day proclaims. It can also appear as Rinzai’s, “That One Shining Alone.” But look out beneath *your* feet. Mortality is lurking near by; don’t be deceived again and again by your self-deceptions. Instead, throw yourself completely into this practice and training, enter what we call the Great Doubt and allow yourself to be swallowed by the Great Death! A great sage once said, “You must lose your life, to save your life.”

Seppo says to the assembly, “There’s a turtle-nosed snake on the South Mountain. You should have a look at it.” South Mountain is a reference to the mountain where Seppo’s temple is located. So he’s saying something like, “Here I am. Come examine me. You should have a good look at this old snake.” Now this isn’t boasting ego. This is, “Here! Come on; give it your best shot! Step up. Let’s dance. Let’s see what happens.” If you were an Aikidoist, he might call you to the mat and demand your best attack. It’s an invitation, and a challenge. “Come on. Throw something this way.”

Chokei said, “Oh, look out! Today, in this temple, there’s obviously one man who has lost his life.” There’s another translation that goes something like, “Look out! Today many are going to die!” In any case, Chokei is implying, “Ah, oh, look out! I wouldn’t attack him if I were you!” (laughter) “Because *he* has already died, everyone who goes up against him is going to perish!”

Chokei is saying what every teacher wants to hear! Later, a monk who overheard Chokei’s response asked another senior student of Seppo’s, Gensha, what he thought of it. Gensha said, “Brother Chokei may put it that way but I’m different.” “Well, how are you different?” asked the monk. Gensha said, “What use is there in making use of the South Mountain?” I think Gensha is saying there is no need to refer to the South Mountain or to oneself. The turtle-nosed snake is sufficient. So Seppo could have

said, “In this moment, how do you face the turtle-nosed snake?” or “Where are you after you have been swallowed by the turtle-nosed snake?”

Ummon is also present. He too was a senior student of Seppo and became one of the most famous Zen masters of all time. Ummon takes his walking staff, and—when Seppo puts out his challenge—throws down his staff and then acts as though the staff has turned into a snake and then perhaps says in words or gestures, “Ooohhh!, I’m so scared!” This is a grand response! Just great! It’s Ummon’s style.

The koan is, “How would you have responded to Seppo? What would your style be?”

You know, IT is the same whether it appears as the “oak tree in the front garden” or “three pounds of flax” or “dried shit on stick” or “a snake in the grass.” It is always the same, and also always different and unique. How do we freely and transcendently respond to ever changing circumstances? How do you respond to the pain? What is your response to the fatigue? How do you meet exhaustion? How will you face your own death? Does the dog have a Buddha nature? What is your response? Muuuu, Muuu, Muuu. Joshu, of course, just said, “Mu.”

What’s *your* style? Many people in this room have glimpsed “Mu.” As you work with traditional Zen koans you are periodically required to *face* “Mu.” Even though you’ve had a glimpse, you must face the turtle-nosed snake again and again. As in, “What is the sound of one hand clapping?” or Gutei’s one finger or Boddhidharma’s peace of mind or Ummon’s “Kan!” or Rinzai’s “Katsu!” Again and again, we must be swallowed by the ineffable. Again and again we must exhaust the trappings of self! Not just once, don’t settle for merely a glimmer. Don’t be satisfied!

After apprenticing nearly twenty years with Genki Roshi, a little more than ten years ago I started up with Eido Roshi. I went to Dai Bosatsu and met the snake. He’s swallowed me whole several times. Scared me to death! Now was this Eido Roshi or was it my own fears, delusions and attachments? Early in my work with Eido Roshi, after working through a few

koans, I got bogged down in my fear, attachments, remnants of unresolved personal history and Eido Roshi said to me, “Genjo, what about Mu? Where’s Mu?” Oh, right, right, right! Yes! Okay, let’s begin at the beginning. Muu. I want to immerse myself in Mu, abandon myself in Mu. Immerse, immerse, extinguish, extinguish, exhaust, exhaust, exhaust. Mu, Mu, Muuuuu, until like hitting the ground, “Ahhhhh. Okay.” And we continue to face the inconceivable again and again until there is nothing left, not even the inconceivable!

There are several people in this room who, because of getting bogged down in one koan or another, or their own assessment of their delusions and attachments have said, “Oh, I need to work on Mu again.” Good. At this Rohatsu let’s all dive into Mu completely; in other words, may we all become completely exhausted and immersed. Remember, in this practice there is no getting it right or getting it wrong, we simply and completely exhaust ourselves, that’s all. Our attachments build up like plaque! (laughter) You’ve got to go in for a cleaning now and then! You can really start to smell (laughter). Mu, Mu, Mu—deep floss (laughter).

*Ummon knew how to beat the bushes;  
The snake—its nature so—  
was nowhere to be found.*

*The staff, suddenly flung down,  
Opened its mouth right after Seppo.”*  
[As in, Ummon steals the show!]

*It strikes like lightning*

[Ummon’s brightness.]

*If you try to look for it, you fail;*

*[It can’t be grasped!]*

*Now it is hidden on this peak of Nyuho;*

*If you want to see it, look at it directly.”*

Where are you not looking at it? The sun is shining. The waves are lapping. The seagulls are flying. The pain is pounding. Though it can’t be held, it is everywhere you look. Nothing is absent; therefore, there is nothing to find! Exhaust yourself completely! Don’t pander...and take care.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Rohatsu Sesshin 2007

### Closing Incense Poem

*Siddhartha awakens to the  
bright morning star.*

*Rohatsu Sangha listens to the  
cold, still silence.*

*Who can say what this is?*

*Eagle soars above Puget Sound,  
leaving no trace.*

## New Posts

### Beginning March 1st

Rev. Genko Blackman: **Shika**  
(Host - Manager)

Diane JoAn Ste Marie: **Shika**  
Assistant

Bob Daigan Timmer: **Dai-Tenzo**  
(Chief cook for Sesshins)

Dee Seishun Endelman: **Tenzo**  
Assistant

Mary Choko Cabaniss-Ballard:  
**Jikijitsu** (Timekeeper)

Tom Shodo DeGroot: **Jikijitsu**  
Assistant

Edward Daiki Cadman: **Densu**  
(Chant Leader)

Charlie Taishin Blackman: **Densu**  
Assistant

Ryan Hosen Grant: **Jisha**  
(Serves tea and takes care of zendo)

Matthew Myodo Perez: **Jisha**  
Assistant

Scott Ishin Stolnack: **Inji**  
(Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens: **Fusu**  
(Treasurer and financial manager)

## Jukai Ceremony

On Friday, January 5th, the first full day of Chobo-ji's Rohatsu Sesshin, Matthew Perez formally accepted the Buddhist precepts. He has been an active participant in our Sangha for some time, and has completed more than the requisite two week-long sesshins. In his application letter Matthew wrote,

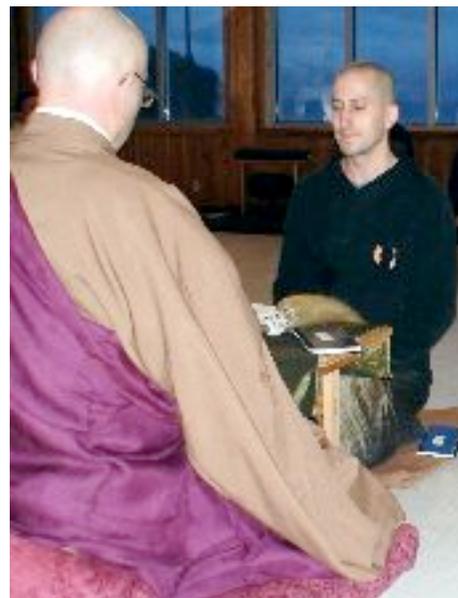
*I came to Seattle and found Chobo-ji after several years of primarily practicing Zen on my own. From my first visits to the temple, I have felt supported in my practice and welcome in the community. Over the past year and a half, I have been exposed to a warm and gentle Zen that I feel is of particular benefit to my naturally serious disposition...*

*Furthermore, at Chobo-ji, I feel that I am surrounded by teachers: Genko, all the devoted senior students, and other novices as well. Every sesshin, I am amazed and encouraged by the collective effort...*

*This Sangha is a community that I am not only eager to belong to but also inspired to serve. I feel that Chobo-ji helps me to tap into my greatest potential. Through involvement in the life of the temple, I have begun to experience how this is not merely "my Zen practice," but Ourr Zen Practice. My feelings of regard for, connection to, and intimacy with this community only seem to get deeper and purer as time goes by...*

During the Jukai Ceremony Matthew acknowledged his respect for Zen practice and Buddhist principles by giving himself to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), chanting the Bodhisattva vows and leading the Sangha in reciting the Ten Precepts.

After that Matthew received a Rakusu (symbolic pieces of the historical Buddha's robe worn around the neck)



and a Dharma Name. A Dharma Name is selected by the abbot to be an inspiration for realizing one's full potential. Matthew's new Dharma Name is MyoDo which means Bright Way.

Jukai candidates need to petition in writing at least one month prior to the ceremony, saying why they feel the time is ripe to take this step. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-ji for a minimum of six months (including at least two week-long sesshins), have become regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha). In other words, they find themselves inspired by practice, feel that the training opens their Heart-Mind, and want to serve the temple community.



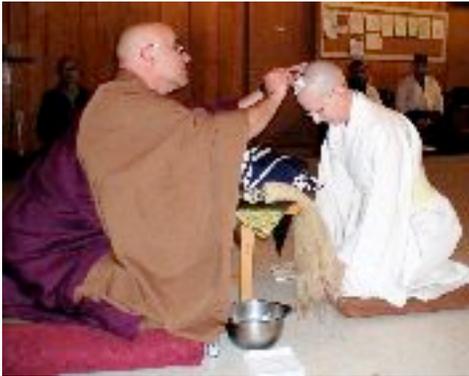
## Tokudo Ceremony

**B**renda Zenmu Nightingale petitioned to become an *unsui* (cloud and water person or Zen monk) shortly after doing her Jukai (lay precept ceremony), on December 8th, 2003. She completed all the requirements set forth below in December, 2006, and was ordained the final morning of Chobo-ji's Rohatsu Sesshin, Friday, January 12th of this year. Here are the steps one is required to complete before ordination:

- I) Complete at least two Chobo-ji intensives over the course of two years, or alternatively, complete six week-long Chobo-ji sesshins.
- II) Do Jukai.
- III) Write a formal letter stating your reasons and desire.
- IV) Solicit the advice of any living nuclear family relatives about your intention to "leave home."
- V) Move to Seattle if you don't already live here, or minimally make plans to reside in Seattle during both the Fall and Spring Intensives. (At this time, I don't believe it is possible actively to oversee training from a distance.)
- VI) Complete an additional year of attending all four Chobo-ji quarterly week-long sesshins full time, and travel with me at least once to Dai-Bosatsu Monastery for sesshin.
- VII) Make or purchase (with assistance offered by the Sangha) all the robes and work clothes needed for ordination.
- VIII) Cut one's hair short in preparation for head shaving (ordained women must first have their head shaved, but subsequently are allowed to keep their hair short, except when doing kessei.)
- IX) Commit to doing at least one kessei (monastic training intensive --minimum of three months), preferably at Dai-Bosatsu monastery, within the first two years of ordination.
- X) Commit to attending all Chobo-Ji training intensives, or equivalent, for ten years.

**D**uring the ceremony, Zenmu was asked to reaffirm her acceptance of the Commandments of the Seven Buddhas, and pledge herself again to the Three Treasures and to the care of all beings. She consented to allow Genjo Osho-san to work with her to diligently strip away all delusions of separated self-hood, as evidenced by self-centered behavior. Zenmu was then asked to formally commit to the path of "leaving home" by acknowledging that the Dharma is like a great sea, once entered an unsui must go deeper and deeper until "self" is lost and True Nature realized.

**A**t this point, Genjo Osho removed the last bit of hair on her head, and Rev. Genko Blackman helped her put on her unsui robes. Genjo Osho then gave Zenmu her second unsui Dharma Name, which is



Dai-Sei (Great Star). This was followed by the presentation of her *Kesa*, the rectangular piece of patchwork cloth worn over the left shoulder on formal occasions, and is symbolic of the robe worn by the Historical Buddha. After reaffirming The Ten Precepts, Zenmu made three prostrations three times. Once in front of the icon of the Historical Buddha, once in front of her ordination teacher, Genjo Osho-san, and then to the Sangha and invited guests.

**T**he service was concluded with the following words by Genjo Osho-san:

*The infinite worlds are all empty, like lotus blossoms growing without water. The Mind is clear and pure in you. The bowed head is a deep offering. May the Three Treasures, Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, encourage and protect you, and may you forever serve and care for all beings. I present you, Rev. DaiSei ZenMu Brenda Nightingale.*

**T**he ceremony concluded with an informal tea for all Rohatsu participants and the dozen guests that came from Canada to be with Zenmu that day. Many days later Zenmu wrote the following in a letter to Genjo:

*As I put on the robes and then the Kesa I felt, for the first time in my life, away from an instrument performance, that feeling which cannot be described of beauty, truth strength, unity connection, awe and humble gratitude. As I looked at the pieces and patches of the Kesa and enfolded it around me, it felt as though all the pieces and patches of "my life" came together as a whole.*



**R**ev. Zenmu will be travelling with Genjo Osho to DBZ for Peter Shinkon Glynn's Tokudo Ceremony to be held at DBZ, March 21st. She will then stay and be a Dharma sister with Shinkon through DBZ Spring Kessei training intensive. She will return to Seattle for Chobo-ji's Fall training intensive.



## Spring Intensive

Chobo-ji's Spring's Intensive will start March 11th, with mini-sesshin on that day, and conclude on June 29th at the close of Summer Sesshin. To join you must be a member in good standing. Good standing means you have:

- A) made three consecutive monthly dues contributions and
- B) attended at least one half-day mini-sesshin or week-long sesshin in the last quarter.

Then to participate in the intensive you must agree to the following:

- 1) Attend group zazen at least five out of seven days a week.
- 2) Commit to attending all mini-sesshins and week-long sesshins during the training intensive.
- 3) Join the Dharma dialogs held at 7:30 pm most 1st and 3rd Sundays.
- 4) Make an attempt to go to every Dharma Interview offered during the intensive. (Dharma Interview will be offered each Sunday night that Genjo is in town.)
- 5) Do at least one hour of samu (working meditation – gardening or cleaning) for the temple per week.
- 6) Read at least one assigned (mutually agreed upon) book on Zen history or practice.
- 7) Make plans to attend an additional sesshin (3 days minimum), preferably at a more formal training center, such as Great Vow Monastery or Dai-Bosatsu Monastery. (This requirement does not have to be met during the intensive but must be planned and completed within a year of the intensive).

For those ChoBo-Ji members who live outside of Seattle, creative adjustments are possible, please speak to Genjo Osho-san.

## About Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji

In 1978, Zen Master Genki Takabayashi was invited by the Seattle Zen Center, founded by Dr. Glenn Webb (at the time a UW Art History professor), to become the resident teacher. He accepted, and by 1983 he formalized his teaching style around a small group of students, and founded Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji, translated as *Great Plum Mountain Listening to the Dharma Zen Temple*.

Before Genki Roshi came to Seattle, he trained for nearly twenty years at Daitoku-Ji, the head Rinzai temple in Japan. In addition, Genki Roshi directed a Rinzai temple in Kamakura, Japan. He entered the monastery when he was 11 years old.



After twenty years of tirelessly giving himself to the transmission of Buddha Dharma to the United States, in 1997 he retired as our teacher, got married and moved to Montana. There he is planting the seeds for yet another American Zen group, and doing the activities he loves best: gardening, pottery, and cooking.

Genjo Osho began his Zen training in 1975, was ordained in 1980, became an Osho (full priest) in 1990, and our Abbot in 1999. In 1981-82 he trained at Ryutaku-ji in Japan. Genjo Osho is assisted by Rev. Genko Kathy Blackman. In addition to his Zen duties, Genjo Osho is a psychotherapist in private practice, a certified spiritual director, married to wife, Carolyn, and father to daughter, Adrienne. Our temple is in the Rinzai Zen School. Since Genki Roshi retired, Genjo Osho-san has continued his training with Eido T. Shimano Roshi, abbot of Dai Bosatsu Monastery in New York.

## Schedule

### Introduction to Zen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 pm

### Zazen

Monday - Friday, 5:30 am, 1 hr.

Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 am

Sundays, 6:30 pm, 1 hr.

### Dharma Talks

1st and 3rd Sundays, 7:30 pm, 1 hr.

**Sesshins:** Quarterly week-long retreats last week in March, June, September and early January.

**Mini-Sesshins:** Half day retreats with breakfast, Dharma Talk and Dharma Interview. 5 - 11:30 am, Sundays: 3/11, 4/15, 5/13, 6/10, 7/8, 8/12

*Spring Sesshin:* 3/24/07 - 3/30/07

*Summer Sesshin:* 6/23/07 - 6/29/07

*Autumn Sesshin:* 9/22/07- 9/28/07

*Rohatsu Sesshin:* 1/3/08 - 1/11/08

**We Are Located:** at 1811 20th Ave., (one half-block north of Madison and south of Denny). Street parking is available in front or between 19th and 20th on Denny, or off-street parking is available behind the house. After entering the front door, remove your shoes and socks in the entry way and proceed to the Zendo (meditation hall) upstairs. [206-328-3944](tel:206-328-3944)

**Dues and Fees:** go to support the life of this temple. We have no outside support from any organization.

Dues are \$60 a month or whatever one can afford. Any amount received monthly means that you will receive this quarterly newsletter, receive discounts on retreats, and be considered an active member.

The suggested fee for any morning or evening practice period, including Tuesday night introduction and Sunday night Dharma Talk is five dollars. The \$5 fee is waived for all members.

The suggested fee for mini-sesshins is \$20. Fees for the March, July, and September sesshins are \$210, and Rohatsu Sesshin is \$320. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. For more information see:

[www.choboji.org](http://www.choboji.org)