

PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 14.2

Summer 2007

Dear members and friends,

As I write this letter we are not yet to mid-August but already it feels a bit like fall, morning clouds, cooler than normal temperatures, and one neighborhood tree showing just a touch of autumn color. Our Summer Sesshin (weeklong quarterly meditation intensive) concluded at the end of June. Twenty-one people were in attendance, mostly full time; however, as we are a city practice, a few participants spent some time at their day jobs each afternoon.

At sesshin, Rev. Genko Kathy Blackman was our Shika (host/manager) and Diane (JoAn) Ste. Marie was her assistant. Together they admirably managed and modeled Samu (work meditation), along with helping to organize and coordinate this training period. Our Tenzo (Chief Cook) was once again Bob (Daigan) Timmer, and he dedicated himself to our Sangha (Community) through his tireless efforts to provide delicious meals. Daigan was backed up by Dee (Seishun) Endelman and other senior Chobo-ji members. In this way senior members pass on the training, and everyone involved becomes more grateful for this tradition. We learn through osmosis and strong example. Tom (Shodo) DeGroot was our Jikijitsu (time keeper), and he kept us in line. Ryan (Hosen) and Sally (Zenka) Metcalf served as Jisha (tea servers and care takers), which they did with great attention. Chris (Zenshin) Jeffries stepped in as Densu (Chant Leader) for Edward (Daiki) Cadman who was unable to attend because of illness. Daiki had his sesshin

at home recovering, and Zenshin, as usual was in fine form. Scott (Ishin) Stolnack was my Inji (assistant) and made tasks simpler for me. On the final day of sesshin Hosen and his fiancé Yuhuan were married in the zendo (meditation hall).



Yuhuan & Hosen



Arne & Muka

They were planning on getting married some time after sesshin, but let's just say they were inspired, after doing sesshin to-

gether, to celebrate their union with the Chobo-ji Sangha.

I want to also acknowledge that Linda (Muka) Wehnes married Arne Kiel on July 21st on Orcas Island. The couple asked me to be the celebrant, and it was a joyous occasion for all. Guests included Muka's parents, other friends and family, and members of Chobo-ji's Sangha. Some of Arne's guests came all the way from Norway.

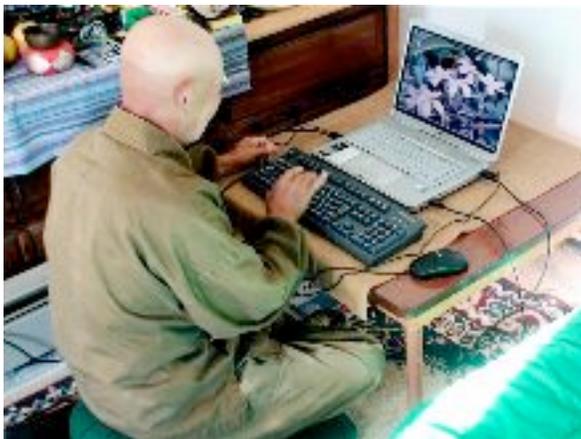
One of the samu projects for Michael (Mukan) Blome at Summer Sesshin was to put together a new laptop computer for our retired abbot, Genki Takabayashi Roshi. Roshi requested a computer that could type Japanese Kanji from the hiragana (syllabary). Genko found a reference to a specialty keyboard that could do this, and Mukan put together the hardware and software to accomplish this feat. I then flew the system to Genki Roshi the weekend after sesshin. Over the course of two days we both tried to get the hang of it, and wrote a complete sentence that used both Kanji and English words. Since leaving the computer with him, some additional problems have arisen that will likely require that he ship the computer back to us so that we can better configure it for him. The computer was purchased with Chobo-ji funds and is our gift to Roshi to assist him with his latest creative endeavor, writing.

One day I hope many of Roshi's works will be translated into English so that we

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can all enjoy his offerings.



Genki Roshi & New Computer

As most people are aware, I became a private pilot and purchased a used airplane back in 1986. From my earliest childhood memories, I've always known that one day I would learn to fly. When I told Genki Roshi in 1979 that I wanted to become an unsui (Zen priest in training), one of the first things he told me was to get a job! I was unemployed at the time, and the relatively small Seattle Sangha had no way to financially support my training. Therefore, it was decided that I would need to find employment that did not hinder my training. This necessitated that I be self-employed. Remembering my fondness and talent as a computer programmer, I started my own software company writing small business applications for personal computers. Eventually, this effort blossomed into Satori Software, which is still a thriving enterprise today. When the company began to make too big of a demand on my time, I sold my interest and used the proceeds to put myself through graduate school and fulfill two of my long-held dreams of becoming a pilot and psychotherapist. As everybody knows, I now support my Zen training by being a psychotherapist in private practice. My clients are used to me being gone at least the seven weeks a year that I do sesshin. In addition, I have used my plane to travel regionally to serve a wider Sangha, and as a method to "chill out" and gain a broad perspective. All troubles seem small from the air. I just said "my" plane, but in fact I gifted it to Chobo-ji back in 2000. Since then Chobo-ji in conjunction with Galvin Flying Service (a flight school on Boeing Field) have sold and upgraded the plane twice now to keep cur-

rent with today's technology. The flight school leases the plane from Chobo-ji to teach students; the leaseback arrangement then pays for the plane's mortgage and upkeep. A sweet deal, where I get to fly the most up-to-date, perfectly maintained, single engine fixed gear aircraft at cost. The whole purpose of this paragraph is to announce that Chobo-ji is now the proud owner of a new Diamond Star (DA 40) aircraft. The old Cessna was traded in and used as one-third down payment on the new plane. In its first month the Diamond Star has earned \$6000, which far exceeds its \$1500 a month mortgage, and like the old Cessna, is well on its way to paying for itself.

Back in May, I attended Memorial Day Sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) monastery in New York with Genko and Zenmu, and got to see first hand how Chobo-ji's two unsui are doing there. Both Shinkon and Zenmu looked a bit drained but in fine form and well appreciated by Eido Shimano Roshi and the rest of the DBZ Sangha. Since then Zenmu has completed her Kessei (training intensive), and has returned to Saskatchewan. Unfortunately, towards the very end of her stay at DBZ she herniated a disk and now faces a long road of recovery that will forestall her planned residency at Chobo-ji for the upcoming Fall Intensive. I've told her not to think of trying zazen before next spring, and then we shall see. One of the aims of Zen training is to help us transcend our ego identity; however, it is sometimes difficult to discern the balance between selflessness and self-care. I met with Shinkon briefly for lunch just a couple of days ago; he was passing through with his partner Cecilie on a motorbike road trip from Alaska during the DBZ summer interim. Shinkon will be returning soon to DBZ to continue his 1000-day commitment there. Thankfully, he looked restored and ready to go.

The last weekend in July, 7/27-7/29, I was in New York again to take a seat on the Board of the Zen Studies Society. This is the overseeing body of DBZ, Shobo-Ji (Temple of True Dharma, opened in 1968 in the upper East side of Manhattan), both established by Eido Shimano Roshi. It also holds archives of writings by D.T. Suzuki (who established the So-

ciety in 1956), Soen Nakagawa Roshi (from whom Eido Roshi received Dharma transmission in 1972) and venerable Nyogen Senzaki (close friend of Soen Roshi, and the first Zen Buddhist priest to reside in the United States). The Society is also a publishing house for select works that are devoted to furthering the practice of Zen in the West. I was honored to be nominated by Eido Roshi and I'm happy to serve. There are nine members on the board and they meet twice a year. After my arrival early Friday evening (the Board Meeting was Saturday afternoon), Eido Roshi and I shared a private dinner at a local Japanese restaurant. At this meeting we discussed many things, including the importance to the West that the Rinzai Zen tradition have the opportunity to be firmly rooted here. We also discussed a date in the near future when he could travel to Chobo-ji. We settled on May 20-21 of 2008, so please keep these dates in mind as you plan your calendar for next year. There will be more details as they become available in future issues of Plum Mountain News (PMN).

In this issue of PMN you will find reviews of two important books in the Japanese Rinzaï Zen tradition. These are Endless Vow and Wild Ivy. Two Sangha members wrote the reviews during Chobo-ji's Spring Intensive. You will also find an update of Genko Ni-Osho's doings, a transcription of a Dharma Talk from Summer Sesshin, the Summer Sesshin Incense Poem, a listing of temple posts for fall, and announcements for upcoming Autumn Sesshin (9/22-9/28) and Chobo-ji's Fall Training Intensive, beginning September 9th.

In the next few weeks, I will be traveling to San Francisco Zen Center (8/15-8/19) for a meeting of the American Zen Teachers Association, where I will get a chance to meet with my Dharma sister, Roko Ni-Osho, and to Michigan (8/24-8/27) and Pennsylvania (10/5-10/7) to do three day sesshins with Aikido students associated with Chiba Sensei. Of course when I am away, Chobo-ji's schedule will continue as usual. Please enjoy the remainder of Seattle's short summer. I am so fortunate to be able to practice with this Sangha; thank you for being just who you are.

With gassho,

Genjo

Hekiganroku: Case 40 Nansen's "This Flower"

(6th day, Summer Sesshin, 2007)

Transcription help from Dee Seishun

Engo's Introduction:

When the action of the mind is stopped and swept away, the iron tree will bloom. Can you demonstrate it? Even a crafty fellow will come a cropper here. Even if he excels in every way, he will have his nostrils pierced. Where are the complications? See the following.

Main Subject

Riku Taifu, while talking with Nansen, said, "Jo Hosshi said, 'Heaven and earth and I are of the same root. All things and I are of one substance.' Isn't that absolutely fantastic?" Nansen pointed to a flower in the garden, called Taifu to him, and said "People of these days see the flower as though they were in a dream."

Setcho's Verse

Hearing, seeing, touching and knowing
are not one and one;
Mountains and rivers
should not be viewed in the mirror.
The frosty sky,
the setting moon — at midnight;
With whom will the serene waters
of the lake reflect the shadows in the cold?

Everything I read lately about following the Way seems to be saying the same thing. Maybe I haven't seen it clearly before this or perhaps this particular vessel called Genjo happens to be viewing the world through this lens this week. Nevertheless, Zen training fosters two things: one is true insight, which is sometimes referred to as "enlightenment" but can simply be thought of as seeing the world clearly as it is right now; the second is maturing over the course of time through a process that Carl Jung called "individuation" towards what Abraham Maslow called "self actualization." According to Maslow, "self actualization" requires that we somehow transcend our basic instinctual needs, that we transcend the survival based "self."

Let's think about our basic needs for a moment. We need something to breathe, to eat, some sort of shelter, and we all need some measure of holding, seeing, love, respect. We also need some sense of meaning or functionality. So what does it mean to transcend these basic needs?

Every organism quite naturally moves towards pleasure and satisfaction and away from pain and discomfort. And yet here in sesshin we are all learning to be patient with and accept many kinds of pain and discomfort — especially in the first few days of sesshin. Perhaps it's because we are hoping or wishing for a payoff at the end of sesshin so we're willing to suffer. And that may be our motivation, but I think what really happens is that we become somewhat "well adjusted" in the midst of our pain and suffering. Whether we're facing physical, psychological pain or both, somehow by the end of sesshin, it really doesn't bother us as much. We aren't so "wrapped around it," or tied up in knots about it. It's not as though the pain has disappeared, and it's not just that the body has gotten used to it, though to some degree this may be true. However, what is most significant is that we're not as hindered or disturbed by our so-called discomfort.

The Tenzo (Chief Cook) has been making a great effort and we've had some fine meals but, by the end of Sesshin, almost no matter *what* the Tenzo cooks, it's so delicious! (laughter) This is a taste of maturity. With maturity we are less attached to things being our way. Maturity is the ability to totally accept and appreciate with gratitude things *just as they are!*

Every day Genko's been asking me if I'm going to see Genki Roshi in Montana and my family this weekend, but because of complications about how I'm going to get there, there is some question as to whether I will be able to go at all. But here, near the conclusion of Sesshin, there is not much discomfort about the uncertainties, it's just "okay, either way." I don't know how it will be for Genki Roshi or my family who are expecting me (laughter), but, for me, going or staying is not a problem. And, this is a glimpse of maturity. Things just as they are, are perfectly okay.

Enlightenment is guaranteed. Anyone who really looks will, without question, see. Sometimes it comes in spurts or

breakthroughs, where one sees reality in great depth; these are called kenshos. These breakthroughs may come throughout the course of one's life; for example, Zen Master Hakuin reported *many* kenshos. During moments of great clarity one temporarily gets a peek around the next corner and may for a time feel "enlightened." But, I warn you, maturity takes decades, and more maturity takes more decades! However enlightened you may feel, it takes decades to mature even a little! And whether maturity unfolds by having lots of sudden breakthroughs over a lifetime or it happens gradually, like walking into a fog and slowly getting soaked, it takes a long time! (laughter) Some of you may be concerned when you hear me talk about how others should approach such and such koan and think, "I'm still on Mu. I'm getting nowhere." However, there is every likelihood you're moving along just as well as everybody else and everyone else is moving just as slowly as you! (laughter) In fact, those of you who have stayed with "Mu" the longest may well discover this course is the most direct.

Maturity takes decades. In most cases, you must live so long. However, in very rare circumstances, even a child can become mature well beyond their years. On the front page of yesterday's PI, there was an article about a 13-year-old kid who died of a progressive disease, a disease that



Seth Cook, 1993-2007

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causes death by “old age” in one’s teens or early twenties. I can’t remember the name of the disease — Progeria — but not only did he appear to be chronologically aged, he was wise beyond his years. For many years he knew he was going to die young, as it turns out, very young. I think knowing he was going to die matured him very quickly. Most of us fool ourselves about our own mortality. His parents, relatives and friends were also well aware and accepting of his situation; therefore, I believe they all rallied to his care and gave him extraordinary loving support. With these two assets, squarely facing his own impermanence, in the midst of loving support, this young man was able to transcend his basic needs for survival and become a Bodhisattva for others. It was not that he didn’t fight for life, but clearly he was ready to die, and this gave him the freedom to genuinely care for others with wit and deep empathy.

It’s interesting that, in order to transcend our basic needs, they have to be met. Doesn’t that sound like a contradiction? But it’s not. If through neglect or abuse our basic needs are inadequately met in childhood, an overly defended pathological “self” develops. Examining our Zen practice, we find that in sesshin our basic needs are well supported; in this way, we are able to face our pain and suffering, and most importantly face the “Great Void so vast and boundless.” Inexorably, this practice gives us the space to mature beyond our basic needs and the opportunity to transcend the preferences that we use to define “self.”

At a certain point in the process of maturing, it becomes truly okay to die because we’ve learned what it is to live, and therefore we are able to face our bodily demise with equanimity. If we have not truly lived for even a day, we are mightily afraid of death. If we have had even a few moments of deep transcendence, our life is changed forever; moreover, our attachment to the sense of a separate ego identity diminishes precipitously, and our certain death is no longer a problem.

With maturity, or at least temporary transcendence, it’s okay —not great— but okay if we aren’t able to eat today or the food is not to our liking. We are no longer bothered by too much or too little, too hot or too cold. Likewise, it’s okay,

if this is our last breath. Moreover, with maturity it becomes okay if nobody sees us, respects us or loves us. This is because love and respect have become a *treasure* that is sufficiently internalized.

There was a time in my relationship with Carolyn where, if she left me, I was pretty sure I would *literally die!* Having not individuated sufficiently, it felt like I would die without her. I was praying she wouldn’t leave me although there were plenty of reasons to. Somewhere during our 21 years together, something shifted for both of us. After this shift we weren’t dependent on the other for basic love, respect and acceptance. Now this doesn’t mean we don’t share these with each other, but it does mean that we no longer need each other to shore up our confidence or affirm a basic faith in our true nature.



I think I’ll die much sooner than Carolyn because she comes from long-lived people. She’s going to be here forever. The Chobo-ji Sangha is going to be taking care of this old woman and they’re going to ask, “Why are we taking care of this old woman? Who was Genjo anyway?” (laughter)

She’ll be fine without me. And, if she should die before me, I’ll be fine without her. Will there be hurt? Yes. Will there be sorrow? Yes. Will all of the stages of grief be there? Absolutely. But will our ability to know or give love be damaged? No longer. Somehow, through lots of

struggle and determination, and the grace of time, we’ve transcended our earlier dependence on each other. Sitting across from me are Hosen and Yuhan, who plan to be married at the end of Sesshin. I pray that your union together leads to the same sort of individuation. Don’t worry; it doesn’t have to happen right away!

Maturity requires that we repeatedly transcend attachment to this life. Even our need for basic sustenance, and our needs to be accepted, appreciated, loved, and respected must be transcended. Does it hurt to not be loved or seen? Yeh. Is it nice to be understood and seen? Yes. Do you *need* it? No! Ultimately, no. Are we closer to transcendence for having done Sesshin? Have we tilled the soil so that maturity has a better chance to root? Undoubtedly. Just as transcendence is guaranteed, maturity is also guaranteed. However, maturity is always gradual and slow. There’s no way around it.

With a lot of maturity we transcend our need and dependence on seeing clearly or in depth. We realize that not seeing clearly or feeling like you are in a fog is perfectly normal and acceptable. We come to appreciate that confusion and uncertainty are pregnant clarity. Therefore, there is no worry or hindrance. Maybe this corporeal body will be around for the next burst of clarity and maybe it won’t. With maturity, it doesn’t matter. We realize that these cycles are endless and that collective consciousness flowers with or without this peculiar unique incarnation.

In this sense, so-called “True Dharma” will naturally take care of itself. Nature is taking care of Nature. What we notice personally, over the course of time and with a lot of determination, is that the sense of being separated or isolated from nature is fading. Now, this doesn’t mean that we don’t feel fear, pain, sorrow, confusion or anything you can name. It’s all still there. It’s just somehow not the kind of trial it used to be.

Genko was saying to me, “You know, I’m as sick or sicker than I ever was, but I worry about it less. It’s really not the kind of concern it once was.” Exactly! Now, on the sixth day of Sesshin, everyone in this room is likely feeling a bit more this way. Actually, no so-called “teacher” is necessary; anyone who genuinely follows the form will naturally root and flower. My job is not to help you

penetrate koans; my job is to encourage you to stay and stick it through sesshin. Because, if you stay and genuinely practice being present, then it all works! And, of course, sesshin after sesshin, year after year, decade after decade, there is a natural unfolding. It is just as natural as a flower opening. And we can feel our attachment to and dependence on a separated selfhood slipping away. This brings a sense of relief and freedom; circumstances are okay just as they are. The food is delicious. The cool breeze of summer, rain falling on our face, or sweat falling from our brow is all good!

“When the action of the mind is stopped and swept away, the iron tree will bloom.” There’s a metal tree down at the Seattle Sculpture Garden. It will be quite the day when it blooms. “When the action of mind is stopped and swept away...” no doubt it takes a while for this iron tree to bloom. “Can you demonstrate it? Even a crafty fellow will come a cropper here.” This is an interesting English phrase; I don’t think the Chinese said it at all. (laughter) Even a crafty fellow will come to disaster. “If he succeeds in every way, his nostrils will still be pierced.” How so? See the following.

“Riku Taifu was talking with Nansen.” He had this beautiful quote in his mind from Jo Hosshi (a famous Fourth Century Buddhist disciple and scholar from India): “Heaven and earth and I are of the same root. All things and I are of one substance.” Nansen, in response, pointed to a flower in the garden, called Taifu over to him and said, “People of these days see this flower as though they were in a dream.” Riku Taifu’s nostrils have just been pierced.

It is true and absolutely fantastic that “heaven and earth and I are of the same root” and that “all things are of one substance.” What is this one substance? It is this “reality prior to heaven and earth that has no form, let alone a name.” All things on heaven and earth and I are this One Shining Alone. Isn’t it wonderful?

Nansen says, “Taifu, you are seeing this flower as if it were only in a dream.” Nansen is saying that with maturity you must learn to discard great insight, your so-called enlightenment, and great clarity; don’t live in a dream!

You’ll say, “But I worked so hard for my awakening! Wait, wait, wait, don’t sweep that away, too!” (laughter) “I just got it!” Imagine you’ve been working on *Mu* for decades, you have a great insight and you come to dokusan and say: “Master, I have had a great awakening and it’s so wonderful!” The first time around, the Zen Master may say, “Yes, let’s share this moment.” The second or third time you try to share this feeling, look out! You must sweep this away, too! If you attach to *this*, if you grasp *this*, lost, lost, completely lost. No longer “gone, gone, completely gone” (laughter)

In the course of our individuation, we may have many bursts of clarity and insight. Regardless, slowly but surely all



who train become confident that what we are seeing in and from our heart/mind (kokoro) is truly real. Eventually, we have complete faith in this reality, even when we are not seeing it. This is maturity. We transcend the need to see, live, or be loved. And why? At a cellular level we realize there is no separated individuality that can be hated or loved, birthed or killed. Living in this realization it is difficult to be distracted or disturbed. Truly there is nowhere to go and nothing to do; therefore, there is no hindrance in getting a lot done!

Then, seeing clearly or not, the food is delicious. The rain is wet. The sun is hot. The red rose stands alone in the summer garden.

Setcho’s verse begins, “Hearing, seeing, touching and knowing are not one and one. Mountains and rivers should not be viewed in the mirror.” That is to say, there is no need for the mirror of clarity. Mountain is just mountain. Pain is pain. Fatigue is fatigue. Longing is longing. Sadness is sadness. Doubt is doubt. Hunger is hunger. Okay, Okay, Okay. Finally, there is true acceptance and in this acceptance there is peace of mind.

Rose is a rose whether it is seen clearly in the mirror of the mind or not. So-called “rose” and “mind” are not two. As with the rose out the window standing alone in the summer garden, or “The frosty sky, the setting moon—at midnight.” Tell me, “With whom will the serene waters of the lake reflect the shadows in the cold?” On a frosty night, after the moon has set, at midnight, who sees? And, what is there to see in the serene waters of a lake at midnight after the moon has set on a frosty winter’s night?

With gassho,
Genjo

Summer Sesshin 2007 Closing Incense Poem

Red rose stands alone.

*Rain gently falls,
with a cool breeze.*

*Together we are the river of
Dharma.*

Who sees past the dream?

*A flash of lightning
in a summer cloud.*

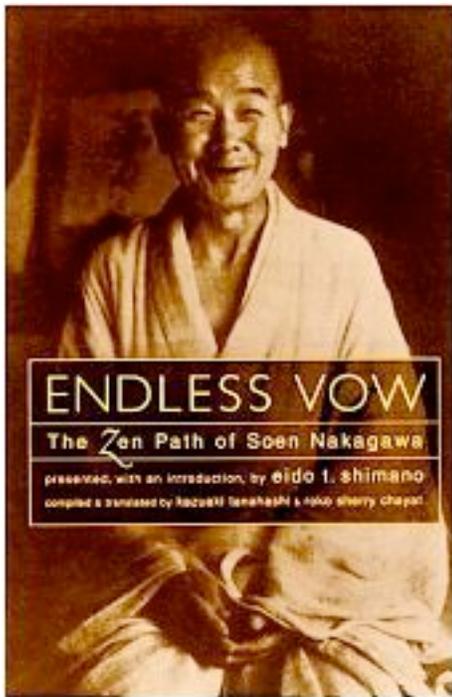
Endless Vow: The Path of Soen Nakagawa

Report by Tina (Seimu) Grant

*New-formed plum
new-formed dew
each born to the other*

Spring 1946

In reading the book *Endless Vow*, I expected that I would learn about the life of Soen Roshi. What I did not expect, but found, was that I would learn about the life of his student, Eido Tai Shimano Roshi as well. For me, this book is as much about how Soen Roshi lived his life as it is about the crucial relationship of a Zen master and Zen student. It is a testament to the intricacies of the student-teacher relationship; how the role of student and teacher shift and grow, even after death.



There is a quote attributed to Lillian Hellman that states, “Nothing, of course, begins at the time you think it did.” This beautifully sums up Soen Roshi’s role in the building of the International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji in the Catskill Mountains of New York. One might think DBZ began when a young Eido Roshi

gathered forces and began building what we now know as Dai Bosatsu Monastery. However, in reading *Endless Vow*, in reading about Soen Roshi’s life, one can trace DBZ’s beginnings back through Soen Roshi, all the way back to Soyen Shaku. I only stop there because that is where Eido Roshi begins his tale.

In 1883, Soyen Shaku came to Chicago to present a lecture on karma at the World’s Parliament of Religions. In 1905, he returned to San Francisco, giving talks in several cities in the US. Soyen Shaku was the first Zen Master to come to the United States. Nyogen Senzaki, a student of Soyen Shaku, was the first “Zen monk to be a resident teacher in the United States.”

In 1931, as a newly ordained monk in Japan, while sitting solitary retreat on Mount Dai Bosatsu, Soen Nakagawa created a mantra, *Namu Dai Bosa*, “which means to become one with the boundless Bodhisattva spirit that is our intrinsic nature.” He began chanting this in an effort to enlarge the Dai Bosatsu mandala and create an international zendo. Soen Nakagawa wrote poetry and an editor in Tokyo asked if she could publish his work in her magazine. One of the subscribers to this magazine was Shubin Tanahashi, who showed the poetry to her teacher, Venerable Nyogen Senzaki, who wrote a letter to Soen Nakagawa expressing his appreciation. Nyogen Senzaki and Soen Nakagawa began a correspondence that lasted until Nyogen Senzaki’s death in 1958. So began the known and unknown forces that joined Soen Roshi and Eido Roshi in an interconnected web of Dharma that created an international zendo in the West.

Eido Roshi’s description of Soen Roshi as “a simple monk, a ‘crazy wisdom’ Zen master, a genius in the arts, a spiritually realized being of the highest attainment, a dedicated student of the Dharma, a master manipulator, a troubled human being, a skillful politician, a tactful diplomat, a stupendous host, an inspired guest...wildly unpredictable” helped me to understand that it was all these things, all these attributes that made Soen Roshi who he was. No perfection necessary when living a life with an endless vow towards seeing all

that is there.

About Soen Roshi’s poetry, he uses few words, but he conveys a depth of meaning and a layering of images far beyond what one sees and understands with one’s mind. One must read and breathe for themselves the powerful forces within the lines. Here are three examples.

*Year of the Serpent
already uncoiling
self itself*

*The past continues
endlessly
spring mountain*

*Bodhisattva ridge
moon expanding
over Jerusalem*

One can reiterate the facts of Soen Roshi’s life, but that is not Soen Roshi. Reading the excerpts from his writings and his poetry leave me with unanswered question about a man, a monk who appeared to be unknowable. In the end, I feel that understanding eludes me, and with this, I am just fine.

Wild Ivy: The Spiritual Autobiography of Zen Master Hakuin

Report by Sally (Zenka) Metcalf

What can I say about an autobiography written in the 1700s? It’s a bit more like reading Chaucer (which I love) than Zen teachings—though the century is wrong. But somehow Wild Ivy has a medieval feel. There are no compelling teishos here, but instead there is a rather embroidered tale of the wanderings, musings and tribulations of a man who was quite a character, by all accounts. Frankly, I almost enjoy the *accounts* of Hakuin’s life more than his own autobiography, as they are rich with his teachings, and his power as a master

shines through them. And from other's accounts we hear more of the breadth of Hakuin's powers.

He was a Renaissance man, in our vernacular, creating volumes of masterful calligraphy, poetry, painting, prose. Nothing was beneath Hakuin's Zen. He taught men and women from all classes, which was unheard of. Even into his latter years he traveled widely to give extensive lectures on Buddhism. Nothing was too mundane for his pen either. For local businessmen, he was known to enjoy writing advertising jingles with a Zen flavor. He composed with staggering versatility in every genre, and there were many. Even his autobiography was penned in a very hip and colloquial style popular at the time, making it devilish to translate for generations far removed.

“Crazy poems, nonsense verse, folk tales, parodies of popular songs, street doggerel, spiels for patent medicines, even riddles—they all became vehicles to convey his teaching of kensho. And it is a tribute to his uncommon literary talent that he was able to carry this off without really diluting that teaching,” says Norman Waddell.

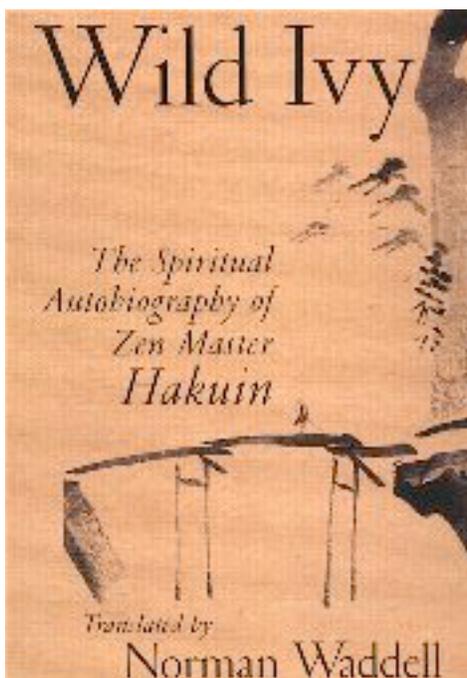
Of course, there is also the issue of the many versions of Hakuin's autobiography, which often boldly contradict each other, as if he took delight in reworking and embellishing a good yarn instead of recording for posterity the story of his life. I found this absolutely hilarious. Will the real Hakuin please stand up!

Don't get me wrong, there is meat for the spiritually-minded here and a wonderful view into antique Japanese religious life and into the emergence and devotions of a great Master. There are accounts of the young Hakuin and friend meditating for a week, face to face, awls in hand, committed to stabbing each other in the thigh if one or the other fell asleep. (No wonder it's called Crazy Zen. Don't these guys know you need your REM sleep to stay sane?)

I had my favorite tales. There's the one where young Hakuin experiences his first taste of enlightenment and is so full of

himself, strutting about insufferably, that his teacher grabs him and hurls him off the temple deck into the dirt—quite a feat as Hakuin was built along the lines of a bull. Humbling, too. Hakuin's preoccupation with kenshos intrigued me. He heard from a fellow mendicant that one has many kenshos over time, some great, some minor. Impossible! thinks the young man, but as time passes, indeed, he finds himself to be experiencing just this. I especially enjoyed the kensho in which he realized that the Lotus Sutra was an inspired teaching rather than being dismissed by him as “a collection of simple tales on cause and effect.”

My very favorite story has to do with Zen sickness, from which Hakuin suffered for many years without hope of a cure, though he tried everything. (Small wonder he fell ill, what with the way he abused himself



in practice.) It is said, that eventually he heard of a hermit who lived in a cave on a nobleman's estate. The hermit was reputed to be 370 years old. Perhaps he knew something about health, thought Hakuin, and set off to find him. The recluse took a shine to the monk and told him his secret to longevity—the melting-butter meditation!

Butter? you say. Yes, fresh sweet cream butter. We are to imagine it in a ball the size of an egg placed on top of our head

and, in our imagination, see it begin to melt slowly from the top of the head, through every cell, to the soles of the feet. And then again. Do it until the scent of sweet butter fills the senses. The beneficial effects are in direct relation to the diligence with which the meditation is practiced.

Don't knock it unless you've tried it.

The theory was that energy can be released improperly so that it rises from the hara into the heart. This weakens the whole being. Instead, energy should drop into the hara. This meditation creates the necessary shift. It cured Hakuin of his Zen sickness completely and restored the health of many of his pupils. Before the butter mediation, he'd spent years weakened and cold, always having to wear layers of clothing and socks and to be near a fire. After this practice, no more extra layers and no fire necessary. He lived to the ripe old age of 82, and traveled on foot far and wide very nearly until that age.

There is much controversy amongst historians about this hermit of Hakuin's. Was he real? Or was it yet another of Hakuin's mischievous tales? Popularly, the hermit is discounted as being fictitious. After all, no one can reach an age of three centuries. It is said that he invented the hermit as a colorful source of his healing technique. But I wonder. Hakuin was cured. He had to have found the means somewhere, somehow. Why not in the mountains of Shirakawa, from a venerable hermit of indeterminate years?

Hakuin's autobiography makes me want to read more of the other accounts of his life and teachings to fill out my picture of this remarkable master. I feel deeply indebted to him. His teaching produced some of the great Zen masters of our lineage. I long to investigate his paintings and calligraphy. He gifted us with rich additions to the array of koans I find so helpful. “What is the sound of one hand clapping” is one Hakuin is famous for. It is so compelling that, after three hundred years, it is virtually a modern-day household phrase. And there is the Song of Zazen—which I can scarcely read without a trembling in my soul. To Hakuin Ekaku Zenji, I can only say, “Thank you.”

New Posts Beginning Sept. 1st

Diane JoAn Ste. Marie: Shika
(Host - Manager)

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

Mary Choko Cabaniss: Tenzo
Assistant

Scott Ishin Stolnack Jiki Jitsu
(Timekeeper)

Dee Seishun Endelman: Jiki Jitsu
Assistant

Chris Zenshin Jeffries: Densu
(Chant Leader)

Matthew Myodo Perez: Densu
Assistant

Tina Seimu Grant: Jisha
(Serves tea and takes care of zendo)

Michael Mukan Blome: Jisha
Assistant

Charlie Taishin Blackman: Inji
(Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens: Fusu
(Treasurer and financial manager)

Daiki Cadman & Genko Blackman:
Introduction to Zazen Leaders

Autumn Sesshin September 22 - 28

Please send a deposit by Sept. 9th, 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, Sept. 22nd, so plan to be there at least 20 min. early. Sesshin will end around 11 am, Friday morning.

Fall Intensive

This upcoming Intensive, which will go from 9/9 - 12/16 and resume on 1/2/07 and conclude 1/11 the last day of Rohatsu Sesshin is your chance to commit to a more rigorous practice. To join you must be a member in good standing. Good standing means you have:

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

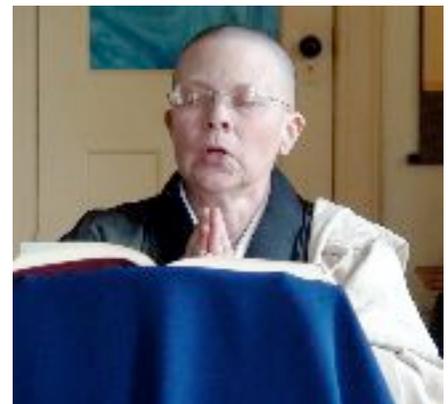
Then to participate in the intensive you must agree to the following:

- 1) Attend group zazen at least five out of seven days a week
- 2) Commit to attending all sesshins full-time during the training intensive (including monthly mini-sesshins)
- 3) Join the Dharma dialogs held at 7:30 pm, 1st and 3rd Sundays
- 4) Make every effort to attend all Dharma interviews 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, writing a brief report that may be published in PMN.
- 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.

Genko's Activities

As many of you know, Genjo and I have been visiting the King County jail twice a month to provide inmates an opportunity for Buddhist meditation. As Genjo's work schedule is changing, he will find it difficult to make jail visits on Thursdays with me. Quite a number of Chobo-ji members have stepped forward to offer to come to the jail in his stead. We are in the application process right now, and are hoping to have several people able to take turns so it is not an undue burden on any one person. Perhaps as time goes on, some of you may be interested in training for the state prison as well; this is a longer time commitment and involves more travel, but can be quite rewarding. Right now I am doing two programs at Monroe Correctional Center's Minimum Security Unit, am helping Shen-ling Michael Rossi at the Special Offenders Unit, and am looking at adding a program at another facility as well.



For the third year now, at the request of Sharon (Meho) and Todd (Daiko) Petit, Chobo-ji members from Wenatchee, I have been going to Wenatchee once a month in the spring and summer to lead zazen for the small Sangha there. At this time the group feels quite strong. They have given themselves the name Stone Blossom Sangha, which reflects the wonderful meditation garden they built, centered on a rock water feature and dry streambed in the back yard of the church where they meet. We will meet again in September and October before winding down for the winter. Chobo-ji members are more than welcome to join us this year and next, when we start up again in the spring.



Seated Buddha, Tang dynasty (618–907), ca. 650 China

Images from the NY Metropolitan Museum of Art



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 Genko Kathy Blackman Ni Osho. In addition to his Zen duties, Genjo Osho is a psychotherapist in private practice, a certificated 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 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: 9/9/07, 10/14, 11/11, 12/16, 2/10/08

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

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

Spring Sesshin: 3/22/08 - 3/28/08

Summer Sesshin: 6/28/08 - 7/4/08

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 \$350. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. For more information see:

www.choboji.org