

# PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 14.3

Autumn 2007

## Dear members and friends,

It has been a very busy time since the last newsletter. In mid August I attended the 2007 meeting of the American Zen Teachers Association, which was held at the San Francisco Zen Center (SFZC) on Page Street. This was significant for three reasons. The first was that I was able to meet with my Dharma sister Roko Ni Osho, and we found time to have a meaningful dialog about our association with Zen Studies Society (ZSS). Second, I was also able to meet with fellow ZSS board member Zenshin Richard Rudin. Zenshin, Carolyn and I had time to walk the Japanese Garden together in Golden Gate Park and share a meal in Japantown. I have only recently gotten to know Zenshin more deeply, but I must say it feels as though we have been friends for several lifetimes. Third, meeting at SFZC gave me some ideas of how Chobo-ji might one day expand into a "Residential Center" for Zen practice and training; more on this later.

In late August I helped lead a three-day sesshin in Michigan with Frank (Daiui) Apodaca Sensei and Rodger (Tozan) Park Sensei, and in October I led two more three-day sesshins, one held at Bucks County Aikikai in Pennsylvania and the other at the Calling Lakes Center in Saskatchewan. George Lyons Sensei, with support



*Zenmu in Saskatchewan*

from Robert Savoca Sensei of Brooklyn Aikikai, hosted the Pennsylvania sesshin. As usual, this sesshin mixed Aikido weapons training with zazen. The Calling Lakes sesshin mixed Quaker Worship and Worship Sharing with zazen and was hosted by the Prairie Christian Training Center. Rev. Zenmu Brenda Nightingale



## *Bucks County Aikikai 2007 Sesshin*

was able to assist me in Saskatchewan, and we were both pleasantly surprised that her back injury had improved sufficiently for her to do most sits on the floor in zazen posture. This means that Zenmu will be able to be resident for Chobo-ji's next training period in the spring.

Our weeklong Autumn Sesshin was held at the Zen House the last week of September. There were 15 participants; this is a little small for us, but everyone in attendance had done Jukai, which meant that we were strong and went deep. Bob (Daigan) Timmer was once again our Tenzo (Chief Cook), keeping us all well fed with hearty meals. Diane (Joan) Ste. Marie was our Shika (Manager) who kept us organized and on task. We were all, of course, very punctual under the constant eye of our Jikijitsu (Time Keeper), Scott (Ishin)

Stolnack. Chris (Zenshin) Jeffries kept the beat as our Densu (Chant Leader). The Jisha (Tea Servers) were Tina (Seimu) Grant and Michael (Mukan) Blome who saw to it that we were all well hydrated and nourished. Sally (Zenka) Metcalf was our all-important garden consultant. And John (Daikan) Green served me well as my Inji (Personal Assistant). Rev. Genko Blackman was able to attend nearly every sit, which is amazing considering her health issues. She also gave a lovely Dharma Talk on the second day. Transcribed for this issue of Plum Mountain News is my Dharma Talk on Kyo-sei's "Voice of the Raindrops" and the closing incense poem.

Last weekend I was able to meet with Genki Takabayashi Roshi, our founding Abbot, in Montana.

As most people are aware, he has been having serious health concerns recently. I am happy to report that he is looking much better. His energy was bright and his stamina was sufficient to again review the use of his new computer.



## *Samu in Japanese Garden*

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The Chobo-ji Board has recently allocated an additional \$250 a month for alternative medicine treatments, which he favors over allopathic approaches and are not fully covered by his otherwise comprehensive health insurance. He is still writing up a storm and dedicates much of his day to this practice. While we were together we were able to review a proposed schedule for the Dharma Transmission Ceremony, May 21st, 2008, that I will take with me for input from Eido Roshi when I see him just before DBZ's Rohatsu.

After the ceremony in May, I would like us to get serious about exploring possibilities of expanding our practice to include a residential center. Right now only Carolyn and I live on the Zen House property, but as you know soon Zenmu will be coming to reside with us for our spring and autumn training intensives. In addition, three Chobo-ji members have now written letters formally petitioning to be ordained unsui (Zen monks); if all goes well, these three should be ready by Rohatsu 2009. It would be grand if these and other lay practitioners could all live together on the same property. This will, of course, require a move to a much bigger space. Accordingly, a committee has been set up to begin now to explore ideas for our future headed by Genko and Dee (Seishun) Endelman. There will be a "Visioning Session" after our Annual Meeting March 9th.

Five Chobo-ji members will be traveling with me to Dai Bosatsu's Rohatsu sesshin in New York the first eight days of December. In addition, Tozan from Ann Arbor, and Robert from Brooklyn will be meeting us there; with Shinkon already in residence, Chobo-ji will have quite a presence. It is hard to say that one is looking forward to Rohatsu (the year's most intensive week-long retreat), but this looks intoxicating. Other upcoming travels include San Diego for the upcoming Christmas holidays, Camp Indianola for our own Rohatsu (1/3 - 1/11), NYC for the next ZSS Board meeting the end of January, and a three-day sesshin in England the beginning of February.

Besides the items mentioned above, you will also find in this addition of Plum Mountain News two book reports on excellent selections of Zen literature, an up-

date from Genko, and details for January's Rohatsu. If you are reading this in time for November's mini-sesshin on Veteran's Day, please note that Rev. Claude Anshin Thomas, author of "At Hell's Gate: A Soldier's Journey from War to Peace" will give the guest Dharma Talk. **The zendo will be closed for the holidays, Nov. 22 - Nov. 24 & Dec. 25 - Jan. 1st.** As usual, we will have our **New Years celebration and potluck brunch beginning 10 AM, New Years Day.** I wish you all a happy holiday season.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Genko's Thoughts

Autumn certainly is deepening into winter now, with leaves falling from the trees in earnest. At the teahouse in the Japanese Garden, we just exchanged the smaller Chinese-style brazier used in the warmer months for the larger, sunken hearth in the middle of the tearoom. This is not merely a nod to convention; all the tea students are glad of the larger charcoal fire in the hearth of the unheated teahouse with its thin, paper shoji screens for walls. When



the wind blows, the leaves slap into the shoji with a scuffly sound. At this time we are grateful both for the shelter of the teahouse and also for its flimsiness, which reminds us of the fleeting quality of our own existence.

The opening of the hearth in early November is considered to be the beginning of the tea year, when the tea, which was harvested in May, has seasoned enough and is ready for grinding. The Wenatchee Zen group, now called Stone Blossom Sangha, will be celebrating the end of its summer series of mini-sesshins with a tea gathering at the last mini-sesshin this month, as we acknowledge the difficulty of travel over the passes with the coming

winter weather.

The other day while waiting to enter the Minimum Security Unit at Monroe Correctional Center, I spent some time talking to one of the corrections officers who transports inmates from one facility to another. He has been "working transport" for 17 years, he said, often pulling double shifts driving from one end of the state to the other, and has seen many inmates released and re-incarcerated multiple times. With the increasing cold and rain, business is picking up, he told me, and some of the regular folks who have been out on the street for the summer are now returning to the shelter of the prisons. This is noticeable at the county jail as well, as the units fill up with the increasing cold weather. Even in the bleak, concrete world of corrections there is a sense of the seasons!

At this time of year our activities tend to increase to the point where we are too busy to notice and appreciate fully the changing weather, except as it might interfere with our ability to get from place to place. Hopefully we can each take the time to reflect on all the aspects of the deepening autumn, be grateful for what we have, and open our hearts to the conditions others find themselves in.

## Visioning Meeting Sunday, March 9th, 2008

Our Annual Meeting will be held at 11:30 am after the Sunday, March 9th 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.

In addition, Sangha members are invited to envision the future of our community. Genjo Osho has asked that we look into developing a practice center that can include accommodations for residents. The meeting will be from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Look for more information, as we get closer to the date. Please contact either Genko or Seishun if you would like to contribute to the organizing and format of this meeting.

## Hekiganroku: Case 46

### Voice of the Raindrops

(5th day, Autumn Sesshin, 2007)

Transcription help from Dee Seishun

### Engo's Introduction:

In a single action he transcends both the ordinary and the holy. With a single word, she cuts away all complications and encumbrances. She walks the ridge of an iceberg, he treads the edge of a sword. Seated amid the totality of form and sound, she rises above them. Leaving aside the freedom of such subtle activity, tell me, what about finishing it in a moment? See the following.

### Main Subject

Kyosei asked a monk, "What is the noise outside?" The monk said, "That is the voice of the raindrops." Kyosei said, "Men's thinking is topsy-turvy. Deluded by their own selves, they pursue things." The monk asked, "What about yourself?" Kyosei said, "I was near it but am not deluded." The monk asked, "What do you mean by 'near it but not deluded'?" Kyosei said, "To say it in the sphere of realization may be easy, but to say it in the sphere of transcendence is difficult."

### Setcho's Verse

The empty hall resounds  
with the voice of the raindrops.  
Even a master fails to answer.  
If you say you have turned the current,  
You have no true understanding.  
Understanding? No understanding?  
Misty with rain,  
the northern and southern mountains.

It may not be raining this morning but it is misty. Who sees the mist? Who hears the rain? From a rational, relativistic perspective, we conclude there must be a subject for the mist to be seen or the rain to be heard. But Zen asks us to go beyond our ideas of "subject" and "object." Anna and Melanie (the temple dogs), the rocks, trees, moon and stars have no idea about "subject" and "object" and they do just fine!

So after all, who hears the voice of the Plum Mountain News

raindrops? Who sees the morning mist? In a way, all koans, or spiritual investigations, focus on this question of "who" or alternatively and nearly synonymously, they can be said to examine "What is this?" We all intellectually agree that *this* is something beyond our intellectual understanding, yet we keep trying. We understand that *this* is beyond our conceptualizations of this and that, subject and object. Nevertheless, we grope for what this reality is. What is this?

black, before black, before black." Now that's black!

Every koan points at this absolute. We refer to it in so many ways, but all we're really doing is referring to it; *it* cannot be said. And if you have penetrated Mu, not to say "you" can penetrate it, but I have to use words, perhaps it is better to say, if you have been Mu-ed by Mu, then you've glimpsed the black before black before black. From this touchstone there is no



### *Mu, by Genki Roshi*

Through our rational mind we come up with all kinds of words and symbols to explain reality. But sometimes we forget that all words and symbols are nothing more than words and symbols; in other words, they are figments of our imagination. On one level, they may be brilliant and indispensable for complex communication, but as I said the other day, words and symbols are very late developments in the evolution of consciousness, and are at best the icing on the cake.

The first part of my Dharma name given to me by Genki Roshi is "Gen." The same "Gen" is found in Genki, Genko, and Genchoku. I've seen this *kanji* translated in a Japanese-English dictionary as "heavenly silence." I've also seen it translated as "original mystery." However, the most literal translation is "black before

rain, no mist, no human being, no dog, no cat, no moon, no sky, no summer, no winter, no autumn, no spring, no hand, no eye, no ear, no tongue, no nose, no body, no mind, no seeing, no hearing, no good, no evil, no better, no worse, no more, no less, no up, no down, no north, no south, no zenith, no nadir. Muuuuuuu. This viewpoint is also referred to as Absolute Samadhi. That is to say, samadhi that is with, in and of the absolute; samadhi that is before the before and black before black. It's going all the way to one end of the spectrum and it's not that this end of the spectrum is a final point but it is the black/absolute/nothing end of the spectrum that is a vast and boundless bottomless void.

The other end of the spectrum is some-

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times referred to as Positive Samadhi. At this end of the spectrum every color, every moment, every aspect is *it!* The Real is shining at you from every apparent moment, color and particle. These two kinds of samadhi are two ends of the same spectrum; to say it more clearly, they're just different sides of the same coin.

Understanding this much, how might you attempt to answer, "Who is listening?" Making an intellectual effort to transcend subject and object, you might say, "The mind of the Universe." Ring, ring, ring goes the dokusan bell, implying "more zazen." "The Tao hears itself," ring, ring. "The no-Tao hears itself?" ring, ring (laughter). Ideas, ideas, ideas! Who sees the mist? Who sees the coming autumn colors? Who hears the voice of the raindrops? Who feels the warmth of the sun?

What we're aiming at is a life that transcends the ordinary and the holy, the relative and the absolute. We're aiming at a life that isn't caught up in our ideas of the absolute, ideas of the relative, ideas of perfection, or ideas of ego identity. Is it possible to have a life not caught up in our neurotic patterns and defenses or caught by the idea of being separated from our neurotic patterns or perceptions? Yes.

Yesterday, I told somebody in dokusan, "To penetrate Mu, you don't need to add anything, but you need to subtract." That's inaccurate and wrongly said. There's nothing to subtract and there's certainly nothing that needs to be added. Penetrating or realizing Mu does require that you step back from your patterns, neurosis, defenses and ideas. We must step back to take a wide view, but there is no need to subtract anything. When there is a wide view of the pain, fatigue or other mental patterns, they are no longer hindrances. When our perspective is narrow, limited to an individualistic view, it's one hell realm after another. In every action, our practice points us at a life that transcends ideas of the apparent and real, relative and absolute, particular and universal, subject and object, this and that, and good and bad. Then, with a single word or gesture, *you* cut away all complications and encumbrances; you are then able to live life fully, openheartedly and compassionately. Warning! To live life this way is like walking the ridge of an iceberg or treading the edge of a sword.

Truly we sit right here on the cushion amid the totality of form and sound. We sit in the midst of form and non-form. Sitting here on the cushion in the midst of the totality, are we aware of it or not? If you are able to sit in the midst of this totality with full awareness, then "you" have risen above it, or it could be said that the individualistic perspective has been transcended. Step back sufficiently to sit fully in the midst of the totality of *This*. Leaving aside the freedom of such a realization, tell me about doing it in this moment, right now. Then Engo says, "See the following."



Kyosei lived during the ninth and tenth centuries, at the height of the Chinese Zen renaissance. In the West, it's not widely known that there was a great renaissance in China between the eighth and tenth centuries, it was as big as, no bigger than, the European renaissance of which we are all familiar. There was a huge surge in human genius in China at that time! Kyosei was a dharma brother of Ummon, with whom we're all familiar; both were Dharma heirs of Seppo. Kyosei asked a monk, not with ignorance but gentle exaggerated innocence and calculated investigation, "What is that noise outside?" How can it be innocent and calculated at once? Well, leave it to a Zen Master! It's a probe.

There are said to be four different kinds of Katsu's in the Rinzai lineage. These are

shouts that have no meaning, but do have uses. The third Katsu is like a long fishing pole teasing amongst the grasses of a marsh or a waterway. "Kaaaaatssu..." (whispering). What's there? This is Kyosei's style. "What is the noise outside?"

The monk said, "The voice of the raindrops." Of course, Kyosei was aware that it was raining. Kyosei says, "People's thinking is topsy-turvy. Deluded by their own selves, they pursue things." Deluded by ourselves, we attach way too much significance to our ideas. In fact, we're so attached to our ideas of reality, that most of the time, we completely miss reality! We *don't* see the morning fog. We *don't* hear the rain fall. We *don't* feel the sun on our face. We just say, "Oh, today the sun is too hot." Or we say, "It's raining again!" Or we say, "Hope this fog clears!"

The monk said, "What about yourself?" Kyosei says this interesting line, "I was near it but I'm not deluded." The monk rightly asks (he's been invited to ask), "What do you mean by near and not deluded?"

When sitting in the midst of this totality with awareness, when you have learned to step back from your egoistic perspective, and are asked, "Does a dog have a Buddha nature," you can simply say, as Zen Master Joshu once did, "yes." Joshu could say "yes" without being caught like most of us are by ideas of Buddha nature, dog nature or ideas of enlightenment. Likewise from beyond egoistic attachment to the idea of rain, one could respond to Kyosei's question about the noise outside by saying, "the voice of the rain." In this case the monk responded more like, "Why, it's the rain, Master!" It all depends on how it's said. Is the speaker aware of the totality? Or is the person responding from superficial ideas and concepts of reality?

Kyosei then goes on to say, "To say it in the sphere of realization may be easy but to say it in the sphere of transcendence is difficult." For example, if you are aware that you are engaged in a Mondo (Zen dialogue) and you're asked, "What is the noise outside," and, instead of saying "it's the rain falling," you said, "Muuuu," while genuinely feeling Mu, that's responding in the realm of realization. Saying it in the realm of realization is quite easy, you just say Mu. Everybody gets it.

A +! Mu. Ah, but what is Mu? Who's saying Mu? Setting these questions aside for a moment, if you respond with Mu to any question asked, then you are responding in the realm of realization. But, what does it mean to say it in the realm of transcendence? That's not so easy. To do so, one must step back even from Mu, step back from the black before black before black. Now, what is the noise outside? Who sees the morning mist? Who hears the rain falling? Who feels the sun on your face?

To say it in the realm of the relative, just say, "I do." There is nothing wrong with this way of responding, but it is superficial. In a Zen dialog we are trying for more depth. Hence in dokuson you will quickly hear ring, ring. Perhaps you would try, "You do?" Ring, ring. "We do?" Ring, ring (laughter). "We all do?" Ring, ring (laughter).

So, now, you all know how to say it in the realm of realization and in the realm of the relative. Of course saying Mu when you are not feeling Mu won't have any depth. Saying it in the realm or the relative doesn't require any depth! But how do you say it in the realm of transcendence? There are ways to learn about how to approach transcendence, but Zen is not so interested in how you approach koans as in how you live a life of transcendence, a life of being an effective voice of the Dharma. This is a never-ending struggle. Never-ending!

Actually, it is very simple to live a life of transcendence. Just live an ordinary life, a life where your every day activity is manifesting the Tao, caring for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. When hungry prepare a meal, when tired sleep, if you want to act just act, if you don't want to act, don't! Yet, a life of openhearted activity is oh, so difficult! We tend to be so defended and self-centered, we are not able to be openhearted and therefore are often intimidated by the simplest things and fearful of acting selflessly. But, all in all, living a life of transcendence is just a little bit easier if you know how to say it in the realm of transcendence. If you can say it in the realm of transcendence then at least you are aware of what you're looking for, and it becomes easier to discern what needs doing.

Koan practice can help each one of us to discern the transcendent course of speaking

and acting. This practice helps us to minimally be aware of what we're pointing at. We are pointing at the moon, and we are never going to get there! At best, we get to a mountaintop, which is still a long, long way from the moon, but this training does at least point us in the right direction. It points us at transcendence; it points us at everyday openhearted, mindful, caring activity. When eating, just eat. When preparing a meal, chop vegetables. Afterwards, wash your bowls. Kyosei can make use of the relative to point at the absolute. This is what is meant by "near but not deluded." How would you do it?

Setcho's verse begins, "The empty hall resounds with the voice of the raindrops. Even a master fails to answer." The empty hall resounds with the voice of the raindrops. The Zendo is *empty*. No one is in it. Do you see why even a master fails to answer? The rain on the roof and the ground is deafening; even when it's not raining, it's still deafening!

If you say, "Ah, I've turned the current, I get it!", you have no true understanding. But, if you get stuck in the idea of understanding or not understanding, forget about it! Just forget about it! The popular Jamaican phrase, "Don't worry, be happy" comes to mind.

"Misty with rain, the northern and southern mountains." No more can be said.

With gassho,

Genjo

## Autumn Sesshin 2007 Closing Incense Poem

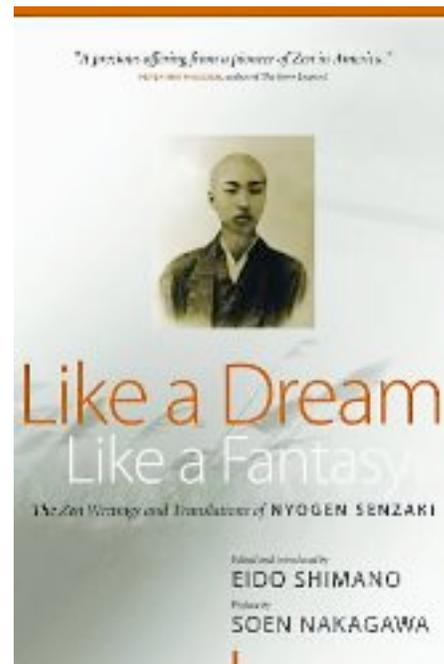
Who feels the brush  
of early autumn's breeze?  
Who sees the morning mist  
and evening moon?  
Gentle rain, who hears it's sound?

Pitter-patter, Pitter-patter.

White clouds ascend Mt. Rainier,  
quickly gone.

## Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy

Report by Tina (Seimu) Grant



### MOVING DAY

*A snail leaves the zendo  
Carrying his own shell.  
He goes along the old road  
Passing under the Bodhi tree,  
Stepping over fallen flowers.  
On his way, he calls to spring  
Speaking softly to the breeze,  
"Three thousand worlds are my home!"*  
March 2, 1947

"Zen is not a religion based on faith; nor is it some sort of speculative philosophy. It is the actualization of an unselfish life." This line comes from an undated teisho given by Nyogen Senzaki titled, *Zen and American Life*. From all I have read about this modest Zen Master, whether he knew so or not, he was describing his own life. In reading about the great Zen teachers who came to the West, who sacrificed their lives to transmit this Way of Zen, I am struck by the manner in which Dharma forces one to trust in the unseen unfolding. And so it was for Nyogen Senzaki, the first Zen teacher who came to live in these United States. Instructed by his teacher Soyen Shaku to "remain in this

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'strange land' and adopt its new language and culture... to remain anonymous and not to teach Zen for seventeen years," Nyogen Senzaki found that he was working twenty or more hours a day just to make ends meet. The year was 1905.

In retrospect, we see the inherent Dharma wisdom in Soyen Shaku's instructions. If one, in this case Nyogen Senzaki, is forced to live within their new cultural surrounding, unable to do what they know best, forced into adaptation, eliminating all separation from the new culture, one would be better equipped to teach. Indeed, in the introduction to the book, Eido Rōshi writes that he believes it was this immersion in American culture that brought the unfolding and rooting of "the starkly simple, deeply idealistic, pure Zen that was Senzaki's gift to America." Nyogen Senzaki's deep idealism was seemingly not shaken by three years of internment at Heart Mountain in Wyoming during WWII, but was stirred into a deeper, richer Zen soup as expressed by poems written during that time.

#### PARTING

*Thus have I heard:  
The army ordered  
All Japanese faces to be evacuated  
From the city of Los Angeles.  
This homeless monk has nothing  
but a Japanese face.  
He stayed here thirteen springs  
Meditating with all the faces  
From all parts of the world,  
And studied the teachings  
of Buddha with them.  
Wherever he goes, he may  
form other groups  
Inviting friends of all faces,  
Beckoning them with the empty hands  
of Zen.*

May 7, 1942

#### SPRING MESSAGE

*Man makes enclosures by himself  
When he thinks himself  
Separated from other beings.  
Bars as such should be taken off.  
The sooner the better.  
One hesitates and loses in vain.  
Nothing disturbs the unselfish man  
Who harmonizes with heaven and earth.*

*He goes freely like a floating cloud  
Or running rivulet—  
Without fighting.*

January 7, 1945

#### CLOSING THE MEDITATION HALL

*Fellow students:  
Under Heart Mountain  
We formed a Sangha for three years  
And learned to practice  
The wisdom of Avalokitesvara.  
The gate of the barbed wire fence opens.  
You are now free  
To contact other students,  
Who join you to save all sentient beings  
From ignorance and suffering.*

August 15, 1945

His poetry speaks of his gentleness in the face of oppression, his willingness to teach all who show an interest in Zen, and his deep understanding of the layers and textures that make up this strange American way of life.

As I read Nyogen Senzaki's teishos, I found within them a fierce gentleness and a straightforwardness that belies their depth. It would be so easy to read these compassionate, graceful talks and think the surface words are the only message, but that is not the case. The directness of his message may seem simple, but, on a deeper level, I have yet to put into transmittable thought what shifted for me when I read his words. I believe however, that this shifting, this reassembling of Zen understanding deep within one's psyche is Nyogen Senzaki's gift to the world. That his writing is so accessible, so readable means that "wherever he goes" he continues to teach "friends of all faces, Beckoning them with the empty hands of Zen."



## Further Adventures with Hakuin Zenji

Report by Sally (Zenka) Metcalf

The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin and The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings was one of my readings for this intensive.

*Selected Writings*, translated by Philip Yampolsky, is a collection of orategami, or letters Hakuin wrote throughout his career in the 1600s to various individuals: noblemen, nuns, governors. I must hang my head and admit to being hungry for readings that guide me spiritually. Admonitions to noblemen promising Hellfire for keeping too many costly prostitutes at the expense of their people's welfare are not my interest. Perhaps my Zen eye is not fully open.

I did delight in the footnotes. They were peppered with phrases such as "Hakuin wrongly attributes this poem to ..." and "Hakuin misquotes..." and "No such quotation could be found in the ... sutra." Blast these picky academicians, anyway! They're so hard on a fellow's reputation. However, the footnotes were also rich with Buddhist lists: the 5 coverings, the 10 bonds, the 4 virtues, the 8 winds, and so on. I'm going to type them all up and put them on my wall.

*The Essential Teachings of Zen Master Hakuin* is a translation by Norman Waddell of Hakuin's pivotal *Sokko-roku Kaien-fusetsu*, a presentation he gave at a large gathering held at his temple early in his career. In it, he details the disastrous decline of Zen and lambastes the so-called masters of his age. It had material I could get my baby Zen teeth into. How this essential writing came to be is another delight.

Hakuin's monks, being devoted to their master, decided to bring the Zen world together to hear his teachings at a conference in their ramshackle temple. They set to work shoring up the place as best they could on a shoestring budget; and sent their protesting master to the home of a

wealthy layman to keep him out from underfoot. He was accompanied by two monks whose objective was to coax him into writing a show-stopping keynote speech. Instead, their master slept.

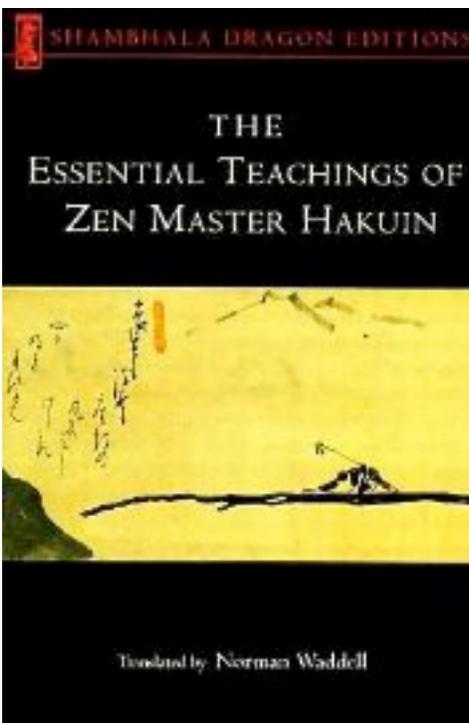
Day in and day out his contented snores rattled the nobleman's shoji screens. Alarmed, the monks repeatedly tried to rouse him, begging for the needed text. The few times he woke, he smiled beneficently, rolled over, and passed out again. (This from the man who, at his temple, retired late nightly, sitting in rigid zazen posture on his sleeping mat; and who had an aide wrap a futon around him, cinching it tight. Hakuin was a virtual prisoner until released in time for early morning services the next day.)

After a few weeks, the aides succeeded in waking their somnambulant master. Hakuin began to talk. They wrote furiously. His speech was disjointed, sentences left hanging, words skipped. At last he finished. And fell back to sleep. The aides quickly made a copy, knowing that when he came to for real, he'd destroy the brilliant but sketchy speech. One aide carried his copy to a trusted editor for a rework. On his way, he met a bookseller who was thrilled by the possibility of publishing Hakuin's talk, which the aide characterized as capable of setting the entire Zen establishment on its ear, and put Hakuin's feet firmly on the path to recognition as a Master of the first stature.

Hakuin did threaten to burn the manuscript, but to no avail, as the copy was just then headed from editor to publisher. Outfoxed! The conference went forward as planned and *Sokko-roku Kaien-fusetsu* made Hakuin's reputation. It detailed his criticisms of the state of Zen, the transformation of which he dedicated himself to so fully and so effectively that he revitalized the teaching of Zen. So powerful and sweeping was his influence, that all present schools of Rinzai Zen can be traced back to him.

Waddell prefaced his translation of *Sokko-roku Kaien-fusetsu* with a letter Hakuin wrote to a layman. Hakuin describes seeing a cicada shedding, its left wing caught in its old skin. Watching it

struggle "I was moved by feelings of pity to assist it with my fingernail." But the cicada, once freed, never again flew properly. Hakuin, regretting his error, made this analogy, "Present-day Zen teachers act in much the same way when they guide their students...They take young people of exceptional talent—those destined to become the very pillars and ridgepoles of our school—and with their extremely ill-advised and inopportune methods end up making them into something half-baked



and unachieved. This is a direct cause of the decline of our Zen school."

Such masters were themselves not to blame, in Hakuin's estimation. After all, they had never encountered the "devious, villainous methods of a genuine master" capable of opening their Zen eye.

Serendipitously, lessons from readings are often punctuated in my life. Sitting in autumn sesshin, it seemed I should bow when Genko Ni Osho entered. Some people did, some did not. At break I checked with a senior Zen student. He confirmed the bow. Well, some of us don't know," I replied. "They'll catch on soon enough," he said.

What confidence in our growing mindfulness! I would have had him make an an-

nouncement; and rob everyone of the essential, small awakenings that lead us on to greater kensho, each in our own time. Me and my busy-body fingernail poking itself into other people's process!

Despite the hilarity of its origins, one of the most powerful images appearing throughout *Sokko-roku Kaien-fusetsu* is **venom**—that cup of deadly brew with which a potent Zen master kills his unwary students' attachments.

Evidently, Hakuin terrified his students. "Torei remembered him as 'a sheer cliff towering abruptly before me. A menacing presence stalking the temple like a great ox, glaring around with the eyes of an angry tiger.'" He beat and scathingly rebuked his students, many of whom were half-starved and living in camps in the snow around Hakuin's impoverished zendo. Still they stayed. It is said that he had at least 50 Dharma heirs. Powerful venom!

In autumn sesshin, Genjo Osho spoke of making the Chobo-ji forge hotter, of tempering our practice for steel. "How shall we do this?" he asked us all to consider. Shall we create a residential program? A monastic program? Everything in me answered, "Yes!" But how shall I help?

In Philip Yampolsky's forward for *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings*, he quotes Muso as saying, "I have three grades of disciples: those who devote themselves to casting aside the myriad circumstances and investigate their own selves alone are of the highest grade; those whose practice is not pure and who are fond of all sorts of studies are of the middle grade; those who of themselves darken the luminescence of their own spirits and relish merely the spittle of the Buddhas and the Patriarchs are of the lowest grade. Those who befuddle their minds in non-Buddhist works and devote their effort to literary endeavors are nothing but shaven-headed laymen and are not fit to be classed even with those of the lowest grade."

For Hakuin's idea of the first grade of disciple, he correctly quotes Kao-feng Yuanmiao as saying, "A person who commits

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himself to the practice of Zen must be equipped with three essentials. A great root of faith. A great ball of doubt. A great tenacity of purpose.”

**F**or me to help with Genjo Osho’s plans, some commitments are in order. While I’m not sure what “casting aside the myriad circumstances” means, I commit to being Muso and Hakuin’s first grade of disciple. I also commit to learning how to keep my busy-body fingernail to myself. And I commit to drinking my prescription of poison. I don’t doubt that these commitments will stoke my forge.

**S**peaking of poison, we might consider brewing a new zendo infusion—a toxic tea. *Death on a Cushion* we could call it. Guaranteed terminal for all attachment to this world.

**T**hrough wrestling with koan, I begin to see that I’ve lived life like the man in Hakuin’s story who, wanting to taste sea water, sets out, only to lose heart and turn back repeatedly. If he would just keep going, eventually he’d reach the ocean and, by sampling the waves, “he will know instantly the taste of sea water the world over...”

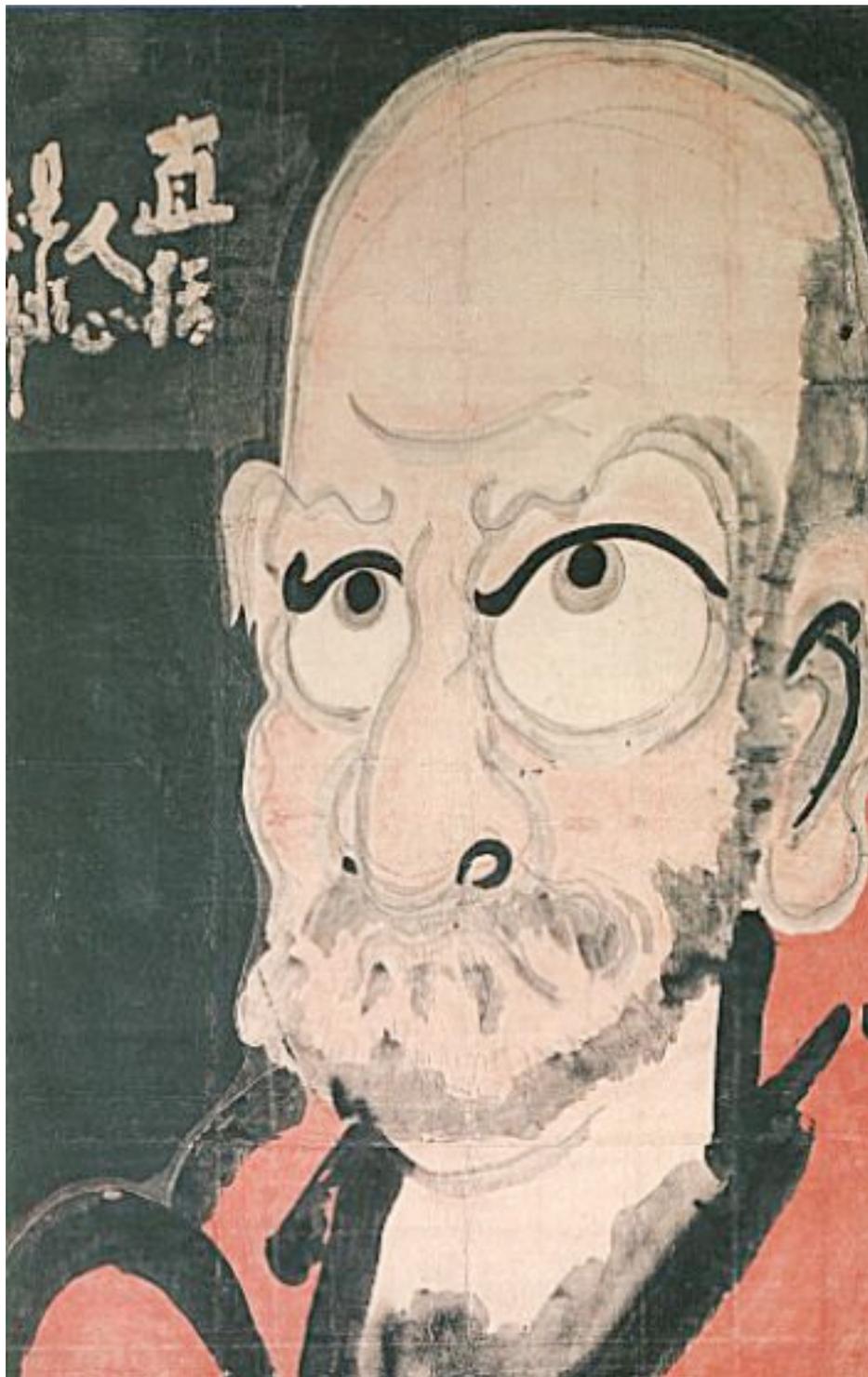
“Those Dharma patricians who explore the secret depths are like this too,” says Hakuin. “They go straight forward, boring into their own minds with unbroken effort, never letting up or retreating. Then the breakthrough suddenly comes, and with that they penetrate their own nature, the nature of others, the nature of sentient beings...The great matter of their religious quest is completely and utterly resolved. There is nothing left. They are free of birth and death. What a thrilling moment it is!”

**T**orei Zenji attributes over one hundred Dharma heirs to Hakuin, of which 50 can be validated. Hakuin Ekaku Zenji seemed too clear of mind to give transmission in error. What was his secret of success? My feeling is that he provided a thriving environment for students who first and foremost delved into their true nature—Muso’s first grade of disciple. And he unerringly guided them with brilliance and penetrating

insight. As we shape the coming transformations at Chobo-ji, we might be well served by Hakuin’s example.

**I** turn 59 in November. Will I live to reach my first thirty years of Zen practice? Maybe, maybe not, though I do come from long-lived people. If I do make it, I imagine that the fresh young unsui of our thriving residential program will chuckle

at the smiley, doddering old nun, so well loved by the Zendo dogs. I hope I will have practiced in such a way that—while I might look harmless—I can brew them a cruel cup of tea. And not a soul here at Chobo-ji will warn them.



## Rohatsu Sesshin

Please make your reservations by Dec. 15th. The cost of sesshin is \$350 (less dues). No part-time participation is allowed. We will leave from our Zendo, 1811 20th Ave., by 4 pm on Thursday, Jan. 3rd, 2008. Please be at the Zendo by 3:00 pm so that we can pack up and make car pool arrangements to Camp Indianola. Formal zazen will begin after a light dinner. Rohatsu ends around 10:00 AM on Friday, January 11th. Please don't plan departure flights before 2pm.

If you are coming from the airport you can take Shuttle Express, (800) 487-7433, from the baggage claim to the Zendo for about \$30 per person (discounts available for groups), 45 minute travel time. <http://www.shuttleexpress.com/> Or, you can take the #194 Metro buses from baggage claim to downtown, and then transfer to either the #12 or #43 to Capitol Hill and the Zendo (travel time is about 1.5 hrs.). Bus fare is \$1.50.

Please bring a zabuton and zafu if you have them. Bring clothes for cold, wet weather (layers are best), and sturdy shoes for outdoor kinhin (walking meditation). Bring a sleeping bag, pillow, towel, washcloth and flashlight. Eating bowls and utensils will be provided (bring traditional nested bowls if you have them).

We serve three vegetarian meals, one large tea and two small teas per day. Leftovers may be available for snacking at the cook's discretion. Hot coffee and tea will be available most of the time. If you want food to munch on, you will have to bring your own. The kitchen and provisions in Totem Lodge are reserved for the planned meals. Totem has two dormitory wings (male & female) with bathrooms, and in Chak Chak, about 50 yards from zendo, there are semi-private rooms. Do NOT use cell phones at Rohatsu!

Morning wake-up bell is at 4:00 am. There are 30 min. breaks after each meal. Structured sitting will adjourn at around 10:30 PM the first two nights and goes later and later the following nights, yaza (personal sitting) follows this.

## 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 20 years of tirelessly giving himself to the transmission of Buddha Dharma to the West, in 1997 he retired as our teacher, got married and moved to Montana. In retirement he does the activities he loves best: gardening, pottery, calligraphy, writing and cooking. Many visit him in the hope of learning something about a Zen life.

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 Ryutakuji 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 State.

## 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: 11/11, 12/16, 2/10/08, 3/9, 4/13

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

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

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

*Autumn Sesshin: 9/27/08 - 10/3/08*

**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

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