



PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 15.3

Autumn 2008

Dear members and friends,

It has been a particularly warm, wet and colorful autumn. Change is all around us, and the country has made a real shift. Perhaps, as someone put it to me, collectively we have broken through the 49 yard line, and we are now at the 53 yard line with a first down and only 47 yards to the goal of becoming as civilized as most of the other democratic nations on the planet.

As I mentioned in the last issue of PMN, I attended the 40th Anniversary Sesshin and celebration of Shobo-Ji, the New York zendo founded by Eido Shimano Roshi. The picture here on the front page shows the hundred or so participants at the conclusion of the celebration on September 14th. Front and center is Eido Roshi, with Aiho-san, his wife, seated on his right.

Seated to Roshi's left is the guest speaker, Buddhist scholar, Professor Robert Thurman. Standing just behind Roshi, most everyone will recognize Roko Ni-Osho, of Syracuse Zen Center, who can now be called Roko Roshi. I am standing to her left and just behind me is Junpo Denis Kelly of Hollow Bones Zen Center in Ashland, Oregon, who is Eido Roshi's first Dharma Heir. It was a very joyous occasion, and I was very happy to represent Chobo-Ji at this auspicious event.

It has been a little more than a hundred years since Nyogen Senzaki, the first Zen priest to take up residence in the United States, arrived by freighter in Seattle. He dropped his body fifty years ago in Los

Angeles, after planting, with his friends D. T. Suzuki and Soen Nakagawa Roshi, the seeds of Zen in the West. These seeds have been tended by the many Zen priests to arrive after him, Eido Roshi, Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Genki Takabayashi Roshi and the late Shunryu Suzuki Roshi and Taizan Maezumi Roshi immediately come to mind. Now it is our responsibility to carry forward their work and build upon the foundation they have given us. As Chobo-Ji gets ready to expand, I hold in

Cadman was our Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook) and his assistant was Dee (Seishun) Endelman. Daiki's meals were often original and always delightful. Mary (Choko) Cabaniss-Ballard was our Shika (manager) and ably oversaw our samu (work assignments). Choko has now served our Sangha in every temple post. Our Jiki-jitsu (timekeeper) was Michael (Mukan) Blome, and he was backed up by Bob (Daigan) Timmer. They held the course true. Rev. Zenmu Nightingale held the post of Densu (chant leader). Like all beginning densu, she had a slow beginning but soon was able to pick up the pace and keep the beat. Once again Peggy (Kochi) Smith-Venturi served as my assistant and kept me rolling along. At this sesshin, Diane (JoAn) Ste. Marie and Kochi completed a long project of making new tea napkins for the zendo. Midweek, as has become our custom, several Sangha members spent their



Shobo-Ji 40th Anniversary Participants

deep gratitude the many sacrifices these pioneers made for us and hope to honor their work with our own. How appropriate that the city where Nyogen Senzaki landed has a strong Sangha (Buddhist community) inspired by his life, message and actions. A new book, Eloquent Silence, has just been released with many of his heretofore unpublished works. It is a must read, edited by Roko Sherry Chayat with a forward by Eido Roshi. Genko Ni-Osho has ordered a dozen copies for purchase or it can be ordered from the featured page of Chobo-Ji's online bookstore.

Autumn Sesshin (9/27 - 10/3) was full but we were not bursting our seams, as has often been the case of late. Daiki

samu time down at the Arboretum Japanese Garden. Rev. Genko Blackman Ni-Osho delivered a fine Dharma Talk on Case 44 of the Mumonkan. Included as a transcription in this issue of PMN is my Teisho on the first case of the Mumonkan, "Joshu's Mu." For a newcomer's look at Autumn Sesshin 2008, see Jaye Morris's account of his "Most Excellent Choboji Adventure" found online as the October 5th entry of his blog named Digital Zendo (<http://www.digitalzendo.com>).

On Sunday, October 12th, I attended the "Acknowledgement" ceremony for my Dharma Sister Roko Sherry Chayat at

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Hoen-Ji in Syracuse. It has been ten years since she received *inka* from Eido Shimanro Roshi and became the first American woman Dharma Heir in the Rinzai/Hakuin/Torei Dharma lineage. At the ceremony in October, Eido Roshi acknowledged that Roko has shown all the promise of living up to the responsibilities and expectations associated with this path. Therefore, he assented that it was time to begin referring to Roko as Roshi. Henceforth, it is now appropriate to refer to Roko Ni-Osho as Roko Shinge Roshi or simply Roshi. Roshi means Elder. Once again I was honored to represent Chobo-Ji at this propitious moment and to lend my own support and encouragement to Roko Roshi.

Also in October, I helped lead a three-day sesshin, 10/17 - 10/19, at Bucks County Aikido in Doylestown, PA with George



Lyons Sensei. There were twenty participants; on middle day we did several hours of *Boken* (wooden practice sword) training. This is exhausting exercise for those who are not use to this kind of training, and it gave me a humbling reminder of how difficult *zazen* can be for those who are not well versed in it. Thankfully, I once again had Carl (Yuho) Baldini as my guide for this part of the weekend. Patti Lyons and Robert (Ryugan) Savoca were the Tenzo (cooks) for this sesshin and their offerings were superb.

Bucks County Aikido Sesshin

Broadway East, in Seattle. The celebration will include a service structured from lessons learned from America's indigenous people, and I have been invited to be one of the interfaith celebrants. Celebrants will address the following themes: "We Are People of the Earth, We Are All Related, We Are All Wounded and We Will Heal Together." Those attending the service are asked to bring an item to include in a community basket.

Here is a list of upcoming events:

This coming weekend, 11/14 - 11/16, I will be returning after a long hiatus to Walla Walla, WA to do a one-day sit at the Vista Hermosa Retreat Center. There I will be visiting my old friends Janaki and Chris Howard who are helping to sponsor this event.

On Sunday evening, November 16th, Rev. Claude Anshin Thomas will give an informal Dharma Talk after *zazen*. As many are aware, he is the author of the book *At Hell's Gate: A Soldier's Journey*. Any donations collected that night will go to support Anshin's work.

On Sunday, November 23rd, the Northwest Interfaith Community Outreach will be hosting "A Celebration of Gratitude at Thanksgiving" from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, 2702

York the first eight days of December. This year Daigan, Rodger (Tozan) Park Sensei, and I will be going to join Shin-kon, Myodo and Seimu who are already training there.

The zendo will be closed from the evening of November 26th through the morning of Saturday, November 29th, and then again from the evening of December 24th through the end of the year.

We will have a New Year's Day potluck brunch and chanting service beginning at 10 a.m. Daily *zazen* resumes briefly for January 2nd and 3rd and then the Seattle zendo will be closed until January 13.

Further in the future, I want to announce that a tentative date for Myodo's and Seimu's *unsui* (Zen monk) ordination has been set for June 3rd, 2009.

In addition to the Teisho transcription mentioned above, this issue of PMN has an update on our expansion efforts, an open letter announcing our capital pledge campaign, a report of Chobo-Ji's gift to Genki Roshi and Genei of a new (used) car in celebration of Genei's 77th birthday, and reservation information for Chobo-Ji's Rohatsu Sesshin. Please allow me to wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving and holiday season; we truly have a lot to be thankful for. May this season of change lead to a productive and transformative new year.

With gassho,

Genjo

Expansion Report by Daigan Timmer

The Zendo Expansion Committee met with the larger Sangha on October 5. At that meeting the group reviewed and revised the draft mission, vision, and values, the draft practice model, and the alternative building models. After this review, the group reached consensus that Chobo-Ji is ready to proceed with the next steps: looking at properties, gathering conditional pledges of financial support, and doing the research, including consulting knowledgeable experts on how to put together a financially sound and responsible process.

A second meeting was held on October 21. At that meeting tasks were assigned to implement the 'next steps' mentioned previously. These tasks include: researching parking and zoning issues (which could be issues if the expansion is nearby), writing letters to potential dharma angels and contacting Seattle First Baptist to explore their interest in another loan.

Quite recently the committee met with Mike Zaugg, a realtor and member of Seattle First Baptist who helped us with our previous loan. The meeting introduced Mike to the committee (and vice-versa), discussed the various expansion options that were defined in the October 5 meeting, and enlisted Mike as a knowledgeable, enthusiastic, like-minded resource for the committee.

Further steps will involve making a list of potential properties and writing a letter to the sangha to help raise money for the expansion property. Of particular interest and worth repeating are the mission, vision, and value statements from the October 5 meeting.

Our mission: We are a community that does deep spiritual inquiry through silent meditation, for the benefit of all beings great and small, animate and inanimate.

Our vision: To create a residential and practice center that will allow for more sitting and group activities.

Our values:

The practice: simple, flexible, adaptable, strong traditional Hakuin/Torei Rinzai Zen style, primarily an urban lay practice

The Sangha: inclusive community

Simple facilities: modest with Zendo central

The instruction: clear, direct, strong

The organization: financially sound, depth of experience

Community work: prison and hospice work, and participation in other community support activities

Mumonkan: Case 1

Joshu's Mu

(1st day, Autumn Sesshin, 2008)

Transcription help from Seishun

Koan: A monk once asked Master Joshu, "Has a dog the Buddha Nature or not?" Joshu said, "Mu!"

Mumon's Commentary:

In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient Zen Masters. For the realization of incomparable satori, one has to cast away one's discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants.

Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen Masters? Just this "Mu," it is the barrier of Zen. It is also known as "the gateless barrier of Zen." Those who have passed the barrier will not only see Joshu clearly, but will go hand in hand with all the Masters of the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear. Wouldn't it be wonderful? Don't you want to pass this gateless barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this "Mu", with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations. It is like having a red-hot iron ball in your belly. You try to vomit it but cannot.

Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and keep on working harder. After a while, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions (such as in and out right and wrong) will naturally be seen through. You will then be like a person who has had a wonderful dream: you only know it personally, within yourself, and you are speechless. Suddenly as you break through the barrier, you will astonish and be astonished by heaven and shake the earth.

It is as if you have snatched the great sword out of the hands of General Kan. You will kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you

meet them. On the brink of life and death, you are utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom.

Now, how should one strive? With might and main work at this "Mu", and be "Mu". If you do not stop or waver in your striving, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once vanquished.

Mumon's Poem:

The dog! The Buddha Nature!
The Truth is manifested in full.
A moment of yes-and-no;
Lost are your body and soul.

Whether or not you have received a koan in the Rinzai Zen tradition, or you have worked on many koans and penetrated them to our mutual satisfaction, your koan is Mu.

We have a new calligraphy scroll hanging at the main altar. It recently was painted by Eido Shimano Roshi, sent to Japan to be mounted, returned in time for the 40th anniversary celebration of Shobo-Ji, the Manhattan Zen temple with which we're associated. It hung in what is called the Garden Zendo there in Manhattan during the 40th Anniversary Sesshin and Celebration, which I recently attended earlier this month, and then was rolled up and given to me to bring home to hang in our zendo [meditation hall].

At the top is this glorious Enso (Zen Circle) and the reason I use this adjective "glorious" is because it is so simple and, at once, mysterious. Eido Roshi obviously put more water in the brush when he painted this circle so that it would have this effervescence and catch somehow a hint of the mysterious truth of it all. This empty circle reveals a token of Mu in visual form.

The characters below are very simple. *Kore Nanzo*, in English, "What is this?" "What is this?" a one-syllable answer is

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“Mu.” However, if we settle for a syllable, wouldn't that be ridiculous? Behind this syllable is an experience, a feeling, a realization of what This is. What is the origin of all of this, everything seen and unseen, from before the beginning-less be-



ginning? “No such thing,” you say. Well, right. Right down the rabbit hole of the origin of creation. It's like two mirrors reflecting each other. They reflect infinitely, an infinite depth. What is this infinite depth that manifests as these incredible myriad mysterious forms, as everything seen and unseen? What is This? When Joshu was asked, “Does the Dog have this mysterious original nature?” Does a wounded, dying dog have this vital inexhaustible mysterious nature? Joshu said, “Mu.”

But however Joshu said this one syllable, “Mu”, he felt “Muuuuuuuuuuuuuu.”

Our koan, our practice, our journey is to repeatedly dip into this experience of “Muuuuuuuuuuuu.” It's not something we have to find, is it? No, just dip into

what's already here. You can dip anywhere. You can dip internally. You can dip externally. Wherever you look, hear, see, touch, feel, think, there it is! It's already out, already revealed. There is nothing to attain, nothing to find. But to experience it is why we're here, not to say it, not to name it, and certainly not to settle for the syllable “Mu.” As we dip into the experience, we are restored, renewed, healed, held and become fundamentally okay! OKAY! No matter, when or where or what's going on, it is all okay!

Maybe, in your life, there's a great sadness or loss. Perhaps someone close to you has died, moved away, or is no longer in contact. Or maybe something really wondrous has happened for you recently, such as a great completion, success or realization. These too can become distractions and hindrances.

Without Zen practice or something like it, when we experience one of these highs or lows, we can easily be tipped over. And, for someone who is very easily tipped over by the range of human experiences, it becomes a disorder. As a psychotherapist I know this may be called bipolar disorder and was previously referred to as manic-depressive. Someone with this disorder is not okay with the highs and lows of life. At the highs they become easily manic, at the lows they become overly depressed. Likewise they are not okay with the depths of the unconscious or indeed with the breadth of consciousness. They are easily distracted or worse by the inevitable joys and sorrows that occur throughout the life and death journey. It is important to develop the potential to be fundamentally okay no matter what the circumstances.

We all do some things well. We all have talents. We also do some things in an idiosyncratic way, which is often perceived to be very limited. We all have limitations that hinder our flexibility and productivity. Are we okay with this? If we are not okay with limitations and idiosyncrasies we will find ourselves scrambling, running away from our shortcomings and towards only the things that we know how to do well. Always moving away from our dislikes and towards our likes is also a

disorder. Over time, our life becomes more and more narrow. If we never approach something we don't do well, we will likely never stretch into the reaches of what we do well. Why? Because we want to be safe. As we are uncomfortable facing our limitations and shortcomings, we don't go there. We live life playing it safe. Through Zen training we learn how not to play it safe. We learn to take risks. We learn to stretch into the depths of depression, the heights of joy! We learn to face our limitations, advance on our shortcomings and reach towards the heights of our talent! Warning: the depths of human experience are not one-sided. For example, if you want deep joy, you must be able to digest deep sadness.

To go deep in this life we must open ourselves to the experience of “Muuuuuuuu.” It may go by many other names, and it can be encountered through many different paths; however, if we hope to reach true depth and fulfillment in this life, the experience is indispensable. It only requires that we risk everything. Our approach and attitude towards life is completely different after we have directly experienced “Mu.”

Because we are the most complex, multi-dimensional manifestation of stardust in this quadrant of the galaxy, we don't have a very easy time opening to or sustaining Muuuuuuuu. So, sesshin after sesshin, year after year, we investigate this matter. We dig down past our complexity to this root experience and make space for the experience of Mu to flow up. Genki Takabayashi Roshi, our founding abbot, constantly told us, “It bubbles up!” In truth there's really nothing to bubble up. It's everywhere you look. It's every experience, everything you feel. Look in the mirror, there it is. It's already out! You don't have to do “Muuuuuuuuuuuuuu” to make it come out. It's already out! But to experience it, we have to sit here, learn how to be really okay with things just as they are, and then indeed a new awareness bubbles up. In the midst of our tears, pain, and fatigue, in the midst of the simple joy of a taste of tea or cracker or the sound of the wind chimes or the squawk of a seagull - sometimes these simple sensations can be so glorious and wondrous that our world is rocked. After such an experience it is

tempting to be grandiose, and we might even be manic because it's so magnificent! However, that's not the point! The point is to be okay with the width, breadth and depth of reality just as it is. Only when we are okay with the lowest lows and the highest highs can we say there is some maturity in the Way.

Allow yourself to be touched by the experience of "Muuuuuuu." Then there will be no problem vocalizing it, whether it's vocalized as "mu" [soft as a feather] or "Mu" or "MUUUUUUUUU!" [shout]. Doesn't matter. It's only a syllable. If it comes from the experience of "Muuuuuuuuuu" it doesn't matter how it is shared.

I'm the luckiest guy because somehow, karmically, I've needed so many sesshins to stay sane. It has worked out that I do six weeklong sesshins and several three-day sesshins every year. I need every one of them! Between sesshins, I can feel clarity, centeredness and equanimity fading. I can feel my complexity, history and personality begin to interfere with the feeling of "Muuuuuuuu." Returning to sesshin I can get back to the simplicity that is the koan Mu. What a relief! This koan is such a blessing in my life. In the midst of my complexity, hopes, dreams, joys, desires, sorrows and fears I am more than ready to get back to "Muuuuuuu."

"Now tell me, what is the barrier of Zen? Just this Mu." But really it's no barrier at all because nothing is hidden; it's all revealed. When there is a penetrating experience of Mu, then all doubts are temporarily dispelled and life in true faith is possible. By persistently working with Mu, our mind eventually settles and simplifies. The chakras open from our root to our crown. As they do, we feel an awareness bubbling up, a vibrant awareness of Mu. Because all we have to do is sit here and open up and let go of our preferences and

attachments to this and that and right and wrong, we eventually come to the place where we not only see Joshu clearly, but we see with the same eye he sees with, hear with the same ear and it *is* wonderful!

It's simple to pass through this barrier. Do you want to know how? Just throw your whole self into Mu "...with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry." What is This? That's the inquiry. What is This? Don't superficially answer, "Mu". NO! Investigate! Engage in deep inquiry with every bone and fiber of your being, inves-



tigate! Open the inquiry with each sit, each breath, day and night. How do you do it at night? When you put your head down on the pillow -if you're not doing Yaza [unstructured zazen]- do so with the intent of dreaming "Muuuuuuuu." Nothing but Mu. After a short night's sleep, be sure to return to the zendo with a renewed dedication to Mu. Continue your investigation; continue to open to the experience of Mu. What a gift! We must have developed some good karma somehow. Our karma allows us to come to this small zendo, to be with this intimate Sangha and do nothing else but transcend our own crap, complexity, neurosis, hopes, desires and range of emotions. By allowing them all and transcending them all we open to Mu. We push past our

fears of doing it well or poorly; we risk again and again exposing ourselves to the vast void that is vibrant Mu. [Dog barks downstairs]. That's right! Melanie says, "That's right, Dad! Yeah, you tell them!" (laughter)

"Cast away your illusory discriminating consciousness and knowledge accumulated up until now, and keep on working harder."

Mu has nothing to do with what you *think* it is. It's not what you think of it. What we think about Mu is of very little importance. In your investigation of this matter, let yourself feel it, as best you can. As we transcend all opinions and oppositions like right or wrong, this or that -or even life and death- then, indeed, in a moment of realization, we're like a person who's had a wonderful dream. We can't even speak about it; we have little desire to say or think anything. At the moment of realization there is a deep joy. In that moment, there is only samadhi (harmony with what is). And *your* face will astonish those around you. If you look into a mirror, you too will be astonished. And when you look into the face of the tree, star, moon, grass, rock or even the dog shit, you are amazed.

In that magnanimous moment, we have no fear about where we've been, where we are, or where we might be going. We have no idea where we might be going and we're *okay* with that. At such a time we easily dispense with the Buddha or the ancient masters. Why? Because we realize we are not separate from them, we are seeing with the same eye and hearing with the same ear. We feel the ancient masters within and we also feel every master to come. In other words, there are no Buddhas or masters there is only *this* Mind

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pervading the universe. There is no thought or attachment to tradition or lineage. When our eyes are open, when our chakras are open from root to crown, we see with the same eye, hear with the same ear and we know intimately that we are on the brink of life and death. Right now! We realize that *this* could be our last breath, and you know what? We're okay! "Yes, this could be the last breath of this physical form." Okay.

When we live this way, we are in complete freedom. "Now how should one strive? With might and main work at this Mu." There is no way to impose Mu; Mu must be allowed to bubble up from our root. Be Muuuuuuu. Truly, if we don't stop or waver in our intention, in our effort or dedication, when we allow ourselves to see things as they already are, then even the darkness is vanquished. And why? Because the darkness is the vast Void! Darkness is it. That's It! The primordial night that is Mu gives rise to everything, that's it. How then can *This* scare us? There is no fear when we realize that we have always been one with *This*.

The dog! The Buddha Nature!
The Truth is manifested in full.
A moment of yes-and-no
(or "this is it" and "this isn't it");
Lost are our body and soul."

We say the core of Zen practice is to just sit. Well, we have made a place to just sit and here we are, but let's not sit like a lump on a log. No, we must sit with every bone and fiber of our being. Sit with the intention of opening to the experience of Mu. Sit deeply and then more deeply again. Just sit, and be "Muuuuuuuu."

With gassho, *Genjo*

Autumn Sesshin 2008

Closing Incense Poem

*Light rain moistens the moss.
Seagull cries hauntingly.
Leaves brighten and fall.*

*"What is this?"
"Who's asking?"*

*Students of the Way investigate.
Fortunately,
no answer was found.*



Autumn Sesshin Participants

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 Sunday, Jan. 4th, 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 a.m. on Monday, January 12th. Please

don't plan departure flights before 2 p.m.

If you are coming from the airport you can take Shuttle Express, (800) 487-7433, about \$30 per person (discounts available for groups and roundtrips), 45 minute travel time. 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 \$1.75.

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.

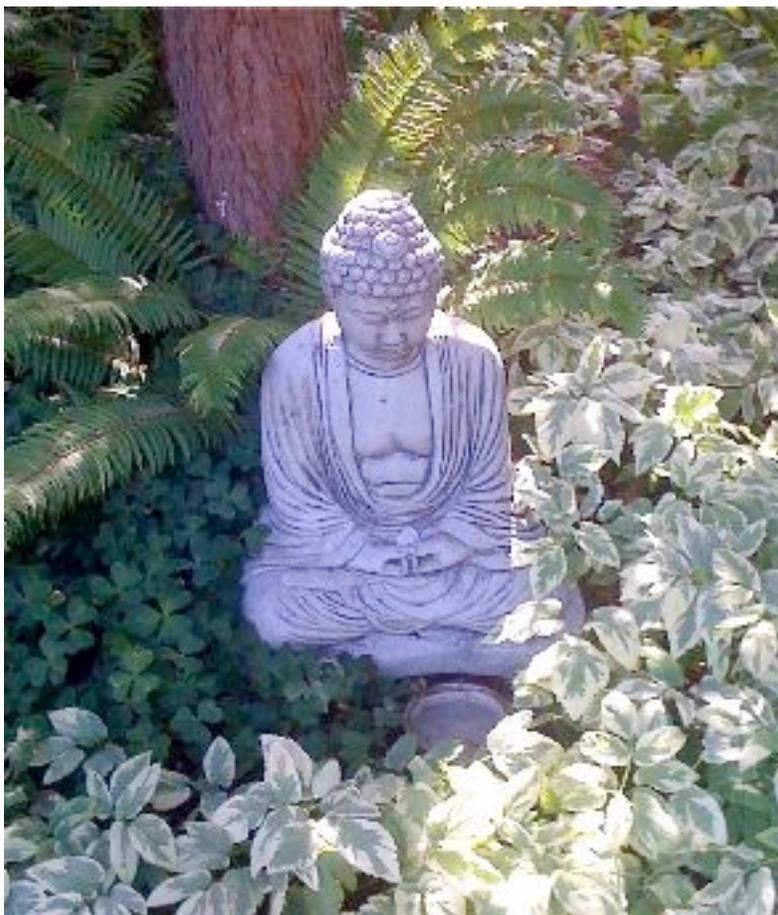
Capital Pledge Campaign

Over the course of this year, we have been engaged in a dedicated visioning process, and the time has come to begin a capital campaign to fund our expansion plans. As everyone reading this is aware, we are a small but very committed community. Ours is primarily a lay practice; it is open to anyone willing to investigate this matter of life and death with sincerity. At maximum our small zendo can squeeze in 22 people. Because our group is about twice this size, not everyone can attend each of our quarterly weeklong sesshins. This limits our opportunities to train together. For now, our daily meditation offerings don't often feel crowded; however, as everyone knows, Zen training really takes off at the week-long sesshins. Therefore, as soon as we are able, it is our hope to have a new zendo that can accommodate at least 40 people. This is our most pressing reason for wanting to expand.

Why is Zen training important? To have the space to just sit, settle and root into our own true nature is rare. Those who make use of such an opportunity are like drops of water to the desert. Zazen gives the practitioner the chance to process and digest their complex lives and historical baggage. In addition, zazen gives one the chance to root in an unending font of energy that is at once restorative and vitalizing. By combusting our hindrances and tapping an ineffable source, the practice helps us get beyond ourselves, transcend our delusions and attachments and see clearly what really needs doing, while tapping the energy to do it. Zazen is not for everyone, and it is not the only way to clear the mind or tap the source to do good work in the world, but it is one modality that does work. Therefore, it is

important to have the space for those who do want to deeply make use of this modality.

What distinguishes Zen practice at Chobo-Ji from the many other groups offering meditation in the Seattle area? We offer a particularly strong supportive frame in which to do deep meditation. First of all, there are many members who have more than a decade of experience. My own experience spans three full decades. Because of the many people who have collectively trained for so many years together, we can offer a new or old hand a great



place to train and do some deep digging into their true nature. Our stream of Zen offers those who train with us an opportunity to investigate a wisdom and way that transcends the ages. Our practice brings reality into clear relief. One of the tools we use in our training is the examination of traditional Zen koans to clear and open one's mind and heart. Though there are many Zen groups, there are few that have the depth needed to properly make use of this way of examining the heart. This

training unquestionably leads the practitioner to "Buji," free, spontaneous, creative, supportive action in one's ordinary life and community.

What do we hope to accomplish by expanding? Beyond having enough space for our weeklong sesshins, we will be offering more opportunities for daily sitting, weekly opportunities for koan training, classes in Zen arts, such as Japanese Tea ceremony, flower arranging, haiku poetry and calligraphy, and perhaps movement arts such as yoga, Tai Chi or QiGong. But most importantly, we will be offering a residential practice for a mix of lay and ordained members who really want to take Zen training to the next step in Seattle. We are looking for space to house comfortably 8 to 12 students who will live on campus, do daily meditation, daily samu (work meditation) and be encouraged to volunteer for good works in the community such as hospice or prison work. All residents, whether lay or ordained, will be expected to pay their own way by holding down a job of their choice, but we hope by sharing expenses to provide less than market rate housing. There will be collective meals, most breakfasts and some dinners, private and shared space such as laundry and library. We will be modeling our residential practice on what other Zen groups have done in other cities such as San Francisco and Syracuse.

There are currently three ordained *unsui* directly associated with Chobo-Ji in addition to myself. Zenmu trains here in Seattle and lives on the third floor of the Zen House when she is in town for our Spring or Autumn Intensives. Genko lives off campus and has completed her ten years of formal training, and Shinkon is currently in the middle of doing a 1000 days of training at the Dai Bosatsu Monastery in

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New York. In addition, Seimu and Myodo are currently training at DBZ in preparation for ordination in the spring, at which time they will also formally begin their 1000 days of monastic training. By the time these two complete their monastic training, it is my hope that we have the space to house them upon their return to Seattle. Our current Zen House is not big enough to accommodate more than Carolyn and me and one student. In addition, there are several senior lay students in town who have expressed a serious interest in the opportunities made possible by residential training, and are likely ready to move in when space becomes available.

What kind of space are we looking for? There are several avenues to explore. One possibility is that we stay where we are and buy and reshape the properties north and south of us to suit our needs. This would be a rather slow approach because we would have to find a comparable property for the owner and renters of the property to our south, and then slowly buy the condos, one at a time, in the property to the north as they become available. Eventually, we would tear down the house to the south to build a new meditation hall, and the condos would be converted for our residential use. However, parking and building expense would be a problem. Another option is to investigate the possibility of going in with the progressive community at Seattle First Baptist Church to tear down some of their existing structures and build a retreat center for both our communities with some shared spaces. Finally there is the option of finding a very big house, small apartment building, fairly complete church complex, or two or more small properties next to each other. All possibilities are being explored, and soon we will need to know what is financially within our reach.

We are just beginning to hone in on a budget and a time line. Currently we are considering a budget of about \$1.5 million. However this will all depend on what we can realistically get for our current house, what's available in terms of property and the success of our fundraising efforts. One good thing about the current

housing market is that even though we will be getting perhaps 20% less for our Zen House (which we paid off this year) than the peak price, the future property will diminish by the same percentage which means that we will pay less overall. In this way it is as though we just won the lotto. If we say the Zen House sells for around \$500,000 and we assume that we can carry a mortgage of \$500,000, then we need to raise another \$500,000 to meet our tentative budget. Acknowledging that this may not be possible in these times, nevertheless, I think readiness of time is upon us.

We are not currently looking to accept donations, rather we are trying to get pledges of what might be reasonable to expect. However, before year's end, we will have a brokerage account to accept stock gifts for donors who want that option. Soon you will be receiving a pledge card in the mail asking what you can give to this project. Please consider what size gift you can reasonably make available now, and additionally what amount you could pledge over the next 1-5 years. Thank you for reading and considering this most important request.

With gassho,

Genjo



New Car for Roshi

Chobo-Ji has purchased a car for Genki Roshi and Genei (Leslie) to commemorate Genei's 77th birthday. After many years of service, and a super Chevy effort to the end, their old Cavalier finally expired. I was authorized by the Board to find a replacement, and after two wet weeks of haunting used car lots in Seattle's north end, I finally found our prize through a chance encounter in Ballard.

It's a 1992 Geo Prizm, very basic transportation with 131,000 miles and a few cosmetic revisions, but it passed an inspection by my mechanic and seems to be a tight little car. The Prizm is mechanically identical to a Toyota Corolla, and shares the Corolla's reputation for reliability. The engine is a recycled Japanese motor with much less mileage, so I hope this car can provide dependable transportation for Genki and Genei for years to come. I just hope Genei is able to keep Genki Roshi out of the driver's seat!

Tom (Shodo) DeGroot



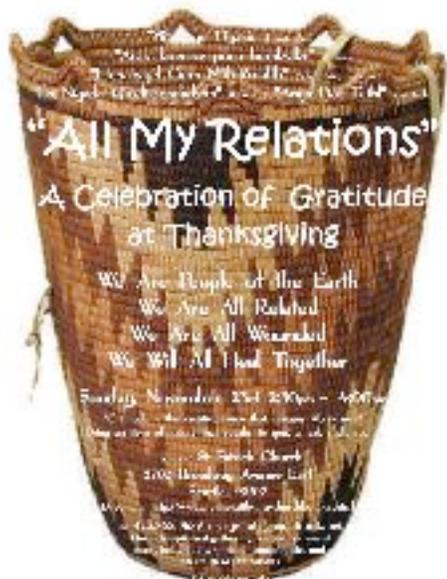
All My Relatives: Celebrating Gratitude at Thansgiving

Northwest Interfaith Community Outreach invites the Seattle community to celebrate gratitude and give thanks at a service structured from lessons learned from America's indigenous people. *All My Relatives: A Celebration of Gratitude at Thanksgiving* will be held from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. on Sunday, 11/23/2008 at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church, 2702 Broadway East, Seattle 98102.

(www.stpatsseattle.org)

Those attending the service are asked to bring an item to include in a community basket. Sponsored by the Compassionate Action Network, a reception follows the service.

Sharing their wisdom through stories, celebrants from different faith and spiritual traditions will contribute to a service designed to create a new experience for showing gratitude at this time of the year. Celebrants will address the following themes: We Are People of the Earth, We Are All Related, We Are All Wounded and We Will Heal Together.



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 Rinzaï temple in Japan. In addition, Genki Roshi directed a Rinzaï 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, and became 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 and a certificated spiritual director. Our temple is in the Rinzaï Zen School. Since Genki Roshi retired, Genjo Osho-san has continued his training with Eido T. Shimano Roshi, Abbot of Dai Bosatsu Kongo-Ji monastery in New York. On May 21, 2008, Eido Roshi confirmed Genjo Osho as one of his Dharma Heirs.

Schedule

Introduction to Zazen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 pm

Zazen

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

Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 am.

Sundays, 6:30 pm, 1hr.

Monday & Wednesday, 7:30 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: 12/14, 2/8, 3/15, 4/12, 5/17, 6/14

Rohatsu Sesshin: 1/4/09 - 1/12/09

Spring Sesshin: 3/21/09 - 3/27/09

Summer Sesshin: 6/20/09 - 6/26/09

Autumn Sesshin: 9/26/09- 10/2/09

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