



PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

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Spring 2009

Dear members and friends,

As I write, it is Memorial Day making this a rather late edition of our spring issue of Plum Mountain News. My apologies for being so tardy. Looking out the window to the back yard of the Zen House, the miniature irises are at peak bloom. They remind us all of the vibrancy of new life, at the same time I am cognizant of the 4,299 US confirmed deaths in Iraq, and the estimated more than a 1.3 million Iraqi deaths attributed to the **2003 USA invasion**. It is true that everything is recycled and life is short for all of us, but this is little consolation to the families traumatized by this blatantly unnecessary, non-UN-sanctioned, extremely poorly executed war. However, I must say it puts our own personal trials in tribulations and perspective.

Yesterday, Rev. Genko Blackman returned from a short visit to **Genki Takabayashi Roshi** (our founding abbot) in Montana. Roshi again expressed his deep appreciation at the wonderful outpouring of support and gratitude he received from our Sangha (community) for his 77th birthday, on February 21st. Genko reported to me that Roshi appears a bit thin-



Genki Roshi and Genko in MT



Birmingham England Sesshin

ner in with less energy than before. However, he continues to garden and write. He has been writing short stories, with plans to write his memoirs -Amerika no Kaze- "Wind in America." Daiki Cadman and Shodo DeGroot will next visit Roshi in a couple of weeks, and I will visit the first Monday in August.

On Sunday, February 15th, Chobo-Ji celebrated Nirvana Day, the day it is thought the Historical Buddha dropped his corporeal form in the year 486 BCE at the age of 80. I spent most of the day at the **Center for Spiritual Living (CSL)** leading worship and conducting a well-received workshop with over 50 participants on "How to Feel your own Light." A very succinct summary of this workshop can be viewed in CSL's spring newsletter: (http://www.spiritualiving.org/files/newsletterSpring09_FINAL_0.pdf).

My annual trip to Michigan to do a three-day sesshin with Frank (Daiui) Apodaca Sensei and Rodger (Tozan) Park Sensei and some senior students took place March 6th - 8th. As usual, in a very short period of time, we deeply and intensely investigated this matter of "What is This?" and "Who is asking?" Early in April, I traveled to Birmingham England to participate in a three-day sesshin with Chris

Mooney Sensei and members of British Aikikai. Chris reminded me that the first time he came to Chobo-Ji's Rohatsu Sesshin (intense winter retreat) he had to leave because of the pain. He has come a long way and is truly maturing in the Way, as have all of us who continue to practice. There were a total of twenty participants, only a few doing sesshin for the first time. It is very gratifying to watch the practice grow and mature. Josen did not come with me, so the Tenzo (cook) this time was Szevone Chin who's practice blends Aikido, Iaido, calligraphy, Zen Meditation and now cooking. Andy Tonks was the Densu (chant leader) and his enthusiasm for Zen has led him to attend sesshin with Eido Roshi in Switzerland and at Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) in New York. Iona Mooney was our gracious Jisha (tea server).

Chobo-Ji's Spring Sesshin (3/21-3/27) was a bit smaller this year, only 18 people, but all sesshin veterans and hence we could go deep. On the last day Jaye Morris, a long time Zen practitioner from Delaware doing his second Chobo-Ji sesshin, did Jukai (Precept Ceremony), more on this later. Tom (Shodo) DeGroot was our Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook) and provided us with a delectable mix of traditional

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Chobo-Ji fare with a Southwestern twist. John (Daikan) Green was our Shika (manager) and not only oversaw our samu (work meditation) assignments, but, provided a lot of his own muscle and engineering skills to many of the tasks. Bob (Daigan) Timmer was our Jiki (time keeper) who kept us moving with thoughtful care and attention. Densu (chant leader) was Rev. Zenmu Nightingale. Among her many incarnations in this lifetime, she is a accomplished cellist, and her musical talent shone. As with all new posts, there is room for improvement, which I look forward to watching unfold. Our Jisha's Sally (Zenka) Metcalf and Virginia (Myoshin) Dunthorne provided us with just the right amount of timely libations. Zenka has not been well for the last few weeks, nothing too serious I think, but please as you read this send her some healing Nen (primal thoughts). Dee (Seishun) Endelman assisted by Peter (Shinke) Ilgenfritz served as my Inji (abbot assistant). My job would be much harder without their constant service and support to our Sangha. Rev. Genko Blackman gave a very moving Dharma Talk on second day. Her fortitude and determination are a constant inspiration to us all. One final note about sesshin, as I looked around the room, I couldn't help missing Chobo-Ji's three students of the Dharma training at Dai Bosatsu monastery.

We held our **Annual Meeting** after minisesshin, March 15th, where we elected a board of directors for the year, more on this later. At the conclusion of the meeting, Tom (Shodo) DeGroot's painting was raffled off to raise money for our future expansion. The raffle was very successful, and I wish to express our deep appreciation for Shodo's efforts and all those who contributed in some way.

As you know Genko has long coordinated Chobo-Ji's **ministry to prisoners**. She and others make visits to local jails and prisons, and many Sangha members keep up correspondence with inmates around the country. Please speak to her if you would like to become involved. Amy Darling, a local acupuncturist and Buddhist practitioner has long asked either Genko or me to come with her one time to a regular Buddhist meditation group she supports at the Washington State Reformatory in Monroe. On Saturday April 11,



Eido Roshi and Students from Chobo-Ji

I was able to travel with her and spent three very gratifying hours with her group. We did zazen, kinhin in the outdoor Buddhist garden, Chi-Gong, and had a rather long and satisfying Dharma dialog with most participants sharing questions and experience with each other.

The annual three-day **sesshin in San Diego** was held April 17th - 19th. Previously this sesshin has always been held at San Diego Aikikai, but with Chiba Sensei's retirement, the dojo has downsized and the smaller space is no longer capable of supporting sesshin. So this year sesshin was held at Steve (Shinkai) Garber's house with his wife Margaret serving as Tenzo. The space was packed but we all made it work. A neighbor's sloping canyon back yard garden served as our kinhin (walking meditation) space; it was exquisite. Also a very memorable moment came when one participant expressed her penetrating insight into her true nature after having a dream of her departed husband embracing her completely the day before she planned to spread his ashes. I have never heard a more deeply satisfying Mu (vocalization of ineffable essence) in Dokusan (Dharma Interview).

Late in the evening of May 1st Genko, Zenmu, and I took a redeye flight to New York to attend together DBZ's Nyogen **Senzaki's Memorial Sesshin** (5/2 - 5/9).

There we learned that Eido Roshi had lost three friends in the course of 10 days in April. Roshi during sesshin memorialized each. One was a Swiss follower of the Way, Michael (posthumously: Buku Hozan Koji), who had long lived and taught in Japan and came as often as possible to DBZ for sesshin. Michael and I sat across from each other last DBZ Rohatsu and he had planned to come to Memorial Sesshin. We had shared not only sesshin, but also rides down the mountain and dinners together. So it was a bit of a shock to learn upon my arrival that he had died. When a wind came up one day, others and I felt his presence strongly sitting with us. Was this just our collective wishful thinking? I think not. Without denying the fact of impermanence, nothing is born and therefore nothing dies, there is only the changing of outward form. In my Teisho on the sixth day of sesshin (selected long before my arrival), Hekiganroku Case 55, "Dogo's I Would Not Tell You" (whether it is life or death), I spoke of each life as a wave on the ocean. Once the wave is no more, the water is not lost, the turbulence and current produced by the waters retreat can often be felt by the approaching waves.

Shinkon, Myodo and Seimu, Chobo-Ji students training at DBZ, were in fine form. Shinkon has less than a year remaining of his 1000 days of initial formal training. As you all know, Myodo and

Seimu will be ordained and begin their 1000 days on June 3rd, Gempo Roshi's memorial day, and Genko and I along with John Daikan Green, will be there to help celebrate this event. Both Seimu and Myodo wrote me shortly before my arrival that they were extremely grateful for their start at Chobo-Ji, but that, as they were just about to enter their formal training period at DBZ, they felt the need to give their whole being to this effort and requested that Eido Roshi be their primary ordination teacher; accordingly, I will be assisting with **ordination**, as I did with Shinkon, rather than being a co-celebrant. It is less confusing this way. I have always known that any time I send Chobo-Ji members to Kessei (DBZ Zen intensives) they may become so absorbed there as to "never return." It is also just as possible that they could discover that they are not ready for formal Zen training. This is all part of the sorting out and growth process. Chobo-Ji has made small monetary gifts to help with their expenses. If you have not already done so, you may wish to consider gifts to Seimu and Myodo and a donation to DBZ as is traditional at the time of ordinations.

On Saturday, May 16th, many Chobo-Ji students were welcomed at the home of Dave and Mary (Choko) Cabaniss-Ballard to celebrate and welcome their two new babies, Frances and Maria, into the wider Sangha of humanity. The **baby shower** was a complete success with most everyone getting a turn at holding these precious bundles. I cannot emphasize enough the warmth and gratitude Choko expressed to the entire Chobo-Ji Sangha for her many years of association with our community.

Just yesterday I returned from a half-day **sesshin in Wenatchee**. Ten people were in attendance. Sharon (Meho) Petit was the Tenzo, Todd (Daiko) Petit was the Jikijitsu, and Genko served as Densu. After sesshin, I visited the remote property, located in the mountains north of Wenatchee, of new Chobo-Ji member, Rick Proctor. Many regular morning zazen attendees are getting used to his regular presence. He has a small cabin, off the grid, but with all the comforts of home. That evening I was offered hospitality at the home of Mike Lanning, who recently attended Chobo-Ji's Rohatsu Sesshin. On Sunday, I was the celebrant at the Cascade Unitarian Fellowship. During the "Story for all Ages" portion of the service I had

fun reading the account of how the nine-year-old Siddhartha was told of his mother's dream foretelling of his birth (Chapter Six of Thich Nhat Hanh's *Old Path White Clouds*). The talk was on the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha) and the Three Ingredients for Practice (Great Doubt, Great Faith and Great Determination), which was well received by the nearly 100 in attendance.

As you have read, there are many commitments that have taken me away from Chobo-Ji. I have expressed my regret to the Chobo-Ji students doing our spring intensive that I have been here so few Sundays. In order to try and be more available to everyone, I have further cut my psychotherapy practice to allow me to attend Wednesday night zazen. Another thing that will help my future scheduling and allow for expanded opportunities for Chobo-Ji Sangha to learn from others and me will be to **plan programs** for the seasons and years to come. Accordingly, I think we will be having a board meeting one day soon to discuss forming a program committee and to address some other topics, such as my role as Abbot and how that role fits in the upcoming expansion, when we find the right property.

In regards to our **expansion plans**, we are planning a Sangha-wide meeting for Sunday, July 12th, right after mini-sesshin. We will review what we have explored and learned so far, and work to collectively refine our vision. Please reserve this date, and plan to attend. You can learn more about what we have done so far in the Expansion Report included in this issue. Also in this issue you will find a transcription of the middle day Teisho from Spring Sesshin, read the incense-closing poem, read two book reports titled "Bodhisattva of Vice" and "Gradual Awakening", and finally an announcement for our quickly approaching Summer Sesshin. Please enjoy these and other offerings found in this issue, and please enjoy the warm weather that comes with late Seattle spring. My warm regards to all of you this Memorial Day.

With gassho,

Genjo

Annual Meeting

Chobo-Ji's 2009 annual membership and board meetings were held on March 15 following mini-sesshin; about half our current dues-paying members were in attendance.

The primary item of membership business was election of the board for the coming year, followed by election of board officers. Muka Linda Wehnes stepped down from the board served for a lengthy term as secretary; many thanks to her for serving all this time. Sharon Buck volunteered to fill the empty position on the board. Board and officers for the 2009 -10 term are: Shodo Tom DeGroot, Seishun Dee Endelman, JoAn Diane Ste. Marie, Daiki Cadman, Ishin Scott Stolnack, Genko Blackman (President), Daigan Bob Timmer (Vice President), Sharon Buck (Secretary), Josen Carolyn Stevens (Treasurer).

In addition to board and officer elections, members heard financial reports, an update on activities related to expansion of the Zen center to a residential center, and reports on Genki Roshi and the status of Sangha members experiencing health issues currently.

Summer Sesshin June 20th - 26th

Please send a deposit by June 14th, 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, June 20th, so plan to be there at least 20 min. early. Sesshin will end around 11 am, Friday morning, June 26th.

Hekiganroku: Case 84

Yuima's "The Gate to the One and Only"

(4th day, Spring Sesshin, 2009)

Transcription help from Seishun

Engo's Introduction: There is nothing right that can truly be called right. There is no wrong that can really be called wrong. With right and wrong eliminated, gains and losses are forgotten. It is all naked and exposed. Now I want to ask you, what is in front of me and what is behind me? Some monk may come forward and say that in front there is the Buddha hall and the temple gate, and behind, the bedroom and the sitting room. Tell me, is that man open-eyed? If you can see through him, I will acknowledge that you have seen the ancient worthy.

Main Subject: Yuima asked Manjusri, "What is the Bodhisattva's Gate to the One and Only?" Manjusri answered, "To my mind, in all Dharmas, there are no words, no preaching, no talking, no activity of consciousness. It is beyond all questions and answers. That is entering the Gate to the One and Only." Then Manjusri said to Yuima, "Each of us has had his say. Now I ask you, what is the Bodhisattva's Gate to the One and Only?" (Setcho says, "What did Yuima say?" And again he says, "I have seen through him.")

Setcho's Verse:

You foolish old Yuimakitsu,
Sorrowful for sentient beings,
You lie sick in Biyali,
Your body all withered up.

The teacher of the Seven Buddhas comes,
The room is cleared of everything.
You ask for the Gate to the One and Only;
Are you repulsed by Manju's words?

No, not repulsed; the golden-haired lion
Can find you nowhere.

We have arrived at the middle day of Spring Sesshin. I don't know about you but, after so many sesshins, each successive sesshin seems to go more quickly. I remember when I first began doing sesshin, the middle day seemed so far off and, when we got there, the remainder of

sesshin seemed so distant. And now I know it is just a brief rush downhill from here. So we must be careful to be even more dedicated because from this point, if you have done many sesshins before, it may be possible to coast downhill. Don't coast!

We're at the pinnacle of sesshin; having exhausted ourselves we should make good use of our efforts and redouble our work at being present, awake, aware and mindful. Please know that we make the most progress, in terms of our skillfulness at being mindful or awake, when it is the most difficult being awake. We are at the height of exhaustion; therefore, we must use the exhaustion we have gained - that's right gained! - to make our best effort to wake up!

I know this morning there was lots of evidence that I was having difficulty being awake. For example, I brought my napkin out with my morning tea, which is unnecessary and inappropriate according to our customs at this temple. For someone coming to dokusan this morning, I got confused about which koan they were on. And for someone else, the Dokusan exchange had come to an obvious conclusion and I forgot to ring the bell. As the student was leaving they whispered, "ring the bell," and I said, "Oh, right" (laughter).

Despite my fumbling, I know that sometimes when we are the most exhausted, deeper dimensions have an easier time shining through. I hope this was the case in this exchange. Because the outer ego-defenses are so exhausted, this is the time when we are most able to hear the subtle profound truth that is singing, nay, shouting at us from every corner of the universe. We may find that we can hear the wind chime in a new way or perhaps feel or hear the cool breeze or rain in a new way. Or indeed we may become aware of a deeper dynamic of our own true nature, for the very reason that we are raw, exposed and vulnerable, but only *if* we don't drop our dedication to be present and to be awake.

Engo's introduction to this case of the Hekiganroku is so true. "There is nothing right that can be called right. There is nothing wrong that can really be wrong." In other words, there is nothing intrinsically right. There's also nothing that we call wrong that is intrinsically wrong. For example, we might say, "Pollution is in-

trinsically wrong." And yet, what is pollution made of but the same energy and light as everything else? If we see "pollution" as its true nature, we see that pollution, like every other form, is just an aggregate component of energy. The same could be said for a human being, even mass murderers such as Hitler or Stalin. They had their likable human side, too. They were babies once and were quite pure. And yet, they became so convoluted or polluted that they became mass murderers. How tragic is that! How sad for them, all their victims, and the whole planet because genocide creates a dark scar on the whole human consciousness. But the psyche itself is not intrinsically flawed or evil. It may be tied up in knots and when the psyche is tied up in knots it may well do many things that are awful and horrific. We cannot ignore this and must do all that we can to arrest it, but the psyche is not intrinsically evil. Likewise, there is nothing that is intrinsically good. Neither a hurricane, nor even a war (which in my view is a sort of human hurricane), is *intrinsically* bad. It may be awful! But intrinsically evil? No! Some hurricanes might have more energy and therefore destructive power today because we, as a species, are warming the atmosphere. But that doesn't make either the hurricane or us intrinsically evil.

In fact nothing can be intrinsically anything. There is nothing that is intrinsically light or dark. Likewise, there is nothing intrinsically large or small. For that matter, there is nothing that is intrinsically alive or dead. We make these divisions and they become so real to us that we miss reality. We miss reality because we confuse again and again the map for the territory. A little like me walking around with my new iPhone, looking at Google Maps. I'm missing reality because I'm looking at my phone (laughter).

This is very serious business; we form our own internal imprisonment through our attachments to our conceptualizations. These are big blinders that we all wear. In Zen, if you can't see the situation from the opposite view you haven't investigated the matter carefully enough. In addition, if you haven't looked past all conceptualizations and dualities, your view is limited and incomplete.

We are most often trapped in our ideas of self and other. However, even for those who have trained deeply, we are also fre-

quently trapped by our ideas of Dharma and Tao. Often we get stuck in an absolute leaning view of reality; I guess this is because we realize how for most of our life we have been stuck in a strong dualistic view. There's nothing dynamic about being stuck and there's nothing whole about it. It's like a stuck pointer on a scale, even if it is stuck in the middle, it's no good. I suppose if you're going to be stuck somewhere, the middle is not so bad. But it can't measure anything. The pointer needs to move according to circumstances; in other words, it should be very flexible.

You may think a number of questions in the dokusan room are silly or simplistic, and indeed when you penetrate them you may often think, "That's so simple and obvious." Uh, huh. That's right! Zen koan training keeps asking these dang simple but tricky questions over and over again. And why? Koans often tempt us to take a prejudiced view, and also test the flexibility of our understanding. Indeed, we often reveal just how stuck our pointer is.

Sometimes in dokusan with Eido Roshi, I come up with an "answer" that I just know is right. At such times, Eido Roshi usually rings the bell almost as soon as I come in. And I think, "How can he ring the bell like that? I had the right answer!" (laughter) And then I think, "Ummm, there's something wrong with this attitude of mine that I have the right answer." Yes indeed, I think Roshi can smell my arrogance. Ring, ring, ring! Dokusan is often a very humbling experience.

Bodhidharma, when asked by Emperor Wu, "Who is it that says, 'Emptiness, no holiness' is the cardinal principal of the Buddha?" said, "No knowing." Right now, who is sitting before you, or for that matter who is listening to this discourse? I really don't know. Any time you investigate yourself carefully, you realize that you can't find a beginning or end of so called "self." So, who are you, after all? Zen Master Dogen says, "To study the Way, is to study the self. To study the self, is to forget the self." As in "self" can't be found. It has no fixed identity; let alone a fixed location, beginning or end. It certainly is much more than this aggregate, composite folding of energy, of cytoplasm, shit, bone and water. Don't you know that this bag of shit and water

and cytoplasm is seamless with the floor, right now? The floor is seamless with the walls and the building. The walls and the building are seamless with the earth. The earth is seamless with the solar system. The solar system is seamless with the galaxy. The galaxy is seamless with the Virgo cluster. The galactic group is seamless with the fabric of the universe. The fabric of the universe is seamless with Mu. And what's Mu seamless with? The self can't be located; therefore, there is none. It must be forgotten. You can examine this most earnestly right here on the cushion.



With right and wrong, self and other, eliminated, gain and loss are forgotten. Even though we can say with certainty that everything is recycled and nothing is really lost, the "loss" of a loved one is still heartbreaking! There are tears of sadness, and then there are tears of joy at the birth of each new baby. Without doubt both kinds of tears are real.

Engo asks, "what's in front of me and what's behind me?" From an absolute perspective, in Zen we say Emptiness or Shunyata. What's in front of me is Emptiness, what's behind me is Emptiness. But don't let the pointer get stuck there. Also don't let the pointer get stuck in the relativistic view that the window is in front of me and the icon of the Buddha is behind me. We may think there is no other way to see the world other than the

window is in front and Buddha behind. Yet that is a very stuck view because, even in a physical way, if I go south far enough, I'll come back here from the north! Therefore in the relativistic view, what's in front of me is what's behind me! Yet people will argue that the window is in front of me, the Buddha is behind and that's it! That's our conventional view and that's stuck. However, if you say, "In front, is Emptiness and behind is Emptiness and that's all there is. That's stuck, too! Completely stuck! So, if I ask you, 'What's in front of me? What's behind me?'" Your response must not get mired in either a relativistic or an absolute perspective. How will you respond?

You might think, "Well, that's a silly question!" (laughter) That's right! It's a completely silly question but even so, it begs us to see beyond our conceptualizations of relative and absolute, right and wrong. Even if you say, "In front of you is the window and it's empty." Then you've got a stuck pointer in the middle. What if you say, "I've got it! The window is both in front and back and it is empty," your pointer is still stuck in the middle. How will you demonstrate that your understanding is dynamically transcendent and free to respond to immediate circumstances? And if you are able to respond transcendently, what does that represent? It demonstrates that in at least the realm of conceptualizations your mind is free! Wouldn't you like to have your mind free? This is important dung! (laughter) We spend most of our time with the pointer stuck somewhere. We tend to see every situation as either right or wrong, neither or both. I'm sure it's one of these! (laughter) And each perspective is limited and stuck. How then do we live transcendently outside of attachment to our conceptualizations?

It falls to Zen masters to ask these silly questions over and over again. Followers of the Way need these kinds of exercises to free our minds and hearts from our various entanglements arising from our attachment to conceptualizations of this and that. Through such work we become more capable to dynamically meet circumstances as they arise. The world is always changing and it's very helpful if we don't have a stuck pointer in the midst of all this impermanence. A stuck pointer does not

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adapt well. Not being flexible creates innumerable problems and exponential, unnecessary suffering.

Some monk may come forward and say, "In front is the Buddha Hall and the temple gate, and behind, the bedroom and the sitting room." From where he's sitting, relatively speaking, that's where things are. Engo asks, "Tell me, is such a person open eyed? If you can see through this monk, I will acknowledge that you have seen the ancient worthy." It depends entirely on how the monk said it.

For example, if I were holding an apple in my hand and I said, "What's in my hand?" and you said, "An apple", I'd say, "Stuck pointer on the relative." And if I said, "What's in my hand?" and you said "Emptiness," then I'd say, "Stuck pointer on the absolute." And if I said, "Tell me the true name of this object in my hand." And you said nothing about the object whatsoever, grabbed it from my hand and took a bite, "yum, yum, yum." This would be one possible transcendent response. Now, if a response is an imitation then very likely there's a stuck pointer at imitation! (laughter) Often in Dokusan Eido Roshi will ask, "Is that all?" or I may ask, "Can you show it another way?" At such a point you may think to yourself, "I just gave him a perfectly good way." However, if it's the one and only way, then again the pointer is stuck. To only have one way to respond is not sufficiently dynamic or free. This is about freeing your mind. Therefore, I almost always ask, "Can you say it another way?" There are hundreds of ways to reveal that you're not stuck. But often we bring to Dokusan the hundreds of ways we are stuck.

Depending on how the monk made his response, Engo can discern easily whether the monk is stuck in the relative or the absolute, imitating the transcendent or really being transcendent. It's not that hard to

discern. It's pretty obvious. Of course, even if you are acknowledged as free to see and *be* the ancient worthy, there is *always* the next koan. It is lovely to be able to demonstrate a bit of real freedom. For a moment, we are as free as the trees swaying in the wind, the rain falling from the sky, and blooming crocus arising from the rich Chobo-Ji soil. It's an endless process becoming more skillful at remaining free. I'm not there yet. However, thankfully, I'm more skillful than I was 10, 20 or 30 years ago. I'm pleased that more of my



Spring Sesshin 2009 Participants

life feels dynamic and *less* stuck. But none of us is ever complete. And why?

As I have often said, we are the most complex, convoluted creature on the planet and probably a big quadrant of the galaxy. I don't know how many planets have life on them, but I'm pretty sure that most of them don't have anything as complex as we are. Our complexity affords us many ingenious advantages; however, this same complexity also means we are easily convoluted and tied up in knots. This is why we need zazen. I don't see any other creatures doing zazen, let alone have any need for zazen. Spiders, slugs, Anna (temple dog), trees, rocks, don't need zazen. We need zazen and lots of it!

In examining this case, I found a note that helps us understand the cultural and mythological context. This case is based

on the Vimalakirti-nirdesa Sutra and Yuima was a semi-legendary person, a lay disciple of the historical Buddha, and he lived in Biyali where the Buddha was preaching. One day, he failed to appear at the Buddha's gathering, and word was sent out that Yuima was sick. "He was sick because sentient beings are sick." Good reason to be sick! Look around the world and see how tied up in knots we are, and it is easy to see why Yuima was sick. Aren't we all sick of human being's antics? Every time I look at the newspaper, I get sick of human being's antics! Such greed! Such avarice! And often we act like the ostrich with its head in the sand. So, Yuima was sick.

The Buddha sent Manjusri to inquire after him and perhaps minister to him, "It's okay, Yuima we will be all right!" Manjusri didn't go alone; thirty-one other Bodhisattvas went with him. That's quite a contingent! But wait until you hear this! He also brought 32,000 Arhats! A whole army went to visit poor

Yuima. (laughter) It is said that all of them could fit into Yuima's room. He had a very big room! Not really, it is recorded that his room was only 10 feet square! How did 32,033 people fit into a room 10 feet square? What a good koan! If you're stuck in conceptualizations of "big" and "small," you'll find that impossible. But if your mind is free of attachment to the concepts of big and small, then the story is just funny, but *not* problematic. Now most people right now in the zendo are laughing. That's good. This laughter comes with sesshin. At this point we are not so fixated on our ideas of big and small. Hopefully we have the flexibility to suspend our ideas of big and small and say, "Oh, yes, that happened. They all fit in the room!" It's much like Jesus feeding the multitudes with a loaf of bread. It can happen! But do *you* know how?

Anyway, Yuima puts a question to them

all, “What is the Bodhisattva gate to the One and Only?” In other words, “What is the path to absolute oneness?” You see this is what you want to know when you’re sick and tired of human antics (laughter). We want to know the pathway to the One and Only when we look at the newspaper. We may ask, “What’s the point? Just get me to the gate of the One and Only or the Pure Land or the Absolute. I’m ready for the Absolute!” So Yuima puts this question to all these Bodhisattvas. Each gave their own answer. Wow, 32,033 answers to the same koan!

One said, “The Dharma is unborn. Therefore, it cannot perish. And this is the gate to the One and Only.” You know, as words go, that’s wonderful! That’s lovely!

Someone else said, “There is no ego. Therefore, there is no external world. If you realize that fact, that’s the gate to non-duality and the One and Only.” That, too, sounds right to me.

Many say, “You know, sin and blessing are all empty. And not really different. That’s the gate to the One and Only.” That sounds right, too!

Then some said, “Samsara and Nirvana are actually the same and *that’s* the gate to the One and Only.” Someone else said, “There are really no gains and no losses and *that’s* the gate to the One and Only.”

When all attending Bodhisattvas had finished, Yuima put the same question to Manjusri. Manjusri is the Bodhisattva considered second in rank only to the Buddha and is considered the saint, sage, teacher of all the Buddhas, past, present and future. Mythologically, there are seven Buddhas, six prior to the Historical Buddha and then comes the future Buddha who will be known as Maitreya, and Manjusri will be Maitreya’s teacher, too.

Manjusri gave his response to Yuima’s koan as follows, “To my mind, in all Dharma’s, there are no words, no preaching, no talking, no activity of consciousness. It is beyond all questions and answers.” This “beyond all questions and answers,” means beyond all preaching and talking, beyond all conceptualizations and ideas of consciousness. This *is* the gate to the One and Only. Even though all the

responses had merit, Manjusri’s response rings much deeper and closer to the mark than all the others. When we hear it, we immediately think, “Wow, that’s a good answer!” The gateless gate is beyond preaching, conceptualizations, formulas and ideas of mind. The real way is beyond ideas! The real way is naked, vulnerable and completely exposed. It’s not hidden at all and it needs no words, let alone an idea.

Manjusri then turned the tables on Yuima: “Each of us has had his say. Now I ask you, what is the Bodhisattva’s Gate to the One and Only?” In other words, “You’re the one sick in bed for humanity. From your position of sickness, from your broken heart for the human condition, how do you see the Gate to the One and Only?”

Yuima was silent. Gestured nothing. Said nothing. Explained nothing. He was truly, deeply silent as we are when we are at our best on the cushion, when we have a glimpse of “Mu” and feel seamless and at peace with things just as they are. At such a moment, we realize the world just as it is, fully reveals the Gate to the One and Only. It needs no interpretation and it cannot be put into a formula or an idea.

There are times when silence can be the only answer. And you have to know exactly when that is, because if it’s premature, it doesn’t hit the mark, and if you cling to silence, you have missed it. Don’t be tempted with the thought that the correct response to all koans is, “sit in silence.” Ring, ring, ring, goes the Doku-san bell. But, are there times when this kind of silence is the only response and trumps all other possible responses? You bet! At the right dynamic time, absolutely! And, if it’s not coming from a stuck pointer and you’re really feeling it, I’ll feel it, too. Perhaps we’ll sit across from each other and shed a tear together. And you might want to move on -or I might want to move on- and, hopefully, I’ll say, “Let’s just sit here and enjoy this moment together.”

Setcho asks, “What did Yuima say?” And I can tell you that Yuima said nothing at all. Setcho says, “Even though he said nothing at all, I have seen through him” and then writes the verse:

*You lie sick in Biyali,
Your body all withered up.
The teacher of the Seven Buddha’s comes,
The room is cleared of everything.
You ask for the Gate to the One and only;
Are you repulsed by Manju’s words?*

Are you repulsed by Manjusri’s words, because, after all, they *are* words? I don’t think so. Let’s listen to Manjusri words again because they are so succinct, “To my mind, in all Dharmas, there are no words, no preaching, no talking, no activity of consciousness. It is beyond all questions and answers. That is entering the Gate to the One and Only.”

Was Yuima repulsed by Manjusri words? Setcho answers himself in the last line of his verse, “No, not repulsed; the golden-haired lion [Manjusri is known to ride a lion] can find you nowhere.” In other words, as wonderful as Manjusri’s response was, Setcho says Yuima’s response leaves no trace at all. Manjusri’s words are indeed concise, but when weighed against Yuima’s silence there is no comparison, none whatsoever. Yuima’s silence was truly so golden, strong, open hearted and revealing that nothing can match it and leaves nothing to cling to.

Nevertheless, how would you continue the conversation after Yuima just revealed the un-reveal-able with his silence and tear running down his face. Likely we would just bow, or perhaps we would ask, “Yuima, please give us a turning word.” Manjusri already did the best job in this category. But undoubtedly Yuima too would have been able to use words, because we assume that his *kokoro* [Heart/Mind] is dynamically free and open, the opposite of stuck. What words could he have said that would not have diminished the silence? You see we are easily trapped by this conundrum. We’re immediately tempted to go back to having an answer that’s as good as Manjusri’s and, if you do that, you’re lost, lost, completely lost again in ideas of what “it” is. So what words do you think would come from Yuima’s lips that would not disturb his dynamic silence? Please consider this and continue to give your all to this session.

With gassho,

Genjo

Spring Sesshin 2009 Closing Incense Poem

*Everything has its own light,
Seeing is no seeing,
Not seeing is seeing.*

Followers of the Way, who sees?

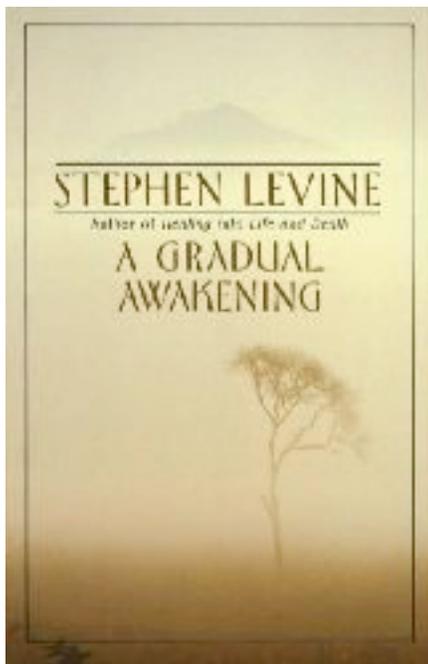
*Seagull sails effortlessly overhead
leaving no trace.*

*The sound of sutras float from
Listening Dharma Temple.*

*The clear peak of Mt. Rainier
makes an appearance.*

Gradual Awakening Review by Bob Daigan Timmer

A Gradual Awakening is a book by Stephen Levine, which tells us about his practice of meditation. Levine practices Vipassana meditation so this book has no explicit insights into koan practice. It is rich, however, in understanding of common Buddhist terms and often mentioned concepts such as karma, loving-kindness,



mind, and wisdom.

This book has short chapters. They can be read quickly but the distilled wisdom lasts a long time. Levine asks "...what actually, is the effect, what's the use, of wisdom or knowledge?" and answers, "Understanding. When you understand mind, you're not at its mercy." It's a lesson I relearn every sesshin. Again, he recounts a time when he was teaching at Soledad prison discussing karma. He discourages analysis and says "[Deal] with the resultant fruits as they ripen in the present moment by using an adequate and appropriate response to what's in the mind...and it can be clearly seen that things could not be otherwise..." Succinct and clear.

Another feature, which recommends this book, is the way it mixes heart and mind. The chapter titles (Watching from the Heart, Pleasure/Pain and Happiness) and the calm writing ("True patience manifests itself as a non-grasping openness to whatever comes next") reinforce each other and lead to a satisfying clarity.

Of course, delightful as the reading is, it does not substitute for practice. Levine says (in the chapter on Daily Practice) "The most a book like this can do is prepare us for an ongoing practice. Reading a book about meditation, like reading a book about swimming, will not assure one of reaching the farthest shore." So true. But it is also comforting to recognize that others have insights and those insights echo our own if we but had the words to express them.

The Bodhisattva of Vice

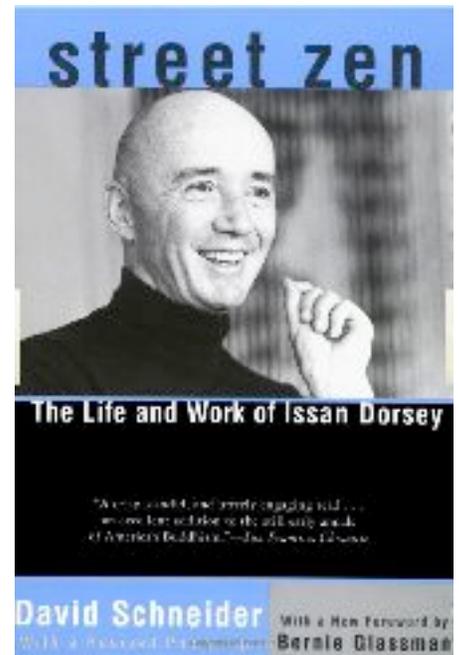
by Sally ZenKa Metcalf

*"When mind exists undisturbed in the
Way, nothing in the world can offend."*
Sosan Ganchi Zenji

"Who are those guys?" is my favorite line from Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. Sometimes I wonder who the people in my life really are. In Buddhist writings there are stories of those in need who are

Bodhisattva's in disguise. They appear as desperate characters or wounded animals to test and/or encourage the awakening of compassion in the unsuspecting.

Who was Issan Tommy Dorsey of the book *Street Zen*, alias the infamous Tommy Dee?: Addict, prostitute, pusher, thief, monk, abbot, founder of San Francisco's Maitri Hospice, a home for AIDs sufferers thought to have not more than six months to survive. Most of whom lived on beyond expectations. Friends believe an essential ingredient in the magic of extended life was Issan's tender care, ministered by climbing into bed with patients, holding and kissing them, welcoming their friends and family and sustaining them in a climate of orderly Zen practice. In Issan's words, "*We have always dealt with whatever came to the door. We started the hospice because death came to the door.*"



As Richard Baker Roshi said, Issan was a good example of the three forms of compassion. First, compassion for people's egos and weaknesses; forgiving them while assuming that their intentions are good. Second, compassion for the body. Feed the hungry. Give the dying a bed. Third, compassion for the unrecognized Buddha within. Issan turned no one away, ever. "*As long as I live, these doors will be open to every living thing.*"

Yet, Issan's biography by David Schneider revealed a youth of dark excess and vice laid so bare the reader's hands shud-

der on the spine of the book. That being said, Schneider tells us, "*Issan Dorsey was my best friend, and there were a hundred people who could have said the same.*" Is this the story of a reformed character – sociopath ascends from gutter to Bodhisattvahood? Maybe, but scores of those friends were from the dark days.

Tommy relished the low life. He seemed so pleased and so much at ease that companions had trouble censuring him, even if they were inclined to. Reggie Mason says, I feel that all the things we've kidded and laughed about in Tommy's behavior-being a hooker and a this, and a that-sounded so foul about someone else. But not about him... It was very natural for him. I don't recall his instigating anything. He simply went along with everybody, and without complaint... Nothing seemed to bother him.

To put the book *Street Zen* in the context of my life, I read it when feeling discouraged about my work as Jisha, splashing tea, taking too much time. Then I read another chapter about Tommy Dee, drag queen extraordinaire, the Baddest of the Bad. Cheating guys out of their money, turning tricks for the next big fix. And delighting in it all! Puts my obsessing about overly-dark peanut butter cookies in a different light, doesn't it?

So, who was Issan Tommy Dorsey, dead of AIDs at age 59 on March 24, 1990? Not who did he become in the end, but who was he lying in the gutter with a multiple overdose of heroine, whoring, speed, and whatever else no one is sober enough to remember? To embrace whatever and whomever life presents, to give whatever is asked, and delight in it, this is a rare gift. I am reminded of Jesus urging us, "*Whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.*"

Struggling to formulate my thoughts, again I turn to my life. I often come to Seattle on the ferry. On the pedestrian overpass from the dock to First Avenue, people beg for money from the stream of commuters. A few years ago, one of these was a withered derelict. He wore the same clothes daily, wool pants and jacket, stocking-knit cap. All filthy, stinking of alcohol and urine. Either he sat –dirty Styrofoam cup in hand– staring at the cup as if it would manifest gold. Or he lay passed out, stretched halfway across the walkway, forcing people to step over him,

some in revulsion. I have a family history with alcoholics and come with judgments aplenty. Even so, he intrigued me. I called him Grandfather, and sometimes dropped money in his cup. He never looked up.

One morning, sitting on the ferry, a message for Grandfather came to my mind. I hurried off the boat and squatted beside him saying, I got a message for you in my meditation this morning. It's this. "*You have a gift to give and it's time to give it.*" He seemed suddenly vibrant!

"Is it Love?" he cried out hoarsely.

I never saw Grandfather again. Nor have I ever been quite the same since that day. Who are these guys? The reprobates on the street, the prisoners, the lost, the unclean? Is there a Bodhisattva of Vice? One who wears many faces while practicing the Way of the Whole World as Medicine –each face giving us yet another chance at the Gift.

Expansion Report

The Expansion committee has had several meetings since our last report. The committee, composed of Genko, Genjo, Daigan Bob Timmer, Daikan John Green, Daizan Michael Lyons, and Josen Carolyn Stevens has discussed potential expansion properties, financing, and various models and concerns about residential practice.

The committee has received weekly listings from our realtors, Mike and Erik Zaugg, and we have found that there are a limited number of investment properties on the market due to the financial crisis.

We have developed a work sheet, which we can use to rate potential properties. The evaluation checklist has several categories: 1) financial -terms and conditions, initial and ongoing costs; 2) location -including zoning, neighborhood, and bus access; 3) site -including parking, landscaping, and kinhin possibilities; 4) building(s) - including number of bedrooms, kitchens, and the potential for multipurpose rooms; and 5) the initial improvements which might be needed to make the space usable including zendo

space, bathrooms, environmental hazards and residential living quarters. Copies of the work sheet are available in the zendo kitchen. With CAD assistance from Judy Green, we have determined that to seat forty people, we need a minimum of 1,100 square feet for the zendo (meditation hall) space.

At this point, the expansion committee feels a need to reconnect with the wider Sangha and to clarify our focus and test some of the assumptions that we are working with. The meeting will be held on Sunday, July 12 at 11:30 am, right after mini-sesshin. We hope that many of you will be able to attend and help move the work forward.

Those who participated in our initial visioning sessions will recall that a variety of practice models were discussed. Currently, the expansion committee is working with at least two models. One model develops from a core property with acquisition of adjacent properties as they became available. Residents would be asked to live nearby if onsite space was not available. The gradual expansion would include multiple phases - a zendo in the first phase and then auxiliary and residential rooms, as they were needed. Another model envisions a wholesale move to a new property that would have space for a zendo, auxiliary rooms, and residents' quarters. This model assumes that extensive remodeling might be necessary upfront. In addition to these two models, we are also considering different kinds of buildings: houses, churches, schools, and apartment buildings. All the expansion models assume that some ChoBo-Ji Sangha members will be in residence. There are ongoing inquiries about the possibility for residential practice from people in the wider community.

With so many variables, the committee is interested in hearing from the Sangha about which options have greater or lesser appeal. As a committee of six, we have discovered that we each have a set of assumptions about how different models might develop. Uncovering and discussing our different points of view has been useful to us, and we want to continue the

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process with the whole community. The goal is to focus and unify our vision with participation from every person who cares about the future of Chobo-Ji. We look to your participation.

Jukai Ceremony

On the morning of March 27, the last day of Spring Sesshin 2009, Jaye Morris formally accepted the Buddhist precepts. He is a longtime follower of the Way and has practiced zazen for many years, including being a resident at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. This was Jaye's second Chobo-Ji sesshin.

Jaye wrote in his Jukai application letter:

My spiritual journey started when I was about 7 years old. In rapid succession two of my close friends died... A deep and nagging question formed within me. "How can the world be like this, if there is a God?" Throughout my life this was something that had been consistently on my mind... I had hopes that through various studies of books, intellectual and pharmacological endeavors, that eventually an answer would become self-evident and clear. The reality however was that no satisfying answer ever appeared...

[In college] I met a visiting professor by the name of Dr. Jamie Campbell Ph.D. He was providing instruction on Eastern philosophy and as it turns out Zen Buddhism... In a particular discussion that we had, he stated, "you know that if you practice Zen, the fundamental questions that you have on life and death can and will be answered. In fact, if you train well, you can actually know the truth as opposed to sitting in philosophy class, guessing at the answer."...

At one point I was reading a book called, "Journey of Awakening," by Ram Dass. In the back was a listing of meditation centers. I decided to flip through the listings with my eyes closed. Wherever my finger landed, I would go there for training, no matter what would come of it. As Dharma arrangement would have it,



my finger landed on Dai Bosatsu Zendo...

I figured that eventually... "In the readiness of time," I would connect with a teacher that I felt something for. I can't quantify that "something," but I figured that Dharma would guide me forward (like a flashlight in the dark). This brought me to discovering and writing on my blog [Digital Zendo] about you Genjo Osho. And then there was the day you shocked

me by writing a comment. This blossomed into something that became a kind of spiritual and moral imperative and led me to travel to Seattle to attend Autumn Sesshin 2008, so that I could verify that I was not deluding myself with what I was experiencing and feeling.

Returning to why it is that I have the desire to take "Jukai" with you has become very simple for me. In my practice of the



Way, I am not yet complete.

When I was at DBZ some 15 or 16 years ago, I recall Eido Roshi, would sometimes use the expression, "in the readiness of time." I had felt that "Yes, I would like to take Jukai, many of my colleagues are doing it." But back then, I did not experience that intense burning behind it.

Since our meeting and beginning my training with you, I can honestly say that my physical, emotional and spiritual boat has a rudder. To be exacting, you have helped to remove a lot of things not only from my hands, but my mind. And in this process, I now feel a deep and unswerving understanding and call that tells me that, "the readiness of time" is here and now. It is appropriate to continue on the path, in this way.

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

Jaye then received a Rakusu (symbolic pieces of the historical Buddha's robe worn around the neck) and a Dharma Name. A Dharma Name is selected by the abbot to be an inspiration for realizing one's full potential. Jaye's new Dharma Name is SeiHo, which means Clear Peak.

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

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, 1 hr.

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: 6/14, 7/12, 8/9, 9/13, 10/11, 11/8

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

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

Rohatsu Sesshin: 1/2/10 - 1/10/10

Spring Sesshin: 3/20/10 - 3/26/10

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