



# PLUM MOUNTAIN NEWS

Volume 16.2

Summer 2009

## Dear members and friends,

Summer really came on strong the last week of July, with record heat in Seattle and around the region. In the zendo for zazen at 7:30 pm on Wednesday, July 29th, the temperature had cooled down to 101 F. By the end of the sit, the three of us present were soaked as though we had been in a sauna; I guess we had. The zendo garden is singed at the edges, but with lots of care and water it has survived.

Back at the beginning of June, Chobo-Ji's Myodo and Seimu were ordained by Eido Roshi at Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) Monastery in the Catskill Mountains of New York, as *unsui* (cloud and water persons - Zen monks). This brings the number of monks training full-time at DBZ who got their start at Chobo-Ji to four. Of course everyone but our newest members know Shinkon, who was ordained in March 2007 and is well known to us, having trained with our Sangha (community) for over ten years. Last June Stefan Streit, now Giun (Good Cloud) was ordained at DBZ. Stefan spent only a short time at Chobo-Ji before traveling to DBZ for more intensive training. There will be more on the ordinations of Myodo and Seimu later in this issue.

Speaking of more intensive training, Chobo-Ji expansion plans continue to be refined, and hopefully we will be able to offer a residential practice to those interested in the near future. We held a meeting on July 12th to refine and forward our collective vision, and there is a report on that meeting in this issue. In addition, Edward (Daiki) Cadman and Michael (Daizan) Lyons are heading up a Program Committee, to begin setting up additional practice opportunities for both Chobo-Ji members and a wider community audience. Programs will delve into Zen arts such as calligraphy, tea service, flower arranging, and other offerings to be announced later this year or early next. Rev. Genko Blackman and I are working on ways to refine and expand the form of our practice. Our first offering will be a re-

fresher course on the use of the Jihatsu (nested eating bowls) after Saturday zazen on August 15th. Senior students set the example for others; therefore, senior students are particularly encouraged to attend this refresher course.

As many of you already know, after taking an extended break from Chobo-Ji practice, Rev. Zenmu Nightingale has decided to transfer the continuation of her Zen training to Eido Roshi and DBZ. I do not pretend to know all the reasons for this, but there was a breakdown of direct communication between her and me that contributed to this decision. Many of us were hoping that after a restorative break, Zenmu would return to process any difficulties, but this was not to be. Of course, I have no objection to her desire or willingness to train at DBZ, as it likely has the very best Rinzai Zen training in the world. Moreover, I am happy to report that she plans to continue her study of tea at the Urasenke Branch in Vancouver, B.C. for two weeklong intensive study periods each year, which will coincide with spring and fall Ikebana workshops. Also, when not training at DBZ, she is

planning to continue to do service in palliative care. Chobo-Ji is not really equipped to fully support unsui training at this time; nevertheless, through our expansion, we will undoubtedly move towards a more comprehensive training environment. I know many are saddened that Zenmu will not be with us to help develop and refine our practice. In a letter she wrote me dated July 15th announcing her decision to train at DBZ, Zenmu said that she bows down deeply in gratitude to the Sangha and me "for all that has been offered." I wrote back, "I return your bow on behalf of the entire Chobo-Ji Sangha, for all that you have given to us. May we all continue to give ourselves to the Dharma."

Our Summer Sesshin 2009 was a great success. Twenty-four people signed up, but two canceled at the last moment. This meant that we had just enough room for everyone to sit at our dining tables together, but it was tight. Our Dai-Tenzo (Chief cook) was Tom (Shodo) DeGroot, who did a wonderful job, with the assis-

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*Middle Day Meal, Summer Sesshin 2009*

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tance of Michael (Mukan) Blome, preparing scrumptious meals to support our training. Genko Blackman Ni-Osho, gave a very moving talk on the second day, about Case 46 of the Mumonkan, "Stepping from a 100 foot Pole." This talk included some references to an oil leak only a few feet from Beecher Lake on DBZ property; read more about this later in this issue. As is our custom, she also prepared whisked powdered green tea for us after Teisho on middle day, which always brings us closer to our founding Ab-



bot, Genki Takabayashi Roshi, since he made each tea bowl. The Shika (manager) responsibilities were shared by Charlie (TaiShin) Blackman and John (Daikan) Green; Bob (Daigan) Timmer also had a turn at this post. They all did a fine job keeping us organized and occupied during samu (work meditation) periods. Besides cleaning and beautifying our own property, our samu projects included cleanup of the Madison parking strip, work in the UW Arboretum Japanese Garden, and a work party to Genko's house to help with her garden. Our Jikijitsu (time keeper) was Edward (Daiki) Cadman, who kept us punctual and on track throughout the day. pinch-hitting as our Densu (Chant Leader) post was Tobin (Fudo) Youngs, who did an amazing job for his first time out. The Jisha (tea server) post was held down by Sally (Zenka) Metcalf and Virginia (Myosin) Dunthorne; they provided delectable treats at just the right moments. Dee (Seishun) Endelman was my Inji (assistant) this sesshin, and her support to me has been invaluable.

Shinge Roko Roshi, my older Dharma sister, who leads the Zen Center of Syracuse (Hoen-ji), stayed overnight at Chobo-Ji, July 8th. The next day she and I traveled to the American Zen Teacher Association annual conference, which this year was held at the Great Vow Monastery in Clatskanie, Oregon. We had a truly wonderful, informative, and mutually supportive drive south and then had a late lunch

on a houseboat on Sauvie Island, with an old friend of Roko's. After we arrived at Great Vow, we participated in one of the most congenial and productive meetings of the AZTA. The group was small, but many of the participants had been actively pursuing Zen training for over forty years. It was a blessing to be surrounded by senior Dharma brothers and sisters who have persevered these many years in giving themselves wholeheartedly to the Dharma. We met from July 9 - 11. On the second day of the meeting I was asked to give a formal Teisho to the gathered AZTA participants and Great Vow residents. My talk was on Case 15 of the Mumonkan, "Tozan Gets 60 blows." This talk was inspired in part by my Teisho that is transcribed in this issue from the last day of Summer Sesshin, which touched on this case. I came back a little early so that I would be fresh for our mini-sesshin and expansion meeting on July 12th. I had one more opportunity to be with Shinge Roshi, Monday night, July 13th, when Carolyn and I were invited to share dinner at Michael (Ryushin) Sobel's house nearby. Shinge Roshi was in good form throughout, and I am so pleased to have her supportive presence in my life.

One outcome of the AZTA meeting was that I became the manager of the AZTA web presence and database. Fortunately, I have been able to enlist the considerable skills of Jaye (Seiho) Morris to help me with this. In truth, he has been doing all the work of transferring and updating the site and has agreed to be Webmaster for us. In addition, after completing the upgrade of the AZTA site, Seiho has agreed to help Chobo-Ji with a makeover of our site. I am very grateful for his help.

Just recently, I returned from Walla Walla, WA, where I led a mini-sesshin on Aug. 2nd for about a dozen participants. The following day I did an informal Dharma talk for nearly thirty participants in a dance studio with no air conditioning. Given the heat of the day, I was surprised that we were able to stick it out. The Walla Walla Dharma Sangha sponsored both events, and my hosts were Chris and Janaki Howard. I believe this was my sixth visit as a Dharma Teacher to Walla Walla, and I look forward to many more.

From Walla Walla, I flew directly to Hamilton, MT, to visit with my mother, my aunt and Genki Roshi and his spouse Leslie (Genei). As reported in our last is-

sue, Genki Roshi's health is very unpredictable these days and he has been steadily losing weight. Genki Roshi, Genei and I were planning on sharing a meal Sunday night, but when Genki Roshi tested his blood sugar it was very high and we ended up going to the emergency room. That evening Genki Roshi spent the first night in his 77 years in hospital. Genki Roshi has now recommitted to watching his diet more carefully and monitoring his blood sugar at least twice a day. We can help Genki Roshi in his efforts to remain healthy by agreeing among ourselves to not enable poor eating and drinking habits. I am asking all of us not to send "care" packages that include alcohol or other goodies that can be easily abused. After his brief hospitalization, Roshi made an appointment with a nutritionist and diabetic nurse, and they were able to give him a lot of material, in Japanese, that should be useful. We need to support these efforts as best we can from afar.

In addition to the many offerings in this issue that I've already mentioned, you will find an article by Genko Ni-Osho on post prison meditation practice, "Coming Home Sangha", the Summer Sesshin closing incense poem, a list of new posts for the autumn training season, several announcements including Autumn Sesshin (Sept. 26 - Oct. 2) and the Autumn Intensive (beginning Sept. 13th). Finally, I want to report that Chobo-Ji now has formal reconciliation and sexual harassment policies. Should we ever need them, they are now in place. Though they are just a work in progress, these policies pave the way for other policy statements that we will need as the group expands. A copy of the reconciliation policy can be found on line by following the "Literature" link at [www.choboji.org](http://www.choboji.org) to "Sesshin and Zendo Guidelines." The Chobo-Ji board has approved Dee (Seishun) Endelman, Scott (Ishin) Stolnack and Linda (Muka) Wehnes to serve as our reconciliation committee.

May True Dharma continue to unfold through the actions of Chobo-Ji's Sangha.

With gassho,

*Genjo*

## DBZ Oil Leak Emergency

This June, residents at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji, the monastery in the Catskill Mountains we are closely affiliated with, discovered a serious fuel oil leak beneath Joraku-an (Beecher House), the historic house next to Beecher Lake at the center of the DBZ property. Lines hooked up to the fuel oil tanks beneath the house were leaking in many places due to

old, corroded connectors. Oil was seeping through the soil across the lawn and threatening to contaminate Beecher Lake, which flows into the Beaverkill River and its tributaries throughout the Catskills.

Fortunately, a team of specialists was called in to clean it up before the oil seeped into the lake. Now all of the contaminated soil has been removed and disposed of in an ecologically responsible manner by a professional environmental agency. Additional soil samples will be taken and examined by a geologist for traces of contaminants, and removed if necessary. The fuel tank beneath Joraku-an has been unearthed, emptied and discarded. As a preventative measure, the other fuel tanks on the property will have to be removed.

As you can imagine, this process has been very costly. So far, DBZ has incurred expenses totaling more than \$30,000 for the clean-up effort at Joraku-an alone. The removal of the other tanks on the property is projected to cost another \$20,000. DBZ's 2009 fundraising campaign, launched only weeks ago, helps defray their normal operating costs. These unforeseen expenses are far beyond anything that they have planned for in their yearly budget, and drastically exceed their limited resources.

Some of you have given generously to support the DBZ over the years, and it is also known that some have already made a contribution to help with this emergency. Thank you so much. However, considering the extraordinary costs that have been incurred, additional support is still urgently needed. Please help them to preserve the pristine beauty of Beecher Lake and the grounds of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, which have supported the flowering of True Dharma in the West for over thirty years.

Tax deductible checks can be made out to Chobo-Ji, with "Environmental Emergency" in the "for" line, or mail your contribution directly to:

Dai Bosatsu Zendo,  
23 Beecher Lake Road,  
Livingston Manor, NY 12758

## DBZ Ordinations

Chobo-Ji students Matthew (Myodo) Perez and Christina (Seimu) Grant were ordained by Eido Shimano Roshi, at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji, on June 3rd, 2009, Gempo Roshi's memorial day (Chobo-Ji's Dharma Great Grandfather). In attendance were many people from the wider DBZ Sangha including Genjo Osho, Genko Blackman Ni-Osho, and John (Daikan) Green.



Myodo received the monk's name Zuiho (Auspicious Phoenix) and Seimu's new name is Jodo (Way of Tolerance).

With this ordination, Zuiho and Jodo have committed to train for 1,000 days at Dai Bosatsu, giving themselves heart, body, and mind to dedicated Zen practice with the support and instruction of Eido Roshi and the DBZ Sangha. We honor their commitment and send them strong Nen to further the flowering of dharma and the strong connection between DBZ East and West.



*Unsui Bows (Sampai)*

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*Rev. Zuiho Matthew Perez  
and his Mother*

Towards the end of the ceremony Genjo Osho offered Words of Encouragement:

*I am so proud and tickled by this day. You could not be in a better place to do your Zen training. When did the two of you really begin your Zen training? In many ways we could say today, with this ordination ceremony. Or perhaps it was at your Jukai (Dharma Precept) ceremonies that took place within a few months of each other in 2007? Was it the day you were conceived in your mother's womb? I tell you truly this day has no beginning.... Know that you both have the full support and prayers of everyone here and from many who could not be with you today. Do your best.*



*Rev. Jodo Christina Grant*

## Autumn Sesshin Sept. 26th - Oct. 2nd

Please send a deposit by Sept. 13th, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check to Chobo-Ji. The cost of sesshin is \$210 (less dues). Sesshin begins promptly at 5 am the morning of Saturday, Sept. 26th, so plan to be there at least 20 min. early. Sesshin will end around 11 am, Friday morning, October 2nd.

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### New Posts Beginning September 1st

Bob (DaiGan) Timmer:  
**Shika** (Host - Manager)

Michael (MuKan) Blome:  
**Dai-Tenzo** (Chief cook for Sesshins)

Carolyn (Josen) Stevens:  
**Tenzo** Assistant

John (DaiKan) Green:  
**Jikijitsu** (Timekeeper)

Charlie (Taishin) Blackman:  
**Jikijitsu** Assistant

Peter (Shinke) Ilgenfritz:  
**Densu** (Chant Leader)

Sally (Zenka) Metcalf:  
**Densu** Assistant

Virginia (Myoshin) Dunthorne:  
**Jisha** (Serves tea and takes care of zendo)

Dee (Seishun) Endelman:  
**Jisha** Assistant

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

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

Rev. Genko Blackman  
& Edward (Daiki) Cadman:  
**Introductory Zazen**

## Fall Intensive

This upcoming Intensive, which will go from 9/13 - 12/13 and resume on 1/2/09 and conclude 1/10, the last day of Rohatsu Sesshin, is your chance to commit to a more rigorous practice. To join you must be a member in good standing and agree to the following:

- 1) Attend group zazen at least five out of seven days a week
- 2) Commit to attending all sesshins full-time during the training intensive (including monthly mini-sesshins)
- 3) Join the Dharma dialogs held at 7:30 pm, 1st and 3rd Sundays
- 4) Make an effort to attend weekly Dokusan (Dokusan will be offered each Sunday and Wednesday nights that Genjo is in town.)
- 5) Do at least one hour of samu (working meditation – gardening or cleaning) for the temple per week.
- 6) Read at least one assigned (mutually agreed upon) book on Zen history or practice, writing a brief report that may be published in PMN.
- 7) Attend an additional mini-sesshin during this period, this can be in Elensburg, Wenatchee or elsewhere.

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## Congratulations!

Diane (Joan) Ste. Marie is happy to celebrate the birth of her granddaughter Lucille Annabel Ortiz Bennet, born 7/14/09, 6lb 3oz.

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## Tea Name

As many of you know, Genko Ni-Osho has been studying Chado (the way of tea) ever since her first kessei living and training at Dai Bosatsu Zendo in 2000. A practitioner of tea from Japan was also training at DBZ at the time and offered free tea lessons and tea gatherings to the unsuis each week. Genko fell in love with

tea, and upon returning to Seattle continued tea studies with the local branch of the Urasenke school of tea. In the years since, she has found many opportunities to use tea bowls and other utensils made by Genki Takabayashi Roshi.



After a number of years of intensive training and practice in tea, this August 7 Genko was awarded her chamei (tea name), Soko, indicating acceptance into the Urasenke tea family. Urasenke tea names all begin with the character “so,” taken from the name of Sen Soshitsu, the iemoto, or hereditary head of the Urasenke branch of the Sen family. This represents the close tie to the Urasenke family, in the same way that both Genjo and Genko, along with others ordained by Genki Roshi, received the character “gen” in their ordination names.

The second character of the tea name is chosen by Sen Soshitsu from the name of the practitioner, in this case, “ko” from Genko. This “ko” means fragrance, or incense. When Genki Roshi gave Genko her name, he said that “ko” was a reminder to combust completely, leaving nothing behind but the fragrance of the Dharma. How wonderful to have both tea family and Zen family in one name.

The chamei is awarded by the iemoto upon recommendation of the teacher after a certain level of training and practice has been achieved. Although exciting to receive the chamei, it was pretty humbling to have this happen at the beginning of a three-day tea intensive, sitting next to a tea teacher in her 80’s, a chamei holder of many years, who continues to train in the basics after many decades of tea. There is nothing like beginner’s mind!



## Expansion Meeting

A Sangha meeting was held after minisesshin, Sunday, July 12. The purpose of the meeting was to get input from the Sangha regarding the various property types that the Expansion Committee has been examining as part of our plan to develop a residential practice center. Eighteen Sangha members attended.

Genjo spoke and shared his thoughts about the expansion project. He said that from his perspective, buying an apartment building made the most sense because it would allow room for a larger zendo and living quarters for residential students and it appeared the most financially sound option. He also commented that now is the time because we have the funds and the price of buildings is relatively low.

As a representative of the Expansion Committee, Bob (Daigan) Timmer then reviewed the various options the Expansion Committee was considering and gave an example of each:

- o A large house;
- o An apartment building;
- o A church which could be renovated with living spaces;
- o Expanding in the current neighborhood;
- o Maintaining the status quo.

Following these presentations, there was a period for small group discussion that focused on which option(s) people preferred, where the expansion should happen, and what additional features might be included. The majority of participants favored a property option that would allow for residential practice, preferably an apartment building (for financial reasons). The majority thought the best location would be between Jackson and Northgate and Aurora and Lake Washington. Other preferences included the following: Ideally our property would be in a quiet neighborhood, would have disabled access, and our Zen practice would ‘fit’ with the neighborhood (i.e. the neighbors would not be dismayed by people in black robes walking the neighborhood sidewalks.) Additional features to look for included garden space and on-street parking. Most agreed that there is no rush to move, that it is more important to find the property that is right for us.

The meeting concluded with the participants giving authority to the Board to purchase a property that meets these requirements. The Board will, of course, endeavor to keep Sangha members “in the loop.” However, if a property becomes available and we need to act quickly, participants agreed that the Board is authorized to buy that property without additional Sangha oversight.

## Coming Home Sangha

A Prison Dharma Practice Opportunity  
by Rev. Genko Blackman

As you know, several of us at Chobo-Ji have been involved in meditation groups at King County jail and in the Washington state Department of Corrections prison system, as well as being pen pals with inmates across the country. Recently I have been part of a group of volunteers interested in working with inmates as they release back into our community, and helping them find support for their practice upon release. Beginning August 5, we will be sponsoring a meditation and guest speaker session on the first and third Wednesday evenings, 7 - 9 pm, at 1930 6th Avenue South, Suite #101 (cross street is Holgate). Our vision is to have a mix of newly released inmates together with community members present at each meeting. The group is known as the Coming Home Sangha.

There are a couple of ways in which Chobo-Ji members can participate. For starters, on evenings when someone from Chobo-Ji is speaking (Genjo is scheduled for September 16), it would be nice to have a few Chobo-Ji members present so that attendees can get to know a bit about our group, and so that more Chobo-Ji members can connect with this large segment of our population. If you are interested in coming, please let me know so I have a sense of how many might attend.

If you are or become interested in participating more regularly, we will be looking to expand the core group of volunteers who can facilitate these meetings, help to recruit guests speakers, keep track of schedules and so on. Please also let me know if you think this might be something you would like to do.

## Hekiganroku: Case 93

### Taiko's "You Fox Devil"

(6th day, Summer Sesshin, 2009)

Transcription help from Seishun

**Main Subject:** A monk asked Taiko, "What is the meaning of Chokei's words, 'He seems to observe reflection and thanksgiving before the midday meal?'" Taiko performed a dance. The monk made bows. Taiko said, "What makes you make the bows?" The monk performed a dance. Taiko said, "You fox-devil!"

### Setcho's Verse:

One arrow glanced off,  
the second struck deep;  
Don't tell me yellow leaves are gold.  
If the waves of Sokei were all the same,  
Many would drown on land.

As I speak there are less than 24 hours left of this Summer Sesshin. This is our final push. It's tempting to start thinking about our ordinary lives and all the things we need to do, but please don't leave Summer Sesshin before it is completed. From doing all this zazen, it's quite natural that we're ready for more action. Hopefully, by the conclusion of sesshin, we'll bring more peace of mind and some deeper insight on how to proceed in our actions, and that's good. However, let's not proceed before we have soaked up as much of the breeze, the sun and the wind chimes as we can, allowing us to deepen our root in the eternity of this present moment. Our effort is directed to being here, now, with each breath, and each action.

This mind extends over the whole universe and transcends yesterday, today and tomorrow. If we are fully present in this moment, room and body, then we will easily realize that "our" mind is not separate from this Mind, extending over the whole universe and beyond. With this realization, we can't help but become com-

passionate towards all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. Also, by being fully aware in this moment, you will naturally be called to do what needs doing today, which will best prepare you for "tomorrow."

Case 93 is rather short because, for one thing, there is no introduction by Zen Master Engo. Engo was born in 1063, 11 years after the bodily departure of Zen Master Setcho, who originally compiled the koans in the Hekiganroku. Engo probably wrote introductions to all 100 koans in this collection, but some of them have been lost. Though this case is short, it gives reference to an earlier case, Case 74. And for those of you who were around for the Teisho on that case, you might remember the midday mealtime dance of Kingyu Osho. In today's case a monk asked Zen Master Taiko, who lived in the 9th and 10th Centuries and succeeded Sekiso, about Zen Master Chokei's

midday meal, calling out 'dear bodhisattvas'], he was not simple minded." A monk asked Zen Master Chokei, "Kingyu's action – what did this dance mean?" Chokei says, "He seems to observe reflection and thanksgiving before midday meal", which is exactly what we do when we chant the sutras before breakfast and the midday meal. They are chants of reflection and thanksgiving. So Chokei said that this dance was Kingyu's form of reflection and thanksgiving. Chokei sees Kingyu's wild dance as the most ordinary normal activity. Yet if you or I saw Kingyu, or if you were out doing samu [work meditation] before lunch, and instead of hearing the gong indicating mealtime, I came onto the steps and did a dance, and called out, "Bodhisattvas! Bodhisattvas! Come take your meal!" You might think this was a little strange (laughter). Chokei claims this activity seems completely ordinary to him. You might think Kingyu is simple minded, but Setcho reminds us, "Kingyu was not simple minded." Isn't that good to know! (laughter)

Case 93 reflects on this earlier case. Setcho must have felt that Taiko's response to Chokei's commentary was significant enough that it has merited its own case. A monk asked Zen Master Taiko, "What was the meaning of Chokei's words?" What did Chokei mean when he implied that Kingyu's actions were so natural and ordinary? Taiko immediately performed a dance! The monk made bows, which is to indicate approval, as in "Oh, I see, I

understand, I approve of your response." And Taiko came back with, "Why are you making your bows?" In other words, "What is it that you think you understand?" The monk responded by also performing a dance. This is a lot of dancing! At this, Taiko said, "You fox devil!" Is this praise or criticism? It could be either way. "You fox devil!" could mean "you are very cunning," or it could mean, "You thief! You stole my response!" perhaps some of both.

Most often "Fox Zen" implies that there



*Summer Sesshin 2009 Participants*

commentary on Kingyu's dance. Each midday meal Zen Master Kingyu would personally bring out the pail of boiled rice for his monks and dance calling out, "Dear Bodhisattvas, come and take your meal!" Chokei much later told an inquiring monk that Kingyu "seems to observe reflection and thanksgiving before the midday meal."

Setcho immediately enters a commentary, "Although Kingyu did this [rather crazy-looking behavior of dancing before every

is some sort of cunning or witty imitation going on, a kind of superficial play, lacking much depth. Hence Taiko's comment can easily be seen as a criticism of the monk's dance in response to "What is it that you see?" Setcho says, "One arrow glanced off, the second struck deep." The first arrow is Taiko's dance in response to the monk's question. The second arrow is Taiko's rebuke, "You fox devil!" Setcho says, "The second struck deep." Ooh, that got him! Then Setcho says, "Don't tell me yellow leaves are gold." In autumn, many leaves are golden, but they're not made of gold. So don't tell me that yellow leaves are gold. Gold, in this case, represents what's real and "yellow" a poor substitute.

Before I go on, as you may well be aware, there are many books about koan training. I've got a few of them upstairs in the library and most of them are very good in that they don't talk about responses very much. In Case 91, "Enkan and the Rhinoceros Fan" we observed how several Zen masters responded to the same koan. Each one had a different take, or angle, and yet all of the responses were more than satisfactory. Each master approached the koan using different language and different gestures, each response original. But some books proclaim that the way to respond to such and such koan is like this and that, giving some sort of canned response.

A long time ago, I admit to reading one of these books (laughter)! And I was down at Bodhi Mandala, with Joshu Sasaki Roshi and there was a certain koan that I was given where I had read the "answer" and gave it in Dokusan. Much to my shame and embarrassment, Joshu Sasaki Roshi immediately scolded me, "You've been reading books!! Get out of here!" (laughter) Well, I closed that book and never looked at it again.

When working with koans you may well intuit a well-known response, one that may indeed be similar to one you could find in a book; however, the person in the role of Zen Master will ask, "Can you say it another way?" This question is a way of checking to see if you really penetrated what the koan is pointing at. When you have fully and genuinely investigated a koan, then you have already turned it over many times and realize there are at least several different ways to respond that will give an appropriate token of your percep-

tion. In which case, it is relatively simple to generate different similes, allegories, metaphors, gestures or verses to the same koan. On the other hand, if you have only superficially penetrated the koan you'll be stuck with one "answer" or way to respond. Until you are able to freely turn over the koan in three or four different ways, you haven't yet adequately investigated it.

In addition, you should be able to look at any koan from a 180-degree perspective, and still find a response that does not lose sight of the underlying transcendent import. In other words, when a koan is thoroughly examined, you can start with either an absolute or relative approach and always reach the transcendent point of the koan. If the koan has only been superficially penetrated, your response will likely get mired in a relativistic or absolute approach. It all turns on whether or not you have investigated the koan thoroughly enough to have true insight into this matter. In other words, has the koan really done its work on you, has it been a catalyst broadening and deepening your perspective?

This is one of the things I love about Rinzaï Zen and its use of koans; there are no pat "answers." It is possible to write a book about each koan and only have surveyed some of the possible approaches one could take. Even after reading such a book, unless you have had your own true insight, you will be thoroughly confused! Hence reading books about how to respond to koans is of no use. Such books will either confuse you or get you stuck in an imitation.

Someone came to Dokusan this morning with a novel response to "Tozan Gets Sixty Blows," Case 15 in the Mumonkan. In this case we learn that Tozan has come a long way - more than 1000 miles - to visit Zen Master Ummon. Ummon says, "Where have you come from?" Tozan responds simply and genuinely and says something akin to, "Well, I came from the other side of the country. I've been walking for a year to come and visit you." Ummon, "When did you get started?" Tozan, "I started on such and such a date." Ummon, "And where have you trained recently?" Tozan, "At such and such a temple." Ummon, "When did you leave there?" Tozan, "On such and such a date." At this Ummon gives the poor guy, who has traveled so far to see him, sixty blows

with the keisaku (waking stick)! Poor Tozan must have thought, "I came so far, I answered his questions simply, honestly and directly, and yet the Master gives me sixty blows, as if I've insulted him terribly! Where is my fault?!" Sixty blows with a keisaku, even our flimsy keisaku, would be quite a few blows! If you'd traveled a thousand miles to Chobo-Ji and the first time you came to Dokusan, you got hit with a keisaku sixty times, you too would likely be completely dumbfounded, angry and dejected! This action of Ummon threw poor Tozan into a dark night.

However, the next day Tozan returned for more! He came back! He didn't leave! I am sure he thought about leaving, he might have even started on his way, but somewhere in the night he courageously decided to stay. Could you imagine that you would do the same if you were in this situation? I think most of us would leave. Leaving would be so much easier! But he didn't leave. Tozan came back to face and confront Ummon and says, "I thought about it all night. Yesterday, you hit me with sixty blows, for the life of me, I can't see where my fault was." Ummon shouted, "You rice bag (you bag of shit)! How can you go prowling around the country like this?" Ummon scolded Tozan terribly for just asking what was his fault. But Ummon's timing was impeccable! Because Ummon was a well-seasoned master, he could place his blows and his scolding with perfect timing, at least that's how we suppose it was. Tozan on hearing Ummon's second rebuke, had a sudden awakening, right there on the spot and saw through the error of his ways; with his heart open he had great appreciation and gratitude for Ummon. Tears, I'm sure, were streaming down his face and Ummon accepted this opening, knowing full well that Tozan would one day go far in penetrating this matter.

Surely Ummon, Joshu and Rinzaï had off days when one of these ploys didn't go so well and the person left. It is not the Zen master's intention to lose a good student, but it happens all the time, and the Zen literature is full of episodes when the inquiring monk doesn't get it. By radically pushing on the mature student, it is the Zen master's hope that the student will bounce back with more determination and a new level of insight. However, it

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doesn't always work out; nevertheless, without risk there would be no growth. Anyway, getting back to Dokusan this morning, the student was responding to the question, "What did Tokusan understand when he had a penetrating insight?" And to this question I was told the following story:

"There was a time when I was going to a very important meeting and I had to get there because my job depended on it. My daughter and husband were with me; I was planning on dropping them off at a park before my appointment. So I'm racing along in my old VW van, going down the highway and all of a sudden, BAM, KER-PLUNK! So I stopped the car, of course, wondering what in the hell had happened, what I'd run over? My husband goes to the back and says, 'the engine's fallen out!' You know the engine on a VW van is in the back and it's dragging on the road! 'We aren't going anywhere, we're going to have to call a tow truck,' he said. And I said, 'No, no, if we wait for a tow truck, I'll never get there!' (laughter) My husband says, 'But the engine fell out! We're going nowhere. We have to call a tow truck.' And I said, 'First let's see what we have in the van that might help.'" (laughter)

This is real faith! (laughter) The engine's fallen out, but you're hoping in the back of the van there might be something that will help get you going. What did they have? There were a few wood blocks, some gardening tools, including a shovel, and some snow tire chains. The person in this situation then said, "All right, I'm sure we can do something with this! Let's use the block and the shovel and leverage the engine up and push it back into place." Then they supported the engine with the snow tire chains, somehow suspended from the shovel, which hung out the back! They started the thing up, and it went! (laughter) I tell you, sometimes what you hear in Dokusan is really outrageous. (laughter) I said, "What does this have to do with what Tokusan learned?" (laughter) And I'm told, "Right where you are, you have everything you need." This—needless to say—is not the traditional response! (laughter) But after sharing some moments of silence, contemplating this amazing journey from birth to death, we went on to the next koan. You won't find this response in any koan book

and it was far from any kind of imitation.

Before we are born, during life, and after we die, we already have what we need. For example we need lungs to breathe; therefore we have lungs and instinctually we know how to breathe. When we take that first breath, we've never done it before, but at just the right moment, there are lungs, air, and the capacity and will to breathe. And even when there is a great illness or calamity and we are about to die, we have everything we need to die. By and large, when we are ill, there is someone—a parent, friend, partner, or in a pinch our adult persona—to take care. We have what we need. When we're getting old, when we're disabled in various ways... Barbara, for example, across the street—at least during sesshin—has what she needs, as one of us each day of sesshin



goes over to help out. We just need to convince her that, outside of sesshin, she needs to be in a place where she can just as readily get her needs met. Barbara is very stubborn, in a beautiful way. She realizes that as soon as she goes into a care facility where everything is taken care of, her life up to this point will be over. She'll be entering a new and perhaps final phase of this lifetime and I think she is aware that life passes all too quickly for all of us. For this reason, she resists entering this next phase; nevertheless, right now she has what she needs, as we all do, even when it comes to taking our last breath.

In Zen, we have this saying, "There's no place to go and nothing to do." And yet there's a lot of living to be done. Kingyu performed a dance. "Bodhisattvas, come

and take your meal! You've been working hard! It's lunchtime." Chokey says, "This is Kingyu's dance of reflection and thanksgiving." Taiko, when asked about Chokey's words, also does a dance. The monk, thinking 'that's what I have to do,' does a little dance, too. It's not wrong but it's not gold either.

There are times in koan work when we can accept some golden leaves and there are other times when we have to wait for the gold. Waiting for the gold requires great patience in addition to great doubt, great faith and great determination. It doesn't matter at all how long it takes, we say, "in the readiness of time" the gold will appear. It's hard to wait. It's hard to be patient. I know it's difficult; when we receive a koan, we want to "get it." I can tell you that it is equally difficult for those posing the questions. It's important that we all develop trust in the process. Teachers, no matter what discipline, all want the student to "get it" and the good teachers know they can't give it to you; they really can't teach you anything. You have to discover the truth for yourself; only you can have true insight. The teacher can do a little modeling, and perhaps point the way, but that's the best they can do. No one can give you the gold; each of us must accomplish that for ourselves. Unless we have learned the lesson with our whole being, not just our intellect, our truth may be golden but never gold.

In Setcho's verse we hear, "If the waves of Sokei were all the same, many would drown on dry land." Sokei is a reference to the sixth Chinese Zen Ancestor. Sokei was the name of the place where Eno Dai Kan Zenji, the 6th patriarch, lived and practiced and this name became associated with him. "Many would drown on land," means that if the lineage relied on imitation or what you could read, then the lineage would drown even on dry land and not be of use to anyone. Unfortunately, there are branches of Zen that have digressed and regressed into merely imitations of their illustrious history. It's true in Japan; it's true in China and also true in the USA. In China because of the Cultural Revolution and religious repression of the Communist state, most if not all of the senior lineage holders were eliminated, so all that was left was imitation and what you could read in books. Therefore much of Chinese Zen doesn't have the depth offered by the continuity found in some

lineages in Japan, Korea and Vietnam. Unfortunately, the materials I've seen coming from the Zen lineages still represented in China don't have much power or clarity, at least from what I have seen. Even in Japan there are lineages of Rinzai, Soto and Obaku Zen schools that are very bland. My assessment of American Zen is that most of it is just pablum.

I have been practicing Zen for 30 years now; however, wherever we are in our journey we are just beginning. Recently I was named a Dharma Heir of Eido Shimanoro Roshi. I'm very new at this role and I have already made some mistakes. There have been errors in judgment that have definitely caused the Sangha and me some pain. Yet, none of us would be here working with and on each other if our collective practice weren't real. So let's continue and give our best through the remainder of Summer Sesshin 2009.

With gassho,

*Genjo*

## Summer Sesshin 2008 Closing Incense Poem

*Wind chime or squawk of crow,  
With one note  
the symphony is known.*

*Is this a Zen dream  
or a dream of Zen?*

*Who can testify to the truth?*

*Flash of lightning in a summer cloud.*

## Potluck Invitation

Taishin and Genko would like to invite you to a potluck at our home, Sunday, August 16, 1 - 4 pm. This is a bon voyage party for Tobin (Fudo) Youngs and a way to thank all of you who gave support to us earlier this year, through your wonderful meals, help around the house, and strong nen.

Please let us know if you are able to attend. RSVP by phone or email.

Plum Mountain News

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

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

Genjo Osho began his Zen training in 1975, was ordained in 1980, 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 Rinzai Zen School. Since Genki Roshin retired, Genjo Osho has continued his training with Eido T. Shimanoro Roshin, Abbot of Dai Bosatsu Kongo-Ji monastery in New York. On May 21, 2008, Eido Roshin 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: 9/13, 10/11, 11/8, 12/13, 2/14

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

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

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

*Summer Sesshin: 6/26/10 - 7/2/10*

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