



Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

Autumn is in full swing; about half the leaves have fallen from the deciduous trees here on North Beacon Hill where our new practice center is located. The season began when we had the move from Capitol Hill on September 10th, and then held Autumn Sesshin from September 24-30. At the end of sesshin Jukai (Dharma Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony) was held for four people. A week later we had the Opening Ceremony for our new center. I've also been to the annual Peace Valley Sesshin in Doylestown Pennsylvania (10/14-17), with one additional Jukai. On the weekend of November 4-6, I was a presenter at the Exploring Heart Sutra conference held at the Seattle Dharma Friendship Foundation. Shortly thereafter, I flew down to LA for the Decoration Conferment Ceremony of the Order of the Rising Sun for Glenn Webb Sensei (the founder of the Seattle Zen Center who invited Genki Roshi to be our resident teacher from Japan). This fall we have held two Chobo-Ji board meetings (I have a new title: "apartment manager"), several book study and chanting practice sessions, multi-mini sesshins and, of course, daily practice. Wow, that's a lot. The holiday season is upon us, and the Zendo will be closed Christmas day through New Years day, and again closed for Rohatsu.

Our moving day was amazing. It was definitely sad to leave our old home; which by the way, sold for the full asking price the day *before* it was to go on the market. It was such an amazing day because of all the great organizing

beforehand, especially by Linda Muka Wehnes, Rev. Genko Blackman, Dee Seishun Endelman and Tom Shodo DeGroot and the great help by everyone! Rick Proctor contributed new zabutons for zendo, which made a big improvement to the zendo and for our knees. Also, Rick's pickup truck proved to be invaluable, hauling many loads of



2011 Autumn Sesshin Participants

stuff, especially for Carolyn and me. Who knew we had so much stuff? Besides giving much away in order to fit into a smaller living space, we have been caught off guard trying to unpack, and we still haven't opened all the boxes. I think we will be making some more drop-offs to Good Will.

At Autumn Sesshin, we truly and deeply inaugurated our new space. Rev. Daitetsu Hull was our Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook), and he really put his whole heart into serving. John Daikan Green was the Shika (Host/Manager) and he too gave his all, as he always seems ready to do. Muka was our Jikijitsu (Time Keeper) and paced us through our busy schedule,

which often changed unexpectedly to make room for more samu (work meditation) in preparation for our Opening Ceremony. Emily HoU Ross held down two posts, Densu (Chant Leader) and landscape gardener. Likewise Jonathan Zengyoku Schwartz held down two posts as Jisha (Tea Server) and landscape gardener. Both of these landscape professionals did an extraordinary job trying to work with a relatively unskilled work force during sesshin to get as much of the landscaping plan accomplished as possible in short order. A lot got done, in large part due to their tireless efforts. Rick Proctor helped mount several art pieces during sesshin, including Phillip Gray's wonderful synthesis of iconic native salmon and a yin-yang circle. My Inji (attendant) this sesshin was Peter Shinke Ilgenfritz, who has been going through some amazing transitions in his life, and yet found the time to come to this sesshin. On second day, Genko Ni-Osho gave an inspired Dharma Talk on Case 43 of the Hekiganroku.

As I have said to many of you, I wouldn't want to do a sesshin just like this again. Sesshin was stressful because we used samu

periods to prepare for our Opening Ceremony and to try and get the property ready for the important final inspection by the City of Seattle, and there were too many uncertainties and unknowns to allow sesshin to be as smooth as it is meant to be. Ideally, sesshin should be a time when we don't have to figure and think much, this certainly was not true for this sesshin and nothing was really routine. Because we were adapting to a new space, much of our form and ritual was not yet stable. Nevertheless, we all demonstrated that we could respond pretty well to changing and demanding circumstances.

I must add that many people have been giving of their time and resources to help us get over some final hurdles required for permanent occupancy. Randal Daigetsu Tanabe and his work crew have spent many

hours improving the front and sides of the property, and donating many plants. The West Seattle Nursery, T&L Nursery, and Laura Wildfong of Northwest Nurseries all donated plants. Giovanni Anichini and Cedar Grove Composting helped with wood-chips and compost. Victor Ceronzane assisted with many hours of devoted labor. There are many more who have been making regular and spontaneous donations of time, effort and resources. Truly the whole project has been a wonderful example of community cooperation and support.

This issue of Plum Mountain News includes a Teisho, five poems marking our transition to our new center, and a report on the opening ceremony. There is a report on the Exploring the Heart Sutra Conference, a book review on a new book titled [Special Karma](#), by Merry White Benezra, and a return of Genko's column, "Thoughts on Practice." Finally, we have a report on the Conferment Ceremony for Glenn Webb Sensei, a report on the five Jukai participants, and several important announcements. May your holidays be joyous.

With gassho,

Genjo



Zen House

Closing Incense Poem

*For a dozen years,
this house has supported Zen practice.
The clear skies of summer waited
for the move to begin.
We revel in what has been given
and received.
A choir of black-robed crows
beckons the city to awake!
Who hears the flowers bloom?
No one sits in the empty zendo.*

Opening Sit Poem

September 11th, 2011

*September 11th a day we will never forget.
Burdened by the recollection
of so many needlessly killed.
We can now begin the memory
of our first sit.
Breath by breath, rooting in No-Self.
Spaciousness of heart/mind
allows true healing.
Dedicating zazen to care of all,
We breath for those who cannot.
Slowly the collective wounds melt away.*

The Book of Rinzai

Jishu: Teaching the Assembly Chapter 11, part 3

"Virtuous Monks, it is urgently important for you to realize the one who manipulates the light. That is the origin of all buddhas to which all followers of the Way return. Your body composed of the four great elements can neither preach the Dharma nor listen to the Dharma. Your spleen, liver, and gallbladder can neither preach the Dharma nor listen to the Dharma. The boundless sky can neither preach the Dharma nor listen to the Dharma. What is it that can preach the Dharma and listen to the Dharma? This very you existing clearly before my eyes, without form, shining alone—it is this one who can preach the Dharma and listen to the Dharma. If you see it in this way, you are not different from the buddhas and patriarchs. Just never be distracted throughout the day, and whatever you see is it. But 'when emotions arise, wisdom becomes clouded, and when thinking wavers, the essence is obscured.' Consequently people transmigrate through the three realms and experience all kinds of suffering. According to this mountain monk's view, there is nothing that is not profound, no one who is not emancipated."

"Followers of the Way, Mind-Dharma has no form. It penetrates throughout the ten directions.

In the eyes it is called seeing.
In the ears it is called hearing.
In the nose it smells odors.
In the mouth it converses.
In the hands it holds.
In the feet it runs."

"Fundamentally, it is one pure radiance. When divided, it becomes six harmonious functions. As One Mind does not exist to begin with, wherever you go, you are already emancipated. What is the point of this mountain monk speaking in this way? Just because you followers of the Way cannot stop your seeking mind, you are lost in the expedient means of the ancient worthies. Followers of the Way take this mountain monk's view and you will cut off the head of Sambhogakaya and Nirmanakaya Buddha. A Bodhisattva who has accomplished the tenth stage of mind is just like a low-class bastard. A Bodhisattva who has attained the two levels of supreme awakening—a fellow carrying chains. An arhat and pratyeka buddha—like piss and shit. Bodhi and nirvana—like hitching posts for donkeys. Why is this so? Because you followers of the Way haven't yet realized that the three asamkhaya kalpas are without substance, thus you have these impediments. The True Person of the Way is never like that. Just live in accord with circumstances, and by doing so erase your past karma. Accept things as they come and freely wear your clothes. When you want to go, go. When you want to sit, sit. Never have a single thought about seeking buddhahood. Why is this so? A person of old said, "If you want to do this and that trying to seek Buddha, Buddha becomes a great herald of birth and death."

"Virtuous monks, time is fleeting. Yet you just want to rush around trying to learn Zen and study the Way, memorizing names and phrases, seeking buddhas and patriarchs. You look for good teachers and speculate. Make no mistake, followers of the Way. After all, you were born of a father and a mother. What more need you seek? Reflect your light upon yourself. A person of old said, "Yajnadatta (thought he had) lost his head. If his seeking mind ceased, he would be at peace (buji)."

"Virtuous monks, just be ordinary. Don't try to be special. There are a bunch of foolish monks who cannot discern good from bad. They see the divine, they see the devil. They point to the East; they point to the West. They like fair weather; they like rain. Everyone of them will have to repay their debts in front of Yama (the king of Hell) by swallowing a red-hot iron ball. Sons and daughters of good families are bewitched by that pack of foxes and so act in strange ways. Blind idiots! The day will come for you to pay up for what you have eaten."

We gotta just love Rinzai! We're at the Middle Day of Sesshin, the peak. Our body should now be used to what's happening to it. We now have the opportunity to dive beneath the waves of thoughts, feelings and sensations, perhaps with some consistency. It can make all the effort seem worth it. At such moments, beneath the surface turbulence, we certainly feel no trouble and know there is no problem, and we can't help having great gratitude for our training and practice.

Rinzai says, "Virtuous Followers of the Way, it's urgently important for you to realize that the one who manipulates the light..."—first of all, everything is the light. Then who is the one who manipulates the light? The one who manipulates the light is the origin of all the buddhas and all universes. As Followers of the Way, it is our job to dip into this origin time and time again. In Zen we vocalize this "origin" that has no form let alone a name as Muuuu.

As we let go into the light, realizing that we are always immersed in it, and already nothing but the light itself, we soak up the one who manipulates the light. In such instances we are inspired, excited, clear, and a single thought is ten thousand years. Arising from the cushion we find that we are better able to adjust to circumstances and better able to move through our trials and tribulations like a knife through warm butter. Soaking up that one who manipulates the light we at once, without effort, have true insight, exactly as the ancient worthies, buddhas and sages of all traditions, from all cultures and planets. Everyone is inspired by the same voice of the Dharma. Not only does everyone in this room have access, but also each one of us is the Voice of the Dharma. All of us are already seamless with the one who manipulates the light. There are no boundaries, gates or fences (except of our own making); therefore, everyone here can listen to and speak the Dharma.

Our temple is called Listening to the Dharma Temple and this name comes from this verse of the Rinzai Roku. When we release our hold on ego identity, we naturally begin to feel immersion, and we might say it feels as though the one who manipulates the light bubbles up from within this vessel, but this thought is still overly dualistic. Regardless, at such

moments we realize everything we do is preaching the Dharma, whether lighting a candle, putting down our chopsticks, sweeping the floor, or giving a Teisho.

The one who manipulates the light is also referred to as "That One Shining Alone." It's also sometimes referred to as Godhead or Tathagata. The voice that comes from this depth is the voice that inspires all of the buddhas and sages of all times and places. Our bodies are made of the four elements—earth, wind, water, fire—or we could say any number of elements, or grouping of aggregates. The elements themselves cannot preach the Dharma or listen to the Dharma. Your organs cannot preach the Dharma nor listen to the Dharma. The boundless sky cannot preach the Dharma nor listen to the Dharma. And yet, it is also true that the boundless sky, your organs and the elements are all manifesting the Dharma. The organs, elements and sky all manifest the Dharma but *who* listens and speaks it? Guess who? Who's here in this room? That's right! Those right here in this room are the ones who actually listen and speak the Dharma. Everything manifests it but who can really listen? Hey! We're doing it right now! We're the ones who are listening and who can speak the Dharma. This is amazing! The various elements are manifesting, even dark energy and dark matter is manifesting the Dharma. What we call 'matter' is only a fraction of what we call the 'universe.' And a fraction of that fraction has some biology and a fraction of that fraction is listening to the Dharma. Only a fantastically minute fraction can listen and speak the Dharma and we're It!

"This very you existing clearly before my eyes, without form, shining alone, it is this one who can preach the Dharma and listen to the Dharma. If you see it in this way, you are not different from the buddhas and patriarchs." Did they have anything that you don't have? No, the ancient masters and sages had the same capacity to listen and speak as everyone in this room. The wind, wind chime and the vast sky all manifest the Dharma, but it is *we* who listen and speak the Dharma. If you can see this much, then your rational mind can see that we are already the buddhas and ancient masters sitting in this room! If we could never be distracted from this truth, we'd be just fine, but I'm afraid our primitive desires, attachments and repulsions cloud our minds most of the time.

We're so often distracted by our instincts for survival, to protect our ego and to have enough and then a little more. Our mind essence becomes easily obscured by our competing thoughts, feelings and sensations. Is there anything wrong with thoughts, feelings and sensations? No! Can you get rid of them? No! Therefore, it's what we do with them that is important. Thoughts, feelings and sensations are like the waves on the surface of the ocean. Very often, we are tumbled by them. And when we are tumbled, our wisdom is obscured. Of course, there is no way to get rid of waves, but, when we're tumbled by them, our insight is blocked and sometimes the waves are big enough to knock our light right out.

The zendo is a good place to learn how to surf or sail these waters. We must learn how to ride our complex, often competing thoughts, feeling and sensations. It is a waste of time to try and stop these waves, we must learn to sail in these rough waters. When we become slightly better seafarers then our natural wisdom and insight is not as hidden from us. And that is what we are here to do, learn to ride the waves and plumb the depths of our true nature. In this laboratory called a zendo we have many rules and routines to help simplify conditions. Once we get the routine of our form down pat, then the zendo becomes a very stable place to explore and train. Therefore, whenever changes are made to the routine, we must allow time, so that the training environment is minimally disturbed. Even in a very stable environment we often drown in our thoughts, feelings and sensations. And, let's face it, most of the time we can barely get any air! (laughter) We are often tumbled by just the pain or fatigue, let alone the mountain of emotions, conflicting desires and ghosts from our under-digested unconscious past. Oh, my goodness, there are such waves! And, if you sit here long enough, you will definitely face them all! If we face these waves courageously and continually, eventually we do get a little bit more skillful at surfing. With this skillfulness, we recover some deep composure and equanimity. It's so different than getting tumbled by a wave! It's the same ocean; nothing about it has changed, we have no power to alter the nature of the ocean, anymore than we can change the number of flights over the zendo.

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Sometimes there are a few jets and sometimes there are many. I can't just wave my hands and say, "Go away!" In the same way, we can't chase away our thoughts, feelings and sensations. Forget about it!

This line that Rinzai quotes, "when emotions arise, wisdom becomes clouded, and when thinking wavers, the essence is obscured" comes, I think, from a paragraph of the Shin Shin Ming, or *Verses on the Faith Mind*, by Sosan Ganji Zenji, the 3rd Zen ancestor in the Chinese line after Bodhidharma: "Do not remain in the dualistic state; avoid such pursuits carefully. If there is even a trace of attachment to this or that or right or wrong, confusion ensues and the mind is lost. Although all dualities come from the One, do not be attached even to this One. When the mind exists undisturbed in the Way, nothing in the world can offend." When we learn how to ride or surf our thoughts, feelings and sensations, something happens! Nothing in the world can offend! Why? Because we are not tumbled; to be offended is one kind of being tumbled. Truly, when nothing can offend, then everything ceases to be in the old way.

Genki Takabayashi Roshi, Eido Shimano Roshi and everybody else in this room, are complex, complicated characters; we could say, "flawed." But, when we settle on the cushion, we realize that we are also already vessels that listen to the Dharma and speak the Dharma. That One Shining Alone is down there in the deep waters of our True Nature all the time. Unfortunately, we are often stuck in our view that we are flawed vessels. Occasionally, we may acknowledge that a glimpse of light shines through. More often though, we don't feel much light. But that's okay. We're not shooting for perfection. We're just trying to improve our skillfulness step by step, breath after breath.

In time we realize more completely that we are the voice of the Dharma! There should be no doubt that we can joyfully listen to the Dharma and over time we discover that we truly are the voice of the Dharma. It takes a lot of zazen just to get a glimpse of the reality of this process, but it's completely true. Our job is to bring this reality into our everyday lives, and the trick is not to get caught in our emotions when

they arise. I can certainly see when Genki Roshi, Eido Roshi or myself get caught in our emotions. We all do from time to time. When we are caught in our emotions, we're miserable and tend to contribute to others being miserable! Although, on some level, I think some of us enjoy it (laughter). We're still miserable, but we come to like our misery. We may even relish our misery, if we come to love our own little piss pot cocoon.

When we get caught by our emotions, thoughts or sensations, our wisdom becomes clouded and obscured. However, even at such times it is important to remember that wisdom is already present. That One Shining Alone is always present, but perhaps not accessible. Nevertheless, there is nothing to be attained. Because we don't have faith in this truth, people



transmigrate through the three realms and have all kinds of suffering. So true! "According to this mountain monk's view, there is nothing that is not already profound and there is no one who is not already emancipated." And why? Because everyone is already that infinitesimal fraction of what we call matter that can listen and speak the Dharma. Fundamentally, it's all One Profound Radiance, but we divide *it* into this and that and the other thing. Relatively speaking, only creatures such as human beings can listen to and speak the Dharma; however, from an absolute view, the idea of One Mind or One Shining Alone doesn't exist to begin with. From this perspective, One Mind or One Shining Alone are just ideas like the idea of a separated selfhood and are delusions; how then can you be emancipated when it is all a dream and you don't exist in the first place? We're already emancipated because we all are already *it*,

and we couldn't be anything else. It's only when we are overwhelmed by our emotions, thoughts, sensations, when we are tumbled by repeated waves, or stuck in our idea of a separated selfhood, that we think we are not it. The journey of Following the Way is getting more and more skillful at catching and riding waves, and feeling one with the ocean of samsara. The more skillful we become the more equanimity we manifest and the more able we are to sustain an openhearted, caring attitude.

Hopefully, our parents and significant others taught us something about how to sail the waves of reality. But more often, children do not get very good coaching from their parents, relatives and teachers. Therefore, we do zazen, inquire and experiment in this room with what's been missing. Coming here is a little like being sent to detention! We've all been sent to detention so that we can learn some patience, and some skillfulness in how to be in peace and harmony with our neighbors. I'm certainly still learning. Sorry to say, most of us got inadequate parenting; hence, we have all volunteered for detention! In truth, we are all so bright. Our poor parents are gifted with buddhas and they don't know what to do with them! They have this bundle of light, joy and genius, this teeny sensitive bundle that can listen to and speak the Dharma, how will they manage? It is so easy to screw up, and they often do. As small children, the truth is we are much too bright to be contained, and our parents often have no idea how to deal with this, so they become punitive and overly restrictive. Even if you were blessed with really good parenting, this room is still a good place to experiment with how to become more skillful, open and compassionate. Don't just sit here, learn to ride the waves of thought, feelings and sensations without getting tumbled. There's always room for improvement. You can always be a better surfer and seafarer.

I use this surf metaphor because I grew up in Southern California where as kids we surfed all the time. Some kids surfed on a board, others with just their body. In body surfing one throws one's whole body into a wave, the back is arched, and one's body becomes stiff as a board. When we didn't catch the wave right, we were really tumbled, but even if we got slammed, we

would just go back out into the waves again and again, all day long. With practice, you get the timing of it and you know exactly from the pull and the rise of the water where you need to be. I'm nearly blind without my glasses; yet, I can catch a wave better than most people because I grew up not far from the ocean. It is not hard for me to feel the water and know when and where to catch the wave. When the water is calm, it's kind of boring. So, hey, we're not bored! Usually, we have plenty of thoughts, feelings and sensations, lots of waves to practice on! I'm sorry if you're tumbled so often by your fatigue, pain, thoughts, feelings, sensations, but you couldn't be in a better place to learn skillful means to catch and ride them.

If we realize this much, we cut off all the heads of all the Buddhas and all the patriarchs. We even kill all the teachings and the Bodhisattvas who've accomplished the 10th stage. We realize they are like 'low class bastards' because, if they've accomplished something, well since there's nothing to accomplish, they must all be phonies. And the Bodhisattvas who've attained two levels of supreme awakening, since they've *attained* two levels of supreme awakening, they are fellows carrying chains. If they put down their supreme awakening, they'd be much lighter. And, even if you're like a Buddha and you call yourself Buddha, you're like piss and shit. And if you're attached to words like Bodhi (awakening) and nirvana, all of these are like hitching posts for donkeys. And why? Followers of the Way, haven't you gotten it yet? You'll just go kalpa after kalpa and universe after universe seeking outside of yourself. The True Person of the Way is never like that. The True Person of the Way just lives in accord with circumstances however they arise. The circumstances that are arising right now are the circumstances of this sesshin, so how do we live in accord with this sesshin? If we become skillful meeting these

circumstances then we are untangling our karma and we're lighter for it. When we skillfully meet the circumstances of this sesshin we have the spaciousness to let the conflict of competing desires and our demanding instincts for survival loosen up a bit. If we have the spaciousness to untangle our inner knots we will feel the release of lots of energy and feel freer and more powerful for it.

The True Person of the Way accepts things just as they are. You freely wear whatever clothes are in front of you. If they are fine robes or work clothes, all dirty, or newly cleaned, it doesn't matter. You can wear either easily. Never feel downtrodden because you are wearing dirty work clothes or puffed up because you've got fine clothes on. When you want to go, you just go. When you want to sit, you just sit. You blend with the circumstances. When it's time to get up, you get up. We are here to learn how to blend or ride the circumstances of this journey called life and death. We should never harbor the idea of seeking Buddha. If you try to seek Buddha, then the Buddha-that's-seeking Buddha becomes "the harbinger of life and death." There is no sense in seeking Buddha. There is no sense in seeking enlightenment.

"Virtuous monks, you know time is fleeting." We have just reached the peak of our sesshin. So don't run around trying to seek Zen or True Insight, there is no merit attained by memorizing names and phrases, seeking buddhas or patriarchs. Stop your speculation. Make no mistake, you already have a father and mother. You're already

born as a fraction of a fraction that can listen to the Dharma and seek the Dharma. What more need you seek? Reflect your light upon yourself.

There's an old story about Yajnadatta. He saw his face in the mirror and thought, "What a beautiful face!" and he tried to find his face without the mirror. He couldn't find it so he thought he had lost his head. And that's us! We go around seeking Buddha and we see a reflection in a teacher or a teaching and we say, "There's Buddha!" But, if you take away the mirror you can't find it. And you try to find your own head. You look everywhere and can't find it. Why? You're already wearing it! The Buddha you are looking for is not external to you.

This is why Rinzai says, "Virtuous monks, just be ordinary. Don't try to be special. There are a bunch of foolish monks who cannot discern good from bad...Blind idiots!" Don't try to be special, or a Buddha, don't try to be emancipated, and don't try to attain enlightenment. Just sit when it's time to sit; stand when it's time to stand. Walk when it's time to walk, chant when it's time to chant, eat when it's time to eat and, in the course of these simple actions, blend yourself with circumstances, learning how to more skillfully surf your own thoughts, feelings and sensations, discovering a natural equanimity and openheartedness along the way.

With gasho,

Genjo

Closing Incense Poem

Autumn Sesshin 2011

*Hanging bells, Han and art.
Paint, landscape and clean.
Followers of the Way,
Who acts with no action?
Not seeing, there is Nowhere to go
And Nothing to do.
The dawn light
Illuminates the freely passing clouds.*



Apartment Available

Repair and improvements to apartment #4 at our new Residential Practice Center are being completed as I write this. It will be available for viewing by the time you read this, and available to rent on December 1st. This is a one bedroom, 812 square foot unit, with a sun porch on the second floor. It is on the West side of the building, which has direct access to the Zendo level. Rent is \$900 per month, and ideally we want a Zen person to move in. If that is not possible we will consider a small group of Chobo-Ji members holding the apartment for visiting students (including themselves) and sesshin accommodations. As a last resort we will open the apartment for rent to the general public. If you are interested in seeing or renting the space, please see Genjo on or after November 28th.

We have not yet officially started the residential program. We are waiting for a critical mass to get started, which will be as soon as one or more apartments is rented to Zen students. The requirements to move from a renter to a resident are now being developed, but will include a requirement of at least three zazen periods a week, at least one sesshin a year, and at least one hour of samu a week.

Opening Ceremony

On Saturday, October 8, 2011, the Chobo-Ji Sangha held an Opening Ceremony for our new Residential Practice Center with approximately 100 Sangha members, friends and neighbors in attendance at our new Zendo. The ceremony began with Rev. Genchoku Johnson playing the Shakuhachi (Japanese flute), this prelude was followed by Taishin Blackman playing the Makah drum. Genjo Marinello Osho made opening remarks emphasizing the



Osho and Rev. Genchoku offered a ceremonial tea at the main altar. Unable to



attend in person, our founding abbot, Genki Takabayashi Roshi sent us a recorded message, urging us to "Practice, practice, practice!" Genjo's concluding remarks thanked the many who were not mentioned by name, who also made invaluable contributions of one kind or another. Though the practice space is new, it feels old, because of the many years of practice, training and experienced execution that have been put into the space.

After the ceremony, we joined in a Chobo-Ji potluck. As usual, there was much good food and friendship over lunch and we were happily joined by John Daido Lowrance



need to be good caretakers of the land as the First Peoples learned to be. Thanks were given to the earth, heavens and wildlife, especially the salmon, which gave much so that we could be here. Carolyn Josen Stevens spoke words of gratitude on behalf of all of us for the many people who gave

(one of our Dharma Angels who made our expansion possible). Later an open house was held where other friends and neighbors could tour the new Zendo space.



generously of their funds and their time to create this Center. Genko Blackman Ni-



Opening Ceremony

Incense Poem

*Indigenous spirits circle
with the Autumn Wind.*

*What is the root of Great Plum Mountain?
Sitting solid in the midst of impermanence.
Clouds quickly pass without hindrance.*

Genki Roshí's Incense Poem

*Autumn wind around
Dai Bai Mountain's peak-
Chobo-Ji's Zen energy embracing
everything, everywhere.
Dharma spring grows deeper, longer;
Over Lake Washington
a bird flies with ease.*

Heart Sutra Conference

by Sally Zenka Metcalf

The Dharma Friendship Foundation organized a recent Conference on the Heart Sutra. They are under the spiritual guidance of Yangsi Rinpoche. The conference took place on November 4-6 at their new location in the International District. I attended only on Saturday and enjoyed the way everyone was warmly provided for in their intimate and quiet temple. Speaking were Eileen Kiera, a teacher from Thich Nhat Han's Zen tradition, Dr. James Blumenthal, a Buddhist scholar and a practicing Tibetan Buddhist himself, the Venerable Thubten Chodron, an American Tibetan Buddhist nun, and lastly our own Genjo Marinello Osho representing the Rinzai tradition.

The conference was a remarkable opportunity for people of many Buddhist persuasions to join together to reflect upon the most significant and widely used sutra of Mahayana Buddhism. While we were all Buddhists, the discourses uncovered some intriguing differences in fundamental approach, perception, and belief. Even so, we also discovered that we share experiences at the very deepest level. The talks can be heard at [http://](http://www.dharmafriendship.org/resources_audio_online.html)

www.dharmafriendship.org/resources_audio_online.html

To sum up my experience of the speakers: Eileen Kiera gave a deeply feeling talk on the Heart Sutra and it's meaning in our lives. She lead us in singing the sutra, set to music. Lovely! Venerable Thubten Chodron then astutely analyzed the Heart Sutra and its relationship to our path along the Way—most enlightening. Dr. Blumenthal discussed historic Buddhist beliefs and philosophies, providing a richly educational context for the sutra as part of the evolution of Mahayana Buddhism. Lastly, Genjo Osho evoked the experience of emptiness—so essential in the sutra—through an interweaving of reflections on his own personal meditative process together with storytelling about our Rinzai practices at Chobo-Ji. From the talks, I especially appreciated gaining a strong feeling for the teachers, sanga and the practice of each tradition..

Genjo Osho directed much of his discourse to the experience of emptiness as addressed in the Heart Sutra. I paraphrase:

*Throughout the Heart Sutra is the Japanese/ Chinese character Mu, which typically means No or Not: No eyes, no ears...no mind, no consciousness. Rather than a simple No or negation, this Mu represents emptiness—an emptiness that is boundless and boundaryless, that is without intrinsic separateness, without substance, and yet—is. When we have a penetrating experience of this emptiness, we cannot help but experience openheartedness. That's why this sutra is called the **Heart Sutra**. When we realize this emptiness, our hearts are open; and we, momentarily, experience what we might call the Buddha. Enlightenment itself is everyday open-heartedness. Nothing more and nothing less.*

Interestingly, Osho's talk brought to light an outstanding difference between particularly the Tibetan tradition and ours, and stirred much commentary from everyone.

Rinzai, the founder of our tradition, said that "Everyone listening to this discourse IS that One Shining Alone—IS Buddha." Opening up to, and gaining confidence in, that—with maturity—is absolutely essential. Then we walk through life more from that perspective, rather than our selfish, self-centered perspective. So, we're not separate from Buddha. Impossible to be so! You may not be awake to or aware of it yet, but you listening to this discourse—Hello Buddha!

The Tibetan nun's eyes widened, the scholar sat up straight. Pitfalls were presented, such as do-nothing Zen. The Venerable Thubten Chodron asserted that we have the *potential* to become a Buddha, but we are not Buddhas now. If we were, we would be ignorant Buddhas, and that is an oxymoron. A lively and provocative discussion ensued. For example Genjo Osho spoke of how the Rinzai tradition loved oxymoron. Perhaps this was a kind of Dharma battle between our traditions.

This kind of exchange must certainly promote understanding and alliances between our fellowships. I hope our various traditions can meet again—perhaps at Chobo-Ji next time—where we can investigate our differences and, inevitably, discover beneath them where we meet as one



Samia Shalabi sang a folk round of the [Heart Sutra](#) at the Conference and again for our Sangha on Nov. 11th. We all joined in. Many were brought to tears by the rendition.

Thoughts on Practice

by Genko Ni-Osho

Recently during sesshins Genjo has been reading passages from the Rinzai Roku. As students of Rinzai Zen it is good for us to hear these passages, as they give us a sense of Rinzai's teaching style, and perhaps some insight into the style of our own zendo.

The Rinzai Roku is not easy reading, however. It also is not for everyone. In spite of having read it numerous times, I have never really warmed up to the language of it myself. Genjo has often said it is the one book he would take with him to a desert island. It is not so for me, but his statement made me wonder what I would choose to bring with me. What is so essential to my life?



As I write this, I'm looking at two special items retrieved from my late mother's house – an ancient penknife and a metal container with three matches in it. My mother's great love when she was young was to go out into the Pennsylvania woods for a week or two at a time, with only these two items and the clothes on her back. Even in her frail old age, the penknife and match case were kept available in her desk drawer, along with her other most important possessions. I have no doubt my mother would have skipped taking any books, and had only these two things with her wherever she went, if she had to choose.

When my mother died, I felt keenly the loss of the tremendous knowledge she had accumulated about so many aspects of life. So often now I have a question that I know she could answer for me, and she is no longer here to answer it. As I look at her match case and penknife, I think I'd probably need a book of edible plants to take to the woods with me as well. My mother didn't need such a book – she knew the woods of Pennsylvania, upstate New York, and New England so well that she could easily put together a meal from the berries and roots she found there.

But what about a desert island, a new environment? She wouldn't have needed a book there, either. Holding her match case in my hands, I can hear her talking to me. Be still, she would say. Pay attention. What are the birds and other critters eating? What seeds do you see in the animal poop? Boil some water and sip it slowly while you learn from what is around you; soon enough it will be clear to you what is safe to eat. There is no useful information in a book, or that a teacher can give you, that you can't learn from direct observation yourself. Above all, don't be afraid. Enjoy the place you are in – and your place in it – wherever it might be.

Actually, this is not different from Rinzai's primary message to us. Be still. Pay attention. You don't need to hear it from someone else. Just relax into whatever place you find yourself. You don't need anything extra (although a penknife and matches may be useful at first). Ultimately what is most essential is this "nothing extra" state of mind.

Order of Rising Sun

by Genjo Osho

On November 15th, I traveled down to LA to attend the Decoration Conferment Ceremony honoring Dr. Glenn Kangan Webb Sensei at the residence of the Consul General of Japan. The Order of the Rising Sun was the first national decoration awarded by the Japanese Government and the Emperor of Japan. Webb Sensei could have elected to receive the award in a private ceremony from the Emperor in

Tokyo or a public ceremony in LA with family and friends. He elected the latter and I'm so glad he did.

The Consul General Jun Niimi conferred the award on behalf of the Emperor Akihito.



It was given in honor of Webb Sensei's monumental contributions to East-West understanding and Japanese-American relations. Webb Sensei is recognized as a world-class scholar of Japanese Art, a Zen Master, an Urasenke Tea Master, and a Juilliard trained classical pianist, among other talents, foremost of which is being a beloved teacher to so many. If you have ever heard me use the terms *kokoro* (heart/mind) or *okage-sama de* (I'm in your shadow) these come directly from my grateful association with Kangan as one of my most influential teachers.

It was great to see many old friends who came to the ceremony, some of whom were early members of the Seattle Zen Center founded by Dr. Webb, the organization that invited Genki Roshi to come and be our resident teacher. Kankan Kurt Spellmeyer



Roshi, leader of the Cold Mountain Sangha at Rutgers, NJ, was among the guests and I got to share a room with him at the nearby hotel. It was wonderful to catch up with him and to get to know others in attendance.

Rate Increase

It has been many years since we have raised dues, and the costs of hosting sesshins has gone up more than our fees. In addition, we are currently operating under a relatively small deficit (\$40,000) arising from our construction and apartment upgrade costs, which is currently being floated by Josen's and Genjo's retirement funds. Over time, of course, it is important to get back in the black. Accordingly, the Chobo-Ji Board of Directors has authorized the following rate increase beginning Dec. 1st: \$75 suggested monthly dues, \$25 for mini-sesshins, \$250 for in-house weeklong sesshins and \$390 for Rohatsu Sesshin. Please note that we make every effort not to turn students away because of lack of funds.

New Year's Day Celebration & Holiday Schedule

There will be no public zazen between Christmas and New Years. As is our custom, we will be celebrating the new year with a Heart Sutra chanting service that begins at 10AM New Year's Day. This will be followed by everyone striking the *kansho* bell hanging just outside the Practice Center double entry doors. When the ceremony is complete, there will be a potluck brunch which will conclude a little after noon.

Rohatsu Sesshin

Jan. 2nd - Jan. 10th, 2012

Please make your reservations by Dec. 18th. The cost of sesshin is \$390 (less dues). No part-time participation is allowed. We will leave from our Practice Center parking lot, behind 1727 S. Horton St., by 4 PM on Monday, Jan. 2nd. Please be at the Zendo by 3:00 PM so that we can pack up and make carpool arrangements to Camp Indianola. Formal zazen will begin after a light dinner. Rohatsu ends around 10:00 AM on Tuesday, January 10th. Please don't plan departure flights before 2 PM.

If you are coming from the airport you can take Shuttle Express, (800) 487-7433, or ideally you can take the new Seattle Light

Rail for \$2.00 from the airport to Beacon Hill station. We should be able to pick you up from there, or it is a short five blocks to the new Practice Center.

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

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

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

Special Karma

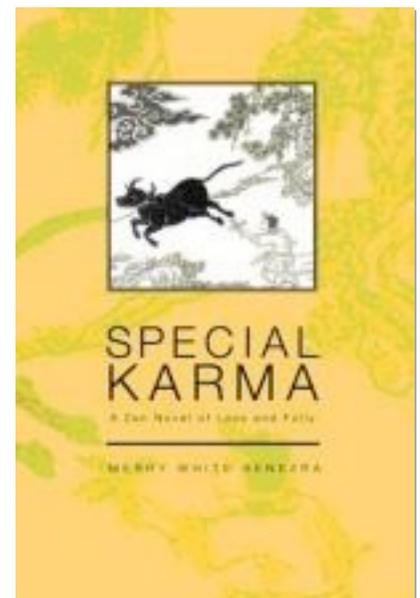
Review by Genjo Osho

I recently finished reading Merry White Benezra's Zen novel of love and folly at a Zen monastery, [Special Karma](#). While reading this book, I was immediately transported to Dai Bosatsu, and though I wasn't there until the 90's, I felt a palpable inner resonance with every nook and cranny of the location and the impact the place and practice had on the people training there. Merry pegged the experience of the place, the practice, and especially the presence of Eido Shimano Roshi. She also captured how isolated and dismal it can be for any residents staying over the DBZ winter break. I can only imagine how bleak it will be for the two female monks planning to stay over this winter's break, and my heart goes out to them.

I find myself still greatly disturbed and betrayed by the fact that Eido Roshi's sexual advances towards students did not end more than 15 years ago, as I was assured they had, when I began to train with him. Indeed, we are all now well aware that his sexual advances, which sometimes even rose to date rape, did not stop. Perhaps the frequency diminished a bit with age, but not because of any real understanding of the harm he had done or was doing right up to the latest exposure in June of 2010 that forced his retirement last year. The book also should help everyone see just how insidious, confusing and detrimental such advances, let alone conquest, can be, not only to the one pursued, but to the whole training sangha, both those who were subtly or actually aware of what was going on, and indirectly to all those who didn't have a clue.

Of course, given Eido Roshi's lack of respect for ethical boundaries in this crucial area, in this arena he was always a poor example to his students. How tragic that such an inspired teacher and leader could have such a big gap in his training and psychological maturity. Clearly his great gifts were repeatedly used to excuse or minimize his great gaps.

It is my sincere hope that the continued dialogue prompted by such courageous and revelatory writing as Merry's will keep pressure on the Zen Studies Society administration to make [the needed organizational reforms](#) that will allow real healing to begin.



Jukai

Buddhist Precept Ceremony

On the morning of Friday, Sept. 30th, at the conclusion of Autumn Sesshin, Murphy Davis, Rick Proctor, Steve Hanson and Jane Orvis formally accepted the Buddhist precepts. The same can be said of Robert Burns, who did Jukai at the conclusion of the annual Bucks County Aikido Sesshin held in Doylestown, PA, October 14-16. They all have been followers of the Way for some time and each has attended a minimum of two weeklong sesshins and some many more than that.

Murphy wrote in her Jukai application letter that arrived after our last Rohatsu that she was surprised to get to this place, it was never her intention – “I’m not sure what purpose is served by joining; I don’t have great clarity of mind or a fiery passion to sit so long I can no longer feel my butt. But it does feel, to quote Genko Ni-Osho, exactly like I’ve come to the bottom of a hill I’ve been rolling down for quite some time. ... after practicing regularly, the grass really



did get greener and the sky really did get bluer. I’ve experienced (in the borrowed words of a zen writer), ‘the uncanny thrill’ of a bed making itself, a book turning its own pages and a dog’s bark manifesting out of nowhere and disappearing into nowhere... I see people who are genuine, hard-working, spontaneous, grounded and laugh easily. I see people dealing with life with grace and grit. I see a teacher who reveals his struggles and doesn’t seem to take himself too seriously.... Other people may have great clarity or a sense of purpose around their decision to take the precepts, but my decision feels slightly more clinical: this works. I sometimes wish it didn’t but it does. It is a fact that my practice gets deeper when I sit with others, and I

sometimes can’t believe my luck in ending up with this group.”

Rick wrote: “I knew Zen before I learned about it.... Carlos Castaneda taught me to look over my left shoulder for death every day.... Why do I want to do the Precepts? They fit. When I read or hear the Dharma it fits. Truth for each of us is what fits.



Almost like clothes. Our religion is probably a lot more like clothes than we think. It is a costume we wear to imply our understanding of nothing. Too often though the costume becomes the belief, Zen seems to be one of the few teachings that encourage us to give into the idea that we do not have to know and define Mu, only experience it, to open to it.... Zen will be my finish, however it unfolds. This is why I want to accept the Precepts. It is the simple acceptance, by this frail human that The Way is my way. Further, it is my commitment to support these teachings via word and action.... I am looking forward to watching American Zen evolve from the root planted at Chobo-Ji.”

Steve’s request was short but sweet: “Chobo-Ji is so wonderful: I never expected to actually find a place like it. I have always



longed for a community like this: vital, appreciative, inquiring, energetic, loving, alive with this life right now. And to find

such a community, in my own neighborhood, is an amazing revelation and opportunity. I have already learned so much here and want to continue to grow with you all.”

Jane wrote: “I have been sitting with this group since the summer of 2009. Wary at first and frustrated by spending so much time not-moving, not-producing, not-acting, my frustration remains but the positive effects of all that non-stuff has been substantial. Within a few months of sitting once a week, I wanted to keep coming.... Normally fearful of groups, of being



subsumed by them, this is the first group I wholeheartedly want to be a part of and wholeheartedly trust. The structure helps. The willingness of all of us to show vulnerability, to be flawed, is crucial. I feel a great trust in Buddhism and I feel a great trust in this assembly of students and teachers. Please accept my commitment to fostering peace in myself and sharing it with others.”

Robert wrote: “I do feel the spirit of Christ within me, and I feel he is a part of me, but also there is this guy Buddha, and another guy, Mohammed, and another



Bodhidharma, and then Dogen, and this guy Genjo... and how can I say I am a Christian anymore than I can say I am a Genjoist???

Well, you would not want me to say I was a Genjoist, and Buddha would not like me to say I was a Buddhist, and Christ would roll over in his tomb if I called myself a Christian, and so on... if I relax the whispers of death will shout, demand then take this energy off into the universe, and with it's splendid spoon, stir my soul into the batter of the entire universe and serve me up a microbe in a compost pile forever to enrich the earth for humanity, a living for which I have a weakness for. Despite all of it, I think humans are so amazing... I want to serve them while I am still here in this form, to share the joy of being allowed to be here now in this magnificent creation we live in called the human body.... Zazen has enabled me to be who I am. The many years of rohatsu, the daily sits, and the aikido training, have enabled every second of my life to remain in my hands. It is time to repay.... When I go to rest each night, I sleep well because of zazen. When I face the world, and feel the sting of injustice across my face... I thank the universe for the honor to be a part of that force that makes harmony. I am a proud Buddhist, and want to 'come out of the closet.' It is payback time for Bob."

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

They all 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. Murphy's new Dharma Name is ZenUn, which means Zen Cloud. Rick's is MuKen, which means No Seeing. Steve's is GanKo which means New Light. Jane's is BuJi meaning No Action, and Robert's, a former Marine, is HeiWa, which means Soldier of Peace.

Jukai candidates need to petition in writing at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji for a minimum of six months (including at least two week-long sesshins), must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha).

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 has been doing the activities he loves best: gardening, pottery, calligraphy, writing and cooking. One day we hope he will return to Seattle to live in our developing residential practice center.

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 continued his training with biannual retreats at Dai Bosatsu Kongo-Ji monastery in New York. On May 21, 2008, Eido Shimano Roshi confirmed Genjo Osho as a Rinzaï line Dharma Heir.

Chobo-Ji Schedule

Introduction to Zazen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Zazen (except during quarterly retreats)

Monday - Friday, 5:30 a.m., 1 hr.
Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.
Sundays, 6:30 p.m., 1 hr.
Monday & Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., 1 hr.

Dharma Talks

1st and 3rd Sundays, 7:30 p.m., 1 hr.
(most Sundays during Fall Intensive)

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 a.m., Sundays: 12/11, 2/12/12, 3/11, 4/8, 5/13

Rohatsu Sesshin: 1/2/12 - 1/10/12
Spring Sesshin: 3/23/12 - 3/30/12
Summer Sesshin: 6/22/12 - 6/29/12
Autumn Sesshin: 9/21/12 - 9/28/12

We Are Located: as of Sept. 6th, at 1733 S. Horton St., (one block west of S. Beacon). Main entrance and off-street parking is accessible behind the building off Lafayette Ave. S. After entering the main entrance, remove your shoes and socks in the entry hall and proceed to the Zendo (meditation hall) on your right. 206-328-3944

Dues and Fees: go to support the life of this temple. We have no outside support from any organization. Dues are \$75 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 \$25. Fees for the March, July, and September sesshins are \$250, and Rohatsu Sesshin is \$390. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. For more information see:

www.choboji.org



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

Plum Mountain News
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