Dear members and friends,

Summer is at its height; thundershowers are in the forecast. Change is in the air. My trip to Birmingham, England to lead an annual three-day sesshin was joyful and fruitful. Josch came with me and served as Tenzo (cook). Chris Gyoshin Mooney Sensei, his wife Iona and the local crew, were great hosts. Doing the sesshin in late spring instead of mid-winter was a great relief; we didn’t spend most of sesshin fighting the bone-crunching cold. I hope we can have our sesshin regularly at this season. After sesshin we visited Barcelona for few days, what a beautiful city, people and great food!

I also found myself in Houston, Texas for the annual meeting of the American Zen Teachers Association in mid-June. Hot and humid! The Houston Zen Center sangha and their abbot, Gaelyn Godwin, offered wonderful hospitality. The last day together was truly remarkable, there was an in-depth exploration of the recent events inside of Rinzei-Ji and temples associated with Joshu Sasaki Roshi. This felt very similar to the exploration of the troubles at the Zen Studies Society centered around Eido Shimano Roshi a few years back. I left both of these annual meetings with a positive feeling that real change was in the air for these centers and AZTA as an organization, but as everyone knows change comes slowly. There was some movement towards the AZTA becoming a professional organization. If this change came about, AZTA could promote and oversee strong ethical standards by its members and the organizations associated with them. In my mind, these actions are sorely needed and long overdue on a national stage. However, again change comes slowly,

Summer Sesshin attendees at the end of June was a little light, but the practice was strong and inspiring. Rev. Daitsu Hull gave a well-received Dharma Talk the second day of sesshin on Kyogen’s “Man Up A Tree.” I’ve included a transcription of my last teisho at this sesshin which examines Torei Zenji’s preference for the Bodhisattva Vows. The all-important Dai-Tenzo (Chief Cook) post was shared by several participants, principally Emily HoU Ross, Steve Ganko Hanson, Tom Shodo DeGroot and Dee Seishun Endelman. Perhaps dividing this post is worth consideration. The other posts of Jiki (time keeper), Shika (host-manager), Densi (Chant leader), Inji (abbot assistant) and Jisha (tea server) were also shared, as most everyone from Seattle could not attend sesshin full-time. Nearly all the full-time participants were from out-of-town, which feels a little strange, but our sangha is mature enough that it all worked despite these challenges. On the last day of sesshin Rev. Kanjin Cederman renewed his Bodhisattva Vows, receiving a brown Rakusu from me to signify his significant training over decades.

On this note, I’m strongly considering offering brown Rakusus to all Chobo-Ji students who have done forty or more weeklong sesshins, which represents decades of Zen practice. Lay Dharma Brothers and Sisters who have practiced this long are de facto leaders and I feel should be celebrated and recognized for this fact. Recently many more ordained have been attending Chobo-Ji sesshins, and this is a welcome development, but I think it is important that Chobo-Ji remain principally a lay practice where senior laity shares a strong leadership role.

Membership at Chobo-Ji is simple, attend and contribute financially and you will automatically be considered a member, and after three months a voting member at our Annual Meeting. We may make this process a bit more formal in the near future, but regular membership will always be simple and straightforward. Anyone who trains enough to attend at least two weeklong sesshins is welcome to do Jukai, where the main Buddhist precepts are taken and a Dharma Name with Rakusu is received. A letter should be written to me at least one month prior to Jukai, stating why taking this step is appropriate at this time. After eight weeklong sesshins, if someone feels they are called to propagating Zen training, form and ritual, as the principal focus of their life, please consult with me about the possibility of Zen unsui (novice priest – cloud and water person) ordination. After forty weeklong sesshins, a monk automatically becomes ready for an Osho (full temple priest) ceremony and laity automatically qualifies for a brown Rakusu signifying recognition of their dedication to practice and leadership potential. Anyone lay ordained who has done forty or more sesshins, completes the full Rinzai koan.

Summer Sesshin Participants

and I’m not holding my breath. I think it may become necessary to support a new pan-Buddhist national professional organization that will fulfill this need.

Continued on next page…
curriculum and demonstrates through their actions they are living a life devoted to the care of all beings great and small, animate and inanimate is eligible to be named a Dharma Heir in our lineage.

I am delineating all this as I contemplate that two people are planning to do Jukai this month, one person is planning to re-ordain in our lineage at the close of Autumn Sesshin, one person will be named an Osho in our lineage just after Autumn Sesshin, another looks like as if they will be ready to be named an Osho in January, and one Chobo-Ji member will likely ordain as an unsui at the end of Spring Sesshin. With all these ordinations and confirmations, I feel it is all the more important to also honor and recognize long-dedicated lay practitioners.

As most of you know I’ve spent the last year more deeply contemplating socially engaged Buddhism. I began my exploration through my new association with Joan Halifax and Bernie Glassman and his organization Zen Peacemakers. Recall that I went to the Upaya Zen Center to meet with them last summer, (and I’m going again in the next few days) and then to a life transformative Bearing Witness Retreat at Auschwitz/Birkenau last November. I’m going again this November, and this time Seishun will be attending with me. In addition, here in Seattle I’ve participated with other sangha members in Buddhist Peace Fellowship events, and continue my occasional prison work, most recently at Walla Walla State Penitentiary. Moreover, as you know Genko Ni-Osho is actively involved in prison work and some sangha members have directly supported and assisted her efforts. Genko is also supporting, along with other sangha members, the Buddhist Global Relief (BGR) “Walk to Feed the Hungry” which will take place on October 12th. BGR is always looking for local cosponsors for this annual event and this year the Chobo-Ji board has offered to lend our name to these good efforts. In addition, many Buddhist groups are getting involved in raising awareness about global warming and other dire environmental issues facing our world. Then there are new local efforts to start a Seattle Buddhist Wellness Center where disenfranchised folks can get a good meal and share a peaceful space to practice meditation and other healing arts. I directly support all of these efforts to the best of my ability; the question is how active as a group should Chobo-Ji become involved?

I will be giving a special teisho on issues associated with socially engaged Buddhism at the October 6th mini-sesshin, which will also mark our Second Anniversary of the inauguration of our new Residential Practice Center. As part of this year’s anniversary celebration we will have a potluck lunch, short samu practice period, great need? What is our role in our local neighborhood? Do we want to sponsor or lend samu support for local services to disenfranchised neighbors? When is it appropriate to take a stand collectively on national or global issues? I expect there will be a lively fruitful discussion that will probably raise many more questions than answers to what paths we want to pursue. Nevertheless, I think it is time to begin a dialogue about possibly expanding our mission and focus beyond the temple grounds.

At our last Annual Meeting, an exploratory working group was formed to examine the possibilities around having a standing Sangha Relations committee to help address some of these concerns, and you will find a report about their efforts and focus in this issue. In addition, Sally Zenka Metcalf has written an article published here about Chobo-Ji “Taking Flight,” which is very pertinent to the conversation now happening about Sangha Relations.

Beyond my travels to the UK to do sesshin, I’ve recently been to Ledyard, Connecticut to do a one-day sesshin with students of Robert Heiwa Burns Sensei, this autumn I’ll be going again to do a three-day sesshin with George Lions Sensei in Bucks County, PA, and this coming January I’ll be doing a second Rohatsu with Rev. Joriki Dat Baker and Blue Mountain Zendo sangha in Lehigh Valley, PA. I want to give everyone reading this a head’s up: to be aware that there is a plan afoot to bring representatives from all the sanghas I train with together under one roof for next year’s Autumn Sesshin, 2014, so please keep this in mind! It will be a good one!

There are four additional activities that I want sangha members to take note of and participate in if they can. The first is our rapidly approaching three-day Odayaka Sesshin coming up August 23-25. There are twenty people already signed up, but the more the merrier. With our new space we can conceivably accommodate twice that number at sesshin; but with a number of people coming from out of town, we are not set up to house everyone. Therefore, if you
are someone local planning to attend please
let me know if you could host one or two
people for three nights Thursday through
Saturday. This will be an entirely new
format than we are used to; the only fixed
scheduled items will be meals. There will
be a lot more “education,” discussion, Qi
Gong and personal time; this is definitely an
experiment to broaden our offerings. I’m
hoping Genko Ni-Osho will lead the next
Odayaka Sesshin tentatively planned for
next spring, and she will bring her own
style and offerings to that event.

The second activity I want to draw your
attention to is the Fall Training Intensive,
which begins with the mini-sesshin, September 8th (see p. 10). Only one person
did the Spring Intensive, so I am lowering
my sights a bit in terms of requirements,
please read them over and consider if it is
something you might be interested in.

The third activity is a workshop to be held
at Chobo-Ji entitled “Spiritually Based
Gestalt Workshop” the weekend of
September 14-15. This workshop is taught
by a good friend of mine, open to the wider
public, is a fundraiser for the temple, and
hopefully will attract a number of our own
sangha. The workshop will principally
explore powerful communication tools
for deepening one’s spiritual path while living
our very complicated ordinary daily lives.
If you are reading this, I hope you will
strongly consider attending this important
offering with me.

The fourth offering is Autumn Sesshin
2013, September 20-27. We already have a
number of reservations, but we appreciate
getting an early count, so please get your
deposits in on or before September 8th.
September 1st will mark the start of new
posts, which are listed in this issue. Scott
Ishin Stolnack has agreed to take on the
post of Dai-Tenzo this coming season. If
you have been assigned a post to which you
think you won’t be able to serve at least one
of our two upcoming weeklong sesshins,
please let me know, and be sure to seek
instruction from me or other senior
members about your responsibilities and
duties.

Also in this edition you will find reports
from the Board, Program task force and the
Building and Grounds task force, a letter
from Brian, the son Leslie Genei Gannon
concerning her days since Genki Roshi’s
bodily departure, and a short report on the
selection of the next book for our collective
study. I hope you enjoy all of these
offerings, and better yet I hope you can
participate in many of them.

Take care,

Genjo

Sangha Relations
Working Group
by Sally Zenka Metcalf

I’m told the Buddha once said, Even if you
are in deepest samadhi, residing in
transcendent bliss, if you hear someone is
ill and needs a bowl of soup, get up and get
him his soup!

Chobo-Ji has a new Sangha Relations (SR)
Working Group composed of Chair: Edwin
Beatty, Dee Seishin Endelman, and Sally
Zenka Metcalf. We’ve had four meetings to
date in which we’ve birthed a host of meaty
questions that have become our guides as
we investigate the meaning and
responsibility of sangha relations. We long
to involve the wider sangha in a discussion
of these questions to help shape the purview
of this all-important work group. To that
end, you’ll be hearing from us soon. For
now, we’re sharing many of our questions
in this article in the hope that readers will
mull them over and provide us with grist for
our mill.

Some of the first questions we asked
ourselves were, “What is the meaning of
community as we experience it at Chobo-
Ji?” How is community fostered here? How
is it undermined? What is the responsibility
of Chobo-Ji to its members, and of
members to Chobo-Ji? Lastly, as a
community, how do we watch over and
support members facing challenges?

Interesting questions? We think so. They
stimulated enthusiastic research into other
spiritual communities that effectively and
lovingly offer member support. Quakers
have a centuries-old tradition of solid
congregational support under the auspices
of a Membership Committee started to help
families whose parent(s) were imprisoned
for taking unpopular political stands.
Quaker Meetings have published very
helpful books on the activity of this
committee, which are an inspiration to us.
We’re researching other communities, too.
Do you have suggestions?

As we see it, our principle care is to
watch over the wellbeing of the sangha.
As Genjo Osho put it, “How do we hold
each other? When someone is struggling in
the sangha, is anyone paying attention?”
How about when someone is new to Chobo-
Ji? Or when the sangha community itself is
facing a challenge? We intend that the
Sangha Relations group will be paying
attention.

Keeping in touch with members and
providing help to those in need: A regular
practice of this group is to review the
member list for those whom we haven’t
seen lately, followed by a check-in to see
whether they need anything. The SR group
will facilitate support, when called for. This
could be anything from listening to the
person over tea, to gathering a group of
sangha members into a Care Committee.
We might broadcast a call for action, such as
when we scare up furniture for new Zen
Residents.

This group hopes to assure truly helpful
support to sangha members in need, but this
effort raises concerns and questions. We
ardently hope to assist members in a way
that is neither fixing, nor judgmental, but
centers around deeply listening and being
present to members, however they are,
whatever their challenges. How would we
do this? We feel we have a lot to learn!

Member support is everyone’s
responsibility: It’s critical to us that sangha
support is not seen as the sole province of
this group’s specific members. Rather, we
hope it will be a sangha-wide responsibility.
Not long ago the health and vision of a
Chobo-Ji member with severe neurological
disease had declined to such an extent that
we were concerned. With her permission, a
Care Committee was formed of four people
she felt comfortable with. The group helped

Continued on next page…
her shop, clean, do errands, go out for fun, get to appointments, and just listened to her when she needed to talk. Such Care Committees would be profoundly helpful in the Chobo-Ji community. We hope readers of this article will volunteer for such committees.

You might be thinking, “What right do I have to butt into someone else’s business?” Truly, who are we protecting when caution keeps us from acting to help others—perhaps just ourselves. Quaker wisdom speaks to this reticence to sit face to face with someone in distress.

“An act of true caring is never intrusive. It may be awkward. It may not be fully received by the other at the time. But it is never intrusive. Admittedly, true caring, i.e., love, is something that needs to be nurtured within us. It can only flow fully when we suspend our judgment.” (p. 5, Grounded in God)

To help us address our lack of confidence and reticence to intrude, we are actively investigating training in chaplaincy and companionship. Genjo Osho is acquainted with a professional chaplain and is arranging a meeting for us. We look forward to this connection and hope to share with the sangha guidelines and skills for supporting individuals in need. Peter Ilgenfritz, our Chobo-Ji member who is a long-time Minister at University Congregational Church, will be helping us, as well.

Membership is another purview of the Sangha Relations Working Group. What makes a Chobo-Ji member? Historically, it’s pretty loose. “If someone pays dues for three months and simply shows up, they’re considered a member,” says Genjo Osho. How about all the people who attend Chobo-Ji who don’t fall into this category? Every Tuesday night, people are attending Introduction to Zen. The latest four-week introduction series had ten committed students! Many Introductory graduates are quietly fitting themselves into our zazen schedule, and hope to be welcomed. How can we support them?

Does the new Chobo-Ji need a membership application process? It has been proposed. There is something to be said for being more formal about membership than we have been. There is also a lot to be said for our traditional process of allowing people to find their own way, in their own time, to greater commitment to the Chobo-Ji community.

Would a directory of members help us incorporate new folks, build community, and keep in touch? University Quaker Meeting has one with photos and bios to help members get to know each other. We could, too.

It’s worth noting here that people who live in the Zen Residential Program or assist at Introductory often meet visitors who have been searching the Seattle area for a solid place to practice meditation. It’s hard to find. Our schedule is filled with opportunities to practice. What we have is rare and precious! We predict that more people will be finding us and gladly practicing here.

Discovered by our neighbors: Many people come here who are from our own neighborhood. The word is getting around. This raises another question for the group. What is the sangha? We could argue that it is members. But are the edges of a Buddhist sangha so clearly defined? Might our sphere encompass Block Watch support, Disaster Preparedness, and acting as a community gathering place? In our former neighborhood, we had a positive affect on crime reduction, just by being there. Here on Beacon Hill, our garden path is already enjoyed by many as a scenic public-access short cut. They bring their children to play at the fountain beside bathing hummingbirds and robins. Providing a peaceful and beautiful respite for all sentient beings, Buddhist or not, human or beast, is service (ananyayogena - unalloyed devotional service) at its best. What more might we offer our neighbors in the spirit of our oneness?

This sums up the efforts, thus far, of your fledgling Sangha Relations Working Group. We hope some of our questions piqued your interest enough that you have something to say about them. If so, please contact Edwin, Dee, or Sally with your comments, suggestions, and questions. Many heads are better than one, and produce lively dialog that leads us all to new ground and a healthier, happier sangha community. Also, if you know of a sangha member who is facing a challenge or might just need company, please let us know.

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Taking Flight
by Sally Zenka Metcalf

Some time ago, I came across a dragonfly emerging from its long-lived phase as a nymph. Its radically new body—wings hanging limp as damp paper—had split free of the crust of the old. Then began an arduous process of filling the wings with blood. The metamorph was utterly vulnerable throughout. Slowly, diaphanous wings unfurled and became taught, until at last the dragonfly took flight.

Since moving into the Residential Program, I’ve been attending Chobo-Ji’s Tuesday night Introductory classes, including a couple of our very successful four-week series. These evenings have placed my unwitting fingers directly on the pulse of both the wider community’s sincere desire for meditation practice and upon Chobo-Ji’s sangha growth. Attending sesshins recently has magnified this pulse for me and brought up concern and a deep longing that inspired this article. In the past, sesshins were always strongly supported by a core group of senior practitioners who attended the full week. Lately, these experienced members have not been present as much.

Not the least of these core practitioners is Genko Ni-Osho. Her example, her unfailing knowledge of the forms of practice, her deep experience with the psychophysical challenges sesshin attendees face and often succumb to, and her wise and
We have a long and powerful tradition of learning by watching and following along. To do that, our new people need someone to watch.

How I wish for the presence of Chobo-Ji’s long-time senior students to mix and meld with these wonderful newcomers! If you are such a member, might you find time to attend again and make room in your schedules for as much of sesshin as possible?

In the June mini-sesshin, Osho gave a thought-provoking teisho: (http://genjo.libsyn.com/requiting-beneficence). It addressed the Rinzairoku chapter in which Rinzai, having been traveling after graduating from training with his teacher Obaku, visits Obaku to pay his respects. He ends up slighting Zen Master Obaku and being chased away. Walking for some miles, he ponders the exchange with his teacher and returns to practice with him for the rest of summer session and perhaps more. When he departs, Obaku gives him a final gift, the teisho seat passed to him by Hyakuju as a sign of his maturation as a teacher.

Exhausting. Infuriating! Alienating?

In discussions, these new folks tell us they find our sangha and Genjo Osho kind and welcoming and safe. Many have met with wounding cruelty in other sanghas. They come to us with long experience, yet humbly enter beginners mind on Chobo-Ji’s threshold. They work on this property with loving dedication and ardently practice.

Standing beside them at our door are all the earnest new people from the Seattle community and even from our own neighborhood who are wondering how, and whether, to trust, and to practice with us.
Buildings and Grounds Report

The Building and Grounds task force met on 7/28. Following is the latest and greatest:

- We recommend convening an ad-hoc working group to undertake a DIY reserve study. Emily HoU Ross is willing to spearhead this effort, and will need several willing participants for this project.

- We think we can work within the budget that John Daikan Green guesstimated based on our first quarter expenditures. This amount will not include special projects. We will bring special projects that total amounts $2000 or more to the board for approval as possible separate line items in the budget.

- Larry Palmer and company have just a few little projects left to finish, and Genjo is confident that these will be completed.

- The back garden drip system is 95% complete, and is automated and functioning properly. Emily needs to get some parts in order to finish. The front garden beds will be on a separate automated drip system, scheduled for installation next season. We have not yet received a bill from Ross & Schwartz.

- We endorse the estimate for a combined improvement project which will add new shelving to the rakusu rack, a literature rack, an outdoor bulletin board, and a new shoe rack. We asked for board approval for this expenditure.

- Tom Shodo DeGroot and Alex Walker have been working on logos. Tom will have several designs to show to the board.

- We are in the beginning phases of conceiving of and constructing a sign to be located on the corner of Horton and Lafayette. We are hoping the project will be completed by year’s end. Genjo is working with Michael Daizan Lyons on getting a cost estimate for this project.

- We discussed the possibility of an apartment being reserved for guests during sesshin, and when the apartment is vacant, we can list it on Airbnb as a short-term rental. We will need to do a cost-benefit analysis for this scheme.

Program and Practice

The Program and Practice Group welcomed new member Sally Zenka Metcalf. We have been making adjustments in the weekly sesshin schedule to acknowledge the need for connection among sesshin participants and at the same time encourage deeper silence.

In addition, we are experimenting with a less physically demanding three-day sesshin schedule. The first one scheduled for April did not have enough commitments to proceed, but the August one will be happening. Anyone who plans to attend, please feel free to comment on your experience.

Tom Shodo DeGroot spoke to the sangha in July about his long involvement with Zen, and Mary Choko Cabaniss-Ballard will speak in the autumn.

Additional events planned include a Gestalt therapy workshop in September, a sangha potluck after the mini-sesshin October 6, and hosting the Northwest Dharma Association teachers meeting October 5. As always, we encourage members to let us know how these events and changes are working for you.

Study Book Selection

by Genko Blackman Ni-Osho

This fall we will be reading Norman Fischer’s recent book Training in Compassion: Zen Teachings on the Practice of Lojong. It is available in paperback and eBook editions.

The Lojong is a set of 59 “slogans,” or aphorisms, summarizing instructions for practices to develop and actualize bodhicitta, the awakened compassionate mind. A 10th century Indian master, named Atisha first put forth the teaching, which was reframed in the 12th century in Tibet by Geshe Chekawa Yeshe Dorje as The Root Text of the Seven Points of Training the Mind. For those with a historical bent, this is roughly the same time that Zen was transmitted from China to Japan.

A number of translations and commentaries of the Root Text have been published over the years. Fischer bases his work on Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche’s translation, and his commentary provides a vivid Zen spin on these important teachings.

Rather than meeting several times to discuss the book as we have done in the past, this time we will try to read on our own and have one discussion somewhat later in the intensive (Nov. 16th, 9:00AM). Following are some study questions to consider during your reading.

1. Both karma and the suffering of samsara are heavily emphasized in the first point, Training in the Preliminaries. How do you see these from a Zen perspective? Do you feel that Fischer captures the essence of your understanding?

2. The instructions under the second point, Train in Empathy and Compassion, make it clear that the practitioner must consider and train in bodhicitta from both the relative and the absolute perspective. To do otherwise risks either burnout (if we focus on the relative perspective), and lack of skill (if we focus on the absolute perspective).
One of the primary practices central to the Lojong is Tonglen, or Sending and Receiving. Do you see a role for this practice in Zen training? If so, how would you incorporate it?

4. The third point, Transform Bad Circumstances into the Path, contains a number of slogans as a way to approach this. How do we keep this practice from becoming Pollyanna-ish? Which of these slogans resonates the most with you and why?

5. The fourth point is Make Practice Your Whole Life, including practicing for our death. The slogans related to this point make it clear we should not just wait for our meditation practice to gradually change us, but must proactively work on our unskillful habits. One way to do this is through reproach. Does this make sense to you from a Zen perspective?

6. The fifth point, Assess and Extend, follows from the fourth. The most important instruction in it is the first slogan, There is Only One Point, that is, to let go of self. Jamgon Kongtrul in his commentary says, “If your efforts in dharma do not counteract ego-clinging, your practice is meaningless.” (Jamgon Kongtrul, The Great Path of Awakening, Shambhala edition, p. 29) Do you agree?

7. The sixth and seventh points list a great number of slogans designed to help us improve our workings with other people and the environment we live in. Which two under each point resonate the most with you? How do you see them helping you in your daily life?

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Case

Carrying a letter from Obaku, the Master went to Isan. At that time, Kyozan was the shika. Upon receiving Obaku’s letter, he said, “This is Master Obaku’s. “Where is the messenger’s?” The Master slapped Kyozan. Kyozan grabbed his hand and said, “Brother, since you know, let’s stop it.” They then went together to see Isan. Isan asked, “How many monks practice under brother Obaku?” “Seven hundred,” replied the Master. “Who is their leader?” asked Isan. “He has just delivered a letter to you,” replied the Master. The Master then asked Isan, “Osho, how many monks practice under your guidance in this monastery?” “Fifteen hundred monks,” replied Isan. “Too many!” said the Master. “Brother Obaku also has no small number,” said Isan.

The Master took his leave of Isan. Kyozan saw him off. He said, “Later, you go to the North. There will be a good place for you to live.” “Is that really so?” asked the Master. “Anyway, just go! There will be a man who will help you, brother. He has a head but no tail; a beginning, but no end,” replied Kyozan. Later, when the Master went to Chin State, Fuke was already there. When the Master began teaching, Fuke truly supported his activity. But the Master had not been there for long, when Fuke cast off body and all.

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This section of the Rinzaireku is full of cross-examinations, but they take place when Rinzai was younger, while still training under Obaku. We’ve heard of Isan and Kyozan, through the koans associated with them. They are neighbors of Obaku’s temple. Obaku sends them a letter to be delivered by his head monk, Rinzai. Kyozan at that time was Isan’s head monk. Kyozan receives Obaku’s letter, and says, “Well, this is your master’s. Where is the messenger’s?” In other words, challenging Rinzai by asking him, “what did you bring?” Rinzai immediately recognized this challenge and was not at all puzzled by Kyozan’s question. He rose to the challenge immediately. Rinzai had two favored responses to such a challenge, a slap or a shout (Katsu!). My sense is that when Rinzai was younger he was more partial to a slap, and later favored the shout. In this case, he raises his hand to slap Kyozan. Kyozan grabbed his hand and said, “Brother, since you know this much, let’s stop.” In other words, since you understand that you’ve been challenged and demonstrated that you know how to respond, enough! We don’t need to carry the conversation further. Let’s go on.

These kinds of examinations are really quite quick; there’s not a lot to them. There’s not a lot to Zen. At its core, Zen is so simple! Together Rinzai and Kyozan go on to see Isan, and Isan starts what seems like a casual conversation with Rinzai. But, of course, this is a Zen Master talking with a Head Monk; no doubt the “casual conversation” is the beginning foray of a Dharma battle. Isan asks, “How many monks practice under Obaku?” “Too many,” is a totally relative question. From the Absolute perspective, there is only One and that One is None. That’s how simple Zen is! Coming from the Real, there’s no such thing as “many”, “too much” or “too little,” because from the absolute perspective, there is only One, and the One has no form, let alone a name. This sums up Zen’s perception of reality nicely.

Isan is genuinely asking the relative question, “How many monks train with Obaku?” and he wants to see if Rinzai catches the strongly relative word “many.” How will Rinzai bounce with this interrogatory? He responds straight up by saying, “700,” which is of course a totally relative answer. That’s okay; we are welcome to respond to a relative question with a relative answer. There is nothing wrong with acknowledging the apparent wondrous diversity of THIS, but we must also be aware of and acknowledge the absolute view, so in a Dharma dialogue we don’t stay in the relative long. As followers of the Way, if we don’t acknowledge the absolute view by the second question in a Dharma dialogue, there’s something amiss, and if we take until the third pass, that’s barely acceptable.

Now Isan asks the next question, also a relative question, “Who is their leader?” If Rinzai stayed in the strictly relative way of...
responding he could say, “Obaku is our
teacher.” or “I’m Obaku’s head monk.” A
relative question is being asked, but as this
is the second relative question, Rinzai
knows well he must at least hint at the
absolute in his response. Instead of giving a
shout (Katsu!), to this question Rinzai says,
“He has just delivered a letter to you.” How
does this response hint at the absolute?

The fundamental leader of our temple is
the Historical Buddha. The other principal
icon in our temple is the Bodhisattva of
Compassion, Kannon. So, in this hall, these
two icons of the Buddha and Kannon
represent the absolute. But from the Rinzai
Zen perspective, the real leader or master is
called “the true person beyond rank or
post,” that one beyond identification with
ego or personality. I sometimes refer to this
depth of being as “the sage beyond our
own years who has our voice” and, borrowing
from Rinzai, “This sage, or true person,
goes in and out of our face all the time.” In
other words, sometimes you see it,
sometimes you don’t. It’s always here, but
often we don’t recognize it. The true person
beyond rank or ego identity is certainly
beyond any definition, label or
identification with Buddhahood or
Bodhisattvahood. The sage beyond our
years is always here, but not always heard,
and when heard, not always listened to. All
too often, without significant training,
dedication and investigation, an attachment
to ego identity leads the way. In fact, ego
identity is usually up front, right? Once in
a while, when we are truly led or motivated
by our deepest heart, we fully respond to
circumstances or conditions completely
appropriately and naturally without any
hesitation. When we respond to the world
from this depth, our actions can have a
profoundly helpful impact.

So who is their leader? At the most relative
level, Rinzai is the lead monk. At a little
deeper level, Obaku is the abbot. Digging a
little deeper, fundamentally every Zen
Buddhist temple is led by the inspiration
and example of Buddha and the Bodhisattva
Kannon. Dig deeper yet and you will
discover that “true person,” who has no
beginning, no end, no dependence on form
but is not separate from form, is the real
leader. Rinzai says, “He just delivered the
letter to you.” Rinzai doesn’t say, “I
delivered the letter.” The letter was just
delivered to you by the leader, as in, the
one who is beyond rank, post and any sort of
name — not Rinzai, Obaku, Buddha,
Kannon, not even “sage beyond your
years”, not even the “true person” beyond
rank or post, not even “That One Shining
Alone”…no name whatsoever! And Rinzai
offers, “No name whatsoever delivered the
letter to you right now.” Wow, that’s good!

Then Rinzai continues the conversation
without skipping a beat. He’s just made this
profound statement: “The one of no name
just delivered the letter to you” and adds,
“and by the way, how many monks practice
under your guidance at your monastery?”
He rolls with the relative conversation, fully
demonstrating there’s nothing wrong with
the relative! This is so ingenious and sharp!
Now it’s Isan’s turn. The tables have been
turned on him. The conversation is still in
play because, rather than giving a shout,
which would have brought the dialogue to a
natural conclusion, Rinzai dropped the ball
back in Isan’s lap. Isan, too, gets one
relative answer free, and responds, “1500
monks.” He passes the ball back to Rinzai.
Rinzai shoots back with something, that in
Zen circles, is totally funny, and says, “Too
many!” Of course, even from only the
relative perspective, everyone can recognize
the humor of this comeback, but from the
absolute, it’s impossible to have too little or
too much. It’s all one fabric! How can the
universe be too much or too little? It’s all
perfectly whole and indivisible. In fact, how
can there be “many” at all? Isan totally
realizes from the preceding conversation
that Rinzai is at once making both a relative
and absolute joke. Now it is Isan’s turn to
respond with an answer that hints at more
than the relative, and it must be as sneaky
and subtle as Rinzai’s. Isan at this point
certainly could have concluded the
conversation with a shout, but instead says,
“Brother Obaku has no small number.” I’m
going to leave that one open to your
investigation. How might this statement of
Isan’s be more than just a relative response?
On the relative level he is certainly
acknowledging. “Yes, 700 is no small
number.”

Well, that concludes the case, but upon
Rinzai’s departure, Kyozan makes an
addendum. As Rinzai is leaving, Kyozan
seems him off and says, “Later, you’re going
to end up in the north.” Rinzai says,
“Really, is that so?” Kyosan says, “Just
go…believe me, you’re going to end up
in the north and you’re going to find someone
there to help you, a Dharma brother.” And
he probably named the town where Rinzai
should go, implying, “You should really
check him out. This guy has a head but no
tail, a beginning and no end.” Later Rinzai
did go north and checked out the town that
Kyozan recommended and found Fuke, who
we’ve heard about in the earlier chapters of
the Rinzairesu, and we know he becomes
Rinzai’s Dharma foil or holy fool. This little
postscript doesn’t in my mind add much,
but explains how Rinzai first heard of Fuke.

Zen is so simple. It’s all one fabric. It’s
indivisible. It has no form, let alone a name.
It’s incomparably profound and minutely
subtle. It’s prior to heaven and earth. It’s
prior to the Big Bang. It gives rise to multi-
universes. And when it speaks with the
voice of the Dharma, it has no rank, no
position, no attachment to personal identity.
It’s like a sage beyond your years who has
your voice and goes in and out of your face
all the time, but we don’t always feel it.
When our actions arise from this deep inner
heart/mind (kokoro) we foster harmony and
compassion in the world. That’s a pretty
good summary of Rinzai Zen.

Torei Zenji’s Preface to the Bodhisattva
Vows expands on this view; let’s open our
Sutra book to page 21. I believe that Torei
wrote this when he was about thirty-five.
He was a principal disciple of Hakuin Zenji,
who revitalized Rinzai Zen in 18th century
Japan. Together Hakuin and Torei founded
Rutaku-Ji where Robert Aiken Roshi, Genki
Roshi, Eido Roshi, Sochu Roshi and Soen
Roshi trained. Soen was the retired Abbot
and Sochu was the Abbot when I briefly
trained there in 1981 & 1982. In the
Founder’s Hall of Rutaku-Ji, Torei and
Hakuin Roshi’s life-size effigies are there,
each wearing a “death mask” and dressed in
full vestments. In the middle of the night
when monks were doing Yaza (individual
after hours sitting), at least one or two of
us would take our cushions to where these
two guys were sitting and we would sit with
them. At such times, I could feel their
presence transcending time and space. Torei
expands on what we have just been talking
about when he says, “…the real form of
the universe, all is the never failing
manifestation of the mysterious truth of
Tathagata. In any event, in any moment, and
in any place, none can be other than the
marvelous revelation of its glorious light.”
He’s saying exactly what the historical
Buddha said in Atta Dipa. It’s all light. It’s
all shining.
We’re not talking about visible light. I don’t know what kind of light to say, “it” is, except to say this is the best metaphor we can come up with; “it” is all light, all shining. Another metaphor I like is “it” is all a good vibration. On the sixth day of this sesshin, I’m hopeful that everyone is having sufficient samadhi that they feel the truth of “It’s all a good vibration” or “it’s all light” and “it’s all shining.” Even the mechanical sound of the plane overhead or the dumpster being picked up, the dog barking, or certainly the rain falling, the smell of the incense, the smell of the roses, everything, including your own image when looking in the mirror, is shining.

Who cannot be respectful of all senseless things, not to speak of a human being? Therefore, even if someone names us as a sworn enemy and persecutes us, we should be warm and compassionate towards them. Their very abuse conveys the Buddha’s boundless loving-kindness for us.” Usually, we probably think, “Well, that’s a bummer. I don’t want that kind of loving compassion; you can keep it Buddha! And I’m not sure I’m going to love my enemies either.” But doesn’t every great religion get around to saying that you must love your enemies the way you want to be loved yourself? Of course, they all use different words, saying it in a slightly different ways. But the Golden Rule is at the heart of all great religions: “Love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is Torei’s way of saying it. He also implies that the things we find most difficult and trying are the very things that hone or sculpt us into mature followers of the Way. We are followers of the Way when we sit here and explore the nature of what we are. We are followers of the Way when we see the “light.” But we’re really followers of the Way in a deep sense when we make use of difficult circumstances and become stronger, more compassionate, human beings by facing difficulties straight on. We must learn to see difficulties as “…compassionate devices to liberate us entirely from our own egoistic delusions and attachments we have built up from the beginning-less past.”

Often we get stuck on, “This was done to me and therefore, I’m upset because this person offended me or took something from me or persecuted me.” Exactly who is offended? Who’s put out of whack? I get out of whack as easily as the next person, especially when someone challenges what I call “my integrity.” I hate to be called a liar, for example. I hate it because I try really hard to be truthful. But I ask myself, who’s taking offense? And I conclude it’s my ego that is taking offense. Not the sage beyond one’s years; this deep voice takes no offense. The true person who goes in and out of our face all the time…takes no offense. The true person has no ego to begin with, and what we call ego is no more than a little strand of dust found on a leaf of a great tree. From the tree’s perspective, there is no offense taken by a strand of dust on a leaf. So when I feel offended, put out or wronged, I work to take a deep breath and ask, “Who is offended?” If I can get this far I always conclude, “it’s the small egocentric self that feels offended or abused.” If I’m then able to take a second deep breath and encounter my deepest self (which is really no self), no offense is possible. Can we learn to operate from this depth more often? Yes, of course we can, with a lot of work! Just because no offense is taken doesn’t mean that no action is taken, but if action is taken it will have the feeling of “no action” (buji) because this kind of action leaves no ego trace and promotes harmony through responses that arise from a caring heart/mind.

To review, Zen is really, really simple: it’s all one fabric. It’s indivisible. It has no form, much less a name. It gives rise to multi-universes. We are it. It’s all shining. It’s all vibrating. Great! And…we all get stuck in our ego identity from time to time! When we are stuck in our egoistic perspective, we divide self from other, differentiate friend from foe. Then we go to war, on a personal, ethnic or national level to “defend” our offended ego. Through our greed to have more, we rape the world. To be a deep Follower of the Way, we must improve our ability to transcend our survival instincts, which tend to keep us stuck in ego identity. Investigating what is, seeing the light AND transcending our attachment to ego identity is what Zen is all about. It’s not just about investigating, “What is this?” and feeling the Good Vibration! It is also about letting go of our attachment to who is worried, who is offended and who is feeling put out. Zen is about learning how to let go of attachment to our surface ego identity. At the very least, we want our egoistic perspective to move into the background, which allows the voice of the sage beyond our years to come to the foreground.

We use icons of the Buddha and Kannon to represent who we want to be leading the show. But the deeper truth is we must learn to allow our deep nature, that aspect that does not take offense, is not put out, does not worry, and has nothing to worry about, to run this life. Our deep nature is fully capable of making use of conditions that feel troubling as a compassionate device to liberate us entirely from our own egoistic delusions and attachments. This is Zen practice; this is our practice. Investigating what is, and the seeing the “light” are not at all useless, but incomplete by themselves. If we use our practice to dislodge ego identity as the principal governance of our life, then, “In each moment’s flash of our thought there will grow a lotus flower.” A “moment’s flash of our thought” is known as a Nen. In other words, each non-ego Nen
will assist with a new flowering of compassion in this world. These flowers of manifest compassion are popping out all the time, but when we transcend worry and offense, we become a genuine peace force in the world. When we can show a loving, strong, unyielding response in the face of hate and fear, we will see flowers of Buddhas pop out right in front of us. It’s so transformative! It melts people’s hearts! To become transformative catalysts in the world, all we need do is transcend our attachment to a separated selfhood and realize, it’s all vibrating, it’s all shining, this is and has always been the Pure Land.

"In every moment, may we extend this mind over the whole universe…” This mind needs no extending over the whole universe. This mind is already over the whole universe, and seamless with every aspect, but Torei Zenji is calling us to participate, “so that we and all beings together will attain maturity in the Buddha’s way.” When there is maturity in the Buddha’s way, we have no need to talk about the light, or seeing the light, or Buddha. With maturity we stop talking about compassion and loving kindness, we are compassion and loving kindness, and indeed flowers of “Buddhahood” appear everywhere. Our practice is to foster maturity, by becoming more skillful at letting go of our attachment to ego identity. It is the hardest work we can do. It is the most important work we can do and, without it, we are not yet practicing Zen.

With gassho,
Genjo

Closing Incense Poem
Summer Sesshin, 2013

Investigating Heart/Mind,

Who sees Dai Bai mountain?

Flowers bloom in the summer rain.

A flash of lightning illuminates the dream.

New Posts
Beginning Sept. 1st

John Daikan Green:
Shika (Host - Manager)

Scott Ishin Stolnack:
Dai-Tenzo (Chef cook for Sesshins)

Sally Zenka Metcalf:
Jikijitsu (Timekeeper)

Mike Daiun Urban:
Densu (Chant Leader)

Rick Muenk Proctor:
Densu Assistant

Edwin Beatty:
Jisha (Serves tea and takes care of zendo)

Lynn Hernandez:
Jisha Assistant

Tom Shodo DeGroot:
Inji (Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens:
Fusu (Accountant)

Tobin Fudo Youngs &
Steve Ganko Hanson &
Sally Zenka Metcalf &
Rick Muenk Proctor:
Introductory Zazen

Fall Intensive

Chobo-Ji’s Fall Intensive will start September 8th with mini-sesshin, and conclude on December 8th. The purpose of the intensive is to give students the maximum opportunity to release entanglements by giving one’s self to the Dharma.

To participate one must commit to:

1) ZAZEN: Five hours of zazen per week, most, if not all, mini-sesshins, and attend two weeklong sesshins full-time (or nearly full-time) during the intensive. This is the most important ingredient of the intensive.

2) Do a minimum of five hours of samu (working meditation - gardening or cleaning) per week. Most of these hours can be in your own home, garden or community, but at least one should be at the temple.

3) Read Training in Compassion: Zen Teachings on the Practice of Lojong. Also, attend the one scheduled session of the Book Study Group on Nov. 16th, 9-11AM.

4) Come to Dokusan at least once a week, or if one of us is out of town, try and schedule a Skype video call with Genjo Osho.

Note from Brian

Brian Erbach who is Leslie Genei Gannon’s son wrote Chobo-Ji about how his mother is doing since Genki Roshi’s (her husband and our founding Abbot) bodily departure. Brian was very instrumental in the care of Roshi in his last few weeks, and has been of invaluable support to his mother during this difficult time. He writes:

I was so gratified to get the news last month through Genko, that... the board at Chobo-Ji had decided to provide additional support for my mother, Leslie. Please extend my gratitude, as well as my mother’s, to all at the temple for this kindness. Genki’s extended illness, and his passing have been emotionally exhausting for my mother. Thankfully she is gradually regaining her strength, but it is the quiet passing of time she requires most, and the generosity of Chobo-Ji is helping provide her with the opportunity to heal. I was also very pleased to attend the ceremony for Genki Roshi in April. It was touching to hear the personal remembrances of Genki and to see how he had affected so many lives.
3-Day Odayaka Sesshin

AUGUST 23-25

FRI
7AM-8PM
SAT
7AM-8PM
SUN
7AM-4PM

"Odayaka" means peaceful and this Sesshin is a little less arduous with more dialogue than our weeklong Sesshins. It is especially suited for Dharma Dragons (practitioners over 60) and others looking for a more spacious daily schedule.

A vegetarian breakfast, lunch and dinner will be served each day with zazen, kinhin (walking meditation) dokusan (private interviews with the Abbot), teisho (dharma talk), chanting, qigong, dialogue and personal time for reflection and integration.

Cost is $100. To hold a spot please send a deposit of at least $25 by Aug. 11th. For questions email zen@choboji.org.

Bearing Witness Retreat at Auschwitz/Birkenau

Bernie Glassman and the Zen Peacemakers are returning for the 18th year to the old site of the concentration camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Oświęcim, Poland, for a Bearing Witness Retreat, Nov. 4-8, 2013.

This retreat is multi-faith and multinational in character, with a strong focus on the Zen Peacemakers’ Three Tenets: Not-Knowing, Bearing Witness, and Loving Action.

Auschwitz, the Place, is the main Teacher for this retreat. Experienced Spirit Holders meet, with Bernie Glassman, each day to reflect on the retreat flow, schedule, events and make appropriate modifications if necessary. For more information see: www.zenpeacemakers.org

Spiritually Based Gestalt Workshop - Sept. 14 & 15
With Leonard Shaw M.S.W, ACSW at Chobo-Ji
9:30AM to 5:00PM both days

Participants will learn the blending of Eastern and Western psychology, to empower and educate themselves and others. The workshop is almost entirely experiential, no prerequisites are required. There will be didactic exercises involving art therapy and gestalt therapy practices.

You will also learn:

1. How to transform somatic or medical issues into powerful consultants.
2. How to deeply heal traumatic experiences.
3. How to breakthrough intransigent difficulties with someone, when each person thinks the other is avoiding a serious problem.
4. Three powerful communication tools for discussing loaded subjects.

Fee: $50 - $150 (sliding scale - 80% goes to temple)

For more information and registration contact Leonard at 206-322-5785 or visit www.loveandforgiveness.com
(CEU’s available for therapists on request)

Autumn Sesshin - Sept. 20th to Sept. 27th

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a deposit by Sept. 8th, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Make your deposit check, $50 or more, to Chobo-Ji and leave it the bowl by the zendo entrance or mail it to...

Attention: Carolyn Stevens
Chobo-Ji
1733 S. Horton St. #7
Seattle, WA 98144

The cost of sesshin is $250 (less dues). Sesshin will start Friday evening, 9/20, 5:30PM with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin from Saturday to the following Friday starts at 5AM. Structured program ends each evening at 10PM. Sesshin ends 11AM, the morning of Friday, 9/27. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town, please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel.
Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen, M-F, 5:30 AM; Sat. 6:30 AM; M & W, 7:30 PM, Sun. 6:30 PM
Dharma Talks, Sundays: 8/18, 9/1, 9/29, 10/14, 10/28, 11/3, 11/17, 12/15, 12/23 - 7:30 PM

Ellensburg mini-sesshin with Genko Ni-Osho ... Aug. 17<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 3pm
Three Day Odayaka Sesshin ... Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup> - 25<sup>th</sup>

(Odayaka Sesshin is especially for new comers, Silver Dragons or anyone wanting a more relaxed pace)

Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and teisho ... Sept. 8<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:30am
Ellensburg mini-sesshin with Genko Ni-Osho ... Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 3pm
Spiritually Based Gestalt Workshop ... Sept. 14<sup>th</sup> & 15<sup>th</sup>, 9:30am - 5pm
Autumn Sesshin ... Sept. 20<sup>th</sup> - Sept. 27<sup>th</sup>
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and teisho ... Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:30am
Second Anniversary Celebration, potluck and forum ... Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, Noon - 3pm
Ellensburg mini-sesshin with Genko Ni-Osho ... Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 3pm
Buddhist Global Relief - Walk to Feed the Hungry ... Oct. 12<sup>th</sup>, 9am, Volunteer Park
Introduction to Zen Series ... Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup>, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup>, 7:30-8:15pm
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and teisho ... Oct. 20<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:30am
Mini-Sesshin with meal, Dokusan and teisho ... Nov. 10<sup>th</sup>, 5am - 11:30am
Book Study Group ... Nov. 16<sup>th</sup>, 9am - 11am
Rohatsu Sesshin ... Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> - Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>