

Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

It has been a wonderfully rich winter t has been a wonderful, season for our Sangha. It began with a well-attended and powerful Rohatsu Sesshin, Dec. 3-11, with 22 participants. Included in this edition of Plum Mountain News you will find a transcription of my Teisho from the seventh day of sesshin and my Rohatsu closing incense poem. Rev. Gendo Testa served as our Shika (Host/Manager) and stayed on top of allocating the daily samu (work meditation) tasks. The Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook) for this sesshin was Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares. Our meals were simple, timely and delicious. Our Jikijitsu (Time Keeper) this sesshin was Rev. Sendo Howells; she has served in this post before, and kept us on track. Zen resident Charles Porter served as our lead Jisha (Tea Server) and was ably assisted by Ken Daien Iwata. Elijah Seigan Zupancic was my Inji (abbot assistant) and managed the Dokusan (formal Dharma interview). Altogether, the Sangha worked well together for one of the strongest Rohatsus in my memory.

Just Chris before Christmas. Seattle had an ice storm that shut down the city for a few days. I have lived in this town since 1976 and I have never seen it this bad. The city shutdown and we all had an unexpected holiday as we stayed safely inside. We had a fabulous New Year's Day celebration with chanting, ringing the kansho bell and a great pot-luck. On January 7, we had two events, a Sangha samu (work) party to clean up our

neighborhood streets, and the Book Launch Party for my new book *Intimate Infinite*.



C arolyn and I flew off to Frankfurt January 21, and returned February 4. During this time in Germany, I met with Dharma friends, gave a lecture on how we find peace in the midst of personal and global trauma, and led a fully attended (23 participants) five-day

Sangha Hike to Ebey's Landing on Whidbey Island.

Still coming, as of this writing, is our Winter Odayaka, Feb. 24-26, and then we will move forward to spring in Seattle. Included in this issue you will find a report

from our Board President a n n o u n c i n g o u r u p c o m i n g A n n u a l Meeting, a splendid and funny article concerning our recent Rohats u S e s s h i n, and announcements for our Spring Intensive and Spring Sesshin. Please enjoy these and other offerings in the months to come.



Sesshin. Carolyn and I then took a train to Berlin and spent five days exploring the city and its many wonderful museums. On February 18, we had a With gassho,





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Board President Report Dr. Eddie Daichi Salazar



s the weather gradually begins its A march into Spring now, our beautiful garden emerges from slumber. We have our Winter Odayaka 3-day sesshin and Spring Sesshin approaching, each offering opportunity to cultivate our garden, and attend to the needs of our souls.

7 e have had busy Autumn and Winter seasons. Beginning in October, through our intro evenings and Intro Series, we have been welcoming quite a few new folks into our sangha. Our book group enjoyed plunging into Zenju Earthly Manuel's The Shamanic Bones of Zen. We capped off our Autumn with Rohatsu sesshin. Winter season began in earnest with



our neighborhood trash pick-up samu. Genjo launched his second book. Toya provided for ample frivolity! We hosted our latest guest teacher talk by Taijo Imanaka from Koyasan temple. And throughout the fall-winter period, we have continued with our popular monthly sangha hikes, ably led by Felix Wazan Pekar!

T ooking into Spring, we have our upcoming Sangha Annual Meeting on April 9, Sunday, following Zazenkai. We begin with potluck and a business meeting to elect the Board members for the next year. (This election requires a quorum, so do your best to be there or send your proxy vote!) The Board has decided to offer a social time for this annual gathering, sharing the movie, Enlightenment



Guaranteed. The Board wholeheartedly encourage you to join us for this quite fun movie.

The Spring Intro Series begins in April **1** (announcement in this issue). The Building and Grounds committee continues to address all facility needs and is ushering the Torii gate project to a completion. Our Program and Practice committee oversees our overall sangha calendar and programming, and financially the sangha is solid.

ur sangha continues prosperous and strong!

Dispatches From the Swamp Murphy Zenun Davis

T he theme of my Rohatsu this year happened to be "Mind is Buddha" and "Ordinary Mind is Tao" and to the extent I touched the truth of these teachings it was "Mind is Blown." In the best possible way.

raced with this little bit of clarity, I was J able to review my practice in the ten or

so years since I experienced another mindblowing kensho of a much more dramatic kind. I call that one Master of the Universe Mind. It lasted all week. Genjo warned me then not to get attached but it was too hard not to. I failed and settled for pretend acceptance as the experience faded. I've been chasing the high ever since - at least until this year's Rohatsu.

can't even begin to describe my Lexperience of "ordinary mind" even though I was shaken to my roots. Well, parts of my roots were shaken. Who knows how deep the roots go, right? What's so wonderfully odd to me is that I don't feel the need to chase it, recreate it, cage it nothing. What's even more wonderfully odd is that I didn't see a difference between my ordinary mind and the Master of the Universe Mind of ten years ago even though I can also accurately say the two experiences were quite different. [I'm so grateful that my years of Zen practice have made me conversational in oxymoron, otherwise this stuff would be impossible to talk about at all.]

It all started on the notoriously swampy Day 2, which has long been mapped as a difficult day for most of us as the twirly swirly surface mind of daily life gets more twirly and ... before it settles. But this time as the dog and pony show of my mind's greatest hits paraded in front of me I was....bored.

hat got my attention. Bored? These **I** were my most treasured fantasies and ancient traumas and they could always be counted on to distract and dismay! How curious. My mind upped the game and Day 2 became Day 3. I fought sleep and frequently lost. Between naps the bamboo floor became a living, breathing, sparkling bamboo forest again [OK, that was cool]. I asked in dokusan: What if THIS is it? This ridiculous ordinary mundane bullshit mind? If I sat for another millennia, this? Laughter.



M ore sleep, more travel in the bamboo forest [you guys really gotta SEE this]. At last the dog and pony got tired; their hearts weren't really in their work anymore. I caught them more than once lounging in the shade of a bodhi tree playing gin rummy, wondering if I'd come join them.

The dawning of a glimmer of understanding of ordinary mind really really occurred during what I'd normally call a low spot. Day 7, I believe. That's right, Day 2 never actually ended. By that time though, I'd realized that I was onto something amazing and my exhaustion didn't bother me even though I felt like I'd been run over twice by an 18-wheeler. But really, I was fine and the miracle was that I knew it.



The lingering effects of Rohatsu are still....lingering, which is nice. However, the core moral of this story for me is "don't cling." Simple, not easy. I already know that mastering the skill and art of not-clinging will require the effort of all my bones and pores.

W ish me luck.



Hekiganroku - Case 17 Sitting Long and Getting Tired Genjo's 7th Day Rohatsu Teisho

Engo's Introduction: Cutting through nails and breaking steel, for the first time one can be called master of the first principle. If you keep away from arrows and evade swords, you will be a failure in Zen. As for the subtle point where no probe can be inserted, that may be set aside for a while; but when the foaming waves wash the sky, what will you do with yourself then? See the following:

Main Subject: A monk asked Kyorin, "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the West?" Kyorin said, "Sitting long and getting tired."

Setcho's Verse:

One, two, and tens of hundreds of thousands,

Take off the muzzle and set down the load.

If you turn left and right, following another's lead,

I would strike you as Shiko struck Ryutetsuma.

don't know about you, but I only got about four hours of sleep last night. I know that Taiza, who is Zooming with us from Waldron Island, had a tree fall on his house last night, so he too got less sleep. We've been pressing ourselves, cutting though nails and breaking steel, for some time now, and indeed, we've been sitting long and getting tired. Sometimes the most ordinary is so profound, whether it's the sound of the wind chime, the rain falling, or just the presence of the maple tree in the garden. During a sesshin we may find that working up a sweat digging holes for a temple gate, sweeping the floors, chopping vegetables, tasting tea or sitting on the cushion long and getting tired can bring us to a place where we are more fully aware of our own center of gravity.

A core question in our tradition, going back to China, is "What is the meaning of Bodhidharma's coming from the west?" It's asked many many times. This question is really asking, "What

is the essence of the Zen school?" Bodhidharma brought what became Zen from India to China around the fifth century. What is the essence of his lineage? Master Kyorin, who was one of the chief disciples of Master Ummon, when asked this question deep in a sesshin, immediately and spontaneously responded, "Sitting long and getting tired." This is the essence of our school. Cutting through nails and breaking steel - the nails and steel of our ego encasement. Together, we have been breaking down our defenses in order to become vulnerable enough to experience something beyond ourselves - in fact becoming open and vulnerable enough to have experienced beyond the beyond, the intimate infinite, or muuuuuuu . . .

X ith psychedelics one can briefly glimpse the intimate infinite very easily. Of course, such an experience is very transitory, and it is easy to doubt one's experience after coming down. However, as these kinds of medicines have done for millennia, such an experience often opens one's eyes to the possibilities beyond our usual narrow egoistic perspective. Here in sesshin, the way we do it is to sit long enough to cut through the nails and steel that hold our narrow egoistic perspective together. Then when we have a shift or a breakthrough, it may be just as transitory, but we are much more likely to be transformed by it, and confident in it. A breakout from our narrow egoistic container that comes by cutting nails, breaking steel, sitting long and getting tired will have a more lasting or maturing effect. During an intense sesshin we come to see our foibles, attachments, delusions, fantasies and all our stuck places. Sitting long and getting tired, cutting through nails and breaking steel eventually leads to a breakthrough where we see beyond all our limitations.

ver the course of this one long day of Rohatsu (eight days of sesshin), we see ourselves much more clearly. We come to see beyond our anger, losses, foibles, and attachments. We drop some roots beneath or beyond all this surface tension and realize our seamless interdependence with each other and all of creation. Another way to put it, is that we have a direct experience of being earthlings.

arly in this sesshin, I think it was the third night, I told you all I was feeling a like a rock that just happened to be

Continued on next page ...

breathing. Nothing else was going on, there were no additional thoughts or feelings that I was conscious of. Yet, I was coming to know myself again as a tiny protrusion of, and was realizing once more that the planet itself is alive. Now after six days of exhausting ourselves, this morning, things are very lucid and fluid. In truth, I'm not sure how lucid I am, but consciousness feels very fluid and seamless with the life of the planet. It's a peaceful feeling.

oreover, I find that I can again easily relate to my early wounds and trauma. I see my compensating fantasies clearly. I'm well aware of my attachments, foibles and weaknesses, and I can distinctly feel the alive silence between and within each note of the symphony of now. The flow of Dharma or sunyata, or whatever you want to call it, is obvious. And these realizations that come from

sitting long and getting tired are the essence of our school. With a caring heart and deep self-awareness we all realize our interdependence more acutely. There is joy and confidence in the seamlessness of all things. For some more so and others less so, we are all sharing similar experiences.

gave someone a koan in the Mu sequence, asking bring me the essence of a Mu mountain, like Mount Rainier, bring it into the dokusan room. And this person brought mountain essence into the room, and I could feel mountain essence exuding from this person's pores. But I couldn't see the mountain. And I said, ask your seven-year-old to show me the mountain – and immediately the mountain appeared. Then I said, now blend it with the energy you came in with, and immediately, the

two were put together, and we both had this joyous smile. Like yeah, yeah, there's the essence mountain, a clear token of the essence of Mount Rainier, sitting in the dokusan room. It flowed so easily and so smoothly, because together we've been cutting through nails, breaking steel, and sitting long and getting tired.

A t this time of year there are hundreds of us all over the world doing Rohatsu. Together we are taking off the muzzle and setting down the load. I'm reading this line of Setcho's Verse as taking off the muzzle of our narrow egoistic perspective that usually keeps us restricted and defended. With the muzzle off we have a clearer view of everything from great sorrow to great joy; we become more aware of our inner beast and our inner Buddha. Taking off the muzzle and setting down the load, sitting on a cushion day after day, night after night, our spirit becomes like foaming waves washing the sky. With intense practice there is a sense of expansion and freedom. The full range of the human condition is all washed together and flowing much more freely. We all started mostly locked inside our narrow prison of ego identity, and now, relative to how we started, I think we are all feeling pretty loosey-goosey.

Sitting long and getting tired is the essence of Zen practice; however, we must remember that the essence of reality is always shining from every



moment and condition. Therefore, being tired is It. Sleeping is It. Being awake is It. The wind blowing or not blowing is It. The tree standing or falling is It.

Setcho's verse concludes with: "If you turn right and left following another's lead, I would strike you as Shiko struck Ryutetsuma." Well, there's a little story that goes with that: "Shiko was a disciple of Nansen and a Dharma brother of Joshu. He was a Master with a sharp Zen spirit. Ryutetsuma was a nun and a disciple of Isan." Shiko and Ryutetsuma were both ordained, one male and one female, both

Dharma Heirs of masters in our tradition. She "was famous for her shrewdness in dharma battle. Many monks had terrifying experiences with her." Ryu was her family name, and Tetsuma – tetsu means iron and ma means mill – "was a nickname implying that she pounded her opponents in dharma battle like an iron millstone grinding wheat into flour." And she also had another nickname, the "Iron Buffalo."

Ryutetsuma appeared unexpectedly before Shiko, who said, "Are you not Ryutetsuma?" And she answered, "You are warm." What does that imply? That could be a whole other koan right there. "Do you turn right or left?" was the next challenge Shiko put to her. "You don't overturn," she said. Shiko was not very impressed with this second response, and before she had finished speaking, she was struck by Shiko. Therefore, a koan could be,

if you were asked this question spontaneously and out of the blue, how would you respond? A couple of things are coming to mind, but I'll let you ponder it.

o back to this koan, "If you turn left and right following another's lead, I would strike you as Shiko struck Ryutetsuma." I've been giving you a long explanation of sitting long and getting tired and the koan is, how would you express sitting long and getting tired, with as few words as possible? On the seventh day of sesshin, what does sitting long and getting tired mean for you? If you don't come up with your own original response, then it would be just ringing the bell, as I don't use my keisaku very much.

don't care how practiced we are, sometimes we flow and sometimes we don't. Sometimes a response comes so easily, it's like a knife through warm butter. Other times, even after we have been flowing greatly, responding becomes as difficult as slicing a knife through iron. And we wonder, what the hell happened? It felt so good to flow so easily. Now responding is like a knife through a bar of iron. How frustrating, aggravating and real!

e're never going to be clear all the time. Even Master Rinzai said, "I have no such clarity." I love this line. He was saying, I have no such clarity

that goes on and on. That would be unreal. Someone else came to dokusan this sesshin and said, "I'm just a muddle of confusion, and a complete mess, and I don't know anything. I feel bad about that, because I've come to lots of sesshins." And I immediately responded, "Ah, but that confusion is pregnant clarity!" Sit with that confusion long enough, and it will give birth to true insight. This too is real.

here's another case, a wonderful case, case 24, "Ryutetsuma the Old Female Buffalo," and we'll come to that in short order. In this case, Ryutetsuma comes to Isan and their exchange reveals host meeting host. Ryutetsuma really shines, Isan shines, and they have a fun time, but that's for another day. Until then, let's go straight on with our practice.

Closing Incense Poem Rohatsu Sesshin 2022

Sitting long and getting tired.
The ancestors have room to speak.
Processing their baggage and
hearing their wisdom,
We share the same heart-mind.
Who hears the rain?
Who knows the sorrows and
blessings of impermanence?
A Beagle howls mournfully.
The leafless maple waits patiently.

Winter Odayaka Feb. 24 - 26

dayaka means "peaceful," and these sesshins are a little less arduous with more dialogue than our weeklong sesshins. You may choose to attend in person if you have been fully vaccinated, or previously had COVID. We will be offering traditional meals for those attending in person. On Friday and Saturday the beginning time will be either 5:30 (optional) or 7:00 a.m., and we'll close after the Closing Sutras at 8:30 p.m. On Sunday we'll begin at 5:00 a.m. and close at noon, following Council. Please fill out this application if attending in person.

Registration for Zoom attendance is required for each day. The Zoom invitations and registration links are below. Requested donations are \$50 for Friday, \$50 for Saturday, and \$30 for Sunday. Please note that if you are attending all three days, you may make a single payment of \$130. You can send your donations to PayPal.

Please indicate the purpose of your donation in the note/memo field.

Day 1 – Friday, Feb. 24, 7:00 a.m. Register in advance for this meeting using this link.

Day 2 – Saturday, Feb. 25, 5:30 a.m. Register in advance for this meeting using this link.

Day 3 – Sunday, Feb. 26, 5:00 a.m. Register in advance for this meeting using this link.

Spring Temple Posts beginning March 11, 2023

Rev. Gendo Testa Eddie Daichi Salazar **Shika** (Host - Manager)

Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares Elijah Seigan Zupancic **Tenzo** (Cooks)

Rev. Sendo Howells Randal Daigetsu Tanabe **Jikijitsu** (Timekeepers)

Felix Wazan Pekar Elijah Seigan Zupancic **Densu** (Chant Leaders)

Charles Porter Ansel Braidman **Jisha** (Tea Servers and zendo care)

Sally Zenka Sensei Inji (Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei **Fusu** (Accountant)

Eddie Daichi Salazar Felix Wazan Pekar Intro Instruction

Spring Intensive

n intensive covers roughly the same time frame as the traditional temple kessei period, beginning with the first zazenkai for that season (March 12) ending with Summer Sesshin. It's a time for concentrated study and practice. Please let Genjo know before March 12 if you plan to participate. Intensive participants are offered dokusan once weekly on Wednesday evenings. All unsui are strongly encouraged to participate fully.

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, zazenkai, and full-time attendance at weeklong sesshins. 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. These hours can be in your own home, garden or community.
- **3)** Read one book of your choosing from Chobo-Ji's Zen Bibliography page (or consult with Genjo about an alternative selection) and write a review of what you have read.
- **4)** Keep a journal about your practice, at least one paragraph per week, and email a minimum of one paragraph per week each Friday to Genjo Osho on how the intensive is working on you.
- **5)** Attend Dokusan Wednesdays in person or via Zoom at 8:30PM, or if this is impossible arrange a Zoom call with Genjo Osho. Zoom calls can be short, 5 minutes maximum per week, or up to 15 minutes every two weeks, or 30 minutes once a month.
- **6)** Be of service to this sangha or the wider community through some direct manifestation of our Great Vow.

Spring Sesshin March 24 - 31

his will be an in-person sesshin. Full attendance is expected, please speak to Genjo if this is not possible. If you are not able to attend in person or for all seven days you may attend by Zoom (Zoom registration required) for any portion that fits your schedule, but some attendance each day is expected. Please help us get an accurate count by sending an application by March 15, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. The cost of sesshin is \$300 (less dues for this month). If attending by Zoom please make a donation that fits your budget and level of participation. Sesshin starts Friday evening, March 24, 5:30 p.m. with informal supper, introductions and orientation.

Sesshin (from Saturday to the following Thursday) runs from 5 a.m. to 10 p.m. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (an additional \$10-\$20 per night); please bring a sleeping bag, to iletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday begins at 5 am and concludes around 11 a.m.

W e offer limited partial scholarships for sesshin. For more information please email: registration@choboji.org.

Passings

Three notable passings of former Chobo-Ji Sangha members.

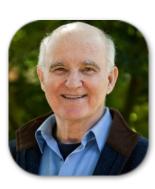
First is Genko Kathy Blackman, Ni-Osho. She was ordained by our founding abbot Genki Takabayashi, and was one of our long-time Board Presidents who oversaw our transition to our current property. Genko was thought of by many as Chobo-Ji's motherly Bodhisattva and passed on December 9, 2022.

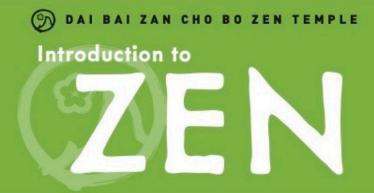
Next is Leslie Genei Gannon, who passed January 1, 2023. She was married to Genki Takabayashi, and she took good care of him in his latter years in Montana.

Finally, Bob Hermer, whom I have known for more than forty-five years and who practiced with Glenn Webb and Genki Takabayashi, died of COVID on February 19, 2023.









A 6-week, in-person, exploration of Rinzai Zen practice
Tuesdays, April 4-May 9 | 7:30pm-8:45pm | www.choboji.org

Bring your curiosity and your questions to our Introduction to Zen class. This 6-week, in-person course, will cover everything you need to develop a meditation practice and teaches the fundamentals of Zen Buddhism. Each class is taught by a different, experienced, Zen practitioner. Classes start with introductions, a 15 minute sit, followed by a presentation, and ample time to ask questions. Recommended donation is \$5 per class. Please register at intro@choboji.org.

4 APRIL	ORIENTATION TO ZEN What is Zen all about?
11 APRIL	FORMS OF RINZAI ZEN PRACTICE Is there more than seated meditation? Learn about mindfulness practices, such as chanting, walking, bowing and work (samu).
18 APRIL	FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS Explore the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha's radical teaching on liberation from suffering.
25 APRIL	EIGHT FOLD PATH Embark on the the Noble Eightfold Path, Buddha's way to gradually unravel suffering in our lives.
2 MAY	KOAN STUDY Dive into the use of koans (Zen parables) to investigate our own deep nature.
9 MAY	FOUR GREAT VOWS Reflect on our Four Great Vows – the fundamental context for our whole Buddhist practice.

Located on North Beacon Hill, just 5 blocks from the Beacon Hill light rail stop at: 1733 S Horton St., Seattle, WA 98144

Recent Sangha Happenings















Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM Intro to zazen most Tuesdays 7:30-8:45PM,

Dharma Council, most <u>Saturdays at 8:30 AM</u> – Dharma Dialogue, most <u>Sundays at 7:30 PM</u> (See Google Calendar at <u>https://choboji.org/schedule/</u> for more detail and Zoom links.)

Winter Odayaka (three-day Zen intensive) ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Board Meeting...

Zen Sangha Hike (location to be announced in Temple Happenings) ...

Spring Sesshin (seven-day Zen intensive) ...

6-Week Intro to Zen Series Tuesday nights ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Annual Meeting (please attend, a quorum is needed) ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Board Meeting...

Precepts Class - Part One ...

Precepts Class - Part Two ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Summer Sesshin (seven-day Zen intensive) ...

Feb. 24 - 26

March 12, 5 - 11:15 a.m.

March 12, noon - 1:30 p.m.

March 18, 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

March 24 - 31

April 4 - May 9, 7:30 to 8:45 p.m.

April 9, 5 - 11:15 a.m.

April 9, noon - 2 p.m.

May 14, 5 - 11:15 a.m.

May 14, noon - 1:30 p.m.

May 16, 7:00 - 8:15 p.m.

May 23, 7:00 - 8:15 p.m.

June II, 5 - II:15 a.m.

June 23 - 30



Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Vi

Plum Mountain News 1733 S. Horton St., unit 7 Seattle, WA 98144