



Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

Now in late spring the daffodils are gone, the irises are fading, and the poppies, azalea and roses are in full bloom. The days are warm, with multiple days of blue skies. This has been a great relief from our months of mostly grey skies. After a six-month hiatus, the clearer weather allowed me to put up my 11" Cassegrain telescope on the roof for some amazing star gazing.



Back in late February, we concluded our three-day Winter Odayaka Sesshin with 23 participants, three of whom attended by Zoom. We are very thankful to Elijah



Winter Odayaka

Seigan Zupancic for being our Tenzo (Cook) for this Odayaka. Our Summer Odayaka Sesshin will be August 18-20. Our seven-day Spring Sesshin also had 23 participants, four attending by Zoom. Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares served as our Dai Tenzo (Chief Cook), assisted by Ken Daien Iwata. Rev. Gendo Testa was our Shika (Host/Manager), assisted by Eddie Daichi Salazar. Our Jikijitsu (Time Keeper) was Rev. Sendo Anne Howells. Felix Wazan Pekar was our Densu (Chant Leader) assisted by Seigan. Our Jisha (Tea Server) was Charles Porter, assisted by Katherine Agent. Finally, my Inji (Abbot Assistant) was Sally Zenka



Spring Sesshin 2023

Metcalf, Sensei. Every participant and post holder gave their full attention and care to the tasks assigned. On the last day of Spring Sesshin, Daichi reaffirmed his Bodhisattva Vows and after many years of Zen training became a Chobo-Ji Sensei (lay teacher of our practice). Included in this issue are transcriptions of the first Teisho (formal Dharma Talk) that I gave at this sesshin, and Daichi's brief but spectacular Dharma Talk. Also, you will find my closing Spring Sesshin Incense Poem.

Our Summer Sesshin is coming right up, June 23 – 30. Please register for this sesshin by filling out an application which you can find on the Chobo-Ji web site under Events. Anyone hoping to do Jukai (Precept and Dharma Name Ceremony) needs to write me a letter requesting Jukai by June 11, including why you are making this commitment to the precepts. Also, at the end of this sesshin I will be elevating two Chobo-Ji unsuis (novice priests) to Osho (temple priests).

Chobo-Ji Sangha members have been busy since our last issue of Plum Mountain News. Not only have we been

keeping up our active daily schedule of zazen, but we have had several wonderful Sangha hikes organized by Wazan. Dee Seishun Endelman, Sensei and Zenka Sensei organized a monthly project that makes sandwiches for people in our area who are hungry. Daichi Sensei continues to organize periodic neighborhood cleanup samu (work meditation).

The Chobo-Ji Board has authorized the Seattle Refuge Recovery Group to meet on Tuesday nights in the Chobo-Ji lounge. Our six-week Spring Book Group is reading *Time to Stand Up: An Engaged Buddhist Manifesto for our Earth* by Thanissara, which examines the Buddha's life and message through feminine eyes. Rev. Seifu is inviting a group of BIPOC practitioners to train at Chobo-Ji. Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei continues to serve on the Faith Action Network Board, working with many others to make Washington State a more socially just and environmentally



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friendly place to live. On May 13, I along with an old friend of mine, Tom Cashman, led a day long workshop on How to be a Good Ancestor. Recently I led my annual one-day Zen retreat in Walla Walla and gave a talk at Whitman College.



Also included in this issue you will find a book review, an interview with Zenka Sensei, found in Rick McDaniel's excellent new book, *Further Zen Conversations*; the Board President report; and a transcription of Steve Shinkai Garber's excellent Follower of the Way Dharma talk. May we all enjoy the spring weather and live our daily lives caring for our environment and being kind to one another.

With gassho,

Genjo

Aikido and Zen Journey

A reprise of Steve Shinkai Garber's
Follower of the Way talk

Often, when I speak about the most pivotal moment in my Zen journey, I refer back to a three-day sit I attended sometime in the early 90's as the precursor to my then, unbeknownst to me, thirty-some odd year journey into Aikido and Zazen practice. During those early years, I considered myself neither a martial artist nor a Zen practitioner, just a guy doing these two activities on a weekly basis – in the same way one might consider going to the gym three or four times a week.

Bob Burns, an editor on a poetry magazine I was producing at the time, *The Poetry Conspiracy*, and my first Aikido instructor,

invited me to attend a sesshin with Genki Roshi. Genjo was, at that time, Genki's interpreter and appeared to me to be his head student. The three days went by uneventfully, sitting, sleeping on the floor of the dojo, waking at 4 a.m. to the loud clang of the dojo bell, and watching T.K. Chiba Sensei, our aikido instructor, walk down the long stairway from his residence above the old Fairmont Theater-turned-dojō to the mats below.

All three days passed without much ado. I did not struggle with sitting, don't remember any pain, and there was nothing remarkable about the sit other than the occasional hallucination that accompanied the daytime hours passing as I sat staring at the person sitting across from me. That was the extent of the sit for me: an uneventful experience sitting in silence with my own under-inquisitive mind, eating, sleeping, and sitting in a monastic setting, which seemed in that moment, antithetical to every image I had ever had of myself. At least, that is the way I remember it now, many years later, in retrospect. The truth of it is awash in the maze of memory.

What I do remember quite clearly is two or three weeks after that initial sit, when I was leaving our house on Texas Street for work. My wife Margaret and I were in an argument about something, the substance and context of which has long evaporated, when I told her I had to go to work and walked out of the house. Just as I stepped out of the door to leave, she threw several verbal daggers at me, which I recognized were intended to bring me back in the house, so that we might continue the argument. It was kind of a, 'how dare you leave mid-argument'.

Of course, I was equally capable of pushing all of her emotional buttons, but in that moment, seeing so clearly the ploy being engaged, I walked back in the house, pointed my finger at her and said, "that was very good; that was the best you have ever

done." At this point, if memory serves, we were both beginning to smile, "and if I didn't have to go to work, I would come back in and argue with you for at least another hour, but I have to go to work." By this time, we were both laughing, and the whole situation had defused. We both recognized that the sit, of a week or two earlier, was the only thing different in that moment, which gave an opening for such clarity to shine through and allow the ridiculousness of the argument to be illuminated.

That was, and has been for many years, the archetypal story told when people ask about why I continue to sit day after day, year after year. This story however, ignores an entire history of my sitting practice and mind/body experiences that began long before Aikido and Zen meditation with Bob Burns and T.K. Chiba Sensei. My first experience with Mind/Body practice was in the mid-70s at the University of California, Davis, in an undergraduate class called Mind/Body Biology, in which we spent a half hour of mind/body interactions with a classmate and then laid on the floor for a half hour while the professor guided us on a journey of



the mind and body. This was my first intrigue with mind/body interaction, and set me on a path in which I was introduced to Vipassana groups in people's homes. My memory of those early sits is vague at best, but it led me to seek out books on mindfulness meditation and magazines like *Tricycle* and *The Sun*.

In particular, it led me to a book called *Seeking the Heart Of Wisdom* by Jack Kornfield and Joseph Goldstein. This book would become my guide for many years to come. I thought, wow, if I can get a tenth of what these guys are getting from sitting, I'll sit for the rest of my life. Of course, my motivations were a bit off in those days, although I always point out that it does not matter what brings you to a path, as long as you get there. Having some experience with LSD and mushrooms, I thought, this might be a way to be high all the time, naturally

and organically. So, I'd been sitting for a while when a friend of mine asked if I wanted to attend a men's silent retreat at Botham Youth Camp in the San Francisco area. When my friend Paul S. brought this up, I was hesitant at first, thinking a "men's retreat?": Not really my cup of tea. Then he said, "I don't know if you've ever heard of this guy, Jack Kornfield, but he's running the retreat." I was in. At that moment in my life, I had already given away at least sixteen copies of his book.

So, I went to the men's silent retreat at a fairly lavish camp, by Zen standards; there was a gourmet cook serving meals. They did have samu (working) posts in the kitchen, and for that entire week my body and mind did strange things, rocking, shaking – imagining I had the power to clear away the hovering fog outside – a thought quickly laid to rest by the descending fog obscuring the entire stairwell window in front of which I was conjuring my special powers.

The meals were like being in the movie *Babette's Feast*. I would taste the food, look up to see everyone eating silently and wonder: do they have any idea how amazing this food is?

Once a day we would all meet in a central location, and people would volunteer to tell their stories. This was the only talking, other than the daily Dharma talk, that went on during the week-long sit. It was during one of these sessions that I learned our roommate, a very handsome young twenty-five-year-old, with long blond hair, a countenance on par with Botticelli's Jesus, had been beaten by his father and, at some point to save his mother's life, took a baseball bat to his father. But that wasn't the end of the story. He chose this sit to come out to his brother, our other roommate, for the first time. It was, to say the least, an emotional rollercoaster, especially given the silence. It was an early introduction to how the practice of meditation could give people the strength to overcome and confront what otherwise might be daunting subjects in their life and set them on a path to opening to who they truly are.

Sometime later that year, at a convention for California Poets In The Schools, in the mountains of California north of San Francisco, I volunteered to get up before sunrise to lead a walking meditation along the river. I patterned it after the walking meditation I had practiced daily at the men's

retreat. We would pick a location, walk back and forth twenty steps in either direction, and pay attention to every intention, lifting, placing the heel, the ball of the foot, the toes, intention to step, lifting, placing, shifting, etc. One morning after thirty minutes of this kinhin, I looked up and everything was breathing – the tall grass, the rocks, the river, flowers – everywhere was pulsing with the breath of life. Intriguingly, though I clearly saw it, I failed to recognize the significance of this kensho moment, and then it was gone. I remember thinking, how do I get back to that.

That experience led me to read everything I could get my hands on at the time, *The Three Pillars of Zen*, *The Tao of Physics*, *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones*, Allan Watts, D.T. Suzuki, Krishnamurti, Joko Beck, Robert Aitken, among a few I remember. This went on and on until my life in poetry, which I haven't talked much about, ran into my life in Aikido. Aikido introduced me to zazen and eventually down the rabbit hole of Zen.

Seven years went by in Aikido with me working my way up to 3rd *Kyu*, when one day sitting injured on the edge of the mat watching class, Chiba Sensei called me into his office and asked if I'd like to join the *Kenshusei* program to become an instructor. That story in-and-of-itself is an interesting tale, but suffice it to say, I become an *uchideshi*, or instructor in training. One of the requirements of the program is that *uchideshi* had to attend Rohatsu at least once.

Now, I don't think I'm exaggerating when I suggest that the majority of *kenshusei* have gone to Rohatsu once in their life and have never returned – not that there aren't some of us who have come back repeatedly, but suffice it to say, we are few in number.

My first Rohatsu, which turned out to be a memorable experience, was attended with Bob Burns. Bob, who was my only confidant at the time, left mid-week with a young *aikidoist* who was having a hard time of it and decided he was going to leave. Bob drove him home from Seattle to San Diego.

So, there I was, in an environment that, except for other suffering *aikidoists*, was utterly foreign to me, sitting alone with nothing but dokusan (interview with the Roshi) for advice. I came home from that sit with what felt to be a profound shift in my perception.



In those early days, I always spent a few days in Seattle to decompress and visit a steam manufacturer I worked with, before going home. It was during these visits with the techs Mike C and Jerry S, whom I had previously only spoken to on the phone, that I realized how immeasurable the after-effects of Rohatsu were. Immediately our work relationships were transformed by a unique openness and connectedness into friendships that are not often found in matters of business. There were times walking around Seattle when this feeling of connectedness seemed to follow me around the city, often guiding me into conversations with complete strangers.

Despite spending several days in Seattle, this subtle shift in connection followed me back to San Diego. Margaret picked me up

from the airport near dusk, and I suggested we drive up to The Mission in Presidio Park and watch the sunset. Unbeknownst to us there was a celebration going on in the park with free hors d'oeuvres music and drinks, and, seemingly, we were the only people who showed up. So, there we were, our own private party in the Presidio, hosted by

people we had never met, watching a sunset of stunning beauty.



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In spite of the beauty of that evening, I explained the ordeal of Rohatsu to Margaret. It was miserable, up at 3:50 am sitting till 10, 11, 12 at night, until the last night when you try to stay up all night and ultimately fail, sleep deprived, as you are, in pain, tired constantly, can't remember where you've put anything, or if you've even remembered to change clothing that day, much less what day it was. Then I swore to her that I would never go back. No one in their right mind would ever go back to that kind of pain and suffering. You'd have to be nuts to return, but miraculously, every year for fifteen years I returned, and every year for fourteen years I swore I would never return.

Then, in my fifteenth year, I had an experience I remember as clear as day. I always sat on the east facing side of Alaskan Airlines, as they often flew over Yosemite on the way to Seattle, and I loved being able to look out over one of most majestic natural wonders of California. However, on this particular flight, we flew over San Francisco Bay in the middle of the night. Looking down, I saw the full moon reflected in the water. At that moment I thought, wow, I'm already there. I'm already sitting. And that was the first time I realized, the first time I relinquished myself to the fact that I would be returning to Rohatsu for the rest of my able life. I realized that it wasn't only Rohatsu that was integrated into my life, but my life that was intimately integrated into Rohatsu, into sitting, into a moment that I would never be able to identify, yet would forever seek.

Once in his dokusan room on Capitol Hill, with a stunning sunrise penetrating the interview room window, and while I was freaking out about not knowing what this is, Genjo said to me: "It's okay not to know Steve." What a relief that moment was. Like Nansen said to Joshu in the koan *Ordinary Mind is Tao* (Case 19 of the *Mumonkan*), "The way does not belong to the world of knowing or not knowing." Then Joshu asks essentially, "If it is not of the world of knowing and not knowing, then why should I try?" Nansen's reply, "because not knowing is ignorance (blankness)."

At this point in my Zen practice, I often think about reading more books on Zen, but defer to the experience of sitting to come to my own understanding. Occasionally a book of Zen will cross my path. Recently I read *The Shamanic Bones of Zen* by Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, which changed my perspective on ritual and ancestral practices. When I was to take my precepts, I asked Genjo about the dark side of Zen and he recommended I read Brian Diazen Victoria's *Zen At War*. Reading this book led me to ask Genjo how, knowing what the patriarchs had done, he could choose to be a Zen priest. His response, "they screwed up, didn't they?" and we both laughed heartily. That was a good enough answer for me.

For me, this is perhaps one of the biggest lessons of Zen. The Way is ordinary mind, or ordinary mind is it, as Genki Roshi was fond of exhorting: we are all humans with our foibles and inadequacies right next to our strengths and beauty. It takes constant vigilance to be kind, compassionate, and loving to all beings.

Oh yes, I mainly stopped reading about Zen in the pursuit of experiencing it for myself. No amount of reading others' experiences is going to shed light on what I must go through, or the moments I must discover for myself. Of course, the

flaw in this thinking is that sometimes it is tremendously helpful to have some guidance, such as the many moments Genjo provided in dokusan, instead of trying to muddle through the journey all on one's own, although muddling is half the journey.

I have always been taken by a story – I can no longer remember where I heard it – of a student at a Zen monastery, who, after several years, is fed up with his teacher telling him to do one thing and others to do the exact opposite. He goes to the master exclaiming, "why do you tell me one thing and exactly the opposite to others?" The teacher says, "I am watching people walk down a path with a steep cliff on either side. Some are about to fall off the left side and to them I say, 'go right, go right'. Others are about to fall off the right side, so to them I say, 'go left, go left'."

The ability to see where someone is on the path, if they are about to fall off the precipice on the left or the right, is a moment, a glimpse into oneness in-and-of itself. For me, koan study with Genjo Osho has been invaluable in helping me see who is sitting on the mat, who is walking, cooking, gardening, laughing. His guidance has been expansive in helping me to muddle through the journey. He has shown me that koans are not all Zen conundrums; sometimes they are conundrums brought about by our daily lives, the daily trek of ordinary mind through which we slog. He has helped me see the beauty in the adventure, and that every adventure can have several vantage points.

There is no getting around muddling one's way through sitting. There are no answers anyone can give you, no magic passage in a book, but there are moments that can be found and those moments can be profound. They are like flowers, blooming everywhere, all around us, all the time. We just have to be cognizant enough to open the window and look out just long enough to catch a glimpse of the immensity of it.

Poem from the last Rohatsu I attended:

*Outside the rain falls
Everywhere puddles forming
Inside, where am I*

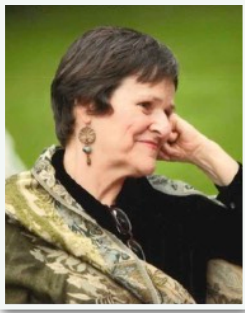
The Impact of Zen Practice

*Printed with permission, Chapter 5 of Rick
McDaniel's new book,
Further Zen Conversations:
an interview with Sally Zenka Metcalf*

Sally Zenka Metcalf is a sensei at Genjo Marinello's Chobo-ji in Seattle. She points out that the title is largely honorific, explaining that Genjo Roshi awards it as a way of "acknowledging certain people in this sangha who are not ordained but who have done forty sesshin and at least ten years of practice. Sensei are active helping the community, have held all temple posts, and are sometimes asked to lead sits or give informal Dharma talks."

For Sally, the practice is very much the development and embodiment of karuna/





compassion. “What use is our practice if it’s not applicable in our lives? Zen talk overflows with profundities. My reaction often is, ‘That’s great, but what does it mean on-the-ground-running in my

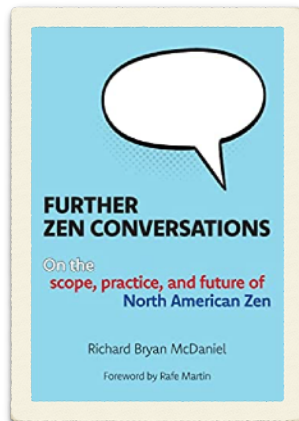
life?’ Ultimately, compassion isn’t an idea, it is how we hold each other in care, day-in and day-out. Over recent years homelessness has grown in Seattle. Everywhere, hungry faces looked out from rain-soaked tents, beat-up camper vans, and even from cardboard boxes cobbled together. Yet our big Zen kitchen stood unused, except for occasional sesshins. Then we started cooking a hundred meals a month for the people in the camps. Spooning up steaming helpings of tasty vegetarian love to our homeless neighbors, we learned their names at last.

“I used to have a little blue boat and took it rowing on Eagle harbor, my old dog in the bow. Even a little rowboat leaves a wake. What kind of wake does my life make? I live a rather small life, in contrast to someone like the Dalai Lama who touches millions of people. I do my best to connect warmly with people through my job for a non-profit that fosters safe and healthy families, and in nearby stores, and on neighborhood walks. My temple time goes to sweeping, laundry and dishes, and weeding the garden, all to make things good for the beings who come here. And there is my much-loved sangha. I greet people among the flowers or at the zendo door, doing my best to learn their names and to listen deeply to them: the guy who welds airplane parts, the landscaper, the capoeira fan, the guy who can fix anything, the mom with two little boys on her mind. Their stresses. Their hopes. Their questions. It’s an intimate life.”

Before Zenka had taken up Zen practice, she had been deeply affected by a program called *A Course in Miracles* based on a 1976 book by Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford. “My three greatest takeaways from

the Course were, first, the practice of forgiveness, seeing all hurt and harm as ‘a compassionate device to liberate me from my own egoistic delusions and attachments,’ as is expressed so beautifully in Torei Zenji’s *Bodhisattva’s Vow Preface*. Wonderful how my Zen and Christian background interweave. Second, listening to the still small voice within, which Genjo Roshi calls the voice of our True Nature. He once told me if we can follow that voice, we have no need of him, nor any book, nor any teacher. And third, the prayer ‘I am here only to be truly helpful’ which calls me back to myself again and again.

“A little boat’s wake has a gentle lift, like lifting hearts. That’s how I want to move through my life, leaving everyone a little lighter and more at ease in the lift of our mutual joy. To do this with others starts with me. The joyful rise is missed if I’m preoccupied, fearful, blaming. Whatever gets in the way of loving care becomes kindling for my zazen furnace, craziness burned to ash. Our founding abbot, Genki Takabayashi Roshi spoke just a little English. His shorthand for our first Great Bodhisattva Vow was, ‘To care for all beings, everywhere, always.’ That includes me, you, the garden birds, flowers, bugs, stones, breeze, stars — hearts lifting together. I don’t want to miss a single chance to care.”



Mumonkan

Case 1: Joshu’s Mu

Spring Sesshin Day 1, Genjo speaks about “The Tree of Consciousness”

Koan: A monk once asked master Joshu, “Has a dog Buddha Nature or not?” Joshu said, “Mu.”

Mumon’s Commentary: In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient Zen Masters. For the attainment of incomparable satori, one has to cast away one’s discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants.

Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen Masters? Just this “Mu” – it is known as the barrier of Zen, and it is also known as “the gateless barrier of Zen.” Those who have passed this gateless barrier will not only see Joshu clearly, but will go hand in hand with all the Masters of the past, see them face to face. In fact, you will see with the same eye that they see with and hear with the same ear. Wouldn’t it be wonderful? Don’t you want to pass this barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this “Mu,” with your 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic or dualistic interpretations. It is like having a red-hot iron ball bolted in your belly. You try to vomit it but cannot.

Cast away your illusory and discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and keep on working harder. In the readiness of time, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions (such as in and out, and life and death) will naturally be identified and seen through. You will then be like a person struck dumb, who has had a wonderful dream: one only knows it personally, within oneself. Suddenly, as you break through the barrier; you will astonish heaven and shake the earth.

It is as if you have snatched the great sword out of the hands of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him; you kill the ancient Masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death, you find yourself utterly free, and in the six realms and the

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four modes of life you live, with great joy, a genuine life in complete freedom.

Now, how should one proceed? With might and main work at this “Muuu,” and *be* “Mu.” If you do not stop or waver in your efforts, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once enlightened.

Mumon’s Poem:

*The dog, the Buddha nature,
the truth already manifested in full,
a moment of yes and no,
lost are your body and soul.*

We always come back to this koan, because it points to the root of our practice. What is the root of the universe? It’s not something that we can know, or that science can examine. We speculate that the whole universe appeared, out of a singularity, some 13.8 billion years ago, and that it continues to accelerate, expanding faster than light. Our universe has become this great bubble of hundreds of billions of galaxies, each with hundreds of billions of stars and trillions of planets, and that’s just in the slice of the bubble that we can observe with our telescopes. What is it that gives rise to this vast, perhaps limitless bubble of the universe? We can call it whatever we want – Dharma, Tao, Shunyata, Mu – these are just names. Unlike the astronomers or the physicists, however, we Zennists, and anyone else who heuristically explores our origin, can feel this ever-flowing, expanding essence. Here it is, just doing its thing, flowering as this universe. And in spring, on this planet, we see it flowering all around us. The flow feels quite endless, timeless and bottomless. With our scientific, discriminating mind, we understand that even a bubble of the universe, vast as it is, will in one way or another expire. It might just pop. It could collapse on itself, or it could continue to expand, and eventually wither on the vine, exhausting itself completely. But anyone who has felt Mu will have a very clear impression that whatever gives rise to this universe has no beginning, no end. I don’t know if there’s a multi-universe, or not, but whatever Mu is, I’m confident you can’t keep it down. Even though this planet is temporary, our lives are certainly temporary, the sun is temporary, the galaxy is temporary, and even the universe is temporary – when we encounter the feeling of Mu, there’s no sense of temporary.

It’s such a silly question on one level, does a dog have Buddha Nature? Even one that is severely wounded, and dying, cries out its Buddha Nature. I had a very traumatic experience as a small child. I was in the fourth grade and living between Placerville and Lake Tahoe in California, on Highway 50, and we had a favorite dog named Timber, who got hit on the highway. Timber’s mother was whimpering and shaking, sitting on a bench at the lodge where we were staying. We found Timber in the road, in great distress and horribly wounded. My father, whom I can easily describe as a brutish bully, got out his revolver and was going to kill the dog that he loved. He couldn’t do it. A trucker who was passing by took the gun and put Timber out of his misery.

The monk is asking, is this misery also Buddha nature? Is the temporary nature of everything Buddha nature? Joshu said, “Mu.” Literally Mu means “no,” “not” and “nothing.” However, when we are feeling Muuuuu, we intuitively know that it is anything but temporary. And so, in the midst of dire impermanence, there’s this solace, that there’s no beginning or end to Mu.

Mumon in his commentary says that in order to really, not just intellectually, understand this timeless, formless, beyond-space-and-time source, we must cast away our discriminating mind. There’s nothing wrong with our discriminating mind. It’s brilliant in its ability to distinguish this from that, self from other, hot from cold, life from death. But this faculty to discriminate so clearly has nothing to do with our capacity to feel Mu. In fact, discriminating mind usually interferes with feeling Mu. This is why in Zen practice we’re taught to put aside our discriminating mind – especially during zazen, chanting, kinhin, samu, prostrations – which gives us the chance to directly feel the unending flow of Mu flowering as this universe. When we’re not able to feel Mu, then we find ourselves stuck in our narrow, egoistic, self-centered view of the world. And Mumon cautions that when we are stuck in our egocentric view, we’re all like phantoms haunting trees and plants. He’s calling us not to be phantoms, and instead, to experience for ourselves, personally and collectively, the flow of Mu.

A tree is a wonderful simile of branching existence. I’ve shared this one before, but it has been on my mind again this morning.

Each one of us, when stuck in our narrow egoistic perspective, is like a phantom haunting a leaf on a tree. And here we are, thinking we are just so many leaves on the tree of existence. And frankly, there’s just a very few leaves sitting here in the zendo, whereas the cherry trees that are beginning to blossom, or our huge maple tree that has got all these budding leaves, are good at representing so many facets of existence. All leaves come and go, and indeed our leaf existence is very temporary. Our lives are so brief.

However, even though our leaf existence is quite temporary, we are connected to something a little less temporary: the branch they’re connected to. We all share the branch of what we call humanity. And in our practice, we can experience not just who we are as a leaf, but we can experience, here on the cushion and elsewhere, what it is to be human. The branch of humanity is connected to a slightly thicker branch of the whole animal kingdom. And this too is something that we can experience when we drop out of our narrow egoistic discriminating mind. We can experience what it is to be seamless and inseparable from the animal kingdom. There’s no gate or fence between our individuality, humanity and the animal kingdom.



An even thicker branch, closer to the trunk, includes all the different forms of life, including bacteria, fungi, plants, and all biological self-sustaining processes. Together we are all a part of the branch of existence called life. When we’re not stuck in our discriminating mind, we really feel our communion with life essence. Getting to yet a thicker branch, we can feel what it is to be an earthling. We can feel our intimate relationship to rain, river, lake, ocean, mountain, wind, fire and the seasons. We

need only to not cling to our leaf-identity. Let's jump quite a few layers, all the way to the trunk of existence. We can feel . . . Mind, with a capital M. We can feel the essence of consciousness, wherever it appears, on whatever planet, in whatever quadrant of the universe. How come we can feel it? Because we're a part of it, already. Nothing needs to be attained. When we are not attached to our leaf-identity, we can feel Mind as easily as we feel gravity. We don't really know what gravity or Mind is, but from my experience these qualities of existence appear to be simply seamless dimensions of the fabric of reality.

I think Zen Master Rinzai would refer to this trunk of existence as "that one, shining alone!" Of course, the foundation of any tree trunk is its root. And the root of existence is seamless with something dark, wide, vast, bottomless, beginningless, and endless. That in which the root of existence takes root is Muuuuuuuuu. And this too, we can feel. We can feel the vast, black, form before form, time before time, intimate, infinite, root from which this universe grows. When we're able to go this deep, we've truly cast away our discriminating knowledge and consciousness accumulated up to now, and we've become like a person struck dumb who's in the midst of a wonderful dream, and we're astonished by every drop of dew, every wisp of air and every face, even our own, when we look in a mirror.

And no matter what our troubles are, or how confusing and complicated life can be, and how temporary life is, when we allow ourselves to feel this depth, we have no fear standing in front of even General Kan, Hitler or Putin. We are quite prepared to lay down our lives. And we've already killed the Buddha and all the ancient masters.



How so? Because we're already going hand in hand with them, seeing them face to face, in fact seeing with the same eye that they see with, and hearing with the same ear. And it's so weird, because not only are we seeing with the same eye as the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, sages and saints, we're all also hearing with the same ear and seeing with the same eye as the mass murderer, and the horribly, mutilated dog on the roadway. It is only by clinging to our sense of ego identity that we have a false sense of separation. Therefore, we say, look, look, see what is real. And we must caution: also, look out.

In order not to be phantoms haunting trees and plants, we must transcend our narrow egoistic perspective. With might and main work to feel Mu and be Mu. This is our practice.

Eddie Daichi Salazar, Sensei

Brief but Spectacular Dharma Talk

This morning, Genjo mentioned that I came over from Soto. But I really started Zen at Choboji, and had Genjo as a teacher. And, Genjo was present at my Soto Jukai in October of 2009. Since returning to Choboji, Genjo had asked me many times whether I would want a Rinzai rakusu. And I would say, "No thanks, I'm good" with my Soto rakusu, but thanks for offering. After a while he stopped asking. I chose to do that because it was a way to carry both traditions simultaneously, and I will continue to do that. But this brown rakusu is unbelievably meaningful for me.

As Genjo mentioned, this morning, there are three other senseis in the room, all women, and all who have been incredible teachers and mentors to me. And I feel honored to be with you three in this way. And this comes quite unexpectedly for me, and I'll explain how this came about. And

this is a very Genjo story. On Saturday morning of our first full day of sesshin, I arrive, and I am sitting on the bench removing my shoes, and Genjo walks by, and says "Oh Daichi, I'd like you to consider receiving a brown rakusu" and then continues walking by. And I'm asking myself if I'm still asleep, or am I dreaming? Of course, I was delighted that he would ask me. And then at the end of the first dokusan, he rang me out, and I am at the door on the way out, and Genjo asks me, "Have you been thinking about receiving a brown rakusu?" And I said yes, thinking that it would be for Summer sesshin, or another time. And he said, "I need an answer, because it will happen Friday." So at the dokusan door, I gave Genjo a very strong yes! A yes that came from a very deep place, even though I had to come up with it on the fly. An answer that was ready to go, and here I am today.

There is a lot that I'd like to say, but I'll make it short. Some of you know that I am a recovering Catholic. I have an M.Div. I also have a doctorate. As an aside, I really don't like recognizing titles, in myself or in others. That said, I delight in the joy that Genjo takes in calling me Dr. Daichi. Anyway, in my M.Div. I am trained to be a Catholic lay leader, and designated to be a teacher of the faith, called a catechist. I did all that at a Seattle parish, but I was removed from that job because I'm gay. And I was deemed ineligible to do that any longer, and that was very painful time for me, and it is a scar that I still carry.



One of the silver linings of that event was to bring me to Zen, and here I am. Today, I have been restored. I am restored to being a "teacher of the faith," a sensei. It is a big role to fill, and it is going to be a

huge challenge for me, my new big koan. All of you in the room know me well, and you know that I am not one to follow rules. Rules don't apply to me. Rules apply to you. I know what the rules are, I just actively flaunt them.

Continued on next page ...

Now, I am 62 years old, and frankly it is time to grow up. Enough of this rebellious teenage thing. It's time to be an adult. So learning to embody this practice will be a new learning curve. How to teach it, how to embody it, and how to be an example of it. I am going to invite you to continue to scold me and correct me. Even more so now. To keep me in line. I'm guessing this is why Genjo is giving me this, just to rein me in.



I am cognizant of the fact that this does not belong to me. It belongs to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This belongs to you more than it does to me. I am to be mindful of that every time that I put it around my neck. And I will wear this with deep humility and great joy. And I invite you to participate with me in that.

Closing Incense Poem

Spring Sesshin 2023

*New leaves abundantly sprouting,
Hope springs eternal.
Beyond the cycles of life and death
lies vast wisdom.
Dwelling not in yesterday,
nor living for tomorrow.
The wind blows,
Soft rain clouds the sky.
Followers of the Way march on.*



Intimate Infinite

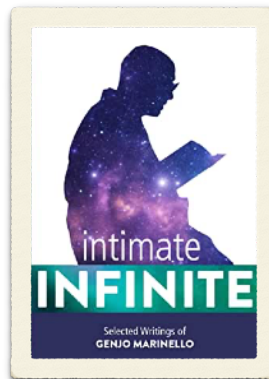
Review by David Taiza Eraker

Genjo Roshi's second book is a treasure chest of traditional Dharma talks and other teachings exploring "the multidimensional reality of the intimate infinite." The book covers his accumulated insights on a number of Rinzai koans, various techniques and approaches to help you master Zen meditation, and straightforward explanations of complex Buddhist topics, including aspects of personal psychology. What can be offered after almost four decades of meditation? Not what you would expect. And definitely better than imagined.

Definitely not found here: Emperor Wu's Government Buddhism or an officially decreed social credit score algorithm, safely watered down. Instead this book is 100% bonafide Rinzai, born out of the Chan

tradition, a Zen franchise with a multi-thousand year history packed full of blown open hagiographies as diverse as the times and places the lineage has traversed. Picking up with American Zen in the late 70's, Genjo Roshi has trained and studied with a who's who of Rinzai missionaries (or were they pirates?) from Japan, including Genki Takabayashi, Eido Shimano, and Joshu Sasaki. Following on the heels of their uniquely strong form of practice, Genjo Roshi brings tens of thousands hours of zazen to the table as an opening bet in this latest gambit, leveraging that work to rebuke, stabilize, and synthesize much of the chaos left in his teachers' wakes.

Don't take my word for it, just check out Genjo Roshi's highly rated archive of teishos and talks entitled "Chobo-Ji's Zen Podcast", perhaps catch a sit in Seattle at the Beacon Hill Zendo, or do similarly online via Zoom anywhere in the world – all at absolutely no cost, with links from the Chobo-Ji website. Then get to the zendo or Amazon and steal this great piece of Zen history.



Summer Sesshin

June 23 - 30

This 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 June 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, June 23, 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, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday begins at 5 a.m. and concludes around 11 a.m.

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

Daffodil Communion

Sally Zenka Metcalf, Sensei

*During Spring Sesshin a cloud of daffodils
bloomed in the heart of our Zen garden.*

*Flowers breezily dancing —
little green arms reaching skyward.*

*Day by day, sitting long dissolved my edges
and emptied my wobbling head.*

*Now and then,
I stopped at the big lobby windows
for blossom watching.*

*Suddenly, sunshine beamed over a next door roof
igniting the cloud of trembling gold.*

Edgeless, emptiness illuminated!

Communing with dancing daffodil happiness.

Board President Report

Dr. Eddie Daichi Salazar

As can be gleaned from Genjo Roshi's comments, Chobo-Ji Sangha continues to be a thriving, vibrant community. One thing to highlight: after years of hiatus, the 100 meals program has returned! It has evolved into "100 sandwiches," which has begun meeting monthly to assemble sandwiches in our kitchen for the Rainier Valley Food Bank. Special



recognition to Sally Zenka Metcalf and Dee Seishun Endelman who once again oversee the food prep.

Sangha members also participated in the City of Seattle Day of Service in May by picking up trash in our Beacon Hill neighborhood.



The six-week Spring Introductory Series concluded in May and was well received with healthy participation numbers. Our sangha book group continues, exploring *Time to Stand Up: An Engaged Buddhist Manifesto for Our Earth* by Thanissara. Felix Wazan Pekar has been ably leading our enjoyable monthly sangha hikes.



Finally, Chobo-Ji had our Annual meeting in April, electing two new members to the Board, Kathryn Zenpo Krane, and Felix Wazan Pekar. They join returning members Eddie Daichi Salazar (President), Anil Seifu Singh-Molares (Vice-President), Anne Sendo Howells (Treasurer), Michelle Muji LeSourd (Secretary), and Elijah Seigan Zupancic (member at large). The meeting included a potluck meal and an entertaining movie viewing, *Enlightenment Guaranteed*. Currently being discussed on the Board is a Torii Gate project for our grounds. The temple continues to be financially sound. Also, with new folks attending our zazen and activities, it is a time of abundance at Chobo-Ji!

Buddha's Birthday Celebration



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 Saturdays at 8:30 AM – Dharma Dialogue, some Sundays at 7:30 PM

(See Google Calendar at <https://choboji.org/schedule/> for more detail and Zoom links.)

Guest Teacher Dharma Talk (Anita Feng) ...	June 4, 7:30 p.m.
Zen Sangha Hike (location to be announced in Temple Happenings) ...	June 10, 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	June 11, 5 - 11:15 a.m.
100 Sandwiches prep ...	June 17, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Summer Sesshin (seven-day Zen intensive) ...	June 23 - 30
100 Sandwiches prep ...	July 15, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Zen Sangha Hike (location to be announced in Temple Happenings) ...	July 22, 10:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	July 23, 5 - 11:15 a.m.
Board Meeting ...	July 23, noon - 1:30 p.m.
100 Sandwiches prep ...	Aug. 5, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	Aug. 13, 5 - 11:15 a.m.
Summer Odayaka (three-day Zen intensive) ...	Aug. 18 - 20
Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with zazen, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...	Sep. 10, 5 - 11:15 a.m.
Board Meeting ...	Sep. 10, noon - 1:30 p.m.



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

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