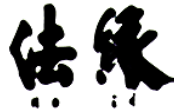




dharma CONNECTION

The Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji

2013



Daily Schedule

Sundays, 9 a.m.-noon: chanting service, zazen, teisho or dokusan
 Mondays, 7-7:45 a.m.: short chanting service, zazen
 Tuesdays, 8:30-9:30 a.m.: zazen
 Wednesdays, 6-7:45 a.m.: chanting service, zazen
 Thursdays, 7-7:45 a.m. and 6-8 p.m.: short chanting service, zazen
 First Thursday of the month: tea and discussion after zazen
 One Sunday every month: Dharma Study, 7-9 p.m.
 Tibetan practice: Saturdays, 10-11 a.m., newcomers arrive by 9:45
 First Saturday of the month: Tibetan Dharma Study, 11 a.m.
 Newcomers welcome; please arrive at least 20 minutes early
 for instruction in sitting posture and zendo procedures

Sesshin Schedule 2013-2014

Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat Roshi – abbot of the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji in Syracuse, NY,
 and Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji in the Catskill Mountains – leads sesshins at both settings.
 ZCS retreats begin at 7 p.m. Thursdays and end at 5 p.m. Sundays.
 Dates and times vary for DBZ retreats.
 For details, fees or to purchase jihatsu (meal bowl sets), e-mail admin@hoenji.org.
 More information also is available on the websites,
 www.zencenterofsyracuse.org or www.zenstudies.org.

Rohatsu 2013

Sesshin Nov. 30-Dec. 8, 2012 at DBZ;
 daily morning and evening sittings at ZCS

Zen Center of Syracuse 2014 sesshins

Winter Sesshin: Jan. 9-12
 Spring Sesshin: April 24-27
 Summer Sesshin: July 24-27
 Fall Sesshin: Oct. 16-19

Dai Bosatsu Zendo 2014 sesshins

Holy Days Sesshin: April 5-12
 Nyogen Senzaki Sesshin: May 3-7
 Anniversary Sesshin: June 28-July 5
 Golden Wind Sesshin: September 20-27
 Harvest Sesshin: November 1-6
 Rohatsu Sesshin: November 30-December 8

Dharma Connection

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Letters

Dear Sangha,

I would like to thank you for your wonderful response in support of Shinge Roshi's birthday energy portrait event, with Alok Hsu Kwang-Han. Whether you supported with your presence, from a distance or through contributions toward the gift, your loving spirit was felt.

I also would like to thank Jisho Enro for introducing me to the Mary Oliver volume of poems *A Thousand Mornings*. Jisho's readings, deeply resonating with her spirit, are a gift I continue to treasure.

I offer one poem, in particular, that so beautifully speaks to the meaning of the student-teacher relationship expressed in the calligraphic portrait that was born of that evening. It is on page 22 of this journal.

Gassho,
Jika Lauren Melnikow

The following letters were written by third-grade pupils at Ed Smith School, where Jika Lauren Melnikow taught meditation in early 2013.

Hi Mrs. Lauren,

I am Luis Menendez. I want to thank you for teaching me how to breath right. I did it last night in the middle of my home work!

Dear Lauren,

I am a third grader in Mrs. Fiacchi's classroom. Thank you for coming and teaching me how to deep breathe. You gave me some good information. I learned how to stay calm when I am really angry at someone.

Meme Scott



Jika Lauren Melnikow with third-graders at Ed Smith School.

DBZ
*Late autumn windstorm
Everything has blown away
Dawn comes undeterred
— Shinge Roshi*

First, I'd like to reflect on what a remarkable year this has been for visiting teachers at Hoen-ji. In February, Hiruta Sensei visited from Japan and spoke on the interrelationship between Zen and the Shinto breath practice of Misogi, as well as the intersection of science and Buddhist consciousness from his perspective as a professional physicist. His senior Aikido disciples from Ann Arbor, Long Island and Brooklyn Aikikai, as well as residents from Dai Bosatsu and New York Zendo, accompanied him.

Shortly after that, we had a weekend with Glenn Mullin, a Canadian-Irish Tibetan lama who is a renowned translator of Tibetan Buddhist teachings. He also has studied with a Korean Zen master, and he told us about a calligraphy given to him by the late Keido Fukushima Roshi, abbot of Tofuku-ji, whom I met several times. The calligraphy was of Ummon Zenji's well-known koan, "Every day is a good day."

Amit Goswami, a scientist who has plumbed the depths of consciousness from a Buddhist perspective, addressed us in March at Syracuse University and joined us for Tuesday morning zazen and an informal gathering.

In April we spent several wonderful days with Red Pine (Bill Porter), a Zen practitioner who has taken many pilgrimages to ancient Buddhist sites in China and has translated some of the most important Mahayana texts.

In June, the Chinese artist Alok Hsu Kwang-Han painted a special Zen calligraphic energy portrait of me based on reflections by assembled Sangha members, to be mounted and presented at my seventieth birthday gathering on Bodhidharma Day, Oct. 5. Alok and his partner, Raylene Abbott, spoke about and exhibited their work on the third floor of Forman House. A short film of the evening was made by their friends and fellow Sedona, Ariz., artists Jerry Hartleben and Shaeri Richards, which may be seen on our website.

And in September, an unforgettable presentation, "Engaged Buddhism: Listening and Responding to World

Every Day Is a Good Day

By Shinge Roshi



Shinge Roshi.
Photo by Togan Tim
Kohlbrener

Hunger,” was given by the Venerable Bhikkhu Bodhi, leading off Syracuse University’s Symposium series. The founder and chairman of Buddhist Global Relief, he called for “conscientious compassion inspired not merely by a feeling of empathy with those who suffer but by the insight that much of this suffering is structural – produced not by natural events, but by institutions, policies and laws that favor the rich and powerful at the expense of the weak, voiceless and vulnerable.” We were fortunate to have Bhikkhu Bodhi in residence for a few days; he joined in our Monday morning sitting and Wednesday morning service and zazen.

Now I’ll share excerpts from a Sunday talk I gave on March 3, about 10 days after falling on the ice and breaking my right wrist.

“Every day is a good day.” Sounds good, until we fall down and break a bone, or get a terminal diagnosis. Of course, each of us has a terminal condition, but sometimes we get it confirmed. Then we may think, “This isn’t a very good day. I’m ready for a different day. A new day.”

In his workshop on the Mahamudra teaching of shunyata (translated as emptiness or boundlessness), Glenn Mullin made an important distinction between preferential mind and prejudicial mind. Preferential mind we all know well. The Third Ancestor, Kanchi Sosan Zenji (Ch.: Jianzhi Sengcan), said, “The Perfect Way is not difficult; just refuse to make preferences.” We don’t get as enslaved by preferential mind as we do by prejudicial mind, Glenn noted. Of course, I prefer not to have broken my wrist. I would prefer to be able to tie my own robes, put on my own tabi. But it’s not of great consequence.

However, prejudicial mind has a way of really lodging in a deep place in the psyche, a place where we draw away in aversion from anything that might be threatening or disruptive to what we’ve constructed and cling to as a separate self. The Mahamudra teachings focus on how everything is a learning experience, through which we can loosen our grip on what we think reality is. Caught up in the appearance of things, we think, “This has unchanging form. This has undying substance.”

Our fundamental prejudice is to favor oneself above all others. Isn’t that the fundamental ignorance? With this prejudice, we project *an other*, a being that is separate and different and therefore threatening, and we feel we must protect ourselves and our own small sphere of influence.

But when we experience no gap between self and other, between life and death, even what seems to be the most negative situation is revealed as nothing but “the marvelous revelation of its glorious light,” as we chant in Bodhisattva’s Vow. Then indeed, every day is a good day.

Glenn Mullin also said that to do real practice, to become a bodhisattva, the most important thing is to develop equanimity. To develop equanimity, we cannot simply say, “OK, I feel peaceful,” in some sort of conceptual affirmation. As soon as we profess that, something disrupts it, right? Because it is not coming from within. We’re still thinking it’s something out there that we can grab, if we

can somehow just get the right techniques.

“Every day is a good day” is a perfect expression of inner equanimity. It comes about through the realization of no separation. Suppose there’s some little six- or eight-legged creature crawling around. Perhaps we have a very prejudicial view toward it. Immediately fear arises: “Well, if there’s one, there are bound to be others, and they’re going to invade my house and I’ll never get rid of them. Argh!” However, in Tibetan Buddhism, there is a saying that every being was once your own mother. Then what? “Hi, mom!” instead of squashing it, right? Instead of aversion, perhaps what wells up is, “Oh, thank you so much for nurturing me in the womb, going through painful labor, changing all those diapers for me. Now, if you don’t mind, I’ll just gently carry you out to that nice tree, where there are good things for you to eat.”

In my Sunday talk two weeks ago, not knowing I would soon break my wrist, I spoke about allowing myself to be vulnerable, instead of always asserting, “I can do it myself, thank you.” Beyond the pain of the moment of falling and breaking my wrist, what has really been striking to me is the extent to which we need to be seen as capable, independent – which implies separation.

So it’s a big shock when you can barely wipe your own ass. I haven’t asked anybody to help me do that, but it’s very hard when your dominant hand is out of commission! Talking about such things may seem embarrassing, but what you find out in this sort of situation is that there is no need to be embarrassed about anything, because that’s just something you’re adding to whatever it is you’re going through. Trying to tie something, or untie something, trying one-handedly to put on a Band-Aid? Impossible. The wrapper might as well be made of titanium. Teeth, elbows, various body parts come into play, but sometimes nothing works.

Many people have kindly asked me, “What can I do to help?” and I’ve been incredibly grateful to so many who have, particularly Kimpu, who to my great good fortune just happened to be staying at my house for a few months. But it’s really something, this feeling of having to ask for help and utterly giving oneself over. We’re broken, hurt – dying – and we can’t do a thing about it. To realize this, to experience it, is to understand that every day is a good day. It seems peculiar, right? But something happens, some softening into vulnerability happens.

Many of you know what I’m talking about. You can’t see out of one eye, so everything looks two-dimensional. You can’t walk because you broke your leg. You’re running to the bathroom instead of running to dokusan. You can’t get out of bed because you’ve got such terrible fibromyalgia. You’re undergoing chemotherapy and everything you took for granted is now no longer functioning. So what we discover is that we have to give up – we have to let ourselves be held in Dharmakaya. As it is. We have to relinquish our ideas about how things should be. We find out, up front and personal, that everything is the great teaching of this moment.

My dear friend Kazuaki Tanahashi painted a series of brightly colored ensos, circle paintings, that he titled “Miracles of Each Moment.” Truly, the miracle of this moment is what? Even with a cold, you’re breathing. Isn’t that a miracle? Your heart is beating. How amazing! For how much longer? How many beats do you have left? This temporary body will soon be gone.

So often when we find out something is wrong, there is a frantic feeling. “What should I do? How can I get better? What kind of treatment should I have?” And the interesting thing is, many times the medical profession really doesn’t have a clue. It can offer this and that, chemotherapy and radiation, pharmaceuticals, but essentially? Not a clue. Today we commemorated the death day of my dear friend and teacher MyoOn Maurine Stuart. When she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she had one operation and then decided to let it be and just live it out for the rest of her days. They weren’t numerous days, but they were wonderful. She sat every sesshin, even toward the end. She would have copious nosebleeds, bleeding bleeding bleeding, sitting sitting sitting, then dying dying dying.

The phrase “every day is a good day” is not like the superficial slogan “I’m OK, you’re OK.” Every day is a good day. Bloody nose day, OK. Pain, yes, pain. Medication when it’s needed, OK. No heroics necessary. All of us will face this: how to bring the jewel of our practice to this every day.

Maurine said, “We are not doing this practice to gain some superficial composure. We are not here to feel a little bit better physically. These things may happen, but they are byproducts. Gaining true insight is what we’re here for, and then we can live our lives unaffected by living and dying.”

This means without a prejudicial view. Indeed, all views are prejudicial. Not hating what may be utterly horrible. Not desperately running after what we think will make us better. “Living and dying includes everything, not just our own life and death,” she said. “Everything.”

This is what Kaz meant by calling his enso series “Miracles of Each Moment.” Everything is in this circle. An enso encompasses everything, without exception. We call what’s enclosed, this empty space, shunyata. The meaning of everything is shunyata, after all. That’s where the miracle comes from. When we gain true insight into THIS, then we can freely come, freely go, without getting entangled. We can endlessly transform ourselves without being caught up in the ongoing transformation. Without saying, “Oh, look, I’m having a transformational moment.” Letting it come, letting it go.

You know, no one asked you at the moment when you were about to be born, “Do you want it to come? Do you want life to come?” Do you remember? Just “wahhhhh.” And then – letting it go, letting it go. Bye-bye. It’s very difficult for us to really feel that way. No matter how broken down this body may be, we’re still very fond of it. We’ve gotten to know it well. We still feel, “I don’t want it to go, I’m not ready yet.” This is honest.

And we get caught up in the delusion that every day will be a good day if we

can just change our circumstances. We think, “When I get things to be the way I like them, then I’ll be able to do good Zen practice. Just the right temperature in the room, just the most obliging people around me who never criticize me, just the perfect cushion, just the right amount of sitting and kinhin.” And each of us, of course, has some variation on that “just right.” So we have to give that up.

We may fantasize, “Oh, in my next life, maybe I’ll be some beautiful bodhisattva with lots of jewels and piles of gorgeous hair, and fancy robes of gold everywhere,” thinking of the way bodhisattvas look in paintings, instead of the way we look in the mirror. Actually that’s just another illusion. Look in the mirror, and what do you see? In reality, a bodhisattva is facing you. This is the true image. It just doesn’t look like your fantasy.

Our practice is to disentangle ourselves from appearances and mental concoctions and just be with the real miracle of this moment, always flowing on. So, Maurine said, “In the midst of impermanence, we are constantly changing without getting enmeshed in any of it. This is what we are here to experience. This is absolute freedom, not relative freedom – it’s not just being free from a few icky, sticky things.

“Ultimate freedom is what we are here for. It’s what comes with true insight. And again, we do not come by this true insight by trying to become free. The very trying is an impediment. In our trying, we become grabby; we want something; we want to become enlightened. In seeking some supreme state of mind, some supernormal powers, we get caught in the leaves and branches, instead of going directly to the root.

“In truth, there is nothing to do. But we are *doing* nothing, *doing, doing, doing*, vividly. We are not sitting on the cushion daydreaming; we are not just passively letting things happen. We are dynamically present to them. Then, everything becomes quite extraordinary...

“We can feel the freedom in each moment, really feel that in the midst of pain, in the midst of sadness, in the midst of everything that life buffets us with, still, every day is a good day.”

It’s not a matter of waiting until it becomes a good day. It never becomes a good day if you wait for it to happen. Broken wrist, yes. Cancer, yes. Loss, yes. Weariness, exhaustion, yes. Right in the midst of it, however it is, “Every day is a good day.” □

Thornden Park
*Already thinning
Canopy of red and gold
Fragrance underfoot
– Shinge Roshi*

On Red Pine and the Heart Sutra

By Shugetsu
Sandra Kistler-
Connolly

Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, doing deep Prajnaparamita, clearly saw that the five skandas are sunyata, thus transcending misfortune and suffering ...

Anyone who comes to Morning Service on a regular basis knows these opening lines of the Heart Sutra. In a Dharma Talk to our Sangha in late April, author and translator Bill Porter (Red Pine) shared a profoundly insightful understanding of the Heart Sutra through his own translation of the Sanskrit version of the teaching.

In talking about his translation work, he said that he “tracks down everything [he] can, always looking for what makes the best sense,” always trying to “go back to where

the story still has some power.” He talked about working with problems with language, taking them into meditation, approaching each language problem as a koan, using meditation “to get unstuck.”

He began his discussion of the Heart Sutra by situating it for us within the context of the development and spread of Buddhism. Suffering, the Buddha taught, arises through attachment to the self. All of the Buddha’s teachings, Red Pine said, were ways to help people to let go of the

self. The various meditation practices he gave to people were designed to show them that there is no self, either internally or externally.

After the Buddha’s passing, Red Pine said, “People didn’t know what to do with his various systems.” Some followers systematized his teachings, creating what is called the Abhidharma, further studies of and commentaries on the Dharmas (the elements of existence). Red Pine called it a “periodic table of the mind ... akin to our idea that the universe is made up of atoms,” a materialist

perspective of reality. This reification of the separate existence of things, Red Pine said, directly contradicts the Buddha’s teaching on the impermanence of all things and the indivisibility of the mind.

Mahayana, he said, developed in reaction to this. The Heart Sutra can be understood as “an attempt to get back to the Buddha.” It is the “heart” of the Mahayana teachings and a direct refutation of the Abhidharmist view. Shariputra, he noted, is considered the founder of the school that developed the Abhidharma, so it makes sense that he would be the key figure to whom this sutra is addressed. These Mahayana teachings are called Prajnaparamita (transcendent wisdom) teachings: the teachings that transcend the dualistic, materialist perspective of the Abhidharma.

As he began to study the sutra and research its context, Red Pine said that he began to wonder why it is Avalokiteshvara who is revealing this Prajnaparamita teaching to Shariputra. He felt that to stop with the statement that Avalokiteshvara is the Bodhisattva of compassion was not enough. There is a deeper context here. He then told us the remarkable story (from an early Sanskrit sutra) of the Buddha’s giving this Prajnaparamita teaching to Shariputra. As Red Pine related it, the Buddha gave these teachings to Shariputra during the course of only one summer, in the evenings, and only in partial form. The Buddha would disappear during the day, so the story goes, and during those times, he would ascend to Mount Sumeru to teach his mother the full Prajnaparamita. After the Buddha’s mother died, she was reborn into this sacred realm, which Red Pine described as a “refined atmosphere, beyond the realm of form.” This, he said, is the only realm in which one can truly receive and understand this teaching. It points to “the mind before it knows, what you know before knowing.”

This is the realm from which Avalokiteshvara looks down upon the world with infinite compassion. In the process of translating this sutra, Red Pine said he had come to believe that “Avalokiteshvara represents the Buddha’s mother,” that he, in fact, “is an emanation of the Buddha’s mother.” A remarkable statement! He did caution that “I’m the only person who would ever say this, but I always go with what makes sense at the time.” And he noted that there was also an ancient Iranian goddess, well-known in northwestern India (where Red Pine said that Mahayana had developed), who had all of the characteristics that are attributed to Avalokiteshvara, including a thousand helping hands and eyes.

While he did not mention it in his Dharma talk, Avalokiteshvara is also known in feminine form in China (as Kuan-yin) and in Japan (as Kannon). There is further context for his intuitive insight that “Avalokiteshvara is teaching from the top of Mount Sumeru, beyond the realm of desire,” as an emanation of the Buddha’s mother.

Red Pine, turning to the first lines of the Heart Sutra, noted that Avalokiteshvara is “practicing deep Prajnaparamita” and that the term translated



Shinge Roshi and Red Pine during his visit in April

as “deep” (gambhira) carries the connotation of “vagina, navel, voice.” This is wisdom that is “below the surface,” he said. He then reminded us that many of the sutras refer to Prajnaparamita as a goddess who gives birth to all buddhas. In India, he said, all goddesses are called “Maha-vidya,” meaning great magic. “Vidya also refers to wisdom, as the deep wisdom that Avalokiteshvara is practicing. “Birth,” Red Pine said, “is the ultimate great magic. And the greatest magic of all is the birth of a Buddha from the womb of Prajnaparamita.”

Throughout the next section of the Heart Sutra, Red Pine noted that Avalokiteshvara is deconstructing, line by line, the subject-object dualism of the Abhidharma, drawing Shariputra away from the mistaken notion that anything has separate existence. Everything, he tells Shariputra, is “empty of self-nature” (svabhava-sunya): There is no separateness; nothing exists on its own, apart from everything else.

In the third section of the sutra, Red Pine pointed out, Avalokiteshvara replaces study of the Abhidharma with the Bodhisattva Path, telling Shariputra to “take refuge in the womb of the goddess ... and live without walls of the mind.” “No hindrance,” the sutra says, “therefore, no fear.” When one creates walls, one “develops fear about what’s outside the wall,” Red Pine said. But in Prajnaparamita, one “can see through the delusions that form the walls.”

In listening to Red Pine’s commentary, I recalled that the name of the Buddha’s mother was Maya, a word that is often translated as “creative illusion.” It carries a double connotation as the illusion that keeps people from seeing the non-dual nature of reality and as the wisdom that leads people to liberation. A story from one of the early sutras relates that when she was carrying the future Buddha in her womb, Maya’s body would become transparent to her family at times, and they were able to see the baby shining through her womb. Red Pine’s intuitive insight into the interconnectedness of the Buddha’s mother, Avalokiteshvara, and Prajnaparamita as the goddess from whose womb (this transparent womb without walls, without boundaries) all buddhas are born seemed to make profound sense.

The final section of the Heart Sutra (as Red Pine divided it) culminates in Avalokiteshvara giving Shariputra the great mantra that “heals all suffering” by drawing him into the refuge of Prajnaparamita: “gate, gate, para gate, parasam gate, Bodhi sva-ha!” Red Pine commented that the word “gate” is a special case ending that cannot mean (as it’s usually translated) “gone.” He said that it means something like “into the gone, into the gone, beyond,” beyond the realm of desire, into the boundless womb from which all buddhas are born. □

*cicadas chorus
their oceanic movement
deepening evening
– Shinge Roshi*

Amit Goswami is a pleasant-looking man with a twinkle in his eye and a funny hat and sandals. You would never guess he is the author of a quantum mechanics textbook and a professor emeritus in theoretical quantum physics at the University of Oregon’s Institute of Theoretical Physics.

I had seen his DVD, “The Quantum Activist,” before he visited Syracuse University in March and had some clue that his ideas are a paradigm shift away from the conventional scientific method currently in use, which says that our world is based on units of matter. Goswami postulates that consciousness is the foundation of being. Terms from our Buddhist practice – such as Mind, dependent co-arising, Thisness and impermeability – fit well into his framework, which is based on solid findings in quantum physics.

His path to Syracuse was itself a bit like Indra’s net. It started in March 2011, when Keigetsu Yao Xu was wandering around on YouTube looking at a video by Antishay about weight loss, Zeitgeist and living outside socially constructed boxes, which led her to a clip of “Amit Goswami, Quantum Physics & Consciousness.”

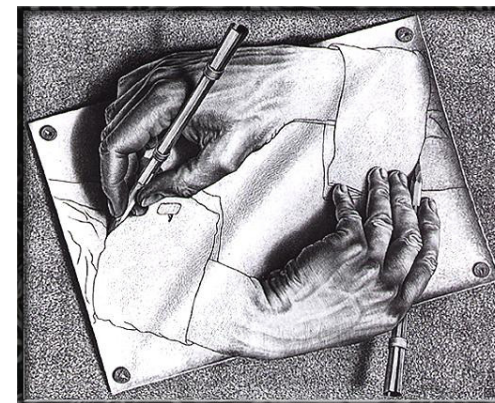
“Looking backward, I just started to see my part of that Indra’s net,” she said. In a video interview, Goswami gave an analogy of M.C. Escher’s lithograph of two hands. The left hand is drawing the right hand, and the right hand is drawing the left hand. But the question is: Who is drawing? Neither the right hand nor the left hand, it is the artist.

“Consciousness is the ground of being,” Goswami says. Ultimately, he wants to bring this worldview to the field of quantum physics. “My heart welcomed this message more than any groundbreaking scientific discovery, because to me the message was a reminder of the interconnectedness between you and me.”

Goswami offers scientifically based answers to why we sometimes hear the phone ringing and know who is calling before we answer, why we think about someone we haven’t seen for years and run into them a few days

Indra’s Net for the 21st Century

By Mokuon
Karen Nezelek



M.C. Escher’s
lithograph of two
hands.



Amit Goswami speaking at the Zen Center. Photo by Keigetsu Yao Xu

later, and why close friends can “know” what each is thinking. He wants to help scientists understand that these kinds of events have scientific underpinnings and are not just coincidences.

In one study that he co-authored, two people meditated together for twenty minutes with the

intention of connecting with each other. Then they were isolated in Faraday rooms, which allow no electronic signals, sound, vibrations or light to enter. Each was hooked up to brain wave monitors. One person was shown a flash of light on a screen. The other person saw no flash of light on his/her screen. But his/her brain instantly registered having seen a flash of light. A third person, who had not meditated with the test subjects, experienced no such brain patterns.

At one point in his lecture, Goswami mentioned how we constantly shift between a state of consciousness during meditation and our daily life in the now, which he characterizes as a cycle of “do-be-do-be-do.” He discussed a number of experiments that support his idea that we link together in this state of consciousness and can set intentions together. In other words, if many people set the intention of saving our planet from ecological destruction, we can actually effect change if we’re in an undifferentiated state of consciousness through meditation. On the other hand, if we intend to conjure a Mercedes Benz in our garage, forget it. The Mercedes starts with a conceptual state of mind. Intentions cannot be directed in this material mental state.

His visit continues to unfold for me. Several of us in the Wednesday sittings at Hendricks Chapel are reading the original studies he summarized in his DVD and SU lecture. I have started his book “The Quantum Doctor” to explore my own health process. I continue to watch and discuss his DVD with friends. Occasionally, I pull up his website (www.amitgoswami.org) and poke around. In some sense, Goswami’s visit has let me explore the unity of my rational and intuitive ways of being.

As for Keigetsu, who had been struggling with feelings of competitiveness in her attempts to lose weight and fit in with others, Goswami’s teaching helped her to see that interconnectedness is the basis of happiness.

“Amit didn’t make me skinnier,” says Keigetsu. “I am still trying to maintain

some target weight. However, rather than (seeing it) as an obsession or as self-esteem junk food, he helped me to notice how consciousness is the foundation of being and how my initial weight goal came from being competitive and from a false conception of being separated from others.”

She discovered Goswami’s interview video just before deciding to come to Syracuse University. “It played a huge role to encourage me to start and embrace the life practice of Buddhism,” she says. □

DBZ Anniversary Sesshin 2013

*Birds insects humans
Taking refuge in the green
Rain day after day*

*Breeze moves through the trees
Branches nod in agreement
Then utter stillness*

— Shinge Roshi

The Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi sat in a back pew of Hendricks Chapel, looking inconspicuous except for his red Theravadan robes, as he watched people filter in to hear him speak on “Engaged Buddhism: Listening and Responding to World Hunger.”

He started, in his precise way, by disclaiming his credentials, calling himself an “accidental activist.”

“I am in no way a food policy expert,” he said. “By temperament, I’m not an activist at all.” Even so, in the five years his all-volunteer organization, Buddhist Global Relief, has existed, it has launched sixty projects in countries from Vietnam and Cambodia, to parts of Africa, to Sri Lanka and India, to Haiti, to the United States. Its mission is to combat chronic hunger and malnutrition.

A scholar, translator and author of several books who teaches at Bodhi Monastery in Lafayette, N.J., and Chuang Yen Monastery in Carmel, N.Y., Bhikkhu Bodhi founded BGR after writing a magazine essay on activism a few years ago. The editors renamed his article “A Challenge to Buddhists,” and his students said, “We have to take up the challenge presented by the essay.” So they formed an

Battling World Hunger

By Meigetsu
Rebecca Beers

More About the Talk

A reception followed Bhikkhu Bodhi's talk, at which his books were sold and food and refreshments were organized by Syracuse University's campus catering. Tops Markets donated much of the food; Hendricks Chapel paid for the rest.

In tribute to Bhikkhu Bodhi's work, the Zen Center also helped organize a coalition of local organizations that address hunger. Hoen-ji also contributed fresh produce to the Food Bank of Central New York from the large garden at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Kentoku Joe O'Brien and Kaijo Matt Russell harvested the produce, which came from the garden created there by a beloved elderly resident, Kiyuu-san Yokoyama, who died August 7, right before O-Bon.

Bhikkhu Bodhi's visit was sponsored by The Humanities Center, Hendricks Chapel, the South Asia Center, David B. Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics and the Department of Religion, in cooperation with the Zen Center of Syracuse, The CNY Medicine Buddha Prayer Sangha, InterFaith Works of Central New York and the SU Student Buddhist Association in the Division of Student Affairs.

organization and settled on hunger as a cause because of its urgency.

Some 870 million people suffer from hunger and malnutrition worldwide – one of every seven and a half people, he says. Ten million die of hunger and hunger-related issues. In the U.S., 50 million people suffer from food insufficiency and 47 million use food stamps.

BGR works by “forming partnerships in countries ... with small regional organizations that know the people, the culture and the language,” he said. It also partners with larger worldwide groups like Oxfam and Helen Keller International. “We aim at small-scale ... sustainable solutions to hunger that try to deal with the problem at its root.”

For example, BGR learned early on that “one of the best antidotes to hunger was improving the status of girls and woman,” because “women will spend much more of the household income on food and family than men will do.” Since 2009, BGR has been developing partnerships in Cambodia that supply food scholarships to poor families on the condition that the girls remain in school. Frequently, in poor families girls drop out of school to work and often wind up in brothels, he said. Last year BGR learned that thirty girls in the program had finished high school and qualified to enter a university. “Quite literally, it brought tears to my eyes,” said Bhikkhu Bodhi.

Nevertheless, Bhikkhu Bodhi says that such small-scale solutions will not solve global hunger. “Hunger is a condition fundamentally caused by social

and economic conditions; thus, the final solution must be social and economic justice.”

Dramatic changes will be required by government systems, and this will require changes in the power structure. Still, relief work is essential, he said. The problem is extensive and multifaceted.

“The demand for food is rising. The world population is expected to increase from 7 billion to 9.2 billion people by the year 2050. That means that by 2050, the world must produce sixty percent more food than it produces at present. At the same time, supplies are under serious threat due to soil erosion, diminishing water reserves and climate change,” he said.

Though the statistics seem grim, the World Food Program reports that to eliminate child hunger altogether would only cost \$3.2 billion – “a drop in the bucket” compared to military spending.

“Hunger is not inevitable, but it is the byproduct of a broken food system. The key point is that this food system is designed to enrich powerful corporations, not to alleviate hunger and promote health,” he said. “The system is subservient to wealth, which means that hunger is essentially a political problem and a problem of economic and social justice to be resolved by changes in the balance of power.” The beneficiaries of the present system are industrial agricultural corporations, giant international food companies, supermarket chains, chemical corporations, petroleum corporations, transportation corporations, political elites and powerful investors “who use the food system somewhat like a casino in order to increase their wealth.”

To change this, people must develop “a sense of moral outrage, a conviction that we should not let people die in order that some might expand their profits.

“The principle of food as a human right must be imposed globally and must be enforced as a matter of policy,” he said. There must be “a shift from a model of large industrial farms to smaller, more organic, more ecologically sustainable farms in which the prime beneficiaries are the farmers themselves and the people who consume their food.” We need to “reallocate control over the food system from the few who are extremely wealthy and powerful to the many – the people working on the ground level who grow the food and sell it in the market.”

It is a daunting task, but Bhikkhu Bodhi's resolve and awareness of the issue are inspiring. Not surprisingly, he donated the entire \$5,000 stipend for giving the talk directly to BGR. As Shinge Roshi said when introducing him, he's a gentle monk of moral integrity who “walks the talk.” □



Shinge Roshi and Bhikkhu Bodhi. Photo by Reiko Cynthia Van Zoeren

Celebrating 70 Years

By Kanro
Christine
Dowling

Some seventy people joined together in honor of Shinge Roshi's seventieth birthday this fall at Hoen-ji. The two-day event included a celebration October 5 and an all-day sitting on October 6. Sangha members and friends came to celebrate from Hoen-ji, Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji and New York Zendo Shobo-ji. The presence of all Sangha, whether near or far, was truly felt in spirit.

On Saturday, the festivities included an invigorating performance by Adanfo, Etse Nyadedzor's drumming and dancing troupe, on the front porch of the Forman House.



Etse Nyadedzor, leader of the Adanfo drumming and dancing troupe. Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

Roshi joined the troupe in 2001, when Etse came to the United States and started teaching. It was fun to see her perform and feel how much she enjoys drumming. The performance was excellent, and many joined in the dancing. Many families attended, and Etse led an introductory drumming workshop for Dharma Kids participants and beginners of all ages. We are grateful to Etse and all of the performers for sharing their talents in celebration of Roshi's birthday.

Afterward everyone gathered in the Forman House for a potluck buffet dinner. Many thanks for the wonderful food offerings. It was beautiful to see the harvest colors on our plates, matching the hilltop

trees' hues in greens, golds, reds and ambers. Autumn combusting inside and out gave delicious nourishment for body, heart and spirit.

We then gathered on the porch to present Roshi's birthday gift, a calligraphic energy portrait by Alok Hsu Kwang-han. Alok was a visiting artist at Hoen-ji this summer. During his time here, Jika Lauren Melnikow coordinated an evening when the Sangha came together with Roshi, while Alok felt the energy of their connection and interpreted it with brushes and ink in a calligraphy that he created in the moment. The portrait was sent to Shanghai to be mounted on a silk scroll as a gift for Roshi's birthday.

Serendipitously, Alok's visit this summer took place around the same time as Hoen-ji's Mortgage Liberation celebration. This event was held in gratitude to all beings

and in honor of the many individuals who contributed in innumerable ways to make it possible to find this temple home and secure it as a refuge for generations to come.

This temple is here because of Roshi's leadership and devotion, combined with the Dharma's provision and many people's efforts and sincere practice over the years. It is wonderful how the energy of our teacher, our Sangha and our temple were woven into the portrait and offered in celebration of Roshi's life.



Shinge Roshi drums with fellow members of Adanfo. Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

When presenting the scroll on October 5, Doshin David Schubert recounted how Alok described the energy that was felt and reflected in the calligraphy as a profound feeling of fertile nourishing soil and then a strong surging energy of growth skyward.

At the close of the evening, Roshi expressed deep appreciation for this precious life and for the efforts of everyone who made the celebration possible. She shared her gratitude for this beautiful Sangha and how moved she was to receive so many birthday wishes and offerings and reminded everyone that the greatest gift is continuing their sincere practice.

As I looked at the calligraphy for the first time, its energy reminded me of the power, strength and vitality of a tall pine tree, growing for many years out of the fertile collaboration of sun, wind, rain and soil. To me, it looked like our practice, our lives, our ancestors' lives, our earth's lives – how creation happens, how things bloom. You may recall some of the meanings given for Shinge are "heart blooming room" and "compassion blossoming space." So, an energy portrait of Shinge Roshi reflects universal energies of growth, bloom, life, creation, soaring – how appropriate, flowers and snowflakes alike!

The celebration continued Sunday as we gathered for an all-day sitting. The Valley was covered in mist rising

Film of the evening

Author and filmmaker Shaeri Richards and actor/director/cinematographer Jerry Hartleben captured the creation of Shinge Roshi's birthday energy portrait by Alok Hsu Kwang-Han on film, which is available on the website www.zencenterofsyracuse.org, under "Publications & Media."

through the sun. Morning Service began and the temple walls resounded with the exuberant chanting and vigorous nen of a full zendo. Refreshing sounds of rainfall gave way to silence. The zendo atmosphere was truly amazing. Sitting together wholeheartedly created such a deep presence of THIS! It was vividly energizing yet with profound dynamic stillness. True Origins.

After morning sitting, the tenzos, Joraku JoAnn Cooke and Togan Tim Kohlbrenner, offered us nourishment from this good earth. Each bite was so alive and imbued with loving care. Once again harvest colors filled our bowls and our souls.

As we ate mindfully and silently, our awareness allowed us to truly taste each bite with grateful hearts. Our Sangha also extends gratitude to Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz, Jisho Judith Fancher, Gyoshin Virginia Lawson, all of the residents who worked so hard on preparations, Jika Lauren Melnikow, Joraku JoAnn Cooke, Togan Tim Kohlbrenner, Daigan David Arnold and Reiko Cynthia Van Zoeren, who served as officers for the day.

In the afternoon participants engaged in temple caretaking during a samu period and then returned to the zendo for sarei (tea) and zazen, followed by a ceremony in commemoration of Bodhidharma Day. Roshi offered an insightful teisho inspired by the teachings of Bodhidharma on suffering and practice. It will be available on our website.

During the closing ceremony, Roshi offered encouraging words. I do not recall them exactly, but I will attempt to express the heart of what she shared: "We have ritual in our practice. There is great freedom found within it. It holds us, reminds us, that we are always being held. We are in the lap of the Buddha, held by 'I Love You.'"

As a Sangha, we thank you, Roshi. You have been on this path for some sixty years and have led Hoen-ji for nearly forty years. Thank you for holding us in your "I love you." □

Syracuse January 2013
Into the red dawn
Exploding from bare branches
Black tumult of crows
 -- Shinge Roshi



Sangha members surround the dancers on the porch of the Forman House. Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

In the Moment: A Zen Portrait

By Jika Lauren Melnikow

Shinge Roshi's seventieth birthday year provided a unique opportunity for the Sangha to express deep gratitude for her endless vow. With her October birthday in mind, Sangha members gathered together on a June evening to create her birthday gift. For this art experience, we called on renowned Chinese calligraphic artist Alok Hsu Kwang-Han, whom Roshi had met earlier in Arizona.

Alok considers Zen as art, and art as Zen. His creations are a striking synthesis of the beauty of Chinese calligraphy and the spontaneity and simplicity of Zen. He considers his calligraphic portraits to be portals that one enters to "come home" to oneself. His offering of this calligraphic energy portrait was indeed a generous gift.

We at Hoen-ji had an integral part in this creation. Alok described the portrait as representing Roshi in relation to her Sangha. Forty Sangha members and friends came together in the Forman House attic, along with Alok's partner Raylene Abbott, who also offered her own calligraphy, *Bodhisattva Behind the Veil*, expressed through movement.

After Raylene's graceful dance, Alok introduced selected pieces, calligraphic paintings based on classic Zen koans.

Then the portrait process began with Alok asking Roshi to share a bit about herself. We were reminded of our history, and the translations of Roshi's Dharma names: Roko, meaning Shining Dew, and Shinge, Heart/Mind Flowering.

Sangha members were invited to express whatever their experience has been with Roshi as teacher. One by one, heartfelt offerings were made. One person described instantly seeing through Roshi's clear eyes. Another commented on her strong presence. Grandmotherly kindness, love and acceptance as one is, infinite patience and insight, compassion, humor and integrity were all mentioned. Roshi was described as one who leads others forward, showing the way. Her example was described as the ultimate teaching – doing what is put before her, preferences aside, with strength and grace in each movement and decision.

In this atmosphere of palpable appreciation and love, Alok began his calligraphy. It was indeed a swift, in-the-moment process – spontaneous and dy-



Alok Hsu Kwang-Han ready to create Roshi's portrait. Photo by Evie Dumanian

namic. Even the choice of the Xuan paper size was made in that moment.

Alok hung the finished work, inviting Roshi to comment. She first noted the weight at the bottom, an emergence from deep within the earth. She saw the semicircular shape as representing the kindness, compassion, love – “all these soppy things” – that people had expressed, as she put it. Bursting up from that, she saw a powerful, strong energy force with no end.

When asked for his description, Alok said he saw Roshi as cultivator of fertile ground, a farmer or gardener, with an endless, powerful energy force.

“We will look at this portrait together (through the years) and see what it reveals about her (Shinge Roshi) being in our midst,” he said. □



Alok's calligraphic portrait. It has, since this photo, been sent to Shanghai and wet-mounted on a silk scroll.
Photo by Evie Dumanian

The Gardener

*Have I lived enough?
Have I loved enough?
Have I considered Right Action enough, have I
come to any conclusion?
Have I experienced happiness with sufficient gratitude?
Have I endured loneliness with grace?*

*I say this, or perhaps I'm just thinking it.
Actually, I probably think too much.
Then I step out into the garden,
where the gardener, who is said to be a simple man,
is tending his children, the roses.*

– Mary Oliver

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Gratitude

By Jisho Judith Fancher

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jisho Judy Fancher was asked to speak at Spring Sesshin on the first anniversary of her ordination. What follows are edited excerpts from her talk.

These words that I'm offering come from my experience ... here (gestures with hand on hara). I ask you to receive them according to how they are for you, here (hand on hara), as well.

I'd like to share something I wrote recently:

*in the crepuscular light along Onondaga Creek,
two heads pop up from the bushes, ears horizontal,
eyes wide-round
Flash!
five yearlings
Whoosh!
pounding earth, white tail pointing up
mr. cardinal, (bird call sounds), looking for a mate ...
they live
here
spring sounds resound,
hear*

Roshi asked me to speak on my one-year anniversary of ordination. Last year, on Earth Day, I was ordained as a Rinzai Zen nun, and ... here I am, beginning. I really am an old beginner. I received my precepts thirteen years



Jisho Judy Fancher.
Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

ago, Year of the Dragon, and twelve years later, also Year of the Dragon, I was ordained. I am truly at the very beginning. As I continue, I welcome your feedback and correction with gratitude. Please, don't hesitate to share these sentiments with me because you think I am some kind of anything, because I'm not, I'm just ordinary. Devoted and ordinary.

First, I must express my deep, heartfelt gratitude for my teacher, Shinge Roshi. This

special affinity, *innen*, has truly transformed my life and helped me so much. I cannot begin to requite everything that I have received from all of my teachers: Roshi, my parents, other teachers along the way, and my Sangha – Sangha here, and Sangha not visible. It empowers my practice to feel that deep appreciation and to serve in return. You practice with me and offer out of your generosity, and compassion. You have helped me. I am deeply grateful.

When Red Pine was here, in part of his talk he spoke about our lineage. He said that Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Zen who came from India, had two disciples, Eka, and a woman disciple whose name we don't know. Eka had only Sozan as his disciple. Sozan had three disciples. Doshin had perhaps fifty, and Gunin followed, having 500 studying with him. When we get to the Sixth Patriarch, Eno, there were 1,000 disciples. One thousand disciples! How does this come about? They are devoting their lives to studying with a teacher. We here at Hoen-ji have a profoundly realized teacher, right here, available, offering herself to each one of us. That is incredibly fortunate. So precious.

In *Bodhisattva's Vow* we chant, "None can be other than the marvelous revelation of its glorious light. This realization made our Ancestral Teachers and virtuous Zen Masters ..." I'm going to interject something. Let us not wait until they are ancestors! Let us express and requite beneficence now! Our teacher is "extending tender care with a worshipping heart, even to such beings as beasts and birds," and to each one of us.

I hope these are encouraging words. That is my intention. We all need encouragement. Be encouraged to come here even when you may feel you have too much on your plate, and you think, "Maybe not this time, I am not going to make it this time, but next time. I'll find a time." However, try it. You might find that it goes differently afterward. It actually helps you do your work in a different way, with intention and attention. Try it.

It's so easy to feel overwhelmed. Even when you feel this, and you are not able to come to the zendo, that is the moment to sit a little bit and breathe wherever you are. Attention and dedication to breath. Then return to what you are doing. Maybe you are frustrated, maybe angry or maybe anxious? Just return. Right here. Then open to no knowing, just "we'll see."

It's possible to interrupt that kind of thing, when our mind runs and we say, "Oh, I hate this. I am doing it again. Ugh! I really don't feel angry, but, gee, it's coming out that way. My heart's not in it. But...uh...uh." Return. Return to your intention. Return your attention to your intention.

I made a calligraphy that hangs on my door at the student residence. The first line is from Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, "When you make some mistake, that is where you establish your practice." I put a line, "There is no other place."

Now this "mistake" could be anything really: an obstacle, or something that you prefer not to experience or a big mistake. Whatever you encounter, there is the place to establish your practice. This is my experience. It's all about your own experience.

I want to share an old Chinese story told to me by Eido Roshi. First though, I do want to say that I honor his teaching, and also, I acknowledge his mistakes as lessons for me. I remember once I asked him if I could place a photo of him on my altar. He replied, "Temporarily, temporarily." Another time he said to me, "There is no teacher other than you."

There was a Chinese farmer who had one horse left helping him to till the fields. One day the horse ran away – great misfortune. One night, the horse came back – great good fortune. Later, the horse disappeared – great misfortune. Then the horse reappeared with a whole brood of horses! Great good fortune. The farmer's son was working with the horses and broke his leg – great misfortune. Shortly thereafter, the army came, conscripting all the young men to go off and fight at war. Because of his injury, the son did not have to go off to war. Great good fortune.

So, for me, this lesson is: no knowing. Of course, it goes much more deeply than the story, and what we see here, or feel or think we know.

In 2008, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had a lumpectomy, radiation and several biopsies between then and now. This past October 2012, I felt some acute pain in my armpit. It was during sesshins at DBZ that it really was thrust upon my consciousness. I thought, hmmm, that could be a lymph node. I went to see my doctor, but we missed it. We made a mistake in thinking the pain I had in my armpit was referred pain from my shoulder. I started physical therapy for the shoulder, but that wasn't helping. So, in February 2013, I had a shoulder MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) to get a picture of what might be causing the pain. I got a call two days later: "You have a few tears in your rotator cuff, nothing that needs surgery. There's degeneration due to age. However, you have an abnormal lymph node."

Oh, OK.

That was the beginning of a journey I have been on ever since.

*this morning I walked a way I had gone before
not on the path
I took a step I thought would hold me
and fell into the creek
rush on
rush on ...*

This is my experience right now. One could think of it as misfortune. However, I see it as a great teacher. The Great Teaching. I am living with cancer. And, I am OK.

Why am I OK? Why do I say I am OK? This practice is probably why I say I am OK. The deep Zen call. This Great Matter. Living dying. Not life and death. Living dying. We talk about the Great Death ...

It may seem upside down for me to say, yet I feel fortunate that I get to work with this living with cancer, and at some point, living with dying with cancer.

Or you know, I could be traveling or a lightning bolt strikes me and I'm dead. In any case, it brings your attention to this moment – and “not knowing.” You can't rely on doing it later, “it'll be different later,” “I'm gonna wait.” No, no, no. Can't afford to wait. We'll see what tomorrow is, what next week is, when we get there.

At the same time, there's an element of patience. Patient forbearance. I have had an up-and-down encounter with this diagnosis. First, there was the misdiagnosis in December of shoulder pain. Then, in February, I had just walked out of the Regional Oncology Center with a clean bill of health, no cancer. The next day I receive a call telling me about the enlarged palpable lymph node – cancer?

I had surgery to remove lymph nodes, quite a number of which were found to be cancerous. Then, I moved on to the next stage: chemotherapy treatment, assaulting my body with poison to hopefully kill the cancer. I was referred to a doctor for that component, and she didn't listen to my concerns. I spent an hour with her, and she wasn't listening to me. I had to make a very difficult decision, to find another caregiver. It was hard for me. Fortunately, Shinge Roshi, Jikyo, Myoko, and others said, “You can't go there!”

The new oncologist that I am seeing is very thorough. She wanted to do all the tests that hadn't been done in order to gain a complete picture to inform our treatment decisions. One of those tests was an X-ray of my head. The office called me the Friday before sesshin and said, “Well, um, the head CT showed that you have a brain tumor, a metastasis to your brain. We will need to do an enhanced MRI Monday.”

“Oh.”

It was a shock. I had felt so much relief when I found this wonderful new doctor. Then this. Again, a reminder of we'll see. We'll see.

From the start, the hardest thing for me has been when I've needed to share this news with others because you are my family. I did share this new development with a few, and it was devastating.

Monday afternoon, following the second MRI, I receive a call saying it is not a brain tumor, it's a vascular abnormality. “We don't know what it is, but it's not a tumor, and we'll keep an eye on it.”

*surprise
good fortune
walk straight on the zig-zag path
big zig friday, big zag monday, and ...
no knowing*

I have a lot of support. I have received so much. Jikyo has given me her apartment since before my surgery and for me to go through sixteen weeks of chemotherapy. All the residents, other Sangha members, they are all offering

their support and concern, and I feel so loved. Everyone shows so much caring and consideration for my well-being.

It isn't easy for anyone, to have someone in your Sangha who has cancer. It brings up feelings in you. It's important that you support each other around this issue. If things come up and it's difficult, notice your feelings. Please be there for each other. I am open to speaking about anything. You can always talk to me, and each other. I can't do it for you. You have to do your own stuff. I'm doing my stuff.

What we encounter in our life is our teacher. Even feelings that come up: “This isn't fair. Why is this happening to me?” Who else do you want it to happen to? What does that matter? This is it. This is where you are.

I want to close with something by Ikkyu, the 15th-century Zen Master and poet.

*without beginning
utterly without end
the mind is born to struggles and to stresses
and dies
and that is emptiness*

Autumn 2013

These days people ask me how I am. I say, “I'm here.” In many ways it comes to a single word: welcome.

*welcome
wonder
joy
as it is welcome*

When I encountered this offering from Ryokan, in a book of his poems recently translated by Kaz Tanahashi, every word expressed my present experience entirely.

*Since I left the household,
throwing myself into the world as it is,
I have erased all dates.
Yesterday I lived on a green mountain;
today I play in town.
More than one hundred pieces patch my robe.
A single bowl knows no years.
Leaning on my walking stick, I sing into the
clear night;
laying out a straw mat, I sleep under the moon.
Who says I don't count?
This body of mine is just this.**

Thank you all for your care, concern and love. I offer you the same with

gratitude for the privilege of being dharma sisters and brothers sharing this path. □

*Ryokan Poem From *Sky Above, Great Wind: The Life and Poetry of Zen Master Ryokan*, by Kazuaki Tanahashi, © October 9, 2012. Reprinted by arrangement with Shambhala Publications, Inc., Boston, MA. www.shambhala.com.



Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz and Jisho Judy Fancher share a happy time at Hoen-ji.
Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

August Bittersweet 2013
Insect crescendo
Farmer's stand overflowing
Nights growing colder
— Shinge Roshi

“The Pause” at DBZ

By Markus
Pierce-Brewster

EDITOR'S NOTE: Markus Pierce-Brewster was introduced to meditation through Diane Grimes' Communication of Contemplative Engagement class at Syracuse University. He met Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz at a Hendricks Chapel sitting and began attending zazen at the Zen Center and building a relationship with Shinge Roshi and the Sangha. Because of this blossoming relationship, he was invited to Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji, to help with and attend the traditional ceremony of O-bon. He is now a resident at Hoen-ji.



Markus' boat for O-bon celebration. Photo by Diane Grimes

My first night at Dai Bosatsu Zendo was exactly how I imagined it. I had always thought it would be this remote temple in the middle of nowhere – only the pictures didn't do it justice. From the temple hidden in the trees to the lake and waterfall, it looked so

beautiful when we arrived.

The first time we sat in the zendo it felt like my favorite

Jet Li movie, “Fist of Legends,” where Jet Li fights twenty to thirty guys in what I now know is a zendo. I thought, this is going to be amazing, then I was humbly reminded of the Zen perspective on expectations. Kneeling on my bench, I was fine for about twenty minutes of meditation and the O-bon rehearsal, then my knees started to ache and it felt like we had been sitting for hours. My feet were falling asleep. Every time we stood up I felt like I was on the verge of spraining my ankles. The shirt under my robe was drenched in sweat. Suffice it to say, I was very uncomfortable.

To top it off, my O-bon rehearsal was beyond embarrassing. I didn't know who to bow to, when to bow or when to walk to the altar. I knew I had to be annoying somebody with my noisiness. I went to bed that night feeling unaccomplished, but I could not even be upset. It was implied that I as well as the other new guests would have some issues in the beginning. I kept reminding myself that it's not personal, they are just trying to prepare.

The day of O-bon I spent the majority of my time cleaning the zendo and doing maintenance work on the grounds: chopping wood for the bonfire, mowing lawns, creating a path of torches and candles, and even cleaning up goose poop and driving a tractor. I did each job as it came to me, seeing one thing at a time but never really stopping to realize what it was all collectively for. I just did whatever I was told to the best of my abilities. I had this moment, though, after I had finished mowing the lawn around the guest house, this kind of moment that author Alice Walker refers to as “the pause.” Before I moved on to the next task I stopped and began staring into the lake. In that instant, everything just felt right, as much of a cliché as that might sound like. I just stared off into the lake. I was standing in the shade, yet I could feel the warmth of the sun and I could feel the direction the wind was blowing across my skin. It was so quiet and serene.

Not a single thought crossed my mind during that time. But in that moment, in my body, in my mind, my heart and in my soul, everything just felt right. All of the thoughts that paralyze me with anxiety on a regular basis, all the sadness and pain I can never not feel during the day, all of the worrying that pits in my stomach, the regret and overwhelming self-loathing, disappeared. It was just me – staring into a lake, feeling for once in a long time that everything would be all right.

For all I know, this could be nothing more than a delusion and nothing will ever be all right, but that was how I felt then. I have lost count of how many times I have broken down this year mentally, physically, emotionally. I'm far from fine and my issues are not all resolved yet. I know the trauma of this year may last a very long time, maybe even a lifetime. But in this single extraordinary moment I felt like everything would be all right, that all is as it should be right now and I will still get to where I need to be when I need to be there.

O-bon was new to me so I'm not sure how one typically feels after the boat ceremony. But sitting on a log at the bonfire, just gazing off and taking pictures,

I felt this genuine sense of renewal and hope, hope for myself and my issues, my family and their individual issues, hope for those who attended and their struggles, and hope for humanity. It was along the lines of what Shinkon, the head monk of Dai Bosatsu, had said during morning zazen – we are mindful of every little thing we do to create and understand order within ourselves and our lives, then within our neighbors, then within our community, and eventually the world and universe. The hope and honest sense of renewal I felt was rooted in me, and I could feel it emanating to those around the bonfire and towards all those who were not in attendance. Having never lost any loved ones or close friends, I have never been to a funeral. O-bon was the closest thing to it that I have experienced. It's such a sad event, but at the same time something that was enjoyed by everyone. At the lake chanting Namu Dai Bosa and at the bonfire mingling and taking pictures, I witnessed two separate spectrums of emotions which only made this occasion that much more meaningful.

I never would have guessed that by the time I left Dai Bosatsu, I would be feeling disappointed, despite missing my bed and meat. I knew this was a great chance to help my meditation practice and immerse myself in Rinzaï Zen practice, but I did not think I would enjoy it so much. From the chanting to jihatsu (meal bowls), everything was so new and exciting. I just tried hard to not be as much of a naive outsider as I actually was and by the end I felt that I did a good job. This trip was akin to going abroad because I'm in this completely new environment with people I barely understand, with practices I hardly know. I just wanted to soak in as much as possible.

Dai Bosatsu exceeded any preconceived notions I could have had – from the meditation in the robes to the entire O-bon ceremony. I feel very fortunate that I was able to come and experience this and even more fortunate that by the end of the trip Shinge Roshi was kind enough to tell me that I'm always welcome there. I have moved around so much since I started playing college football four years ago that it's nice to have somewhere I can consider a home. I genuinely feel grateful. I thank Jikyo and Shinge Roshi for allowing me to share this event with them and for the acceptance and warm welcome by the denizens of Hoen-ji and Kongo-ji. □



Markus bows before the giant Buddha on the shore of Beecher Lake. Photo by Diane Grimes

Winter and Summer

*When will it end, this yearning to be elsewhere?
Come mid-June, I will be sixty-nine.
In the same month, as if to blunt that fact,
a long-awaited grandchild will be born.
No greater joy – and, in truth, no better
reason to be exactly where I am.
Why, then, this infant longing to repeat
the past or throw a lifeline to the future?
To live in another climate zone or time?
Will she be blonde, or will her hair be brown?
Whom will she resemble? Wait and see,
I tell myself, as if that might allay
this urge to hold a child not yet born
and trade midwinter for a summer's day.*

– Ben Howard

The day dawned bright and sunny. It was June 23, 2013 – the day we were to celebrate the Zen Center's financial liberation.

After seventeen years in debt, we were free. The road to bondage had begun with a vagabond collection of meditators in Roshi's attic who needed more space. We looked at – and ran away from – a house in the Westcott area that we judged to be too costly – \$96,000. Then in 1996 we moved into and later bought the Joshua Forman House, at 266 W. Seneca Turnpike, for just under \$200,000. After several renovations and with the acquisition of the neighboring property to use as a student residence, the mortgage swelled to a whopping \$300,000. It was daunting. Some couldn't even afford to make regular membership contributions.

As we waited for the Mortgage Liberation party to begin that Sunday, we browsed through placards of photos from those early days: zazen at Dale and Ann Tussing's East Seneca Turnpike home during one of Hoen-ji's itinerant periods; zazen in Shinge Roshi's attic, which served as Hoen-ji's home for a decade or so; zazen at Alverna

Mortgage Liberation at Last

By Meigetsu
Rebecca Beers

Heights, where we held sesshins for a handful of years. Sangha members smiling and eating and dancing and posing in groups after sesshins. Old friends and new.

We gathered on the Forman House porch for a luscious potluck lunch provided by our many good cooks. As we chanted sutras expressing our gratitude, the day couldn't have been lovelier. By the time lunch was over and the speeches began, a few clouds started to roll in. Walt Patulski spoke about finding the property and leading a group of us there for a first look on a sopping-wet Saturday morning. Nikyu Robert Strickland and Hogan Howard Blair, two of the three original Sangha members who founded the Zen Center some 40 years ago on the Syracuse University campus, slapped each other's backs and laughed heartily. Treasurer Toku Ellen Grapensteter, who has shepherded us through some thin times when we barely had enough money to pay the bills, expressed her gratitude. Shinge Roshi read excerpts from an emailed tribute and reflection by past President Saigyo Terrance Keenan, now living in Ireland. By the time the last of the old friends and longtime Sangha members finished speaking, the sky had turned seriously dark.

Just as our illustrious emcee Doshin David Shubert called Shinge Roshi up for the burning ceremony, it began to rain – hard. The mortgage document was passed from hand to hand as we huddled on the porch, rather than in front of a container fire in the parking lot, as had been planned.

It poured. Great peals of thunder rang out. Lightning flashed all around as Doshin used a torch lighter to set fire to the document in Roshi's hand, right there on the porch. As the Dedication was intoned, and our Zen Ancestors' names were read, Boom! Crash! It was perfect. Walt and I grinned at each other, standing arm in arm. The thunderous ovation continued. Flames engulfed the burning document as Roshi held it over the railing. When it was too hot to hold, she pitched it over the edge of the porch into the rain. We were free. □



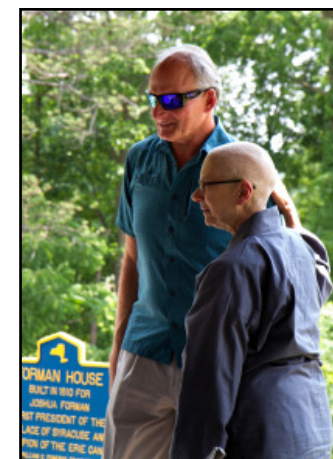
Joraku JoAnn Cooke and Shugetsu Sandra Kistler-Conolly look at historic photos.



Enjoying the potluck lunch on the porch.



Nikyu Robert Strickland and Hogen Howard Blair, two of the Zen Center's founders, guffaw together.

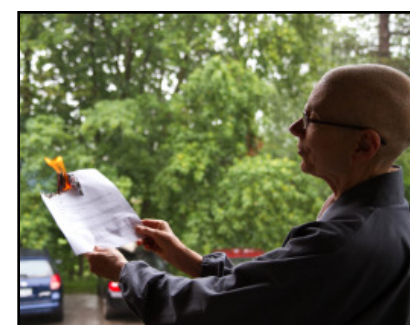


(Above) Walt Patulski, who found the property for the Zen Center, and Shinge Roshi.

(Left) Ryujo Bob Missoff (at right) and other Sangha members chant sutras as the rain pours down.



Fugan Sam and Julia Gordon's three little girls.



Shinge Roshi holds the burning mortgage document.

Photos by Evie Dumanian

On the Occasion of the ZCS Mortgage Burning Ceremony

By Saigyo Terry Keenan

EDITOR'S NOTE: Saigyo Terry Keenan was president of the Zen Center of Syracuse Board of Trustees when the Forman House was purchased. The following are excerpts from a letter he emailed to Shinge Roshi from his home in West Cork, Ireland, on the eve of our Mortgage Liberation ceremony.

Congratulations! Such an occasion!! Seventeen years ago (has it really been that long?) no one imagined, even remotely, that you would ever reach this day. In fact, most of us wondered if we could even meet our first monthly payments. I suppose there are as many different memories as there are survivors from those early years of how the flow of karmic events leading to this day began. My own are mine only and suffer all the predations of time and aging.

A little over twenty years ago the so-called Attic Sangha (I am told some now call it the *mythical* Attic Sangha) was really just a gathering of like-minded friends and seekers who took Zen practice seriously and who sat once or twice a week in the attic of Shinge Roshi's home on Concord Place. She was then known to all as simply Roko, or even Sherry. We rarely had more than \$500 or so in the coffers for new cushions and incense. ...

We were then loosely affiliated with MyoOn Maurine Stuart and the Cambridge Buddhist Association. She would visit Syracuse for weekend sesshin from time to time and some of us took the precepts with her. Roko had been "lay" ordained by her, which gave some credible authority and leadership to Hoen-ji. After MyoOn's death in 1990, Roko began to study again with Eido Roshi and some of us began to do full sesshins at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. In general, we stumbled along happily in the attic zendo and the number of regular sitters remained modest.

Then in 1993 everything changed. That was the year of the one-hundredth anniversary of Zen in America. [Note by Shinge Roshi: We organized what turned out to be the only real commemoration in the United States, with a month-long exhibition at the Everson Museum of Art featuring calligraphies by Soen Nakagawa, Hakuun Yasutani, and Eido Shimano roshis, huge hanging banners of female bodhisattvas by Mayumi Oda, brush paintings by Kazuaki Tanahashi, and photographs by John Daido Loori Roshi. We also had three



Saigyo Terry and Jikai Jane Keenan.

days of talks, presentations and panels at Syracuse University, featuring some of the best-known Buddhist teachers and writers of the time.]

What followed was an utterly mad flurry of cajoling, coordination, cooperation, begging, bullying and any number of other efforts to bring together speakers, performers, venues, money and audiences. We had never had to work so hard as a group, and we were shocked to find that we worked well together. Unfortunately, the event was a huge success. Our age of innocence was over.

Everyone seemed to have heard of us after the celebration. Membership grew rapidly and there was no longer room for everyone in the attic. Sesshins were particularly difficult. We had to find other, larger places, ones that could accommodate overnight stays for twenty or more people. Each time we had to disassemble the entire zendo, from cushions to gongs, and haul it off to wherever we had found. Then we had to put it all back together for three or four days, only to take it all apart again and bring it home. The most difficult place was up north at a small retreat center in Gouverneur, optimistically started by two poor women who had no idea what they were in for. Most memorable were the howling wolf-like huskies at a nearby farm, the port-a-potties for the women and the open fields for the men. The most popular site, to which we returned several times, was Alverna Heights, located on a former farm high above Green Lakes State Park. It was run by the gentlest and most patient Catholic nuns [Sisters of St. Francis], who liked us, largely, I think, because we were very quiet, provided our own food, and left the place much cleaner than we found it. Everyone who attended remembers the swallows zipping noisily in and out of the barn eaves to feed their young while we sat, and kinhin through the woods, where we passed the nuns' hermit retreat huts, one of which was in a tree. We all had difficulty picturing one of those sweet elderly nuns camped out up there.

Finally, it became clear we had to find a place of our own. At first this just meant earnest meetings in a coffee shop and some cautious house hunting. But the prices! Even in depressed Syracuse! How could we afford the cheapest and most rundown of the options? Could we fix up a fixer-upper ourselves? As Jikai, my wife, pointed out on one occasion, most of us were working lay people with families and none of us had the time nor the professional level skills required to do that sort of work. We had a vague goal, but no clear idea how to get there.

Then one Saturday morning, [at a meeting in Agora, the Westcott-area coffee house Roko Osho used as her nearby office], Walt Patulski, who would become a mainstay in the ensuing months, placed a Native American pipe on the table in front of us and told us a story about an Iroquois peace pipe carver. He explained how the old man could see the figures inside the wood or bone he was carving. We all wondered where Walt was going with this charming story. Then he explained how every day he drove past a house on West Seneca Turnpike on his way to and from work. He could see a Zen Center inside the

old colonial structure. The house was for sale and had been on the market for some time. Immediately, we trundled off in the rain to see this magically hidden Zen Center. It was, of course, the Joshua Forman House.

What followed was a challenging period in the history of Hoen-ji. Not because the price seemed to us astronomical, though it did. Not because we had to negotiate with the owners on the price, the city for zoning, the banks for funding, the school across the river for land. Not because we had to raise money in addition to what the Sangha could give, and to learn how to do fundraising on the fly. Many mistakes were made in every area of effort. But we learned fast.

No, the hard part was change. Hoen-ji had to become an organization. This was anathema to virtually everyone. Yes, we were officially a not-for-profit organization, but, really, we were just a bunch of friends, right? We had by-laws, but weren't they just for the government forms and tax exemption? No, it was time to grow up, and fast. The board actually had to begin to manage things. Committees with real responsibilities had to be formed and had to follow through on difficult tasks. We had to deal with financing on a large scale. We had a big loan.

We had buildings and grounds to maintain, remodeling to organize, membership to manage, dues which absolutely had to come in, and we had to sustain the practice at a high level, which was why we were doing all this in the first place. We even had to learn how to run efficient meetings! And all this had to be done by inexperienced volunteers who had jobs and family responsibilities above everything else. None of it could be done by one person. Delegation became a new uncomfortable byword. We sought advice everywhere we could. The meetings, long nights, working weekends, reports and hands-on work seemed endless. Sangha members and friends gave in countless ways. I, as president of the board, was exhausted. Nerves frayed. Frustration and anger seemed never far away. Where was my touted Zen calm? Nevertheless, I was able to drive to a July sesshin at DBZ in 1996, leap out of the car and hand Roko Osho the signed documents that said we owned 266.

Not everyone could handle the necessary changes. A few people drifted away. But we had been told the Dharma provides. It was much more than a nice-sounding platitude. Just when we thought we could not afford another plumbing bill, funds would appear. When the nearly finished zendo in the carriage house was almost destroyed by an arsonist and we wept at the loss,

*On an empty path
The scent of scattered flowers
Sighing in the wind
— Toku Ellen Grapenstater*

the insurance allowed us to rebuild an even better space. Somehow the Dharma did provide. Look at you all now. It took very, very hard work. The Dharma doesn't provide gifts, but rather opportunities if you are working hard enough and practicing deeply enough to see what you really need.

Recently I was reading Heinrich Dumoulin's two-volume *Zen Buddhism: A History*. I was struck by the changes and divisions, rises and falls, clashes and personalities, teachers abused and abusing, societal and political pressures, temples coming and going, ruins built upon ruins that he chronicled [throughout India, China, and Japan]. Somehow true Dharma continued. This is what I come back to when I look with my innate Irish distrust for the authenticity in what I have been taught and by whom. Shinge Roshi has spoken of a new way of thinking of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha as refuges. I used to think of a refuge as a kind of escape from whatever bits of reality I had come to fear. Escape in that sense seemed a kind of cheating, a hiding, when facing things through our practice. But no, it's a letting go of untenable situations, freeing ourselves from the burdens of fear and betrayal, a cutting through of bonds.

We are given such a tremendous gift with our practice. When we do Mandala Day chanting, I feel keenly all that Hoen-ji represents and even more the efforts and sacrifices that individuals make. I think of the long hours of dokusan Roshi has given, the countless scores of sesshins, the years and years of guiding students, over and over again, with patience, to the heart of the matter, and of course the Dharma itself. None of it would be here for us without her effort. But it is here and it will remain here. The Dharma provides what we really need, not what we want or think we need. All the pain, tragedy and soap opera

*Ancient hedges mark the fields
that have owned the souls of men
time out of mind.
Early autumn fog rolls in
to hide the great hills,
though I still feel their slow heave
against the sea.
My beloved burns garden debris.
Twigs, leaves crackle up into smoke
exactly like ten thousand thousand fires
through the meager millennia of men,
and each swirl of leafy smoke unique
among every other ever.
Today the last rejection
has come in from the City.
I can allow myself to be free of the game.
My children have their own lives
and no longer need my struggles.
All my life I have understood
the language of trees.
I can allow myself to be free
to hear their deep silent speech again.
And now, again, they will hear mine.
— Saigyō Terry Keenan*

Saigyō wrote this poem one morning during his study of the Hekiganroku, Case 39, "Ummon's Kayakuran."

drama you have confronted in the last few years are nothing compared to what was created for us by that selfless work of Roshi's and of every member of the Sangha year after year. For me, I know this practice is one of the reasons I am still alive. What words of gratitude can address that? But the gifts from Roshi are not from her. She is there to hold the door open. We must walk through on our own. What was it that endured and carried through the turbulent history of Zen, through the birth pains of Hoen-ji? I see it everywhere.

*And what with breakdowns and so on
who would say it hasn't been hard going?...*

*... if you ask whether I regret starting out
my voice rises like flocks of finches at dawn
and blows across the deep blue sky."*

– from St. Nadie In Winter □

The Bodhisattva Tumbler

*By Senju Dave
Fisher*

When I was in college, I was on the divinity track to become an associate pastor or youth pastor in the Protestant church. I had other "loves," such as photography and architecture in high school, but I also was a strong evangelical Christian and felt that to be the "best" Christian possible, I needed to be involved in the workings of the church itself. I recognized I had a strong bias: The best Christian serves the church. I didn't have a problem with that bias. I accepted it as fact.

This bias creeps into the nooks and crannies of our lives. For example, I have committed every Tuesday morning to the Zen Center, to participate in zazen and staff meetings. I deeply love this time. I am rarely at Thursday night or Sunday morning services. Does this make me a "bad" Buddhist? A Sangha member commented the other day, "Well, we all know the real practitioners go on Sunday." It was stated in jest, but it struck to the heart of this issue for me. There is a ruler in my mind that wants to know: How am I measuring up? Am I the best Buddhist possible? Am I a good practitioner or a bad one? We all have a measuring stick of one kind or another, right? It's one thing that drives me to the cushion.

The Sangha is like a rock tumbler. Rock tumblers take gritty, grimy, rough stones (such as ourselves) and from the sheer constant banging and clanging up against one another they become gorgeous, shiny, polished stones. I had one of these as a kid and loved throwing in stones and

turning on the tumbler.

Being in the tumbler myself lacks the romantic notion of rough stone becoming smooth. It's pretty damn uncomfortable to be a stone banging into other stones.

The truth is that every human being is in a tumbler of one kind or another banging into others and causing conflict and harm. But our particular tumbler in Zen practice is different. After banging into each other, we *go right back to the cushion*. This is the "bodhisattva tumbler" that polishes, smooths, and, if we tumble and sit enough, results in the bodhisattva's way of life, free from the tyranny of self-interest and appreciating this process for what it is.

At Hoen-ji we have the opportunity to participate in four sesshins a year. I deeply appreciate sesshin. It is a time of "cutting through" all the clamor, glamour and overstimulation that confront me. In this sense, I think that lay practice can be more difficult than practice in the monastic environment. As a lay practitioner, I am caught up in the concerns and worries of livelihood, bills, subsistence, marriage, children and more. And, on some level, I believe I have a choice of when and where to practice. In the monastic environment those choices are removed. Roshi Bodhin Kjolhede writes the following in his article "The Freedom of No-Choice:"

Zen training [in the monastery] leaves us with far fewer personal choices in daily life than people "on the outside" have, but if we can surrender to that simplicity, it will yield an ease of mind denied to those still hooked on preferences. This is the paradox of freedom that is revealed in Zen training (especially sesshin): The more of our personal freedom we are willing to relinquish, the more true freedom we can realize.

This is one reason sesshin is so important to my practice. I have been attending at least one sesshin a year for fifteen years, first at Zen Mountain Monastery and then here at Hoen-ji. I have attended every sesshin at Hoen-ji for the last five years (except for one when my mother had a stroke). Most have been with full-time attendance. It is no longer a matter of "if" but of "when" and "how much." I'm not trying to tout anything here. It's just that I have noticed incredible transformation in my own life by consistently attending sesshin. I understand the hesitancy, since sesshin is so rigorous and intense. The thought "Do I really want to do this?" still crosses my mind. I understand all the concerns about the time commitment. Our lives are busy with many responsibilities. But let's say we attended each sesshin part time on Saturday. That would only be one percent of our entire calendar year. Attending full time would only be three percent. When I consider it this way, the time commitment seems doable.

And, really, do I have a choice? I could choose continual manipulation by my own puppet strings, reacting to every little (or large) thing that comes my way. I could choose enslavement by my own devices rather than freedom. I can't live

that way anymore. Choice becomes choiceless.

So are the monks and nuns at the monastery better practitioners? (I hope any monastics or residents reading this at least snort ruefully.) After all, when did the monastics leave lay practice? Did it happen when they did kessei or became a full-time resident? Did it happen when they took monastic vows? There have been times during sitting that the total of all my experiences arises in full Technicolor, from parental issues to a failed marriage, the many tumbles I have suffered throughout my life banging up against my own mind. In the words of Buckaroo Banzai, “Wherever you go, there you are.”

Lay practice, resident or monastic practice, Tuesday morning service or Sunday. We are in the bodhisattva tumbler and, truly, the world is our monastery. □

I Quit!

**By Jiryu Caroline
Savage**

I’ve never been a quitter. I don’t quit on my friends or family, no matter how mad they drive me. I never played hooky from school to see a movie or hear some heralded heroine in my field. My resume bears an assortment of titles made possible more by stick-to-it-iveness than skill. I have been faithful to an assortment of addictions and boxes of books that I hated but refused to shelve until I read every last word. I finish what I start.

So *what gives with all of this struggling?* Seriously. After five years, I’d expect a little more enlightenment, thank you very much! I jumped into a seven-day sesshin weeks after I started practicing, spent nights sitting in the snow, bought some robes, learned some chants ... bippity-boppity-boo, right? Five years. Where is my gold star?

Meditation found me at age 19. It was unlike anything else I was doing in my twenty-two-credit-hour, part-time job, president-of-three-clubs life. It had no goal, and yet it did not feel like a waste of time. I could show up each week, or not; there were no points to be earned, no status for which to strive. There was no winning, no failure. It felt like a subversive act. Indeed, the lack of some achievable goal mystified and drew me. But before long, I had thingified this, too.

This year. This Anniversary Sesshin 2013 at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, my first sesshin since moving my 25-year-old self to Indiana last year. It’s strange, since I once did sesshin monthly. I feel more urgently than ever the preciousness of this wholesome gift, the spiritual energy, the lovingkindness and the simplicity of life here at DBZ. I

must find a way to use it to my advantage during zazen.

For the first time in years, I am not an officer for sesshin. At first, this is troubling. My body does not remember the forms of this practice as well as it once did, and I am ashamed. I watch others perform flawlessly, and I feel useless. I watch others make mistakes and tell myself that I could do it better. I wonder what I will do during breaks if I have no duties – I must find something to do, some way to help. I find it nearly impossible to just go to bed when the schedule is finished, just wake up at shinrei – no later, no earlier. This is the hardest sesshin ever.

Perhaps it is obvious what the answer to all of this is. *CUT! CUT! CUT! CUT! CUT!* I understand, but without knowing.

I am sitting in the zendo on day two or three – I have lost track – staring out the barred window at dried grasses having conversations with the breeze. I am trying not to try. Then, I am not trying not to try. Then I feel a voice, softly at first, then clamoring inside me. It is some time before I can hear what it’s saying. Then it crystallizes into two words:

I quit!

This is not my gold-star moment. But I know instantly – I know with my whole body – that life can never be the same. I am no longer an indentured servant to the God of Doing. There is a place for me just to be, without the whole world falling down around me. I can do nothing! *I can quit!*

I quit for the rest of sesshin. I fail plenty of times, but I find that it is possible not to always seek. When I feel that old inclination to buzz around, mentally or physically, I laugh at myself. When I see in my mind the drive to push harder, harder, harder, to the point of extinction, I cry for this wonderful being that I have abused for so long. How much time have I wasted like this?

I quit on the quiet road back to Indiana, into the office on a chaotic Monday morning, on the sun-soaked bike ride home from work when I usually comb through the day for all of the things I shouldn’t have done or said. When my boss is bent on having an argument, I just quit. When a family member hounds me for an answer I cannot give, I just quit. A friend offers some juicy drama; I quit. I quit folding the sheets perfectly and always preparing lunch the night before. I quit holding on for dear life to painful histories that tell me who I am. I quit looking at every day like a report card. I quit addiction, and when addiction won’t quit me, I quit berating myself over it. I quit doing zazen every day with religious fervor. I quit life as I knew it.

I don’t quit all the time; you could say I’m not a faithful quitter. As I am learning, quitting is a process, not an endpoint. Its tense is past, present and future. Like some science experiment in a windowless room, its effects are unpredictable and erratic. I don’t know what is going to happen; I’m not focused on the results. I can just practice being free.

I wouldn’t trade it for all of the titles in the world.

There. Now I can cross “submit to Dharma Connection” off my to-do list. □

A Prison Journey

By Michael
Shane Hale



Sho Shin

EDITOR'S NOTE: Michael Shane Hale is an inmate at Auburn Correctional Facility and a member of the Sho Shin (Beginners' Mind) Sangha, a Sangha under the auspices of the Zen Center of Syracuse.

In prison, running keeps illness and weakness at bay. You cannot be weak in prison. Vulnerable, yes. Weak, no. Running gives you the ability to not be broken by change. Somewhere between a quarter-mile and a half-mile everything in my system is telling me to stop, slow down. Instead I bear down, cultivating focus that keeps my feet pounding the ground to drive my body forward.

I remember a day not so long ago with a runner friend. Gary's body was cancer-ridden, and the gray sky shook us with its chill. I remember that my mind struggled with denial as Gary and I danced along the precipice of life, meaning, awareness. In the end, only the ability to drop my pretense really matters.

"Hale," calls a man in a blue uniform. My stomach goes queasy. He carries the title of corrections officer and has the power of a god over my life. He calls my name again. I stifle my fear and step obediently forward. I smile when I say, "Yes." It's my go-to position. I smile so I seem weak, less than, not a threat. The officer's red hair and drifting blue eye see me.

"Take Sickler over to sick-call. He only wants you to take him. Between you and me, he shouldn't even be here. Just get him there in one piece." I take the small, rectangular piece of blue paper that will allow me to move from the prison industry shop through the prison compound to the medical unit.

I sigh when I see Gary. He already looks disappointed. I look and I smile: I'm not a threat, I'm not a threat, I'm not a threat. We begin our journey. I want him to lead. He's strong, independent, stubborn, Quaker, opinionated, well informed. His body betrays this memory. Cancer treatment, remission, recurrence, over and over he's fought these cells that don't know how to stop – that, like him, are obstinate. I remember one day in a gym shower. His body is beautiful. His perfectly rounded chest sits atop a body with little body fat, defying his being 60-plus years, reflecting his discipline. I'm attracted because he embodies all the things I'm working on in my life. That symbol of

For another story by a member of Sho Shin Sangha, visit the Zen Center's website, www.zencenterofsyracuse.org

inspiration evaporates as he takes a first halting step. He reaches for balance. My arm slips around his back and comes up under his armpit. We can't walk this way. I withdraw and look puzzled. How can I carry Gary? I try again and slip my arm around his and entwine our fingers. He looks cross. He shakes his head. I hold my forearms out and Gary grabs ahold. We toddle forward.

With each step, I put myself into Gary's boots and merge with his shadow. I'm shaken when his feet beat on the pavement, steps that are usually effortless.

Gary ran like a gazelle. He understood the power of running, of exercising, of moving through space and time. His strength and focus conditioned him to step through the pain. Step, step, step, step, stop. In the pause he regains his breath and resolve. I check out the ugly pavement. I breathe in Gary's pain. I see how far this journey will be at this pace. I exhale and wish for Gary to experience peace. Step, step, step, stop. Outrage and sadness and frustration and grief rip open my face. Each step is our last – until the next one.

"Shane, what's wrong with you?" asks D. He looks smug in his watch cap and Army coat, pushing a cart that will soon be filled with the property for people coming into the prison. I smile.

"No, it's not him. It's me," says Gary, finding the strength to set the record straight – that he's carrying this trouble, this bag of bones.

Stepping, stopping, I notice the refuse of orange rinds, milk cartons, toast. I see Gary and me – the refuse of society – mixed in this mess that lies angrily on the pavement. Another man, Abdullah, a tall, muscular Muslim, asks if I am OK and pulls me out of my Dumpster dive.

We step into the main yard. A large rectangle of asphalt penned in by four buildings with quarried stone dating back to the 1800s bitterly greets us. A male nurse sees us and comes over. Small talk, chitchat. I smile and realize I'm holding my breath while holding Gary up. He tells Gary to go back to his cage and gather his things before going to the hospital.

In Gary's cage, we pack his belongings. He puts things just so. We fit, push, prod all of his belongings into feed sacks carefully marked with large black numbers that spell out Gary's identification numbers. Gary's first two numbers are 69, the year he became state property. I quickly do the math – more than forty years. Living history, he watched as wardens were phased out and replaced by superintendents, as grass and trees were asphalted over, as punitiveness overtook rehabilitation as a correctional goal. Gary is old. He once cited an article as an example of how an aging prison population costs society two or three times more to incarcerate than younger people.

I notice that Gary's number (if the six were inverted) could be my number – 99, the year I became state property. I have a long sentence. Gary has been "deuced" (denied parole for two years) a number of times by the parole board and has become increasingly bitter. The thought arrives like an arrow: Have I been tending to my future, aging, incarcerated self? □

An officer comes to the gate and tells me in a surly tone, “Hale, for the last time, you have to get back to the shop.” I look at Gary. His agitation and stress are building. He becomes apologetic. “I know, I’m sorry, don’t get into trouble.” I look firmly at Gary and ask him what he wants me to do with his cassette player. I shut out the world, and the officer fades away. I’m willing to suffer the consequences of my compassion.

I feel for the officer, also. Although he has the authority of a god, he only directs it against his subjects, not on their behalf. His focus is his ritual of counting bodies. The ritual takes place several times a day. This is why he is here – to count us. But Gary and I are two bodies too many.

Packed up, I push myself into a small space in a room that is only eight feet long. I try to afford Gary the dignity of a pseudo-privacy as he changes his clothes. I look sideways and stifle another explosion to my senses. Gary is naked from the waist up; his bones push on the swollen skin. I look away. The association with Holocaust survivors as walking skeletons works its way through my mind. Living death. He calls me. I must help him disrobe from the waist down. He unbuttons and unzips. I lovingly guide the fabric downward. I untie the laces and with patience release the tender feet from the boots. With him undressed, we reverse the process. I see the anxiety of putting his feet into another pair of boots. As we finish, he can’t stand any longer. He confides that it took him nearly an hour to dress that morning. He is determined to be no weaker than he has to be.

I go to get a wheelchair and find a stretcher instead. Its rusted parts are bent into the shape of a high chair with no arms. I sit Gary down and realize the seatbelts are horribly rusted and will not work. They hang limp from the contraption, like Gary. I let him know everything that is happening because I want to relieve him of any doubt or confusion. We roll forward. The steps of the building are coming up. These gods don’t dare help. Assisting this man would get them labeled as an “inmate lover,” a label used to control compassionate impulses.

A man with coarse hair and thick eyebrows moves to help me lift Gary into the air. Gary clears the stairs with nary a bump. Outside the building, I meet a corrections officer, who tells me to “just drag him.” I’m flummoxed for a moment. Dragging conjures painful images, and I’m doubtful. Gary’s comfort is my concern. It’s in my blood, my sinews. I slowly obey the C.O.’s command, ready to object on Gary’s behalf.

“You know, if you weren’t here, I’d be doing this by myself,” he says. I’m taken aback by his admission, which is beautifully human. With a few words, we are transformed into human beings helping one another, transcending labels.

Inside the medical unit, I help Gary to stand while the C.O. gets a real wheelchair. For a second I take my eye off Gary to push away the stretcher. He begins to sit down, exhausted as I slide the wheelchair up. Gary screams

out, misjudging the chair’s height. The fear of falling has broken him and me. I never heard Gary scream before. The nurse administrator asks how he is doing. “Oh, the pain, the pain!” he says. “I’ve never felt such pain! My whole body is on fire!”

The door closes. I’m left with a dilapidated stretcher to return.

Gary dies the next day. The day after his death, I eulogize Gary at a Dharma talk, during a partial-day sitting. I am moved and humbled by the space that our community has cultivated for our practice, a practice that allowed me to carry Gary one step at a time, one breath at a time. It enabled me to be with him as the moment revealed Gary, me, pain and life’s preciousness. □

I am member of the Sho Shin Sangha at Auburn Prison. My name is Kidkarndee, Srisdi. I am from Thailand, and Thailand it Buddha country. (Center of Buddha in the world.) And 55 percent Thai people had Buddhism religion. And one day amazing happen to me. In that day, and that night, I dream about Buddha and in that dream Buddha he tell me you have to make Buddha by soap and donation to Buddha temple in Syracuse. And I talk to Buddha in my dream. I don’t know how to make Buddha by soap. And Buddha tell me don’t worry. I come down to hold your hand to make Buddha but you have to do (concentration) and call me. And one week later I go commissary to buy Ivory soap. And I make Ivory soap to be powder in my bucket and I put water to make Ivory soap to get soft and I start do (concentration). And about 20 minutes. My body get heavy, and my head had dizziness, and I start making Buddha. Wow, amazing Buddha done come out well and beautiful. And from that day I make Buddha some big, some small, and some little Buddha, and I donation to Buddha temple in Syracuse, many many times. And I very happy to do it. And thanks you very much for your time to read my story, it is 100 percent truth. And Buddha blessing you be well, be save.

P.S. That a give from Buddha for me. I very happy and I am only one in Auburn Prison make Buddha by soap. The community – Buddhist brothers and sisters – help to make Buddhas to give soap and paint. This way I make more with my Buddhist family. □

**Amazing
of Buddha
Happen to
Me**
*By Srisdi
Kidkarndee*



*Soap Buddha given to the
Zen Center of Syracuse.
Photo by Diane Grimes*

The Weather Is Always Changing

*Even on a hot summer's night, when nary a leaf is moving.
The trees release their moisture, leaves soon to fall.
And so it is on a cold winter's day
When everything is white and frozen.
Snow is melting underneath, A river flows on quietly.
Soon the winds will come, taking things away with them
No matter how we struggle to hold on,
The weather is ALWAYS changing.*

— Chogen René Berblinger

W-A-T-E-R

By Myorin
Catherine Landis

When I ask kids visiting the Zen Center, “What lives in the stream?” their unhesitant response is “Water!” As a biologist, I could correct them – tell them that water itself is not alive, is rather the abiotic medium in which stream creatures live and on which all life depends. Instead, though, I smile – not doubting for a moment that water lives! Perhaps not in the same way as a snail or an amoeba, but water so universally infuses and streams through living things – plant, animal or microbe – that “life” and “water” might well be synonymous terms.

So, delighted with their understanding, I question them

further, “OK, and what lives in the water?”

“Frogs!”

“Grass!”

“Fish!”

“Bugs!”

What lives in the stream? The stream in question is Onondaga Creek, flowing along the Zen Center’s eastern edge on its way north to Onondaga Lake. The lake, in turn, drains into the Seneca River and eventually into Lake Ontario. From there water eventually finds its way to the sea, via the St. Lawrence River.

To reach Onondaga Creek,



Onondaga Creek flows beside the Zen Center.
Photo by Myorin Catherine Landis

you drop down a steep, grass-lined slope into a ditch. The creek, in its more natural form, was converted into a flood control channel by the Army Corps of Engineers in the 1950s. Gone are the generous, sweeping meanders that left patterns of oxbow arcs, apostrophes and circles across the Onondaga Valley, like the marks of a whimsical artist. Early European settlers were not thinking about whimsy, or ecological integrity of a stream-floodplain system. Their thoughts were on livelihood, land, flood prevention. They had little tolerance for the ebbing and flowing of floodwaters into patchworks of marshes and swamps. To suck the water out of the floodplain, the engineers turned the slow-moving creek into a deep, straight, ditch.

The Onondagas, local indigenous people, lived here for millennia – “since the dawn of time” – and live here still. Unlike the European settlers, they saw no need to interfere with Onondaga Creek and its floodplain. Rather than change the course of the stream, they moved their homes, gardens, fishing and hunting camps to accommodate water and its shape-shifting ways. Instead of draining wetlands, they relied on them as sources of medicinal plants, fiber, mollusks, starchy rhizomes like cattails, fish.

Children say that water lives in the stream, and they have a point. If we think of water as an inert fluid flowing downhill from point A to point B, we miss a far more interesting story. We miss water as conduit for life, carrier of oxygen, eggs, seeds, spores, larvae, sperm, dissolved nutriment, microbes, tiny flecks of soil.

Moreover, a stream belongs to a larger landscape mandala, a branching pattern above ground as well as below. To us, a stream might appear a single thread of water flowing from hills to valley, from uphill to down. But the stream we see is merely the exposed portion of a continuous freshwater unity that includes underground, alluvial and streamside networks.

In any part of a stream we might trace a maze of flow paths of varying lengths, directions, velocities. We think of water as flowing downhill as though in a gutter, but streams are more than ditches. They can exchange water up, down (with groundwater) or even sideways (through banks). Water, in other words, can flow in three dimensions. Of course, the engineers who designed the flood control channel had no use for such complexity. Their overriding thought was to save property and lives by getting the water out of the city as quickly as possible.

You might not expect to find much living in these waters. Onondaga Creek is best known as a sewer. And indeed, just downstream from the Zen Center combined sewer overflows dump domestic sewage directly into the creek during heavy rainfall events. Such overflows happen several times a year during the summer months, swelling the stream with everything we flush down the toilet or send down the drain.

Some of the tributary streams to the creek have cleaner water, however. At one such outlet we once found a metropolis of aquatic life: stonefly, cad-

disfly larvae, tadpoles, beetles, even a hellagrammite. These creatures require cleaner water, so their presence suggests the relative purity of the feeder streams that are encased in concrete.

Watching the stonefly larva, a boldly patterned prehistoric beast, I recalled Master Dogen: “Do not foolishly suppose that what we see as water is used as water by all other beings.” You should not be limited to human views when you study water. Stoneflies would be astonished if we were to tell them that what they see as a pavilion or a forest is really flowing water.

This particular brook remains nameless and invisible except here, where it debouches into the flood control channel. Such channels flowing into Onondaga Creek have been buried in culverts to create dry land for houses, streets, lawns. We have condemned water’s dendritic pattern of springs, rivulets, brooks to catacombs underground, replacing it on the surface with a gridwork of streets and lawns. Its waters run clear and cold compared to the flood-control channel. I’m guessing that it’s spring fed, from groundwater surfacing along the walls of the valley.

There was once talk of covering Onondaga Creek – the main channel, not just the tributaries – where it flowed in the city of Syracuse. The creek was considered a great nuisance for its tendency to flood – that is, overflow onto its floodplain as it had for centuries, replenishing wetlands and delivering soil, seeds, drifting aquatic creatures. Covering up the creek would, it was supposed, solve the flooding problem and free more property for development. Such a complete cover-up never did happen, however, due to prohibitive costs.

When the kids say water lives, I’m reminded of Helen Keller’s *The Story of My Life*, where the author describes her first experience of language, of connecting with others beyond her “still, dark world.” Water mediated this awakening:

One day, while I was playing with my new doll, Miss Sullivan [Annie Sullivan, Ms. Keller’s teacher] put my big rag doll into my lap also, spelled “d-o-l-l” and tried to make me understand that “d-o-l-l” applied to both. Earlier in the day we had had a tussle over the words “m-u-g” and “w-a-t-e-r.” Ms. Sullivan had tried to impress it upon me that “m-u-g” is mug and that “w-a-t-e-r” is water, but I persisted in confounding the two. In despair she had dropped the subject for the time, only to renew it at the first opportunity. I became impatient at her repeated attempts and, seizing the new doll, I dashed it upon the floor. I was keenly delighted when I felt the fragments of the broken doll at my feet. Neither sorrow nor regret followed my passionate outburst. I had not loved the doll. In the still, dark world in which I lived there was no strong sentiment or tenderness. I felt my teacher sweep the fragments to one side of the hearth, and I had a sense of satisfaction that the cause of my discomfort was removed. She brought me my hat, and I knew I was going out into the warm sunshine. This thought, if a wordless sensation may be called a thought, made me hop and skip with pleasure.

We walked down the path to the well house, attracted by the fragrance of the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness of something forgotten – a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that “w-a-t-e-r” meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

The water from the spring-fed stream gushing over our hands is the same “wonderful cool something” that Ms. Keller encountered in the well house. But we don’t dare drink the water from Onondaga Creek. The water from the tap comes from Skaneateles Lake, about twenty miles to the west. It’s clean, cold, refreshing, and we drink with appreciation. □

Genko–Sis
*I wake to your glow
Full moon flooding my senses
Original Light*

– *Jika Lauren Melnikow*

Jika wrote this poem after the death of her sister.

A new presence now greets us as we arrive at Hoen-ji: a lovely eight-foot-tall red maple tree. It was planted in memory of Natalie Fancher, mother of dear Dharma sister Jisho Enro Judy Fancher, and my sister Genko Leslie DelGigante.

Jisho approached me with the idea of a memorial tree last spring, shortly after my sister’s passing. I was deeply touched. My sister loved nature – indeed, she was drawn to the Zen Center’s grounds. She attended the dedication of the Kannon statue, which was carved by Tom Matsuda in my mother’s honor, and ceremonies honoring Tom Huff’s sculpture and the lost walnut tree. During the Heart Shrine Relic Tour, her beloved Chloe received a pet blessing from Shinge Roshi.

Since we lost the Norway maple beside the pond, Hoen-ji has needed a replacement. Myorin Catherine Landis, our Sangha tree expert, recommended a red maple,

Crimson Memorial

By Jika Lauren Melnikow

which is indigenous to the area. Leslie and I grew up with a large red maple in our front yard in Eastwood, a rarity on our street. Its red leaves dropped on the snow in our yard only.

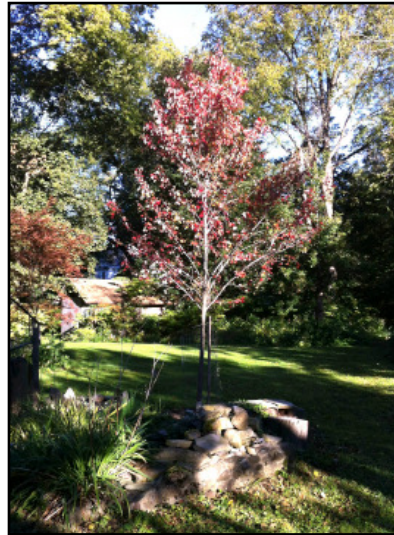
Brainard Fancher, Jisho's father, helped with installation expenses, which reminded Jisho of Natalie, who "liked to get things done," Jisho said. With this donation and a gift he gave at the time of Jisho's ordination for outdoor projects we were off to a good start. My sister's family and friends helped cover the purchase of the tree.

A bare root tree was chosen, rather than one with a clipped root ball, because of its sturdy growth potential. The tree was planted September 5 and already showed the beginning of color change. It is lovely to pass in kinhin. Leslie often sang, "I see your true colors shining through," and I hear her as I pass by. I also remember Natalie fondly. We met many years ago and were together when we first heard Roshi speak at First Unitarian Universalist Society. She shared that important moment with me.

Last fall, Leslie shared with me a verse by Sadhguru, a teacher she respected. I now share it with you all.

Fall Time

*Leaves of every hue
colorful feast for eye
But a death dance
of color Not of gaiety
but of cold gravity
Crown and clothing
all tumbling down
Being stripped off
of life making sap
Trees will stand naked
of leaf, flower or fruit
Only in hope of
another lease on life
Autumnal fall
Winter's rot
Spring's surprise
This not of life or death
but of life and death
Not a catastrophe
but a carnival
No where to go
as all is Here. □*



*The Zen Center's new red maple
in all its crimson glory.
Photo by Jika Lauren Melnikow*

*View from our window
Never more a miracle
Each day a lifetime.
— Jika Lauren Melnikow*

On the final day of summer sesshin, July 28, 2013, I held a Completion Ceremony for Jikyo Tairo Bonnie Shoultz. She had become a resident at Hoen-ji shortly after beginning practice here, and I ordained her ten years ago.

Jikyo trained as a kessei student at Dai Bosatsu Zendo and has participated in innumerable sesshin there and at Hoen-ji, and she has served as our head monastic for several years.

After we chanted Heart Sutra, Great Light Dharani, Great Compassionate Dharani and Hakuin's Song of Zazen, she knelt before me. I addressed her and read her Completion Ceremony certificate aloud, adding "Of course you know, there is no completion of training, and yet you have completed your training – and now your training begins!"

Then I spoke of her dedication to this practice, evidenced not only by what she does for the Zen Center, but also as a meditation teacher at Auburn Correctional Facility and the Onondaga County Justice Center, as the Buddhist chaplain at Syracuse University and as a member of the board of the Zen Studies Society. "You are actualizing your practice in very important ways. You have shown your leadership and your teaching ability without ever thinking of yourself as having such a role. It's because of this that I now pronounce you a Dharma Teacher of the Zen Center of Syracuse." This came as a complete surprise to her and to the Sangha.

After she found her voice again, she was able to say a few words; then many Sangha members spoke about her with great appreciation, noting particularly her compassion, generosity, patient forbearance, radiant smile, inspiring energy ("not wasting any of it in self-importance") and her unstinting work ("getting it done without a lot of fuss") – in short, her exemplification of what it means to be a Zen student.

With this ceremony, Jikyo-san joined Nikyu-san Robert Strickland in serving the Hoen-ji Sangha as an authorized Dharma teacher. Congratulations! □

Dharma Teacher Authorization for Jikyo Tairo

*By Shinge Roko
Sherry Chayat*

The Saturday Sitting Group

By Myoko
Jennifer Waters

It has been one year since Andy Hassinger asked me to take over leadership of the Saturday Tibetan Sitting Group. I love that our Gelugpa lineage of Tibetan Buddhism goes back to the founder, Je Tsongkhapa (1357-1419), and represents an extremely traditional practice of Vajrayana Buddhism from the “old school,” as Andy often says. And yet, we are simply called the Saturday Sitting Group.

Andy has a way of making complex teachings extremely accessible, like a cup of tea and a cookie. He tirelessly led the group for sixteen years and ultimately led us to the Ven. Achok Rinpoche, a reincarnate lama in the Gelugpa lineage.

Our group was formed under the direction of the renowned Domo Geshe Rinpoche. Andy was his student. I had the good fortune to meet with Rinpoche personally twice – the first time to ask to become his student and the second time to receive the seal of this commitment. I was granted a third meeting, but he died before it could take place.

Since his passing in 2001, our group has been in *bardo* (the Tibetan term for the stage between death and re-birth). We prayed for his safe return and for his reincarnation to be found without obstacles. Not surprisingly, it worked. His reincarnation was located and is now a ten-year-old monk studying vigorously at Shar Gaden Monastery in Southern India. To be involved with reincarnation so intimately has been a wonderful reminder that these so-called concepts are not something to be believed in, but to experience directly. My daughter Juliette is the same age. She has grown up meeting the “Young Rinpoche,” as Domo Choktrul Rinpoche is often called, and seeing pictures of the last Rinpoche. This is a completely natural way for her to understand the endless continuum of death and birth.

My father-in-law, a devout Catholic, died when Juliette was four. While attending the funeral, I prayed that she wouldn’t ask questions about his re-birth. Luckily, she saved those questions for me in the privacy of the bathroom. “Do you think Grandpa is going to be a cat in his next life?” she asked.

It will be many years before the “Young Rinpoche” returns to his North American home in the Catskills. Luckily,

the Ven. Achok Rinpoche leads us and guides us. He offers weekly teachings from his home and teaching place, the Gadenpa Buddhist Center, a sparkling, three-story building in Long Island City. We are invited to join whenever we can. For the last three years, we also hosted Rinpoche in Syracuse, where he has offered retreats.

Many people who come on Saturdays ask me: “Is this Zen?” “As a Zen practitioner, can I join you?” The answer is “no” and “yes.” I always point out that we chant the Heart Sutra, which is central to all lineages of Buddhism. We are not separate from Zen practice since our Syracuse home is at the Zen Center. And yet the practice is quite different. This is because of the superb guidance of Shinge Roshi, who has a “mind that alights nowhere” and has allowed us to maintain our practice there. So, please, join us anytime. There are always tea and cookies. □

The Zen Center of Syracuse continues to offer meditation throughout the area in its Community Meditation Programs.

Auburn Correctional Facility: Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz and MyoEn Deb Bateman meet for zazen every Friday with members of the Sho Shin Sangha, a Zen Center of Syracuse affiliate that’s located in Auburn Correctional Facility. They also assist with all-day sittings there throughout the year.

Camp Alverna: Jika Lauren Melnikow plans to teach meditation to forty-five pupils, age eight to eleven, from Martin Luther King Jr. School and refugee communities of Sudanese, Congolese and Burmese in November at Camp Alverna at Alverna Heights, one of the first places the Zen Center held sesshin. The children will gather for various day camp experiences with spirit, nature and caring for the earth.

Colgate University: Myorin Catherine Landis and Taigen Rick Braaten just started leading a meditation Fridays at Chapel House for students, staff, faculty and Chapel House guests. It is offered when school is in session.

Ed Smith School: Jika taught meditation to a classroom of third-graders in January at Ed Smith School. The teacher, Joanne Fiacchi, and a parent, Ryla Daley, continued meditating daily with the class after the visit. Letters and photo from pupils: Page 4.

Hamilton College: Togan Tim Kohlbrenner leads the Hamilton College Meditation Club, which meets Wednes-

Community Meditation Programs

days at the college when school is in session. Togan has been in charge of the program, which includes structured zazen sittings and discussion, for five years. The club has operated for fourteen years. Shinge Roshi visits every year.

H.O.M.E. Inc.: Kentoku Joe O'Brien teaches meditation to clients from Humanitarian Organization for Multicultural Experiences Inc. twice weekly in the Carriage House Zendo. The program has operated since 2007, when Jika Lauren Melnikow and Kanro Christine Dowling launched it.

Onondaga County Justice Center: The Zen Center offers meditation on Wednesdays and Saturdays to women incarcerated at the Justice Center. Teachers are Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz, Kelly Schalk and Meigetsu Rebecca Beers.

Onondaga Free Library: Joraku Joanne Cooke led an "Introduction to Meditation" workshop for teens July 13 at Onondaga Free Library, as part of a series of summer weekend program sponsored by the library for teens. On September 21, Joraku and Keigetsu Yao Xu represented the Zen Center of Syracuse at the library's Festival of Nations, which features diverse cultural groups from the Syracuse area.

NOPL Cicero: Shugetsu Sandra Kistler-Connolly offered "An Introduction to Zen Meditation" for four Saturdays beginning August 24 at Northern Onondaga Public Library in Cicero. About a dozen adults participated, working from readings Shugetsu handed out, such as "Questions and Answers about Meditation." Many brought their own questions and some sat daily between classes.

SUNY Oswego: Fugan Sam Gordon and Ungo Jim Pangborn offer an introduction to meditation program on the SUNY Oswego campus Thursday evenings throughout the academic year. Participants are introduced to chanting, breath counting and walking meditation. The program is sponsored by the Lifestyles center on campus and has received the generous support of Maria Grimshaw-Clark, director of the campus Counseling Services Center.

Syracuse University: Jikyo, Myorin, Mokuon Karen Nezelek and others lead five meditation sessions a week during the academic year in Hendricks Chapel. (The schedule is updated often on the Zen Center website.) The sittings have been offered for more than twenty years. Jikyo, Shugetsu, Myorin and others also have offered numerous presentations and meditation sessions for departments and classes at Syracuse University as part of Jikyo's role as SU Buddhist chaplain; Kaigetsu Yao Xu and Markus Pierce-Brewster also have been developing meditation and yoga videos for SU audiences. Jika was a guest lecturer September 12 in Diane Grimes' Community and Contemplative Engagement class.

Westcott Street Fair: Mokuon Karen Nezelek and a crew of Zen Center of Syracuse volunteers staffed a booth September 15 at the Westcott Street Fair in Syracuse. □

– *Compiled by Meigetsu Rebecca Beers*

The purpose of residential training at Hoen-ji is to establish stability of practice for the community. To do that, we make a sustained, wholehearted commitment to practice. We support and encourage each other in our training. By taking responsibility for ourselves, we can extend this to the community and world at large. We work to maintain and sustain an atmosphere of training during our time here.

In practical terms, this means we sit at least three zazen periods each week, study regularly with Shinge Roshi, including dokusan, and do our best to live in a harmonious way with the Sangha by honoring commitments and supporting each other's practice. We agree to spend at least one hour a week (most give much more time than this) maintaining the temple and keeping the public areas we use clean and organized.

Residents have regular meetings and all are expected to participate. We pay tuition or do work exchange when we cannot pay. We pay for our food and household supplies as well. We do not pay to attend Zen Center programs like sesshin or Deep Presence.

Residents also participate in the Hoen-ji schedule and programs and fill many Hoen-ji training positions, such as in the zendo and for sesshin. We also are expected to develop and sustain a positive relationship with the community and neighborhood. This includes community service/citizenship activities such as working with community youth or in the Justice Center, attending neighborhood meetings such as Neighborhood Watch and Tomorrow's Neighborhood Today meetings, patronizing neighborhood businesses and getting to know people in the neighborhood.

Community living responsibilities include having communal meals and sharing in their cost, preparation and

Residential Training at Hoen-ji

*By Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Head Monastic*



Zen Center of Syracuse residents grouped around Shinge Roshi: from left, Chimon Bill Mitrus, Keigetsu Yao Xu, Kentoku Joe O'Brien, Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz, Shinge Roshi, Jisho Judy Fancher, Reiko Cynthia Van Zoeren, Markus Pierce-Brewster, and Kyung-Ha Lee. Not pictured: Jushin Barb Rauscher and Kyugen Dan Ward. Photo by Keigetsu Yao Xu

cleanup. They also include cleaning of personal and public areas at least once a week and sharing in seasonal tasks like mowing, snow shoveling and sweeping ramps and porches. It means being visually aware of what needs to be done, rather than waiting to be told. In addition, residents are expected to take on certain specific tasks according to their particular talents, such as designing posters, carpentry, flower arranging, gardening, publicity and/or serving as tenzo for special events and sesshin.

The abbot is always available to residents for personal guidance. Periodic residents' meetings and occasional council meetings with the abbot help us to grow in our practice and as a community.

When someone wants to live at Hoen-ji, these responsibilities are explained. Shinge Roshi and I meet with a potential resident for a first interview, and then the other residents meet him or her. If all agree it will be a good fit, an invitation is extended. Sometimes, as now, all rooms are occupied, but at other times a person can move in right away. □

Board of Trustees Report

By Meigetsu Rebecca Beers

The following are highlights of the work and plans of the Zen Center of Syracuse Board of Trustees during 2013.

No More Mortgage

After 17 years and \$300,000 of debt, the mortgage is satisfied at last. Many thanks to Toku Ellen Grapensteter for shepherding it all these years and to the great generosity of our Sangha and friends. See story: Page 31.

Residence Renovations

The Zen Center Board of Trustees has turned its attention to renovations of the Zen Center of Syracuse Residence. After years of repairs to the Joshua Forman House, work has begun to restore the building that is home to two of our nuns and several lay Zen students.

We started with the basics. Thanks to the generosity and hard work of True Heart Chuck Price, the residence has a beautifully renovated second-floor bathroom. After foundational plumbing repairs, True Heart stripped the room down to the rafters, repositioned the bathtub and installed a new toilet, lighting, ceiling, sheetrock and ceramic tile around the bathtub and on the floor. The cabinetry, sink and fixtures are new, and the room was painted a gentle yellow. It's beautiful, and the Zen Center is extremely grateful to our dear part-time resident from Canada.

Less beautiful, but equally essential, is the new sewer line from the residence to the road. When sewage backed up in the basement, Aalco was called. It ran a new sewer line out the east wall of the basement and corrected the grade leading to the city sewer lines. The Residence also got a new basement

*'Tis not the ever watchful
watcher
Nor the turning of the tide
Nor waves caressing
distant beaches
Nor death, nor do, nor die
Attention opens wide
this night
What stars above do guide
these steps
What beating drum
inflames this heart
Darkness calls
a siren's song
Hurry not nor tarry long*

— Nikyu Robert G. Strickland

sink.

A complete renovation of the first floor is under consideration for the near future. Sangha member Clay Strange-Lee, a licensed architect, created preliminary drawings that would maximize the space and utility of the kitchen and dining area during sesshin, while retaining a homey atmosphere for those who live there. The generous donation of part of his fee is deeply appreciated.

The center soon will need to replace the roof and insulate the third-floor ceiling, since the many layers of shingles that now provide insulation will be gone. Stage two of the driveway paving also is scheduled for spring.

Welcome to the Zen Center

Next year we plan to reconfigure the connection between the entrance to the zendo and the back stairs into the Joshua Forman House and the adjoining area between the parking lot and the pond. This is, after all, our entry to the zendo, and it should convey the importance of this space, harmonizing with the aesthetic of the interior of the Carriage House Zendo.

Work on the back stairs to the Forman House has been put off for several years and the porch area will need renovation soon. The temporary awning on the Carriage House Zendo deck, which had deteriorated after 15 years of use, was removed. A new roof over the deck is being designed to protect against rain and minimize ice buildup. Meanwhile, Togan Tim Kohlbrenner and Chimon Bill Mitrus have generously offered to build a temporary awning for this winter.

Plans are under way to add a bamboo fence to shield the waterfall, small pond and tsukubai from the parking lot, as envisioned by Vaughn Rinner in her master plan. This will include a Japanese torii, or gate, as an entryway to

the kinhin path and Garden of Serenity, thanks to generous donations given in celebration of Shinge Roshi's seventieth birthday.

Sesshin Prices

At its recent meeting, the board voted to increase sesshin fees, which have not been raised in many years. Beginning with January sesshin, three-day sesshin will cost \$200 for members and \$250 for nonmembers. One-day participants will pay \$75.

Samu Day Generosity

The Zen Center held a samu day in September. Myorin Catherine Landis helped to organize the day. An attractive fence was built to protect the blueberry patch from consumption by deer. The bushes were a memorial gift from the family of Eishun Phyllis Berman. Many thanks to Togan Tim Kohlbrenner and his team of fence builders: Daigan David Arnold, Evie Dumanian, Diane Grimes, Chimon Bill Mitrus, Nicolette Pascarella, Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz and others.

The Le Moyne College women's cross country team also volunteered its time and cardio-fitness to help us dig gardens, move compost, wrap trees, mend fences, transplant tulip trees and chop down burdock. Ava Zurita and Shugetsu Sandra Kistler-Connolly also helped protect trees for winter. Special thanks to Le Moyne student Laura Hough, who contacted Myorin to arrange the team's volunteer effort. Some plants were donated by Janet Allen of the local Wild Ones chapter, Habitat Gardening of Central New York. □



Chimon, front, Samantha Colammussi, left, Togan and Jikyo at work on the fence around the blueberry patch during samu day.
Photo by Evelyn Dumanian

From the Treasurer

By Toku Ellen Grapenstater

This has been a year of celebration and concern. In June, we celebrated the burning of the mortgage – a real tribute to all who supported the 2010 Capital Campaign and Hoen-ji since 1996. Not only has the Sangha repaid its debt, but also many essential and energy-saving repairs have been made.

Of course, we're not free of expense. The economic climate has changed in recent years and the effects are being felt through membership and program support. Our operating income needs a boost to end the year well. An increase in membership support and year-end donations would help, if possible. Hoen-ji exists here and now not only because of those who came before but also for those who will come in the future. My deep gratitude to all who give so much time, effort and funds. □

Sangha Passages

New Members

Hoen-ji welcomed eight new Sangha members during ceremonies in the last year. The following people joined during winter sesshin: Mary Abraham, Akash Jaggi, Sheronda McClain and Jim Thompson. Shawn Trifoso became a member during summer sesshin. Mark Barber, Markus Pierce-Brewster and Audrey Hager were welcomed at fall sesshin.

Jukai celebrants

Sangha members Keigetsu Yao Xu and Kigyo Kayphet Mavady received Precepts last spring in a ceremony at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Their names mean Flower Moon and Resolute Practice, respectively. The Dharma Connection designer, formerly known as Tetsunin Pat Yingst, also received a new Dharma name: ShiOn, meaning Ultimate Sound.

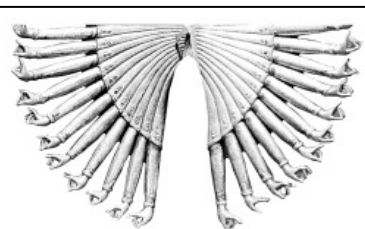
Studying at Harvard

Clay Strange-Lee recently began pursuing his post-professional master's degree in urban design at Harvard University's Graduate School of Design. He expects to graduate in 2015 and continue to pursue his career as an architect and urbanist both domestically and abroad.

Clay is a licensed architect and has experience in master planning, urban design and residential, retail and institutional projects in the United States, China and South Korea. He recently developed preliminary designs for renovations to the Zen Center's student residence.

SU Doctoral Award

Sangha member and former resident Sanghyeon Cheon received a doctoral prize last spring from the School of Education at Syracuse University for his excellent dissertation. The award was announced at the Hooding Ceremony



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and at convocation.

Sanghyeon's dissertation compared two meditation programs (sitting vs. moving) to see if one is more effective than the other, depending upon the participants' characteristics measured by cognitive and somatic anxieties, Sanghyeon wrote in an email. Within the group of nonmeditators, moving meditation was more effective than sitting meditation in reducing both cognitive and somatic anxieties for those who are more vulnerable to the cognitive type of stress. This suggests that a less cognitively challenging meditation technique, such as moving meditation, would have more potential benefit for cognitively vulnerable college students, especially beginning meditators, he said. The meditation technique selection did not matter for the experienced meditators' group. Mature meditators seemed less sensitive to immediate benefit from the meditation and might be able to tolerate whatever experience they had during the meditation practice.

Sanghyeon received his Ph.D. in instructional design, development and evaluation. He lives in Glenside, Penn., where he is an assistant professor in the Department of Won Buddhist Studies, at the Won Institute of Graduate Studies.

Good Neighbor

Zen Center resident Jushin Barb Rauscher was among 15 neighborhood volunteers from around the city who met monthly with the Gifford Foundation to plan the Syracuse Neighborhood Action Conference in October.

The program's aim was to develop the capacity of city neighbors to unify voices and increase influence. It offered a variety of workshops to build skills and contacts, learn how to move thoughts and ideas to action and empower the community.

"Five or six years ago I was not an involved resident," Jushin told the Gifford Foundation. "I learned so much at the 2011 conference and now as part of this planning committee – and especially learned I am not alone. I hope that residents and neighborhood associations who have seeds of ideas for improving their community will participate and gain the courage and knowledge to speak up, connect with others and plant those seeds."

Births

Vivian Lan Slade, daughter of Mai-Liem and Chuck Slade and little sister to Morgan, was born at 2:48 p.m. December 20, 2012.

Tessa Dylan Wilett-Jensen, first grandchild of Muju Rene Wilett, was born October 4 at 3:49 p.m., weighing 5 pounds, 13 ounces. Tessa is the daughter of Nicole Ann Wilett-Jensen and Colin Thomas-Jensen.

Deaths

Genko Leslie Bernet DelGigante, sister of Sangha member Jika Lauren Melnikow, died February 15.

Bernice Helen Emmons, mother of Tibetan Sangha member Marie Luther, died April 14.

Julia Good, niece of Sangha member Daigan David Arnold, died January 20. Joseph Michael Hughes, who practiced at the Zen Center and at Hendricks Chapel on Syracuse University campus, died June 15.

Evalyn Van Zoeren, grandmother of resident and Sangha member Reiko Cynthia Van Zoeren, died August 24 at the age of 94.

Peter Ward, brother of resident and Sangha member Kyugen Dan Ward, died November 19, 2012.

Marc Charles Wilett, son of Sangha member Muju Rene Wilett, died June 8. He was 36.

Margot Loines Morrow Wilkie, longtime friend and Dharma sister of Shinge Roshi, died August 21 at the age of 101½. She supported the Zen Center generously over the years and was a beloved student of Domo Geshe Rimpoche at Gangjong Namgyal, a close neighbor of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. □

– Compiled by Meigetsu Rebecca Beers



JUKAI REUNION: Members of the Jukai Class of 2002 gathered for a reunion September 28 at the Fayetteville home of Jika Lauren and Walter Melnikow. They are, left to right, GetsuAn Ann Marshall, Jika, Ungo Jim Pangborn, Reijitsu Paul Batkin, Hokyo Sarah Keith, Nengaku Roger Cunningham and Joraku JoAnn Cooke. Jisei Joanne Dwyer was not present. Members traveled from as far away as Key West and Gainesville, Fla.

Photo by Debra Roberts

Summer Sesshin
gentle morning sit
soft sun with trickling water
breeze brushes no one
– Jika Lauren Melnikow

Thank You to Our Donors

The following people generously gave year-end and memorial donations. We bow in gratitude for your support.

Year-end 2012

Judy Antoine	Diane Grimes	Walter Melnikow
Joanne Arany	Gary and Bonnie Grossman	Kathryn Mollach
Paul Aviles	Leonard Heckwolf	Gay Montague
Meigetsu Rebecca Beers	Anne Helfer	Masako Nakatsugawa
Jane Begley	John Henley	Martine Nguyen
Killian D. Benigno	Charlotte Hess	Catherine Nolan
Chogen Rene Berblinger	Fumiyo Hirano	Ann Ogburn
Carol Biesemeyer	Lisa Anna Hofstead	Nicolette Pascarella
Bruce Bitz	Shiju Ben Howard	Kishan and Dawn Perera
Ken and Cathy Bobis	MyoUn Lorraine Huang	James Pickard
Beverly Brown	David Humphrey	Daiku Linda Piddock
Bill Burch	Elizabeth Jones	Ted Pietrzak
Mary Jean Byrne-Maisto	Heidi Kadick	Richard and Neva Pilgrim
Moshe Cahill	Deborah Kanter	Amy Judy Place
Shinge Roko Sherry	Jikai Jane Keenan	Jeanette Powell
Chayat Roshi	James Kelly	Keishin Jen Reid
Renate Chevli	John Kitchen	David Richards
Rudolph Colao	Paul Kocak	Hongo David Robertson Jr.
Frederick Conroy	Eiko Krezdak	Kigetsu Jennifer Sampson
Daishin Paul Cook	Myorin Catherine Landis	Mark Savad
Joraku JoAnn and Dana Cooke	Christine Lane	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Daisho John Corso	Clifford and Barbara Laws	Catherine Shradly
Mushin Thomas Crisman	Inada Lawson	Mai-Liem Slade
Amber Davis	Gyoshin Virginia Lawson	Ryushin Michael Sobel
Amy Doherty	Zuisho Elaine Leahy	Janet Stemmer
Jeffrey Doolittle	Thomas and Pamela LeBlanc	Nikyu Robert Strickland
Adrienne Eddy	Laura Leso	Mary Swan
Richard Ellison	Christian Lord	John Tanquary
James Emmons	Ryoju John Lynch	Rosemary Thompson
Jisho Judith Fancher	Oren Lyons	Edward Usakewicz
Michael Fiels	GetsuAn Ann Marshall	Joanne Verone
Senju David Fisher and Deb Badera	Peter Mathe	Sal and Dianne Villano
E.L. Flocke	Tom Matsuda	Thomas Walsh
Wendy Foulke	Kayphet Pat Mavady	Konreki Randlett Walster
Sokyu David Franke	Dennis McCort	Myoko Jennifer Waters
Dennis Giacomo	Michael and Alice McGrath	Carrie Mae Weems and Jeff Hoone
Diane Giamartino	Jika Lauren and	ShiOn Pat Yingst
		Fred Zolna

continued from previous page,

Syracuse University Communication and Contemplative Engagement Class

Memorial

Philip Goodrum	Daiku Linda Piddock
Meigetsu Rebecca Beers	Jennifer Santorelli
Mary Jean Byrne-Maisto	Naoko Sasaki
Shinge Roko Sherry	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Chayat Roshi	Konreki Randlett Walster
Gyoshin Virginia Lawson	
Jika Lauren and	
Walter Melnikow	
Mokuon Karen Nezelek	

Generous Birthday Contributions

In lieu of gifts for her seventieth birthday, Shinge Roshi suggested Sangha and friends might contribute to the building of a new entry to the kinhin path and Garden of Serenity – a bamboo fence and torii gate. The following people donated generously to this project and/or contributed to Shinge Roshi's energy portrait.

Paul Andrioli	Christine Lane	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Anonymous	Gyoshin Virginia Lawson	S.U. Communication and
Meigetsu Rebecca Beers	Christian Lord	Contemplative Engage-
Mary Jean Byrne-Maisto	GetsuAn Ann Marshall	ment Class
Rudolph Colao	Kigyo Kayphet Mavady	Reiko Cynthia Van Zoeren
Daishin Paul Cook	Jika Lauren and	Thomas and Maureen
Joraku JoAnn Cooke	Walter Melnikow	Walsh
Ishin Bill Cross	Brenda Miller	Muju Rene Wilett
Evelyn Dumanian	Chimon Bill Mitrus	ShiOn Pat Yingst
Senju David Fisher and Deb Badera	Mokuon Karen Nezelek	
Diane Grimes	Markus Pierre-Brewster	
John Henley	Jeanette Powell	
Myotan Patricia Hoffmann	Jushin Barbara	
and Bill Cuddy	Rauscher	
Saigyo Terry Keenan	Keishin Jen Reid	
	Mai-Liem Slade	



Jisho Judy Fancher, Shinge Roshi, Kimpu Jonathan Swan and Nikita. Photo by Myorin Catherine Landis



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