



dharma
CONNECTION

The Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji

2009



Daily Schedule

Sunday, 9 a.m.-12: chanting service, zazen, teisho or dokusan

Monday, 7-7:45 a.m.: short service, zazen

Tuesday: 8:30-9:30 a.m., zazen

Wednesday, 6-7:45 a.m.: chanting service, zazen

Thursday, 7-7:45 a.m.: zazen

Thursday, 6-8 p.m.: short service, zazen

First Thursday of the month: tea and discussion at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Tibetan practice: 9-10:30 a.m.

Joza (unstructured sittings): 5-6 a.m. every morning except Tuesday

*Newcomers welcome; please arrive at least 20 minutes early
for instruction in sitting posture and zendo procedures*

*Please note: We are extending our winter sesshin to five days, and
our summer sesshin to seven days, as a result of your ever-deepening
commitment to the Dharma!*

Sesshin Schedule 2010

Five-day Winter Sesshin from 7 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 12 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 17.

Three-day Spring Sesshin from 7 p.m. Thursday, April 15 to 5 p.m. Sunday, April 18.

Seven-day Summer Sesshin from 7 p.m. Sunday, July 25 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 1.

Three-day Fall Sesshin from 7 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 21 to 5 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 24.

*Sesshin applications must be filled out, either online at our website or at the Zen Center.
The fees – \$200 (\$150 for members) for three-day, \$250 (\$200 for members) for five-day,
and \$300 (\$250 for members) for seven-day – are due two weeks before the starting
date. Part-time participants pay \$75 per day (must do at least one full day). Payment
can be made by mail, in person or online. Some scholarships are available. Jihatsu (bowl
sets) for formal meals are supplied at sesshin or may be purchased through the Zen
Center (contact Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz, bshoultz@mailbox.syr.edu).*

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From the Abbot

Eloquent Silence, compiled and edited in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Nyogen Senzaki's passing last year, continues to reverberate in American Zen.

Recently I received a wonderful birthday package from my longtime student Saigyo Terry Keenan, who moved to Maryland several years ago, where he has been working as a Buddhist chaplain with patients at Johns Hopkins and with addicts and alcoholics.

He sent a new book of poems he just completed called *Master of Nothing*, which is the final section of a novel he has been working on; the poems are paired with small reproductions of his paintings. In the accompanying letter, he wrote, "I must tell you what a wonderful and continuing joy it has been to read *Eloquent Silence*. I forget if this is my third or fourth time through it, but Jikai and I share a reading each day before our morning sitting. It is the clearest and most direct expression of our practice for westerners I have ever read – and I have read way too many. But what strikes me most is Nyogen Senzaki's deep loving-kindness behind every word. Such a profound lesson! Thank you for making these gentle words available to us all. I recommend or even give it to many of the patients I see and to those whom I instruct in the basics of meditation."

In July, I spent a week in the Northwest, first in Seattle and then at the American Zen Teachers' Conference, held this year at Great Vow monastery in a rural area outside Portland, Oregon. Of course, flying into Seattle, Nyogen Senzaki was very much on my mind, since that was where he first stepped onto American soil, in 1905. I spent that first night at Chobo-ji, where my Dharma brother Genjo Osho is abbot. I sat with his Sangha, and then rode with him to Great Vow, stopping for lunch on the houseboat of my old friend Courtney Frisse. Genjo Osho and I had a good chance to talk about our respective Dharma activities and sanghas. The conference itself was excellent; each day started with zazen at 4:20. There were 21 of us from all over the country, and we discussed many important topics throughout the four days.

While there, I received a call on my cell phone from Professor Lawson Inada, Oregon's poet laureate, with whom I had been in correspondence this past year. From that point on, uncanny "coincidences" involving Nyogen Senzaki continued to occur – the Dai Bosatsu Mandala manifesting at every turn.

Prof. Inada, who had been sent to an internment camp as a young boy, had first contacted me when he read *Eloquent Silence* and saw Nyogen Senzaki's poem written at Heart Mountain Internment Camp that ends, "While they



Shinge Roshi

search curious stones of ancient ages.” Prof. Inada sent me his own poem in response to Senzaki’s, called “Picking Up Stones,” about the elderly monk gathering stones that he found at Heart Mountain, writing on them with his brush, and then putting them back on the plateau, and how others had begun going on “Eastern eggless hunt(s)” and collecting them.

On the last evening at Great Vow monastery, since I was in Oregon, I thought it would be appropriate to read both poems. Afterward, Chozen Jan Bays, co-abbot, stood up with an astonished expression. She said that when she and Kaz Tanahashi had gone to Hiroshima and Nagasaki to offer the Jizo Project quilt (to which Hoen-ji had contributed panels) on the 50th anniversary of the atomic bomb attacks, a filmmaker friend of Kaz’s who went with them had given her a copy of a 2004 video she had made called “Rabbit in the Moon,” a documentary about the internment camps. This filmmaker, Emiko Omori, had been in one of the camps as a small child, and her mother had died at the age of 39 due to the terrible conditions there. The documentary was her way of connecting with the mother she lost when she was one-and-a-half years old. Chozen ran to get the video and showed it to me. The opening image is of a 55-gallon oil drum that had been dug up by a farmer at Heart Mountain. It was filled to the brim with stones – each one with a word in brushwork by Nyogen Senzaki!

The next day, Chogen Rene Berblinger picked me up and drove me to his organic farm, where we had a sumptuous lunch of just-picked vegetables, and then took me to his studio in Portland; that afternoon we had tea with his friend, a Japanese artist named Allen Say, whose beautiful, poignant children’s books Chogen had sent me earlier. The next day he brought me to Looking Glass Bookstore in Portland to do a reading from *Eloquent Silence*. It was at that same bookstore in 1996, when I was giving a presentation on *Endless Vow*, that Chogen and I had met. He came up to me after the reading to say how moved he was to encounter the Dai Bosatsu lineage once again, having practiced with a student of Eido Roshi’s in Washington, D.C., many years ago, and at DBZ. It was because of that “chance” meeting at Looking Glass Bookstore that Chogen became my student.

After my reading from *Eloquent Silence*, I told the story about reading Prof. Inada’s poem and seeing the opening image in Omori-san’s film; then I read the poem. During the book signing, a woman who had been sitting in the front row came up. Her name was Margaret Chula; she was a haiku poet who had spent 12 years in Kyoto, and had just finished writing a book of poems called *What Remains: Japanese-Americans in Internment Camps*. The first poem in the book was “Heart Mountain, Wyoming.” She inscribed the book for me, “May the mandala continue to turn – gassho, Maggie.”

Chogen and I drove back to Seattle that evening for dinner at the home of Cathy and Ryushin Michael Sobel; they had also invited Genjo Osho and his wife, Caroline; Horen Vaughn Bell and her husband, Brennan Staley, and her

brother, Jordan Bell. It was a merry last gathering of dear Northwest Dharma friends before I headed back to Syracuse.

A few months later, at Hoen-ji's Fall Anniversary Sesshin, one of the participants, Tom VandeWater, told me about a pilgrimage he and his family had made June 30 to Heart Mountain. He later wrote about the experience: "No sign of Nyogen Senzaki Sensei here. Only two buildings remain, one with a tall chimney. My family and I walk along the interpretive trail, reading signs telling of hardship and injustice, looking at photos of what was. Still no sign of Senzaki Sensei.

"By the old infirmary smokestack, echoes of concentration camps ... my oldest son lies on his back looking up at the chimney for a long time. Wyoming sky.

"A pebble of concentric rings weathered to a smooth, sand-blasted surface lies on the ground. Stones the monk of no rank walked on. These winds blew through this stark beauty. Nothing left here, or anywhere.

"Just the face of my teacher before me."

Many memorable events took place at Hoen-ji this year. Celebrated scholar-monk Sogen Victor Hori, whose book *Zen Sand: The Book of Capping Phrases for Koan Practice* is a must for any serious Zen student's library, visited in February, sat with us, and gave a fascinating talk at Syracuse University; Saigyo Terry Keenan was also in town to speak at the SU Library, and he and Jikai joined us for dinner with Sogen-san at Hoen-ji.

I taught an all-day haiku retreat in March, and several poems written that day appear in this issue.

We had a rich four days in April with renowned poet Jane Hirshfield, who participated in our Buddha's Birthday ceremony, stayed at the Zen Center residence, gave enthusiastically received readings, talks and book signings at SU, the Downtown Writers' Center, and Hoen-ji, and left us all glowing, due not only to her remarkable work, but to her deep practice and beautiful presence.

On a sad personal note, my beloved mother-in-law, Frances Davis Hassinger Everhart, passed away May 14 at the age of 93. Andy and I had been going to Pennsylvania to see her frequently this past year, as her physical condition worsened; her mind remained clear to the end, and Andy held her as she died.

At the end of May, I dedicated a magnificent Zen garden that Cathy Shrady and Mark MacWilliams had created at St. Lawrence University, sat with and gave dokusan to members of North Country Zendo, and presented a meditation workshop as part of the university's Alumni/ae Reunion Weekend.

After my aforementioned trip to the Northwest, we had a strong summer sesshin, and then Andy and I attended the beautiful O-bon ceremony at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, to honor his mother. The following weekend we had a powerful O-bon here at Hoen-ji, with Zan-san Paul Worden as Ino.

Five students and I participated in a glorious Golden Wind sesshin at DBZ, and shortly after our return, we held Hoen-ji's Fall Anniversary Sesshin,

with 33 full-time and four part-time participants. All agreed that it was the most remarkable sesshin ever. With the maturing practice here, the strong enthusiasm of many new young Sangha members and the accumulated Nen of our sitting, we have decided to extend January sesshin to five days, and are planning a full week-long sesshin for July (see sesshin schedule in this issue).

As I contemplate this past year, my heart overflows with gratitude to the Hoen-ji Sangha. Many, many people, far too numerous to name, have worked very hard, volunteering their time, energy, contributions, and offerings, in notable and inconspicuous ways – and this kindhearted generosity is one of the reasons that the Dharma is manifesting so strongly here. Jikyo Bonnie Shultz, our shikaryo, is an inspiration in that regard. We have a great board of trustees, and are fortunate to have Meigetsu Rebecca Beers and Toku Ellen Grapensteter as president and treasurer. Facilities committee co-chairs MyoEn Deb Bateman and Daigan David Arnold have taken loving care of our buildings and grounds, with many volunteers working alongside. Gyoshin Virginia Lawson managed innumerable tasks in the office and as development committee chair (she is now training at DBZ). We are indeed fortunate to have the expertise of Senju Dave Fisher, who devotes long hours to our computer and database functions, and Todd Relyea, our webmaster. Tetsunin Pat Yingst has done a masterful job designing the Dharma Connection. New program committee chair Mokuon Karen Nezelek has proven to be a wonderful organizer and facilitator. We have an especially strong group of residents this year: Jikyo Bonnie Shultz, Jisho Judy Fancher, Joe O'Brien, Kyugen Dan Ward, Jushin Barb Rauscher, and Sanghyeon Cheon were joined recently by Kimpu Jonathan Swan, True Heart Chuck Price, Kaity Cheng, and Caroline Savage (who is spending fall kessei at DBZ). Daigan and Alex Dumanian, who live nearby, are all-but residents, always here to do what needs to be done. And all our officers, both in sesshin and in regular sittings, have carried out their roles with dedication and grace. Last but not least, I am grateful to my husband, Andy Hassinger, for his leadership of the Tibetan Buddhist group here, and for his loving, encouraging, Bodhisattva spirit. Thank you, everyone, for making Hoen-ji such a special place. □

*Monarch butterfly
among the purple flowers
autumn harbinger*

*crows scream in oak tree
homeless person's belongings
stiffened in first frost*

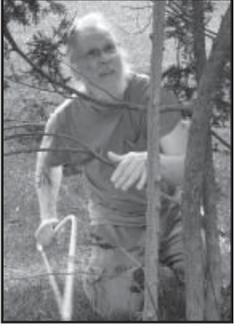
Three Autumn Haiku

*Wind roars through the trees
wherever each leaf alights
a golden temple*

— Shinge Roshi

Letters

Dear Sangha,



Due to a generous scholarship from Hoen-ji, I was recently able to attend Golden Wind sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. All sesshins are deeply moving, but this one was especially so because I was keenly aware of the support of the entire Sangha – not just financially, but spiritually. In turn, I dedicated my sitting to everyone who could not be there. We are truly fortunate to have found each other.

Gassho,
Daigan David Arnold

Dear Shinge Roshi,

I was able to go to Omega for a weekend of Pema Chodrun teaching tonglen practice. It was a great experience and really opened up some space for me. There were over 500 people there, and she began to read from a list of their loved ones who were suffering from many different mental and physical ailments. She read for about 20 minutes and it's difficult to express the profound sense of the suffering of the world – the first noble truth – that was conveyed.

A great space opened up to include all suffering beings; a sense of compassion and sorrow without sentimentality. A space large enough to connect every sentient being with a source of the most profound peace. A space I am still aware of this morning, as I am thinking of you.

I am so grateful for your teaching and our practice at Hoen-ji. Without this practice the teachings I heard last weekend would be mere words, idealistic visions. All my time sitting here, in my own backyard, has made it possible to get a glimpse of something very wide and deep and wonderful. The surprise and wonder at finding this right down the road is with me still, and I just want to say thank you for all you do.

Gassho,
Toku Ellen Grapensteter

October 18, 2009

Dear Sangha,

The train has just left Syracuse, is gathering speed, and dusk is casting its purplish haze on the autumn leaves. During my first years of living in New York City I used to take this train home from sesshin, and it was my habit to write Roshi a brief letter, thanking her and saying a bit about my reflections on sesshin.

All these years later, another train ride letter – this time, to the Sangha. And this time I truly feel as though I am leaving home, rather than returning home. There is no place on earth that is more my home than Hoen-ji, and I mean to thank you all for always having the “home fires burning.” I’ve moved all my life, so literally have no family home: I’m fairly estranged from my parents, so don’t go stay with them; Florence and I commute back and forth between Western Massachusetts and New York City, so neither place is that settled.

But the minute I walk into the zendo, the knot I didn’t even know I had in my stomach begins to unwind. To be able to just drop in for three days and sit in utter stillness with you – supported by your breath, and energy, and utter gentleness, is an astonishing gift. I want to thank you for all you do to sustain Hoen-ji, and want you to know I am so grateful to you all throughout all the hours I sit beside you.

I felt such tenderness and exquisite caretaking from the officers this sesshin; there was no pretense or edge, nothing but full-hearted enthusiasm and commitment.

More than a few times during sesshin, someone’s actions caught my eye, and I was powerfully aware of the person’s earnestness and devotion to the Dharma. In those moments, my heart expanded and I was struck by my good fortune to be practicing with you all.

A few of you know I arrived on Thursday night with a parcel of troubles – all, it turned out, made of air. Under your tender care, with your Nen-filled chanting, with really yummy food, and inspired by Roshi’s stunning teaching, I am returning to New York City an entirely different person. (I wonder if any of my colleagues will even recognize me?)

Now it has already grown dark. I have five hours more to travel tonight. My heart is filled with the warm glow we all shared these past few days.

For all this – and more – I thank you.

With love and gratitude that our paths have crossed,
Jikishi Celia Oyler

Ho-en-ji Summer Sesshin Teisho

Blue Cliff Collection, Case 21, Chimon's Lotus Flower and Lotus Leaves

By Shinge Roshi
August 1, 2009

Enko's Introduction

Setting up the Dharma banner and establishing the Dharma teaching is like spreading flowers over brocades. If you take off the blinders and set down the load, you will enter the season of great peace. If you can discern a phrase outside of patterns, given one corner, you understand the other three. If you are not yet able to do so, listen to the following:

Main Subject

A monk asked Chimon, "How is it when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?" Chimon said, "The lotus flower."

"What about after it has emerged from the water?"

"Lotus leaves."

Setcho's Verse

The lotus leaves! The lotus flower!

He is so kind to tell you of them!

The flower coming out of the water –

What difference, before or after?

If you wander about, now north of the river, now south of the lake,

Questioning Master Wang and the like,

As one doubt is settled others will arise

And you will puzzle over question after question.

During kinhin, before morning dokusan, I was walking with you on the trail, and as I looked at the trees, the phrase from the dedication we just heard came to mind: "... past, present, future, all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, all Ancestral Teachers ..." Some of the trees were quite ancient; others were young guys, still in their twenties. Some were just starting out; still others were long gone, crumbling away. Some were standing soooooo tall. Some were leaning on their canes. Some were horizontal, already on a bier. Bier, you understand? B-i-e-r. (Laughter) And here we all are, at our various stages: past, present, future, all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas.

...

Today, we meet a teacher who was a wonderful poet, Chimon Koso. He was in Ummon Zenji's lineage, and was the Dharma heir of Kyorin, who some of you may

remember from Case 17: “Sitting Long and Getting Tired.” One of Chimon’s heirs was the great poet Setcho, whose verses we are appreciating in each case of *The Blue Cliff Collection*.

Chimon is well known for his response to a monk who asked, “What is the essence of prajna (wisdom)?” Chimon replied, “The oyster swallows the full moon.” The monk asked, “What is the action of prajna?” Chimon said, “The rabbit conceives by the full moon.” (Case 90 of *The Blue Cliff Collection*). Another time, Chimon entered the Dharma Hall and addressed the monks: “You put your staffs over your shoulders and go traveling. That’s what you do. You leave one monastery and travel to the next. How many different types of monasteries do you think there are? There’s either a sandalwood monastery surrounded by sandalwood or a thistle monastery surrounded by thistles, or it could be a thistle monastery surrounded by sandalwood, or a sandalwood monastery surrounded by thistles. Of these four types of monasteries, in which are you willing to spend your life? If you don’t find a place to which to devote your life, then you’re just wearing out your sandals for no reason. Eventually the day will come when the king of hell will take away all your sandal money.”

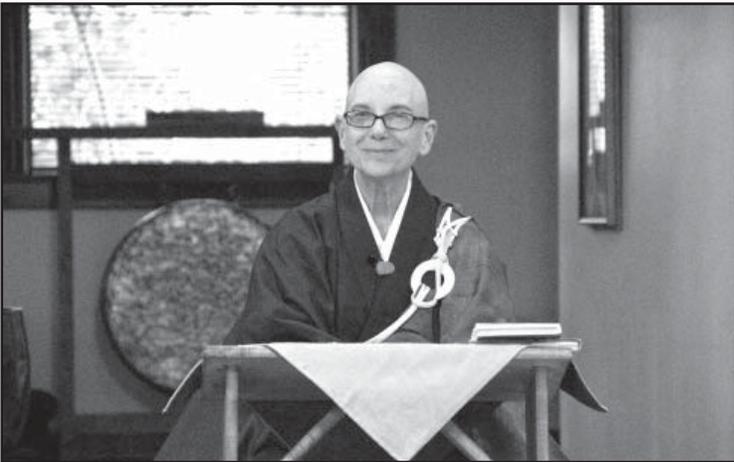


Photo by Ryushin Michael Sobel, 2008

Going from this place to that, going from this thought to that, when are you finally going to say, OK! (BAM!) This is it! It’s not what I want, but this is it. It’s not what I thought, but this is it. It’s not the way I would prefer it to be, but this is it. Thistles, sandalwood – this is it!

In his introduction, Engo begins, *Setting up the Dharma banner* – traditionally the banner, or flag, was set up when the teacher was to give teisho. Some of you know Case 22 of *The Gateless Barrier*, “Knock down the flagpole at the gate!” *Setting up the Dharma banner and establishing the Dharma teaching is like spreading flowers over brocades*, Engo tells us. The

brocade of Just This is already right here; there is no need to spread flowers over it, no need to gild the lily. This glorious light is already shining everywhere! What can we possibly add? What interpretation does it need? What meaning can we give it? When we start to interpret something, or classify it, or concoct some narrative about it, what happens to it?

Then Engo says, *If you take off the blinders and set down the load, you will enter a time of great peace.* Nyogen Senzaki called it “taking off the wrappers.” What are the wrappers? What are the blinders? (A student answers, “preconceived ideas.”) Definitely, preconceived ideas, and where do those preconceived ideas come from, anyway? All our preconceived ideas about Zen, about Buddhism – somebody has spread flowers over brocades. In his poem “On Zen,” Daio Kokushi said, “... Wishing to entice the blind, the Buddha has playfully let words escape his golden mouth; heaven and earth are ever since filled with entangling briars. ...”

When we take someone else’s words for it, those words, no matter how profound, become blinders. Take off the blinders! I can’t tell you a thing! All I can say is: I can’t say a word. Of course, we use many words to say that! But take off the blinders, and find out for yourself! *Set down the load.* What’s the load? Everything you carry with you, yes, all your baggage, your conditioned habits, definitely, but in this context, what’s the load? Your load of crap! It’s a crock of shit, that’s what he’s saying. You’re going to all these teachers looking for the answer. You’ll find *their* answers, and where’s that going to leave you? You have to find out for yourself. That’s what the good teachers say. They deprive you. Deprive, deprive: this is the Rinzai School! Deprivation.

Some of you are working on koans. They are exchanges with the great masters of old. And when you encounter them, the impulse is what, to make sense of them? In other words, to load yourselves. But you’re not here to study koans, analyze them, talk about them. When you really go deeply into your koan, something happens inside. It’s not received wisdom. It’s not given to you by Chimon, or Ryuke, or Ummon, or Rinzai, or any teacher; it’s a meeting of Mind to Mind. Koan practice is looking into, truly seeing into, yourself – true insight.

To see this way is indeed to take off the blinders, and set down the load, and enter the season of great peace, in which pain? No problem. Egocentric muddy thoughts? Ah, lotus flower. The season of great peace.

If you can discern a phrase outside of patterns ...

Now what is that? Usually what goes on in the mind is determined by the patterns created by our self-absorption, the narratives we’ve constructed around our experiences, the views we hold, our expectations that everything will follow along in the same way. So when we hear a teacher say something, or receive some correction from someone, or even when we read a text, immediately it is perceived through a cloudy lens, or seen through the wrong end of the telescope. Everything revolves around the self, this conditioned self

stuck in its patterns. But if you can break through, and discern a phrase – any phrase! This is the same as realizing that any thought is a sutra when it is not obscured by the veils of your habitual conditioning, when it is just seen directly as it is, as it is. Then, just pick up the daily newspaper, and any headline, any caption, will be seen as none other than This.

... given one corner, you understand the other three. This is a Confucian saying. If you can discern, then given just one part, you know the whole. You get it.

The koan: A monk asked Chimon, “How is it when the lotus flower has not yet emerged from the water?”

When we were in Japan we went to Ryoan-ji, and saw wondrous lotus flowers on the lake. What is the beautiful Buddha on the altar carved by Tom Matsuda sitting on? A lotus flower. In “Bodhisattva’s Vow” we chant, “... If by chance they should turn against us, and abuse and persecute us, we should bow down with humble words, in the reverent belief that they are the merciful avatars of Buddha, who uses devices to emancipate us from sinful karma that has been produced and accumulated upon ourselves by our own egoistic delusion and attachment” – of course, we haven’t called it “our own egoistic delusion and attachment,” we’ve called it “their fault” – “through the countless cycles of kalpa.” Every time we say, “Oh, it’s because of my mother, my father, wah, wah,” another kalpa. Then – when we see it as our own egoistic delusion and attachment, then what? “Then, in each moment’s flash of our thought” – some of you may think your thought is the problem – that you should have a lobotomy, no more thinking! But each thought is a sutra! “When we bow down with humble words,” each thought becomes a lotus flower. “Then, in each moment’s flash of our thought, there will grow a lotus flower, and each lotus flower will reveal a Buddha.” How many of you really believe your thought can produce a lotus flower, let alone a Buddha?

“...some of you may think your thought is the problem – that you should have a lobotomy, no more thinking! But each thought is a sutra!”

How does the lotus flower grow? In the mud! Isn’t that a handy analogy? So as you experience thoughts that may be filled with all kinds of habitual conditioning, miserable blaming, self-recrimination, whatever – all that is the mud. How can the lotus flower grow without that? As Yamakawa Roshi once told me, “Don’t hate your delusions.” And somebody told me in dokusan, “I realized that pain is my best friend.” Appreciate your thoughts, deluded as they may be, as this wonderful ground of being, this earth of Buddha-nature, nourishing us all. When we sit deeply, we can realize this. When we haven’t realized this, we think, “Oh, this is horrible, and it’s all my fault, or it’s all their fault,” and the inner war continues.

So this monk is asking about the lotus flower when it hasn’t emerged from

the water. The lotus flower is “not yet.” Some of you may be reminded of another koan, Case 9 of *The Gateless Barrier*, about Daitso Chisho Buddha. A monk asked Koyo Seijo, “Daitso Chisho Buddha sat for ten kalpas and could not attain Buddhahood. How could this be?” Ten kalpas is a long time to be doing zazen. Four days sesshin, five days sesshin, ten kalpas! Yet he didn’t become a Buddha. Seijo said, “Your question is quite self-explanatory.” The monk persisted, “But he sat so long, why could he not attain Buddhahood?” What was the answer? “Because he did not become a Buddha.”

How is it when the lotus flower has not yet emerged? He did not become a Buddha. Typically, we parse that statement and kind of accept it, but in a superficial way, and say, Oh, *become* must be the key word here, right? What if we take *become* away? How can he become? How can he become what? And we remember Hakuin Zenji’s “Song of Zazen”: “Sentient beings are primarily all Buddhas. It is like ice and water; without water, no ice can exist.” Daitso Chisho Buddha is fundamentally Buddha, so how can he *become* any more Buddha than he already is, you might say. That is one way of looking at it, but what about emerging?

This is where Chimon comes in. How is it when the lotus flower has not yet emerged? One might say this is the condition of potential, of not yet being actualized. But whether it has emerged or not, it is still in the water, the Dharma water of its fundamental nature. This non-emerging lotus flower; this non-becoming Buddha. There are two ways to take that statement, you see? He is not yet a Buddha is one way; another is, he is a “not-yet Buddha.” Words are not only tricky but really astonishing. Remember, Chimon was a poet.

“There are two ways to take that statement, you see? ‘He is not yet a Buddha’ is one way; another is he is a ‘not-yet Buddha.’”

What about after it has emerged from the water? The lotus leaves.

The leaves are actualizing this lotus. Wherever we go, our leaves are spanning out. (Student says: Lotus seeds remain viable for hundreds of years.) There’s no end to it! No end. Inconceivable. Lotus leaves, everywhere. What about these words “before” – not yet – and “after”? As I said, the typical way of using language is to construct everything in terms of our logical mind; thus we think, “not yet a Buddha,” instead of “a not-yet Buddha.” We see not yet as a condition that precedes “after.” Yes? Not yet comes before after, that’s the way we think. That’s our problem. That really is our problem.

Chimon’s Dharma grandfather, Ummon, said, “I do not ask about the days before the fifteenth of the month, but what about after the fifteenth? Give me a word about those days.” (Case 6 of *The Blue Cliff Record*.) Again, “before” and “after.” Fifteen days, fifteenth of the month – the full moon of enlightenment is pointed at here, the finger pointing at the moon. So, did

anyone answer? As usual, Ummon gave the answer for his monks, and what did he say? “Every day is a good day.”

You might say, “Well, maybe that’s what happens after realization – every day, even though it’s horrible, is a good day – but I’m certainly not there. So I know that there is a ‘before’ and an ‘after,’ thank you very much!” Someone said to me, “I feel I don’t deserve to be. . .” You can end that statement with any word: I don’t deserve to be happy, I don’t deserve to be loved, I don’t deserve to be Buddha. I admired this honest statement very much. In our zazen a lot of stuff comes up. It’s so important that we open to it, and speak with candor; that we don’t try to patch things over, that we don’t try to put a good face on it; that we really acknowledge the way we feel: non-deserving. Remember the monk who asked Joshu, Does even a dog have Buddha-nature? implying, Is it possible that even I do? Feeling, surely all sentient beings are primarily Buddha except me?

Master Rinzai speaks to this point in a well-known passage that we read at our last Dharma Study meeting, and by the way, these monthly meetings with the *Book of Rinzai* are really fantastic, aren’t they? Here is what he says about lacking self-confidence in “Jishu (Teaching the Assembly),” Chapter 11:

... Followers of the Way, outstanding ancient teachers all had their own methods to liberate people. In the case of this mountain monk, all I want to point out to you is that you must not be deluded by others. No patterns, no blinders . . . you must not be deluded by others. If you want to act, just act. Don’t ever be intimidated. You students nowadays don’t get it. What is the disease? The disease is a lack of self-confidence. If your faith is insufficient, you will keep on wandering in confusion. Just like Setcho’s “now north of the river, now south of the lake.” Rinzai continues, No matter what the circumstances, you will be controlled and led around by others. You will not find freedom. If you can stop your continuously seeking mind, then there will be no difference between you and the buddhas and patriarchs. Would you like to know the buddhas and patriarchs? They are none other than those of you who are now in front of me, listening to the Dharma. ...

Those of you who are now in front of me, stand up. Everyone, in your own voice, coming from within you – not in anyone else’s voice – say, “I am Buddha.”

(Everyone stands, says, “I am Buddha.”)

That was so not convincing. How discouraging! I will have to read the entire *Rinzairoku* to you. *Don’t ever be intimidated.* Let’s hear it!

(Everyone says loudly, “I am Buddha!”) All right! (Everyone sits.)

It is a fundamental misunderstanding of Zen practice to think that it is grim and uptight. Buddha-nature is expressing itself in spite of that misperception! I am not here conducting summer sesshin to prevent you from being Buddha! The wonderful discipline of our practice, and all the regulations of sesshin, are to help us break free of our self-imposed restrictions, our self-constructed

barriers, so that at last, we can stand up and Be! Act! Do what needs to be done when it needs to be done, with this Buddha-mind, freely actualizing our lives. So that we can flower! Send out our leaves!

Setcho's verse: *Lotus leaves! Lotus flower!* Indeed with exclamation. Setcho is so happy. This is his teacher. He gets it. He says, *He is so kind to tell you of them.*

Meaning Chimon is not telling you anything; he is inviting you, to stand up! That's what he's doing. Lotus flower, lotus leaves. No before, no after. *The flower coming out of the water – What difference, before or after?* Lotus flower. Lotus leaves.

Then Setcho looks around and says, *If you wander about, now north of the river, now south of the river ...* Now north of the St. Lawrence Seaway, now south of Lake Ontario, questioning this guy, that woman, going to this sesshin and that, trying to find a spiritual practice that suits you, and thinking, maybe it's better to just do the nice oils on my skin, and maybe do some crystals, because after all, I'm already Buddha, right? Be careful! Setcho warns, *If you wander about, As one doubt is settled others will arise, No doubt about that! And you will puzzle over question after question.* And never feel free! Always thinking that the answer lies somewhere else, somewhere without all these rules and regulations, maybe at a sandalwood monastery! And a new doubt will arise, without a doubt. Rinzai puts it this way in Chapter 19, Section 9: *Virtuous monks, what are you really seeking? Visiting this master and that master, wearing out the soles of your feet! There is no Buddha to seek, there is no Way to accomplish and there is no Dharma to obtain.* Rinzai then quotes Buddhanandi, the eighth ancestor in India: *You seek the Buddha with form outwardly. . . Even though we hear Buddha say in the Diamond Sutra, "Who sees Me by form, Who seeks Me by Sound, Wrongly turned are their footsteps on the Way, For they cannot perceive the Tathagata," we seek anyway. And when we do, Buddhanandi tells us, what you find does not resemble you. If you truly want to know your own original mind, it is neither united nor apart from you.* Rinzai concludes, *Followers of the Way, true Buddha has no form, true Way has no substance, true Dharma has no shape. These three are harmoniously infused into one.*

You may feel that you are indeed "not yet," but remember! This "not-yet" itself is Buddha! So, please, be this "not-yet-Buddha" Buddha, which no one else can give you. Remember this treasure, which may have many names: Sleepy Buddha, Anxious Buddha, Pain-filled Buddha, and remember too that they are only names – such conditions have no inherent reality. They cannot be grasped. They have already gone. The minute you try to say, "This is where I'm at," you have already locked yourself away in a cell of your own construction, so don't do that. Not yet is wonderful. Not having emerged is wonderful. And when you realize for yourself, when you emerge: it has no form, no substance, no shape. It's all here for you to experience for yourselves. □

Although we have always been extremely careful about the use of financial resources, I occasionally have been intrepid enough to complain of some real or imagined extravagance. With so many needed repairs and program ideas unfunded, it seemed like we were spending a lot of money to publish our journal, the Dharma Connection. Did anyone read it, I wondered. Or did all this hard work and creative energy end up in the recycling bin, unopened? I even went so far as to ask if we should continue the effort.

A couple of years ago these questions were answered clearly. A new friend, who had begun coming to Hoen-ji not long before, told me about her struggle to change her life. From an all-time low of self-destructive cycling, she has successfully entered a journey of self-discovery. From isolation and despair, she has begun to blossom as the Bodhisattva she has always been. She is a blessing to her community, her family and her workplace.

When we talked about how all this came about, she said her first steps began through the Dharma Connection. Somehow, she was on an outdated mailing list, and she read each issue from cover to cover. Through an ad, she initiated a therapeutic relationship with a professional member of the Sangha. This relationship led to further growth and recovery; she continues to come to Hoen-ji for classes. I continue to be blessed by our conversations.

The Dharma is vast, mysterious, subtle. I do not pretend to understand its workings, but I have heard it said that there are no coincidences. Certainly this connection is expressed through the medium of ink and paper, touching the greater Sangha and changing lives in ways we may never know. I am deeply grateful to everyone who continues to work so hard on this Dharma Connection. □

Mysterious Pen and Paper Connection

*By Toku Ellen
Grapenstater*

*oak leaf on the floor
the wildness is coming in
nothing can stop it
- Daishin Paul Cook*

Reflections on Eighteen Months at Auburn Correctional Facility

By Jikyo Bonnie
Shoultz

Sho Shin (Beginner's Mind) Sangha has held a Buddhist service at Auburn Correctional Facility almost every week since March 2008. The Sangha's study group also meets on Friday evenings.

In the Dharma Connection 2008, we wrote about the beginnings of that effort. Now approaching two years old, the prison Sangha continues to grow. Volunteers from outside attend most services and some of the study group meetings; they include MyoEn Deborah Bateman, DaiAn Linda Gehron and myself from Hoen-ji, and Nancy Koschmann from Ithaca. Even when no volunteers can come, the Sangha is usually permitted to meet if the designated inmate facilitator, Shane, is present. We also have held partial-day (five-hour and seven-hour) sittings, and two all-day sittings (9 a.m. to 9 p.m.). We have commemorated Buddhist holidays, incorporating them into some of the longer sittings: Parinirvana Day in February, Buddha's Birthday in May, and O-bon in August. Our next 12-hour sitting is Oct. 30.

Auburn administration and security personnel have been wonderfully cooperative and supportive. Coordinating Chaplain Deacon John Tomandl has helped us understand prison rules and regulations and develop our capacity to hold longer sittings. The deputy superintendent for programs and the security staff have made many changes to the usual prison routines, so we can bring food and equipment in for the longer sittings and eat in the mess hall separately. (We go for lunch after the other inmates have eaten, and have a vegetarian meal, with chanting.) Security and chapel schedules have been changed for these sittings.

Early on, the study group developed its structure and ground rules, based on Buddhist principles and values, such as "Greet each other with a bow when entering or leaving; be mutual in openness, love, and sharing; see the perfection: do not speak of others' errors or faults; observe the agenda as a form of discipline," and others. They

listed "Deal Breakers," such as physical violence, repeated offenses of rules even after a healing or reconciliation has been achieved, harmful gossip and disrespect (of guests, Sangha mem-

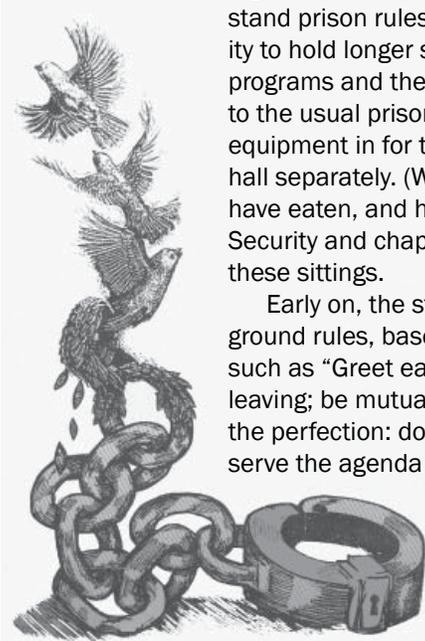


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bers, or prison staff) to the extent that they violate someone's basic dignity. Each study group meeting begins and ends with a period of meditation.

From study group minutes, Feb. 6, written by Shane: "Shane set up the group in a circle and, continuing the earlier conversation that had started in the morning service dealing with empathy, asked everyone to talk about some aspect of the practice and how it was affecting their lives." In the May 30 study group minutes, Shane writes: "As a Sangha, we are growing in our connection to ourselves, each other, and the contextual world without and within. The exploration of this connection and balance is an important one because we reside in a world that thrives on disconnecting itself and everything within it. As we grow together, bound together by the precious Dharma, we strive to enlighten ourselves and our world."

At one study group meeting Shane commented that the Sangha is having a positive effect on the prison community, citing as examples a respectful interchange with a correctional officer and a gentle exchange with another inmate. At another meeting, Jamey said he had been practicing a kind of charity, giving or sending something to other inmates on his block (soap, a pen, paper, etc.) unbidden, and that men who had formerly been aloof or hostile were now friendly toward him.

We volunteers, like the men inside, came together to form this Sangha with no idea what might happen. Trusting in the Dharma, we have all worked hard, especially in regard to the longer sittings. I think I can speak for all of us in saying that we are tremendously grateful for the experience.

As River wrote after the first five-hour sitting: "Sho Shin Sangha possesses Buddha Nature! A source of inspiration for all beings. I give my personal 'Thanks' to Jikyo, MyoEn, Nancy and the Syracuse Zen Center. SUKHITA HOTHHA (May all beings be happy)."

Editor's Note: The following three essays were sent by Sho Shin Sangha members to the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji, a guiding temple to the prison Sangha. Some have been abridged in the interest of space restrictions.

THWOCKKK ... Anyone familiar with MyoEn's fiery temperament would instantly see her essence reflected in that first whack on the han. It startles me, and I suddenly bolt upright. We just finished a period of zazen, but I was still following my breath intent on completing a cycle of 108. I noticed MyoEn get up. I knew the han was behind me, although I had never heard this wonderful sound before. The sound is like the sudden

Making Connections

By Jamey McGill

strike of lightning. Needless to say, I am now fully awake and present.

It is difficult to encapsulate the partial-day sit with words and concepts, partly because words and concepts fail to define the experience of each moment as it blends into the next. Instead, there were small moments that somehow stood perfect in their imperfections. It has been decades since Auburn prison has seen a Buddhist Sangha, and who knows if it has ever seen a partial-day sit. ... The day could not have been possible without the support of the prison administration and the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji. The center even donated the han that I have become so taken with.

The trip to lunch was an exciting adventure through the maze of perceptions. We filed out of the prison chapel with Jikyo leading the way. The walk to lunch took us through the prison's main yard, where other inmates were gathered. Whether it was Jikyo's shaved head and robes, or the line of ducklings walking mindfully behind her, I will never know. It must have made quite an impression, because the other inmates fell silent and stood looking. Even the inmates working the mess hall gathered in the window and doorway to see this strange troop.

Shane, the Sangha's inmate coordinator, gave the Dharma talk. It was very moving and midway through I ended up bowing out because I needed tissues to catch my running nose. ... Mindfully polite, Shane paused long enough for me to return to my cushion and continue my happy trail of tears. Even this was amazing to me. Years of behavioral conditioning born from years of prison aggression came to nothing. The barriers easily fell away, and I was able to be openly receptive to the moment. I was able to be moved to tears, share those tears with the Sangha and be completely OK with that. While not perfect, this is a long way from the egoistic person that I used to be.

Perhaps the most profound thing that occurred to me during this partial-day sit is the connectedness of it all. Jikyo, MyoEn and Nancy came to support us as we stumbled along our path, not to mention those whose names and faces we may never know. They came to support us, and we in turn are able to support others. Their compassion is a sparkling example that helps us connect with our own compassion. They are as much a part of our Sangha as the faceless multitudes that inhabit the universe.

"They came to support us and we in turn are able to support others."

As the day's sit came to a close, I had the opportunity to inspect the han that Hoen-ji donated to our Sangha. These words were written on the back: "Time flies like an arrow, Wake up!" I laughed and laughed as I remembered the way I bolted upright when MyoEn whacked it. Perhaps those words were written with the perfect wisdom arising out of an empty moment, perhaps those words were written for that very moment that brought my mind sharply to the present. Perhaps....

The Laughing Buddha

*By Michael
Shane Hale*

For nearly a year, I have had the incredible privilege of sitting with a Buddhist group at Auburn. The group is called a Sangha or community whose name is Sho Shin (Beginner's Mind).

It is an interesting thing to sit consistently with a space or group. It seems to take on a quality reflecting that interaction of practice. There is a familiarity that becomes the backdrop to see the minutiae of change taking place from one sitting to the next. With this mindset of expecting something similar (though changing), I was nearly felled from my seat when laughter was introduced into my practice.

During the striking of the han, the mallet's head went flying through the air. This caused the han striker to laugh, perhaps with embarrassment. The head was retrieved, the mallet restored and the striking continued. It happened again. The laughter changed from embarrassment to enlightenment.

We took our seats for zazen. I looked to a point on the floor and began counting breaths. The han striker couldn't help it. Laughter was pouring from him and filling the space around us. He attempted to leave, but Jikyo told him, "No, Jamey, it's OK to laugh or cry in the zendo. It's OK." She struck the gong four more times to signal the sitting period was beginning. Jamey sat back down inhaling deeply and exhaling laughter. My neighbor began to laugh. Many others laughed. Everything quieted down – for awhile.

First Jamey and then his neighbor, Vajra, would laugh. Crescendo, building one off the other, then a breath of silence. I sat through the bursts, inwardly questioning. Frankly, I didn't get it. The hammer came undone, what of it? Why this response? I was feeling left out of the joke and becoming self-conscious about it. Fortunately, the discipline of labeling a phenomenon, and then letting it be, came in quite handy. I was granted the gift of the moment.

Then, another round of laughter. My neighbor brought his hands to his face and bent over. I heard the laughter. He was putting something together. The clicking

"Jamey's laugh was different. There was freedom echoing in there, as well as acceptance and autonomy."

was apparent, but I hadn't heard it before. Jamey's laugh was different. There was freedom echoing in there, as well as acceptance and autonomy. I was shaken with gratitude.

These young men are in prison. How often can their laughter simply ring out? How often can they laugh with no pretense – with the spontaneity of the moment?

Later, Vajra read an excerpt from the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji's newsletter. The article, "Hakuin Zenji and the Heart of Zen," by Dave Fisher, describes his experience of crying "throughout most of zazen." Fisher quotes Hakuin Zenji:

"As for sitting, sitting is something that should include fits of ecstatic laughter – braying – that makes you slump to the ground clutching your belly." At one point during a demonstration of exactly this behavior, he was called "Crazy monk! Crazy monk!" by those around him, just after they broke and ran, perhaps afraid that whatever had possessed Hakuin was contagious!

Vajra pointed his finger in Jamey's direction, "You're the mad monk." Throughout this sharing I nodded my head, thankful for the validation that laughing was as much a part of my practice as sitting.

Meditation on Sesshin: Buddha's Birthday

*By River
Williamson*

Well, that was an enjoyable experience, I think to myself while walking through the prison yard en route to the cell block. I recall the tapestry of flowers that adorned the altar. Red, yellow, white, pink, and my favorite, purple. After my second bathing of the baby Buddha in the pool of sweet tea, I meticulously went from flower to flower, relishing form and fragrance. Ending with closed eyes, I envisioned myself standing with my family among a field of flowers in a place far from here. Even now, the pleasure of that moment lingers.

It's late evening now. Like a warm breeze that quells the chill, the calm of night seems to have settled into the spirits of the men I pass. The usual tension of the prison yard is absent. The emptying of zazen. I cannot put my hand upon it, but I sense an emergence from within. The gaining of Shunyata? When I am with the Sangha, cleaning together, witnessing each other, being, I experience an overwhelming appreciation. I am grateful for the gift of discovering a community of people with whom I can freely practice self-exploration, compassion and love. Leaving sesshin, I am emotionally open, breathing in a deeper

awareness, a temporary porousness that allows fear and frustration to pass.

In contrast, the culture of incarceration demands that I guard myself against being hurt or taken advantage of. Supposedly, protecting myself from the false possibilities, ideals and hopes that good things can emerge during one's imprisonment. This lifeless role leaves me fatigued and blunted.

The members of Sho Shin Sangha are willingly vulnerable, open to possibilities – paramitas. With the love of my family (a core connection) and communal practice (a broader connection), I feel as though the larger world beyond this catacomb is accessible. The inevitable consequence of isolation behind bars, doors, locks, walls, metal and concrete is the erosion of human senses. Prison is an unyielding, barren and indifferent mind that concedes nothing without compulsion.

Before closing sesshin, Jikyo provided space for questions about sesshin and practice. The questions were mainly about our practice. "What do I do when I plant a row of seeds, then someone follows right behind me and pulls them out?" someone

"I am grateful for the gift of discovering a community of people with whom I can freely practice self-exploration, compassion and love."

asked. The discussion prompted me to ask, "What does Buddhism say about ... well, uh, I'm a social movement type. I struggle to be simple sometimes. I can't be silent and inactive in the face of injustice. Yet I'm aware of the warnings about creating my own suffering. How does Buddhism suggest – or what insight can you offer me?" I looked from Nancy, MyoEn, and finally, to Jikyo, who looked at me with a smile and a slight nod. No one said anything.

After a moment of silence, someone asked another question. As he talked, I looked at the larger picture: Six incarcerated men asking questions that are loaded with the peculiarities of our experience. Are our questions making sense? Should the complicated questions be figured out on our own through practice?

When I look back to Jikyo, she is smiling and listening to Smitty. There is no doubt that Nancy, MyoEn and Jikyo care. I just can't help wondering whether this practice has anything to say about negotiating our experience as prisoners. I don't know. But I do know that I am in it to discover answers. I accept the silence, the prelude to zazen.

Jamey and I wait at the entrance gate. The guard approaches and looks at us through the gate.

"Where are you guys coming from?" he asks.

"Service in the chapel," we both respond.

"Oh, the Buddhists!" he says, then opens the gate.

We enter. □

Beginner's Bread

*Two browned loves came
from the oven today
I meant to write loaves*

*in come the words of Jane H. –
“Wrong solitude vinegars the soul.
Right solitude oils it.”*

*Steeped in both,
a sieve suspended,
unable to separate
what is, what isn't.*

*Beyond this pool
of uncertain brine,
its radius –
the length of an arm.
I want to meet you there,
even if I am late.*

*I slip a love
through my neighbor's window*

*watching the loaf or love move
it wriggled effortlessly from the pan
(recipe said “plan”)
love eluded the plot, the heart, the pan*

*as for my own,
looking so perfect,
I wanted to keep it whole for a while,
I already knew how it tasted.*

– Kaity Cheng

*Rambling strong roots
Sunlight peeking through our trees
Butterflies dancing
– Robin Gross*

*Floating white orbs
first thing I see as I pass the window
then something shifts.
What's outside is actually a hillside, very close by.
A fiery blanket of October grass, red leaves*

*Those orbs are tiny white flowers
Ghosts hovering from the tips of their long, wobbly stems.
One yellow leaf drifts to the bottom.*

A glimpse of autumn, dividing gently in the golden wind.

*In the unhurried jigsaw of time,
My eyes touch one piece after another,
As the wind touches them,
how they fit together,
how they drift apart.*

Golden Wind

— *Kaity Cheng*

It was Thursday night, the opening ceremony for Spring Sesshin 2009. I stood outside at the han outside the zendo waiting for the last and final signal of the bonsho. [bong bong BONG!] I quickly circled the han with an enso and stuck it THWACK!

And then I just stood there – paralyzed in stark terror. I needed to continue striking the han in the correct rhythm, but suddenly could not remember what that rhythm was! I have heard of performers suffering from stage fright. The curtain rises and suddenly every line they learned, every word they memorized is gone. Then, fear erupts as the mind searches for a clue of what in the world it should be doing right then, right now. And ... nothing, which generates more paralyzing fear.

“Just strike the han again,” was all I could think. So I did. Again and again, all the while knowing that something was terribly, terribly wrong, but I could not tell what it was! I had been

To Han or Not to Han

*By Senju Dave
Fisher*



*Photo by Meigetsu
Rebecca Beers*

functioning as jokei for the past couple of months every Tuesday morning, so I knew the pattern to play on the han. The pattern is written in a series of O's, where a capital "O" represents a loud strike and lowercase "o" represents a softer strike. Just how soft, how loud, and how fast or slow is a matter of practice. The han's pattern is as follows:

O! oo
OOOOOOO o OOOOOOOoooooo.....
OOOOO o OOOOOoooooo.....
OOO o OOOOoooo.....
oo O!

Just for the record, that is NOT the pattern I played. Not even close. Indeed, my blank-slate, paralyzed mind could only keep striking the han, waiting, hoping for the return of information. It never came. I finished what I thought was the final han strike. Normally at this point the jikijitsu is back from her prostrations, seated at her place in the front of the zendo and ready to strike the inkin on the jokei's final strike. But, as I peered through the crack of the han door, Jisho, the jikijitsu, was nowhere to be seen. I stood there horrified as I saw her finally arrive at her zabuton. She struck the inkin. I walked through the door in a haze and seated myself to her left.

Then ... the avalanche came. I felt this as a physical flush that began at the top of my head and oppressively crushed me into the ground. I collapsed under the weight of shame and intense feelings of inadequacy. Perhaps I could have given myself a morsel of compassion if this had been my first time in front of the han, but I could not even throw that crumb into the inferno that now burned within me.

"I've ruined the opening of sesshin for everyone ... I can't even play the han. I've let everyone down. I am worthless. Shame, shame, shameshameshameshame" hammered at me in a series of relentless blows. "I" this ... "I" that.

That night, I dreamed. I was holding a child in my arms – an infant. As I held and cradled this child in my arms, I felt a great love and caring protectiveness flow out from me. When I looked more closely at the child, I knew that it was me.

Upon waking the next morning, I got up and prepared for another day of sesshin. Intense waves of shame were again my companion as I sat in the zendo and performed the jokei duties. I struggled with fear of what I might forget next – when to empty the universal tea bowl, when to fill it, how to position it on the altar, when to light and/or snuff the chanting candle, what incense to use; do I give it to the Jikijitsu or leave it at the altar this time? ... On and on the details swirled. I clutched the written instructions I was given like a lifeline. But they could not dispel the torment of my inner experience.

I dreaded going to my first officers' meeting that morning. I was sure I would be rebuked and criticized, as I surely deserved it. I sat there and profusely apologized to everyone, shame pouring out of me in waves and, in doing so, felt even more humiliated than before. And, to a person, each was compassionate and understanding in his or her response, neither adding to nor removing from the process I was experiencing.

I cooked in turbulent emotions during zazen the rest of that day, at the mercy of my own self-recriminatory responses, but determined to deeply breathe through each self-indictment, each wave of shame. This was extremely difficult to do, as I was feeling such intense dark feelings of despair and humiliation. Yet, to do otherwise would be to accept this situation as *fait accompli*, unalterable and irreversible, and I just could not do that either.

That night, I dreamed. I was holding a child in my arms – this time my own children, Adrian and Devan, as they were infants. One moment the child was Devan, then another moment the child was Adrian, alternating back and forth. Intense feelings of love and connectedness flowed from me.

During the next day I was offered many corrections with the han: "Don't be afraid to strike it loudly, especially the first strike. It's not going to break. Pick up the pace, play a bit faster. Slow down the pace, play a little slower. Be more dynamic." And so on. I earnestly threw myself into the han, to hear it, feel it, and be present with it. Each strike of the han became a breath. Each breath became recognition that *this* breath is my first breath and ... may well be my last. [*strike!*] So precious. [*strike!*] So brief. [*strike!*] So... beautiful. [*strike!*]

I began the practice of meeting each inner self-recrimination, each breath, with love and appreciation. I began to allow the love that so freely courses out from my life to others to also flow inwardly and embrace a self that I had deemed "unlovable."

During Roshi's last sesshin teisho, she entreated us to truly immerse ourselves in the experience of our breath, to feel the diaphragm as breath is completely expelled and then drawn inward, only to be expelled again. Her instruction reminded me of what Shodo Harada Roshi writes in *The Path To Bodhidharma*:

Do not force the breath, but allow it to flow completely out in a relaxed, expansive way ... Continue the exhalation for about thirty seconds or more if possible, breathing out every last bit of air until the abdomen becomes convex. At the very end of the exhalation some tension tends to set in, so try making two or three light, gentle pushes – this heightens the sense of the tanden and makes the transition to inhalation quite natural.

So I did this. Breath after breath after breath, fully focusing my attention on all the sensations of my diaphragm as I slowly and fully released the breath

and then drew it in again. I felt a great warmth flood my hara and, as breath pooled into me, it flowed upward to embrace and envelop my heart.

I, the child being held and holding simultaneously. Suddenly ... no difference.

This experience deepened with each breath. I felt a physical softness flood both my heart and mind – my whole body became diffused. Literally, the fuse that was ignited Thursday night was extinguished. I had experienced this kind of bliss years ago when I began practice, but somewhere along the way I didn't realize that I had started pushing it away, thinking, "Oh, this is wrong to feel such pleasure. Zazen shouldn't be used like that." And yet, in doing so, I put confining limits on just what I "thought" zazen was and was not. I put limits on just what the depth of this Dharma experience could be.

Pain and pleasure are a reality for us, both physically as well as in our spiritual practice. We *will* feel pain. We *will* feel pleasure. They are interlocking dependencies with each other, inseparable. Our practice is being open to the full experience of each without pushing away one and chasing after the other.

It was Sunday, the final day of sesshin. I stood before the han.

O!

Welcome into being!

[tap] [tap]

It begins. Breathe.

[strike!]

Each moment is precious...

[strike!]

And swiftly passes by...

[strike!]

Listen! Breathe! We are clocks winding down, not knowing when our last moment will be, but knowing with all our heart that this moment is most precious, most important. May we all be fortunate to live into the twilight of our lives and stare into the profound vivid colors of the vast sky, calling us into the essence of our True Nature.

[strike!]

Time is so short.

[TAPTAPTAPTAPT TapTaptaptaptappitytappitytaptapapapppp...]

Until one last moment...

[tap]

And one last breath...

[tap]

just...

O!

Muuuuuuuuuuuuuu. □

The Moth

We're in the zendo for morning service in the pre-dawn hours, and I notice some creature flying about, leaving a giant shadow despite its diminutive size. It lands on the wall near the Assistant Jisha, Alex – a moth. Apparently it flew in through an open door. Then – very mysterious! – as we finish the long vowels of Vandana, the moth lands on my right hand, raised in gassho, palms together.

Startled, but seeing also an opportunity to contain the creature so that it can be released from the zendo prison, I quickly cover it, and hold it in cupped hands. OK, now what? Everyone else is chanting Buddham Saranam Gacchami strongly in unison. Then Jisha Togan Tim Kohlbrenner, who is sitting on my right and has seen exactly what happened, with no hesitation brings his cupped hands to meet mine, and the moth is passed to him. He gets up, leaves the zendo, and releases the creature unharmed.

The Accident

Day 4, summer sesshin, 2009. It's the middle of zazen, the 2 p.m. sitting, a beautiful bright sunny Saturday. Zansan Paul Worden goes around the room and gives us each an encounter with keisaku. Afterward, silence. The shades are down, and windows sealed shut to keep cool air within, so any sound from outdoors seems muted and distant. Then, intruding upon the stillness, comes a dull thud, a metallic crunching sound, glass shattering. Followed by screaming, or yowling, that makes me think of an innocent injured animal or child. Because we are sealed off, the sounds come as though from far away, or under water, but are unmistakable.

No one in the zendo moves, but collectively we “move” from any lingering self-absorbed thoughts to compassion. You can feel the aggregate turning, like iron filings sharply aligning under the force of a magnet, or a school of fish turning. Silently I begin chanting Kanzeon. My logical mind says: If that sound sequence signified what I thought it did, then shortly we should hear sirens. Sure enough, after about three minutes, sirens arrive, and stop – right where we sit. Somewhere close, along Seneca Turnpike, I guess. What happened? I wonder – and know that whatever it was, it could have been me. During

Zendo Notes from Summer Sesshin

*By Myorin
Catherine Landis*

kinhin, some of us stand near the rain garden and see across the street the emergency crew, the flashing lights. A stretcher. I don't know what happened, but I continue to chant as I watch and throughout the afternoon. □

Not Too Fast, Not Too Slow

By Myorin Catherine Landis



Photo by Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz

I was attracted to the gyorin position, since as a child I wanted to play the drums. Rhythmic pattern lies at the heart of life. Our own heartbeat and that of every other living creature, from paramecia to maggots, earthworms, nudibranches, turtles, beetles, bison, sturgeon, birds. The pulsing night sounds of katydids, crickets. Circadian rhythms, the ebb and flow of tides. Cicada vibrato, chipping sparrow chips, peepers' peep-peeps on cold April nights, rap beats, hip hop, bass notes booming from open car windows cruising down Seneca Turnpike during zazen. Annual and menstrual cycles. All oscillating phenomena.

Diamond Sutra, "Heart Sutra." Milankovitch cycles of 100,000 years. Breath, coming and going. Each has its own timing, and so has each sutra, for each occasion. As gyorin you have the privilege of entering into this rhythmic sphere. I felt it was a great trust and honor.

The first step, as it says in *Instructions for the Donai (Officers)*, is to Listen! Listen to people who precede you and do it well: Daigan, Kensei, Joraku, Reimon, Kigetsu.

Listen to the way Reimon strikes the hanging gong, which reminds me of the soundtrack to a horror film just before some dire episode transpires; he conveys that resonant suggestive power.

The first instruction given to me by my Wednesday morning predecessor, Kigetsu Jennifer Sampson, was "Relax." Her second instruction: "It's all in the wrist." Two pieces of excellent advice from which I continue to benefit.

Still, at first I was hesitant to hit the instrument in public. I was afraid to make a "joyful noise"! Perhaps I was shackled by the voice of the inner critic, who has no patience for beginner's mind – that ego imposter, condemning before I even began,. Strike the instrument with confidence, advises the *Instructions for the Donai*. Well, at least I struck the instrument, and trusted that confidence at some point would follow.

Indeed, those voices recede, though new ones rear up, such as, “You’re not a musician. You have no musical training.” Roshi once told me, “What matters is not musical training, but paying attention.” It’s not a performance, but rather an offering and a practice.

The first time I struck the mokugyo for chanting of “Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo”, as jisha on Thursday night, I looked to Jikyo for advice. It was simple: “Each time faster,” she said. Three words. As I recall, I went each time the same pace. But no one complained or commented.

I learned that it’s one thing to strike the mokugyo in an empty zendo, another when you have 30 people chanting along and listening to the pace you set. The ino is the chant leader, but gyorin sets the pace. Too fast, you lose people. Too slow, put them to sleep. Sometimes brisk, sometimes stately; sometimes (in Roshi’s term) “sprightly,” depending on what is appropriate. There are some chants where people tend to get lost or slow down, like “Dai Shi Shu,” so the mokugyo must “plow through” and carry everyone along with a compassionately steady pace.

The *Diamond Sutra* is the music of the spheres, and it was always an aspiration for me to keep the beat for its incantation during sesshin. The opportunity came in a most unexpected way. I was so nervous the previous night I barely slept! The next morning I received excellent, timely advice from both Zansan and Daigan about maintaining a steady, alacritous pace during an extended chant.

When I was asked to be gyorin for five-day summer sesshin, I was somewhat apprehensive. Not about the mokugyo, which I knew fairly well, but the hanging gong. By the fact that all in the zendo would be listening to the bonsho sequence as sesshin opened. I shared my concern with Senju David Fisher, and I could finally laugh. The journey from invisibility has been a long one for me, like a cicada nymph emerging after years underground in the soil, sucking on juices of tree roots. I remember laughing with Senju at my fears. “Play,” I said, thinking of the mind with which I would strike the gong. “That’s why they call it *playing* an instrument!”

Then come moments when there is no arm, no instrument, just that rhythmic wave, one with all the voices in the room. One night at winter sesshin I dreamed I was ploughing through snow in my old Camry, which reminded me of the gyorin’s job — helping to carry everyone in unison through all those syllables with even, steady beat. It’s been quite humbling — each time is different, and I have so much more to learn. □

*Walking through snowflakes
in darkness, they stick to me
Sitting, melting
- Daishin Paul Cook*

Fall Sesshin Journal Excerpts

By Myorin
Catherine Landis

Friday, Oct. 16

The silence deepens. Not me alone, the group stillness and silence, remarkable. It's like, as Shinge Roshi matures, so does the Sangha. It seems to make little difference whether people are new or have been coming for many years – the silence deepens. Having Zan-san as jikijitsu is a huge part of this zendo atmosphere also. Roshi said in her teisho that sitting perfectly still, one can enter samadhi. That we mustn't fear it, but enter courageously. More and more (well, as always), she talks about death. It will come whether we are prepared or not. We're in a burning building; there is that kind of urgency. Meanwhile, I have a stomachache and headache, and moment to moment is precarious.

Saturday, Oct. 17

From the *Diamond Sutra* reading I heard: "No separated individuality" ... and felt a great relief. No need to bolster up some cardboard caricature of a true self, a separated individual. This made all subsequent activities – *Diamond Sutra* mokugyo, leaving sesshin to lead a tree walk – far easier. What a relief! The gong sequence (bonsho; by "me") ends, and the han (dear Senju) begins. Han ends, and jikijitsu's bell signals start of "Tei Dai Denpo." On and on the interweavings exfoliate in 10,000 directions.

Sunday, Oct. 18

It was a remarkable sesshin. Really, I haven't had one like that in years. Remember the first few sesshin where I seemed to leap forward in energy and confidence? Where I heard the *Diamond Sutra* chanted and felt pain and worry and anything extraneous drop away? Completely unexpected. Where for days I felt so happy and energized that I took uncharacteristically long walks, rose at 5 a.m. to make up lost/unfinished work. Last few sesshin, not so much has this happened. The last sesshin (summer five-day), in fact, I think I had such anxiety regarding striking the bonsho and the mokugyo for *Diamond Sutra*, it fatigued me, and I could not concentrate. I gave that gyorin position everything I had, and came up (so I thought) empty-handed. Clearly I had a gaining idea. The blessing was that I dropped it. I didn't care anymore,

and that was freeing. Now I was asked to be gyorin again, and it was much easier in part because of those trials – necessary prerequisite that they were. Because this time I did not live in such a state of self-doubt, prepackaged self-criticism. I also took Kigetsu’s advice seriously – “Relax.” During *Diamond Sutra* I would be striking the beat, and remind myself, “relax,” and did.

The bonsho is amazing this time. I am not so invested. Everyone else, jishas included, go sit down in the zendo and gyorin is left with gong, striker, and backlight from a small night light behind the instrument. I check my watch, pressing the button that illuminates the face. Two minutes. I feel a wave of anxiety, nervousness assail me, and arms lose strength, intelligence. “Everyone is listening to me,” I once would have thought (completely untrue, of course, and self-focused). Now I say – Who is “me”? Who is “everyone”? Who is listening? Who is waiting to strike the gong? What is this energy that I experience as fear and attempt to push away? Let it come. Some deep terror like a scream, paralyzing my arms and my knowing. This time, I’m moving toward it. You can’t fight it or push it away. Bring it on. It’s time. I open my arm and strike the gong. Sounds fine. Imagining the big long log being pulled back by forest men whose soul/sole task is monastic life – to “wake up.” I see the log, I hear the bonds creaking. Pull it back, let it go. Bong (gentle). Again, visualize the wind-up and letting go, both. And this time it goes so much better. Less “me.” Dropping that self-conscious nervous person. Nervous to the point of debilitation. Now, who cares? Do it badly, fine, as long as you do it with attention and intention. Between strikes of the gong I count slowly – up to about 40 or 45. Nicely spaced, not in any rush at all. I feel my muscles actually relax. I sense the silence from the zendo interior (between gongs) as if with antennae. By the time I reach the series’ end, something has built up – the silence between strikes has worked its magic and I’m “in the groove” (don’t know how else to say it). In the forest with the massive log. Jokei Senju gets up at the right time and strikes the han at the right time. Nothing to do, nowhere to go, just here and now, eternity stretches before us in each moment.

Diamond Sutra, Day 2

I must have been going too slowly, since about 2.5 pages in, Roshi speeds up precipitously. It was amazing – I picked up the pace immediately and met her there. All voices followed seamlessly. Rather than steep in shame or embarrassment for the correction, I took on wholeheartedly this brisk, almost exhilarating pace – it felt great! It was “Hannya Shin Gyo” pace, fast. Recalling Zansan’s suggestion and encouragement, I took the lead, one with my teacher’s dancing fast pace. Tumbling right into those last Sino-Japanese syllables for “A phantasm and dream. A star at dawn, a bubble in a stream.” Afterwards, zazen. All I can say is Wow! I’m blown away by the chanting, the pace and everyone picking up on it. Borders of self fall away. “No separated individuality.” □

Half a Kessei at Dai Bosatsu

By Jikyo Bonnie Shultz

For six weeks – from May 24 to July 10 – I was at Dai Bosatsu Zendo to participate in Spring Kessei, a three-month training period. The DBZ website describes kessei this way: “This tradition dates back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. The training utilizes the discipline of structured daily zazen, chanting services, work practice, and formal meals, with the support and guidance of the Sangha (community) and Abbot Eido Shimano Roshi. Kessei students follow the residents’ schedule. Work practice ranges from splitting wood and landscaping to serving guests and zendo cleaning. Students have private rooms and there is one rest day each week for personal study.”

On the day I left DBZ, Eido Roshi met with me. The kessei had been a very difficult and very good, possibly life-changing experience, I told him. He said the word “difficult” or “hard” should be banished from my vocabulary. People come here wanting ease and comfort, he said, but that approach doesn’t work. I was feeling transformed, liberated, and 10 years younger than when I came, he said. In that short exchange, he summed up all the feelings and realizations I had had during those six weeks.

I have been a nun for six years, and was a practitioner for seven years before my ordination, completing a kessei at DBZ in 2002. But Shinge Roshi clearly saw that more training was needed for both myself and Gyoshin. She asked us to attend kessei again, and we worked out the times so one of us would be here while the other was away. Gyoshin is there now.

I went with few expectations. Soon, I realized I was in a situation where all choices were made for me, and that many assignments would challenge me physically, emotionally and mentally. My only option was to comply, to do what I was told to do, and to let go of my resistance. Internally, I found myself complaining, feeling that as an older woman I had limitations that should be acknowledged. It went like this, in my head: “I’m so tired. I’m too old to do that. Can’t they understand that I’m 67 years old?” There were many variations on this theme, especially at first.

The training is designed to help students loosen the bonds of ego, which are sustained by habits, preferences

and fears. I quickly saw that I was not special; my Syracuse identity was not of much interest to anyone. I grappled with issues such as whether it was important to be liked, how to respond (publicly and internally) when I was corrected or scolded for a mistake, and how to cope with feeling too tired and bodily sore to keep going. I learned a lot about the extra reserves available when it feels as though a limit has been reached. The schedule dictated our movements throughout the day, and everyone was expected to adhere to the schedule. Even our rest periods and rest days were not our own, for the most part. There was work to do or an activity that was mandatory during the “rest” time.

During the first week, I was told there was optional joza (informal sitting) at 3:30 a.m. most days, and mandatory yaza after the regular zazen periods ended, usually from 8 p.m. to 8:45 or 9 p.m. I thought I would be too tired if I joined the group for joza, so I did not. At the beginning of the second week, I was told it was not optional for me. “I can’t!” was my first response. Then, reluctantly, “Hai! I’ll try it.” As it happened, the joza sittings were my favorites, even though I was often exhausted in the afternoon.

Three weeks into the training period, the internal resistance abated. I could see that I was physically stronger and had more stamina, and that much of my inner protest was based on self-limiting beliefs, not on reality. I’d been writing regularly to Shinge Roshi, and at the end of my third letter, I wrote: “As you said at the end of your letter, ‘Deprivation, deprivation ... where true freedom lies.’ The deprivation is so hard to deal with, but now that I’ve gone through some of



*Three weeks after kessei ended, Jikyo returned to Dai Bosatsu Zendo to participate in O-bon. She stands with Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi and the DBZ ordained at the O-bon fire.
Photo by Zensho Martin Hara*

it here, I have at least a taste of that freedom. Right now, I'm experiencing it as a kind of ease, a lack of reactivity, a sense of confidence, a getting myself out of the way.... The great thing is how the energy returns, the confidence returns, and the knowledge returns that this path is right for me and all beings. Once again, I learn that This is something I can rely on and give my life to."

By the time I left, I realized that there is a central mystery at the heart of this practice. There are no words for it. It just is. The training, severe as it often was, had somehow created a deep happiness within, an energetic happiness that seemed to emanate from a newly discovered vitality and spirit within myself. I have no doubt that every scolding, every mistake, every correction for inattentiveness or stupidity, somehow cultivated the ground for a sense of liberation from the confines of my old self. Shinge Roshi, after returning from the American Zen Teachers' Association meeting in Oregon, made this statement: "Training is what the student needs, not what the student wants." Intellectually, this is not difficult to grasp, but going through it is another matter. I would recommend it for everyone.

My biggest challenge has been to sustain that energy and spirit here at Hoen-ji. We have a wonderful practice temple and an incredibly gifted teacher. At the same time I have realized that I must dig in ("combust," as Eido Roshi often says) more deeply and more enduringly. Otherwise, I will stagnate, resting on what we as a temple have achieved rather than continuing to dig for the reserves each of us has within. Toward that end, when I returned we instituted joza from 5 to 6 a.m. six days a week here at Hoen-ji, optional for everyone but often attended by six or seven. I am changing other aspects of my daily life based on promises I made to myself at DBZ. Some changes are bold, some subtle. For example, I try to notice when I am seeking comfort, especially when I'm trying to soothe myself in regard to something I'd rather avoid. These changes, I trust, will affect the Sangha, just as your changes affect me. Finally, I will go back to DBZ as often as I can. □

*Digging deeper, like a terrier.
I sit in the car and cry.
I've just come home from shopping at the supermarket.
The feelings of loneliness, fear and frustration of my
childhood jump up and hit me over the head.
I remember my mother's cruelty
and then her occasional kindness.
The tears drip down.
Drip. drip.
No problem.*

-- Jinen Jeanne Colgen

You Rang

By Daishin Paul Cook

As I pulled into the parking lot of the Zen Center, the storm was still rolling through the valley. Sitting in the car, the thunder receded into the distance and the rain fell off to a light sprinkle. I went up the steps to the back porch of the Forman House and knocked, but there was no answer. Turning to leave, I instead picked up the striker from the porch railing and struck the bell loudly three times. Descending the stairs I went around to the front porch and waved as Roshi arrived.

We went upstairs together and upon entering the meeting room, I said, "I rang the dokusan bell, and you came."

Gassho!

Editor's Note: This article is taken from Shiju Ben Howard's blog, One Time, One Meeting, at practiceofzen.wordpress.com.

Me and Mu

By Shiju Ben
Howard

In New York State you can own a personalized license plate, better known as a vanity plate, for \$43. To retain your plate, you will need to pay an annual fee of \$25.50. Depending on your viewpoint, that is a lot or not much to pay for the privilege of having your name — or that of your trade, your passion, or your favorite sport — emblazoned on your car.

As I was driving on the New York State Thruway the other day, I came upon the ultimate vanity plate. Pulling into a rest stop, I noticed the out-of-state license plate on a sporty silver car. In bold black letters, it proclaimed its owner's first concern:

ME

On either side of these letters were several inches of white space, which gave further prominence to this one, all-important word.

It's common to hear the word "me" in conversation, but it was striking to find that word isolated on a license plate. I was reminded of a poem by my one-time mentor, the Maine poet Philip Booth (1925-2007). Titled "Marches," the poem is an exploration of seasonal change and

human mortality.

In the first four stanzas, the narrator reflects on the advent of spring, imagines the young “wading the surf, getting wasted, pretending / they cannot die,” and envisions “thousands of death-needles” being passed, leaving “hundreds of / children ... born with systems in no way immune.” In the last two stanzas, he reflects on the imminence of death in everyday life, especially life on the highway:

And millions of the rest of us, self-righteous
in the perfect democracy of backcountry roads, freeways,
and interstates, pass each other at life-span speeds;
or close, in opposing lanes, at a hundred-and-thirty,

trusting implicitly in simple self-interest, missing
each other, time after time, only by fragments of seconds,
as we move our lives, or dyings, another round toward
what March may be like in maybe the year 2000.

Yes, the roads are dangerous, these lines acknowledge, but no one wants to die, and we can depend on each other’s self-interest to keep us alive.

This vision of interdependence is common in Western culture. In sociological terms, it is often called Western individualism; in economic terms, the free-market economy. In America, this view has prevailed for at least 200 years, though of late its economic version has not been faring so well. But there is another vision of interdependence, which the Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh describes in this way:

In our ordinary discriminatory world, we see a teapot as a single, independent object. But when we look deeply enough into the teapot, we will see that it contains many phenomena — earth, water, fire, air, space, and time — and we will realize that in fact the entire universe has come together to make this teapot. That is the interdependent nature of the teapot. A flower is made up of many non-flower elements, such as clouds, soil and sunshine. Without clouds and earth, there could be no flower. This is interbeing. The one is the result of the all. What makes the all possible is the one.

In this vision of interdependence, everything depends on everything else. All are interconnected parts of the great, indivisible body of reality, in which energies are constantly being exchanged, and what we normally call “things” are being transformed, moment by moment. To describe that reality, Thich Nhat Hanh has coined the word “interbeing.”

In Japanese Zen, the reality of “interbeing” is epitomized by the Japanese

word “mu,” which literally means “no” but in Zen usage has no extractable content. Rather, it is a way of pointing toward things as they are at any given moment — impermanent, void of intrinsic selves, and utterly dependent upon each other. In contrast to “me,” “mu” evokes a fundamental mutuality and engenders a spirit of compassion. Were I to see it on a license plate, I would feel safer on the road. □

*Passing our old home
Long driveway shrouded in trees
Soft piles of raked leaves*

*Driveway peony
Wet grass under the green hose
Day burns off slowly*

— Kaity Cheng

As treasurer of the Student Buddhist Association, what I knew about Jane Hirshfield before her visit was that she was a celebrated, high-value, high-profile poet. What I didn't know was the warm, generous person. The poet who chooses her words with great care, and the aptitude of a master practitioner of language arts.

I attended most of Jane's readings. The one held at the Zen Center was my favorite. It was intimate. In a sense, you could say that Jane delivered “teisho” like a Zen master. Someone in the audience asked: Why spend time meditating – isn't that a waste of time, when we should be out protesting the world's many wars and fighting for social justice?

Jane's response was unequivocal: without the sitting, you can do more damage, since often you have not addressed the violence within. You can, therefore, perpetuate the cycle of suffering by adding your own to the mix, striking out or crumpling (the other extreme, total passivity). In sitting, we return to the source, the “taproot of compassion” that is also poetry. The practice can inform every action, clarify purpose and strengthen resolve. Is action coming from ego or mu?

The practice of poetry, of sitting, are essential, potent, related; they are medicines needed now more than ever.

Jane Hirshfield and the Taproot of Compassion

*By Myorin
Catherine Landis*

The journey to wholeness may be “old-fashioned,” but it works and has for millennia. As a student of sciences currently, I know I left with a much renewed sense of the power of art — as Jane quoted from Rilke, “You must change your life!” The wildly dislocating writing of a poet master like Dogen illustrates this exactly.

Jane spoke of her journey as a Buddhist and how Zen practice informs her poetry. She trained for a year at Tassajara, rising at 4 a.m. and in general adhering to a rigorous training schedule. She did not consider herself a “Buddhist” poet, but rather eschewed labels. Her work, however, began appearing in anthologies of “Buddhist” writing, so the label stuck.

I think all of us present will always remember Jane’s book-signing reception afterward in the Forman House. When we reached the table where she sat, pen in hand, she greeted each of us in turn like an old friend she hadn’t seen in a long time, with an irrepressible delight, warmth, curiosity.

Asked once to sum up Buddhism, Jane did so in seven words:

Everything is connected
Everything changes
Pay attention

We hope she comes back soon! □



*Shinge Roshi and Jane Hirshfield during Jane’s visit to the Zen Center of Syracuse.
Photo by Shiju Ben Howard*

SPRING HAIKU

*Selections from a haiku workshop given by
Shinge Roshi last April.*

strange balls of white fluff –
squirrels must have discovered
that discarded quilt
– Shinge Roshi Sherry Chayat

a lone strand of web,
its architect gone for now –
what will become of it?
– Laura Braaten

High hole in bare tree
Exposed, vulnerable home
The creek flows fast
– Lynne Flocke

dog sits watching ducks
on the water rain begins
changing the silence
– Andy Hassinger

Very suspicious
How did I get to heaven?
Dreaming. Blue. White.
– Alex Dumanian

ant crawls through a log
the other end of her life
waits with white flowers
– Kaity Cheng

Bare trees stretch and wait
Single stubborn leaf remains
Dancing from a limb
– Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz

amid last night's snow
two robins do a rain dance
abundant morning
– no name

A glint of green moss
traces an insect tattoo
on last year's windfall
– Jisho Judy Fancher

The first fragrant wind
sweetly threatens to destroy
the last whiff of "me."
– DaiAn Linda Gehron

Sunny day, cold creek
Glistening by the slender crane
A new bridge coming
– Meigetsu Rebecca Beers

Hoen-ji held its third annual O-bon Celebration on Aug. 16. Sangha members decorated the zendo, the Sangha Grove and the trail leading to Onondaga Creek with lanterns and prayer flags and prepared special altars honoring our Zen ancestors and departed loved ones. A traditional small bonfire on Saturday evening opened the way for spirits to join us for a delicious repast the next day, followed by the melodic chanting of Dai Segaki, with dedications including the names of deceased relatives, friends and pets of participants. The names were inscribed by everyone with brushwork on lantern-boats. The evening culminated with the release on the creek of the lanterns as we chanted Namu Dai Bosa and bade farewell to our loved ones for another year.

O-Bon at Hoen-ji

By Alex Dumanian

I have a lot of debt to repay. Wonderful people did loving and generous things that allowed my life to take this shape. I do not think enough about them, or act from the feeling of awe I have when I reflect on them. This year's O-bon Celebration was for me – and I'm sure for all – very poignant.

Because of the enthusiastic and thoughtful help of many volunteers, bit by bit Hoen-ji was transformed into a really magical place. In the morning, as I illustrated my boat, I felt the spirits of those past were present in me. I think those in my heart really approved and rejoiced at this day. The food, Dai Segaki chanting, listening to Shinge Roshi's moving talk, the Sangha – it was incredible.

When night came and all lanterns, torches, candles, and boats were lighted, I was stunned.

Walking along the trail to the creek, I felt as though I had somehow wound up in an enchanted land. We released all the boats, bade the spirits farewell, and chanted Namu Dai Bosa.

When everyone began to head back down the trail, I quickly got out of my robe, stashed it in a tree and began to run. Far down the creek, Caroline and Kaity waited

in the water to catch the boats. Quickly, I reached them and slowed my pace to a cool walk, trying to conceal my breathlessness. Getting into the thigh-deep creek, I felt like a little kid. Standing in the cool water, the summer night, being with friends. It was the best way to repay the debt I owe. □



Photo by Chimon Bill Mitrus

Hobo

*What could be less permanent than this breath
that comes and goes as freely as those guests
who visit us and soon enough return,
as though our fragile dwelling were an inn
and we the constants in their changing lives.*

*And yet how permanent this constant flow
of breath through bodies that were made for breathing,
as though this visitor who comes and goes,
this transient and unassuming hobo,
were of itself our one unchanging home.*

— Shiju Ben Howard

I was fortunate to spend part of February at the with thirty other artists who gathered there to work in all manner of artistic disciplines. Many were accomplished and recognized in their fields. Others, like me, were unknown.

The colony occupies a beautiful site, 400 acres, partly open former farmland, partly wooded with eastern white pine, beech, hemlock and birch. Thirty-five studios are scattered on the grounds. There are two dormitories, although anyone can sleep in an assigned studio. The former barn serves as dining room and recreation space. A separate stone building houses a library. This is an imposing place, and the sense of privilege was overwhelming on first entering the grounds. I was anxious about fitting in, even though, for the most part, it was an amazing collection of open-hearted, generous people.

Each day, I rose early, took a thermos of coffee from the kitchen, and walked twenty minutes to my studio. I spent an hour chanting, and then worked on a new beginning for the novel that had qualified me for admission. Mansfield was furnished with three large tables, a bed, electric

A Stay at the MacDowell Art Colony

*By Konreki
Randlett Walster*

kettle, screened porch and bathroom, and working fireplace. A shed with wood and kindling stood outside. If anything else was wanted, I was told all I had to do was ask, and it would be delivered.

I wrote from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (lunch is delivered to the studios), then walked in the woods. Evenings, after dinner, studios were open for presentations by pairs of residents.

As time wore on, I was gathering the nerve to do a presentation myself; however, no one offered to join with me, and the two people I asked declined. With only two days left, a musician, Jeff, posted a notice that he was going to play a recent composition. I asked if I could join him. He said yes.

But the next day, the day we were to “open,” he changed his mind. I wasn’t about to go solo and backed out, too.

At dinner that night, I sat with the strangers who had become friends, next to a composer from Lithuania, Zibuokle, a beautiful young woman who became my bodhisattva.

She said she was disappointed I was not reading, and asked if I wouldn’t change my mind.

I said no.

Just for those at our table?

No.

You could do it right here.

No. Not in the dining room.

Then your studio.

It’s too far away.

Use mine.

I relented.

She waved at another friend at a different table. We have to invite Roger.

All right.

And what about Carla?

You said just our table.

Oh, but Carla will feel left out.

Okay, but that’s it.

We forgot about Cassandra.

What the hell, go ahead. Invite them all.

I walked down to Mansfield to get my work. It was a clear night with a recumbent crescent moon, and I remembered the line from an ancient poem. “The new moon holds the old moon in its arms.” I stopped and looked at stars sprinkled overhead. It’s all a gift, I thought. And art is praise. □

Editor’s Note: Konreki generously contributed a book about the MacDowell Colony to the Sangha library that may encourage any who work in the arts to put their work out there. Residence at MacDowell is free of charge.

*This is a rented room
or a spool of thread*

*This is a cushion
or a fathomless sea*

*This is winter
and she is asleep at the wheel.*

*These are bare feet
and this a cold pedal*

*This, a sutra book
or a stone, cracks filled with moss*

*This is an empty cup
and this, a blue planet wrapped in clouds*

*That is a bell
or the splash of a fish*

*That is an army of waves
and this, the surrendering depth*

*This is a board
and she, our hungry ghost*

*This is a buried horizon
or a distant pulse*

*This is a shot glass
and this is salt*

*This is familiar.
This water, diluting, over-time*

*This is a house on fire
and that is a window*

*This is a seemingly good intention
and that, a pebble - getting softer, getting smaller*

*This is a palm, greeting a palm
or a stand of retired maples*

*This is a gathering of mind
and this the empty harvest.*

*This is a mango memory
and that the mockingbird's arc.*

*This is nobody, meeting nobody
in the belly of being.*

*This was unexpected,
This Immensity*

The Gathering

— **Kaity Cheng**

*Fundamental truth
Embracing uncertainty
Here Now Awaken
— Robin Gross*

Buson's Butterfly

*Landing on the temple bell, that butterfly
Gave rise to lines that have outlasted their occasion,
Reminding you and me as we complete our breakfast
That we have no idea how a random meeting
Might still reverberate, two hundred years from now.*

— Shiju Ben Howard

Asters

*Every year, in late September, it happens.
The birds are silent,
most flowers have long gone to seed.
Days are short, nights cold.
The asters — who have bided their time, all
summer long
open their eyes — unfurling their long pink
lashes*

*I think there is no flower more lovely
they go straight to my heart
they understand patience
and waiting
and long fallow stretches
they understand all things unfold in
their time*

*And when that time arrives — trusting
they open, receiving the warmth of the sun
mouthparts of bees
and share an abundance of color and pollen*

— Myorin Catherine Landis

*Scent of spring kinhin
Kannon in sea of violets
Compassionate breeze
— Jika Lauren Melnikow*

From the President of the Board

By Meigetsu Rebecca Beers

It has been another very busy year that has seen considerable restoration of the Zen Center of Syracuse facilities and growth in its nonprofit operation. Here are some highlights.

Administrative Office Update

In 2008, the Zen Center received a Gifford Foundation capacity-building grant to upgrade its administrative systems. We had reached a point where ... well ... you couldn't operate a vacuum cleaner and a computer simultaneously, and people were waiting in line to use our one and only office computer. In short, our office greatly needed an overhaul.

We started last December with the electrical system, replacing panels, wiring and plugs and installing new electrical circuitry in the Joshua Forman House, so office electronics could be operated safely. Then we purchased a new PC and laptops for our abbot and treasurer, added capacity to the old office PC, added a color printer, and upgraded the software for our database to keep accurate records of our Sangha donations and mailing lists, publish our newsletter; and more. We put in a new fan/ceiling light in the second-floor office, and restored the antique chandelier in the first-floor dining room, where meetings are held. That work has taken a year.

We've let the contract to rebuild the closet in the second-floor office, which



Memorial Fund Card Zen Center of Syracuse

To honor the memory of _____,
my (relationship) _____,
who passed away (date) _____, I would
like to donate \$ _____ to the Zen Center of Syracuse
Memorial Fund.

I appreciate that my loved one's name will be included in memorial chanting during retreats and at the annual O-bon Ceremony for the deceased.

(Over)

Home Assessment

Much of the impetus for these upgrades came from a professional home assessment, which recommended three things: 1. Upgrade/restore all the electrical work throughout the buildings; 2. Insulate and ventilate the attic; 3. Repoint, restore and cap the Forman House's three chimneys.

We've completed Job 1, the electrical work. We're in the process of choosing a contractor to do the attic work, which will alleviate the buildup of ice on the roof caused by escaping heat, cut our utility bills and prolong the life of our new roof. The chimney work waits for another year.

Thanks again to MyoEn and Shido Jon Propper for helping to procure bids, among other things.

PayPal on the Website

The Zen Center of Syracuse recently added PayPal to its Website – and we've already taken in more than \$1,600 through the online payment service. You can pay for sesshin, for Roshi's teisho CDs or her "Deep Presence" class, or make monthly support and other donations to the Zen Center by clicking on a button on various screens at www.zencenterofsyracuse.org. Yay!

Thanks to Shido and Todd Relyea for getting it all hooked up and running.

Onondaga Creek Bridge

More than a year ago, the city began replacing the bridge over Onondaga Creek alongside our property. The \$4 million-plus job is due to be finished



Gift Card

Zen Center of Syracuse

I would like to make a donation to the Zen Center of Syracuse's 2010 Capital Campaign in honor of _____

on the occasion of his/her ___ Birthday;
 ___ Anniversary; ___ Holiday Gift
 in the amount of \$ _____.

Enclosed is my check # _____.

I understand that _____ will be notified of my gift, and that this donation is tax-deductible.

(Over)

by the time this newsletter is published.

While access to the Zen Center has at times been affected, overall the process has been pretty painless. The city's engineer, John Kivlehan, met with us early on to explain the process and answer concerns about possible effects upon our activities and property. Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz spoke with him frequently as the work progressed, and it was a cordial and helpful relationship. Many thanks to Jikyo, to John, whose professional approach was so helpful, and to the residents, who kept a watchful eye on the process.



Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner

The bridge's design is simple and functional, and some attention was paid to what enters the creek from the road. A filter will prevent trash from entering the creek, though the runoff water will not be filtered. Overall, it's a beautiful and much-needed addition to the neighborhood. And there's room enough for a bike path, which is supposed to be part of Phase II.

Donation Cards

Now there's a simple way to make memorial donations and gifts honoring Sangha members by friends and family for such events as birthdays and

Honoree's Name _____
Donor's Name _____
Street _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

___ I would like to be put on the Zen Center of Syracuse's announcement list of events, classes and programs.

My email address: _____

Please send this card with your donation to:
Zen Center of Syracuse, 266 West Seneca Turpike, Syracuse, NY 13207
This gift is tax-deductible.

Thank you for your support of the Zen Center's work.

For more information: www.zencenterofsyracuse.org

holidays. Gyoshin Virginia Lawson created cards for both purposes. You can cut out the cards in this article, pick them up at the Zen Center or request one by mail. (We're hoping to put the cards online, too.) You can fill out a memorial card and mail it with your contribution in honor of the person who has passed away. Also, many of us would rather have a contribution sent to the Zen Center instead of a birthday or holiday present. Now we can give gift cards to our family and friends and ask them to donate to the Zen Center in lieu of giving us more material goods.

Vision for Youth Garden

You may have noticed the beautiful new meditation circle when doing kinhin through the woods behind the Zen Center. It's called the Vision for Youth garden; the peaceful site in the woods includes a beautiful bamboo screen, four marble benches and a plaque.

It was created by Muju Rene Wilett and Sheila Morrissey to honor their daughters, Nicole and Jennifer. Shinge Roshi married the couple there on July 25. They asked friends and family to contribute to Vision for Youth in lieu of wedding gifts, which they did – generously. (See the list of Vision for Youth donors, Page 57.) Muju and Sheila see the garden as a meditation and gathering place with special programs for teens.

Zen Center's Mortgage

Thanks to the generous support of our Sangha and friends, the mortgage for the Joshua Forman House, the Carriage House zendo and the residence is down to \$160,685 – from \$300,000. We expect it to be paid off in seven years. Cool!

New Board Members

With the help of Gifford Foundation workshops, the Zen Center continues to work to raise the professionalism of its board of trustees.

In the last two years, committees have begun documenting their work and supplying written reports to the board. The structure of the meetings has been revamped, limiting discussion to issues of board-level decisions and focusing on the fiduciary responsibilities of the board as a decision making body. We continue to bring our practice to all board decisions, which are made by consensus. .

We added four new board members this year: Togan Tim Kohlbrenner, an administrator and former technology teacher with the Oneida Central School District; Shido Jon Propper, a commercial real estate agent with Pyramid; Fugan Sam Gordon, civil engineer and founder of Planit Community and Environmental Planning; DaiAn Linda Gehron, an attorney for 28 years handling court-appointed criminal and family court cases. As are all our board members, they are committed Zen practitioners.

The board thanks John Henley for his three years of service on the board; Henley has joined our Advisory Council, where his expertise in personal relations and youth issues will continue to benefit the center.

Former city auditor Minch Lewis had to step down from the Advisory Council, since he moved away. Minch's astute recommendations and the breadth of his background were of great help to the board. Gassho. □

*That young upstart jisha
Tried to take the wheels off this cart.
Maybe he'll succeed!*
— Meigetsu Rebecca Beers
(after Winter Sesshin 2009)

*How is it to be
On the edge of a rock
Sharp and caked in ice? gold band on finger
 earnestly holding ladle
 power of no words.*

*I want it to be
Grateful – this last breath of mine.
COMBUST! Just ... COMBUST! — Caroline Savage*

Useless

*It is useless
to try and save the Earth.
The Earth is going to be fine,
Long after the polar ice caps melt,
And we are long gone.
But in the meantime,
When you crave apples,
Wait for fall,
And for strawberries,
... Spring.*

— Joraku JoAnn Cooke

Sangha News

A great American teacher's passing

John Daido Looi Roshi, abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, New York, died Oct. 9 from complications of lung cancer. He was a Dharma heir of Hakuyu Taizan Maezumi Roshi, and was renowned not only as a fine Zen teacher, but as a photographer, a naturalist, and a scientist. One of his most recent books was the compilation *Sitting with Koans*, which includes teachings by Nyogen Senzaki, Soen Nakagawa Roshi, Eido Shimano Roshi and Shinge Roshi. Eido Roshi was Daido Roshi's first teacher, and it was he who gave him the Dharma name Daido ("Great Way").

Eido Roshi, Shinge Roshi, several monks and nuns from Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and Alex Dumanian from Hoen-ji attended the casket ceremony Oct. 11 at Zen Mountain Monastery, where Eido Roshi was asked to be the first speaker. Shinge Roshi had known Daido Roshi since he first came to practice as a neighbor of Dai Bosatsu Zendo when she lived there in 1974 and '75. She invited him to be one of the speakers and guest artists at the 1993 conference and exhibition "One Hundred Years of Zen in America."

Daido Roshi taught Zen and Photography at Naropa in the summer of 1976, and then, at Bernie Glassman's invitation, became director of Center Publications at the Zen Center of Los Angeles. Daido Roshi later helped Glassman establish the Zen Community of New York, and went on to found Zen Mountain Monastery.

Deaths in the Sangha family

Michael Allen Grimes, brother of Diane Grimes, passed away suddenly on Oct. 14

Natalie Basford Fancher, mother of Jisho Judy Fancher, passed away Oct. 12, after a long illness. She was 95. A 49-day Memorial Service will be held Nov. 29 at Hoen-ji.

Louis J. DeSantis Jr., of Syracuse, died Oct. 6. He sat with our Sangha for several years, and was well known as an animal rights activist. He was co-owner of the Lou DeSantis TV and Appliance, in Syracuse.

Jerry Brooks, father of Anna Madden, died Sept. 6. Anna moved to North Carolina in 2003, but stays in touch with us.

Phyllis Bernet, sister-in-law of Jika Lauren Melnikow, passed away Aug. 21 after an illness. Jika and her family also lost a dear cousin, Kim Ball, this year.

Frances Davis Hassinger Everhart, mother of Andy Hassinger (and Shinge Roshi's mother-in-law), passed away May 14.

Walter W. Lawson, Gyoshin's father, passed away May 11.

Vaughn Rinner, mother of Vaughn Rinner and grandmother of Horen Vaughn Rinner, died May 1.

Ian Laird Roberts MacLeod, father of Jikai Jane Keenan, died Dec. 19, 2008.

Congratulations

Shinge Roshi performed the wedding of Muju Rene Wilett and Sheila Morrissey on July 25 in the Zen Center's new Vision for Youth Garden, which the couple sponsored in honor of their daughters, Nicole and Jennifer. Sheila's mother, brother, and cousin traveled from England and Scotland, and other family members attended from all over the United States.

Longtime Sangha members Chosei Heidi Flint and Chimon Bill Mitrus were married by Shinge Roshi Sept. 12 in the zendo, with many Sangha members in attendance. They are expecting a baby girl in December.

In May 2009, Caroline Savage received her B.A. in International Relations from Syracuse University. She is spending the fall kessei (training period) at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

Myorin Catherine Landis completed her studies for an M.S. degree in Forest Ecology from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. Her thesis topic was restoring plant communities along urban streams.

Kaity Cheng completed her studies for an M.S. degree in Forest Ecosystem Science from SUNY ESF. Her research took her to Chiapas, Mexico, where she worked under the guidance of Lacandon Mayan master farmers. They recommended she study tao, a tree species they believe restores soil fertility.

The American Sociology Association chose a research "white paper" by Hongo David Robertson Jr. for presentation at its semi-annual conference Oct. 15-16 in Boston. Hongo, who is director of Operations Research with Syracuse University's Office of Institutional Advancement, wrote the paper about migrant informal philanthropy.

Jisei Joann Dwyer reports that she continues to work as a massage therapist in Vermont, privately and at a spa in Stowe, and also practices in Richmond and Montpelier. She is now engaged to "a wonderful man."

Dog Poem (for Nikita)

*The capacity for joy
in the mind of a dog
Is not diminished – by four legs
or fur – or scavenging habit
or keen sense of smell
but, irrepressible, leaps through the house
rearranging floor rugs
bounding up stairs
(not knocking over vases)
losing its footing
comes at last to rest – spent –
as quickly as it began*

— Myorin Catherine Landis

We congratulate the following eight Sangha members who received Buddhist Precepts at January Jukai Sesshin 2009. Here are their Dharma names and their meanings:

Jikishin James Douglass, Direct Heart/Mind
 Senju David Fisher, Thousand Hands of Kannon
 DaiAn Linda Gehron, Great Ease
 Enji Anita Gustafson, Pool of Compassion
 Reimon Eric Gustafson, Mysterious Gate
 Shido Jon Propper, Perfect Way
 Kofu Carol-Anne Pugliese, Fragrant Breeze
 Kyoko Ginger Storey-Welch, Mirror Lake



*L to R: Kyoko, Jikishin, Kofu, DaiAn, Shinge Roshi, Shido, Senju, Enji, Reimon
 Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner*

The following Sangha members were recognized in New Member Ceremonies during 2009 sesshins:

Kaity Cheng	Debbie St. Germain	Caroline Savage
Alexander Dumanian	Jon Randall	Sheamus Spencer

Capital Campaign 2010 Donors

The following people made contributions to the Capital Campaign during 2009. The campaign culminates in 2010. We are grateful for your generous support.

Chogen Rene Berblinger	Senju Dave Fisher	Patricia Numann
James Betro	Enko Mary Beth Gamba	Walt Patulski
Irja Boden	Koshin Robert Hanson	Mary Anzel Pia
Beverly Brown	Robert and Sookie Kayne	Richard and Neva Pilgrim
Rudolph Colao	Myoho Victoria Klawitter	Kofu Carol-Anne Pugliese
Daishin Paul Cook	Laura Leso	Kigetsu Jennifer Sampson
Daisho John Corso and Dokyo Paul Melnikow	GetsuAn Ann Marshall	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Amber Davis	Alice Foster and Michael McGrath	Mai Lem Slade
Koshin Paley Ellison	Jika Lauren and	Jeffrey Sneider
James Emmons	Walter Melnikow	John Tanquary

Year-End 2008 Donors

Our profound gratitude to all of you who helped the Zen Center of Syracuse meet its operating expenses with your generous donations at the end of 2008.

Judy Antoine	Chris Hickey	Kishan and Dawn Perera
Louise Bayer	Sogen G. Victor Hori	Linda Perla
Meigetsu Rebecca Beers	Shiju Ben Howard	Ann Pia
Horen Vaughn Bell	David Humphrey	James Pickard
Eishun Phyllis Berman	Elizabeth Jones	Richard and Neva Pilgrim
Ken and Cathy Bobis	James Kelly	Shido Jon Propper
Rick Braaten	Dennis and Felice Killian-Benigno	David Richards
Beverly Brown	Paul Kocak	Dorothy Riester
Bill Burch	Togan Tim Kohlbrenner	Entsu Scott Rosecrans
Mary Jean Byrne-Maisto	Leslie Kohman	Eido Tai Shimano Roshi
Richard Cocks	James Kraus, Esq.	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Rudolph Colao	Cheryl LaRochelle	Catherine Shradly
Daishin Paul Cook	Joyce Latham	Chuck Slade
Joraku Joann Cooke	Gyoshin Virginia Lawson	Ryushin Michael Sobel
Mushin Thomas Crisman	Christian Lord	Kensei Jim Spencer
Kanro Christine Dowling	Anna Madden	Debbie St. Germain
Alexander Dumanian	Rocki and Rowena Malamud	Diane Stebbins
Evelyn Dumanian	Getsuan Ann Marshall	Sal and Dianne Villano
Adrienne Eddy	Michael and Alice McGrath	Thomas Walsh
Richard Ellison	Alex Melnikow	Konreki Randlett Walster
Daian Linda Gehron	Dokyo Paul Melnikow	Kyugen Daniel Ward
Inge Gellatly	Jika Lauren Melnikow	Myoko Jennifer Waters
Gary and Bonnie Grossman	Pam Monaco	Fred Zolna
Frederick Guereschi	Gay Montague	
Zenshin Michael Haederle	Mooshi Namordi	
Koshin Robert Hanson	Walt Patulski	
Cindy Helms		

Memorial, Birthday and Other Donations

General contributions to support the Zen Center of Syracuse, memorial gifts, and donations for special occasions such as birthdays and holidays were generously given by the following people between October 2008 and September 2009:

James Bellini	Dorothy Gavrielides	Alice Lawson
Eishun Phyllis Berman	DaiAn Linda Gehron	Daiku Linda Piddock
Ryosei Theresa Bizzell and Joen Joanne Grisanti	James Gutelius	Jushin Barbara Rauscher
Robert Blumenthal	Andy Hassinger	Vaughn Rinner
Irja Boden	John Herrling	Zenshin Richard Rudin
Rick Braaten	Fumiyo Hirano	Debbie St. Germain
HoEn Monica Bradbury	Kiyoshi Ike	Jikyo Bonnie Shoultz
Sanghyeon Cheon	Saigyo Terry and Jikai Jane Keenan	Kyoko Ginger Storey-Welch
Mark Desiderio	Christine Lane	Sam Tamburo
Evelyn Dumanian	Lauren Lanterman	Konreki Randlett Walster
H. Brainard Fancher	Gyoshin Virginia Lawson	Kyugen Daniel Ward
E.L.Flocke	Elana Levy	Myoko Jennifer Waters

Vision for Youth Gifts

The Vision for Youth garden was created by Muju Rene Wilett and Sheila Morrissey before their wedding on July 25, in honor of their daughters, Nicole and Jennifer. The following people generously contributed:

Christine Allen

Patricia Augenthaler

Meigetsu Rebecca Beers

Douglas and Sari Biklen

Robert and Janet Bogdan

Dominic Carone

Frances Carroll

Olive and Robert Corson

Jacqueline Cowan

Jane Cummings

Gerry and Wendy Edwards

Richard Ellison

John and Carol Gilligan

Michael Glen

Gerald and Judith Grant

Norman and Fran Green

Stan and Terri Hall

William and Karen Harris

William and Myotan

Patricia Hoffmann

John and Annette Kappes

Robert and Linda Kashdin

Raymond and Lorraine Kayal

David and Noel Keith

Gary and Joan Kelder

Richard and Linda Kelso

Howard Kligerman and

Nancy Geiger

Christine Lane

Mary Jane Long

John and Judy McCrea

Thomas and Linda McKeown

Richard Waldman and

Elaine Mielcarski

William and Pat Murray

Michael Niewiadomski

Dan and Anna O'Leary

Mary Olin

Peter and Ann Olson

David Pasinski and Geri Hall

William and Sarah Patrick

Nicholas and Pat Pirro

Joel Potash and Sandy Hurd

Beverly Powless

Alan and Elizabeth Robertson

Alan Robertson

Larry and Beanne Rothenberg

John and Donna Scofield

Jim Sicherman and Dani Reposo

Jackie and Michael Terribile

Damian and Pat Vallelonga

James and Nanda Weeks

Muju Rene Wilett

Kathryn Williams

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and, if appropriate, gift card information*

Zen Center of Syracuse Calendar

*Registration for many events is available online at
www.zencenterofsyracuse.org,
which includes convenient PayPal access.*

Conscious Stress Reduction, William Cross, Ph.D. Two eight-week courses: Feb. 10-March 31, 2010, and Sept. 15-Nov. 3, 2010. Wednesdays, 6 to 8 p.m. Cost (includes 4 CDs and workbook): \$200. Learn methods of integrating positive change into daily life, including reducing stress and high blood pressure, working with chronic pain and difficult situations. Booster classes every Wednesday except during the course itself. To register, call Dr. Cross, 474-3762. Carriage House Zendo.

Deep Presence: An Introduction to Zen Meditation, Dharma Teacher Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi, abbot. Six weeks; Feb. 2-March 9, 2010. Tuesdays, 6 to 7:30 p.m. Cost: \$125 (\$85 for students, seniors).

Instruction in sitting and walking meditation through awareness of breath and posture. Discussion focuses on breaking free of old patterns, cultivating wisdom and compassion. Register before Jan. 22. Send your check to the Zen Center to guarantee your place; call to leave your name and phone number, or register online. Joshua Forman House and Carriage House Zendo.

Basic Buddhism, Prof. Shugetsu Sandra Kistler-Connolly, senior Zen practitioner and faculty member at Nazareth College. Five weeks; Nov. 14-Dec. 19, 2009 (skipping Thanksgiving weekend). Saturdays, 1 to 3 p.m. Cost: \$125 (\$100, Sangha members). Study important texts, learn fundamental principles of what the Buddha taught. To register, call Prof. Kistler-Connolly, 277-5126. Joshua Forman House.

Dharma Kids is offered two Sundays each month at 11 a.m. The one-hour class is designed to teach children how to find inner calm, care for the environment, and explore basic practices of Buddhism. Each class has an original theme. Ages 3-10, although all children are welcome.

Nov. 22: Giving Thanks; Dec. 6: In Light-ment (this is Buddha's enlightenment week in Rinzai Zen); Dec. 20: You are Light. Contact Myoko Jennifer Waters, 247-8613 for more information. Joshua Forman House.

Yoga, led by Dick Molitor. 5:30-7 p.m. Fridays and 1-2 p.m. Sundays. All levels welcome. No preregistration required. Members free. \$5 per class, non-members. Joshua Forman House third floor.

Events at Zen Center of Syracuse

Contemplative Writing Workshop. Taught by Ben Howard, Ph.D., author of six collections of poems, most recently *Leaf, Sunlight, Asphalt*. He recently retired as professor of literature, writing and classical guitar at Alfred University. Saturday, Nov. 21, 2009, 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Cost: \$75, including lunch.

All-Day Meditation Retreat. Taught by Shinge Sherry Chayat Roshi, 10:30 a.m.-4 p.m. Jan. 30, 2010. Open to beginners as well as those with an established meditation practice. Includes a vegetarian lunch and teachings. Drawing from more than 40 years of Zen practice, Roshi will give instruction and lead periods of silent sitting and walking, as well as group discussion. Cost: \$75; register by Jan. 22.

New Year's Eve Ceremony. 9 p.m. Dec. 31. Includes Personal Purification Ceremony in Forman House, zazen, teisho at 10 p.m., and chanting of Kanzeon 108 times from 11:30 p.m. to midnight, with participants taking turns striking the large gong. Followed by refreshments, conversation and dancing in the Forman House. Family and friends are welcome.



*Fall Sesshin 2009 participants
Photo by Togan Tim Kohlbrenner*



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