

## From the Abbot

### “This Very Place”

Our Anniversary Sesshin and celebration at Dai Bosatsu Zendo will never be forgotten. Some fifty people sat together amid the beauty of full summer, layers of green upon green, the birds calling and the breezes dancing through the trees. Lay and ordained, long-time practitioners and interns doing their first sesshin, all entered into the deep stillness of zazen and the vigorous interaction of dokusan. Many people told me it was the most profound sesshin they had ever experienced.

Keynote speaker David Loy sat with us throughout, and Shunan Noritake Roshi, abbot of Reiun-in at Myoshin-ji, Japan, gave the final teisho on July 2 on Hakuin Zenji’s “Song of Zazen,” encouraging us to know for ourselves the opening and closing lines, “Sentient beings are fundamentally Buddha” and “This very place is the lotus land of purity; this very body is the body of the Buddha.”

On July 3, the day after sesshin ended, we commemorated forty years since the formal opening of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji; fifty years since the passing of D. T. Suzuki; and sixty years since the establishment of the Zen Studies Society to support Dr. Suzuki’s scholarly work. The program began with offerings of incense and whisked tea at the altar and the Dai Bosatsu Day chanting service.

A theme running through the talks that followed reflected what we recite each day in “Opening This Dharma”: “May we completely realize and actualize the Tathagata’s teaching.” The speakers—Noritake Roshi, Richard Jaffe, David Loy, and myself—manifested a current that flowed seamlessly from the Rinzai tradition as it has moved from Japan to America, to the unique interaction of scholarship and practice for which the Zen Studies Society is known, to Buddhism’s relevance in addressing the climate crisis and other contemporary concerns. Excerpts from the presentations are included in this issue. To listen to the complete talks, [click here](#).

A sublime shakuhachi performance by Grand Master Nyogetsu Ronnie Seldin brought everyone into a state of *myo* (the wondrous) that had just been referenced in Professor Jaffe’s talk on D. T. Suzuki.

Following the presentations in the zendo, an informal hour included beautiful guitar renditions by Anthony Bez during appetizers set out in the dining room, tea ceremony offerings conducted by Todd Frey under a colorful red tent outside the main entrance, and book signings inside by Professor Jaffe and David Loy. We moved to the big white tent in the courtyard for a great feast prepared by guest tenzo Seppo Ed Farrey and our residents and volunteers, all of whom had also cooked throughout sesshin; and a beautiful jazz performance by Genmyo and Koshin Aikawa on bass and keyboard.

At dawn the following morning, some seventy of us walked in two parallel lines, with the call and response of handbell and inkin punctuating the birdsong and gentle breezes, to Sangha Meadow, stopping first to offer incense, pure water, and chanting to ancestral teachers and deceased relatives and friends at the memorial obelisk, and then at the stupa where the ashes of Nyogen Senzaki and Soen Nakagawa Roshi are buried, continuing along the lake trail, chanting at the Benzaiten shrine and the Buddha on his rocky cliff, and walking silently on as the sun lit up the mists and foliage, the beavers’ homes and dams and the goose and duck families. The magical morning concluded with an informal breakfast.

(see next page)

I bow deeply not only to our wonderful presenters and participants, but also to everyone who worked so hard, truly with all their hearts, to bring this beautiful occasion about. The unstinting devotion and dedication of these students are what will ensure forty, fifty, sixty and more years of true Dharma activity at the Zen Studies Society's monastery, Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji, and urban temple, New York Zendo Shobo-ji.

Quite a few appreciative emails have been received since the anniversary events. Ann Ogburn, a long-time resident of the nearby Tibetan retreat center, wrote, "We want you to know how inspired we are by the work you have done over these many years and the work you continue to do to help the Buddha Dharma flourish. The Zendo is obviously prospering under your direction and we know that you and your students will carry the Dharma into the future."

Professor Jaffe said, "The visit to Dai Bosatsu was a real treat for me and the celebration of the multiple anniversaries was, from my perspective as a part of the program, a success. Thank you all for making me feel so welcome in your community. What a wonderful place, Dai Bosatsu!"

Many Hoen-ji Sangha members were present. Miyo Hirano wrote, "I am awed with deep gratitude for what I experienced at the DBZ 40th Anniversary event. Thank you ... the proceedings were a truly beautiful and joyful celebration of the past, present, and future of DBZ. Congratulations!"

From Taisho Paul Aviles: "A most fitting and ELEGANT event on Sunday. Absolutely everything about it--the pacing, the food, the music--came together seamlessly. I am so glad I went down, even if it was for just the day. It's an experience I've been raving about, one I'll surely remember. Deepest thanks to all involved."

And from Jika Lauren Melnikow: "Congratulations on the amazing anniversary--both in bringing everything/everyone together to this point in our history and in heading a most stunning event. It was beautiful, touching, serene, and comfortable. I don't believe the day could have been more beautiful.... I was surprised that such a large event could feel so serene. The temple and grounds more than accommodated the guests. I couldn't help but feel the Nen in the full zendo, as fertile Dharma ground."

Neighbor and Dharma friend Austin "Mac" Francis wrote, "I was honored to be asked to join everyone at the anniversaries celebration. It was simultaneously fulfilling to spend time sharing stories and reminiscences with dear friends, and yet frustrating that I couldn't be with each of you long enough. For example, I couldn't even find Seppo before I had to leave. I wanted to tell him what an inspiration it has been to have his book [*Three Bowls*], give it to others, and use the recipes in my own cooking. I did manage on my way out to stop by the garden and roust Myoho out of her hutch for a nice long chat. We saw a mama and baby bear as we talked. I could go on and on; it only needs saying that it was a beautiful day in every way, and thank you all for your company and love."

Shugen Arnold Roshi, abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery, wrote, "It meant much to me to be there with you and your Sangha as well. I'm just sorry I couldn't have been there for the full day and that it's taken me so long to get to DBZ. I am so appreciative of your devotion to the Dharma and your Sangha; it's good for all of us... I look forward to our continuing relationship."

With profound gratitude,

Shinge