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# Realizing the Dream:

## A Dai Bosatsu Zendo Chronicle

### The Pioneering Years: A Vision on Mt. Dai Bosatsu

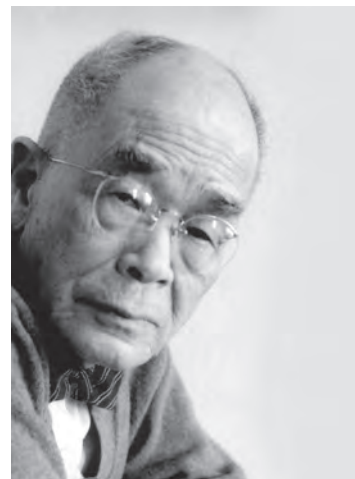
It's 1893. Soen Shaku Roshi, abbot of Engaku-ji in Kamakura, Japan, is invited to address the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. He is attended by his 23-year-old student Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki, who translates his talk into English. The Dharma effect of their coming to the United States will be the creation of the Zen Studies Society in 1956 to support D. T. Suzuki's scholarly work.



Among those who are deeply affected by Soen Shaku's lecture is a woman named Ida Russell, who becomes the first Zen student in America; she later travels to Japan to study with him.

In 1897, D.T. Suzuki returns to the United States to translate Chinese texts into English and to work on the editorial staff of the journal *The Open Court*, published in La Salle, Illinois, by Paul Carus.

In 1905, Soen Shaku and D. T. Suzuki are invited to San Francisco for a long visit by Ida Russell and her husband, Alexander. Soen Shaku asks another of his students, the monk Nyogen Senszaki, to accompany them, but due to illness the latter has to postpone his trip until later that year. He arrives in Seattle by freighter and makes his way to San Francisco; after a brief stay with the Russells, he is on his own.



Soen Shaku teaches at the Russell home in San Francisco where Mrs. Russell has begun leading a small Zen group. He then tours the United States with D. T. Suzuki as interpreter. Talks given during their travels are later compiled as *Sermons of a Buddhist Abbot* (since reissued as *Zen for Americans*).

Nyogen Senszaki takes all sorts of odd jobs in San Francisco, learning English during the few hours he isn't working. Soen Shaku passes away in 1919. From 1922 on, Senszaki gives lectures on Buddhism whenever he can afford to rent a hall, calling these meetings his "floating zendo."

In 1931, he moves into a small apartment in Los Angeles, where he meets Kin Sago Tanahashi and her husband, who

Photos this page: Soen Shaku and D.T. Suzuki; opposite page: Soen Nakagawa, Nyogen Senszaki and Ruth McCandless — Ryutaku-ji 1955





run a laundry, and their son, Jimmy. She becomes his Zen student and in 1932 he gives her the Dharma Name Shubin, “Autumn Sky.”

In 1931 and 1932, a young poet-monk named Soen Nakagawa is doing solitary retreats deep in the forest on Mt. Dai Bosatsu, near Mt. Fuji, having been ordained on April 8, 1931, at Kogaku-ji, which was founded by the great Bassui Tokusho. He ceaselessly chants a mantra of his own invention, “Namu Dai Bosa” (uniting with boundless Bodhisattva-nature). Monk Soen envisions “a training center for producing great bodhisattvas on that Dai Bosatsu ridge.”

In November 1934, Soen Nakagawa’s poems are published in a magazine read by Shubin Tanahashi. She shows them to Nyogen Senzaki, who is so

impressed that he sends a letter to Soen Nakagawa; an intensive correspondence and profound friendship begins. They meet in 1949, when Monk Soen comes to California for a long visit. Their deep spiritual connection nurtures the Dharma activity that will eventually result in the establishment of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji in 1976.



In 1951, Soen Nakagawa receives Dharma Transmission from Gempo Yamamoto Roshi and becomes abbot of Ryutaku-ji in Mishima, Japan. Nyogen Senzaki, accompanied by his disciples Kangetsu Ruth Strout McCandless and Kokin Louise Peddeford, makes his first and only visit back to Japan in 1956; he stays with Soen Roshi at Ryutaku-ji. In 1957, Soen Roshi decides to send one of his students, Eido Tai Shimano (Tai-san), to the United States to be Nyogen Senzaki’s



attendant. However, on May 7, 1958, Nyogen Senzaki passes away.

At Soen Roshi’s suggestion, in 1960, Tai-san continues his academic education at the University of Hawaii. He is invited to meet with D. T. Suzuki when the latter, now over 90, comes to lecture at the East-West Philosophers’ Conference.

On a visit back to Japan, Tai-san is introduced by Soen Roshi to Haku’un Yasutani Roshi, and in 1962 he accompanies Yasutani Roshi on a trip arranged by Soen Roshi, during which

they offer sesshins at various places in the United States. Tai-san continues his training with Yasutani Roshi; the two travel around the world in 1963.

Tai-san moves to New York City, arriving on January 1, 1965, and rents a small apartment on West 85th Street, establishing a zendo where students, many of whom have already done sesshins with Yasutani Roshi, can gather for zazen. Word spreads, and more people come for public meetings on Thursday evenings. On February 14, 1965, the first all-day sitting is held. As the group grows, Tai-san realizes it would be helpful to have the guidance of an organization, and recalls that the Zen Studies Society had been established in 1956 to support the work of D. T. Suzuki.

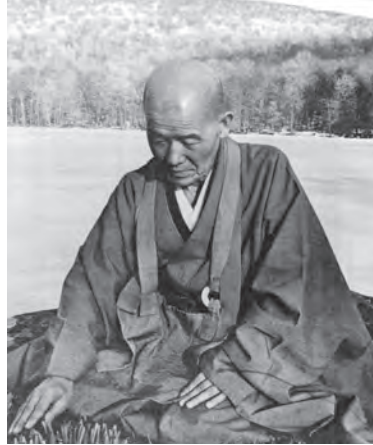
He gets in touch with Bernard Phillips and George Yamaoka, original Board members of the Zen Studies Society, which has been in a period of organizational dormancy since the 1962



Opposite page: Soen Nakagawa in California; Haku’un Yasutani Roshi; this page: Eido Tai Shimano



passing of its principal donor, Cornelius Crane. In 1965, new members are elected, including Yasutani Roshi, Soen Roshi, Tai-san, George Yamaoka, and Bernard Phillips.



Tai-san is able to arrange a visa for Yasutani Roshi to come to the United States, and finds a larger apartment at West 81st Street and West End Avenue where they can live; it becomes the home of the Zen Studies Society. Professor Phillips, who is chairman of the Department of Religion at Temple University, arranges for Yasutani Roshi to give a series of lectures there. Tai-san's wife, Yasuko Shimano, comes from Japan to join him in his Dharma work.

With Yasutani Roshi's profound teachings and Tai-san's dedication, visionary leadership, and charisma, the Sangha outgrows the apartment. A former carriage house at 223 East 67th

Street is purchased and renovated through the generosity of a donor who asks to remain anonymous. On September 15, 1968, with ceremonies led by Yasutani Roshi, Soen Roshi, and Tai-san, New York Zendo Shobo-ji is formally opened as the new home of the Zen Studies Society. Weekend sesshins are held there and seven-day sesshins take place at the Daughters of Wisdom Retreat Center in Litchfield, Connecticut.

In 1970, after an evening sitting at Shobo-ji, Tai-san announces that the perfect property for the Zen Studies Society's own country retreat center has been found. It's in the Catskill Mountains, situated on 1,400 acres that surround a sparkling lake. There is also a house on the property that was formerly owned by Henry Ward Beecher, brother of Harriet Beecher Stowe, the famed abolitionist. Her 1852 book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first published in installments in the antislavery weekly

newspaper *The National Era*, galvanized the abolition movement.

The Sangha is told that the first deed of the property was signed in 1776, the very year of this nation's Independence. In 1971, Soen Roshi comes to see the newly purchased property. He immediately falls in love with it, saying, "This is like the site of an ancient temple!" He and Tai-san name it International Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

Left: Soen Roshi; below: unidentified monk from Japan, Soen Roshi, Tai-san





In his collection “Ten Haiku of My Choice,” Soen Roshi writes, “It so happened that the dream of building a training place on that Dai Bosatsu ridge came to fruition through the spontaneous activity of the Dharma, but not in Japan. It happened on sacred land deep in the Catskill Mountains of New York State, a place like Yamato Prefecture in ancient Japan, where deer visit and play. There is a clear lake called Beecher Lake surrounded by thousands of acres of national forest. It is an almost infinite wilderness and is a place where true Dharma friends can gather from all over the world, a place not limited just to Buddhism or Zen.” (from *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa*, page 62.)

Starting with the July 4th weekend of 1971, many students spend work weekends at DBZ, clearing the land of rocks for construction of a gatehouse at the bottom of the road, and preparing the Beecher House for sesshin use, where they make a rustic zendo on the second floor. Bill Johnstone is named chairman of the Building Committee for

the monastery that will soon be built. Soen Roshi’s friend Father Maxima, a Japanese artist who is also a Greek Orthodox priest, spends several months painting a mural in the first-floor Dharma Hall of the Beecher House depicting the Buddha’s transmission to Mahakashapa. On one weekend, a large bronze Buddha is precariously rowed to “the other shore” and is seated on a rocky ledge overlooking Beecher Lake.

Tai-san formally asks Soen Roshi to become Abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and Nyogen Senzaki is named Honorary First Abbot. The first five-day sesshin at DBZ, attended by 23 students, begins September 5, 1971, with alternating periods of zazen and work practice. Week-long sesshins continue to be held in Litchfield.

On September 13, 1971, the third anniversary of Shobo-ji, the first Zen Studies Society ordination takes place there for Daiko Chuck Carpenter. Daiko becomes resident director of DBZ, joined by Maishin Mick Sopko, Myoko

Carol Snyder, Daishin Steve Levine, and Richard D’Eletto.

While sitting in Rohatsu sesshin at New York Zendo Shobo-ji, the Sangha is told



Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

the news that Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, founding abbot of San Francisco Zen Center, has passed away in the early morning of December 4. It’s a big loss for all Zen practitioners in America, beyond his own students—countless numbers have been inspired by his book *Zen Mind, Beginner’s Mind*.

The first New Year’s Eve ceremony at DBZ is held at the end of that eventful year.





In February of 1972 Tai-san gives a two-day zazen workshop at Syracuse University; the following year he returns and dedicates the zendo there, giving it the name HoEn (Dharma Salt).

Sangha member Hoko Deborah Love Matthiessen, wife of Peter Matthiessen, passes away from cancer January 28, 1972. The first seven-day sesshin at DBZ takes place March 1-8, 1972; on the last day, her ashes are interred next to a boulder overlooking the lake in the newly-named Sangha Meadow.

That summer, Soen Roshi comes for a four-month stay, and the second seven-day sesshin at DBZ is held in early September. At this sesshin Soen Roshi sings “Atta Dipa,” the last words of Shakyamuni Buddha, which he had seen inscribed on the lid of a box of the Buddha’s relics while in India earlier in the year.



On September 13, he conducts Kai San Shiki (“Opening Mountain Ceremony”). Two days later, in an evening ceremony at New York Zendo on its fourth anniversary, Soen Roshi authorizes Eido Tai Shimano as his first Dharma heir. He gives him the name Mui Shitsu (“True Man without Rank”), and installs him as Abbot of both New York Zendo and International Dai Bosatsu Zendo. After an intermission, that same evening, Myoko Carol Snyder is ordained.

The first full eight-day Rohatsu sesshin is held at New York Zendo, with some 60 people participating; each afternoon the *Diamond Sutra* is recited, which one student, Kanzan Bruce Rickenbacher, is memorizing in Sino-Japanese. On January 17, 1973, 20 Sangha members gather at DBZ for the first Rohatsu sesshin there.

On March 28, 1973, at the age of 88, Hakuun-shitsu Yasutani Ryoko Zenji Dai Osho passes from this life; the DBZ sesshin of April 20-27 is dedicated to him.

Davis Hamerstrom is chosen as the architect for the new building. He spends a month in Japan with Eido Roshi, studying traditional Japanese temple design; eventually Tofukuji is selected as a model for DBZ. Construction begins, but it becomes clear that inflation caused by the fuel crisis will make it necessary to raise funds in order to complete the project. Three students—Myoku Margot Wilkie, Isshin Peter Matthiessen, and Roko Sherry Chayat—begin work on an informational fundraising brochure. John and Grace Key donate their large Buddha, which Eido Roshi had found for them in Nara some ten years before, to Dai Bosatsu Zendo; a daisho (large hanging gong struck by a log) is cast as a gift to DBZ from Mr. Kiichiro Kitaura, president of Nomura Securities in Japan. He also generously offers to provide funds for the bell tower. “Zen Art Objects from the Four Quarters” is hung





in a show at the Greer Gallery as one of the fundraising projects.

Soen Roshi returns in the spring of 1974, and “A Dai Bosatsu Evening” is held at Japan House. Isshin Peter Matthiessen is Master of Ceremonies, and gives an introductory talk. Several students perform a Noh play, *Togan Koji*; Eido Roshi speaks about the meaning of Namu Dai Bosa and about Zen practice; a number of students sit in zazen on stage. Haiku scrolls hung between two poles are stretched across the stage, and Soen Roshi tells the audience about each one. Pointing to the calligraphy “Great Laughter,” he leads some 300 people in the auditorium in great laughter. The evening ends with the *Heart Sutra* and *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*, and then the audience joins in chanting *Namu Dai Bosa*. From the Spring 1974 issue of *Dharma Seasons*:

“The results of the Dai Bosatsu Evening were quick and startling. Many who had been in the audience expressed their gratitude; some said the zazen on stage was like a powerful current carrying everyone along. Friends whose

prior interest in Zen had been purely intellectual expressed a strong desire to begin sitting. And generous donations for Dai Bosatsu Zendo began appearing the mail from friends, relatives, and strangers alike. But as the roshis have said many times, more important than the financial support of Dai Bosatsu Zendo is the extension and strengthening of Dai Bosatsu spirit, and this occurred very tangibly on April 3.”

A special ceremony is held at the construction site that Easter Sunday. In the new zendo, a rope and ladder lead to the rafters of the roof. Several hundred sheets of hand-written *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*, which students have been writing during rest periods at sesshins, are placed in a wooden box mounted on a plaque inscribed with that sutra and *Namu Dai Bosa*. To the chanting of *Hannya Shin Gyo* and *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*, Soen Roshi and Eido Roshi



nail the box shut. During *Namu Dai Bosa* chanting, the plaque is raised and hammered into its new home.

Later that spring, the first residency program begins. A small group led by Shoro Lou Nordstrom and Roko Sherry Chayat Nordstrom lives in the Beecher House, to which Eido Roshi gives the name Joraku-an, “Eternally Joyous Cottage” (Jo and Raku from *Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*). Communal life includes clearing rocks for a large garden and planting a variety of vegetables.

Daily zazen is augmented by sesshin with Soen Roshi, who is now spending more time at DBZ. Shoro and Roko work with him and Eido Roshi on the book *Namu Dai Bosa: A Transmission of Zen Buddhism to America*.

At the end of the summer of 1974, which closes with a seven-day sesshin, it seems impossible to leave. Shoro, Roko, and five other residents decide to





stay on, living in the mostly unheated and quite drafty Joraku-an, as monastery construction continues.

In a journal entry, Roko writes, “As winter deepens, the water in the Buddha’s bowl on the zendo altar frequently freezes. Before morning zazen two or three of us take turns going out in the old blue truck to plow and sand the road so that the construction crews can get up the hill. Early in 1975 we tap for maple syrup. Incredibly, spring does come again; the lake thaws, and zazen is filled with the sounds of rushing water and the songs of returning robins and wood thrushes, and the scent of daffodils.”

Three students are ordained: Shoro Louis Nordstrom; Dogo Don Scanlon; and Kanzan Bruce Rickenbacher. In the



summer, more Sangha members arrive to be residents. On the fifth day of summer sesshin, June 28-July 5, the inkin is struck for the first zazen in the still unfinished zendo. Eido Roshi says, “This floor has finally been laid. Now we must sit with all our might. We must be the nails and screws.” On July 4, he takes the high seat for his first teisho in the new zendo, and begins, “At last a baby is born....” and becomes overwhelmed with tears. He asks Suigan Eddie Daniels to “play the teisho”; Eddie, a renowned jazz musician, goes to the altar with his flute and plays “A Child Is Born.”

On August 3, residents sit in the old Joraku-an zendo for the last time.

Each goes up to the monastery, kneeling in the traditional niwazume posture to request formal acceptance as a student at International Dai Bosatsu Zendo; everyone continues sitting until all have entered. On August 9, 1975, a Dedication

Ceremony is held in the new monastery.



Soen Roshi arrives August 21, Dai Bosatsu Mandala Day, for a visit of several months, and the first seven-day sesshin entirely in the new zendo is held from August 30 through September 6. Eido Roshi says that although he and Soen Roshi have Rinzai Zen backgrounds, “Here in this new zendo on this new continent we will establish neither Rinzai nor Soto Zen, but Dai Bosatsu Zen.... While in essential areas

Left: Joraku-an entryway; above: Eido Roshi and Shoro Louis Nordstrom; opposite page: Roko Sherry Chayat





the centuries-old traditions of Japanese Rinzai Zen will be maintained, certain aspects of living and practicing at Dai Bosatsu Zendo will become clear only as the monastic community develops.”

In his first teisho of that sesshin, Soen Roshi offers this poem:

I came to the door of Dai Bosatsu Zendo  
and it was already open.  
I opened the Book of Rinzai and found  
no word.  
Where is Master Rinzai?  
Where is the Master?  
Kwatz!

Daily practice as described in the Fall 1975 *Dharma Seasons*: “Up at 4:30 for morning service and zazen, we have worked for the most part straight through until supper and evening zazen. Among the results are a woodshed eighty feet long by thirty feet wide, a garden of over an acre containing nearly every kind of vegetable (many of which have been stored and frozen for winter use), and over 100 zafus and nearly 50 zabutons and futons. Trees have been felled,

cut and split for firewood to heat the monastery; the sap house and woodshed have been shingled; landscaping of the area around the monastery has begun.

After much rewriting, editing and polishing, *Namu Dai Bosa* has been put in the hands of Stinehour Press of Vermont, which is considered the finest printer in America.” The book is to be published in 1976 by Jochi George Zournas’ Theatre Arts Press; in her Foreword, Chigetsu Ruth Lilienthal writes: “Beside the highest lake in the Catskill Mountains, the International Dai Bosatsu Zendo lies in a green silence, waiting to be born. And to bear.”

With Eido Roshi’s visionary work and indomitable Dharma spirit and the efforts and contributions of Sangha members and Dharma friends, “The Impossible Dream” is being realized.

Planning begins for the following summer’s formal opening and dedication ceremonies, in which Dai Bosatsu Zendo will be offered as a



place of true freedom to celebrate the United States of America’s Bicentennial. It is an exciting and ebullient time for this Sangha, and for many other pioneering Zen centers that are being established during these years.

Buddhist teachers from all over the world, including Joshu Sasaki Roshi, founding abbot of Mt. Baldy and Rinza-ji in California; Taizan Maezumi Roshi, founding abbot of Zen Center of Los Angeles; Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, founder of Naropa Institute in Boulder,





Colorado; Seung Sahn Sunim, founder of the Kwan Um School of Zen in Providence, Rhode Island; and many prominent Zen roshis from Japan attend the grand opening on July 4, 1976. Everyone receives slip-cased copies of the limited edition of *Namu Dai Bosa*. Many people stay on for the International Sesshin that follows.

Soen Roshi is not present at that formal opening. Quite a few Sangha members do not attend, either; there have been waves of deeply saddened departures and Board resignations due to reports of Eido Roshi's multiple inappropriate relationships with students.

### International Exchanges

On October 5, 1976, the Ven. Itsugai Kajiura Roshi, abbot of Myoshin-ji, visits

DBZ; he is attended by Kogetsu Tani, his future Dharma heir and Shogen-ji abbot. A week later, on October 13, sixty Rinzai monks led by Mumon Yamada Roshi, abbot of Shofuku-ji in Kobe, arrive for Koku Sai Dai Sesshin, "International Great Sesshin." They walk from the gatehouse to the monastery carrying Japanese and American flags side-by-side. The total number of sesshin participants is 100 (60 Japanese, 40 American).

Miura Isshu Roshi, the co-author with Ruth Sasaki

of *Zen Dust: The History of the Koan and Koan Study in Rinzai Zen*, who has lived a reclusive yet inspiring life in New York City for many years, passes away December 10, 1978, and a memorial service is held at New York Zendo Shobo-Ji in January.



Eido Roshi participates in "The First Gathering of Zen Teachers in the United States" May 2-4 at Green Gulch Farm, moderated by Huston Smith, who gives a talk titled "Zen in the West: This American Moment." The gathering is organized by Masao Abe, author of the soon-to-be-published *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered*.

Eido Roshi is writer, editor, and translator of many books from 1978 through 2005. The first edition of *Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy*, a compilation of poems and teachings by Nyogen Senzaki, is brought out in 1978. Eido Roshi's *Golden Wind: Zen Talks* is published in 1979 by Japan Publications, and is followed by *Points of Departure: Zen Buddhism with a Rinzai View* in 1991. *Zen Word, Zen Calligraphy*, with text by Eido Roshi and brushwork by Kogetsu Tani Roshi, is published the following year by Shambhala. Fascicles from Dogen's Shobogenzo, "Being-Time," "Only Buddha Knows Buddha" and "Life-Death," are published in 1997 and 1999 by Encre Marine, with the original





Japanese and translations into English by Eido Roshi and into French by Charles Vacher. Their bilingual translation of Dogen's "Buddha Nature" appears in 2002. A second edition of *Like a Dream, Like a Fantasy: The Zen Teachings and Translations of Nyogen Senzaki* is brought out by Wisdom Publications in 2005. Eido Roshi's translation of *The Book of Rinzai*, a four-year project, is also published in 2005.

His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama speaks at New York Zendo and



at Syracuse University in 1979, on his first trip to the United States. He visits

DBZ on July 29, 1981, and gives a talk in which he says, "In order to lead [the proper way of life], the proper way of thinking is important. The root of proper thinking is kindness and compassion and love. If you have good motivation, then the whole way of life becomes proper and you will accumulate merit." Paul Reys leads "a lively, experiential evening" at Joraku-an during that visit.

Wataru Ohashi Sensei makes Joraku-an his headquarters August 1-10, 1981, for the first of many

Ohashiatsu workshops there. Numerous shiatsu practitioners become Zen students over the ensuing years.

The summer of 1982 features a number of special events: a weekend called "On Being Fully Alive," with Dainin Katagiri Roshi, psychiatrist Tadao Ogura, and Eido

Roshi, is held; Paul Reys is in residence and offers "A Weekend at Play"; another weekend workshop, "Poetics and Meditation," is given by Allen Ginsberg.

Soen Roshi comes to DBZ for what will be his last visit, giving teisho on the Rinzai Roku at the summer sesshin of 1982; he meets privately at Joraku-an with a few of his long-time students, including Lou Nordstrom and Maurine Stuart, who has become the resident teacher at Cambridge Buddhist Association in Massachusetts.

Soen Roshi passes away at Ryutaku-ji on March 11, 1984. His death poem reads:

Nanohana ya  
Sarani nageutsu  
Mono mo nashi

Mustard blossoms!  
There is nothing left  
To hurl away

Soen Roshi's teisho given at the 1982 summer sesshin, his haiku, and a selection of commemorative writings by his students are assembled in the book *The Soen Roku: The Sayings and Doings of Master Soen*, published in honor of DBZ's tenth anniversary.

This page: Eido Roshi and His Holiness the Dalai Lama;  
opposite page: Eido Roshi, His Holiness, and Aiho Yasuko Shimano with two students





At that Anniversary Sesshin July 1-7, 1986, Bishop Koin Takada, abbot and leader of the restoration of Yakushi-ji, one of the oldest Buddhist temples in Japan, gives a talk, and together with his monks and nuns, performs a purification ceremony. The sesshin is jointly conducted by Eido Roshi; Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Abbot of Mt. Baldy Zen Center in California; and Rev. Genki Takabayashi from Seattle Zen Center. Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche from Naropa Institute in Boulder presents a talk on the final day. There are 90 participants, including many students from guest teachers' Sanghas.

A new brochure is published in 1986 that states: "Dai Bosatsu Zendo was created as a lay monastery, receptive to the spiritual needs of those who find in Zen a congenial practice. To fulfill this function, Dai Bosatsu Zendo must continue its tradition of a strong practice even as it seeks to participate in the culture of America. Generous and often anonymous friends built Dai Bosatsu Zendo; that we continue to practice and make it available to others gives meaning to their generosity."

Before leaving for a year's sabbatical in Japan in 1989, Eido Roshi appoints Junpo Denis Kelly head monk. In August, Kogetsu Tani Roshi, abbot of Shogen-ji in Gifu prefecture, travels to DBZ with his monks to lead summer sesshin, and then returns for sesshin here that October.



Donge John Haber takes charge of Open Space wellness programming and, in September 1989, holds the first retreat for fellow HIV-positive people at DBZ, sponsored by the Community Health Project. He lays out plans for a cottage in the woods, O-An, "Hut of Accord," planning to live out his final days there. O-An refers to Donge's Dharma

name, which is derived from that of the Chinese Ancestral Teacher O-An Donge Zenji. Eido Roshi writes the name for the hut with an enso in place of the O. In a piece for the newsletter, Donge writes, "There is a deeper meaning to circle. It is the circle of life: a circle of embrace and of coming together. So

now there is a cabin in which I will live and perhaps die, and which visitors, guests, and other members of the community can use when I am not here."

MyoOn Maurine Stuart dies of cancer

on February 26, 1990. She teaches and leads sesshin at Cambridge Buddhist Association right up to the end.

Donge never has a chance to live in O-An. In December 1991, shortly after Eido Roshi and a group of Sangha members leave on a trip to India, he is hospitalized with AIDS-related





pneumonia. Roko Sherry Chayat is with him in the Intensive Care Unit as he passes away January 29, 1992.

On October 11, 1992, Junpo Denis Kelly receives *inka shomei*, Dharma Transmission, from Eido Roshi, and is named Vice Abbot. At the end of Rohatsu sesshin that year, Eido Roshi conducts a Dharma Teacher authorization ceremony for three women: Agetsu Agatha Wydler-Haduch, New York Zendo Director Aiho-san Shimano, and Roko Sherry Chayat. The following year Junpo Roshi leaves Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

In April 1993, the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji organizes “100 Years of Zen in America,” at venues including Syracuse University, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, the Everson Museum of Art, and area galleries. Among the speakers are

Eido Roshi, Daido Loori Roshi, Dai-En Bennage Roshi, Lou Nordstrom, John McRae, Lex Hixon, Wataru Ohashi Sensei, and Paula Arai; Shakuhachi Grand Master Nyogetsu Ronnie Seldin performs. A month-long exhibition at the Everson Museum features the work of Daido Roshi, Kazuaki Tanahashi, and Mayumi Oda, as well as calligraphy by Yasutani Roshi, Soen Roshi, and Eido Roshi.

Shubin Kin Tanahashi, Nyogen Senzaki’s disciple who brought Soen Roshi’s poetry to his attention, thus sparking their long spiritual friendship and the Dai Bosatsu Mandala, passes away on August 31, 1993, at the age of 96. All three shared a love of poetry and a devotion to

the Dharma. Her son, Jimmy, who was wheelchair-bound with severe Down Syndrome, had been cared for every day by Nyogen Senzaki after his move from San Francisco to Los Angeles.



Calligraphy by Kazuaki Tanahashi; above: Shubin and Jimmy Tanahashi with Nyogen Senzaki

Taizan Hakuyu Maezumi Roshi passes away on May 15, 1994. He had come to Los Angeles from Japan in 1956, and founded Zen Center of Los Angeles in 1967. Maezumi Roshi and Eido Roshi both did koan study with Yasutani Roshi; Maezumi Roshi received Dharma Transmission from Yasutani Roshi, as well as from the lay Rinzai Master Osaka Koryu and from his teacher and father, Baian Kuroda Roshi, a leading master in the Japanese Soto School. Maezumi Roshi and Eido Roshi both had a karmic connection with Nyogen Senzaki.

The dedication of DBZ’s Kaisando (Founders’ Hall) takes place July 4, 1994, the last day of Anniversary Sesshin. Eido Roshi says, “I feel it is inappropriate for me to consider myself the founder of Dai Bosatsu Zendo—not because I am still alive, but because I know what a karmic net is. Therefore, it is most appropriate at least for now to name the following people as the founders of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji: Soen Nakagawa Roshi, Respectfully Invited Founder; Nyogen Senzaki, Karmic Founder; Chester Carlson, Financial Benefactor; Jimmy Tanahashi, Karmic Benefactor; Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, Spiritual Benefactor; Dr. D. T. Suzuki, Scholarly Benefactor, and William Johnstone, Managerial Benefactor.”

Jiro Andy Afable becomes general manager and treasurer at DBZ. He had been leading the practice at Kashin Zendo in Washington, DC, where he was acknowledged as a Dharma Teacher in 1988.

Kogetsu Tani Roshi, Abbot of Shogen-ji, passes away November 21, 1994. He





and Eido Roshi had known each other for more than 40 years. Before his death, Tani Roshi acknowledges his long-time student, Sogen Yamakawa, abbot of Kokoku-ji, as his Dharma heir. Tani Roshi's death poem, discovered after his departure:



Cultivating the clouds,  
Fishing the moon,  
Sixty-three years have passed  
Now I know clearly  
There is no life, no death.

From 1995 on, a number of DBZ monks and nuns spend training periods

at Shogen-ji, and Yamakawa Roshi regularly brings his Shogen-ji *unsui* to sesshins at DBZ.

In 1996, the 20th anniversary of Dai Bosatsu Zendo is attended by 56 sesshin participants; a new granite stupa is dedicated at Sangha Meadow.

More than 100 people arrive for a festive celebration on the morning of July 4. Dai-En George Burch, chairman of the Zendo Roof Replacement Fundraising Drive, gives a speech asking the Sangha to think "about how to build a new American Dai Bosatsu Zen. With your help over the next twenty

years I predict that Dai Bosatsu Zendo will come down from the mountain, that ordained Zen monks and nuns will be funded to start community Zen centers, and that new practices will help ordinary Americans discover the extraordinary way of Zen, so that all citizens of the United States may become truly liberated from suffering."

Guests receive copies of the newly published *Endless Vow: The Zen Path of Soen Nakagawa*, compiled and translated by Kazuaki Tanahashi and Roko Sherry Chayat, with an Introduction by Eido Roshi; *The Book of the Zen Grove*, translated by Zenrin Robert Lewis; an original shikishi calligraphy by Eido Roshi, and a tea cup by George Peterson. A feast is prepared by Seppo Ed Farrey, followed by a poetry reading by Saigyo Terrance Keenan, an ordained monk from Hoen-ji in Syracuse; and a performance by the Ives String Quartet of the Juilliard School of Music.

*Subtle Sound: The Zen Teachings of Maurine Stuart*, compiled, edited, and





with an Introduction by Roko Sherry Chayat, with a Foreword by Edward Espe Brown, is also published by Shambhala in 1996.

On October 18 of that year, Eido Roshi conducts the dedication ceremony for the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji's new home on six acres along Onondaga Creek, and installs Roko Sherry Chayat as abbot. He changes the second character of "Hoen" (formerly "Dharma Salt") to become "Dharma Connection." He returns to Hoen-ji in October 1998 to conduct the ceremony in which Roko receives *inka shomei*, Dharma Transmission, with some 140 people attending.

Jiro Fernando Afafe receives Dharma Transmission in 1998 and is appointed Vice Abbot of DBZ. Zenrin Robert Lewis and Denko John Mortensen are acknowledged as Dharma Teachers on December 8, 1998.

*Three Bowls: Vegetarian Recipes from an American Zen Buddhist Monastery*, by Seppo Ed Farrey and Myochi Nancy O'Hara, is published by Houghton

Mifflin in 2000, and becomes an instant bestseller in the Buddhist MahaSangha.

DBZ's 25th anniversary is celebrated July 4, 2001. Present are Japanese Ambassador and Consul General to New York Mr. Kawamura and Mrs. Kawamura, Yamada Sensei of Urasenke Tea School, many ordained and lay students, and guests, for a total of 250 participants. A stone monument inscribed with a line by the 92-year-old poet Shinmin Sakamura, *Nen Zureba Hana Hiraku*, ("Nen! Blooming Flowers"), a new Jizo statue carved by Mr. Nomoto, and a seven-foot granite



slab carved by Mr. Nomoto with the image of the Jizo Bodhisattva painting in the zendo foyer, are installed and dedicated.

In 2003, Jiro Osho resigns. Seigan Ed Glassing is appointed *shikaryo* (head monk). On April 12, at the close of Holy Days Sesshin, Denko John Mortensen, who received Dharma Transmission from Eido Roshi in November 2002, is appointed Vice Abbot, but he leaves DBZ in 2006. Fujin Attale Formals, a dedicated long-time resident who was ordained in 1993, comes into ascendancy in the leadership of DBZ.

Some 60 Sangha members participate in the 30th Anniversary Sesshin, with Yamakawa Roshi of Shogen-ji joining for the last four days. On July 15, 2006, more than 200 Sangha members gather for the anniversary celebration. A ceremonial tea offering by Yamada Sensei of Urasenke Tea School is followed by a service, and speakers include Yamakawa Roshi; Ambassador Sakurai; Melvin McLeod, Editor of *BuddhaDharma* and *Shambhala Sun*; Soshin Nakai, and Eido Roshi. A new stupa honoring Gempo Roshi is dedicated in Sangha Meadow.

A Shinto shrine and two new statues, Benzaiten (carved by Myoyo Tanaka)

and Fudo Myoo (carved by Soshin Nakai), are dedicated at the celebration, with o-fuda (papers with inscriptions that carry blessings) from Kotaro Hiruta Sensei, who is head of Ichikukai Misogi Dojo in Tokyo and a professor of nuclear physics. A misogi ceremony is performed by members of Ichikukai Dojo, Robert Savoca, Yuho Carl Baldini, and members of Brooklyn Aikikai. Yuho writes that misogi "as a method of purification and spiritual awakening has a long and honorable history and is still rigorously practiced in modern Japan... this training is perhaps more valuable and relevant to humankind than ever."

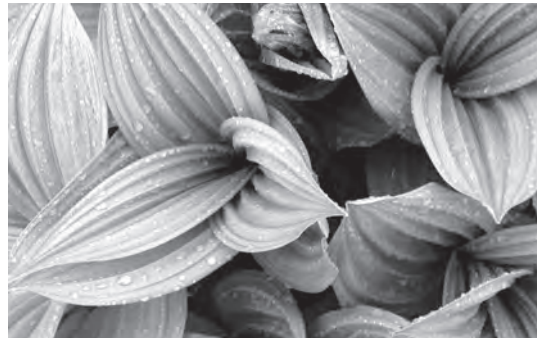
Also in 2006, Yamakawa Sogen Roshi's *Selected Teishos on the Gateless Gate*, translated by Saiun Atsumi Hara, is published in time for the 650th commemoration of Kanzan Egen Zenji, spiritual founder of Shogen-ji in Gifu Prefecture. The book contains teishos delivered at DBZ.

That October, Eido Roshi leads six students on a pilgrimage to Japan for the 650th commemoration. They first visit Engaku-ji, Soen Shaku Roshi's monastery





where Nyogen Senzaki and D. T. Suzuki practiced; then they go to Gifu to attend the commemorative sesshin at Shogen-ji, with nine roshis giving dokusan for the more than 120 participants. After sesshin



ends they visit Enzan, and are taken to the huge rock on which Bassui Zenji sat in zazen; the following day they visit Bassui's temple, Kogaku-ji, where Soen Nakagawa Roshi was ordained. They climb Mt. Dai Bosatsu, and suddenly Mr. Fuji appears through the mists.

Seigan writes, "The circle is now complete; from Soen Shaku, Ven. Nyogen Senzaki, and D. T. Suzuki, to Soen Roshi, to Eido Roshi. From this great peak in Japan to Los Angeles, and still farther to a temple in New York City

and a monastery by Beecher Lake, in the Catskills. The Dai Bosatsu Mandala."

Early in 2008, Roko Sherry Chayat finishes the manuscript of *Eloquent Silence: Nyogen Senzaki's Gateless Gate and Other Previously Unpublished Teachings and Letters*, with her Introduction and Eido Roshi's Foreword. Nyogen Senzaki Sesshin is held at DBZ May 3-11, supplanting Memorial Day Sesshin. Soon afterward, Eido Roshi, Aiho-san, Fujin, Yayoi, and Roko fly to Los Angeles and present the bound pages, with chanting and offerings of incense, matcha, flowers, sweets, and pure water at Nyogen Senzaki's grave in Evergreen Cemetery, fifty years after his passing. On the eighth day of the eighth month of 2008, the books arrive from Wisdom Publications.

A 10-year period of advanced training culminates in a ceremony on October 12, 2008, called *shitsugo*, literally, "room-name," in which Roko Sherry Chayat receives the title of Roshi and the name Shinge ("Heart/Mind Flowering") from Eido Roshi at Hoen-ji, with more than 150 people attending. In the ZSS

newsletter Seigan writes, "There is a love at the heart of Hoen-ji that shines through in so many ways. The Hoen-ji Sangha's devotion to their teacher and to the Dharma is reflected in their many kindnesses. The warmth is perfectly condensed in Shingeshitsu Roshi's new name."

On April 18, 2009, Hisashi Yamada Sensei, retired director of the Urasenke Tea School of New York who has offered ceremonial tea at many special occasions at DBZ, passes away.

In 2009, 78-year-old Kiyuu-san Yokohama becomes a part-time resident and full-time gardener at DBZ. His first visit was in July 2008 for the funeral and burial of his wife, Sumiko; now he reactivates the vegetable garden, makes many kilos of miso, and plants flowers, bushes, and trees all over the grounds.

A fundraising project is begun by the Board of the Zen Studies Society: "To commemorate Eido Roshi's 50th Anniversary in the United States, and to express his gratitude to the Three Treasures, a Sanmon (gate complex) will







be built at the entrance of Dai Bosatsu Zendo.” The Sanmon is dedicated August 12, 2012.

### Heartache and Transformation

At a meeting that had been held in 1993 in Dharamsala, India, between His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama and a group of twenty-two Western Dharma teachers from the major Buddhist traditions in Europe and America, sexual exploitation of students on the part of Asian teachers in the West was a principle topic of discussion.

On June 21, 2010, an endemic culture of secrecy surrounding decades of sexual misconduct is broken when a student discloses an affair with Eido Roshi. Many practitioners leave both

temples. An article about this appears in The New York Times. Meanwhile, an Internet archive has been posted documenting Eido Roshi’s abuses of power and the many unsuccessful ZSS Board attempts to call a halt to such behavior. The current Board asks Eido Tai Shimano and Aiho Yasuko Shimano to step down from their positions on the Board, and engages the Faith Trust Institute to help guide the Society through this traumatic time of broken trust. Following their recommendations, on December 8, 2010, Eido Roshi retires as Abbot; on December 10, Aiho-san retires from her role as Director of New York Zendo Shobo-ji.

In her book *Turning The Wheel: American Women Creating The New Buddhism*, Sandy Boucher notes, “In most situations in which the teacher is having sexual relations with students, it is not the actions themselves that prove destructive, but the secrecy in which they are pursued. Students believe in their teacher and model themselves after him. A deep trust is established. When that is broken, much psychological harm is done. Also, the senior students

usually know about the affairs, keep the secret, and thus the hypocrisy spreads. Certainly the teacher’s participation in secret affairs affects his ability to give guidance to his students, especially in the area of relationships.

“Often the sexual liaisons are only part of a larger picture in which a hierarchical structure results in some students feeling taken advantage of, as their unpaid labor built the Zen center and their loyalty allowed their Zen master to enlarge his domain of influence and function in a dictatorial manner.”

On January 1, 2011, Shinge Roshi is installed as Second Abbot of the Zen Studies Society. She and members of the Board are faced with splintering factions in the Sangha and a darkly tarnished reputation. They work at revitalizing an organization in disarray and attempt to cultivate a positive atmosphere based upon the Buddhist precepts and democratic principles while upholding strong Rinzai Zen practice.

A limited access policy for Eido Roshi is put into effect, based on ethical,





legal, and insurance requirements. It precludes his teaching on ZSS premises. An unfunded retirement policy that had been drawn up years earlier becomes a major issue, and the Zen Studies Society is sued by the Shimanos for non-payment. With the help of non-binding arbitration, eventually the lawsuit is dropped and a mutually agreed-upon financial settlement is put into place.

During the next few years, consultants from the professional organization An Olive Branch conduct workshops on board “best practices” and mission, values, and vision, as well as a facilitated Sangha weekend retreat during which more than 50 people speak honestly about their deep pain, anger, and disillusionment, and make recommendations for the future. New

by-laws are adopted. Atonement ceremonies are held at the conclusion of each Anniversary Sesshin, along with Council gatherings to foster openness in the process of healing. Shinge Roshi and her students vow to let the air in, to “take off the wrappers,” as Nyogen Senzaki put it.

In a vision statement, Shinge Roshi stresses the importance of



“understanding the compassionate nature of formal practice, seeing it as holding, rather than repressing. True freedom is found through gladly embracing discipline. At the same time, we must beware of getting caught up in

a superficial regard for form that then becomes rigid and cold. We are here to nurture bodhisattva mind. We are making a commitment to wake up to our true nature. That is the essence of our practice. It cannot be forced or rushed; we have to allow it to unfold.”

In her first “From the Abbot” article, published in the Spring 2011 newsletter, she writes, “There are changes that I envision. I want to cultivate an atmosphere that is harmonious, warm, open, and respectful of everyone. Since my way as a teacher is more relational than hierarchical, I look forward to sharing creative ideas with residents and visitors alike. I welcome past and current students with deep concern for continuing our heritage and love of the Dharma to take part in shaping the future of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. From time to time I would like to bring poets, artists, environmentalists, and other stimulating people to share what they do, and I would like to reach out to the wider Catskills community.”

“These changes will evolve organically; they are not to be hurried, but they have





begun. Supporting and encouraging each person's practice in appropriate ways, taking note of individual needs and talents: this is Rinzai Zen in an American setting. Snow and ice have melted; spring rains soak the earth, and the sun coaxes new buds to open. With the readiness of time, fruits form and ripen. Saturated with the incomparable practice of Buddha-Dharma, let us work together to realize the Great Way here at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji."

In 2012, Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Roshi retires at the age of 105. One of his senior disciples, Dokuro Jaeckel Osho, abbot of Cambridge Buddhist Association, formally requests to continue his training in Rinzai Zen at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, having met Shinge Roshi at CBA in 2010. In 2014, Joshu Roshi passes away. Dokuro becomes an official disciple of Shinge Roshi, attending sesshins at DBZ and giving Dharma talks. In 2015, she announces her intention to transmit the Dharma to him, and acknowledges him as a Dharma Teacher at Rohatsu Sesshin. His advanced training includes

completing the Hakuin koan training process and becoming familiar with the responsibilities and duties that a ZSS lineage holder assumes. A date will be announced soon for his *inka shomei*.

Dokuro Osho is a native of Austria, where he began his formal Zen training in 1982 under Genro Seiun Osho, a student of Joshu Roshi; he then continued his studies with Joshu Roshi and was ordained a monk at Mt. Baldy Zen Center (California) in 1989. In 2004, he received Temple Dharma Transmission in the Rinzai-ji lineage of Inzan. Dokuro Osho is married to Shuko Marlene Rubin, whom he met at Mt. Baldy Zen Center while both were training there, and who was also ordained by Joshu Roshi.



The first Family Weekend is held in July 2013, in the spirit of Nyogen Senzaki's Mentorgarten. Including residents, there are around 65 participants, ranging in age from a few months to over 70. It includes nature walks, swimming and boating, short periods of sitting and yoga, picnics, and creating and flying dragon kites in honor of the Year of the Dragon.

A big loss to the DBZ community is the passing of the inconspicuous Bodhisattva Kiyuu-san Shinko (Heart Cultivating) Yokohama on August 7, 2013.

In September 2013, the book *The Hidden Lamp* is published, "a collection of one hundred koans and stories of Buddhist women from the time of the Buddha to the present day." Shinge Roshi is among the contributors, commenting on the story of Hakuin and "The Old Woman's Enlightenment." She participates in a book signing with editors Florence Caplow and Susan Moon and several other contributors at Village Zendo on May 10, 2014. The book, notes Juyo Dennis Giacomo,





general manager of DBZ, “shatters forever the exclusively masculine history and perception of the koan.”

An internship program for college students and recent graduates begins in the summer of 2014, and is so successful that it continues in the winters and summers that follow. Interns join in all the sittings and ceremonies, and help support Open Space programs and resident work projects. They have afternoons off for their individual projects, which range from art to environmental studies, from temple cooking to writing.

By the winter of 2014, DBZ’s 40-year-old wood boilers are barely functioning, so after thorough research on sustainable heating systems, a decision is made to purchase a new bio-mass energy-efficient boiler. Thanks to the generosity of many, many bodhisattvas, the new system is installed in time for the following winter.

A second Family Weekend is held in the summer of 2015, and it is a resounding success. To celebrate the Year of the Sheep (both Soen Roshi and Shinge Roshi were born in the Sheep Year), it features artist Mandy Greer and her family in residence. They and weekend participants of all ages create magical installations of sheeps’ wool on the path along the lake. Also presenting programs that weekend are local beekeepers, beaver experts, and Keigetsu Yao Xu, who shows a first cut of her film *Journey*, about an alternative elementary school.

“Now, as we commemorate the 40th anniversary of DBZ and the 60th of the Zen Studies Society, we rededicate ourselves to the flowering of the Dharma at our temples,” Shinge Roshi says. “Wiith gratitude for all that we have received from our founding teachers—the profundity, the beauty, the challenges, the hardship, the joy—we go forward with great resolve. We pledge to uphold the highest standards of personal and organizational integrity;

to extend our care and concern to all beings on our planet; and to actualize our Bodhisattva Vow, moment after moment.”

Juyo Dennis Giacomo says, “The Dai Bosatsu Mandala continues to enfold us as we celebrate not only the past which formed us, but the future which we embody and cultivate in this very moment and in all the moments we continue into. We move forward not to escape the past but to fulfill its long-awaited promise.”

Shinge Roshi adds, “With compassion for our own and others’ struggles and mistakes, let us grow together, forging deep bonds of spiritual friendship and encouraging each other to realize and actualize our true nature. Breathing in, nothing is excluded. The whole universe is right here. Breathing out, nothing is held back. *Namu Dai Bosa!*” ■





# poetry

Lone spider  
descends on silk thread  
we sit still

Swimming to Buddha  
salamanders, dragonflies  
beaver tail warning: SPLASH!

Snaking line of lights  
spirits float free on water  
fire leaps to heaven

*Karen Dodds*





# R

## eturning Home

by Kyo-on Dokuro Jaeckel Osho

This is the story of the travels of a green kesa. The Japanese term kesa originates from the Sanskrit word kasaya: a set of robes worn by the disciples of Shakyamuni Buddha. In the Buddha's time the kasaya were stitched together by discarded fabric scraps. Over the many years and through cultural influences, the kesa changed to its current form, which is worn draped over the left shoulder, leaving the right shoulder exposed. Zen clergy wear the kesa at formal occasions.

So what is the big deal about this green kesa? Here is the remarkable story of this piece of clothing. In October 2009 some thirty European Zen students traveled to Rinzaï-ji in Los Angeles under the leadership of Genro Seiun Osho to participate in a Dai-Sesshin with Kyozan Joshu Sasaki Roshi. Genro Osho is the teacher under whom I started my formal Zen training in 1982, when I lived in

Austria. My wife, Shuko, and I traveled to Rinzaï-ji to join the European Sangha in sesshin, knowing that Genro was suffering from terminal cancer and that it would probably be our last chance to see him. I had not seen or practiced with Genro Osho for more than a decade, because I had relocated to the United States in 1994. The retreat was also the



first occasion in which we encountered each other both as Oshos, holders of the Rinzaï-ji temple lineage. It was a cordial reunion. Many common memories came alive, and Genro expressed his deep regret that I had moved from Austria. The sesshin flew by. It was a remarkable week, sitting with a former teacher—now a fellow Osho—as well as a Sangha that included a few long-time practitioners who remembered the monk Dokuro from his time in Europe.

Before the Europeans had to depart, Genro Osho asked to see me in private. In his room, and after some conversation, he showed me a stack of robes and Japanese finery, including a few fancy gold brocade rakusu, a few kesa, and nezumi-iro kimono, which is the grey colored under-robe of monks (nezumi-iro literally means “mouse colored”). I happily accepted the kimono (which I've been wearing ever since), thanking him. I also thanked him for the offer of the other fancy items. “Joshu Roshi really doesn't like us to





wear fancy robes,” I said, respectfully declining to pick from the fancy pile. Genro pulled out a green kesa, made from heavy winter cloth, and handed it to me. “Please take this. I really want you to have it. The other things I don’t mind anyone else taking, but this one, the green one, you should have.” I tried again to politely decline, but Genro insisted: “Joshu Roshi gave this to me as a present, and since it came from him, you should feel free to take it as a hand-me-down. It would mean a lot to me that you accept it.” I accepted the gift and let Genro know that I would probably not be able to wear it, but that receiving it from him as a hand-me-down of one of Sasaki Roshi’s own robes was a great honor. We said our goodbyes, a few pictures were taken, and after that day I never met Genro in person again—he passed away peacefully in November 2010.

In 2010, I was the Abbot of the Cambridge Buddhist Association. As you may know, the CBA was founded in 1957 by D.T. Suzuki and Shinichi Hisamatsu, two eminent Japanese Buddhist scholars who taught for some time at Harvard University. In early January of that year I received an



inquiry from a former student of one of my predecessor abbots at the CBA, MyoOn Chiko Maurine Stuart Roshi. The person inquiring was coming to visit her son in Boston, and asked if it

would be possible to stay a few days at the CBA. A donation and a talk were offered in exchange. I gladly extended an invitation and accepted the offer for the talk. The person inquiring was the Abbot of Hoen-ji in Syracuse, Shinge-shitsu Roko Sherry Chayat Roshi. This was the first time I encountered Shinge Roshi; she stayed at the CBA for a few nights, gave a teisho to the CBA Sangha, and presented to me a copy of the then recently published book *Eloquent Silence*, inscribed with a personal note. A new Dharma connection was actualized and a Dharma friendship had begun.

A few months after Shinge Roshi’s visit to the CBA I received a letter from Genro Osho, telling me of his worsening condition and of the expectation that he would not be long on this planet. There was something





else he wrote, which he had forgotten to tell me when he had given me the green kesa as a gift. He wrote, “I should let you know why Joshu Roshi gave me the green kesa. He gave it to me when I was accompanying him to participate in a ceremony that he had been invited to as a guest, and we attended the ceremony together. It was on July 4, 1976, the opening ceremony of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji in the Catskill Mountains.” Genro continued to write about the ceremony, noting the many prominent participants (you can see them all in the photograph hanging in the Meeting Room at DBZ), and about how the entire party, in their full robes, was rained upon by a surprise downpour. Many thousands of dollars’ worth of fancy Japanese finery was completely soaked and thoroughly ruined. The green kesa, however, since it was a heavy winter fabric, did not suffer lasting damage.

On January 1, 2011, Shinge Roshi became the Abbot of the Zen Studies Society and Dai Bosatsu Zendo. In early 2012 Joshu Roshi, then in his 105th year, retired from teaching. The CBA Board had sold the house in Cambridge, and it was our group’s work to clean it out. There were some old photographs of Soen Roshi and Yasutani Roshi, which I saved and decided to return to someone I knew would care to have them—Shinge Roshi. I had also realized that with the impending official retirement of Joshu Roshi, I needed to find a way to continue my training in Rinzai Zen. Because we were already in communication, I asked Shinge Roshi if it would be possible for me to continue my formal training with her. Shinge Roshi graciously accepted, and thus I came to participate in my first sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo—and with me I brought the green kesa—which after 38 years returned to the place where it was worn by my first teacher, at the opening

ceremony of the monastery. On the occasion of my first Dharma talk at DBZ I put on the green kesa, tying a karmic knot with DBZ and the Zen Studies Society, being yet another Austrian-born Zen monk wearing it at one of the most extraordinary places on earth.

As you all know, after Joshu Roshi’s passing in July 2014, I became an official disciple of Shinge Roshi and have been studying with her to complete the requirements to become a Dharma heir in the ZSS lineage. Through this story about the green kesa, the meaning of in-nen, karmic affinity, has come alive for me. It was not only the green kesa that returned to DBZ; I also returned to a home that I had not known, except intuitively. For this I wish to express my deep gratitude to Joshu Roshi, Genro Osho, Shinge Roshi, Shuko-san, and all the Bodhisattvas and Mahasattvas who are with me in the investigation of this most remarkable Great Matter. ■





# haiku

Late into the night  
chipmunks doing fast kinhin  
around the Zendo

Through the falling leaves  
bright sun dancing on the blade  
of the pruning hook

Instrument of peace  
playing continuously—  
This heart opening

So much Buddhist Bling!  
No one sees the incense smoke  
dancing in the Sun

*Ryoju Jack Lynch*





# O-An

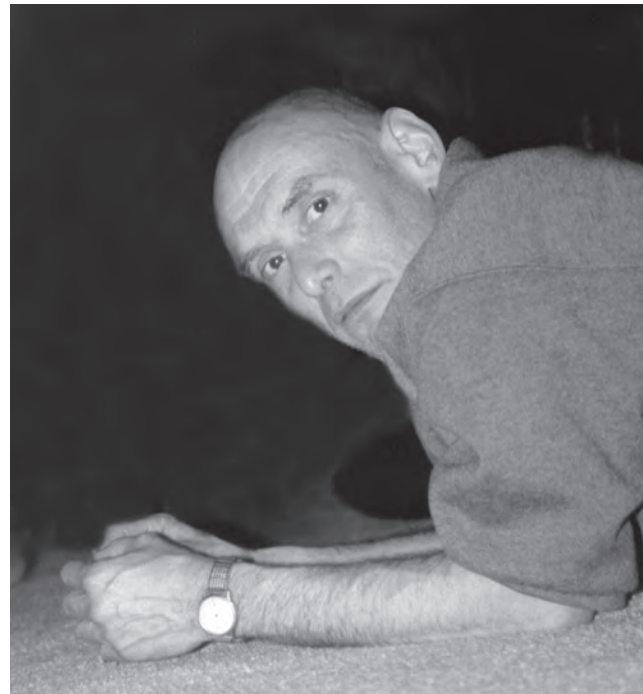
by Donge John Haber  
Spring 1992

On November 15, 1990, my mother died. On November 15, 1991, while I was in Syracuse conducting a healing service for People with AIDS, a roof was going on a small log cabin on a knoll just beyond the woodshed at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. These three apparently separate events are in fact intimately related. The year's karmic journey has drawn many threads together, and with the readiness of time and the support of Eido Roshi and the Sangha, I would like to share some thoughts.

I was propelled into Zen practice by death—my father's in 1983 and, beginning in 1984, a long and continuing line of friends and acquaintances who succumbed to HIV related diseases. Though I did not take the antibody test until 1987, I knew what the results would be. My first weekend sesshin at New York Zendo

was heightened by an unexplained, and as it turned out, completely harmless spot my dentist had found on the roof of my mouth. I recall that even though I had never been to the monastery, I thought that if this was it, I'd move to Dai Bosatsu Zendo. How this would be accomplished, I could not say. But I knew it to be the right path.

It turned out not to be it, and it took me a few years to get here. I was ordained, partly it seems now, as a bargain with



the Dharma. "I'll do this, you save me," and also in the belief that the practice itself would heal, if not save me: helping me to live and die with grace. And for the better part of three years, it seemed to work.

The fear that resulted in my being asked not to cook vanished. The community embraced the idea and realization of retreats for HIV positive men and women, and we discussed the best ways to take care of me if I should become ill. I seemed protected and in perfect health.

Then, this spring, that seemed to be changing. It turned out to be related to medication and not to my dropping blood numbers, but I began to feel low on energy and was experiencing a number of odd, small and upsetting symptoms of decline. This depression of my energy was joined by the sickness and death of one of my dearest friends and the now evident mourning process for my mother. And it threw me into a crisis of faith.





Who was I kidding? All of my so called insight paled in the light of the simple fact that I might actually be spiraling into “sickness”—helplessness—and my mother, the only one who had permission to take care of me, was dead. What was I doing here? In sitting, in walking, in every activity of life here, I came face to face with this terror. I said to Muin Bernard Spitz, “I should have seen this coming.” With a wonderful gentle smile, he said, “You don’t hit the wall if you see it coming.”

The community was wonderfully tolerant and supportive. I asked to be relieved of many responsibilities and was given complete understanding.

Nonetheless, I felt I needed to go off alone. Junpo was away, so I did a private retreat at Sun-Moon Cottage, feeding the deer, picking meals from the garden, sitting a bit, chanting, crying a lot and

trying to find my bearings. I didn’t lose the practice, but I felt I was just going through the motions. Shots of a magic potion corrected the anemia, but not the spirit.

The 1991 HIV retreat was scheduled for September. I had spent the past year working on the program in the fervent and deep belief that Zen practice, yoga



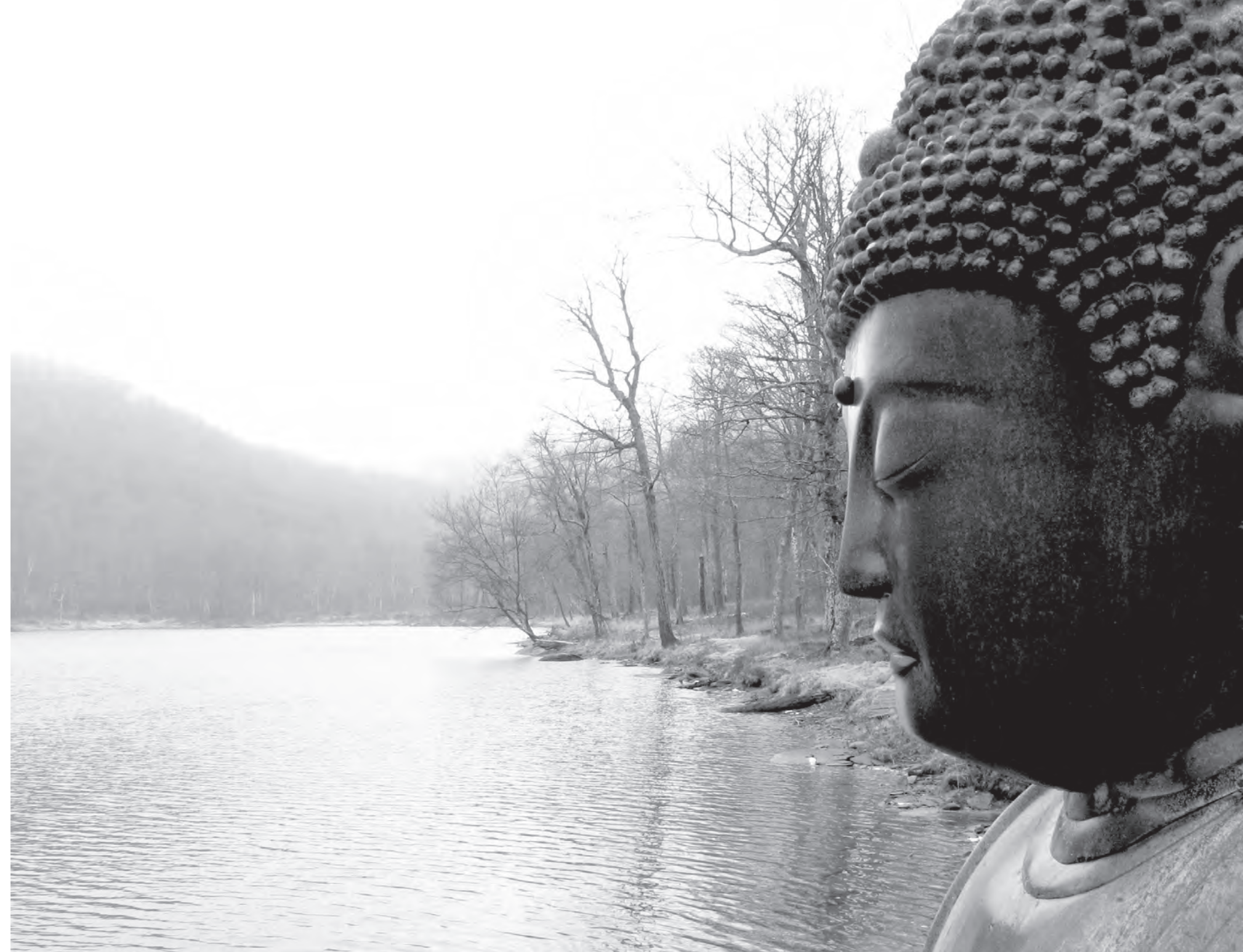
and this magic mountain could be healing in a real sense. I had drafted reams of rhetoric about the benefits of this practice with myself as proof that it worked. And at the start of the weekend, shaken as I was by my questions and

doubts, it seemed I was welcoming the participants speaking lies.

And then, sitting in the Guest House living room, sharing the evening meal, something happened. Suddenly all the distinctions of “healthy” and “sick,” “healing” and “declining” truly vanished. Living or dying with HIV or cancer, or just humanness, was all one thing. Just living. As it is. And miraculously OK.

Each of you suffers from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in that you are human. Eventually, if you are not hit by a bus, the immune system will break down. And this shared truth, and the questions it raises, is the beginning of Zen. It is this realization in which my practice has become real—it is not AIDS, not health, not sickness, but just life, just being. And the Dharma is at work in it all.

My mother left me a far-from mendicant monk, and over the last year Roshi, and Junpo and I have discussed





several possible projects by which to memorialize my parents and to benefit the monastery. One of them was a retreat cabin. And we had also discussed what would be the best way to take care of me, should I become ill.

And so O-An was born. I asked Roshi to name the cabin and, after a few days, he said “How about O-An?” My Dharma name comes from the Chinese patriarch O-An Donge Zenji. O-An means “The Hut of Accord.” Roshi did a wonderful calligraphy on a plaque to be placed at the door. He wrote a circle instead of the character for “O,” and humorously said that if other cabins were to be built, the names should be “A-An,” “B-An,” and so on ...

But there is a deeper meaning to the circle. It is the circle of life: a circle of embrace and of coming together. So now there is a cabin in which I will live and perhaps die, and which visitors, guests and other members of the community can use when I am not here.

My mother is still taking care of me, building me a house. When she first became ill, we spoke of the oddness of sharing health fears, I at 44 and she at 76. We made a pact that I would worry about her and she about me, but not about ourselves. Neither of us had a thing to worry about.

Shoji Wa Hotoke No On Inochi Nari

Birth and Death are  
the very life of the Buddha.

*Dogen Zenji* ■



*by Jean Valentine*

*When I woke up, my friend  
was with me. We were  
on the island  
of no going beyond.  
Unseparate. You,  
never-returned,  
you had come back for us.*

*(written at  
O-an Cottage,  
Dai Bosatsu Zendo  
July 27, 2013)*





## Full Circle

by Carol Lindsay, Holistic Practitioner

A year before the first Healing and Wellness Retreat at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and through the recommendation of a friend, but without directions, I found my way to DBZ for a personal retreat. Finding the Zendo all the way out there was a miracle in itself and told me that I was meant to connect with this place.



After dragging in 2 extra futons so that I could at least sleep (they gave firm a whole new meaning!), I settled into the life there: working, chanting, sitting zazen, eating macrobiotic food, enjoying all the natural beauty and animals and meeting amazing folks. The most amazing was Donge, who slipped into my heart in a very deep way. Before I left, I signed up for the newsletter. When I received it and saw that they were offering a retreat for those living with HIV and AIDS, I called Donge and offered my services, which he gladly and gratefully accepted. What an experience, so intense and profound.

Who was healing and who was being healed? All of us. It was so deep that I am still in touch with some of the practitioners and participants. I participated for many years doing energy healing work and leading the Saturday night healing circle, which was such a gift to me. Then I became sick with leukemia and couldn't go for a couple of years. I returned as a participant for a year or two and knew that I had come full circle. Although I haven't been back for several years—I perform weddings and August is always a busy month for weddings—the tapestry of my life is filled with colorful threads from my experiences at DBZ, and I am eternally grateful. ■





# haiku

September 2003  
*(after my first ever morning service at  
DBZ–Intro to Zen with Shinge Roshi–  
staying in Joraku-an)*

Saturday Morning

Morning Service song  
giving birth to the ancient  
wrapped in fall darkness

After Dinner

Silent shimmer lake.  
Translucent message profound.  
Fall in true nature.

October 2005

Meal chant is begun  
Miracles of each small bowl  
Are you tasting them?

November 2005

sesshin aftermath  
actions are acting themselves-  
the planner is gone.

2012  
*(summer sesshin–immediately after  
Roshi’s recovery–her heart stopped)*

*For Roshi: Night Zendo*

From state of no breath  
you rise and shine more brightly  
igniting deep vows.

2011 (fall sesshin)

let everything go  
each fall leaf dropping away  
‘til there’s no more tree

Nov 2015 (Harvest Sesshin)

Clear-eyed encounters  
Morning fog lifts on its own  
Revealing clear lake

*Jika Lauren Melnikow*





## Selling Nothing by the Pound

by Muken Mark Barber

In 1868, when naturalist John Burroughs first stood beside the water of Beecher Lake, he must surely have sensed the Dharma shimmering across its surface. “As beautiful as a dream,” he wrote of the lake, “the mind is delighted as an escaped bird, and darts gleefully from point to point.” More than a century later, the Sangha of Dai Bosatsu Zendo thrives in its vow to master this Mind—not merely the perceptual mind dazzled



by the rolling hills and streams of the Catskills, but true Mind, the vibrant

dance of life in dynamic totality. At Dai Bosatsu Zendo we are capable of springing from our mental cage to taste the freedom we enjoy as naturally as birds in flight. We are free to open to joy, fear, frustration and exaltation as they converge into one unshakeable finger to point the way. Like the doors of this zendo, this Mind is open to everyone to discover and cultivate for ourselves. We only have to be receptive to its call.

*Listen!* At this very instant, stirring in the breeze—do you hear it?

Many of us come to Zen practice, and to Dai Bosatsu Zendo specifically, having been fortunate enough to taste great suffering. Whether like a sudden growl of thunder or the gradual wearing-down of the ego’s cushioning, we begin to sense in our lives something missing and something possible, something deeply mysterious but ineffably, utterly and essentially human. With the right kind of curiosity, and maybe an overdose of

desperation, we are driven to drastic measures to make sense of that great Something, even if it drags us fully off the deep end...and if it drives us crazy enough, we might even start to sit zazen.

Though it was with that mind of curiosity that I arrived at Dai Bosatsu Zendo in July 2013, it was in the midst of decades of flailing within the Great Doubt that I first discovered Zen practice in Syracuse. Of course, having never given a thought to Buddhism or real spirituality of any kind, at the time I had no idea what I was doing or why. But what I understood deep in my bones was the personal loss that had brought me there, the inescapable reality of the karma I had created and the demons I had brought to life for myself, the years of grasping for a stability of ego and purpose that would vanish at a stroke whenever it seemed close at hand. When all of these finally converged one auspicious morning, a great radiant light sliced through the despair and radiated outward through me. All of a sudden there was a way out, a glimpse of Something More glinting down a





vast path, but too blurry to make out. This sudden experience was enough, and the promise of this path pulled me toward the pinpricks of light just ahead. A couple of days later I woke up and immediately the thought came: *Maybe I should try meditating.*

I still remember how Shinge Roshi's voice crackled like gentle fire the first time I heard her give teisho at the Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji. If I thought I had gleaned something of this Zen thing by then, she incinerated that with one strike: "Zen is not self-improvement. Zen is a *spiritual practice!*" My immediate thought—*well, crap*—dissolved in the knowing that something still lay ahead that completely sidestepped all rational conceptions. My practice was being primed for descent beneath the surface. What did it mean, this spiritual practice? How would it unfold and where would it lead? And did I have any choice but to follow?

Though we may set out on the path with such ideas, with notions of finding

or achieving something at the end of the road, my experiences at DBZ have shown me time and again that in fact, there is nothing to gain and no road to take you there. The seeking is the way and the path is the goal. As long as we walk, we are there, whether we realize it or not. And so it was that a few months later I found myself volunteering for O-Bon prep week with hardly a clue about what I was doing. I had never sat sesshin, never worn a robe or so much as heard the word *jihatsu*. For travel directions I received such cryptic instructions as "ignore signs like 'Dead End'," which actually became a nice distillation of Rinzai Zen. Two minutes after we arrived at the monastery early in



the afternoon, a black bear stumbled out into the main road, perhaps thirty feet from the front entrance where I decided right then to deposit my expectations.

Though it's tempting to dwell on the joy and gratitude that radiates from the walls at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, the real work begins when we open to the challenges that are the core of our practice. In fact, joy and difficulty are not separate; to get to the marrow we must cut through flesh and bone, and even in the cutting we can realize overwhelming gratitude. In my three years as a frequent resident at DBZ I have found that the great gift of this monastery is the privilege to be enfolded moment after moment in restriction, to enter a container that throws us into naked confrontation with who we really are. I remember how, during my first formal breakfast at DBZ, I nearly passed out





from the pain of kneeling on the hard tenzo floor. I remember thinking of the place as a work camp for stubborn neat-freaks as I grappled with what felt like mystifying dictates of a capricious cultural tradition: “Why is it such a big deal if I walk ahead of the jikijitsu? *We’re all going to the same place, man.*” I’ve navigated the arcane complexity of the jisha board during middle day lunch (all those condiments!). I’ve been fiercely corrected on the forms of practice more times than I can count, and I’ve choked on the feelings of shame and inadequacy the mind throws out to protect itself when vigorous practice seems poised to pierce through.

But sesshin after sesshin, one samu period after the next, each opportunity to serve as jisha or inji or tenzo becomes an invitation to toss away the artificial self which needs so badly to look impressive to others. To settle into the rhythm of daily life is to accept with humility and good humor our shared grace and gracelessness, knowledge and lack of it. There really is nothing to do; should and ought are distractions. When

we wake up to this urgent reality, we can know intimately what we really are beyond the flickering of transient things, bowing to the perfect imperfection born in This moment.

The truth is that within the restriction and between the statues and bells, Dai Bosatsu Zendo has nothing to offer. It promises nothing, it sells nothing; there is nothing we can take home with us. But this nothing is the most precious commodity of all, the one we’ve sought all along. In *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D. T. Suzuki writes that “the Zen-man is an artist to the extent that, as the sculptor chisels out a great figure deeply buried in a mass of inert matter, the Zen-man transforms his own life into a work of creation, which exists, as Christians might say, in the mind of God.” At DBZ we discover that because our mind, our lives, are an unblemished stone block, anything is possible. With each breath we unveil the limitless freedom and creativity before us, and the inventive performance that is true Mind emerges from the nothing. Past the wall of self a yawning ageless

void in which to dance—casting aside everything unnecessary, giving thanks to the wisdom of great difficulty, learning through repetition how that fraying patchwork wall can be demolished with a good sledgehammer or a sip of tea. What could be more wonderful?

When Dai Bosatsu Zendo was being established in 1975, Shinge Roshi wrote in her journal, quoting her teacher Eido Shimano, that here “we will establish neither Rinzaï nor Soto Zen, but Dai Bosatsu Zen.” After forty years the question still arises: *what is Dai Bosatsu Zen?* Forget it—it doesn’t exist. It has no definition, no framework, nothing to pin it down. Dai Bosatsu Zen is alive in the Sangha and in the energy we generate together in deep concentration, our nen holding fast the joists and boards of our zendo. Relentlessly unrepeatable, Dai Bosatsu Zen lives as we walk the razor’s edge of not-knowing. And now as we celebrate our 40th anniversary together, we can cry MU! with jubilation as we fall off the edge of the map. Happy independence day! ■





# poems

Let Loose of it and it  
Fills Your Hands

— *Dogen*

What arose were moths  
from the bodhisattva's fingers

in the great hall, ablaze with eyes,  
color of flutter, color of smoke.

In the deep shade of the body,  
a stirring, a stillness older than stone.

The spokes of mind in their scattering,  
loosed from god and circumference.

The ancestors, their names  
coming toward us like snow.

*Lorraine Coulter*

Song of the Sesshin Bird

Still Waters  
Illuminating  
This!

Misty waters,  
a beam of light,  
every which way.

*Evelyn Nenge-Ryushin Talbot*





# In Such A Place, In Such Company

By Kevin Zych

Just before my twin sister and I were born, my mother spoke to an apparition of the Virgin Mary. “She was as real as the infirmiry doctors,” my mom said with a smile, “who, by the way, gave me a really confused look.” A devout Catholic, my mother has always allowed faith to inform pivotal moments in her life. Evidentially that includes birthdays; my sister and I happened to arrive on December 25, 1991. It was this conversation with the Blessed Mother that provided strength and assurance when she needed it most. It’s also, she says, what saved my life. Shortly after I was born, the doctors were concerned that I wasn’t receiving enough oxygen, and they were about to take me away. But my mother called out to them, and once in



her arms, I returned to perfect health. My sister tells a slightly different version of events, one that we might call more scientific. According to her, I was born blue—something of a cause for alarm. The doctors took me to the pediatric intensive care unit, and it was through

their help that I was able to do what is so often taken for granted: pull air from the outside world down into the lungs, allow it to nourish the body and mind, and release carbon dioxide to make way for another live-giving breath.

As for me I enjoy both stories equally well, and can easily imagine elements of the two fusing together like opposite sides of the same coin. After all, from the point of view of an infant with no conceptual understanding of what life could be, what is the difference between a divine intervention and a first breath?

Twenty-four years later, I feel grateful that I got around to breathing, however it happened, for those first few breaths are what allowed my entire life to unfold. The Earth, the sky, Mom and Dad, the patterns on a blanket, my favorite LEGOs, Melody Lake, a friend’s embrace, the tweet of a black-capped chickadee, the sound of laughter, the taste of watermelon, the feeling of surprise, the smell of spring—it’s all here! Just one breath, wedged into an infinitesimal moment, unfurled outwards like a firework, ignited, a flame of all colors, a light enveloped in all shapes.

As Shinge Roshi put it in a recent teisho, “Every second, WOW!” Indeed, to





remember one is alive, to find oneself immersed in this stream that flows from one happening to another, is to experience something beyond our normal religious-scientific conceptions. Not that life isn't religious, or scientific, but that it first appears to us raw, unmolded to our intellectual frames.

More unfathomable is how this radiance shines through all beings; the infinite array of emotion and sense within any life is equally experienced by billions of other lives. Since entering this practice, I have found meditation naturally extends this awareness. As my mind becomes more subtly attuned to a single breath, a cup of tea, or a grain of rice left over in my Jihatsu bowl, I come to realize the person next to me also shares this immensity of perception. Infinities within infinities sitting next to infinities. As my friend once put it, "Entire worlds swirl in bowls of soup."

And yet, the conditions of our culture, my reactions to them, and a myriad of other factors did much to dismantle this appreciation for ordinary life. While

living in New York City, I became accustomed to chasing things—GPAs, internships, jobs, points on a resume, accomplishments, the subway. And slowly this mentality pervaded even the most precious things in life. Friendships, humor, and artistic expression all became tainted with competition against either my peers or my own egoistic projections of who I should be. I was hardly alone. Everywhere I looked, it seemed, people were working hard to make something of their lives while life was making them exhausted. Witnessing this firsthand led me to question the futility of pre-defined success, of creating images in my head and chasing them with my eyes closed. If it weren't for the kindness of a few close friends, I might never have allowed myself to step back, reconsider my ambitious plans to tackle life, or ask myself, what is it that I wanted from this whole thing anyway?

Moving back to my hometown, Syracuse, and attending Shinge Roshi's Deep Presence course, felt like an enormous step forward, one that propelled me instinctively into deeper

practice. Within months I attended my first sesshin, and sought a residency opening at Hoen-Ji. Like many students, I arrived encumbered with life-long insecurities, and though I wouldn't have said as much, I hoped that Zen would offer clever alternatives, secret techniques that would evaporate my suffering. While it is true that this practice yielded a new lens to understand life, and a sharper discernment to address difficulties, I sensed that a deeper truth existed beneath such problems. I began to wonder if solving my issues wasn't the issue.

It was in the rigor of sesshin at Dai Bosatsu Zendo when these thoughts bloomed into full realization. Sit after sit, the slew of white noise that normally runs through the mind subsided, and in its wake arose something familiar: the breath—that simple, yet ineffable communion between oneself and the universe. Returning to the present again and again, I discovered there was nothing to return to. Each breath was my first;







each breath was my last. First, last, both, and neither. After so much effort to breathe, to just breathe, that same effort became superfluous. Then for a moment here, a moment there, there was nothing to exert, nothing to grasp, nothing to attain. Life could not be extracted from life.

Looking around the zendo, and seeing the silhouettes of fellow Sangha

members against the rising sun, I felt a mutual dissolution of our normal selves. In its place emerged an open and completely honest presence, as unassuming as the morning light. Though not everyone knew each other's names, and most hadn't spoken in nearly a week, the tears and smiles across the room spoke volumes of the transformative power of this practice, of our shared trust, of gratitude just to be alive. In such a place, in such company, the breath can be a way to express everything.

It is both humbling and inspiring to return to Beecher Lake and know generations of students have come here, shattered their perceived limitations, and forged new relationships with their lives. Over the past 40 years, how many students have shouted Mu from Sangha Meadow to hear the echo of their vow return from the mountain? How many have walked past mossy waterfalls, awakening to the words of the *Diamond Sutra*, "like a dream, like a fantasy"? How many yet to come?

As a new member to the Hoen-Ji and Dai Bosatsu communities, I feel a subtle confidence that a fresh, exciting chapter has begun. What we will write together is unknown, but what I have seen in other students, working under the guidance of our truly compassionate teachers, shows great promise. Whether in deep zazen or resting on the deck, I can hear a nameless quality in their silence and in their laughter. It welcomes and inspires me to partake in a growth process that exceeds our individual potentials. It gives an inexpressible meaning to our chant, Shu jo mu hen sei gan do.

I owe a tremendous thanks to our beloved Shinge Roshi, who challenged me to look beyond my self-imposed limits and commit to a true calling. I also extend my gratitude to all my friends in this wonderful Sangha, for their immeasurable love and encouragement. Thank you all, and let true Dharma continue! ■





# haiku

filaments of rain  
on this late summer morning  
slow saturation

moment by moment  
in today's soft steady rain  
a green unfurling

walking before dawn  
crescent moon among the stars  
nothing more than this

late autumn windstorm  
everything has blown away  
dawn comes undeterred

birds insects humans  
taking refuge in the green  
rain day after day

wind roars through the trees  
wherever each leaf alights  
a golden temple

after last night's storm  
snow blossoms on bare branches  
welcome cries of geese

breeze moves through the trees  
branches nod in agreement  
then utter stillness

*Shinge Roshi*

long-fingered shadows  
sweep down the frost-tinged hillside  
crow rends the silence





# R

## eturn To The Root

By Eshin Brenda Shoshanna

“When you return to the root  
You gain the meaning.”

—*Sosan Zenji*

The fortieth anniversary of DBZ is a wonderful time to look back at the many seeds that were planted to enable Dai Bosatsu Zendo to bloom. Each of those seeds has sprouted different roots, given birth to many branches, which have spread over the world. As Soen Roshi taught us, wherever we go, we carry DBZ with us. The power of its practice and teachings cannot be contained.

In the very early days, before the actual monastery was constructed, the original Sangha arrived. Like a group of swallows suddenly finding home, we gathered to build a nest not only for ourselves, but for future generations. The memory of the beauty and wisdom we experienced

as we helped DBZ grow over the years can never be erased.



We gathered both in Manhattan at NewYork Zendo Shobo-ji, and at the wonderful Beecher House, Joraku-an, on the newly acquired land. The Sangha that gathered was magical; each of us was deeply thrilled to be embarking upon a path that was both completely familiar and totally new.

When up on the mountain, we sat close together, in cozy zazen, under a wooden

roof and beside a beautiful lake. The sun and moon shone in upon us. Barely knowing what we were doing, we simply entered this wonderful adventure, day after day, year after year, sesshin after sesshin. Some actually lived up at DBZ, taking care of the premises. Along with intense zazen practice, the boiler was loaded with wood, vegetables were planted, delicious meals cooked. The place was kept clean and in good order, always prepared for the upcoming sesshin.

Others went back and forth between DBZ and their daily lives, to join in whatever way they could. As I look back upon those days, it seems to me the great power of our practice came from jumping in wholeheartedly, without preconceived notions, not following a path we knew anything about. Just giving ourselves fully, again and again, we allowed the Dharma to affect us and take us wherever it did. At that time, back in the city, the doors of Shobo-ji were open to everyone. It was everyday life practice, sitting and returning to our families and work until all was indistinguishable and everything became zazen.



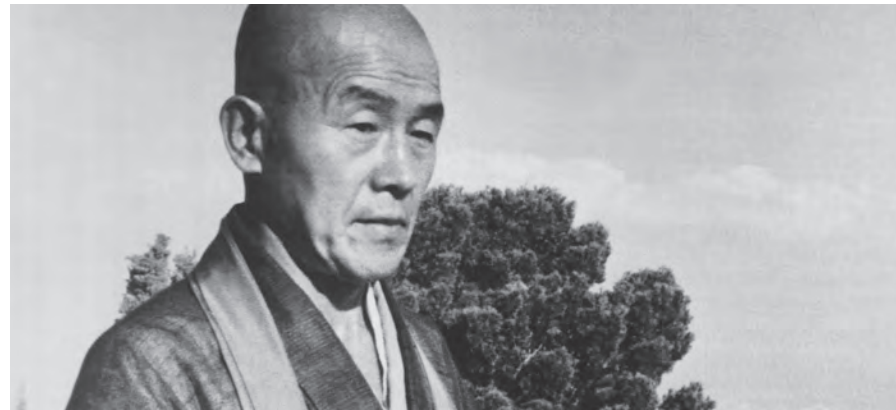


Naturally, as time went on, we learned a great deal both through our growth and our disappointments. Like life itself, there were plenty of shocks along with moments of great beauty and joy. The fleeting nature of life became more and more apparent as wonderful Sangha friends left and others arrived. Slowly, this simple, profound and unknowable practice taught us to hold it all in the palms of our hands. As the years go by it still teaches us that, if we remember that after we fall off our cushions, we must just get back up, honor everything that has come to us, and sit down and breathe once again.

As the fortieth anniversary approaches I remember the members of the original Sangha, each of whom was and always will be a root in my life. The support we gave one another, the inspiration, friendship, and courage, cannot be underestimated. Each of those people, whether alive now or not, whether actually able to be at the anniversary celebration or not, cannot be forgotten. They themselves were the foundation upon which DBZ was built, and

wherever they are now, they are carrying the wonderful DBZ spirit with them.

In the beginning Soen Roshi was there, and Eido Roshi, and the monks who came from Japan to help. Along with honoring the great vision and beauty of Soen Roshi, I deeply thank and acknowledge the tireless efforts of Eido Roshi, who was always there, sitting alongside us, inspiring and challenging us constantly. Without his efforts DBZ



would never have come to be. I also thank Sogen Yamakawa Roshi, who touched many deeply and came to DBZ regularly, along with his monks, to support the growth of Zen in the West. I

greatly thank Shinge Roshi, so devoted and committed to practice, a dear Dharma sister at the time.

We cannot forget Dogo Don Scanlon (the ex-welter- weight prize fighter), whose wonderful talks on beginners' nights at Shobo-ji kept so many of us going. Tough and real, Dogo spoke our language, made the practice accessible to our everyday lives. I thank Wado Vicki Gerdy who brought me to the zendo,

and dear Jonen Sheila Curtis, who greeted all with warmth, gentleness, and love. I thank Shoro Lou Nordstrom, and Kanzeon Bruce

Rickenbacker, who along with Dogo were the first monks ordained at DBZ.

I remember with love Kushu Min Pai, who taught me to remain stalwart, no





matter what obstacles arose. Daishin Peter Gamby, one of the first residents at Shobo-ji, was a special Dharma friend. I remember how, during kinhin, at particularly difficult moments when I wanted to run away, he would lean over and whisper, “Keep going, whatever you do. Once you’re through the pain, you’ll really be into something!” What would I be into, I wondered? “Just take one more step,” Daishin insisted, “and you’ll find out.” What he didn’t say at the time was that one more step goes on forever: it must be taken day after day.

Other dear Dharma brothers and sisters gave to all of us deeply. Daijo Vinny Piazza and I came to the zendo for the first time on the same night. Years later, he arrived at my garage zendo to keep our zazen going, week after week. Isshu Randy Place was there, where he met and married Ellie, his wonderful wife. Now, over forty years later, both have suddenly re-appeared in my life, dear Dharma friends.



I think of the struggles, hopes, and victories of my dear Dharma sister Kuju Sara Birnbaum. She sat beside me on the cushion year after year, and was just about to go on pilgrimage when she passed on suddenly, way too soon.

Where are all these great friends and teachers now? I cannot help but think of Soen Roshi’s answer when I asked him that very question years ago. His eyes

twinkled as he replied, “They’re all right here, Eshin! We are all always together. How come you don’t see that yet?”

With one mind, one vision, and one dream for Dai Bosatsu’s healing effect upon the entire world, we gave of ourselves wholeheartedly. May that intent grow and come to fruition so that a taste of true Zen practice may be available for all. ■

*“Wherever I go  
Is my home  
In eternity.”*

—Soen Roshi





# haiku

*Two from Nyogen Senzaki  
Sesshin 2014*

framed by still-bare trees  
ripples on the lake glisten  
wind writes a grace note

bare trees transparent  
mountain disappears in mist  
autumn rain begins

*Three from Harvest Sesshin 2015*

breaking through thick clouds  
eye of god stares intently  
bare branches reach up

larches' copper haze  
last apple on the old tree  
wind bites into me

trees insubstantial  
dense layers of drifting fog  
everything is gone

*Holy Days Sesshin 2016*

glittering spring snow  
on almost budding branches  
in the sharp bright cold

*Three from Nyogen Senzaki  
Sesshin 2016*

beneath still-bare trees  
swaths of brilliant green appear  
saturating rain

after days of rain  
mountain mist begins to lift  
sudden drift of green

dog chews on new grass  
thick fog conceals the mountain  
a lone goose glides by

*Shinge Roshi*







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