



Plum Mountain News

Dear members and friends,

As I write this letter, there have been many days of rain in the Pacific Northwest, with many local rivers flooding. Even though it is mid-winter, the temperature is rather mild, low 50's, with a strong wind from the southwest referred to in this area as the "pineapple express." POTUS has been impeached and the Senate is about to acquit him without calling witnesses. I never thought I would live in a world this turbulent and scary. In such a time as this, how shall we live? Recently a spiritual companion of mine shared a poem with me by Wendell Berry, "In the dark of the moon, in flying snow, in the dead of winter, war spreading, families dying, the world in danger, I walk the rocky hillsides sowing clover."

At our Rohatsu Sesshin the first eight days of December, twenty-six participants sat zazen from well before dawn until long into the night at Gwinwood Conference Center on Hicks



Lake in Lacey, WA. At sesshin we have no option but to face all our shortcomings and foibles along with a chance to roundly meet our deep, intimate, infinite nature. With such a grounding, I think all of us leaving Rohatsu felt ready and able to start "sowing clover" on the rocky hillsides of our daily lives in these trying times. At sesshin our *Shika* (Host Manager), Eddie Daichi Salazar, along with our *Fusu* (Financial Manager), Carolyn Josen



Stevens Sensei, made sure we got off to a good start. Daichi worked hard during sesshin to distribute the *samu* (work meditation) chores equitably, which is not at all an easy job. Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez was our *Dai Tenzo* (Chief Cook) and her chief assistant was George Kyoki Gibbs. For a year now we have had Sogetsu's fine culinary fare. Our *Jikijitsu* (Time Keeper), Rev. Gendo Testa, not only kept us punctual, maintaining our demanding schedule, but also helped us keep noble silence throughout our retreat. Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares was our *Densu* (Chant Leader) and ably kept the beat on the *mukugyo* (wooden fish drum). Elijah Seigan Zupancic was our lead *Jisha* (Tea Server) and his assistant was Sam Tullman. They kept the tea, coffee and snacks flowing. The *Inji* (Abbot Assistant), Rev. Sando Anne Howells made sure I had everything I needed in the *Dokusan* (Dharma Interview) Room and managed the dokusan queue. All in all, it was a very strong sesshin. Rinzan Osho gave a lovely *Teisho* (formal Dharma Talk) on second day. My first and third day teishos are reprinted in this issue along with my closing incense poem. Two participants did *Jukai* (Dharma Name – Precept Ceremony) on the Buddha's

enlightenment day, December 8, more on this later in this issue.

We celebrated *Toya* (the day to break all rules) on Saturday, December 14. This is a time to blow off a little steam, relax, entertain, share good company and enjoy some fabulous food. Ken Klettke serenaded



us with a couple of lovely songs on his ukulele, Rev. Taishin Akesha Baron read her poems, and we played catch with a small hovering UFO



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in the zendo!

As is our custom, we celebrated the new year with a 10a.m., January 1, Heart Sutra chanting ceremony (twelve times to bless



each month of the new year), and rang the *Kansho* bell 108 times to dispel our delusions. As we begin this new decade in an election year, these rituals felt more significant than usual. Following this we enjoyed a vast potluck of exquisite offerings. We especially relished the traditional Japanese New Year's fare offered by Randal Daigetsu Tanabe.



The first weekend in January, Chobo-Ji hosted a two-day Non-Violent Communication (NVC) workshop on how to repair relationships by looking deeply into the mutual survival and growth needs of all involved parties. This workshop was taught by the locally based, internationally recognized NVC facilitator, Kathleen Macferran. I found the role-playing of difficult conversations very trying and useful. Peace in our world depends on being able to hear and process with each other. As we all know, when things are hot, holding an empathetic position in the face of fiery judgement is tough. As with all endeavors, more practice helps us learn the skills necessary to go forward. Zen training emphasizes silence and an inquisitive “no



knowing” outlook. Even with this base, it takes a lot of practice to verbally hear and share peaceably, which is why here at Chobo-Ji we continue to offer NVC training.

Beyond what has already been mentioned, this issue includes two book reviews, a report on our recently concluded three-day Winter Odayaka Sesshin and announcements for the upcoming start of Chobo-Ji Conversations, Spring Posts (post-holder workshop after zazen on March 7), Spring Intensive, Spring Sesshin, and our Spring Zen Intro Series.

I will be traveling to Germany to lead a five-day sesshin in Bonn early in February, probably before you read this. I'll also be going to Victoria, BC in late February to oversee the Osho (full priest) ceremony for Rev. Doshu Rogers, and making my annual visit to San Diego Aikikai for a three-day sesshin in mid-March. In early May, I'll be leading a zazenkai (half-day retreat) in Walla Walla. **We will be having our Annual Meeting of the membership to elect our Board of Directors (a quorum of local membership required) after our zazenkai on May 17.** You will read more on these events in our weekly email bulletin, *Temple Happenings*.

The buds of spring are already evident. The grass has begun to grow. May the remainder of your winter be warm and cozy, as we have a big year ahead.

With gassho,

Genjo

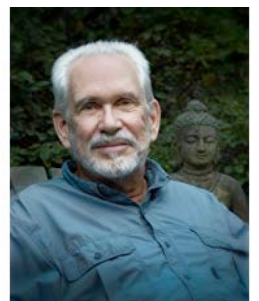
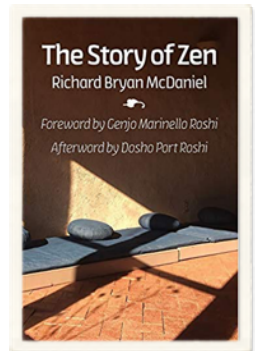
The Story of Zen

Review by Rev. Sendo Anne Howells

As a book title, *The Story of Zen* both looks standard – how many books call themselves “the story of” in their title? – and is extremely audacious – how can there be such a thing as “the” story of a practice which insistently pulls the rug out from under any verbal attempt at definition? Rick McDaniel acknowledges his audaciousness with his book's opening epigraph, from Joseph Campbell: “If you're going to have a story, have a big story, or none at all.”

Of course there are many small Zen stories (koans, for a start, then the traditional biographies of Zen masters: how they came to Zen, their decisive *kensho* experience, anecdotes about their teaching – which often became koans, how they died). McDaniel's earlier books about Zen (*Zen Masters of China*, *Zen Masters of Japan*, *The Third Step East: Zen Masters of America*, and *Cypress Trees in the Garden: The Second Generation of Zen Teaching in America*) compile many such stories, traditional and contemporary. This new book, which draws on, synthesizes, and deepens the work of the earlier ones, doesn't give up the richness of this multiplicity of Zen's many centuries of experiences and perspectives.

McDaniel's story is weighted heavily toward our own time, the small and large stories we are in the midst of now. By the time we're about a third of the way into his big story, we've gone from pre-Buddhist seekers in India and China all the way through the legends about Shakyamuni and



summaries of the earlier and later Buddhistharma (Buddhist teachings), as continuing questioning gave rise to the streams of Mahayana Buddhism which became Chan (in China) and Zen (in Japan) insights and practices. We then move quickly to North America, and the final third of the book spreads out into stories about what has happened here since about mid-twentieth-century: flowerings, boom, crashes, and revisioning.

Genjo Marinello Roshi provides a clear overview of the book in his “Foreword,” also published in the Autumn 2019 edition of *Plum Mountain News*. From his personal perspective, it’s clear how valuable a service Rick McDaniel has provided in telling the big story: how helpful for Zen teachers and students today to have so much, so clearly presented, answering so many of the questions any of us might have, in a single very readable volume. An index would make the volume even more helpful. Someone wanting a clear explanation of “transmission,” for example, can find a brief definition in the Glossary at the end of the book, but the longer, more nuanced and historically oriented discussion on pages 142-144 will be harder to find. If there’s a particular teacher you want to read about, you won’t know if he or she appears in the book without searching. On the other hand, a big topic like “Mahayana Buddhism” is easy to find, and if you’re like me, you’ll emerge from reading McDaniel’s account of it with a much fuller sense of how crucial Zen concepts and emphases are rooted in Mahayana as it developed in India and then encountered Daoism in China.

“Big story, or none at all” can suggest the positive and negative absolutes. Everything, interconnected, cannot be here, but the book puts the reader in a position to understand, in a preliminary way, how everything here is interconnected. This is what good storytelling does. It also embeds the understanding that any story is an interpretation: *The Story of Zen* comes from the perspective of our own time and place. There’s been a lot of scholarship trying to pinpoint what “really” happened in the development of Buddhism. Can we really “know” anything, in a relative way, about Shakyamuni? Most Zen students learn early on that we can’t. We can intuit that certain aspects of the legends “feel” right: meaning that they resonate with us. “Ata dipa” feels fresh, now. The legend of Shakyamuni’s

birth, showered by flowers, is charming, has featured in some great Buddhist art, and is celebrated annually by us with flowers from our garden. The six patriarchs? The lines of transmission during the Song and Tang dynasties? Documentation is missing or incomplete. McDaniel doesn’t pretend otherwise: he makes it clear that plenty of older Zen “history” is “faux,” at least part legend. But the “faux” stories are also true: they’re what has been handed down, they are satisfying as traditions, artifacts that speak to our need to feel the profundity of our connection to where we came from. Part of Shakyamuni’s story as it has been told and retold is about the rivalries and challenges to authority that developed in his sangha as it grew. Why has this been passed on? Surely because it has happened in sanghas again and again, and continues to happen. I feel pain for Shakyamuni and his followers – and it’s comforting to be reminded that they, or people like them, were able to navigate what we too must navigate.

There is, then, a seamlessness between the book’s first chapter, “The Buddha,” and its final third, in which McDaniel guides us through major ups and downs of Zen in the U.S. since the 1950’s. One of his great strengths as a storyteller is to let his actors tell their own stories, either drawing on written records for older ones (back to the *mondos* of the ancient Chan Masters) or, with those he has been able to meet personally, nudging them along in interviews which he shapes so well that the reader feels part of an ongoing conversation. He collected much of this material in his earlier books; in *The Story of Zen* he has pruned but he has also added historical context and analysis.

Thus from the plethora of anecdotes in *Zen Masters of China*, he has selected out just enough of the tales about major teachers to delineate Chan’s development from Bodhidharma to the Linji and Caodong lines (to become, in Japan, Rinzaï and Soto Zen). In the chapters “Out of Asia” and “The Zen Boom,” we can follow the interweaving histories of the Japanese teachers who introduced Zen to America and the eager westerners who worked with them and on their own to plant Zen here. In “Things Fall Apart” and “Revisioning,” McDaniel puts together accounts from a range of participants to form succinct narratives of the near-death experiences of

sanghas led by influential teachers, and the subsequent steps taken by sanghas and teachers to rework organizational structures, rethink the role of the teacher, and articulate guidelines for ensuring safety and accountability.

Always, teachers have had distinctive styles and emphases, and this becomes increasingly apparent as they became more fully recorded. Two supreme examples are Dogen and Hakuin, but sharp contrasts are evident as well among the second generation of teachers in the U.S.: for example, John Daido Looi, who worked to establish an American and ethically grounded version of monastic practice at Zen Mountain Monastery, and Bernie Glassman, who took zazen to the streets and, with Zen Peacemakers Bearing Witness Retreats, to the sites of genocides. McDaniel concludes his book by talking with Zen teachers of a third generation (included among them Rinzaï Pechovnik Osho and Seiho Morris), whose differences and also similarities as they situate themselves in responsiveness to the spiritual and other challenges of our imperiled world are evidence of Zen’s continuing vitality.

Jay Rinsen Weik is abbot of the thriving Great Heartland Buddhist Temple of Toledo, Ohio – about 150 members, a family-oriented Sunday morning Sutra Service which welcomes children, an intense and extensive jukai training process. Here’s how he sees the people who keep coming: “I think the ones that stick it out are coming because they really want to alleviate suffering for themselves and, then, broadly for others Pain is kinda inevitable. But suffering really has to do – this is the way I would say it – with the fact that we live in a world-view that is in contradiction with the way the world actually is. You bump up against things all the time. And what that view is is that I’m an exclusively separate self. So I would say that this encounter with the non-dual and integrating it with compassion in daily life is what folks are goin’ for, although they wouldn’t articulate it that way in the beginning of their training. One thing people really want is they want a teacher who can help and be a guide. That’s one of the big features. Another feature is they want a community of folks they can connect with. And so I think that’s what people really end

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up relating to. Teacher. Having a strong teacher who can actually teach. And then this community thing is really important.” (379-80)

Chimyo Atkinson is Head of Practice at Great Tree Zen Temple in North Carolina, a small women’s residential center. Its founding teacher is Teijo Munnich, a former Roman Catholic nun and a dharma heir of Dainin Katagiri. Feeling that “the traditional style of Dogen’s Zen appeals very much to men, and has been developed by men, and so has a very male quality about it,” Teijo decided to put women together, do zazen, and see what happened. “Doing zazen, studying and working together, the three components that Dogen Zen suggests,” Chimyo says, “People have this incomplete idea of what Zen is, and I think they come sometimes looking for that. The sort of peace, bliss, kind of thing. I think the people that stick around are looking for community and looking for a place to be that is open, where they don’t feel judged, and can just have a conversation about anything, really, with people who care.” She hopes the women who come will “find their way to a lifelong practice in this tradition or any other.” “A lifelong practice to what end?” Rick asks. “To what end? To relieving their suffering and the suffering of the world.” “Not awakening or kensho or whatever you want to call it?” Chimyo responds, “You can find those things, but compassion and benefit to the world, what else is there? What else is there?” (416-19)

Both Dogen and Hakuin saw themselves as reformers and revivers of practices they thought had lost vitality. Shakyamuni was a reformer whose reforms united spiritual practice with social justice, a conviction that all of us, of whatever caste or gender, have the potential for awakening. Zen’s future is, as it always has been, unknown: will reformers and revivers continue to appear among what is still, in the west, a small number of practitioners? McDaniel concludes (for the present) his big story by returning to his interview with Rinzan Pechovnik. Reflecting on the future, Rinzan says “We try things and see if they fit. But not so much laying out a plan for it. Because it is alive. It’s here alive in me. Does it look the same way it would have with Hakuin? Absolutely not. Not even with my teacher’s teachers would it have looked the same. So just giving it attention, letting it grow, and being open, while at the same

time respecting what has been.” (437) The epigraph McDaniel chose for his final chapter is the 45th case in the *Mumonkan*: “The practice master of East Mountain said, “Shakyamuni and Maitreya are both the servants of another. Just say, who is this other?”

Who Dies?

Review by George Kyoki Gibbs

During the autumn intensive practice period I elected to read a book and summarize a few thoughts on the subject of death. True to our tradition I chose a book from the Chobo-Ji reading list titled, *Who Dies? An Investigation of Conscious Living and Dying*, by Stephen and Ondrea Levine. These are my thoughts.

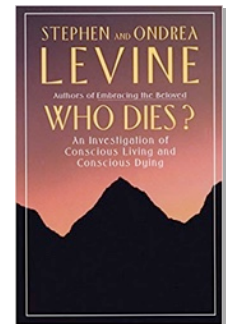
I was curious what writers might have to say about death from a Buddhist perspective, perhaps even a *Zenist* perspective, knowing nothing about the two authors. The reading thrust me into a rather immediate realization that the question of dying is central to our sitting practice, the title of the book forming perhaps our most fundamental koan. As our teacher Genjo Roshi reminds us on a rather frequent basis, sit, breath and listen all the while asking, “What is this? Who is it that asks? Consider this great matter,” which I take to mean death and the pain of living. More than just a discussion, the book provides exercises for contemplation with the goal of making peace with the inestimable transience of life, perhaps even finding beauty, replacing fear with the wisdom of compassion.

Levine’s prose capture thoughts inspired by the sages from a variety of traditions, both contemporary and ancient, some familiar, but most new to me. The writing draws on the work of the authors who as counselors and teachers. Throughout the writing the authors instruct that to open to death is to open our deep nature to love itself, and to gain freedom from the bondage of the Ego. Indeed, death is seen as a natural consequence of living, providing a healing where there is no cure. Instead of material acquisition or the pursuit of health and vitality, life’s journey offers the precious reward of understanding. “To become fully born is to touch this deathlessness. To experience even for a moment, the spaciousness which goes beyond birth and

death. To emerge into a world of paradox and mystery with no weapons but awareness and love.” (page 24)

Each of the book’s chapters deals with the subject of conscious living and dying from a different angle. For the sake of providing a taste allow me to cite a few chapter titles, which include “Opening to Death,” “Getting Born,” “Be Also Ready,” “Finishing Business,” “Grief, Dying Children,” “Working with Pain.” Perhaps most compelling to this Dharma student is the chapter titled, “Who Dies?”

The authors begin the chapter by stating “it is because you are born that you fear death. Who is it that was born?” (Page 179). The work challenges the reader to reconsider the notion that when we die we cease to exist. Surely we come from



something that precedes this incarnation, we come from some place and are composed of constituent elements that proceed us. So does the awareness that we know as self just cease to be, the “energy that animated that empty form”? If we identify with the *body* as “me”, “mine”, or “I” then we fear death, for yes, most assuredly the body will decay. But, if pure awareness is itself the self, or *Mind*, where did it come from and where does it go? “The examined mind is seen constantly to be dissolving and re-emerging. Constantly dying and being reborn, moment to moment.” (page 180) We cannot know for sure what happens when we die. But, it is the authors’ assertion that if we can open to something greater than our limited sense of being we can live life free from fear, connected to an endless stream that knows neither beginning nor end. This opening, the possibility of such an awakening, is the challenge laid before us, and the good news of Zen. Does the dog have Buddha nature?

I’ve come to recognize that inevitably death emerges as something of a theme in life. We become more familiar with saying goodbye to those we love. First we lose our pets, then friends along the way, and eventually we lose parents and partners, all the while recognizing that we are in the process of decline, confronting a certain loss of vitality day by day. We say goodbye

to our youth, our good looks, maybe even our intellect. All of this in this order if we may be so lucky! Eventually denial gives way to fear, fear and anger mix, nervousness masking sadness, anxiety breaking to full blown panic. But... as time goes by, we begin to see that we are more than just passengers in the bodies we inhabit, that perhaps we are not in decline after all. Yes, every one of us must suffer through the 100% incurable case of living. Through it all though there is a part of us that remains strong, one that grows over time and gains insight, one that continues to blossom, opening through compassion and connecting to life's essence. Indeed, with a daily return to the Triple Treasure, we may perhaps come to recognize the Buddha's teaching in our daily experience among the living. Yes, we are the light that shines through infinity. Rely on the light. Rely on the Dharma.



*Atta Dipa Viharatha Atta Sarana Ananna
Sarana Dhamma Dipa Dhamma Sarana
Annanna Sarrana*

Winter Odayaka

Report by: Rinzan Pechovnik Osho

We held a wonderful Odayaka Sesshin running from January 24th to the 26th. The attendance was marvelous with a total of 30 people registered, half from the Seattle area and the other half coming up from Portland. So once again, it was a nice mix of Chobo-ji and No-Rank sangha members making for a stable and reliable container for practice.



I led the retreat with support in the posts coming mostly from No-Rank sangha members. Gus Keizan Shaffer held the post of Shika, taking a lot off my hands with remarkable steadiness and surety, especially given he was functioning outside his home temple. Pam Kyoshin Hagedstedt held the post of Jikijitsu, keeping time in the zendo and holding the forms with equal grace and clarity. Jon-Paul Daigen Vaerini served as Tenzo dishing up wonderful meals for a large group of hungry practitioners. (I learned afterward that he'd only ever cooked for more than two people a handful of times in his life!) Eric Vanderwall kept the beat going as Densu, and Evan Onsetsu Cordes served admirably as my Inji. Keeping us hydrated and well nourished were two local Chobo-Ji post holders serving as Jishas, Elijah Seigan Zupancic and Sam KoU Tullman.

For many people, this was their first sesshin and the more relaxed schedule helped guide them more deeply into the practice. For those who wanted to take their practice farther and have more of a feel of a full sesshin, we provided optional structured sitting at the beginning and close of each day. Though I often tailor my Teisho for Odayaka to newer practitioners, their group was so mature, I continued with my examination of the Rinza-Roku, beginning each Teisho with a reading from "Teaching the Assembly."

I have enjoyed leading the Odayaka Sesshin at Chobo-ji, and have mixed feelings about now stepping back. Genjo Roshi has made it clear to me he is happy to take the post over, and this will give me and the No-Rankers an opportunity to increase our focus on building a healthy retreat schedule down in Portland. Already, we are holding two full sesshin in Spring and Autumn. I will now add three-day sesshins in the winter and summer. In contrast to Odayaka sesshin, these will be run on regular sesshin schedule, simply with fewer days. Three bows to all who have helped keep the container of practice stable.

Mumonkan

Case 1: Joshu's Mu

First Day Rohatsu Sesshin, 2019

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

Mumon's Commentary: In studying Zen, one must pass the barriers set up by ancient Zen masters. For the realization of incomparable satori, one has to cast away one's discriminating mind. Those who have not passed the barrier and have not cast away the discriminating mind are all phantoms haunting trees and plants. Now, tell me, what is the barrier of the Zen masters? Just this Mu. It is known as the barrier of Zen. It is also known as the gateless barrier of Zen. Those who have passed this gateless barrier will not only see Joshu clearly but will go hand and hand with all the masters in the past, see them face to face. You will see with the same eye as they see and hear with the same ear. Wouldn't that be wonderful? Don't you want to pass this gateless barrier? Then concentrate yourself into this Mu, with your three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousand pores, making your whole body one great inquiry. Day and night work intently at it. Do not attempt nihilistic (absolute) or dualistic (relativistic) interpretations. It is like having a red-hot iron ball stuck in your stomach. You try to vomit it but cannot. Cast away your illusory discriminating knowledge accumulated up until now and keep on working harder. In the readiness of time, when your efforts come to fruition, all the oppositions such as in and out, life and death, right and wrong, will naturally be identified and seen through. You will then be like a person who cannot speak but has had a wonderful dream. You know it personally within yourself. Suddenly, you break through the barrier, and you will astonish heaven and shake the earth. It is as if you have snatched the great sword out of the hands of General Kan. You kill the Buddha if you meet him. You kill the ancient masters if you meet them. On the brink of life and death, you are



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then utterly free, and in the six realms and the four modes of life, you live with great joy a genuine life in complete freedom. Now, how should one strive? With might and main, work at this Mu and be Mu! If you do not stop or waver in your efforts, then behold, when the Dharma candle is lighted, darkness is at once vanquished.

Mumon's Poem:

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

Most of the time we move through this life like phantoms, haunting trees and plants. Usually we're inside our phantom bubble of separateness, also known as our ego identity. We come to a place like *sesshin* (Zen meditation intensive) with the hope of dissolving, popping, or at least seeing past our artificial phantom bubble. At *sesshin* we work day and night at dissolving this bubble that usually keeps our view self-centered and narrow. We all have a sense of identity that is linked to our ethnicity, family of origin, education, gender, vocation, beliefs, age, sexual orientation, etc. However, even putting all these components together, our sense of personal identity only represents a small slice of our potential range. If we haven't yet realized that we are Buddha, and that we're quite capable of being Hitler, we haven't looked very far.

This koan about Joshu being asked, "Does a dog have Buddha Nature?" is always the koan we examine first in every weeklong *sesshin*. We do this because the syllable *Mu* represents popping our phantom bubble of separateness. On the surface the monk's question is quite a silly question, because a fundamental principle of Buddhism is that everything is Buddha Nature. Whether it's old or young, male or female, human or nonhuman, animate or inanimate, everything is already a manifestation of Buddha Nature. When we truly realize this, we can't help but be caring toward every moment, circumstance and every being, great and small, animate and inanimate. We start each *sesshin* morning by chanting "Atta Dipa," which reflects the most important instructions from the historical Buddha: "Know! You are the Light itself. Rely on yourself. Do not rely on others. The Dharma is the Light. Rely on the Dharma.

Do not rely on anything other than the Dharma." The Light being spoken of in this verse is the very light that gives rise to the universe. This Light, Buddha Nature, and the Dharma, are all synonymous. Put this truth into one syllable, and you have "Muuuuu..." the indivisible, infinite, quiet power or presence that is before heaven and earth, and has no form, let alone a name.

Occasionally, we feel Mu, or get close to it, without ever knowing what it is, or where it came from, or why it's here. And when we feel it deeply, we realize cellularly, with every pore and fiber and bone of our being, that we *are* it. Then we are struck dumb; there are no words that can adequately convey this experience. Although we have nothing to say, we find ourselves in the midst of a wonderful dream. All our fear is temporarily dissipated, and if what is required or appropriate is taking the sword out of General Kan's hand, then we are prepared to do it, prepared to lay down our life for what needs doing in that moment.

You know, even if we break through our narrow identity of gender, ethnicity, family of origin, vocation, education, age, we're still left with a very human perspective. Even if we transcend all these artificial barriers that separate one person from another, we're often still stuck perceiving ourselves as human beings limited to a human perspective. Furthermore, within our human perspective, we may be happy to claim wisdom or compassion, but are very reticent to accept ourselves as potential or actualized sociopaths, narcissists, heretics, murderers, thieves, racists or rapists. We all like to say, "Oh that's not me." But any time we say that's not me, we've missed it and once again we are mere phantoms haunting trees and plants. I've said it many times, publicly and to myself, "Oh, that's not me." Baloney! As soon as it comes out of my mouth, I know it's a mistake!

The longer we sit in *sesshin* together, the further we wear away the artificial barriers that separate self and other, and this from that. In the readiness of time, walking among the trees during *kinhin* (walking meditation), circling the moss of the labyrinth, or feeling the bite of the brisk cold air, we start to have this feeling that this too is me. Rock, tree, moon, star, cold, hot, moss, lake, mountain, squirrel, this too; we are all this and much more. Not to know this much, is our greatest delusion. And if

we're honest, we must accept that we too are narcissists, sociopaths, thieves and murderers. Joy, sorrow, suffering, bliss, this too, this too.

Often as we begin to plunge into these depths of this too, we'll get waylaid by our fatigue, pain or some other kind of mental disquiet. Perhaps some current or past drama or trauma will come up and occupy every fiber of our being for a while. As unpleasant as this may be, during *sesshin* we can work at combusting and digesting this karmic history. If we don't run from this process, we will learn what we can from our own suffering, maturing as we do so, releasing ourselves from our own karmic baggage. Through this process we convert our hindrances into allies, manure into compost for growth. It may take many *sesshins* or decades of practice to burn through the personal dramas, traumas, conflicts, doubts, fears and regrets we have collected in our lifetime. This work is a big part of any *sesshin*. During *sesshin* we have the time to face, digest, combust and release, whatever it is that we're carrying. From time to time, like a whoosh, or a dam breaking, we pass through our fatigue, pain and all our disquiet. Our *kokoro* (heart-mind) breaks open, and there's a shift in perspective. And with sorrow and joy we say, this too. Muuuuu... These are life changing moments when we can't help but love ourselves, one another, the planet and our suffering.

Astrophysicists tell us that the universe appeared some 14 billion years ago. Exploding from a singularity, CLAP – whoosh, out comes the universe – from one point of Mu. Once we've temporarily cast away our discriminating between this and that, between self and other, up and down, life and death, male and female, right and wrong, we realize personally and intimately, that everything, everyone and all dualities arise from this singularity. At such a moment, we feel the unity and oneness of everything united as a singular alive expression of Mu, with myriad unique, constantly fluctuating, impermanent, wondrous manifestations. Without doubt we are astonished by heaven and earth, and if we happen to be looking in a mirror we are astonished by our own face of revelation, love, released from fear, and for a while full of joy. Though this awakening is also impermanent, it is life-transforming and

as long as there is mental acuity this experience can never be forgotten.

Follow Mu further and it pops oneness! We are all capable of feeling the original presence, the black before black before black. Between and within each note of the symphony of now is a quiet power, a stillness. We might refer to it as Light or Dharma or Mu, but it has no form let alone a name. It is at once intimate and infinite. This too is not the end of our exploration, there is no arrival. For example, how do we live these experiences out into our daily life? Wherever we are at, we are just beginning.

How shall we strive? With might and main we work at allowing ourselves to feel *before oneness*, to feel before manifestation within manifestation. In clarity and confusion, sit, breathe and listen. Settle into a grounded, attentive posture. Work at fully feeling what is. With each slow and gentle breath, combust a little. Listen with your three hundred and sixty bones and eighty-four thousand pores making your whole body one great inquiry. No self-deluded barrier can stand in the face of this kind of effort. It doesn't matter if you're facing pain, fatigue, confusion, fear, grief, hate, jealousy... sit and breathe with whatever it is long enough and every "barrier" will either dissolve, or transform itself into some sort of insight and energy. No barrier can stand in the face of perpetual determination to be here now. Everything is impermanent, the tightest knot eventually disintegrates or dissolves, and we get a glimpse of deep freedom and see clearly how to proceed in our daily life. We see what needs doing and we have the confidence, open heartedness and the energy to do it.

If we don't stop or waver, pressing on, sit after sit, step after step, breath after breath, when the bubble of our narrow egoistic perspective pops, we realize darkness *itself* is the Light, is the Dharma, is our deep nature. In our tradition, we consider this realization just the beginning of our practice or training. If we're fortunate enough in the course of this sesshin to experience fully, cellularly, the black before black, then the real work begins. Popping back into our usual human perspective and identity, how do we proceed, knowing we're both Hitler and Buddha? If we get stuck down in the absolute of oneness or even the black before

black, we end up doing what's called spiritual bypassing. As attractive as the feeling of oneness may be, if we cling to our realization, we will end up bypassing the transformative work that is possible once we have this foundation. Maturity is much more important than enlightenment, and this is the real koan. How do we process and release the personal and collective karmic baggage we are carrying? To ignore or skip over the sins of our time and culture is obscene. How do we live this life being more mindful, attentive and kind all the while knowing that we are still capable of sadistic cruelty? How do we keep our own hungry ghosts in check, without resorting to denial and repression?

Is a mortally wounded, deeply suffering dog a manifestation of Buddha Nature? When we're mortally wounded or fully realize we have a terminal disease called life, is this all there is? Is this too Buddha Nature? In the course of sesshin all we can say is this too. So, having this terminal disease called life, how will we live it? How will we meet it this day, with what actions? If we are fortunate enough to momentarily see with the same eyes or hear with the same ears as all the sages, past, present and future, may we all become holy fools, naturally and without effort moving through the world of sorrows like the jolly old bodhisattva Hotei. May we have no attachment to territory, status, rank, post or position and always be ready with a shoulder to cry on, or ready to lend a helping hand. Having no answers, and preaching no sermon.

The Book of Equanimity

Rohatsu 3rd day - Case 70

"Shinzan Questions the Nature of Life"

Preface to the Assembly

One who hears of the elephant's crossing the river is still affected by the current. One who hears that the nature of life is unborn is still held back by life. If one argues about bamboo shoots and braided bamboo twine in terms of before and after samadhi, the sword will be long gone. Then indeed, one has notched the boat. If one kicks out the wheel of activity, how can one in particular

proceed down the one road? Please try to let me discuss it, and let's see.

Main Case

Attention! Priest Shinzan questioned Priest Shuzan, saying, "Knowing clearly that life has the nature of being unborn, why is one held back by life?" Shuzan said, "The bamboo shoot eventually becomes a bamboo. Right now, can you use it as a bamboo sheath, instead?" Shinzan replied, "You will be enlightened on your own later on." Shuzan said, "I am just like this. What's your meaning, Joza?" Shinzan remarked, "This is the administrator's quarters, and that is the cook's quarters." At that, Shuzan bowed low.

Appreciatory Verse

*Vastly clear, attachments left behind.
Elevated calm, unfettered.*

*Peaceful home, rare the person who arrives.
Minor ability, the level is discerned.*

*Capacious body and mind go
beyond right and wrong.*

*Right and wrong gone beyond.
Alone, he stands everywhere,
leaving no tracks.*

[a flock of geese squawk overhead]

Remember that however well or poorly I do at interpreting this case, the geese passing by have given a far superior teisho.

We are all here questioning and exploring this journey of life and death. As Mumon said, we are all investigating this matter with our 360 bones and 84,000 pores, making our whole body one great inquiry. We approach every bit of our practice this way, in how we put down the teacup, how we bow, how we pick up the chopsticks, how we walk in *kinhin*, and certainly how we do zazen.

We're not here to attain anything, but it's hard not to seek something when we sit on the cushion. Any time we try to seek something, we are probably moving away

Continued on next page...

from our heart's desire. The best we can do on the cushion is to sit here patiently waiting for something to happen. Indeed, something will happen. You could have a heart attack, or you could have a *kensho* (sudden awakening) sitting there like a lump on a log, but both are rather unlikely. If we don't seek and we don't sit here like a lump on a log, then what are we doing? We work to be still, breathe slowly and listen gently.

If our desire were to get across the lake outside of this lodge, then we would take a canoe, and start paddling. We would have a real hard time getting across the lake if we just sat in the canoe and didn't paddle. Of course, we might drift from time to time to the other shore, but obviously that is not a very efficient or guaranteed way to get across. If we're trying to get across the lake of our own artificial barriers that separate us from our deep nature, then we do need to do some work. Therefore, we get on our cushioned seat, plant ourselves with the best posture we can manage, resting in our center of gravity, erecting our spine, keeping our chin level, eyes gently open, and begin to paddle with slow, gentle rhythmic breaths. If we want to get across the morass of our own artificial barriers, we must take our seat, breathe and listen moment to moment to this symphony of now. If our seat and posture is not stable and our paddling uneven, we are bound to fall into the lake of delusions, pain and fatigue.

For a good paddle, it is best for one's breath pattern to begin in the lower *tanden* or *hara* (below the sternum and above the pubic bone). Remember that Hakuin instructs us to loosen up anything that's tight around the abdomen. Our lower abdomen needs to be able to relax so that the diaphragm is free to take whole unrestricted breaths rather than partial breaths. Establish a pattern of slow, smooth inhalations and exhalations. Try counting off ten slow breaths until a smooth, regular pattern is manifested. And any time we are feeling conflicted, exhausted or pained, again work to count off ten exhalations. Breath after breath is our way of paddling. As we get into the rhythm of a sit, each breath takes less effort, we need less volume of air and the breath cycle slows. We can be confident that we have set a good rhythm when the breath cycle is slowing. This is a good indication that we

are entering samadhi – a good paddle across the lake of our delusions. Of course, if we then think, "Oh, now I've got good paddle going, I will get across the lake faster," this will only hinder our journey. Just paddle: just sit, breathe, and listen.

When I say listen, I mean listen to the geese squawking overhead, listen to the rain and wind. I also mean to "listen" with all our senses, being gently and attentively aware of all sensations, in addition to listening to our interior thoughts and feelings. The hardest and most intimate kind of listening is to learn how to "hear" the sound of silence. I know that I'm entering this kind of listening if I'm serenely sitting on the cushion and it feels like I'm sitting harmoniously in this forest alone. It's as though the walls of the building disappear. In the readiness of time, while listening to the silence, the quiet power ever present between and within each note in the symphony of now, becomes apparent.



My job doing zazen is to make the effort to paddle harmoniously. I take a balanced seat, encourage my breath into a slow regular pattern, listen gently and attentively to all channels of perception. Any less effort falls short; any additional effort is counter-productive. Sometimes, I'm so exhausted that I take a rest from paddling. That's okay. But when I am awake enough, and not too distracted by this or that, then I slightly straighten my back, open my eyes a bit wider, listen to the wind, rain and silence and breathe one slow, regular breath at a time from my *hara*.

At some point in our training we realize that our deep nature is never born and never dies. This truth is reflected in the preface to

the assembly of this case, "the nature of life is unborn." Priest Shuzan is questioned by priest Shinzan. Shin asks Shu, "Knowing clearly that life has the nature of being unborn why is one held back by life?" This question indicates that Shin has already had a penetrating insight into his deep nature. He has realized that the core animating presence, mind, is immutable. Mind doesn't come, it doesn't go, it's always here. It's not born, it doesn't die. The presence is always here. That's a bunch of words, but when you feel it, especially when you feel it on the cushion, it's ohhhhhh. . .

Even though Shinzan has had a breakthrough and he feels the presence that is not born, doesn't die and is everything, he knows that his life is still all messed up. (laughter) What about that? It is as if Shinzan is saying, "You know, I sat for a long time, had this big insight, returned to my daily life, and my life is still shit. I'm as neurotic as ever, maybe even more so. I thought I would suddenly be done with feeling like a little kid. That's far from the truth; recently, after I saw things more clearly, I bit somebody's head off." Therefore, Shinzan questions Shuzan, "why is one held back by life?"

This is one way to read Shinzan's question, but actually I think Shin is testing Shu. Sometimes, it's hard to know. By asking the question Shinzan starts out in the role of the guest. Shu responding to the question is in the role of host, and he doesn't do a bad job. Shu responds to Shin's initial question, "The bamboo shoot eventually becomes a bamboo. Right now, can you use a bamboo sheath, instead?" Shu is telling us that young grass bamboo shoots are not the same as a mature strong stand of bamboo. Tall mature bamboo is very different from a bamboo shoot. One can make all kinds of stuff out of strong, mature bamboo and not much with grass-like bamboo shoots. This allegory implies that the reason one is held back is because even after a big breakthrough, most of us are not mature enough to do much with our insight so we are held back. Just because we've realized that our true nature is unborn, never dies, can't go anywhere, there's never too much of it or too little of it and all this feels good, this is just the beginning of practice. After a strong breakthrough, we say it takes another thirty or forty years to develop the breadth for deep maturity. In fact, the path towards greater maturity is endless.

It's like the difference between a bamboo shoot and mature bamboo. There's a big difference. Are you waiting for maturity? Maturity requires a lot more paddling and the effort to continuously process, digest and integrate our karmic baggage. Innumerable breakthroughs are insufficient for deep maturity. If we don't process our karmic baggage of ego deflation and inflation we will be hopelessly mired in our own excrement. There are many ways to help us combust and grow. How about raising a kid? How about being in a long-term relationship? Both helped me a lot. Seeing my psychoanalyst for three years definitely helped. Time also helps us compost our karmic baggage. Slowly layer after layer, mistake after mistake, relationship after relationship, there's a bit more maturity than there used to be, but remember wherever we are, we are just beginning.

Shin replies, "You will be enlightened on your own later on." Wait a minute! Shu's metaphor was very nicely said, succinct, pithy, clear, direct and true. Where is Shin coming from? What does he mean? In this line, Shin shifts to the host role and we discover that Shin is testing Shu. This reminds me of the wild fox koan where Zen Master Hyakujo has an old man as a guest. The old man sounds very plaintive, but in fact, as we investigate the story more deeply, we see how the old man is testing Hyakujo. This is a similar case. Shin says yes, "you'll be enlightened later on." Shu pipes back, "I'm just like this, what about you?" Shu is asking, "All right, what do you got?" And Shin responds, "this is the administrator's quarters, and that is the cook's quarters." When I trained briefly at Ryutaku-ji, there was the administrator's (shika's) quarters, and over there was the cook's (Tenzo's) quarters. Two different but equally important and indispensable jobs. Hearing this response Shu rightfully concedes by bowing low. Gosh that is good, but what does this mean?

If I said mature bamboo is the only product that I'm interested in, therefore, I'm going to eliminate all the bamboo shoots, you would immediately recognize just how silly an idea that is. It would be like claiming that bamboo shoots are fake news, and have no value. (laughter) Of course, bamboo shoots have a very essential, precious place in the production of a mature bamboo forest. Everything in the universe has its

place. Even Donald Trump has a place in helping our society wake up to its own shadow. Some Christian and Buddhist sects try to eliminate our more primitive human characteristics. How well does that work? It doesn't!

In other words, sitting on this cushion, listening to this discourse, there are a whole bunch of infants, sitting right here. At the same time there are a whole bunch of sages sitting right here. Multiple personalities are all sitting here together. I will never be, nor will you be, free of your infantile or primitive beast nature. At one time I thought we could outgrow these aspects. It hasn't happened yet. I'm still waiting. (laughter) I thought I would be done with my selfishness and my narcissism. This hasn't happened yet either. I thought I'd be done with my grumpiness and my hyper-critical nature. Sorry to tell you, I'm still waiting. Nor can any of us be free of our violent reptilian nature. Neither can any of us be separated from our inner sage, which is well beyond our chronological age and years of training. Who hasn't met a two-year-old who says or does something that is genuinely sage-like? The good news of Buddhism is that our inner sage is always with us and never lost; therefore, it never needs to be attained.

Please remember we're not here trying to mature into a sage. The sage is already with us. Over time we slowly learn how to call our inner sage into the foreground more often, and with acceptance and loving kindness, we learn to let our two-year-old rest a bit more in the background. Through our various practices, we help ourselves realize that there is nothing to attain and nothing we can get rid of. Everything has its place, nothing needs to be cut out. Having this insight, Shuzan bowed low.

The reference to the "notched boat" in the preface to this case is kind of fun. Evidently, there's a story about a guy traveling down river in a boat with his sword. At some point the sword fell overboard and, on the way down, notched the boat as it fell into the water. After arriving at shore someone asked him what happened to his sword. He said it fell overboard, but said not to worry because he knew right where to look for it in the water because of where the sword notched the boat. (laughter) Okay, let's keep paddling down the river of this sesshin.

Closing Incense Poem

Rohatsu Sesshin 2019

A cold wind drifts down Mt. Rainier.

Fog over the lake dissipates.

Who hears the ancient rain?

Geese in formation leave no trace.

Spring Post Workshop

March 7, 2020, 9:30am to Noon
all are welcome!

Spring Temple Posts

beginning March 8, 2020

Tom Shodo Degroot Sensei
Elijah Seigan Zupancic
Shika (Host - Manager)

Rev. Gendo Testa
George Kyoki Gibbs
Tenzo (Cook)

Rev. Seifu Singh-Molares
Rev. Akasha Taishin Baron
Jikijitsu (Timekeepers)

Rev. Sendo Howells
Eric Seiku Dee
Densu (Chant Leaders)

Randal Daigetsu Tanabe
Sam Kou Tullman
Ali Horri
Ben Barnet
Jisha (Tea Servers and zendo care)

Eddie Daichi Salazar
Inji (Abbot Assistant)

Carolyn Josen Stevens Sensei
Fusu (Accountant)

Lynn Sogetsu Hernandez, Eddie Daichi Salazar, George Kyoki Gibbs
Intro Instruction

Chobo-Ji Conversations

Saturday, Feb. 22, 9:15 to 10:45 am

Beginning Saturday, February 22, the Chobo-Ji Program Committee is introducing an opportunity for us to discuss important topics that affect our participation and sense of belonging in the Chobo-Ji sangha. We want to welcome and include all sincere practitioners, but does everyone feel seen, welcomed, respected and accepted? Is each one of us able to bring our whole self to the sangha? On February 22, our topic will be **Gender and Sexual Orientation**. From 9:15 to 10:45, we will hold structured conversations, facilitated to provide both a safe and brave space for us to listen deeply to each other. We will start by sharing in dyads, and end with larger group "fishbowl" discussions.

Do people of all gender identities and sexual orientations feel welcome at Chobo-Ji? Are we all integral members of the community, and if not, what experiences or attitudes have gotten in the way? The Chobo-Ji sangha currently has more men than women. Do women feel fully welcome and empowered? How does this imbalance affect men? Where do power and privilege reside? Who is kept at the margins?

Buddhists believe in the unity of all beings while acknowledging that we live a relative reality; we are one and also many. We bring the relative distinctions of our identities with us to the Zendo, and we live them out in our sangha relationships.

Additional Chobo-Ji Conversations will be held quarterly in 2020 on the topics of 1) race, 2) loneliness and separation, and 3) hierarchy and status. If there's interest and the format is successful, we will continue thereafter. The purpose of Chobo-Ji Conversations is to share and listen to each person's experience so that we can grow in empathy, inclusion, and equity. Everyone is invited to enter the conversation.

Spring Intensive

An intensive covers roughly the same time frame as the traditional temple kessei period, beginning with the first sesshin for that season and ending with the second. It's a time for concentrated study and practice. Chobo-Ji participants receive dokusan twice weekly between sesshins. *All unsui are strongly encouraged to participate fully.*

Chobo-Ji's Spring Intensive will start March 8, with mini-sesshin, and conclude on June 26. The purpose of the intensive is to give students the maximum opportunity to release entanglements by giving one's self to the Dharma.

To participate one must commit to:

- 1) ZAZEN:** Five hours of zazen per week, most, if not all, mini-sesshins, and full-time (or nearly full-time) attendance at two weeklong sesshins. This is the most important ingredient of the intensive.
- 2) Do a minimum of five hours of samu** (working meditation - gardening or cleaning) per week. Most of these hours can be in your own home, garden or community, but at least one should be at the temple.
- 3) Read one book of your choosing** from Chobo-Ji's [Zen Bibliography page](#) (or consult with Genjo about an alternative selection) and write a review of what you have read.
- 4) Keep a journal about your practice**, at least one paragraph per week, and email a minimum of one paragraph per week each Friday to Genjo Osho on how the intensive is working on you.
- 5) Come to Dokusan at least once a week** or if out of town try to schedule a Skype call with Genjo Osho. Skype calls can be short, 5-10 minutes maximum per week, or up to 20 minutes every two weeks, or 45 minutes once a month.
- 6) Be of service to this sangha or the wider community** through some direct manifestation of our Great Vow.

Spring Sesshin March 20th - 27th

Please help us get an accurate count by sending a **deposit (\$75) and application by March 15**, earlier if you want to guarantee a reserved spot. Please drop it by or mail it.

The cost of sesshin is \$250 (less dues for this month). Sesshin starts Friday evening, 3/20, 5:30pm with informal supper, introductions and orientation. Sesshin from Saturday to the following Thursday runs from 5am-10pm. We provide sleeping accommodations for those traveling from out of town (**an additional \$10-\$20 per night**); please bring a sleeping bag, toiletries, sitting clothes, work clothes and a towel. The final Friday begins at 5am and concludes around 10am.

Zen Intro Series

Eight week exploration
starting March 31, 7:30 - 9 pm

Please come and join us for an 8-week exploration of Rinzai Zen practice. Tuesdays - 7:30 to 9:00 pm, beginning March 31 and concluding May 19. A \$5 donation per class is suggested, but any amount you care to give is accepted. Each class can be taken as a stand-alone. No prior experience with meditation practice is required and old-timers are also welcome to attend and share their thoughts and questions. Participants are encouraged to attend either the April or May Zazenkai (half-day sit).

March 31st: Zazen instruction.

April 7th: Mindfulness practices

April 14th: Circles of meditation

April 21st: Koans (Zen parables)

April 28th: Four Noble Truths

May 5th: Noble Eightfold Path

May 12th: Four Great Vows

May 19th: The Ten Precepts

Jukai Ceremony

Jukai (受戒 – Precept Receiver) candidates need to petition in writing to the Abbot at least one month prior to the ceremony. Jukai candidates usually have attended regular zazen at Chobo-Ji, or an affiliated temple, for a minimum of six months (including at least two weeklong sesshins), taken our precept classes or completed a course of equivalent study, must be regular financial supporters of the temple, and feel ready to give themselves to the Three Treasures (Buddha, Dharma & Sangha), working to live our Great Vow to care for all beings great and small, animate and inanimate. At the ceremony candidates take the Precepts and Four Bodhisattva Vows, and receive a rakusu and a dharma name.

On the eighth day of Rohatsu Sesshin, Dec. 8, 2019, Sam Tullman and Jesse Burgess did Jukai. Here are some of Sam's own words on why he wanted to do this ceremony:

The first thing is my conviction that this is the right path for me. The questions we ask in this tradition - or perhaps more importantly, what we do with the questions we ask - feel deeply aligned with something very essential in my being. The forms WORK for me... I feel a balance between being pushed and being able to be wise in pulling back when I need to. And I do feel deeply motivated to care for all beings, or to practice so I can be closer to caring for all beings. On some level, this has been a drive for me since a young age.

I practice because, whether I always realize it, I'm hurting too. Caring for others has been, at various times in my life, a way to ignore my own suffering, but in the process of sesshin, (facing my heart-mind) my own pain has become impossible to ignore. I'm grateful for that, and I hope to work towards including myself in the category of all beings that could use some caring for! I am taking Jukai because this path is incredibly nourishing and nurturing to me, in addition to, hopefully, all other beings.

Morning coffee after sits, turning and facing difficult issues within our community and in the larger community outside of Chobo-Ji are essential to my understanding of this practice... This is not a community of, to loosely quote Master Hakuin, "Silently illuminating, do-nothing" Zen practitioners. It's full of life. It's full of engagement. And

the sense of community, of belonging that I feel is central to my experience of the Dharma.

What I'm saying is, I'm doing Jukai because I've bought in. Fully, without hesitation. That's actually quite a rare occurrence in my life, but it's the case here.



Genjo Roshi gave Sam the Dharma name: KoU - "Ko" = Ancient (古) - "U" = Rain (雨) in hospital because of a foot infection.

Jesse is from Walla Walla and has attended many one-day sits with me there, and also attended a Summer Sesshin and Odayaka sesshin here in Seattle. Here are some Jesse's words on why he felt ready to do Jukai:

Since meeting you (Genjo) a few years ago, my practice has taken a turn: I sit longer and with solid consistency, I study more devotedly, and I keep mindful of ways to bring insight into everyday life. In short, my entire my entire way of being in the world has changed.

I mentioned to you one time that I teach a course called Four Perspectives in the History of Ideas. It was created by my mother and father in the mid-70s, and she taught it until 1996 when I took it over. It explores key ideas and influences of Pythagoras, Galileo, Buddha, and Jesus. From a scholar's point of view, each is massive: each figure comprises dozens of fields of inquiry requiring lifetimes of study. When I took over the course, even though I had a relatively solid background in philosophy, classical history, and science, I felt overwhelmed, daunted. But I was especially drawn to learning more about Buddhism. I knew deep down that I needed

to. Teaching this course, as well as Asian Philosophy, has been a blessing and boon in my life. What a gift to have been able to study and learn and teach these powerful, transformative ideas! ...

Then in 2004, I had a dream – a dream in which I awoke. The dream was so powerful it woke me out of sleep, but the satori I experienced in the dream came with me out of the dream and stayed present. I was so overcome I wept tears of joy. I felt utterly intimate with all things, completely fearless, completely free, thrown out of my tiny egoist concerns and the selfish small heart/mind I'd lived in to that point. I felt that everything had changed in my life – in an instant. I walked into the countryside and continued for hours. I didn't know what to do next with my life.

The intensity of that experience faded. I knew, after that experience, though, that enlightenment is real, that this deeper reality must inform and transform my default "ego-mode" of operating in the world. Slowly and almost imperceptibly, I did begin to transform a little. I noticed that the ego views with fear the giving up of itself to the Way. The Way from the "outside view" seems uncongenial to life as we want it to be. From the "inside view" the Way seems to be pure liberation. I now see the "inside view" and "outside view" as not essentially different...

Genjo Roshi gave Jesse the Dharma name: HoFu - "Ho" = Summit (峰) - "Fu" = Wind (風).



Important Dates to Remember

Daily zazen: M-F, 5:30-6:30 AM; Sat. 7-8:30 AM; M & W, 7:30-8:30 PM; Sun. 6:30-7:30 PM

Dharma Talks, Sundays, 7:30pm: 2/16, 2/23, 3/1, 3/15, 3/29, 4/5, 4/19, 5/3, 5/10, 5/24, 5/31, 6/7, 6/28

Zazen instruction: Tuesdays, 7:30-9:00pm (except: March 24 & June 23)

100 Veg Meals for homeless: Saturdays, 9:15-10:45am: 2/8, 2/29, 3/14, 3/28, 4/18, 4/25, 5/16, 5/23, 6/6

Chobo-Ji Conversations: Gender & Sexual Minorities ...

Follower of the Way Dharma Talk ...

Zen Post Workshop (all are welcome) ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Board Meeting ...

Spring Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

Eight Week Tuesday night Zen Intro Series begins ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Annual Meeting (Please plan to attend if you are in town) ...

SU Zazenkai (all welcome) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Zazenkai (1/2 day sit) with meal, Dokusan and Dharma Talk ...

Summer Sesshin (weeklong Zen intensive) ...

Feb. 22, 9:15am - 10:45am

Feb. 23, 7:30pm - 8:30pm

March 7, 9:30am - noon

March 8, 5am - 11:15am

March 8, 11:30am - 1:30pm

March 20 (7:00pm) - March 27 (11am)

March 31 7:30pm - 9:00pm

April 12, 5am - 11:15am

May 17, 5am - 11:15am

May 17, 11:30am - 1:30pm

May 30, 7am - 5:00pm

June 14, 5am - 11:15am

June 19 (7:00pm) - June 26 (11am)



Dai Bai Zan Cho Ba Zen Ji

Plum Mountain News
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