

Summer Newsletter

2016

That Old Saw

by Gento Steve Krieger

When I first moved to the Mount Baldy Zen Center, the head monk put me and another student to work cutting off a tree branch up by the Roshi's cabin. I climbed the tree and began sawing. At one point I looked down and Roshi was staring up at me through the window. He looked like he was watching the birth of the universe. As I continued sawing he began to imitate me. It was a little unnerving. Finally the branch broke free from the tree, and I looked down and Roshi was shaking his hands in the air like he'd just scored a World Cup-winning soccer goal.

He brought that moment up again and again during our private koan meetings. "Show me how you saw branch!" This was my cue to reenact the moment for him. I was (and remain) an over-thinker, and though I didn't know it at the time, he was teaching me how to relate to the world directly, through activity.

Put your mind on the breath. Or a sound. Or the cushion under you. Put it on something, otherwise it doubles back on itself. The mind is an organ for relationship. It is meant to touch the world. Through this touch, thoughts and feelings, a self, is born. We often get hung up on our selves and make the leap from the world back into our heads. The mind starts relating to itself, to its own ideas, reactions, and emotions, while remaining under the illusion that it's still relating to the world. The difference between the mind touching its surroundings and the mind touching its reflection of its surroundings is extremely subtle. It is the difference, for example, between genuine problem solving and merely worrying. So we do sitting practice, or Zazen (meditation), so that we don't take our thinking mind for granted. We are learning to be in true relationship with our surroundings.

There's a deep silence at the heart of every activity, a place to rest your mind. If you give yourself to an activity

completely, whether hugging your grandkid, sending an email, or sawing a tree branch, you touch that peace. In common parlance this is "being in the moment." In Zen practice, you hold your mind to whatever activity is going on right now. Self-consciousness dissolves. When you become aware of yourself again, you are awake and alive. When was the last time you felt truly inspired? The only true inspiration I have ever found is when I have let myself go into some activity so completely that when I returned to myself, it was as though I'd disappeared and someone fresh and new had taken my place.

The point is not to seek out novel and interesting experiences. Don't sit on your cushion waiting to get run over by the enlightenment truck. It'll never happen. Open your heart to the most mundane part of your day, give it the same amount of attention you would give to Buddha or Christ were they to suddenly appear before you. It's the quality of attention that you bring to whatever you are doing that makes the activity sacred, that makes it Zen practice. To find peace and inspiration, stop anticipating or dreading the next moment, and stop reliving or regretting the past moment, and start giving yourself wholeheartedly to this one. Even a stubborn tree branch and an old blade can be tools for awakening once you stop thinking and start sawing.

Visiting Bodhidharma Zendo in Vienna

by Myoren Kumiko Yasukawa

I'd like to begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the Rinzaï-ji Board of Directors for flying me to Vienna to visit the Austrian Sangha of Bodhidharma Zendo in Wien upon their invitation. I must say that it was indeed an incredible and fruitful experience.

The Go (Five-day) Sesshin took place at the farmhouse that the Bodhidharma sangha rents in a beautiful countryside called Walsberg about 2 hours away from Vienna. 36 participants including all the Board of Director members put their wholehearted effort into the Sesshin with Noritake Rōshi & Okajima Osho and Kigen Osho. Noritake Rōshi gave Teisho daily with 3 Dokusan, as he did at Mt. Baldy last July. I was able to help as Jisha (Inji) in support of Noritake Rōshi & Okajima Osho. The Sesshin concluded right after Teisho with Sosarei on the 22nd.



All sesshin members then headed back to Vienna for a World Peace prayer at St. Stephen's Cathedral with Noritake Rōshi and Dom Pastor Toni Faber. About 50 members of Bodhidharma Zendo witnessed this special ceremony of Buddhist & Catholic prayers for world peace. Noritake Rōshi conducted the same ceremony with a delegation of 30 visitors from Japan in 2007. He was deeply touched this time by how local Austrian Buddhist members joined the ceremony.

The next day, the groundbreaking ceremony (*Kikō-shiki*) of the new BergZendo was held. The event was filled with excitement because a new contract concerning the property was signed during the Sesshin on the 19th. Over 50 sangha members along with their family and friends came together for this ceremony conducted by Noritake Rōshi. The new Zendo was named "Peaceful Light." The name of the location in the Gutenstein Alps, Almfrieden, means peaceful meadow. BergZendo is located at the top of the cliff. Its view is truly breathtaking.

Wilma, one of the Board members, kindly took us to the Vienna Boys Choir at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna, followed by a boat cruise in the Danube. Then Noritake Rōshi invited all members of the Bodhidharma sangha for dinner. The last day in Vienna concluded with evening

Zazen at the Bodhidharma Zendo in Wien. Noritake Rōshi paid his respects to Joshu Sasaki Rōshi & Genro Osho's altars as well as the Zendo altar that was handcrafted by the Bodhidharma sangha. Over 30 members came to the Zendo to bid farewell to Noritake Rōshi, Okajima Osho, and myself, as we were departing the next day.



I'm deeply touched by the warmth and kindness that I received from the Austrian Sangha. They welcomed us with such enthusiasm and joy. Joshu Rōshi and Genro Osho's over 30 years of effort & teaching are alive in the Sangha, and now with Kigen Osho. It is wonderful to see that the sangha's commitment to the practice is solid. Kigen expressed how lucky he is to have come to the Bodhidharma Zendo, where he is fully supported and appreciated. This is his 5th year in Vienna. The Board of Directors of the Bodhidharma Zendo extends their gratitude for the donation from Rinzai-ji & Mt. Baldy in celebration of the new Zendo project. To see the full report, click to the following link: www.rinzaiji.org/visiting-bodhidharma-zendo-in-vienna/



Recent events at Rinzai-ji

On April 5-9 Rinzai-ji hosted our annual "Hanamatsuri" sesshin in honor of the Buddha's birthday. Yoshin David Radin led the retreat, and several of his students from the Ithaca Zen Center practiced with our local LA sangha/community for five days. The retreat ended with a "Buddha's birthday" ceremony on Sunday, April 10. Sangha members each had the opportunity to ladle tea over the Buddha statue at our butsudan (altar), which was carpeted with rose petals. The ceremony was followed by a celebratory lunch in the courtyard.



We continue to hold daylong practice retreats once each month. These "Zazenkais" give us the opportunity to reconnect with ourselves and our surroundings through the practice of doing simple things completely. The group practice includes zazen (sitting meditation), kinhin (walking meditation), work practice, silent meals, dharma talks, and tea ceremonies (Sadō).

We are fortunate to have a community that gathers for holidays as well as practice events. We celebrated Easter Sunday in the courtyard with a potluck feast attended by old and new friends. At one point, we enjoyed the company of a majestic hawk, which took up brief residence in the Buddha bath of the courtyard.

On April 30 - May 1 we held a weekend retreat. Zen practitioners gathered to sit, chant, partake in silent meals, read Hakuin Zenji's Zazenwasan (song of zazen), and observe silence together. From a student practicing for the first time, to a student who first studied with

Sasaki Roshi in 1967, the weekend came alive with the sincerity and effort of the local sangha.



Also in April, work was begun on a new Butsudan (altar) in the zendo at Rinzai-ji. With the support of another generous donation from Sotaku Jack Drake, the work is undertaken jointly by Jack Sasaki, a skilled architect and carpenter, and Hiro Uchihara, the same contractor who helped to renovate the Gardena house. Executed in consultation with Seiya Chisaka Osho and Noritake Shunan Roshi, the project is due for completion in time for the Memorial Service (*Sankaiki*) in July.



Takuhatsu, Dana & Giving

How does a true person give gifts? A true person gives a gift carefully, gives with one's own hand, gives showing respect, gives a valuable gift, gives it with a view that something will come of it. That is how a true person gives gifts. (Buddha's Discourse on the Full-Moon Night)

Since ancient times, compassion (karuna) and giving (dana) have been important concepts in Buddhist thought. But, we know that conceptual understandings mean nothing if they are not manifested in our actions.

When Zen practice came to Japan, the custom of takuhatsu became an integral part of the practice. Monks, often in groups of four or five, go out, forming a line, walking slowly, and crying "Ho" the word for Dharma. Each monk carries a bowl, which receives the money or rice offering.

The traditional belief behind takuhatsu is that both parties give and receive: the monks, through their example and practice, bring dharma to the community, while the community supports the monastery. While our modern version of this traditional Buddhist practice is different in form from that of our ancestors, we hope the spirit is the same.

At Rinzai-ji and Mt. Baldy Zen Centers we often pick up produce from markets that are used for sesshin and ongoing practice. Of course, Rinzai-ji, Mt. Baldy and all of our related sanghas also rely on contributions to sustain their practice.

Traditionally, the monks wore deep, broad straw hats – hats so deep that the monk could not see the face of the donor . . . and the donor could not see the face of the monk. This was done purposefully. The act of charity was carried out completely free from judgment, personal considerations and totally without attachment.

Though we don't wear straw hats today, we do have our "Support Zen Center" link on the Rinzai-ji Zen Center website. Please visit our website and be as generous as possible. Surely the "Donate" click space receives all gifts with the same non-judgmental nature . . . and the same absence of attachment.

Please know that your gifts are crucial to maintaining the Rinzai-ji Zen Center. You can use our website to manifest

your compassion and generosity. Thank you for your support, and please continue to help out as you can.

ACKNOWLEDGING DANA

Agnes Lin	Myotai Yvonne
Bill Flynn	Kossmann
Carole Wilson	Myoyuu Donna Okazaki
Charles Billingsley	Ned Shepard
Denkyō-an	Oren Beth Schaefer
Dianne Lawrence	Patrick Lavey
Dokuro Jaeckel	Paul Humphreys
Eido Shimano Roshi	Peter Bissinger
Elisa Atwill	Peter Pyrko
Ginsei Ginger Calloway	Reiun-in
Hogen Heribert Harter	Ryōan-ji
Honkō-ji	Seido Clark
Ithaca Zen Center	Shunko Clark
Jack Drake	Senjō-in
Jacqueline Farley	Shōun-in
Jefferson Creek	Sohan Noah Youngelson
John Candy	Sotaku Fund
John Watts	Stanley Edmondson
Karen Salvato	Stanley Weinstein
Kendo Hal Roth	Stephan Slusher
Myoko Kimberly	Susan Crozier
Salisbury	Tōen-ji
Marie Johnston	Tokuji Matsumoto
Shinkai Marie Navarre	Tom Yoneda
Marilyn Gladle	Yōki-ji
Mark Byers	Yoshiko Poncher
Myokyo Judith McLean	Zennō-ji
Myōshin-ji	Zuigan-ji
	Zuiryū-ji
	Vincent Piazza

FROM OUR READERS

**Reflecting on Roshi's
remarks on the Sila**

by Shunko Pam Clark

From gems I have collected over the years from teisho and dharma talks, I would like to share this short passage about what Roshi sometimes referred to as "the mistaken mischief of consciousness." Roshi's teaching of how the incomplete self arises together with its opinions and unique sense of right and wrong seems highly relevant to challenges this sangha has been facing recently.

...Most people talk about good, talk about evil without ever really deeply fathoming what good and evil are; they just take good and evil on face value. That's why in the sutras it points out that primordially, all along, there is no good or evil. Really originally there is no sin, there is no lack of sin. It's only when a self is born that we carry on about good and evil. So what Rinzai is saying is that most people simply accept good and evil at their surface, face value, the same way that they accept the sense that the self is a thing that exists, accepting it without fathoming any more deeply as to its nature.

What I am saying is that this "I" that we unquestioningly recognize, but we don't really understand, is not our true "I". From the standpoint of this mistaken "I", we come to think that everything that is inconvenient for that "I" as being bad and we reject it. And, we come to think that everything that is convenient or comfortable for that "I" are the good things. So, in the end we come to think and act with the idea that those things that are convenient to the self can be accepted and those things that are inconvenient to the self are not the self...

As we move forward without Roshi's living presence to guide us, it seems useful for us to reconsider why we were drawn to such a rigorous and ultimately ego-negating practice as Tathagata Zen in the first place. It does seem vitally important that we practitioners come to investigate and understand how the I am self, with its always incomplete viewpoints, arises from a state of completed-ness of the Source. Roshi made the

powerful statement in teisho several years ago that if we did not come to truly understand this process of the emergence of the I am self, that his coming to America would have had no purpose at all.

'What is this called?'

by Len Pinto

During a recent Sesshin a new student asked another student, "What is this called?" while she rested her hands flat below her sternum. He brought his hands together and said, "This bow and hand posture is called a 'Gassho,'" and resting his hands flat below his sternum he said, "This hand posture or mudra is called 'Sassho.'"

Then the new student formed her hands into a perfect circle surrounding her navel. This perfect circle radiated a pristine silent stillness. "What is this called?" Her fellow student answered, "The full moon." As she began to walk out of the zendo she spoke the words, "How beautiful." Her fellow student bowed and leaving the Zendo said, "How beautiful."

This led the older student to ponder, "Is 'The Full Moon' pointing to a Zazen experience that it describes (no matter how inadequately) or is it a mere convention like calling a finger a "finger" a nail a "nail?" Where did it come from? He had learned the name "The Full Moon" from a seasoned monk of our teacher. Did this teacher-monk, this "Osho," only learn it from our teacher or did it reflect his own experience? Was the name an inheritance or an experience? The student had no doubt: whatever else it was, it was based on the monk's own experience.

So the student asked himself, "Given my experience what do I call this mudra?" The swift answer: "The Door. The Door to the furnace whose flames' light and heat consume all delusions, the very same furnace that has no roof, no floor, no walls... and No Door."

What is this called?

Two Poems

by Teresa Bresnan

LA Zen in July

Sweltering, humid heat
 Sweat dripping
 Off my brow, arms, chest
 Sitting, walking, inside, outside
 Thick, oppressive, and unbearable.
 I think of soldiers fighting in Iraq
 They must be so strong.
 Me, I can only wait for the next break
 Chance for another cold shower
 A brief respite from hell.
 “Roshi! It’s hot”, I say
 Twinkle in eye, he replies:
 “Manifest hot Buddha!”
 In the brilliance of his glory
 I am saved.

Kinhin Interdependance

Walking left foot, then right
 My followers depend on me
 I rely on those ahead
 Together we maintain the
 Harmony of selflessness.

Invitation to sangha meeting in July

by Shindo Sharear Ataie

Oftentimes seeing Roshi face to face reminded me of a short poem by the French poet Guillaume Apollinaire.

Come to the edge he said

We are afraid they said

Come to the edge he said

We are afraid they said

Come to the edge he said

They came

He pushed

They flew

Only, in my case and I suspect many others, he pushed and I fell, headlong into pitch blackness, hitting all things animate and inanimate as I descended rapidly into an ever-expanding hole. Looking back at the carnage that is my psychic landscape, all I can do is smile in gratitude. I am thankful for the cuts and bruises, the scrapes and bumps. At a minimum, for me, they map a more intriguing journey to life.

A Buddhist Center can be metaphorically described as a forest and the Sangha as a gathering of trees from the ten directions. We come together to cherish, appreciate, revere and above all offer support to each other in whichever ways we happen to be growing. By doing so we show appreciation and deep respect for our teacher, Joshu Sasaki Roshi.

From the presidents of the boards

Dear Fellow Students and Friends,

With this issue, Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Centers are pleased to reinstate the practice of publishing a quarterly newsletter. The occasion signals an opportunity to take stock of where we stand in the moment, where thanks are due, and possibilities for the way ahead.

The Rinzai-ji and Mt. Baldy Staff and Boards of Directors are committed to continuing the rigorous Rinzai Zen practice taught by our founder, Kyozan Joshu Roshi. We have kept our Centers fiscally strong and responsible. We have strengthened our ties to Japan, to encourage our practice and maintain the relationship that Roshi had previously established, and we are envisioning new prospects for established traditions of strong practice at both centers.

We thank ordained and lay members of the Sangha in the lineage of Joshu Roshi who continue to practice and lend effort to the work at Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy. We are particularly grateful to oshos who have participated as practice leaders, served as members of the Listening Council (now the Ethics and Reconciliation Council), and given time and perspective to revising previously considered versions of Right Conduct Guidelines. Now approved by the boards for posting to both websites, the Guidelines also are available at the following link: www.rinzaiji.org/rinzai-ji/right-conduct/.

We reaffirm our profound thanks to Noritake Shunan Roshi and Minakawa Shōkyū Roshi for their generosity in leading sesshins and ceremonies at Mount Baldy and Rinzai-ji during the previous year. We look forward to new practice opportunities with them in seasons to come (see schedule of coming events in this issue).

We are also pleased to congratulate Bodhidharma Zendo in Vienna, where Seigaku Kigen Ekeson serves as Abbot, on the dedication of a new mountain center in the Austrian Alps. (See Myoren's account in this issue of the ceremony and sesshin in May, both led by Noritake Roshi.)

Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy continue to implement timely and substantial improvements made possible by Sotaku Jack Drake, most recently the beautifully crafted Butsudā-in-progress at Rinzai-ji. Photos do not do it justice so please come to see for yourself!

We extend thanks, once again, to Kendo Hall Roth for training his acumen as scholar and organizer on two sutra workshops hosted by Rinzai-ji during the past year. Most recently, the Heart Sutra Workshop in October of 2015 included the participation of Paula Arai (Louisiana State University) who lectured on the Buddhist paintings of IWASAKI Tsuneo and guided a workshop in calligraphy as contemplation. We also appreciate the dialog on a variety of topics made possible by the online forum created by Nora Haen and Shindo Ataie.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome Stanley Weinstein who has agreed to serve on both Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Boards. In addition to decades-long practice as a student of Joshu Roshi, Stanley brings a distinguished record of professional service as an author and consultant in fundraising and nonprofit organization.

We look forward to opportunities in July (detailed elsewhere in this issue) to explore new avenues of dialog and cooperation, to practice in solidarity, and to honor the memory of our beloved teacher, Kyozan Joshu Roshi.

Warm thanks for your continuing support and gassho,
Sōkō Paul Humphreys and Mark Byers,

Board Presidents, Rinzai-ji and Mount Baldy Zen Centers

CONTACT INFORMATION

We welcome comments and proposed submissions.
Please address these to editor@rinzaiji.org.

Many thanks!

Upcoming events

ZAZENKAI

Sunday | 9:30am - 4:30pm
June 26, July 17, September 18, November 27

WEEKEND ZAZENKAI

August 13 (Sat) & 14 (Sun)

SESSHIN

Ho-on Sesshin led by Noritake Roshi

Hashinkyūji: Monday, July 25 | Banka 4pm
Sesshin: July 26 - 30, 2016

Daruma-ki Sesshin led by David Yoshin Radin

Hashinkyūji: Monday, October 17 | Banka 4pm
Sesshin: October 18 - 22

Rohatsu Sesshin led by Minakawa Roshi

Hashinkyūji: Saturday, December 10 | Banka 4pm
Sesshin: December 11 - 17, 2016
At Mt. Baldy Zen Center

Nirvana Sesshin led by Minakawa Roshi

Hashinkyūji: Saturday, February 11 | Banka 4pm
Sesshin: February 12 - 18, 2017
At Mt. Baldy Zen Center

SERVICES

Joshu Sasaki Roshi - Sankaiki Memorial Service:
Sunday, July 31 | followed by Reception
Daruma-ki: Sunday, October 23 | 11am
Jōdō-e: December 18 | Early morning
Saturday, February 19, 2017 | Early morning

Japan & China Pilgrimage



Commemorating Joshu Roshi & Rinzai Zenji

Dates: August 30, 2016 – September 17, 2016

We invite you on a once in a lifetime pilgrimage to Rinzaï Zen temples in Japan and China. We studied with Joshu Sasaki Roshi for decades, but we never had an opportunity to visit his temples in Japan. In this Pilgrimage, we will visit the historic Myoshin-ji temple complex and other important Rinzaï zen temples in Kyoto, practice with the monks at Zuiganji monastery in Sendai, and partake in a ceremony led by Noritake Roshi honoring the founder of our lineage - Rinzaï's 1,150th anniversary memorial at Rinzaï-ji in China. The Pilgrimage comes in two parts. Part A of the Pilgrimage—Kyoto and China—runs from August 30 - September 9. Part B, to the northern part of Japan, runs from September 7 - September 17. Join us for all or part of this journey. Please contact office@rinzaïji.org for more information. Hurry! The deadline for registration is coming up.

Practice Schedule at Rinzai-ji

DAILY ZEN PRACTICE

Wednesday - Saturday Morning 6:00 - 7:30 AM

Choka (chanting), Zazen & Kinhin

Wednesday - Saturday Evening 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Zazen & Kinhin

Wednesday - Saturday

10:00 - 11:30 AM & 2:00 - 4:30 PM

Samu work practice

WEEKLY PRACTICE

Thursday Evening 7:00 - 8:30 PM

Sutra Study, Sutra Copying, Movie etc.

Sunday Program 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Rinzai-ji offers Zazenkai on a regular basis and also hosts classes and workshops by special arrangement. Please check the [Rinzai-ji online calendar](#) for details and dates as these are announced.

Two Activities of Knowing

Denkyo Kyozan Joshu Roshi

If I look upon this teacup from a point of view of simply knowing, then this teacup would be looked upon as something different from myself. But at the very instant I just glance at that teacup, there is another way of knowing: where I know the teacup as myself.

So we must practice two activities of knowing—an activity of knowing where we know *engi* in a personified way and one where we know it in an absolutely un-personified way ... a pure clarity of understanding only, no feeling whatsoever.

We must learn to practice both of these modes, be able to be ambidextrous in our knowing—that too is the practice of Zen. And being able to act fully from both of these aspects of emotionless knowing and knowing with fullness of feeling, this is called the activity of *shin-jin* or the Middle Way.

* excerpts from a talk on the *Shin-jin Mei* by Denkyo Kyozan Joshu Roshi. Published in *Trailing Mud and Dripping Water* (Bodhi Mandala Press 1981).



Thus Gone

With joy in the recollection of shared practice and friendship, with sadness in their passing, we recall the dedicated and long-time students of Denkyo Kyōzan Jōshu Roshi whose names appear below.

Oscar Moreno de Ayala (1946 - 2015). Founder of El Centro Zen in San Juan, PR.

Steve Sanfield (1937 - 2015). Jikijitsu for Joshu Roshi in Gardena, CA from 1962 - 1965.

Sokai Geoffrey Barratt (1951 - 2014). Founder of Hakuun-ji in Tempe, AZ