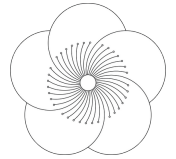


NEWS OF RINZAI-JI

SUMMER 2024



“Tōzan’s Sixty Blows” (*Mumonkan*, Case Fifteen)

Teisho by Shōkyū Minakawa Rodaishi

Translated by Yūho Thomas Kirchner

Nirvana Ōzesshin, Day Four, 16 February 2024
at Mt. Baldy Zen Center

The koan begins: “When Tōzan came to have an interview with Unmon, Unmon asked him, ‘Where have you been recently?’ ‘At Sado, Master,’ Tōzan replied.” The monk Tōzan had arrived to train at Master Unmon’s monastery. Master Unmon had shot the first arrow in a volley of questions intended to sound out the newcomer’s mind. Tōzan, however, failed to grasp Unmon’s deeper intention and thus responded in a superficial way.

Unmon continued: “And where did you spend the last training period?” In other words, which monastery did you train at during the most recent three-month retreat? This was the second arrow that Unmon let fly. Tōzan responded naively by giving the name of the place where he had trained most recently, “At Hozu (temple) in Konan (Province).”

Zen mondo exchanges are not like exchanges in ordinary conversations. Unmon and Tōzan were constructing together a Zen spiritual world—a so-called “house wind” [家風]—through their attainments in practice together. Through their exchanges they ascertained the depth of one another’s Zen state of mind. In addition, in a mondo we must manifest to the other person the depth of our own practice in No-Mind through our thoughts, words, and actions.

Unmon continued his questioning, “When did

you leave there?” Unmon was a great teacher, so here again, he wasn’t just asking an ordinary question. His questioning was the function of words born through the living action of a realized self that had thoroughly grasped No-Mind. It was now up to Tōzan to respond to this. Please keep in mind that this question, along with its significance in this mondo, is also a question testing how far each one of you here has grasped the state of your own Zen self.

Tōzan replied, “On the twenty-fifth of August,” which is the date that the three-month summer training periods traditionally end. Tōzan was surely engaging in this exchange knowing that it was a Zen mondo between him and Unmon. But it is fair to say that, for a Zen mondo, his responses seem just a bit too naïvely straightforward.

I would like you all to look deeper into the state of Tōzan’s mind. His answers are so straightforward that they lack any sense of real engagement with Unmon. It seems, though, that both parties are concealing something. Unless they discover whether the other is pure gold or just an alloy, whether the other is the real thing or an impostor (or neither one nor the other), then the mondo risks ending up as just an ordinary superficial conversation. Everyone, if you do not possess your own profound Zen ability, you cannot resolve such matters.

Next the koan tells us that “Unmon exclaimed, ‘I spare you sixty blows with my stick!’” Unmon was saying that Tōzan fully deserved sixty blows with the master’s stick, but that this time he would let Tōzan off.

In Zen training, disciples are refined through use of the shout and the stick. It is like forging high quality tools by repeatedly beating the hot steel with a hammer. This is a real, vital approach directly endured by our living body that, right then and there, directly awakens us to experiential knowledge of whether something is hot or cold. Such direct experience is something that we never forget. It gives birth to knowledge that we embody and use to create various teaching methods. If you are a true Zen person you are a Master throughout your entire body, and the world you function in is reality.

If it was up to me to act in place of Tōzan, I would immediately face Unmon and throw my monk's staff at him. I would use my staff to strike Unmon with the reality of who I am.

Unmon ended up not giving Tōzan sixty blows. Hitting him probably would have been useless, so he ignored Tōzan instead. However, this, too, may be seen as a vital, living means of liberating Tōzan. Unless Tōzan was able to see Unmon's actions as a frightening trap to snatch away his Zen state of being, then he would not have attained awakening.

This mondo occurred at the midpoint in Tōzan's practice, where he wasn't yet able to do Unmon one better. The following mondo should help you see what I mean. The following day Tōzan attended Unmon's lecture, then went up and once again questioned the master: "Yesterday you spared me sixty blows with your stick. I do not know where I was wrong. Yesterday you refrained from giving me a beating. How had I erred that made me deserving of your stick?" Tōzan, asking about his mistake, started to question Unmon.

Cutting him off, Unmon shouted, "You sack of rice! What have you been doing, wandering

about like that from Kosei to Konan?" You useless rice-eater! Traveling about here and there on pilgrimage and gaining nothing, like some tourist on a sightseeing trip! It was just like visiting Kyoto and admiring nothing but the wonderful hotels and cuisine, without understanding a thing about the profound historical significance of the city's Buddhist temples. "At this Tōzan was enlightened."

Unmon's harsh, poisonous words surprised Tōzan, leaving him feeling blank and stupefied. His ego was obliterated, and the state of No Mind opened up.

Unmon and Tōzan's mondo was part of their intense and severe Zen training. I hope you will also notice how vivid Unmon's words were as he persistently questioned Tōzan three times and how severe his response to Tōzan's question was. If you were actually living in an environment of twenty-four-hour-a-day Zen practice you would surely understand this mondo. In the realm of the written world, where we see nothing more than the exchange of words between Unmon and Tōzan, it is impossible to convey the depth of the Zen interaction between the two. Nor do the words convey Unmon's compassion for Tōzan.

Mumon's comment — "If Unmon at that time, by giving Tōzan fodder for his Original Nature, had awakened him to the vivid, dynamic Zen life, Unmon's school would not have declined" — is a critique of "Unmon's Sixty Blows." If Unmon had struck Tōzan severely right at the very beginning of their mondo, he would have revitalized Tōzan and inspired him to vigorous training, so that Unmon's lineage would not have died out as it did. As it was, there was no one to follow Tōzan in transmitting Unmon's severe yet meticulous, detailed, and profound Zen understanding.

Mumon's comment continues: "Tōzan struggled all through the night in the sea of yes-and-no. When the day broke and he came to see the Master again, Unmon helped him to break through." Tōzan agonized for the entire night, not having received Unmon's sixty blows. "Where did I go wrong?" That was Tōzan's state of mind, just a mass of doubt. The next morning, he once again questioned Unmon, and Unmon—here we see the master's true compassion—gave him a true tongue-lashing. "Are you just wandering here and wandering there?" His words were severe, and full of poison.

Mumon's comment continues: "Tōzan was enlightened right then and there, but he was not bright enough." Although Tōzan was enlightened, his awakening was too slow. He was still stuck in the flow of time. His realization was not immediate.

Mumon's comment continues: "Let me ask you, 'Should Tōzan have been beaten, or not?' If you say he ought to have been beaten, then trees and grasses and everyone in the monastery ought to have been beaten. If you say he should not have been beaten, then Unmon was lying." Master Mumon is asking if Tōzan should have received Unmon's stick. If you think he should have, then grasses, trees, the monastic community—in other words, everything in existence—should have received Unmon's stick. But this matter is not about what the words are saying. It is about directly engaging, in a real way, with those objects that are being struck. Again, if you say that Tōzan should not have received Unmon's stick, if the real action should not have occurred, then Unmon's words were unbacked by any substance, so that he was, in effect, deceiving someone through words. He was talking nonsense.

Mumon's comment continues: "If you can be clear on this point, you are breathing through

one mouth with Tōzan." If you regard "do strike" and "don't strike" as being diametrically opposed, you will fall into contradiction and be at a loss as to how to respond. Here we need words with the power to spit out a fitting phrase. In English this would probably be series of words: one, two, three; a, b, c, d; etc. But this koan is not just speaking gibberish. It is only when you can clearly understand the contradiction here that life will be imparted to Tōzan and he can truly respond to Unmon.

Mumon's verse says: "A lion has a way of training its cubs." Lions teach their cubs by pushing them off a cliff into a deep ravine, making the cubs struggle desperately to climb back up. A true place of training is one where this kind of relationship exists between people. The mondo between Unmon and Tōzan was based on the depth of their resolve in training.

Mumon's verse continues: "When they climb up, the lion shoves them back down." Tōzan pretended to fall, but nimbly leapt away. Nevertheless, he lacked the capacity to comprehend and deflect Unmon's words, "I spare you sixty blows."

Mumon's verse continues: "For no reason, the lion hits them again." Unmon was forced to show Tōzan how serious he was. "You sack of rice!" When I was training in the monastery I, too, was scolded with such harsh and abusive words. They pierced to the bone and were almost impossible to bear. Tōzan had to endure such abuse twice—not only "I spare you sixty blows" but also "You sack of rice!"

Mumon's verse continues: "The first arrow just nicked him, but the second went deep." Tōzan's first arrow was still shallow and not yet fatal, but his second arrow was deep and took Tōzan's life. However, Tōzan's life, once

lost, was revived through Unmon's compassion. Understanding what he had been taught, Tōzan expressed his gratitude to Unmon for the great awakening he had experienced. This great enlightenment itself was a matter for Tōzan himself, and was not something he could transmit to others.

Both Unmon and Tōzan were strict Zen practitioners for their entire lives. In order for us, too, to attain a Zen state of being, we must first do zazen. As we go through life we look into our present dark and confused minds and gradually deepen our awareness of the continuous motion of the physical activity of breathing. With this practice of zazen, our minds become empty and our ego-consciousness is dispelled. That which we call “mind” disappears. What remains is just a conscious physical body.

What we are doing in practice is not a matter of refining the thinking mind. If, in practice, we are still bound by the thinking mind, we end up deceived by the mind and even more deluded than before. Practice is not about the thinking mind. On the contrary, we must drop our identification with the thinking mind and discard it. We regard our consciousness as constituting what we are, with the body merely attached to this. This is Descartes' notion of “I think, therefore I am.” To practice zazen is to know that it is through physical experience that consciousness forms.

In zazen we straighten our physical posture, bring our entire body into equilibrium through abdominal breathing, and simply devote ourselves completely to sitting meditation. Gradually the whole body becomes the breathing. Scattered thinking ceases, body and mind become stable, and one can sit forever. Thinking disappears and the practice of mind-body oneness fills one's awareness. With the power of life permeating the body,

the distinction between inside and outside disappears. Once this is grasped, you are Master and can live your life in freedom. Practice is the process of reaching this point, and I hope you will all realize this now.

***Shinzan-shiki* at Myōshin-ji and travel in Japan** **By Bill Flynn**

During his visit to Rinzai-ji this past March, Jiun Arslanian extended an invitation to Rinzai-ji Board members to attend the May 26 shinzan-shiki (new abbot installation ceremony; 晉山式) for Yamakawa Sōgen Roshi as the new Kanchō (Chief Abbot) of Myōshin-ji in Kyoto, Japan. For those of you who have not met Jiun, he is an American-born disciple of Yamakawa Roshi and was the head monk of Shōgen-ji while Myōren was training there under Yamakawa Roshi.

I arrived in Tokyo on June 22nd, then took the Shinkansen to meet Myōren the following morning at the Kyoto train station. From there we took a taxi to the Rōkoan Hermitage in the Higashiyama district for two days of sitting with Jeff Shore. The schedule has nine hours of sitting a day with two three-hour breaks, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Jeff, who is the lay dharma successor of Fukushima Keidō Roshi, gave sanzen in the morning and evening. During the breaks we could explore the neighborhood. We were fortunate to catch a special exhibition of the work of Sesshu Tōyō



View of koi pond at Myōkan-ji

(雪舟 等楊), the great 15th century Japanese landscape painter, at the nearby Kyoto National Museum.

After the morning sit on Saturday the 25th, Myōren and I left by local train to visit Gudo Kanai Osho at Myōkan-ji. His temple is in a beautiful location in the countryside near a small town. There is a mountain spring and koi pond which adds to the charm. While there we visited the gravesite of Jōshū Roshi where, in accord with his wishes, a portion of his ashes are interred. As a gesture of commemoration and respect, the three of us joined in chanting the Heart Sutra. Afterwards over lunch, we continued to enjoy the warm company of Gudo Osho who—as did his father—enjoys sharing sake generously with invited guests.

That evening, back in Kyoto, Myōshin-ji sponsored a traditional ten-course meal for several hundred guests at a nearby hotel. There must have been several hundred people there.

Yamakawa Roshi gave a talk which I, as a non-speaker of Japanese, did not understand. Myōren, however, had provided an introduction just prior to the dinner. During that conversation, the Roshi expressed his sincere thanks for the work we are doing to keep the practice alive, to which I expressed my gratitude in return for the support he has given us in recent years.

The following morning, the Shinzan-shiki (Abbot installation ceremony) began around 9:00, with Yamakawa Roshi and an entourage of monks, nuns, and laypeople going to important sites within the Myōshin-ji temple complex. There was chanting at each site before the entourage finally arrived at the Dharma Hall where the ceremony was to take place. As the Hall did not have enough space

for all guests, many of us sat just outside with a beneath a large canopy. The location gave us a good view with a CCTV screen as well. Chanting, often accompanied by drums, was a prominent feature of the ceremony. Afterwards, we went to the nearby Hanazano Kaikan hotel where we were treated to lunch and offered gifts by which to remember this special occasion. Yamakawa Roshi gave a short talk, then visited each of the tables, showing endless patience as he posed for selfies with many of those present.



Yamakawa Roshi greeting guests after the ceremony

Immediately following, Myōren and I left to catch the Shinkansen train to visit Seiya Osho in Sendai. The trip took about four and a half hours, and it was evening when we arrived. Seiya Osho met us at the station and drove us to Matsushima where his temple, Toen-ji, is located. It was about a forty-five-minute drive, and he entertained us along the way with stories of his visits to the United States, one of which included hiking to the top of Mount Baldy. After a late dinner, where the chef gave us special treatment as guests of Seiya Osho, we retired for the evening at a nearby hotel.

The following morning, Seiya Osho gave us a tour of his temple which included a beautiful Sutra Hall, impressive collection of scrolls dating back centuries, and a Buddhist kindergarten. Seiya Osho then surprised me by

telling me I was going to give a talk to the class of forty or so kids! With Myōren translating, I did my best.

I told them that I wanted to visit the place where my teacher had come from to teach Buddhism where I live in California. They didn't know where that was, but when I told them I lived near Disneyland and near to where Shohei Ohtani plays baseball, they were thrilled and cute as could be! After that, we had a short drive to visit Zuigan-ji, where Jōshū Roshi had done most of his training. Seiya Osho, who is Jōshū Roshi's nephew, gave us a tour of its beautiful grounds and buildings. Unlike the urban environs of Myōshin-ji, it is in a bucolic setting and not far from the ocean. The waters from the 2011 tsunami came almost to the gate of Zuigan-ji, but left the temple undamaged.



Kindergarten children posing for photos with author

After lunch, Seiya Osho drove us to the local train station where we gave our heartfelt thanks and goodbyes. From Sendai, Myōren continued north to Sapporo to meet with Minakawa Roshi. I caught the Shinkansen to Tokyo and flew back the following day to my familiar world after a truly wonderful and rewarding trip. A special thanks to Myōren for making it possible!

Interview w/ Myōren Yasukawa, Temple Director of Rinzaï-ji Zen Center Conducted by Monica Ordaz

Monica. Could you provide some detail on the location and traditional practices at Shōgen-ji?

Myōren. Located in Minokamo, Gifu Prefecture, Japan, Shōgen-ji is a temple affiliated with the Myōshin-ji branch of the Japanese Rinzaï School of Zen Buddhism. This temple has a rich history dating back to 1330 when it served as a place of practice for Kanzan Egen Zenji, one of the founders of Myōshin-ji. Within Shōgen-ji there is the Shōgen Sōdō, a training monastery where unsui (Zen monks in training) undergo rigorous training. This part of the temple is typically closed to the public.

Monica. What did a typical day look like for you?

Myōren. Shōgen-ji maintains a consistent schedule throughout the year, treating all three- hundred and sixty-five days as sesshin. The kaijō (wake-up) time remains the same year-round, and there is little difference between the seichu and seikan periods, except that during seikan, there is only one sanzen per day. Shōgen-ji is also known for having a schedule that is unusually strict since there are no off days (benji) which unsui are allowed to take in most other Zen monasteries.

The training schedule includes the practice of takahatsu (formal begging). Typically, each of us uses a shihatsu bag that hangs around our necks to receive from three to five kg of rice, some money, and anything else that is given that day.

We walk very fast most of the way, running between houses in straw sandals, often with broken skin and blisters on our feet as a result. Due to the pandemic, my first two years were limited to doing only kinpatsu (short-distance) takuhatsu with no Tenjin (lunch). (Shōgen-ji's kinpatsu takuhatsu is on a par with what is considered long-distance in other monasteries.)

After the pandemic restrictions eased, we began regular takuhatsu of varying distances. These could include Tenjin, a custom by which we are treated to lunch (usually containing a fair amount of protein and alcohol) by villagers in their homes. As tenzo (temple cook), I also did yasaihatsu (begging for vegetables) with a cart near the temple.

Monica. What was your favorite part of being in a monastery?

Myōren. My favorite part of being in a monastery was watching the four seasons unfold before my eyes while drumming hokku (taiko drum) for teishō and various ceremonies. The taiko drum was located right by the shoji door that is normally open to the garden. As tenzo at Shōgen-ji, I was responsible for hokku in addition to cooking. Serving as tenzo through both winter and summer seichū (formal training period), I had the privilege of witnessing the serene garden of Shōgen-ji in all the beauty of its seasonal transformations.

Another significant result of the rigorous practice at Shōgen-ji was the deep sense of authenticity and self-discovery. Despite the great challenges, the experience of being constantly seen and having no place to hide allowed me to confront my habits. This level of immersion in traditional practice, supported by fellow monks, was incredibly rewarding.

It was an opportunity to witness my mind and transform in a way that one is unlikely to encounter in a less demanding environment. The sense of community and shared purpose among the monks also created a profound sense of connection and support which I cherish deeply now.

Monica. Would you choose to undergo this training again?

Myōren. Certainly, if such an *en* (dharmic connection; 縁) were to arise.

Monica. How has your experience at Shōgen-ji shaped your daily practice back at home?

Myōren. The rigorous discipline, the practice of takuhatsu, and the emphasis on letting go in every task have instilled in me a deeper sense of presence and purpose. I've learned the importance of community and interdependence through daily monastic life. This has in turn influenced how I engage with and support my local community. The physical endurance and mental fortitude required at Shōgen-ji have strengthened my resilience and commitment to practice, enabling me to approach daily challenges with greater calm and clarity.

Additionally, the dietary practices and the importance of gratitude for food and resources have become central to my everyday life, reminding me to live in deep gratitude. Rinzai-ji is also now able to offer intensive ango practice. This is a direct result of my training at Shōgen-ji.

Monica. How can a lay practitioner get a sense of monastic life?

Myōren. Join the Japan Zazen Pilgrimage this coming October! You'll not only visit but also stay at a training monastery and practice alongside the monks in training.

Monica. Do you have any additional comments regarding your experience?

Myōren. My experience at Shōgen-ji has profoundly shaped my daily practice at Rinzai-ji. Yamakawa Rōshi's reminder that every day is sesshin guided me to approach each moment with careful attention and dedication, helping me to directly observe the mind with deeper understanding.

It is uncommon for a nun to undergo full-time monastic training alongside monks in Japan; Shōgen-ji had never previously had a nun in the roles of densu (chanter) or san'nou (inji) until my training. In light of this, I am especially grateful.

Overall, the practices and teachings at Shōgen-ji have enriched my daily life, fostered personal growth, and deepened my commitment to serving as Temple Director at Rinzai-ji.

From the Temple Director — Myōren Yasukawa

I am deeply honored to return to Rinzai-ji as Temple Director after three and a half years of monastic training in Japan. My time away was transformative, and I am profoundly grateful to those who have maintained the daily schedule at Rinzai-ji in my absence as well as to everyone who attended ceremonies, both in person and online, during the challenging pandemic period. I also am indebted to the Rinzai-ji Zen Center Board of Directors for making it possible for me to pursue formal training in Japan. That unwavering support was essential, and I return with renewed

dedication. The events and activities described below are evidence of the continuing vitality of Zen practice at Rinzai-ji.

Rōhatsu Sesshin and Jōdō-e ceremony. The Rōhatsu Sesshin began on December 4th, with seven of us gathering to sit together. We celebrated Buddha's Enlightenment Day, Jōdō-e, on December 10th with Koyo Osho and Sohan Osho, with nineteen people in attendance. The ceremony serves as an annual reminder of our shared commitment to practice in the Dharma.



Nirvana Ōzesshin with Shōkyō Minakawa Roshi. In the face of challenging snow conditions in February, the Nirvana Ōzesshin was held at Mount Baldy Zen Center with twenty-six attendees. This came after a four-year hiatus in sesshin practice at Mount Baldy. Minakawa Roshi maintained a full schedule, offering koan practice and frequently participating in zendo practice. Going forward, Minakawa Roshi has expressed his willingness to conduct sesshins three times a year, for which we are grateful.

Visitors from Japan. On March 3rd, Jiun Zenji, a head monk at Shōgen-ji, brought several of his Japanese Dharma friends—Gyokuryū Osho, Yusen Osho, and Ichimura Kōbin—for a special program, “The Joy of Dharmic Friendship.” The event drew twenty-five attendees and featured exchanges that were both informative and lively. The guests stayed at Rinzai-ji and enjoyed various activities and sightseeing while in Los Angeles.

Spring Ango. At the start of a month-long Spring Ango training period beginning on March 18th, Rinzai-ji welcomed Sylvain Bellemare from Montreal, Canada, as a new resident at Gentei-an and full-time practice participant. Jiun Zenji delivered short talks daily during scheduled zazenkaï and sesshin. Ango concluded with a five-day sesshin followed by the Sunday program on April 21st. Ashley Frith, Board member and Rinzai-ji resident, offered yoga classes during zazenkaï. She also served as tenzo, and we had Chad a former resident that flew from Buffalo joined for a juice-fast zazenkaï, keeping everyone well-nourished and energized throughout. Thanks go to Jiun Zenji for his talks and to all in-person and online participants.

Hanamatsuri Sesshin and Ceremony. Yōshin David Radin led Hanamatsuri Sesshin from April 1st to 6th with a total of twenty-four in-person and online attendees. Koyo Osho served as Doshi for the ceremony after which Yōshin delivered a Dharma talk. Jōshū Roshi's birthday was celebrated as well, with a musical performance by Paul Humphreys to commemorate the occasion.



Also at Rinzai-ji. Thirteen participants gathered for a Christmas potluck and nine for a New Year's program which included a Shōgen-ji-style dinner and a traditional breakfast. The new monthly calligraphy and tea ceremony programs, held on the third and fourth Saturdays of the month, have been well received and well attended. These provide opportunities for neighbors and sangha members to engage in cultural activities which have a historical relationship to Zen practice. Thanks are due to Sōgen for leading the calligraphy program and to Asami Sensei and Masako Sensei for teaching the refined details of the tea ceremony.



Unified Mindfulness Retreat. From April 30th to May 4th, Rinzai-ji hosted for the first time a Unified Mindfulness retreat, led by Julianna Raye. There were twenty-nine participants, with all but five staying at Gentei-an and Rinzai-ji. Sōgen and I served as tenzo for the retreat. Many expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to practice in a Zen setting and to experience samu as an aspect of meditation practice. In his online talks, which were a highlight of the retreat, Shinzen Young shared his experiences at Rinzai-ji and as translator for teisho by Jōshū Roshi.

Participants shared positive and heartfelt comments during the closing circle, and several have expressed interest in future practice at Rinzai-ji.

Rinzai-ji-at-Large. In January, Sōgen and I attended a one-day zazenkai at Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, warmly welcomed by Kwong Roshi, his son Nyoze and Nyoze's wife, Kashin. We congratulated Nyoze on his installation as Abbot. Also in January, we attended a zazenkai at One Drop Zendo in Los Angeles. Sōgen spent February visiting his family in Japan. He brought back a gift from Yamakawa Roshi at Shōgen-ji, a hanging scroll that reads, "The one with nothing to do is noble" (*buji kore kijin*; 無事は貴人). In April, Sōgen and I visited Sogen Billingsley and Shinkai Navarre at Haku-un-ji Zen Center in Tempe, AZ. In May, Bill Flynn and I attended the Shinzanshiki installation ceremony of Yamakawa Roshi at Myōshin-ji in Kyoto. [Please see "Shinzanshiki and Travels in Japan" in this issue.]



Maintenance and Repairs. Rinza-ji replaced the entire outdoor water line due to leakage in the courtyard. Following a burglary in February,

Rinza-ji saw to upgrading of the security system by installing a floodlight camera as well as new locks, and to the repair of damaged doors. Maintenance included tree trimming, gutter cleaning, replacing of the attic vent screen, mulching, and tending of the gardens.

Additional improvements included adding landscape lights, upgrading the irrigation system, adding a hand railing as well as anti-slip tape on the zendo porch, and installing HVAC systems in the zendo as well as all other rooms at Rinza-ji.

In resuming my role as Temple Director, I am committed to fostering a supportive and vibrant practice environment at Rinza-ji. Thank you all for your continued dedication and support.

In gassho,

Myōren, Temple Director, Rinza-ji Zen Center

Welcoming Ashley Lauren Frith, new member of the Rinza-ji Board

Ashley is a violist, singer, songwriter, anti-racism facilitator and music educator. Focusing on care partnerships, her anti-racism work particularly addresses how racism affects our individual and collective interiority as it amplifies all other forms of oppression. In her approach to this work, she gives special emphasis to embodied trauma practice.

Ashley has been practicing Zen meditation for over fifteen years. Her teacher is Yoshin David Radin of Ithaca Zen Center. She also studied and practiced Zen hospice care for three years at the New York Zen Center for Contemplative care with Koshin Paley Ellison and Robert Chodo Campbell.



Ashley has also trained at the Florida Community of Mindfulness, the Cambridge Zen Center and the San Francisco Zen Center. She is a faculty member of the LA Philharmonic's YOLA National Institute, teaches yoga and has recently started a clowning practice.

From the Outgoing Chair of the Rinzai-ji Board By Elisa Atwill

Dear Rinzai-ji Sangha and Friends,

As summer is now upon us, I have good news for those planning to visit or practice at Rinzai-ji. We now have a functioning air-conditioning system which will alleviate some suffering from the heat!

We started working on this project in March before my term on the Board of Directors ended, and I am very grateful to the new Chair of the Board, Sam Landsberger, for his knowledge and expertise as well as a substantial contribution from Denkyo-an to see it to completion.

It is with much fondness and gratitude that I look back on my years of participation as Chair of the Rinzai-ji Board of Directors. Together we made it possible for Myōren to train for over three years at Shōgen-ji monastery in Japan, created alternative ways to practice together during the pandemic using Zoom (which continues to be useful!), and made many

physical improvements to the temple as well as welcoming many new practitioners. I am especially grateful to Jion Ned Shepard for handling communications and orientations, Shoei Tadashi Higashide and Luis Melodelgado for taking such good care of the temple, Myōkyō Osho for her efforts as Interim Temple Director, Ron Berger for supervising repairs of the properties, and fellow Board members for their hard work in supporting the organization. A special bow goes to Soko Paul Humphreys for his many years of service as well as his continued participation on Board committees and as lead editor for *News of Rinzai-ji*.

Thanks to Myōren and Sōgen, we now have a full schedule of practice-related events and training opportunities. I am looking forward to being present for them.

Bowing deeply,

Elisa

Remembering Shozan Marc Joslyn, 1928–2024 By Koyo Engennach and Andrew Joslyn

Mount Baldy Zen Center is deeply saddened to announce that Shozan Marc Joslyn Osho has died. He passed away peacefully at home on May 12. He was 95 years old. Shozan was one of Roshi's earliest American students. He was a pioneer and leader in many ways in establishing our sangha. Shozan was one of the founders of Mount Baldy Zen Center and played a pivotal role in getting it established as well as helping to establish Cimarron Zen Center (Rinzai-ji).

Shozan and Hajni lived just below Mount Baldy village for thirteen years during which time he served as Vice Abbott of the Zen Center. Both were dedicated students. Shozan remained greatly appreciative of Jōshū Roshi and his teaching.

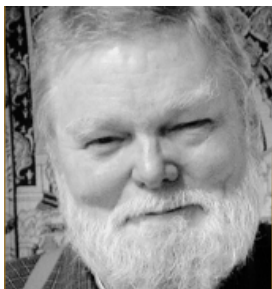
He had recently expressed the hope that the Roshi's students would gather together with the intention of clearly formulating the core principles of Tathagatha Zen. Shozan was deeply interested in studying the relationship of Zen to western psychology, science and cultural norms.

Here is a statement from his son Andrew:

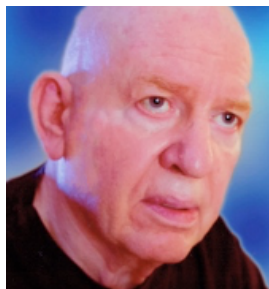
Dr. Marc Joslyn was a mountain of a man, in personality, presence and physical size. He was born on July 8, 1928 in Los Angeles, California to Lys LeFevre and Marcellus Newell Joslyn. He had an incredible mind, contributed to the fields of psychology, philosophy, religion and the arts. Dr. Joslyn became a student of Joshu Sasaki Roshi in 1964 and was instrumental in founding the first Zen Buddhist center in Los Angeles and, subsequently, Mt. Baldy Zen Center. He was ordained as a monk in 1972 and an osho in 1982. Dr. Joslyn, along with his wife Hajni, moved to Bainbridge Island in 1985 and founded the Entsuan Zen center in 1995. Up until his death he was an active leader and teacher of Zen Buddhism, family therapist and clinical psychologist, and a loving husband, father, and community member.

Shozan is survived by his wife Hajni, his four children, and his four grandchildren.

A memorial service in memory of Dr. Shozan Marc Joslyn Osho will be held on August 10, 2024 at the Manor House on Bainbridge Island, WA at 1:00 pm. Mount Baldy will be doing a formal memorial service on Zoom that will be coordinated with the August 10 service on Bainbridge Island.



Shozan Marc Joslyn



Hokaku Jeffrey Maitland

Remembering Hokaku Jeffrey Maitland, 1943-2023

By Sogen Charles Billingsley

On December 28, 2023, at the age of 80, our dear friend Hokaku Jeff Maitland passed away due to complications from Parkinson's Disease. There was a well-attended memorial ceremony held at Haku-un-ji Zen Center on February 18th, with a full zendo, family and many friends, some attending through Zoom. Hokaku is survived by his loving wife Hogetsu Lee-Ann Maitland, daughters Jessica, Lys, Deva, and three grandchildren.

Jeff Maitland received his Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, eventually becoming a tenured professor of philosophy at Purdue University. During his time at Purdue, Jeff would occasionally talk about the energy of an encounter with a visiting Zen teacher.

Lee-Ann is a native of Minnesota where she and Jeff met. They would both practice with Dainin Katagiri Roshi in Minnesota for a time as well.

He left academia with a heartfelt energy to study Roling. This would become his new professional calling. He was an intuitive healer, helping guide folks out of debilitating pain with skillful means and gentle Roling. Countless people's lives were changed by his work, and he became world-renowned in the field of Roling Structural Integration. In addition, he was a prolific author, and his book *Mind, Body, Zen* included many encounters (zennits) with Jōshū Roshi and fellow practitioners—highly recommended for anybody who has practiced with the Roshi.

Jōshū Roshi would become Jeff's principal teacher. He was ordained at Haku-un-ji in 1998 and was a dedicated student and disciple of the Roshi for the remainder of his life.

While in assisted living, he had no trouble sharing his humor, compassion and life wisdom with those around him. Hokaku was a joy to be around and anyone who crossed his path would find it impossible to leave without a heartfelt smile and laugh.

We are grateful for your life, dear friend.

Briefly Noted — *Zen and Poetry: Letters and Uncollected Writings of R. H. Blyth*. Edited with an introduction by Norman Waddell. Boston, MA: Shambhala, 2022. By Soko Paul Humphreys

R. H. Blyth is for me a hero of literature. His books altered the world I could know, both in poems and through them — Jane Hirshfield (cited on the cover)

This volume of previously unpublished letters and writings will come as a source of insight and delight to those already acquainted with the work of R. H. Blyth. Since its original publication in 1942, his *Zen and in English Literature and Oriental Classics* has itself become a classic in the spheres of criticism and practice that are referenced in its title.

A large portion of the letters included within *Zen and Poetry* are addressed to Robert Aitken with whom Blyth lived as a fellow noncombatant internee in Kobe during the Second World War. In evidence within this correspondence is the high regard in which Blyth's erudition was held in post-war Japan, not only by the academic establishment, but by the Imperial Household of the Emperor (Blyth served for a number of years as personal tutor for the Crown Prince). His later correspondence with D. T. Suzuki reveals the keenness of a Zen thinker who understood the limits of thinking about Zen.

Within the writings, essay titles such as “Buddhist Sermons in Christian Texts” and “English Humor and Japanese Humor” hint at an eclecticism that is attentive to essential difference while at the same time alert to human kinship across cultures. None of these essays is more representative of Blyth's ‘first love’ among genres of Japanese literature than “Zen and Haiku.” (A few excerpts appear below.) Blyth sums up his notion of poetry and its standing in relation to philosophy and religion in the observation that appears in a 1955 letter to Robert Aitken: “... [Just] as with Zen, it is better to go to Platonism through or with the poets.”

For those approaching Blyth for the first time through this volume, a congenial point of entry is the collection of prefaces that Blyth was invited to write for the works of R. L. Stevenson, H. D. Thoreau, and R. W. Emerson for publication in Japan.

Correspondence and writings that comprise the overall volume are selected and edited by Norman Waddell, an esteemed Buddhist scholar whose translations of Hakuin are widely known. Waddell's high regard for Blyth and his work are evident in an informative biography that provides context and chronology for most items within the collection.

Taken as a whole, this volume demonstrates not only the equanimity of Blyth's engagement with the literary traditions of the English-speaking world and of Japan, but with the world at large. While we can marvel at his achievement, it is a good guess that he would exhort us, as his readers, not to leave it at that.

Offered with a deep bow to Dharma Brother Rakusan Robert Ricci (Zen Mountain Monastery) for calling this book to my attention.

Excerpts from “Zen and Haiku”:

さまづけに *sama dzu ke ni*
育てられたる *sodate raretaru*
蚕かな *kaiko ka na*

Bringing up the silkworms ...
They call them
“Mister”

— Issa (1763 – 1828)

Blyth comments: “The word ‘sama’ (‘Mister’) implies some gentle, pious, familiar attitude to the silkworm.”

ものいわず *monoiwazu*
客と亭主と *kyaku to teishu to*
白菊と *shiragiku to*

They spoke no word
The visitor, the host,
And the white chrysanthemum

— Ryōta (1718 – 87)

Blyth comments: “In India Buddhism seems to have been a highly philosophical thing, and this tendency increased in China, but at the same time there was an opposite tendency, culminating in Zen and Jōdo, towards simplicity and non- intellectuality.”

どもも夜 *domo mo yoru*
永だらうぞ *eidrau zo*
淋しかろ *sabishikaro*

For you fleas too,
The night must be long,
It must be lonely

— Issa (as above)

Blyth comments: “[P]erhaps the most Buddhist verse ever written ... a testimony [both] to the greatness and weakness of mankind.”

Dana Paramita

With nine bows, Rinzai-ji acknowledges the contributions of the following institutions and individuals since fall 2023.

Agnes Lin
Andreas Zunker
Brian Koffman
Catherine Alelyunas
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Kendō Hal Roth
Keye McCulloch
Kingsley Hines
Kobin Ichimura
Marian Pines
Max Girin
Monica Ordaz
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Koshin Susan Crozier
Piercesare Grimaldi
Pina Kamolnick
Richard Anderson
Robert Robbins
Robert Wesson
Sayyad Chakarian
Sotaku Fund
Jundo Steve Slusher
Sylvain Bellemare
Tammy Meister
Tony Farina
Kigen William Ekeson
Yusen-ji
Zuiryu-ji

**A Zen Monk Talks on the Diamond Sutra
By Kyōzan Jōshū Sasaki Roshi. Compiled and
edited by Kendō Hal Roth with the assistance
of Haruyo Sasaki (2012 [1977]). Excerpt from
Lecture 19.**

In the appropriate form of self-giving, one must not be "supported by the notion of a sign." To be supported by the notion of a sign means to view the object from the subjective standpoint alone. We can compare this to a situation where we see a flower and think it is lovely. This thought is a sign and affirmation of our subjectivity. We have not fully accomplished the activity of Giving until we allow the assumption of a subjective knower to fully disintegrate.

In our ordinary lives it is easy to give ourselves over to the apparent objects of our experience because so many are attractive. But this feeling of attractiveness arises from the subjective identity which chooses what it likes and dislikes. Giving based on this subjective self is not true Giving.

In true Giving, we must utterly dissolve, surrender to the formless and manifest it through our own bodies. This may seem impossible, but in fact it is already accomplished because the Self is always manifesting as all that appears.

So in *fuse* [Sanskrit, *dana*], to give a gift is to manifest Self as object. Since God or Buddha has no-self and no-object, there is no giving, no giver and no gift.

How do you give yourself to the Buddha?

Weekly Practice Schedule

Morning Zendo

Wednesday - Saturday 6:00 – 7:30 AM.
Zazen & Kinhin; Choka (chanting) followed
by short work period and breakfast

Evening Zendo

Wednesday - Friday Evening 7:00 – 8:30
PM. Zazen & Kinhin

Sunday Program

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM followed by lunch



Newsletter Committee:

*Soko Paul Humphreys
Myōkyō Judith McLean
Monica Ordaz
Myōren Yasukawa*

RETURN REQUESTED/

Rinzai-ji Zen Center
2505 South Cimarron St.
Los Angeles, CA. 90018



2024 EVENT CALENDAR

Month	Date	Event	Location
July	15-20	Hô-on 5-day Sesshin with Chigan Rôshi	RZJ
	21	Founder's Day (<i>Kaisan-ki</i>)	RZJ
	27	Annual Memorial Service (<i>Shôgentsu-ki</i>)	RZJ
	July 29 - Sep 4	SUMMER ANGO	RZJ
August	July 29 - Aug 3	Opening Sesshin	RZJ
	6-8	3-day Zazenkai	RZJ
	13-17	5-day Sesshin	RZJ
	23-25	3-day Zazenkai	RZJ
September	Aug 31 - Sep4	Closing 5-day Sesshin with Jiun Zenji	RZJ
October	1-5	Daruma-ki 5-day Sesshin with Minakawa Roshi	MBZC
	6	Daruma-ki	MBZC
November	4 - December 8	WINTER ANGO	RZJ
	4-9	Opening Sesshin with Yoshin Radin	RZJ
	12-14	3-day Zazenkai	RZJ
	19-23	5-day Sesshin	RZJ
	26-28	3-day Zazenkai	RZJ
December	1-7	Rôhatsu 7-day Sesshin with Minakawa Roshi	MBZC
	8	Jôdô-e	MBZC
	31	Year End Program	RZJ