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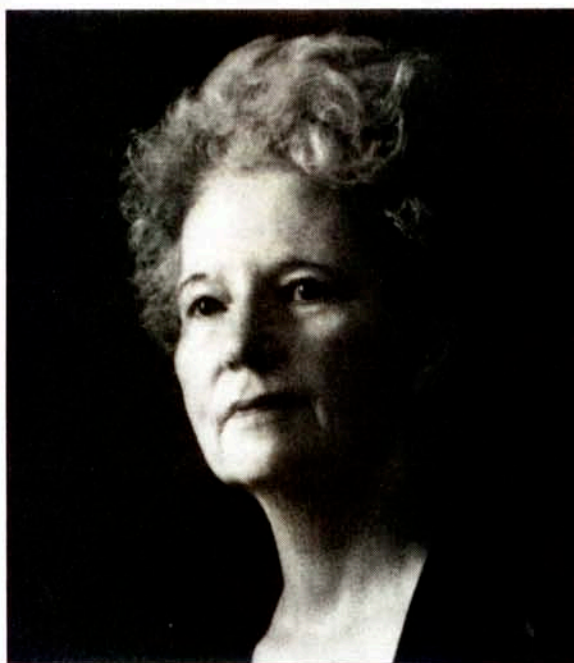


Dai Bosatsu Zendo  
Kongo-ji

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ZEN STUDIES SOCIETY  
SPRING / SUMMER 1998

## My Head at Your Feet: To Dorris Carlson

*Eido T. Shimano Roshi*



ON JANUARY 24, 1998, DORRIS CARLSON, wife of Chester Carlson, passed away in Rochester, New York. She was 94 years old. I was in Japan for my annual teaching and lecturing journey, when a facsimile came from Dai Bosatsu Zendo informing me of her departure. I placed the fax on a table and burned incense called Misho, the one that she really liked. I then chanted the Great Compassionate Dharani in the hotel room.

There are few individuals of whom I often think, "If I had not meet him or her during this incarnation, my life would have been quite a different one." Dorris was certainly one of those few. Remembering some important things she said to me, I would like to share them in the hope that you too can appreciate her words.

*"I'm not afraid of death. Death is like going from one room to the next room."*

Dear Dorris,

You told me this sentence quite a few times. Each time I was impressed by your insight. Now you have moved to "the next room," and everyday I am burning incense to you and conversing. Strangely enough, we communicate

better now than any other time, as there is no door between this room and "the next room."

*"In the early days the Christian Bible contained reincarnation. The ancient holies knew it was only a transformation and not extinction. But for some political reason that important part was removed from the Bible."*

[CONTINUED PAGE 3]



Dear Dorris,

Before you showed interest in the Vedanta you were a faithful Christian. But after studying the Vedanta philosophy and meditation practice you had a great experience of deathlessness. So, the latter part of your recent incarnation you lived with the unshakable conviction that Life will never end. You expressed this insight beautifully in the following way:

*"That which is called God by the Christians, Jehovah by the Jews, Ultimate Reality by the Hindus, The Buddhmind by the Buddhists, Allah by Mohammedans, and which the Chinese call the Tao—that is the Real Self, and is all-pervading. May we experience that!"*

Dear Dorris,

I think this is your Teisho. Though everybody is saying more or less the same thing, when you said it I felt it was so true. You were not quoting from someone's saying but, rather expressing it through your personal insight.

*"Taisan, you came all the way from Japan to teach Zen Buddhist Meditation for Americans but, we Americans have not done anything for you. My wife and I talked about it. We would very much like to support your work."*

Dear Dorris,

Chester said this at the small apartment on the West side of Manhattan at 3 PM on September 21, 1967. How can I forget that moment. Though this was said to me by your husband, it was clear that both of you had discussed it. Thus New York Zendo Shobo-ji was born in 1968, just four days before your husband departed to "the next room."

In my diary it states, "There is only one condition," Chester said, continuing, "this donation should be anonymous." Also it said, in Chester's words, "If you have a temple in the city it will cost more, so why don't you try to find something outside of the city." I was deeply moved by his humble attitude. I kept your names anonymous for at least two years. But the board of directors wanted to know. So, I told the board and stressed your anonymity, but it leaked. The more one wants not to be known, the more one is known. The more one wants to be known, the less one is known. Like the *Tao Te Ching*, a beautiful paradox. Now, because of your generosity, both Chester and you are internationally known as the benefactors of Dai Bosatsu Zendo and New York Zendo.

*"Please come to Rochester, and during the memorial service for Chester, please give a short speech."*

Dear Dorris,

I said to you, "Oh no, I will do anything for you but, for this please ask some elder teacher." You said strongly, "I would like you to do it," so I accepted. I went to Rochester with a few people from the Zen Studies Society. We stayed at an inn. My mind was occupied with my forth-coming speech. I did zazen, with a paper and pencil by the side of my seat. I must confess that I wanted to speak impressively. Thoughts came. I examined them carefully. Is it honest, is it true? The answer was no. I sat again. New thoughts came. I questioned them in the same manner. Again, I had to say no. Thus, all night I struggled to give a talk of only a few minutes. When the dawn came I still did not have a clear idea for the speech, but because I sat all night long I had confidence. This was a good lesson for me.

I went to the auditorium of the Xerox corporation. It was packed with thousands of people. A few distinguished people spoke about Chester. At the very end my turn came. I climbed to the stage, and right in front of me were Yasutani Roshi, Suzuki Roshi from the Zen Center of San Francisco, Baker Roshi (then Dick Baker), Aiho and Sylvan Bush. Mr. Yamaguchi, a student of Nyogen Senzaki, began to play the Shakuhachi flute. I was amazingly calm. As you know, we all did Zazen for one minute and I spoke directly to Chester. At the end I struck the bell. The melody of Impossible Dream began. How can I forget that day. It was September 26, 1968.

*"This is my quest, to follow that star / No matter how hopeless, no matter how far / To fight for the right without question or pause / To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause!"*

Dear Dorris,

You told me how Chester and you both liked the musical *Man of La Mancha*, particularly its theme song *The Quest*, (*The Impossible Dream*). You told me that both of you went to see the musical many times and Chester always cried when Don Quixote sang that song. Dorris, do you remember after Chester's departure we went to Broadway together to see *Man of La Mancha*? When *The Quest* began, you grabbed my hand and cried. Perhaps this summoned an intimate memory of Chester, or some mysterious power which cannot be imagined. Nevertheless, that evening I saw another aspect of you.

If someone asks, "What is Mahayana Buddhism?" I would quote these lyrics from *The Quest*.

*"Taisan, let's meditate together at least for one hour."*

Dear Dorris,

After lighting Misho incense in your house in Rochester, you and I began to do Zazen facing the wall. I remember your beautiful sitting posture. [CONTINUED NEXT PAGE]





*Mr. and Mrs. Chester and Dorris Carlson.*

We went into the fathomless, boundless state. When I looked at my watch nearly three hours had passed. I struck the bell to finish Zazen and told you that we had just sat for three hours. You said, "Imagine! I thought it was only ten minutes."

*"Why don't you come to see me in Rochester?" "For what?" I replied. You said, "Many people say to me that Chester had promised to give funding, thus they come." I said, "I had no such promise." You said, "Please come anyway, Taisan."*

Dear Dorris,

Do you remember at that time you said, "Please start a permanent country Zendo where everybody can come and meditate. I will be responsible to provide you with the funds without any conditions. Make it as elegant as possible and it should last a long time. Will you do it?"

On the way back from Rochester I was pale, asking myself, "Can I meet her expectation?" I was almost going to go back to Rochester and say, "Thank you, but I can not do it." However, the Dharma arranged it.

One year passed, during which I ruminated over your proposal. In the mean time, I met Bill Johnstone, former vice-president of Bethlehem Steel Corporation. He had just retired, was in excellent health and had sufficient experience, but had no particular work to do. As his wife Millie was coming to the Zendo, he had some idea of what Zazen was. I went to his apartment near the United Nations and explained the situation. After listening to me silently Bill said, "Taisan, if you like a comfortable life, forget it. If you want to have a meaningful life, do it. I will help you." With

these words I decided to concretize your fund into your wish.

The next year you were in New York, staying at the Regency Hotel on Park Avenue, and in your room after dinner you gave me an envelope, saying, "This is double." I said, "I don't understand what you mean." "Please, open it," you said. I opened it and found twice as much funding as you had already provided for the country Zendo. With such casual manner, with trust and loving compassion, so generously you wanted me to establish a country Zendo where meditation would continue. I truly committed

myself to this historic project, as this was and still is the only way to express my gratitude to you and Chester. Thus, Dai Bosatsu Zendo was born on July 4th, 1976, the Bicentennial Day of the United States of America.

*"My head at your feet."*

When I even just recall this phrase my eyes become wet. So many times you literally brought your forehead toward my feet. I said, "No, I'm not worthy." You said, "This is my practice, please let me do it." "No," I said. "Please let me do it," you said, and did.

In September 1998, thirty years after your husband's departure, New York Zendo Shobo-ji will celebrate its 30th anniversary at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. You watched the birth and growth of these two Zendos, and upon their completing three decades, this January you walked to "the next room." It has already been 22 years since DBZ was established, and literally thousands upon thousands of people from all over the world have come to sit. So I feel that I have met your expectations.

Both Zendos enshrine photographs of Chester and you, regarding you as *Kaiki*, which means principle benefactors in the establishment of the temples. Every year we commemorate Chester's day, September 19, and from now on we shall do likewise on your day, January 24. Not only for my generation, but for generation after generation this tradition will continue. Your "Impossible Dream" has come true. Now it is my turn to bow and say to you,

*"My head at your feet."*



## From the Board

*Notes from the Annual Meeting of the Zen Studies Society  
Board of Directors by Secretary Hozo Willem Pretorius*

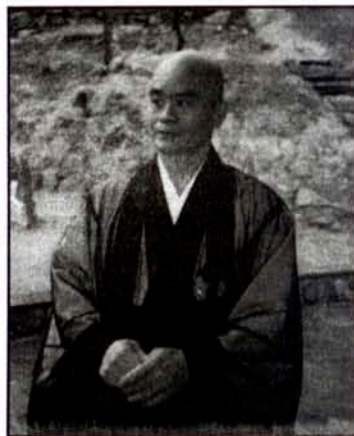
ON MARCH 1, 1998, the Board unanimously endorsed a proposal by Eido Roshi to appoint Jiro-san Andy Afable as Vice Abbot of the Zen Studies Society. While emphasizing that he was not retiring as Abbot and Chairman of the Board, Eido Roshi said that the creation of this position was necessary for the future growth of the Society.

A long-time student of Eido Roshi and presently the General Manager of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, Jiro-san will be the first person to hold this position. Eido Roshi suggested that the installation ceremony be held at Dai Bosatsu Zendo on July 4th of this year, the 22nd anniversary of the monastery's dedication. Meanwhile, Jiro-san will gradually take on more responsibilities and undergo training in the ceremonial aspects of Zen practice. To start, he will lead DBZ's shorter sesshins and give Dharma talks even when Eido Roshi is in attendance, and also lead daily Morning Service when Roshi is away.

While he was pleased that the board supported his decision, Eido Roshi added that he expects the Sangha also to acknowledge and support Jiro-san in his new position as Vice Abbot.

The Board wishes to express its deep gratitude to Eido Roshi for his decision to continue his dedicated work on behalf of the Zen Studies Society, the Sangha and, most importantly, the Buddha Dharma. The Board also congratulates Jiro-san and offers its support on this challenging new path.

At the same meeting, a vacancy on the Board was filled by the election of Rev. Denko John Mortensen as its newest member. The seven member Board now consists of Eido Roshi, Chairman and Abbot; Jiro-san Andy Afable, Vice Abbot; Zenshin Richard Rudin, President; Hozo Wilkie Pretorius, Secretary and Treasurer; and Aiho-san Y. Shimano, Jikei Jean Bankier, and Denko John Mortensen as members.



*The installation ceremony for Vice Abbot Jiro Osho Andy Afable (left) will take place Saturday July 4, 1998. To attend, please call Dai Bosatsu Zendo.*

## New York Zendo Shobo-ji 30th Anniversary



*Eido Shimano Roshi (Tai-san) and Chester Carlson in front of New York Zendo Shobo-ji, September 15, 1968.*

ON MANHATTAN ISLAND, September 15, 1968 New York Zendo Shobo-ji was dedicated with one intense wish: Let True Dharma Continue. Even after 30 years, Soen Roshi's haiku for the occasion glows with the auspiciousness of the that Sunday's event:

*Cleared up  
Boundless sky of Japan  
Now in America*

Of those who gave their inspired energy to insure that this Temple of True Dharma would continue, many are now gone. Yet Soen Roshi, Yasutani Roshi, Chester and Dorris Carlson, Bill and Millie Johnstone, Korin Sylvan Busch, Chigetsu Ruth Lilienthal, and others are still very much with us—each year, every step, every breath. Their devoted concern, and the untiring efforts of Eido Roshi and Aihosan, with the help of the Shobo-ji Sangha and friends, combine to make New York Zendo an wellspring of energy, an oasis for the urban Dharma traveler.

The 30th Anniversary of New York Zendo will be held at Dai Bosatsu Zendo from Tuesday evening, September 8, to Sunday, September 13. Sogen Yamakawa Roshi and the Shogen-ji monks will also join our Sesshin, offering their attentive concern and spirit to this very special occasion. Those who cannot attend Sesshin we encourage to join the Anniversary ceremony and celebration the morning of the 13th. Free round-trip chartered bus service will be provided from New York Zendo the same day (see bulletin).

For thirty years we have practiced at Shobo-ji. As the Zen saying goes, we shall *Practice thirty more years.*

*Namu Dai Bosa.*