

November 2008

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						
◀ May						Dec ▶

ARCHIVE FOR NOVEMBER, 2008

My Road to Egely Kloster, Denmark

Saturday, November 29th, 2008

I knew Denko Osho from his time at DBZ, in upstate New York. I was there when he left. He actually left twice, the second time being permanent. Now, anyone who is familiar with Dai Bosatsu Zendo is familiar with abuse and deceit. You get tired of people driving down the hill, vowing never to return. Shimano discredits the escapee, lies are told, things are forgotten. This has been going on for years.

When Denko left DBZ, the second time, there were only three others in the room — another student, Shimano, and myself. After leaving the first time, Denko had talked things over with the Board of the Zen Studies Society (the governing entity of DBZ) and had agreed to return. So here he was, ready to give it another shot. But on his first day back he abruptly left the morning chant. He just stood and walked out.

Zazen followed, and after 15 minutes or so, Denko returned, sat down on the floor, and announced that it just wasn't in his heart to continue at DBZ. And that was it. He was leaving — this time or good. Shimano reacted in typical Shimano fashion — shouting insults and commands, screaming angrily "I am your teacher! I am your teacher!". But Denko answered "Not anymore", and was gone. I remember Shimano announcing his leaving was a "sign of mental illness". Typical Shimano.

And, aside from a volley of dark stories (affairs? tax evasion? mental institutions?) launched by Shimano and Fujin (Shimano's Inji), I heard nothing about Denko for the next couple years.

Then I found myself living on a small farm in Osnabruck, Germany, looking around for places to sit. Tamcho, the former caretaker from DBZ (another recent escapee), mentioned in an email that Denko was back in Denmark, starting up a monastery. I thought "well if he left Shimano, he can't be all bad". And O.K. Denmark was close by. This was October 2007. I was living with a girlfriend then, Stefanie, and she sent off some emails. Sure enough there was a sesshin scheduled, but Stef had an 11 year old dog, going blind, having seizures — a sweet, sweet old dog that needed care. So we flipped a coin. Alright, I would go to sesshin in Denmark. Stef would take care of the dog.

So that's the background. I went to sesshin that October, and the following July, I was up there again for the first kessei at Egely Kloster.

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