

Time To Leave...

By Kobutsu Malone

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This is a memoir from 1980 when I served as the gatekeeper / zomu at Dai Bosatsu Zendo, in the Catskill Mountains at Hardenburgh, New York, and lived in the DBZ Gatehouse with my wife. This account is but one of many experiences that occurred at DBZ during our tenure. In view of Merry White Benezra's and Phil Benezra's recently published accounts of their experiences I am adding this piece to the archive to fill in the down-to-earth experiences that many of us went through up there. I'm refraining from using real names in this essay to offer privacy to the individuals involved.

My wife and I arrived at DBZ as Gatekeepers in May of 1979 under a two-year contract. We were offered residence in the Gatehouse, electricity, telephone, gasoline for our vehicle, a five hundred dollar a month stipend and medical insurance. I was in a unique position for the job as I was an experimental machinist by trade, had worked in industrial maintenance, including electrical, plumbing, heavy equipment maintenance and installation and construction. I was also an avid wood-worker and trained draftsman.

Maintenance at DBZ was always a haphazard affair, there was never an established budget, enough skilled help or any means of "transmission" of the changes made, systems modified or items fixed or in need of repair. The logging operation prior to my time was poorly managed and the monastery lost a lot of income through mismanagement and overall lack of supervision.

One night, around 8:00 PM, I received a phone call at the Gatehouse from a student friend who was living at the monastery asking if I knew what a certain psychoactive drug was or if I had a PDR (Physician's Desk Reference). I responded negative and asked him what was going on. I was told that a woman in the zendo during evening zazen had become comatose. I jumped into my truck and drove up to the monastery.

I arrived at the building to find all the lights on in the office and public areas; this was never done at that time of day with zazen taking place in the zendo. I was directed to the zendo by students and when I entered the room, I found Eido Shimano's wife Aiho and a few students trying to slide an apparently unconscious young woman on a blanket across the zendo floor. I had an older woman, a senior student with a fast car; bring the vehicle around to the back of the buildings close to the rear outside door of the zendo. Eido Shimano was nowhere to be seen; I was told he had retreated to his quarters.

I picked up the woman and carried her to the waiting car. I placed her in the back seat of the car and another quite sharp and street-wise student and I sat on each side of her. The ride to the town doctor was exciting; our driver had a tendency to over-drive her headlights and was traveling at a high rate of speed. Her driving gave some concern and I urged her to slow down a number of times after skidding on turns. All of a sudden,

after a particularly sharp skid, the “unconscious” woman, stiffened, sat bolt upright between us and blurted out, **“You’ll kill us all!”**

We slowed down considerably and got her to the town doctor who examined the now conscious, animated woman. His final comment was suggesting that she see her psychiatrist in New York City as soon as possible. We brought her back to the monastery. Eido Shimano was informed of the situation and the doctor’s recommendation of psychiatric intervention – I went home to bed.

The next morning, I was sore, tired and late when I got up. I went directly to the monastery for morning meeting and waited with my coffee cup in hand in the hallway by the meeting room as morning service ended.

Suddenly the outside door to the courtyard burst open and the young woman from the night before came reeling into the building wearing riding boots. She deliberately stomped her boots on the polished Tasmanian Oak floors. My first reaction was to say, “Take those boots off!” She ignored me and clomped down the hallway to her room as the sangha was leaving the zendo. The young woman began shouting and some other students tried to calm her down.

Morning meeting was cancelled and I went into the meeting room with Shimano. I told him it was time for the young women to leave the monastery. He told me I had too little faith in the power of zazen... The woman’s shouting continued, becoming quite loud and abusive. Shimano then left the meeting room, entered the dokusan room next-door and shut the door behind him. After a brief encounter with the head monk, a delightful mid-western farm boy with a fondness for plaid shirts and jeans over robes, I opened the door to the dokusan room and again told Shimano that it was time for the student to go home. He closed his eyes, began to shake his head... at that instant, the distressed young woman yells out at the top of her lungs, **“I’ve got Roshi’s cum dripping down my legs!”**

Shimano suddenly opens his eyes and immediately said, **“You know Kobutsu, I think it’s time for her to leave...”**

We finally got her belongings together, contacted her family, her psychiatrist and held her still so she didn’t go running off before we got the vehicle loaded.

I drove; she sat beside me, the head monk behind her, and another student next to him, both ready to restrain her should the need arise. I took her to the psychiatrist’s address and was quite surprised to find it to be directly across the street from the controversial Townhouse donated by Mrs. Dorris Carlson to the ZSS for the use of the Shimanos. Some years later, the Shimanos moved into the building housing the psychiatrist’s offices.

She spent some time with her psychiatrist and then I drove her to her parent’s house in suburban New Jersey. We trekked back to Dai Bosatsu, an hour and a half trip, and never heard from her again.