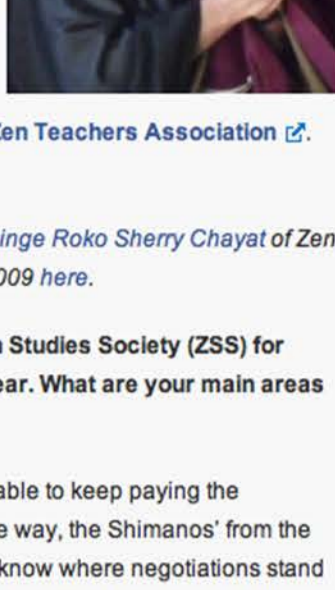




Interview: Genjo Marinello on Eido Shimano & Zen Studies Society

March 03, 2012

Kokan Genjo Marinello Osho (born 1954) is the current Abbot of Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji in Seattle, WA, a **Rinzai Zen** temple. Genjo Osho began his Zen training in 1975, and was ordained an unsui (priest in training) in 1980. During 1981-82 he trained at Ryutakuji in Japan. Genjo Osho was formally installed as the second Abbot of Chobo-Ji on Rinzai Zenji's (d.866) memorial day January 10th, 1999. Genjo Osho is also psychotherapist in private practice, a certificated spiritual director from a program affiliated with the Vancouver School of Theology, married to wife, Carolyn, and devoted father to daughter, Adrienne. Chobo-Ji temple is in the Rinzai – Hakuin Ekaku Zenji Dharma Line, after **Genki Roshi** retired, Genjo Marinello Osho trained with **Eido Shimano** Roshi, former abbot of DaiBosatsu Monastery in New York, who affirmed Genjo Osho as a Dharma Heir on May 21st, 2008. Genjo Osho-san is a member of the [American Zen Teachers Association](#). (Read more...)



Interview notes: This interview took place shortly after my recent interview with Shinge Roko Sherry Chayat of Zen Studies Society. You can read an older interview with Genjo Osho from June of 2009 here.

SZ: You've been expressing concern over stewardship of the board at the Zen Studies Society (ZSS) for some time now, having tendered your resignation from there in June of last year. What are your main areas of concern?

KGM: I'm concerned about a number of issues. First of all I don't think it is sustainable to keep paying the Shimanos' just over \$90,000 a year in deferred compensation and benefits. By the way, the Shimanos' from the beginning have tried to argue that they were owed more than this amount. I don't know where negotiations stand today, but this is the rate that ZSS was paying them when I departed. This seems exorbitant to me, especially considering the reasons for their retirement. I believe the 1995 ZSS board that foolishly enacted the Deferred Compensation Agreement (DCA) stipulating this amount, along with a 4% per year cost of living increase, had no adequate sense of separation from Eido Roshi and therefore mismanaged their fiduciary responsibility. In hindsight, I think both Eido Roshi and his wife should have been fired for causing instead of being strongly encouraged to retire, which would have given the board much better standing to negotiate more reasonable terms. In any case, I've been advocating that the board at least attempt to use all legal means possible to abrogate this agreement in court, but Shinge Roshi is adamantly opposed to this approach and has basically conceded to the terms of the 1995 agreement. Mind you I have nothing against coming to some reasonable settlement with the Shimanos', but I think it is unreasonable and unsustainable for the ZSS to continue to make this kind of outlay month after month. I would rather see them sell some slice of the Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) property to support a lump sum settlement then be burdened by this unreasonable 1995 agreement. The only way ZSS can possibly pay for the 95 DCA anyway is to sell some land or grant an easement of 1000 acres of DBZ to an organization such as the Nature Conservancy.

More importantly I am concerned by the board's continued attachment to the man over the Dharma or the healing of the Sangha; agreeing to the 1995 DCA is only the tip of the iceberg. Once ZSS began, through our ethics investigation, to get credible evidence that Eido Roshi had been sexualizing other women at the monastery in recent years, I thought the time had come to begin implementing to the tee the recommendations of the FaithTrust Institute. This would have meant that Eido Roshi should have been forced to resign as abbot by early Fall of 2010. Instead, Shinge Roshi argued that he should be allowed to continue to teach through Dec. 8th, 2010, and plans were being made for him to be able to teach willing senior students well into 2012. However, just after his retirement we discovered the letter that Eido Roshi foolishly circulated to friends in the US and Japan addressed to the editor of the New York Times that stated the allegations against him were false. This flew in the face of what he later called his "forced" public apology of Sept. 7, 2010. When a copy of this letter was discovered in the office of Shobo-Ji (New York City Zen Center), Shinge Roshi strongly discouraged me from going public with my indignation and expressed indignation that I stirred up such a hornet's nest of protest against Eido Roshi.

I thought things were going better in early February of 2011 when the board affirmed that Eido Roshi would no longer be allowed to teach under the auspices of ZSS, and it appeared that Shinge Roshi had secured a commitment from Eido Roshi that he would no longer teach. But shortly thereafter, bolstered by his most staunch supporters, Eido Roshi reversed himself, and then Shinge Roshi too began to look for some way he could continue to teach those who still desperately wanted his attention. Ideas were floated that perhaps Eido Roshi could reside part time, do translation work and teach at Jorakuan (Beecher House in the center of DBZ property) if there were some way to make Jorakuan not legally connected to ZSS. Later plans were made for a meeting in early May 2011, with the help of [Olive Branch](#) consultants, where we would try and negotiate some sort of settlement possibly allowing Eido Roshi to continue to teach willing senior students on ZSS property if many stringent stipulations were met. However, at the meeting Eido Roshi not only would not agree to stipulations, he began to claim that the board had no authority to put any restrictions on him at all. It was also at this meeting Eido Roshi said that it would have been more karmically harmful to refuse sexual overtures from female student than to acquiesce to their needs.

After this point I felt sure there would be no further thought of negotiation with Eido Roshi, but Shinge Roshi insisted that we still try to find a way to accommodate him and his most devout students. Shortly after an early June 2011 meeting at DBZ, I heard from a former board member about a first hand account shared with him by a woman and senior female student of a "date rape" by Eido Roshi some years back. After hearing this I had a sickening realization that Eido Roshi was a sexual predator, not just a sexual addict seducing his own students. I tried to convey this as best I could to the rest of the ZSS board. However, despite my efforts and additional credible evidence that kept coming to light, later in that same month, Shinge Roshi floated the idea to split ZSS, keeping the monastery but giving up Shobo-Ji to Eido Roshi so that he could continue to teach there. I thought this was insane, Shinge Roshi thought it was "thinking out of the box." At this point, I began to lose confidence that Shinge Roshi would ever understand that helping Eido Roshi to teach in any capacity anywhere on or off campus would be enabling the continuance of his predation of vulnerable female students. Yet she begrudgingly agreed that we needed to change the locks to Shobo-Ji so that Eido Roshi could not have unsupervised access. Changing the locks sent a concrete message to Eido Roshi that the board would not collapse under the weight of his charismatic persuasion.

Then in early July of 2011 Eido Roshi and Shinge Roshi invited everyone to come to DBZ for an "extremely important announcement." At this meeting Eido Roshi openly stepped down from any teaching and encouraged all of his former students to train with Shinge Roshi. However, the meeting was marred at the end with an aggressive attempt by Eido Roshi, backed by staunch supporters, to receive a new key to Shobo-Ji. Having made this concession about teaching, he made a scene trying to manipulate the board to allow him to have free and open use of the city temple a few blocks from his condo on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. At the meeting the board did not bend, but decided, against my strong objections, that the video of the meeting and the full transcript of the meeting would be suppressed, and it has been to this day.

Then incredibly a couple of days later the board received an email from Eido Roshi detailing how he wanted to be allowed to teach introductory zazen and lead Dharma classes at Shobo-Ji so he could "nurture the next generation of students." I was flabbergasted, but I was told by Shinge Roshi and the others that this letter was also to be suppressed. I tried to make the point to the board that this letter should be released because it patently exposed his expectation to continue teaching in one form or another. I also tried to make a strong case that in light of this letter, there needed to be a hiatus of having Eido Roshi on ZSS property. Sadly, it became clear that the majority was not with me. The conference call with the board where these items were being discussed ended with Shinge Roshi loudly scolding me for breaking rules of confidentiality. She complained vehemently that my June 5th, 2011 memo updating the Chobo-Ji Sangha on recent ZSS events and shared with the wider maha-Sangha, disclosed far more than she thought appropriate. Other board members informed me privately that they thought I had done a good job. Nevertheless, by the conclusion of this conference call I became convinced that I could no longer be effective on the ZSS board.

I could feel little harmony with the direction Shinge Roshi was going. I felt the need for more transparency not less. I wanted Eido Roshi to stay away from both properties, and in my opinion no real healing would be possible for those alienated or directly harmed without this step. I was also disturbed by the fact that he still had rooms at both ZSS properties that were devoted to him and his possessions. And I remain frustrated by the fact that the board has essentially capitulated to the 95 DCA without a fight. I take some credit for helping the board not to surrender to more than this amount, which Eido Roshi was arguing for. Can you see why I think the board has been overly focused on the man rather than on propagating the Dharma or healing the Sangha?

On a more positive note, there was an important All Sangha Meeting held in August of last year, facilitated by the Olive Branch. However, not everyone could or would attend because the meeting was held at the monastery in the Catskills rather than a more neutral and central location in or near the city. I was traveling from Seattle to attend, but when transferring in Chicago, all flights to New York were canceled because of Hurricane Irene. Those in attendance did much work together, but I believe there has been far too little follow up. Here is a link to Shinge Roshi's progress letters and others to my letters calling on Shinge Roshi and ZSS to do much more.

http://www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110919_Chayat_Sangha.pdf &

http://www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20110919_Chayat_Sangha.pdf &

http://www.shimanoarchive.com/PDFs/20111107_Marinello_ZFI.pdf &

http://www.choboji.org/ZSS_steps.pdf

SZ: Wow. What was the board's reaction to the attempt made to get a key to Shobo-Ji? Was this the same evening that a board member's car was keyed up, or was that on a different occasion?

KGM: All the board members present were stupefied and I heard even his DBZ monks told him his manipulation to get a key was inappropriate. However, all my information is second hand, as I was not at this meeting and have never seen the tape or been able to read the fuller transcript. The incident where a board member's car was keyed (vandalized) because of his support for stringent restrictions on Eido Roshi's visitations was at the August All Sangha Meeting.

SZ: While you were still a board member, did you ever see Shimano admit wrongdoing in a public way?

KGM: On several occasions I heard him make reference to past deeds, saying that he took full responsibility for the harm his actions had caused. In my presence, he was never very specific in public about what his misbehaviors were. However, others have told me that on occasion he has publicly been more revealing than this. I thought his initial reaction just after the most recent scandal broke was not bad at all. In my presence, he did not deny any allegation made by the woman who called him out, he was apologetic and accepted full responsibility for the ethical breach, and realized that his time for "retirement" had come. Compared to what I had heard about his response to earlier incidents this was a major advance.

SZ: In all of this, many others and I are curious as to why you continue referring to him as Roshi. I say that while having a ton of respect for you, so you know. I just find it a little strange, considering such extreme measures are being taken to ensure that he does not have access to any more students, as he has been deemed a danger. How do you reconcile that?

KGM: It is hard for me to reconcile this; I'm still working on it! I often heard Roshi say that Soen Roshi, his Dharma Father, was a enigma to him and his greatest koan. Now I know much better what he was talking about. Let me begin by saying he was a Roshi to me; in other words, he served as a catalyst to my own insight and confidence. I was able to project on him without fear that it would significantly hook him. He would push me into dark nights of the soul, not knowing for sure if I would be able to climb out, but confident that if I did, I would be the stronger for it. I will forever be grateful for his strengths, clear insights and many talents.

One of the most important lessons he helped me realize is that one can never find Buddha in isolation from Bumpkin. We are all a mix of strengths and weaknesses. Just because we are weak in some areas, doesn't mean that we can't excel in others. Even in his failures, he has provided invaluable lessons. First and foremost among them is that Zen practice can indeed nurture true insight, but true insight alone, especially when bounded by a bubble of arrogance and self-aggrandizement, is insufficient for deep maturity in the Way. Deep maturity requires that we examine our lives and vow to root out any repeating patterns or programs that harm others. We must always be on the lookout for patterns that cause harm.

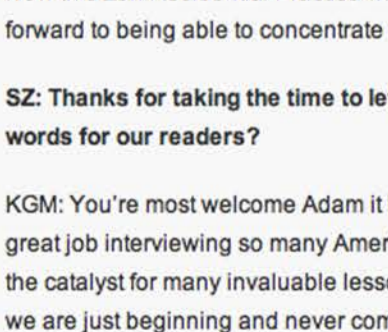
As a psychotherapist I see these patterns as gaps in our early development, and we must vow to expose, examine and face our shortcomings so thoroughly that they are transformed from liabilities to assets. This effort will likely be the hardest and most important work we will ever do, but if we don't do this work, look out! It will come to bite us, and probably those closest to us. How can we hope to live our Great Vow to care for all beings without truly facing our own shadow? This is not to say that Eido Roshi never faced his shadow and never did this kind of work; however, it is plain that he had big blinders on and that circumstances never caught up to him in such a way that he had no other choice but to delve deeply into these shadowy broken areas.

SZ: Would you ever consider restoring a relationship with ZSS again, or becoming a member of their board? In short, do you hold out hope for that organization?

KGM: Yes, I believe ZSS can still recover. Much has already been done by Shinge Roshi to positively change the culture of practice at DBZ, but it is tragic to me that she appears to be trying to move on without fully integrating and learning from the past and without more fully reaching out to those who have been alienated and directly harmed. No one currently alienated or directly harmed will likely feel comfortable returning to ZSS while Eido Roshi is still allowed on campus, so I fear the wider sangha for this reason alone will remain fractured.

I believe ZSS must one day become haven for those who have been abused or harmed, and that ultimately this is the only possible path for those in Eido Roshi's lineage. How else can we possibly make amends for the damage that has been done to the ZSS Sangha and turned, I will be? I believe in the readiness of time this course would become the only path. When this conger is turned, American Zen? I believe in the readiness of time this course would become the only path. When this conger is turned, I will be delighted to return in some capacity, but I'm not holding my breath. Until then I will stay away, but I plan to continue to be vigilant calling out Eido Roshi's history of bad behaviors to whatever audience he hopes to teach. Moreover it is my intention to watch and comment as needed on ZSS actions until the inevitable corner to deep healing with those alienated or harmed has been turned.

SZ: How has the transition been, moving to your new location for Chobo-Ji? It looks like you all have put a ton of work in to the place (photos are beautiful).

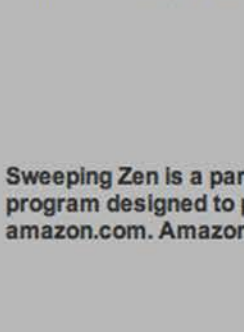


KGM: Thank you. It is a joy to be up a half-hour before zazen, to go downstairs to the new zendo, open the doors, turn on the lights and get the tea water going. Even though the space is new it radiates an ancient feel. The planning committee of Zen students, architect and contractor brought decades of experience to bear in the planning and execution of every detail. I am awed and unbelievably grateful for the many who have volunteered so much time and so many resources to make this expansion possible. I have a new title; in addition to being a Zen Abbot, I am now an Apartment Manager. There are eight apartments above the new zendo, one is reserved for the office/library, my wife and I and our two small dogs occupy one apartment and this leaves six one-bedroom apartments available for Zen students to reside and train on the property. Former tenants of the building still occupy two of these six apartments, and residents who are interested in joining the Residential Zen Practice with me occupy the last four. How this Zen Residential Practice will evolve remains to be seen, but it is an exciting time for Chobo-Ji and I look forward to being able to concentrate on my efforts here in Seattle.

SZ: Thanks for taking the time to let readers know about your concerns. In closing, do you have any parting words for our readers?

KGM: You're most welcome Adam it is a pleasure to work with you and support Sweeping Zen. You have done a great job interviewing so many American Zen Teachers. My ordination teacher, Genki Takabayashi Roshi, was the catalyst for many invaluable lessons; perhaps foremost among them was the realization that wherever we are, we are just beginning and never complete. We all have work to do; unfortunately, it appears that with the help of others who continue to indulge and financially support Eido Roshi, he may never get on with the work he needs to do anytime soon. This is one of many ways the sangha has failed Eido Roshi and other teachers put up on pedestals. We must be careful to realize that as human beings we will never escape our base animalistic nature. The best we can do is become so conscious of our own base nature that we develop the skillfulness to put it in the back seat. However, even with great awareness and great faith it is very difficult not to be fooled and tricked by our instincts for survival that constantly try to direct us to have enough and then a little more. With time, great determination, great faith and great doubt, we all can come to deeper maturity, where insight rather than instinct becomes the guiding principle of our lives. Nevertheless, we must all remain vigilant not to get tricked by Mara again and again. Take care!

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