



WINTER 2020 NEWSLETTER

COLLECTING THE MIND IN A PANDEMIC

SAYAMA DAIAN ROSHI, ABBOT

Covid-19 lays bare the First and Second Noble Truths that existence is impermanent and that suffering arises from attachments. To date, December 18, 2020, there have been 17 million infections and 310,000 deaths in the United States. Life has been disrupted in so many ways, and so many livelihoods lost. Face to face encounters have become a luxury. It's a good time for spiritual training.

Collecting the mind is a translation of the Japanese word sesshin which refers to a week-long intensive training held in July and December at Chozen-ji. From the start to the end, students are told to treat it as one long period of zazen, essentially copying Shakamuni Buddha meditating under the Bodhi tree before he was enlightened. Sixteen people participated in this last sesshin which ended December 6.

Nine were in a bubble at the temple for three months and the others took Covid-19 tests before the start. We sat farther apart and wore masks throughout. The weather was gorgeous, and we did many things outdoors. Being able to do sesshin was a blessing for us.

In sesshin form is used to force concentration into the present. The forms of eating are particularly complex and fast, with hand signals to indicate servings, and chopsticks placed on the table when the person before or after you is being served. Bowls are cleaned with tea and a slice of radish. All must be done without noise, except when eating noodles, then slurping is the right form. It is impossible to be regretting the past or worrying about the future when the present is so demanding.

After sesshin one student said when she went to see her family, everyone seemed to be moving in slow motion and everything was in Technicolor. Her mind was collected and her spirit bright despite the pandemic still raging in the world.



WHEW. SET. ADVANCE.

RYUKO (NORMA KAWELOKU) WONG ROSHI

Whew! What a year! If you are human, you are so looking forward to its end and ready for 2021 to begin. But what does that mean?

Many of the conditions and factors that made this year so fraught will not come to an end in two weeks. Vaccinations are just beginning. COVID-19 infections and deaths accelerate. Economic hardships compound. The deep divisions between peoples have been laid bare. We know the truth of continuing hardships and seemingly unsolvable challenges.

And yet, the natural turn at each year's end gives us a chance to pause, to rest and renew. There is something about the approach of a new year that allows us to let go of the burdens and disappointments of the time before. The human calendar schedules eating favorite foods, remembering family and friends, and indulgent resting. Physical distancing requires that this year's activities will be quieter than usual... and we need that, so very much. Less trying to make the best of it, and more just letting go. Rest!

Rest, so that the reset may happen. Breathe low and slow, shoulders back, feet sturdy and confident on the ground. Aware, again of what nature is asking us to be. And prepare to begin anew.

Much aloha.

P.S. Stay tuned for the forecast of the Year of the Ox...



SESSHIN

With lessons learned from this summer's sesshin, we proceeded with our winter sesshin with serious precautions in place (testing, quarantines, masks and distancing). We ended up with 16 people training hard for the entire week. The sesshin was anchored by the 9 people who had lived in and trained together for the entire fall. It made for a solid group all pushing each other. We were joined by several local students doing their first sesshin and a few long-time students coming back. We were treated to excellent food provided by Tenzo Yumiko Sayama and Cristina Moon.

Next summer's sesshin will be held from July 5-11. It is shaping up to be very full, especially if the travel restrictions are relaxed by then. Please let us know ASAP if you are hoping to attend.

STRAIGHT UP THE MOUNTAIN

CHRISTINE CORDERO

It seemed impossible or at least foolish—maybe even a little crazy—to try.

I had previously lived in at Chozen-ji twice—once for three weeks including sesshin, and a second time for two weeks—so I had some idea of how difficult three months of live-in training would be. It would be difficult in part because I was in the worst shape I'd been in a while, both physically and psychologically. I was also desperate.

Earlier in the summer, a disturbing childhood memory surfaced after 35 years buried deep in my body and psyche.



Chozen-ji live-ins working by the stream. Dojo?

I spent the summer battling PTSD, mostly in freeze mode. I barely functioned. Having spent years processing and healing other trauma in my life with therapy and meditation, I now needed strength and control back in my own body and spirit. Could I regain that through three months at the

They say there are three primary responses to threat: fight, flight, and freeze. It became immediately clear that the training would not allow for freezing of any kind. The schedule was relentless. There was always something to do next and no room to overthink or plan. Flight or running away was out as every moment demanded attention to my self and habits, and more importantly to my surroundings and others around me.

What I was left with was fight. I had to learn how to fight again, to regain my fighting spirit. Day after day, week after week, it looked a little different—whether it was training zazen, boxing, outside work, ceramics, or kendo.

I learned how to completely trust that my training partners in boxing were there to help rather than hurt me. And I got to punch back, feeling my own strength and control. Even after jarring and tear-filled zazen, I had to go directly into kendo. At barely five feet, I had to stand tall into every inch of my small stature and enter decisively regardless of who would hit me. And when a dear friend died while I was living in, I channeled all of my grief into okyo, knowing I had a

responsibility to keep the beat steady on the mokugyo for the whole group.

Over time, I saw that I could not and did not have to go up the mountain of Zen training alone. As I saw my other training partners face down their own demons, and find and surpass pain, I found deeper wells of strength and boldness to keep pushing forward. After three months of hard training, I was leaner, physically and spiritually. There wasn't much extra stuff left.

One of the ways I have heard Chozen-ji training described is like a path straight up a mountain. Other approaches may take the switchbacks—still arduous, but tackling the mountain at a different pace. While there are many different ways I've been able to train and transform over the years, none have been as direct and effective as living in at the Dojo these past three months. It is one thing to talk about and process my issues and trauma. It is a completely other thing to train new habits into my body, and be able to actually be someone stronger, more sensitive, clear and decisive.

Towards the end of sesshin, we literally hiked up the mountain behind Chozen-ji. Surrounded by others training as hard, I could put one foot confidently in front of the other, breathing deeply, sensing 180 degrees. I knew it didn't matter much what other mountains lay ahead. We would go straight up—kiai first.



Chozen-ji students on top of the mountain behind the Dojo.

IN MEMORIAM

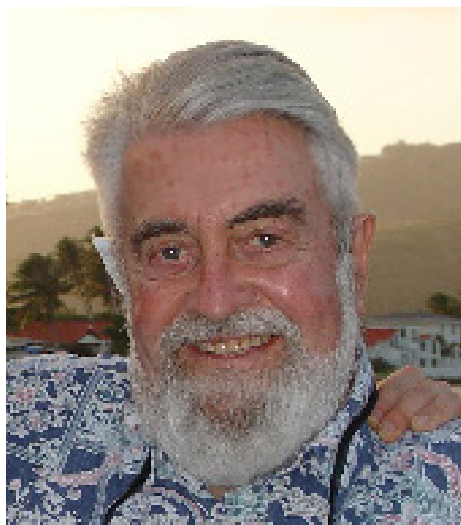
REMEMBERING DOJO MEMBERS WHO HAVE PASSED THIS YEAR

In a year when many of us experienced loss, we note the passing of several important Dojo members who taught, trained, and embodied the spirit of Zen training at Chozen-ji. Their influence on past and current Dojo members continues to have an impact on the training here.



DAN KAWAKAMI

Dan Kawakami PhD was an accomplished Aikidoka and trained at Chozen-ji with Tanouye Rotaishi for more than 25 years. In addition to founding his own dojo in Placentia, California, Dan was a professor and counselor at the California State University Fullerton, also for 25 years.



TOM MORELLI

Dr. Thomas Morelli MD was ordained as a Chozen-ji priest under the name 安徳大心 (An-toku Dai-shin, "Peace-Virtue, Great/Big Spirit"). Known and respected for his work as a psychiatrist, Tom's unwavering support, warm smile and big aloha will be deeply missed at the Dojo.



LLOYD INABA

Lloyd Inaba was ordained as a Chozen-ji priest under the name 敬山玄響 (Keizan Gen-kyo, "Respect-Mountain, Deep-Sound"), and was a beloved band teacher and Aikido instructor on Maui and Lanai. Chozen-ji is grateful to him for his years of support, including ensuring the continuation of Chozen-ji's Chinese Medicine by growing the plants on Maui.



UPDATES

2020 CHOZEN-JI ART SHOW

“As a vibrant force, Zen Art influences your vibration, helping you to accord with the flow and rhythm of the Universe, which is unmoved even by today’s chaos.”

— Sayama Daian, Abbot of Daihonzan Chozen-ji

This year marked the first time we moved our Annual Zen Art Show & Sale completely online. While we anticipate restarting the in-person show next year, the online art sale was a surprising success!

Works for sale included calligraphy and ceramics made by Chozen-ji Zen Masters, priests, and students, as well as books and omamori. Thank you to everyone who made a purchase to support Chozen-ji, and to the Dojo members who volunteered to photograph and categorize items, and manage shipping.

Although the Art Sale is over, purchases can still be made online. We will continue to add items periodically to the online store at www.chozen-ji.org/store.



Before.



After.

KITCHEN RENOVATION

After decades of wear and tear, Chozen-ji’s kitchen was becoming painfully outdated and in need of repair. With six long term live-ins in the fall of 2020, we wanted to update our kitchen—plumbing and electrical, and new appliances and finishings—to support cooking and teaching.

Thank you to the more than 50 generous donors who contributed to our kitchen renovation. Dojo volunteers completed the demolition, wall repair, and painting. Because of support from the Dojo network, we’re now enjoying a significantly upgraded space for meeting, training, cooking, and teaching that we will enjoy for many years to come.

Features of the new kitchen include:

- 6-burner gas cooktop for cooking demonstrations and teaching, in addition to day-to-day and sesshin cooking
- 36” fridge with more capacity to feed the nine folks living here this fall
- In-wall oven and microwave to free up space for food prep on the island
- Relocated, larger island for easier passage when multiple people are cooking and washing dishes
- Range hood suspended over the island where the new cooktop will be
- New sink, cabinets and counters
- Vinyl plank flooring in the cooking area—no more carpet!
- Stain resistant carpeting in the eating area
- LED lighting to replace the current industrial fluorescents
- Built-in bookshelf for cookbooks and the live-in library

LIVE-IN TRAINING AT CHOZEN-JI

Chozen-ji's response to the COVID-19 pandemic this year was not to shut down and go online, but to go deeper into in-person training through 3-Month Live-in Intensives.

As the pandemic opened up opportunities for working remotely and forced people to confront life and death, we received a record number of live-in applications. Two of them committed to 1-year stays, both having already completed at least one sesshin. Four additional live-ins (including Christine Cordero, whose article appears in this newsletter) completed 3-month stays that began in September and ended with Winter Sesshin.

The next 3-Month Live-In Intensive will begin in April 2021 and culminate with participation in Summer Sesshin. Applications are being accepted now at: www.chozen-ji.org/live-in-training.



JOIN US ON NEW YEAR'S EVE & NEW YEAR'S DAY

New Year's is on! We are limiting attendance to both the evening and morning New Year's ceremonies (and taking other COVID precautions), but we will still hear the reading for the Year of the Ox, ring the ogane 108 times, and have the blessing by Chozen-ji priests for the new year.

RSVP here: www.chozen-ji.org/new-years-2020

Attendance limited to 20 people per event (December 31, 11PM and January 1, 10AM). For those who cannot attend in person, we will livestream the ceremony on New Year's Day at www.chozen-ji.org/ny2021. There will not be a potluck on New Year's Day.



SUPPORT ZEN TRAINING AT CHOZEN-JI



2020 has shown us that Chozen-ji training is still relevant and, in fact, needed now more than ever.

In spite of—and in some cases because of—the COVID-19 pandemic, we received a record number of inquiries about live-in training in 2020. It seems that especially young people were jolted into asking the big questions that motivate Zen training by the year's many troubling events.

With your support, we'll build on this growth in live-in training in 2021. We also look forward to restarting classes for local students as progress is made controlling the pandemic.

Your gift will only count towards tax deductions for the 2020 tax year if you donate by December 31, 2020! We humbly thank you for considering an end of year donation to Chozen-ji.

Please visit www.chozen-ji.org/donate to make an online donation or checks can be mailed to:

Daihonzan Chozen-ji
3565 Kalihi Street
Honolulu, HI 96819

2021 EVENTS CALENDAR

The following is just a partial listing of events, please check our website for additional events and class schedule.

December 31 - 11:00pm-12:30am New Year's Eve ceremony

January 1 - 10:00am New Year's Day ceremony

January 13 - 7:00pm Tanouye Roshi Memorial Service

April - June - Three month live-in intensive

Spring/Summer 2021 - Zen and Politics 2.0

July 5-11 - Summer Sesshin

September - December - Three month live-in intensive

December 6-12 - Winter Sesshin



2021 CLASS SCHEDULE

While daily zazen has been possible to continue safely, many of the martial and fine art classes are paused due to COVID. We will be sending out update emails as soon as in-person classes are able to resume.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Zazen - 5:30am	Zazen - 5:30am	Zazen - 5:30am	Zazen - 5:30am	Zazen - 5:30am
Practical Zen - 9:00-10:30am				
Zazen - 6:00pm Intro to Zazen for beginners - 6:00pm	Zazen - 6:00pm	Zazen - 6:00pm	Zazen - 6:00pm	Zazen - 6:00pm Intro to Zazen for beginners - 6:00pm
Zazen - 6:45pm	Zazen - 6:45pm	Zazen - 6:45pm	Zazen - 6:45pm	Zazen - 6:45pm
Okyo - 7:30pm	Hojo/Kendo - 7:30pm	Intro to Zen Training - 7:30pm	Okyo - 7:30pm	Hojo/Kendo - 7:30pm
		Archery Zen - 7:30pm		

Saturday	Sunday
Zazen - 8:00am Intro to Zazen for beginners - 8:00am	Chado (Way of Tea) - 8:00am
Hitsuzendo (calligraphy) - 8:45am	Zazen - 8:00am
Archery Zen - 8:45am	Okyo - 8:45am
Kado (Way of the Flower) - 8:45am	Karate - 8:45am
Aikido - 8:45am	