



# Mountains Talking

Lotus in the Flame Temple, Zen Center of Denver

Spring 2005

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## Open Heart, Open Mind, Open House

by Danan Henry Roshi

### **The Blue Cliff Record, Case 9: Joshu's Four Gates**

A monk asked Joshu, "What is Joshu?" Joshu said, "East Gate, West Gate, North Gate, South Gate."

Where do you see Joshu here? What are you like? What is our temple like?

Many of the Tang masters' names were derived from the mountain they lived on. Joshu's name was taken from the place where he was living, the town of Joshu. Like most ancient Chinese towns, the town of Joshu was enclosed within four walls, each with a gate. These gates were open to anyone who wanted to go in or out of the town. Men and women, young and old, those of high birth and low birth, officials and criminals, rich and poor, monks and nuns, strong and weak, smart and dull, dogs and cattle, fancy coaches and broken down wagons – all could pass through the gates.

A monk asked Joshu, "What is Joshu?" This question has a bite to it. Engo, one of the compilers of the Blue Cliff Record, comments here, "Thorns in the mud." Yes, watch out, danger beneath the surface. At nearly every shosan (Dharma exchange) I try to devise a trap like this. If Joshu had answered referring to himself, the monk could say, "I did not ask about you but about the town." If Joshu's answer referred to the town, the monk could say, "I was asking about you." If we fall into the slightest distinction, we miss the essence, the ground, the wide, unfathomable mystery and loose our inherent vastness and freedom.

Not only does Joshu avoid falling into discrimination but he demonstrates his vast, open, unfathomable nature. Joshu said, "East Gate, West Gate, North Gate, South Gate."

Where do you see Joshu here? What are you like? What is our temple like?

# Sangha News

## Vision Retreat Report

On the weekend of January 15 and 16, some 27 members of the Sangha took part in a retreat to discuss and envision the future of the Center. The retreat was held at the Trinity Mountain Ranch, a Catholic retreat center outside of Black Hawk. Under the expert facilitation of Mike Green, the group was led to discover its main areas of interest, which were:

1. Making the Center more open and accessible to new participants
2. Community Living
3. Activities for families with children at the Temple

Subgroups were then formed around these interests to explore them more deeply, and to report back to the group as a whole. The accessibility group discussed the creation and further development of social forms to promote deeper Sangha relations and sense of community, including ways of including non-practicing spouses and family members, and the easing of barriers to new practitioners in getting started at the temple, with concrete suggestions on how to do so. The community living group discussed various forms of community living for interested Sangha members, including clustering (members living in single family dwellings near the center), communal living (shared single living space), and co-housing (separate living accommodations for family units with some community space and activities). The family-children's group spoke mostly about developing a regular Sunday program for children to be incorporated into the existing teisho format.

The ideas of each group were recorded for future reference and action, and anyone interested in seeing these documents should contact the office.

The retreat was very fruitful both in terms of sharing ideas for the Center, as well as building Sangha. The atmosphere was relaxed and social, with a fair amount of unstructured time to read, talk, rest, and hike. The food was delicious and plentiful, prepared with love by the two proprietors Br. John and Mary. Participants were very positive about the experience, and there was a general feeling that this kind of retreat should be held regularly.

## Opening Up the Center

In response to recommendations made at the vision retreat to make our Center more accessible to new people, all regular sittings, ceremonies, and talks are now open to the general public. This change will be effective Sunday, April 3. Previously, until someone came to an introductory seminar, they could only attend public zazen on Tuesday evenings, or the chanting and talk when scheduled on Sundays. By opening more of our events, we hope to create an environment that is welcoming and accessible to more people, encouraging new energy and growth. At the same time, because our sittings are now essentially open to the public, each member has a greater responsibility to maintain the forms properly so that the disciplined atmosphere of the Zendo is not compromised.

People coming to sit at the temple for the first time will need to come to an evening sitting or Sunday talk for instruction in zazen and the forms. An exception here is zazenkai or the evening block of sesshin, where the silent atmosphere precludes zazen instruction. Instruction will take place in the old zendo during the first round of zazen, after which they join the Sangha in the main zendo for the rest of the sitting. Once a new person has received instruction, he or she is welcome to attend any sittings they wish as a friend of the Center.

To help people gain some familiarity with the forms before coming to the temple, the website will have a section providing instruction in zazen and zendo etiquette, and some of the introductory material has been revised. This is useful as well to newer members that are still learning the forms. The new material for the website will appear at the start of April.

This new policy is not intended to replace the introductory seminar. Membership at the temple and participation in events such as dokusan, daisan, samu, zazenkai, and sesshin are still dependent upon completion of a seminar.

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## New Head of the Zendo

The position of Head of the Zendo will be rotated from Peggy Sheehan to Ken Morgareidge during the first part of the Spring Prajna Ango. The position is rotated periodically to allow qualified persons greater leadership training opportunities. Peggy has served as Head of the Zendo for about 3 1/2 years, fulfilling her responsibilities with great energy and warmth. During her service, Peggy was highly involved in sharing the Dharma through talks and daisan, and she will continue to do so. Her successor, Ken Morgareidge, has also shared in leadership and teaching through talks and daisan, and is currently a resident trainee and Vice President of the Board of Directors

The Head of the Zendo is Roshi's assistant in the overall running of spiritual matters of the Temple and is responsible for overseeing the practice and training in his absence. The Head of the Zendo also conducts membership interviews, daisan, and meets with supporting members who are interested in becoming personal students of Roshi.

## Evening Sittings During Sesshin

The evening block of sitting will be open to nonsesshin participants, starting with the April sesshin. The evening block of sitting starts at 6:30 pm, and doors will be open at 6:15. Each night of the sesshin is open, with the exception of the first Saturday, as this is primarily sesshin opening ceremonies. As you are entering a silent meditation retreat, please enter and leave in silence, much as you would for shosan. The evening block of sitting begins with a tea ceremony; wait on the stairs until it is over before entering the zendo. Please use the extra rows of mats to sit. It's alright to leave the sitting early during kinhin, but do not arrive after the evening block is in progress. Although the sitting is open to those not attending sesshin, dokusan is only available for sesshin participants.

## Posture Encouragement

As we are no longer using the kyosaku, a greater emphasis is placed on posture, and in making posture corrections. There are two ways that this is done. The first way is with a general posture correction, such as when the tanto brings a person who is leaning to one side back to center. This is done at the tanto's discretion when he or she walks around the zendo during a round of zazen. The other way is called "posture encouragement," and is a much more in depth form of adjustment. Not only does it correct posture alignment in a profound way, it also works internally to balance and invigorate ones energy, bringing out the full potential of zazen posture. When performing the posture encouragement, the tanto gently pulls back on the shoulders while drawing his or her knee up along the spine to lift, straighten, and open the posture. The shoulders are rubbed briefly to encourage them to lift and relax. To con-

clude, the head is drawn upward; thus, energy is drawn upwards from the base of the spine through the crown of the head.

Because this is a much more intimate form of posture adjustment, it is only available by request, except during sesshin and zazenkai when it is done at the tanto's discretion. If you would like posture encouragement, place your hands in gassho when the tanto approaches.

## New to Practice Q & A

On the first Tuesday of each month, there will be an opportunity for new people to ask questions about practice in an informal group setting. The Q & A will take place at in the Zen Center library at 6 pm and will be led by a senior member.

## Online *Mountains Talking*

*Mountains Talking* has been available on the website as a downloadable PDF file for a number of months, with an archive of back issues dating back to winter 2000. The version on the web contains exactly the same content and format as the paper version, and is easy to read and print.

Currently, we mail *Mountains Talking* to all supporting and associate members of the temple, as well as other centers and teachers free of charge. However, due to rising production costs, and because it is so easy to view and download the newsletter from the website, after this issue *Mountains Talking* will no longer be mailed to associate members, except by special request (please contact the office). Instead, email notification will be sent out when the new issue is available to all who join our mailing list. To sign up for email notification, simply send your preferred email address to [MT@zencenterofdenver.org](mailto:MT@zencenterofdenver.org).

Also in the works is a weekly email bulletin. In addition to news and information about activities at the Center, the bulletin will be open for contributions from members any information they might wish to share with the Sangha. Besides providing up to the minute news and information about the temple, it is hoped that this bulletin will help deepen our sense of community by helping us to stay in touch with one another. More information about the bulletin will be coming soon.

## Lay Ordination

Longtime Sangha member Eric Wolf was lay ordained into the Lotus in the Flame Order on Sunday, March 6. During the ceremony, Eric received a rakusu and the Buddhist name Gentle Flame. Ordination represents the deepest commitment one can make to this path and temple, and we offer our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude to Eric.

## Kyudo Classes

Beginning in May, the Center will host the Denver branch of Ryuko Kyudojo, a traditional Japanese archery dojo, for ongoing classes in kyudo. The classes will be led by teachers authorized by Kanjuro Shibata Sensei, a 20th generation lineage holder in kyudo. The classes will be held on Wednesday evenings at 7:30. More information, including starting dates and cost, will be posted as it becomes available.

## Wedding Announcement

David Harris and Martha Brown would like to invite the Sangha to join their wedding celebration on Saturday, May 14, 2005, at 3 pm at the Center. The celebration will continue at The Depot Eatery and Pub located in Loveland, Colorado, following the ceremony. Martha and David have placed RSVP cards in the foyer, and would appreciate hearing from whoever would like to attend on or before April 23.

## Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

The Mountains and Rivers backpacking sesshin will take place on July 14-18. Participants should have attended at least one regular sesshin, and have some experience with long hikes and camping, preferably backpacking. The application deadline is Wednesday, June 15. Registration is limited to 15 people, due

to park regulations. There is no set fee for the sesshin; participants make a donation of their own choosing. More information about the sesshin will be posted.

## Sangha Yard Sale

The annual Sangha yard sale will take place on Saturday, June 11, from 8 am to 3 pm. For the sale, we are collecting any items in good condition that Sangha members would like to donate. Everyone is requested to price their own items to make preparation easier. Anything left over from the sale will be donated to a charity such as ARC or the Salvation Army. Proceeds from the sale will go into the ZCD general fund.

Volunteers are needed for preparation and to staff the sale. Please contact Jesse Brown at 303-432-2178 if you would like to help.

## Chanting Practice

A practice session to refine the mechanics of chanting will take place on Thursday, May 19, rather than our usual chanting service. Please attend if you can.

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