Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei, 1942 – 2020



Autobiographical Comments, Tuesday, June 28th, 2011:

Zen Master Anzan Hoshin transmitted to me in May 2001 the welcome responsibility of being his first Dharma successor and Lineage holder. In February, 2011 twenty-four years of practise, study, and service was publicly acknowledged by the Roshi and he called me Shikai Zuiko O-sensei.

On June 25, 2011 the 104th Dharma Talk on the 105th verse from "The Practice of Purity: Verses from the Flower Garland Discourse" drawn from the Avatamsaka Sutra as translated by Zen Master Anzan Hoshin and me, published in 1996, was given to the students at the Saturday morning General sitting.

Born in 1942 into the chaos of personal lives turned upside down during war and having crossed the Atlantic twice by age 5, my parents said that I, their first born child, began asking the questions "What's going on?" and "Who am I?" with the eyes from birth and with words at around 3 years old. By the time I was 45 I had searched and discarded any religious, spiritual and philosophical traditions I had come across and since age 6 I had sought them out. All, to my simple mind, seemed to confuse the issue and couldn't answer "What's going on, really?". In 1987 encountering Anzan roshi (then Sensei) in a bookstore led to asking about that piece of patchwork cloth he was wearing around his neck. Gruffly he replied that it was a rakasu and,"I'm a Zen priest". A few weeks later I took what I vowed was my last shot in "The Search" and called a number in a small ad for "instruction in traditional Soto Zen". Arriving for the meeting I was greeted by the Zen teacher from the bookstore who showed me how to sit zazen and practise, "Sit and if you don't, don't bother coming back." The truth of the teachings of sho-jo-no-shu, realized practice could not be denied. I sat. I came back. The rest is history. Not smooth sailing, often sailing on an ocean of tears, but, nevertheless, it is history. In 1988 I was ordained as a postulant monk, then a novice, I received transmission as a practice advisor and began training in various posts including several years as tenzo, oryoki leader, kata leader, Introductory Workshop presenter, and then shuso, and eventually, godo.

On February 12, 1991 the Shuso Hossen Dharma talk, "It's Too Easy" was the first of my attempts to present what I have been taught and understand and experience of the Dharma. In the many Dharma talks over the past twenty something years humour, sometimes raw, sometimes eliciting hearty guffaws, and an extensive knowledge of historical and contemporary world culture help draw together the Teachings and the understanding of students. "Freedom and Tyranny" a collection of Dharma talks is available as a free ebook here.

For over 25 years, starting in 1966, I worked in communication, broadcast television, development radio and freelance as a writer, producer, and director in Canada and abroad. A long interest in the capacity of humans to change and how best to achieve that led to certification as an NLP trainer and in 1987 to the creation of an elegant method for effecting change the Roshi named Shinjin ™. Additional study and certification as a Constructive Living: Morita Naikan instructor, and in Anmo Tuina bodywork from Quanganmen Hospital in Beijing all based in my own on-going practice and study with Anzan Hoshin roshi led to the development of Practical Mindfulness ™, and ZeNLP ™. After a hiatus I am reviving and updating these useful and accessible methods.

Over the years since I first started to practise I have introduced hundreds of people to mindfulness practice in Canada, Europe and the U.K. I continue to teach face-to-face in daisan and over the miles by teledaisan and email.

Along the way I have designed spaces and clothing and costumes, exhibited photographs, paintings, multi-media works, and videos in Canada and abroad even winning some prizes and honourable mentions. Some photographs are on our website and "coming soon" some vintage video work. A rough outline for a multi-media presentation of "The Flower Garland Sutra" conceived in 1992 has recently surfaced and there's possibility that it may mate with the help of the newer technologies with the "Every Breath You Take" Series…and….stay tuned.

Ven. Shikai Zuiko O-sensei — February 6th, 1942 – October 31st, 2020 (Obituary Notice)



On Saturday, October 31st, Shikai Zuiko O-sensei died of pneumonia at the Montfort Hospital. Brilliant, fierce, and funny, she was deeply loved and lived a long life of many accomplishments. An artist in different media, she had been a broadcaster and travelled the world. In 1987 she became my student.

Here is one of the first poems I wrote for her:

one mind,
one body,

no mind,
no body

in this moment
who are you?

what is this moment?

everyday
you breathe in and
breathe out

why?

Well?

She was the first student to receive monastic ordination and was a trailblazer for many. As a practice advisor and then Dharma Teacher she continued to travel for many years. She brought our Lineage's Zen to England and Germany, to prisons and universities. Over the past years as her health suffered she stopped travelling but always carried and upheld the Dharma.

Since her death and up until Saturday, December 19th, monastics and residents at Dainen-ji have been practising the Komyo Shingon. If you have received instruction in this practice you are welcome to join with us in your home practice.

Traditionally in our Lineage the cremated remains of Teachers are cast into the air to become traceless. For the time being, her remains are in the Hojo.

Her two best friends, the cats Kitsune and Shindo, are being well cared for.

If you have memories or stories about Shikai O-sensei that you would like to share then please feel free to write them down. Eventually these will be collected into a "sayings and doings" (yulu or goroku) commemorating her life, practice, and Teaching.

– *Ven. Anzan Hoshin roshi*