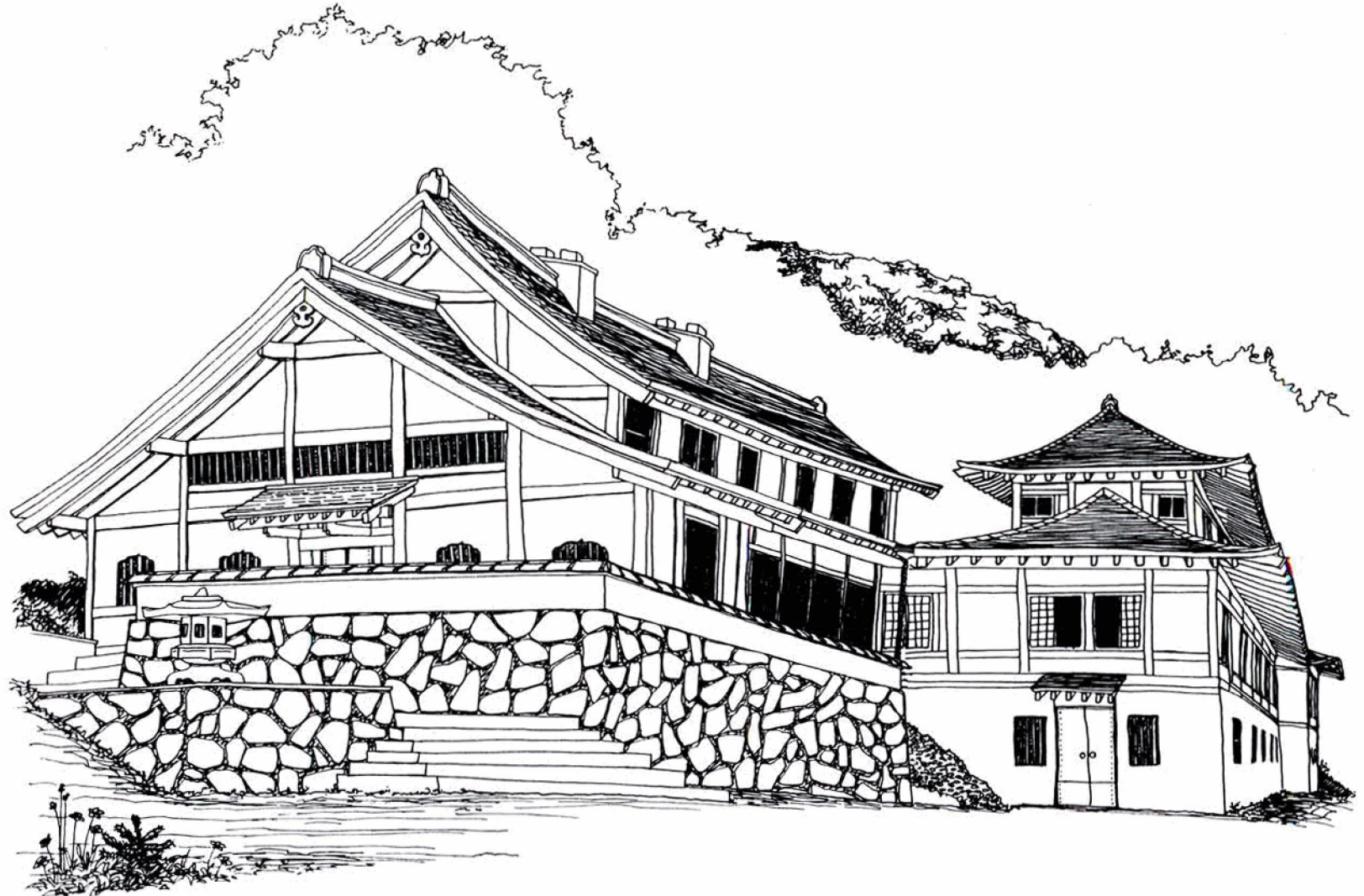


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# International Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-JI

*File*

A Zen Buddhist Monastery in the Catskill Mountains, New York



"As I was a new monk, I did not know why Nyogen Senszaki had come to Japan. I did not even know who he was." The "new monk," in 1956, was Eido Tai Shimano. Nyogen Senszaki had come to visit his teacher, Soen Nakagawa Roshi, the Abbot of Ryutaku-Ji. The next year, 1957, Soen Roshi asked Eido if he would be willing to "live in America" for a year as an attendant monk to Nyogen Senszaki. Eido Tai Shimano corresponded with Nyogen Senszaki; he read the letters of Nyogen Senszaki in preparation for his new life as a monk in America.

Nyogen Senszaki died in the spring of 1958, in the midst of Eido Tai Shimano's preparations to leave Japan. Nyogen Senszaki willed part of his ashes and all his manuscripts to Soen Nakagawa Roshi. Eido Tai Shimano carried these manuscripts with him when—again at the request of his teacher that he teach in America—he arrived in Hawaii in 1960. He studied at the University of Hawaii and led a small group of students who practiced Zen. He wondered if he should proceed to Los Angeles or return to Japan; he did not feel confident that Nyogen Senszaki's students would find him adequate. Some friends encouraged him to come to New York: he arrived in New York in 1964.

Of his first ten years in New York, Eido Roshi has said that "Bodhisattvas appeared everywhere." In ten years he had known uncertainty and hardship, but in those years he had revived the Zen Studies Society, established a Zendo in mid-town Manhattan (New York Zendo Shobo-Ji), and in 1972 was embarked on building Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji. That year Soen Roshi recognized him as Dharma Heir, and installed him as Abbot of The Zen Studies Society.

Soen Roshi died in 1984, two years after his last visit to the United States. He had sent one of his monks to America. It was his way of teaching, of bridging East to West. In his lifetime he could say "Dai Bosatsu Mountain in Japan has moved to Dai Bosatsu in the Catskills."



## 1976-1986

Since 1976, thousands of people from all over the world have participated in the activities of Dai Bosatsu. In the spring and fall, lay students join the monastery staff for Kessei, a formal training period when they live uninterruptedly in the monastery for 100 days. Kessei is an opportunity to establish a strong foundation for Zen practice. Life during Kessei consists of Zazen, work, study, and Dokusan. Dokusan is the formal private meeting with the teacher where the student can measure the depth of his practice. It is an essential part of Rinzai Zen training.

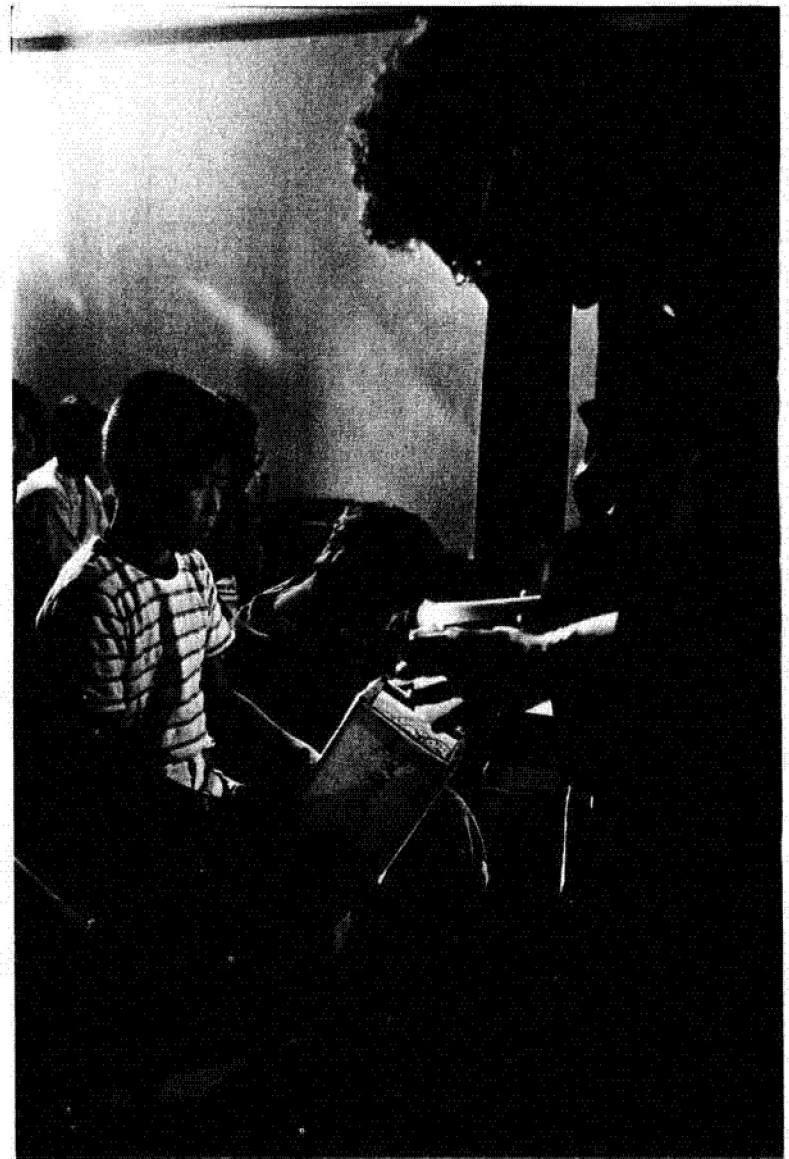
Three Sesshins are held during each Kessei. Sesshins are rigorous, week-long retreats where Zazen is the primary activity. Once a day, the Roshi delivers Teisho, a formal talk where he declares the 'point' of Zen. Dokusan is given twice each day.

Sesshins are open to all serious Zen students; they are not limited to Kessei students.

In the interim between Kesseis, people may stay at Dai Bosatsu indefinitely and participate in the daily schedule of the monastery. The guest house is open to those who wish to experience a quiet vacation; they are welcome to visit the monastery. Dai Bosatsu has sponsored a broad range of activities. Workshops have been held on Tea Ceremony, Shiatsu, Psychotherapy and Zen, and Poetry. Student groups from many colleges have visited Dai Bosatsu as part of their education. In 1985 artists and craftsmen were invited to join the first Dai Bosatsu arts sale.

Every year, in mid-August, the traditional Japanese festival of O-Bon is observed in Dai Bosatsu. It is a day to remember the dead and appease their spirits. After dark, candlelit lanterns bearing the names of dead friends and relatives are set adrift on Beecher Lake.

It has been nearly ten years since the opening of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongoji. From the start it has been the site of continuous and dedicated Zen practice. Behind all the activity is the persistent and invisible work of Eido Tai Shimano Roshi and the monks and lay residents who sustain this place.



## How Can Zen be Assimilated into the Life and Culture of America?

As Dai Bosatsu Zendo begins a second decade, how we respond to this question is very important. The practice of Zen Buddhism was met with enthusiasm, but it is essential for Zen to be deeply rooted in American soil, to be experienced not merely as "meditation practice" but as a Way of life.

Dai Bosatsu Zendo is dedicated to this task, and the decisions we make today will affect the character of Zen in the years ahead. Two streams of effort are necessary for this task to be carried out. Master Hakuin, exhorting his students in seventeenth century Japan, said, "There are two kinds of bodhisattvas: some transmit the Buddha Dharma, others protect the Buddha Dharma . . . , When they are not in harmony, the Dharma light will not shine brightly. Transmission of the Dharma and protection of the Dharma are equally important."

Dai Bosatsu Zendo was created as a lay monastery, receptive to the spiritual needs of those who find in Zen a congenial practice. To fulfill this function, Dai Bosatsu Zendo must continue its tradition of a strong practice even as it seeks to participate in the culture of America. Generous and

often anonymous friends built Dai Bosatsu Zendo; that we continue to practice and make it available to others gives meaning to their generosity.

In the past we have supported ourselves primarily through activity fees paid by students coming to Dai Bosatsu for Kessei and Sesshin. The guest house and our maple syrup sales have generated a modest income. While we have been solvent, we have no financial reserves to keep our grounds and buildings in good repair.

Ten years is a brief moment in the life of a monastery. Zen itself is a recent teaching in America. For the present Dai Bosatsu Zendo must keep the delicate balance between a disciplined spiritual practice and its financial needs. It must find practical ways to become self-supporting without diluting the strong Zen practice it has established.

We enter into our second decade with optimism. In our future projects, we seek to preserve our past and learn from it; we seek as well to sustain ourselves, to thrive, in the faith that future generations will find this place.



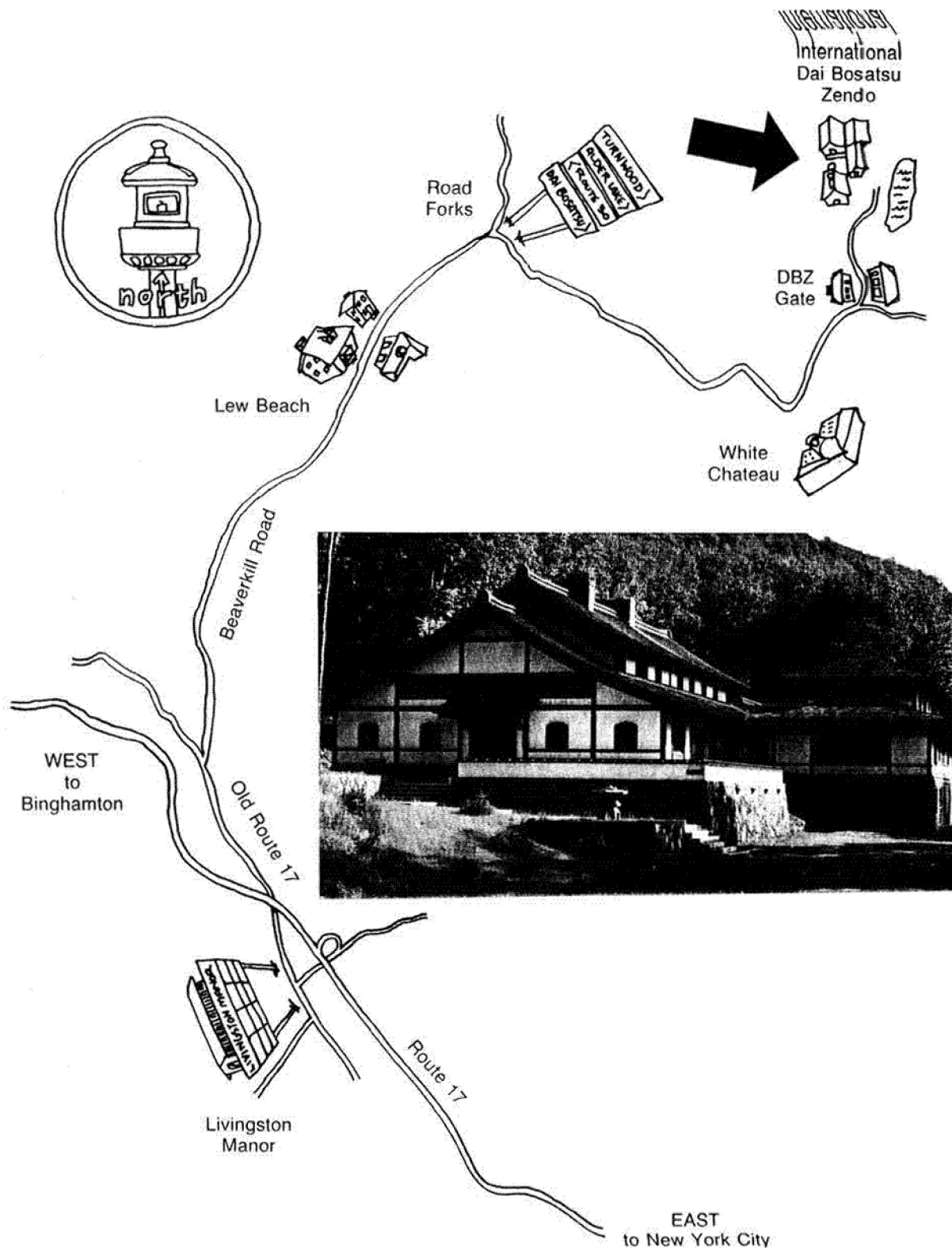
*The Proposed  
Dai Bosatsu Zendo  
Mountain Inn/Culture Center*

## Visiting Dai Bosatsu Zendo

Persons wishing to visit Dai Bosatsu Zendo may make day visits at any time of the year. Please call ahead of time to make arrangements. Overnight stays are only possible in the summer months. Write or call for information.

**Traveling by bus:** Take the Short Line Bus from New York City's Port Authority to Livingston Manor. A cab will bring you from there to Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

**Traveling by car:** The easiest and most scenic route is to take the Palisades Parkway North from New York City to Route 6. Take Route 6 across the Bear Mountain park to 17 West. Follow 17 West to Exit 96, Livingston Manor. Off exit 96 go right under 17. At the Livingston Manor commerce sign make a right turn onto old 17. Traveling approximately one mile, just past Kings Catering, make a right turn onto the Beaverkill Road, toward Lew Beach. Follow the Beaverkill Road for the next 20 miles going through the town of Lew Beach. At the fork in the road stay to the right. The road becomes dirt and 2 miles later you will pass a white chateau on the right hand side; the entrance gate for Dai Bosatsu Zendo is 1/2 mile further on the left. Through the entrance gate follow the private road 2 miles further to the Zendo.





*Our special thanks goes to Mitutoyo Corporation and MTI Graphics for printing this brochure and their technical help. We are also grateful to Jiro Andy Afable for his help, Doshin George Elvin for the art work, Davis Hamerstrom for the preliminary drawings of the Inn/Culture Center, Gerald Murrell for the photographs, and finally Dai Bosatsu Zendo for the inspiration.*

DAI BOSATSU ZENDO  
BEECHER LAKE, STAR ROUTE  
LIVINGSTON MANOR, NY 12758  
914-439-4566

*Today we write to you for help. We are requesting contributions from friends, from individuals as well as from Japanese and American corporations who are sympathetic to our efforts for the Buddha Dharma. We envision that, like Dai Bosatsu Zendo, our Mountain Inn/Culture Center will be the culmination of the combined effort of East and West. Much of the labor for this project will come from Dai Bosatsu residents and the Sangha membership. We appeal to you for help so we can help ourselves. We thank you for your interest in Zen and for being a friend to Dai Bosatsu. Without you we could not exist. And we hope that because we continue to exist, and provide this place where anyone can practice Zen, we can return your friendship.*

## **Special Membership Contributions**

We invite you to join our membership program by becoming a Sustaining or Supporting Member and thereby to help assure the continuation of Zen training and practice at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

**SUSTAINING MEMBERS**—Individuals and corporations who contribute \$1,000 annually. Sustaining Members will receive a specially-boxed edition of *Namu Dai Bosa* containing the writings of Soen Roshi, Nyogen Senzaki, and Eido Roshi, with an extensive history of the events leading to the founding of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Members will also receive activity discounts and invitations to attend special events.

**SUPPORTING MEMBERS**—Individuals who commit themselves to contribute \$500 annually to support the operation of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Members will receive activity discounts.

To become a Sustaining or Supporting Member, please mail your check, made payable to the Zen Studies Society, to:

*Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji  
Beecher Lake, Star Route  
Livingston Manor, NY 12758*

*Telephone: (914) 439-4566*

Special membership contributions are tax-deductible.



Dai Bosatsu Zendo has been entrusted with the care of the writings and calligraphy of Zen teachers whose lives are connected with our history. The manuscripts of Nyogen Senzaki, the calligraphy of Hakuin Zenji, Gempo Roshi, Yasutani Roshi and Soen Roshi, the documents and records pertinent to the beginnings of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, are stored today in boxes and files. We plan to create an Archives within the monastery building where the public, as well as scholars, can have access to them.

Eido Roshi is presently preparing a book dedicated to the life and teachings of Soen Roshi, his teacher. The book will contain a biography, selections from the many Teishos he delivered in English, and the memories of his friends and students. To those whose lives were touched by Soen Roshi, this book will be an inspiration. To others, it will be an introduction to the Zen spirit of an eccentric and independent Zen Master.

The practical matter of generating income for the continuity and growth of Dai Bosatsu Zendo continues to be a priority. Two projects seem appropriate to us. First, we are inviting individuals and corporations to become Sustaining and Supporting Friends of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. Their annual pledges will go into a fund expressly for the support and maintenance of the monastery and its grounds. Second, for the longer term, is our Mountain Inn and Zen Culture Center.

## **The Mountain Inn/ Culture Center Project**

Since 1977 Dai Bosatsu Zendo has operated a country inn on the shores of Beecher Lake. In this remote setting, just a short walk from the monastery, the inn has provided a unique vacation-retreat for many people. Its guests visit the Zendo to learn about Zen and monastic life; in turn, the monks and monastery staff are given the opportunity to serve them, to be gracious hosts. The inn has been an effective revolving door between Dai Bosatsu and the public. It fulfills what has been the historical function of "guest houses" on monastery grounds, places where guests can stay and experience monastic life to the extent they wish.

The Board of Directors of Dai Bosatsu Zendo have drawn up preliminary plans for the renovation and expansion of the current guest house. The new building will function not only as an inn but also as a Zen Culture Center. Over centuries, Zen has provided the insight and spark that have given many traditional disciplines their life: tea ceremony, calligraphy, poetry, etc. A Culture Center that provides information on Zen-related disciplines—through workshops, lectures, exhibits, a library—will greatly enhance the attraction of the inn to the public.

The Inn/Culture Center will provide Dai Bosatsu Zendo with a source of income. It will give the public greater access to what Zen can offer to their lives. In addition to the summer months, the inn will be open during the winter interim. Our setting is ideal for this project. We can offer our guests our natural resources: a clear sky, deer in the meadow, and a quiet and serene atmosphere.



'Everyone,' it is said, 'should find the heart of the Buddha in his own heart.' Not by turning away from reality, but only by surrendering himself to it, can man achieve salvation. In accordance with this, Zen cloisters are not places of contemplation for individuals, but fellowship settlements of landworkers; the work is the foundation of their life. Of the

patriarch, who founded this way of life in the eighth century, it is told, that when the monks besought him to tell them the secret truth, he commanded them to go to work in the fields, and after their return (he said) he would speak to them. When they returned, he went to meet them, spread out his arms, and pointed at them.

—Martin Buber



## What is Zen?

Zen is frequently considered to be just one of the many schools of Buddhism. In truth, it is another name for Mind, existing in all religions and in all cultures.

Zen practice is neither therapy nor philosophy. It is a practice of mindfulness that saves us from alienation; a practice of purification that frees us from anxiety; a practice of the cultivation of imperturbable mind.

Zen practice can be done by anyone. He or she does not have to be a Buddhist. Christians, Jews, Moslems, Hindus, agnostics, and atheists all find it to be the foundation of human existence.

In a narrow sense, Zazen practice is a kind of meditation—sitting still on a cushion. Through concentration on breathing, one's swirling thoughts and emotions are dissolved. The dynamic stillness and lucidity that follow open for us a new vista—the realization of the true nature of the Universe. Thus, we understand our relationship with all life.

In a broader sense, therefore, Zazen is a way of living attentively, joyously, and spontaneously under all circumstances.

*Eido Tai Shimano, Roshi  
Abbot of The Zen Studies Society*

## Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji

Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-Ji was formally dedicated on July 4, 1976, America's Bicentennial. From the start it has been a lay monastery dedicated to the vital tradition of Rinzai Zen. Here monks and lay residents work with Eido Tai Shimano Roshi to sustain a place where anyone is welcome to discover in himself the liberating spirit of Zen. In this clearing, beside a mountain lake, the daily schedule of work and meditation provides a balancing perspective to the demands of a busy world.

In 1971 the Zen Studies Society purchased land in the Catskills for a mountain monastery. A site was cleared, and plans for an authentic Japanese temple-monastery were completed. Dai Bosatsu exists today and continues because of a stream of sincere friends and students. Behind it is a vision, long aspired for by three Zen teachers, that one day America would be the setting for a truly international Zen practice.

In the meadow across Beecher Lake, facing the monastery, a granite slab marks where the ashes of Nyogen Senszaki and Soen Nakagawa Roshi share a common urn. Soen Roshi is the teacher of Eido Tai Shimano Roshi; Nyogen Senszaki is their pioneering predecessor, the monk who brought Zen practice to America in 1905.

"I at last established a Zendo in 1928," Senszaki recalled. "Whenever I could save money, I would

hire a hall and give a talk on Buddhism—this started in 1922." In the preceding years Nyogen Senszaki had worked as a waiter, a cook, a hotel manager. "What have I done in this strange land?" he asks during the war years. There is a wistful note in Senszaki's writings, but he continued "Meditating with all faces/From all parts of the world,/And studied the teachings of the Buddha with them." It is his inconspicuous yet persistent efforts over five decades that cleared the path for the present generation of Zen students and teachers.

Soen Roshi was living on Dai Bosatsu Mountain in Japan when Nyogen Senszaki wrote him in 1934. It was the beginning of a deep bond that included, in time, one of Soen Roshi's students, Eido Tai Shimano. When Nyogen Senszaki visited Japan in 1956—his only homecoming in more than half a century—it was to return a visit Soen Roshi had made to Los Angeles in 1949. These two teachers, in their letters and in their demeanor, were quite different: Nyogen Senszaki was self-effacing, while Soen Roshi was dramatic and playful. The basis of their friendship was a shared sense of adventure, of questing, in their lives as Zen monks. Soen Roshi was fascinated by Nyogen Senszaki's life in a "strange land". Nyogen Senszaki found in Soen Roshi a spontaneity and expansiveness that he thought had disappeared from Japanese Zen.