



Kanzeon Connect

Memorial Edition 2021



Final Poem

“Eighty two years,
Some were good, some were bad
Like this! Like this!
In my dreams I am a pilgrim, like Sudhana!
The Dharmakaya never dies
The True Man lives forever!”
Kirigaya Junyu, a ragged Zen monk



Jinpu Hojo-san Kuroda
November 9, 2021

Remembering Junpu Kuroda Hojo-san

I first met Junpu Kuroda Hojo-san, the brother of Maezumi Roshi, in 1973 when he came to ZCLA at Roshi's request to help us with our first 90-day ango retreat. This was our first ango and Bernie Tetsugen Glassman's shuso as head monk. Hojo-san and I quickly became very close friends and buddies, spending many hours practicing, working and playing together. He was about the same age as Tetsugen and five or six years older than me. Roshi brought him over to help lead the ango services and teach us all the traditional Soto Zen Buddhist ways of being, dressing and performing rituals.

He had a great sense of humor, and the ability to laugh at himself non-stop. We laughed, told stupid jokes and made fun of our abilities – or better put, our lack of abilities – to do carpentry and other tasks that I personally sucked at. The three of us, Maezumi Roshi, Hojo-san and myself worked on the dokusan room and the front entrance of the Zendo house. Laughing joking and playing, I don't remember ever in my life having so much fun working hard. He loved to dance, sing and drink whenever possible. In Japan years later we would go to the Ginza in Tokyo, singing karaoke and dancing.

After Maezumi Roshi's death in May of 1995, which happened in Hojo-san's Japanese ofuro in their temple in Tokyo, he visited us in Salt Lake City. It was at this time that he gave Shukke Tokudo to Stephanie, saying it was a special ceremony only for the wife of the abbot, somewhere between Shukke Tokudo and Jukai, not quite a monk, not quite a lay person either. Hojo-san became her Zen teacher and left her with one teaching that has lasted her these past 25 years, "Be free, be happy, be joyful, be yourself." Simple yet profound teaching

In 1999 Tenkei and Myoho Coppens went to Japan as Hojo-san's guests for six months, learning from him so many beautiful ways of being and how to perform Soto Zen Ceremonies and temple affairs. This continued as a lifelong relationship for the three of them. Hojo-san has been a very important teacher, friend and support to so many of us over the years and decades. He and his joyous laughter will surely be missed.

– *Genpo Roshi, November 2021*



**Beloved Zen Monk
Henricke Jishin Reef
December 7, 2020**

Mind aches!
Go forward.
You're going the wrong way.
Sit.
You're wasting your life.
Find enlightenment.
You're doing it wrong.
Turn around.
Go back.
You're still going the wrong way.
If we are boundless, why am I so small?
If I find enlightenment, then I'm lost.

Then my wife tells me,
"Just sit, be open, empty,"

Michael Eric Doryu Olsen



Leigh Lake

Jeremy JitsuE Daiki

What Are You Dreaming About
By Jenny Tendo Flatberg Lambson
May 20, 2021

My fondest memories growing up were going to the dump with my dad in his pick-up truck. Just quietly hanging out and doing stuff together. My dad spent a lot of time taking care of our grass and trees, sweeping and hosing down the patio and walks. I'd watch him from my tree house. He was a very good sweeper. When we were little, he'd pretend he was a silverback gorilla. He'd walk on his feet and knuckles, grunting and snorting. He'd jump around and chase us, throwing couch cushions around in the wake of our terrified squeals. As I grew up, our relationship grew complicated. Though we were grounded in love, he didn't always trust me and I didn't always respect him.

My dad was a master plumber with the local union but he preferred pipefitting. When I was a kid, it seemed like he would get pissed off at work and quit - too often. I worried about his smoking and his drinking. I worried when he didn't have work. Sometimes our utilities would get turned off. When I was in about tenth grade my dad came across a book by the Dalai Lama. I'm not sure what it said but he changed himself right then: when he felt himself getting pissed off at work or otherwise, he would put his palms together and bow, humbling himself instead of angering. I sensed this to be an amazing thing for a human to be transforming.

However irrationally, my dad, my sister, and I were holding out some kind of hope he had a future until the PET scan came back. The just-diagnosed bladder cancer had spread through his abdomen and metastasized to his liver, lymph, pelvic bones, and spine. The oncologist said he probably had a handful of months left but if they could get his kidneys working, maybe he could get radiation or chemo and extend his life a few more months. We each thought about that overnight and the next day my dad called us together. Starting with me he asked us what we thought he should do. I said I could not possibly know what he was going through or how to make that decision for him but that I loved and supported him 100%. Anne echoed the sentiments. He said, "Okay then, I've made a decision. There is,

unfortunately, no way out of this. I'm done. I want to enjoy every day sitting on my porch in my beautiful valley, not at the doctor." Sitting there on the porch in the sunshine, we cried out loud together - from relief at his decision, but mostly from the Great Grief of the reality of our situation. And so it was. He sat on his porch with friends and family in this beautiful valley while he died over the next two weeks.

It was such a pleasure to accept his death, together. We grieved him, *with him*. One day we were eating dinner at the kitchen table and my sister and I were kind of teasing our dad about something and he said, "If you don't do what I'm telling you to do, you are really going to regret it when I die." It was so funny we had tears running down our faces.

Another evening Anne and I were helping him into bed and he said to us, "It is the weirdest thing, but I'm not going to last. Girls, you aren't going to last. Nothing will...it's the weirdest thing." I imagine my dying body is his dying body. I feel my/his tremendous tiredness deep within my bones. My jaw opens. My nervous system calms. My breath slows, deepens, becomes expansive in my belly, around my beating heart, now...everywhere. I feel my spine and sit bones remember each other, release my arms, belly, legs, and lose visual focus. The *letting-go-of*.

Death forces the hand of choice. There is only letting go to do. Practice, Jenny. Practice letting go. Of everything. Toward the end of his cremation, my connection with my dad became purely nonverbal.

As it was doing so, he said, "Feel everything Jenny. Don't be afraid to feel everything." Further dissolution. There is only letting in to do. Practice, Jenny. Practice letting in. Everything.

No trace. The great way is not difficult, it only abhors picking and choosing. The Buddha turns the Dharma wheel and so reality is shown in all its many forms. Letting go. Letting in. Being awakened by the ten thousand things. Bearing witness. Not not-love. Being breathing.



David Roland Flatberg
December 1, 1947 - May 17, 2021

The day before he died was like the most perfect day ever. We sat on the couch for breakfast and fed him a slice of the most delicious chocolate cake. It was Guinness Chocolate Cake with Bailey's Cream Cheese Frosting made by his dear friend River, director of his local Senior Center. A few times he took the fork in his own left hand and fed himself. "Mmm," he'd say. He went in and out of consciousness all day and we used a scarf to gently tie him into his wheelchair because he wanted to sit up. Around 11am he was trying to rip the oxygen cord in half. He said he didn't want that anymore "cuz that's the stuff that keeps ya alive." So we took off his oxygen.

We sat around the back yard almost all day, moving our circle into and out of warm sunshine and cool shade. Listening to the best songs ever written. He sipped on an ice cold Classic Coca Cola through a bendy straw, we'd help him hold the glass. The breeze blew here and there and my dad could feel it. He drank it in. Occasionally he would open his eyes and tilt his face to the bright blue cumulus sky or, recognize one of us. Friends and family came and went. We joked and talked and sat vigil together. We took turns in the chairs next to him, sitting and saying goodbye. We helped my dad light cigarettes, which he could never hold onto, which always made us all laugh out loud.

He kept stopping breathing for long periods of time and his upper body would roll forward slowly collapsing. Then, after long silence, he'd inhale again and more times than not have something to say. One time someone asked him what his favorite season is and he said, "fucking." To which we all roared. He kept making us promise we would not lose our sense of humor at any time during his dying. In fact, after my daughter (who spent the weekend up here with us) heard the story of his cremation and studied his ashes over Facetime she said, "That looks like a pile of laughter and jokes to me." Indeed.

Another time he woke up he said to all of us, "The way I see it, Death is the only real thing in life. Look around, we have fences, and houses, and even each other, but none of it is real. Only Death is real and It is serious business."

In the late afternoon on that 'very good day to die', he said, "Well, that's it for me. Let's take me to my bed." We all knew he wouldn't get up again. He knew he wouldn't get up again. I sat in the wheelchair at his bedside until

6am while he and my sister slept in his bed. Around 3am his chakras started glowing, lit all the way up and spun faster and faster until they dispersed to a rainbow that was distinct at first but grew ungraspable. I then looked back into his chakras to find myself on the edge of the heaviest emptiness I've never even imagined. In its infinite vastness, it somehow gathered a form that floated up and through me. After this time, his energy was very, very low. Kanzeon namu butsu yo butsu u in yo raku ga jo cho nen kanzeon bo nen kanzeon nen nen ju shin ki nen nen fu ri shin...I was craving deviled eggs.

Around 6am I curled up on the foot of the bed and snuggled with my family's beautiful feet. Turns out my dad, sister, and I all have the EXACT same hand and foot size! I slept hard for two hours. By morning on his death day, he was agitated. With increasing help he had made it to the bathroom to sit on the toilet to urinate, until now. At 120 pounds, he was too heavy to safely lift and maneuver. We told him he was dying. He didn't understand that he couldn't make it into the toilet. This was the first time in his dying, my sister and I couldn't accommodate him. We acknowledged parent child roles had reversed, irreversibly. He was very angry at us for not letting him go in to the bathroom. At one point he shoved me, hard, and told me he'd never forgive me.

The morphine and lorazepam eased us out of the agitation. The hospice nurse, Tiffany, came and bathed his entire body, which he had refused to wash for over a week. She washed around and under every toe, every wrinkle of sagging skin, every crevice, pore, and follicle, with more care and presence than I regret to admit I have with my own child. Truly, she is someone to behold. She be-held us in empowered love and spaciousness throughout his last week, always deferring to my dad's wishes. He was in charge. At the intake interview with her for hospice, my dad apologized to her for swearing and she said, "Please don't apologize, we want you to be you." It was true, she really did want him to be him and it was humbling to be part of.

For the hour before he stopped breathing I laid on my back side-by-side next to him in bed. I rolled up my sleeve so our bare arms could touch. His breathing continued to slow until I felt my heart break open. I curled around him with my face at his neck, my arm around his protruding ribs.

After all night and day of breathing loving dissolution I began to bawl and heard myself wail, "No, wait, don't go, take one more breath." But, you know, at that point his rare breath was more a mechanical pattern of bodily habit than it was life-giving.

My sister and I stayed curled around him. Tiffany had happened by a short time before he died and, holding his hand and pulse pronounced time of death: 16:27. He was still so there. People came in and visited him. When I finally sat up my tears and the mucus streaming out my nose were enmeshed in his hair and stringing out from the side of my face. Anne and I laughed and she handed me some tissues. We bathed him. We dressed him for his cremation in his nice jeans, black cowboy boots, a white collarless dress shirt with simple pleating on the breast, his grandfather's bolo tie. His black cowboy hat placed on his chest, his hands resting on the brim. He looked so sharp. He was still close by.

He went with his body to the mortuary and spent the night alone there, the only body in the refrigerator. I held for the silence and stillness to be deeply right for him. We met him the next morning, did the paperwork, got the bill, signed the releases, and when the death certificate was signed by the doctor, we placed our dad in the hearse. It was odd and hilarious to us that his hearse was a Toyota Sienna minivan. My sister and I followed him over the pass to Jackson in my car. We placed his body in the cardboard box, folded up the sides of it, placed him in the crematorium. We lit it. We sat outside under aspens and evergreens in the shadow of the smoke, heat rising from the chimney stack. I ate sourdough bread and arugula. He became more and more non-distinct during this time. After a couple hours the crematorium cooled to about 800 degrees and Tyson, the mortician, let us back in. Bones and ashes lay right where he had lain. Tyson quoted the Book of Genesis as he raked our dad's ashes into the bin. "From dust we are formed. And to dust we shall return."

We poured his remains into a large rectangular metal bowl above the grinder. They were still very hot but we took our time with them. Tyson removed metal, like the copper rivets and button from his jeans, the nails from his cowboy boots, the plate from his face, while Anne and I looked at and crumpled his bones between our hands. The inside of his skull was indented with the patterns of rivers and swirled with pinks and beiges. It

looked like an aerial map of southern Utah. We found a finger bone that I wanted to keep, but the mortician said he'd have to issue me a certificate to have human remains and that it would crumple before I got it home. So, I left his finger and we ground all of him up. We poured him into two plastic bags, tied them with zip-ties, and brought him home. Tyson said that was the first time in his fifteen years as a mortician anyone had participated in the cremation process with him. To us, it was a gift.

It was a relief to have his physical body taken care of. That night we drank whiskey around the fire until cold stars blessed us to our beds. My dad was grateful not to die alone. He expressed ache for those who do. My heart aches for him. For the loss of him. I feel a chasm where he used-to-be and it makes it hard to breath sometimes. The feeling is so big everyone on the planet must be feeling this with me...right now. Sometimes I can still smell his dying, but I guess I best get back to work and the five weeks-worth of piles my bosses generously allowed me to accumulate.

What am I dreaming about? *I'm dreaming I'm someone.* I'm best able to serve when I'm awake from that dream. *This* is the only moment in which to do that. In reciting the Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo and in offering a-yard-of-yellow-dandelions, raincloud-sunlight, and cigarette-smoke, I dedicate its merits to the Peace of the World. And to David Roland Flatberg, on this the third day since his passing. May he have a swift passage to the other shore and may we accomplish the Buddha Way together...

Mother & Child

Photo by Bruce Lambson

