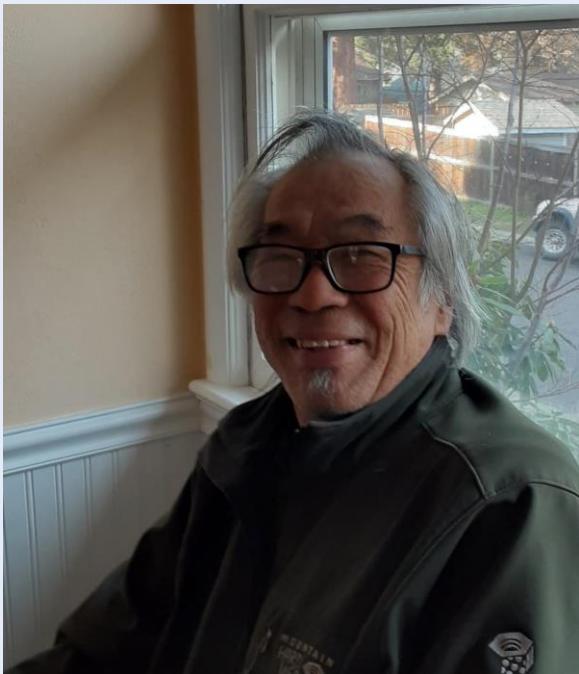


# **TASHI CHOLING SANGHA NEWS FEBRUARY 2022**



## **Sangha Spotlight: Mike Osugi**

Mike Osugi's parents arrived in the US from Japan in the late 30s. During World War II, they were held in an internment camp in Poston, Arizona with many others of Japanese descent. Two of their children were born at the camp.

When Mike's parents and children were released after the war, they settled in Salinas, California. That's where Mike was born and raised, the youngest in a family of 12 children. "As the youngest, I was spoiled silly," he noted. Years later, Mike's sisters told him that, when he was little, he ran around shouting, "I was born in the spirits!"

Mike's middle name in Japanese is Daisuke, which means big helper. "I've always wanted to be of help," he noted. When he was a child, he imagined helping in the form of Batman and Superman, but as time went on, his wish to help led him to use his construction skills to help Gyatral Rinpoche develop his centers.

Mike's father was a mechanic, and the family lived in a small house behind his garage, many people to a room. "It was a rough part of town. We were surrounded by Mexican gangs. But to us, they were just regular folks. They didn't bother us. They were our neighbors," he said. Mike lived in Salinas until he was 20, then he went to UC Berkeley to study engineering. Two of his brothers had become engineers, and Mike thought he would try it out, too. But it soon became clear that engineering was not his path. Instead, he earned a degree in zoology.

At that time, many spiritual masters lived in or visited Berkeley. Mike was curious about Buddhism and had taken a few classes with Tarthang Tulku Rinpoche. Then he met Seiji Toyama; they worked together on landscaping jobs. Seiji was also interested in Buddhism. He told Mike about another Tibetan lama, Gyatral Rinpoche. Mike began to attend teachings Gyatral Rinpoche was giving on ngondro and the bodhisattva way of life at his center on Hillegass Avenue. "I didn't understand what he was teaching. I was a poor student for many years. I just stuck around," Mike said.

In 1980, something occurred that had a lasting impact on Mike's life. He became a father. "I never thought I would be a dad. I didn't want the responsibility," he said. But he took the responsibility of

supporting his daughter Sherab seriously for many years. Sherab lives in Washington state now, and the two of them remain close.

Mike continued to study with Gyatral Rinpoche in Berkeley. After Rinpoche moved to Oregon, his Bay area center lost its physical location, but a small group of students in the East Bay met for pujas in each other's homes and rented halls when lamas came to teach. In 1984-1985, Mike served as vice president for the center.

In 1989, Mike traveled to attend the Rinchen Terzod empowerments given by His Holiness Penor Rinpoche in Maryland. He and several other West Coast students were invited to camp out on land owned by a local sangha member. About five people in the group found jobs inserting ads into newspapers all night.

"We were broke," Mike explained. "We worked all night, got home at 5 or 6 in the morning, and slept. The empowerments began at 1. It was rough, but we were excited to be there. And we were all a lot younger then." After the empowerments were over, Mike stayed in Maryland for several years, then he moved back to the Bay Area, where he focused on work and his daughter.

Mike decided to take a month off from work in 1997. He wanted to reconnect with dharma, and especially with Gyatral Rinpoche at Tashi Choling. Feeling a bit anxious because he had not seen Rinpoche for years, he parked by the Vajrasattva statue, intending to do some korwa on his arrival. As he entered the garden, he saw that Rinpoche and Jigme were there, circumambulating the statue.

When Rinpoche greeted Mike, Mike's anxiety completely evaporated. It was as if there had been no time lapse, no years of separation. Rinpoche sat on a bench in the garden and asked Mike to join him. Looking at Mike, Rinpoche said, "We've known each other a long time, haven't we?" For Mike, it was a moment that illuminated the nature of their connection.



*Building a structure to house the prayer wheels*

A few years later, Mike began volunteering as a construction worker at Tashi Choling, Orgyen Dorje Den, and Rinpoche's home in Half Moon Bay. His first project was building two rows of prayer wheels at the entrance of the Mandala Garden at Tashi Choling. "I didn't know anything. For some reason, there I was building those prayer wheels," he reported. He built the prayer wheels himself, and then worked with

other sangha carpenters to build a structure to hold them.

After that, Rinpoche asked Mike to work on other projects. Next, Mike helped to renovate the shrine room at Orgyen Dorje Den under the guidance of Nepalese artist Sonam Tsiring. “It was an amazing amount of work. We worked from 9am to 9pm. Sonam was the engineer, architect, and artist,” Mike said. Many people contributed to the effort with Mike being the mainstay. The renovation took 10 months.

In 2004, Mimi Hohenberg asked Mike if he wanted to be a caretaker at her home in Half Moon Bay, which was Rinpoche’s residence. He lived there for the next seven years. “I got to see Rinpoche pretty much every day,” he reported.

In the summers, Rinpoche asked Mike to work on many projects at Tashi Choling, including enclosing the statues in the Mandala Garden, putting roofs over prayers wheels, building a shrine in the Guru Rinpoche Pavilion, and building the entry arch that leads to the Tashi Choling temple. (This is not a complete list.)

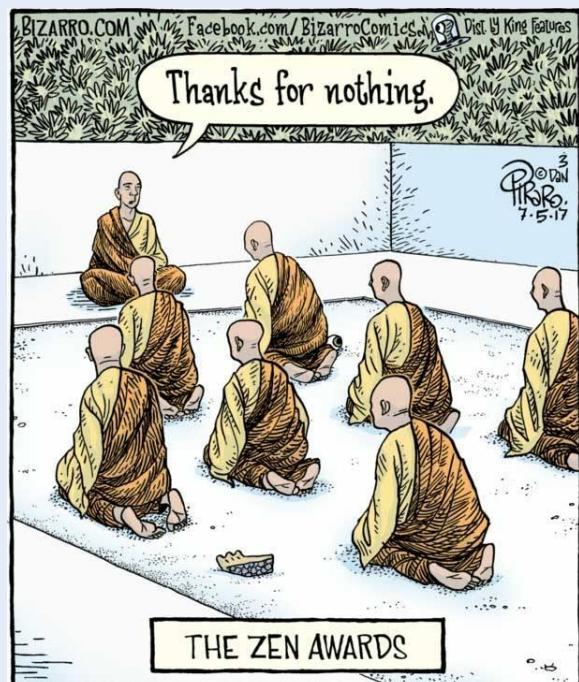
As Mike noted, “Our human interaction with Rinpoche makes everything come alive. Our vision is so puny compared to his grander vision. I wanted to be part of that. Helping in that way fulfilled what I wanted to do in life.”

Thank you, Mike, for everything you have contributed.



Gyatru Rinpoche and Mike Osugi during construction of the East Wing

## Contemplative Cartoon Corner



*Editor's Note: I need more funny cartoons, as in ha ha ha! Please send me any that make you laugh!*

**Keep reading....There's more!**

## Living in the Temple

by Julie Rogers

You will not waste your life.  
It is a diamond  
set into your heart  
and light escapes  
through the many windows  
opening you to the world.

Everything that has hurt you  
is the carving of the jewel,  
brilliant facets  
formed in rough hands  
that have struck you down.  
Pain is a teacher.

There is nothing to fear  
if you remember  
you are safe  
in the treasure house  
of awareness,  
the spacious center

everywhere, the pure air  
of devotion,  
love that breathes  
into the emptiness  
of suffering.  
This you can trust.

from *House of the Unexpected*  
[Wild Ocean Press]



## The Teacher Appears



In Ensenada, Mexico in 1982, Loreto Beamonte was praying to find a spiritual guide. One night, she dreamed that she would finally meet her teacher. In fact, her teacher appeared in the dream, wearing maroon clothing. Loreto said. "I was so amazed that I would finally meet him, but in the dream, I couldn't see his face because I was astonished at his clothing. Why was he wearing a skirt?"

The next day Loreto shared her dream with her friend, Mrs. Pallares, who was associated with the Brotherhood of Man, a group focused on indigenous wisdom. Mrs. Pallares said, "Oh, a Tibetan teacher is teaching here tonight. You should come. Perhaps he is the one you are looking for."

As things turned out, Loreto didn't even have to wait for the evening teaching. Mrs. Pallares was hosting a breakfast at her home that day for Gyatral Rinpoche and other guests, and she invited Loreto to attend. When Loreto walked into the room, she recognized Rinpoche immediately as the figure in her dream. "I felt like a little kid," she said. "I was so excited."

Their first exchange was rather endearing. "I asked him, is it true you are my teacher? He said, 'Maybe.' I thought he was a little cautious. Maybe he thought, 'Who is this crazy lady?'" Loreto also attended a luncheon at the house that day. When Mrs. Pallares asked Loreto to offer grace before the meal, Loreto was surprised, thinking that Rinpoche should have been asked to say grace.

Spontaneously, Loreto chanted "Om Ah Hung" as a food offering. She had learned the three sacred syllables from Dr. Hector Kuri, a bioenergetics practitioner, but knew nothing about their meaning. During the meal, Loreto asked Rinpoche how Tibetans say grace. "The same way you did," Rinpoche replied. "Om Ah Hung, an offering to the Three Jewels."

Subsequently, Loreto attended teachings that Rinpoche offered on ngondro and dream yoga. During her first interview with Rinpoche, he encouraged her to rely on Tara and Vajrasattva practice. Rinpoche told her, "This is not only for you. This is for you to help your people."



*Ignacio and Loreto Beamonte with Sangye Khandro*

"From then on, I had a commitment to help myself and help others," Loreto said. "Rinpoche trusted me and that gave me the encouragement I needed. He was the answer to all my prayers."

The following year in Santa Monica, His Holiness Dudjom Rinpoche authorized Loreto and her husband Ignacio Beamonte to start a Yeshe Nyingpo center in Ensenada. They have continued to maintain the center ever since — 39 years of devotion and care.

Of course, there is much more to the story of the Ensenada center. And it all began when Loreto Beamonte met Rinpoche.

E ma ho! How wonderful this is!

Website: <https://www.ynmexico.org/>



## Remembering Laura Glasscock by Carolyn Myers

Ani Baba, Diane Taudvin, and I gathered together telephonically to remember our good friend and dharma sister, Laura Glasscock, who died on December 7, 2021 from complications of an inherited kidney disease.

Ani Baba and Laura were together in the early 1980s the first time they saw Gyatrul Rinpoche and Sangye Khandro, who were appearing onstage at an ecumenical gathering at the Presbyterian Church in Ashland. Laura turned to Ani (then Barbara Brown) and said, "That guy, he's got something!" She took refuge several years before Ani Baba, and during breaks from teachings she was attending at the town center, then located on Second Street, she would drop by Ani's house with enticing tidbits of Tibetan lore. One thing that lodged in Ani's mind was that Rinpoche had said

that lamas, when they meet beings who have passed, speak directly to them, "Hey, you're dead!"

Finally, in 1985, Ani was confiding to her friend that she felt like she was missing out on something in life, that she needed a big change. Laura invited her to stay in her tent at Tashi Choling, where His Holiness Penor Rinpoche was giving the Namchö empowerments. Laura assured her that there would be no pressure to attend, she could just camp and take walks and listen in if she wanted to. Ani drove to the Colestine Valley but couldn't get up the nerve to drive up to Tashi Choling.

She pulled into a driveway down the road and was about to turn tail and run, when Patrick Hansen saw her. "No, drive on, go on," he said, "You're almost there!" She attended one day of the empowerments and never missed another one.

Diane remembered doing a three-month retreat with Laura, Ani, and many others. Once, during phowa practices, when Rinpoche touched Laura's head, she was so sensitive that she jumped from a sitting position and then began giggling. Rinpoche said, "Now that's interesting." Another time in the temple, both Diane and I remembered how he singled Laura out for praise, pointing to her humility. I well remember how still she could sit with her good posture, perhaps steadied by years of playing the cello.

Ani Baba and Laura played the cello together, once in a play for Actor's Theater at Pioneer Hall, under the direction of the madly creative Michael O'Rourke. They were also in a choir, where Ani remembers the voices once

came together in such harmony that it felt like the whole choir was lifted by the energy flowing between them. Diane also sang with Laura, and I spent several years in the early 2000s schooling myself in classical music once a week, when Laura would come over and my friend Sharon, Laura, and I would take turns researching a composer and bringing some of his music on CDs to listen to.

Diane reminded us about the time when Laura's apartment on Beach St. burnt down, and almost everything went up in a blaze, only her cello and her dharma things were miraculously saved. After that fire, Laura and her son Malcolm moved in with my family for a while, then moved to an apartment just over the fence. She grew a large and wonderful garden in my yard, another of her talents.

And I have and use some of her dharma things, so I think of her every time I play my instruments in chöd practice. Laura left the dharma years ago, although she continued to respect and love Rinpoche. All three of us greatly regretted her decision, which seemed based on misguided self-criticism rather than conflict with the dharma or the sangha. Diane took weekly walks with Laura for many years, and they continued to discuss dharma but nothing brought her back to practice.

In 2017, when His Holiness Getse Rinpoche was visiting, Laura came out to the temple to return some of her dharma items. Rinpoche was giving empowerments, and Ani suggested Laura stay. Laura, already ill, received the empowerments and felt they helped her in her illness. She was also stopped in her tracks by the Vimalamitra statue, which she had never seen. A few weeks

before Laura died, Ani sent her a photo of that statue and a few other images, and Laura was glad to receive them. Laura's sister wrote to Ani Baba and shared that Laura died peacefully and was in no pain at the end.

Farewell to our dear friend and sister. We all had the astonishing good karma to meet Gyatral Rinpoche, our teacher. Life feels short right now, but the path of dharma is long. May it continue to unfold in an auspicious way for Laura.

Tuesday, January 25, 2022, marked the 49<sup>th</sup> day of Laura Glasscock's bardo period. May she find a fortunate rebirth.



#### ***About Sangha News***

*Sangha News is published bi-monthly. The next issue will appear on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Please send your cartoons, poetry, news, etc. to [gaea.laughing@gmail.com](mailto:gaea.laughing@gmail.com) by March 10<sup>th</sup>.*