

# Robert Moore Becomes 7th Master Dharma Teacher

Robert S. Moore, 45, a Texas-born jazz musician and martial arts teacher, was certified as a Master Dharma Teacher on Dec. 6, 1986. In an evening ceremony at the Providence Zen Center officiated by Zen Master Seung Sahn, Bob became the seventh American Zen student to be named as an MDT, which is equivalent to "sensei" in the Japanese tradition. He has been a student of Soen Sa Nim's for 12 years.

Married and the father of three children, Bob teaches music at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles, is a Tai-Chi instructor at the Aikido Ai Dojo in Whittier, and leads a small Zen group there. A former professor of music at Yale University, he was a co-founder of the New Haven Zen Center in 1975.



Robert Moore receiving his Master Dharma Teacher certificate from Zen Master Seung Sahn.

The highlight of the certification assembly was a lively 30-minute "Dharma combat" in which Bob answered questions from the audience in formal, Zen interview style. Sitting alone in front of the altar of the main Dharma room, Bob received people one by one as they made a prostration before him, then sat and delivered their question. The often fierce and dramatic questions and Bob's pointed or witty answers to them occasioned much good-humored laughter in the audience. Bob revealed himself as a warm-hearted and clear teacher.

Following the combat, Bob received from Soen Sa Nim his certificate as an MDT, an orange kasa for ceremonial wear, a Zen stick, and the teaching books of the School. His Dharma name is Hae Um, which means "ocean sound." Certification as an MDT means that Bob will be leading retreats in the Kwan Um Zen School in about six months, following a series of retreats to be co-led with Soen Sa Nim and several of the other Master Dharma Teachers. He will be available twice a month at Dharma Sah Zen Center in Los Angeles, and will be giving talks and interviews at Empty Gate Zen Center in Berkeley, and at Seattle Dharma Center.

### Bob Moore's background

Born in Texas, August 22, 1941, Bob's talent in music developed early. He worked his way around Texas and the Gulf Coast as a jazz musician in high school and through college. In 1964 he received a BA from Centenary College in Shreveport, LA, and took MA and PhD degrees in music composition in 1967 and 1969 at the University of Iowa.

Bob's first teaching position was at the Conservatory at Oberlin College in Ohio. His first encounter with Zen practice occurred in 1969 when he joined a student meditation group at Oberlin run by the college Chaplain. Two Japanese monks visited the group. Bob started reading about Zen and also encountered Zen ideas through the work of composer John Cage and others. He started sitting on his own in 1970.

In the summer of that year he married Marilyn, an art history graduate student he had met at the University of Iowa. They now have three children: Rane (9), Lian (6), and Devin, (6 months). Marilyn, who has a background in both studio art and art therapy, is administrator of an art gallery at California State College at Fullerton.

In 1973 Bob received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to do research at MIT. During that year of living in Boston, he became involved in Buddhist temples and began looking for a teacher. He sat a retreat with Eido Roshi in New York. In 1974 he became a Professor of music composition at Yale. There he began a close friendship with David Mott, a recent music graduate who was serving as an instructor. David, who had been teaching martial arts for years, had a martial arts club at Yale, which Bob joined.

Bob and David started sitting together along with Katie Kahn and Steve Cohen, two New Haven residents also looking for a spiritual teacher. In 1974, having made contact with Stephen Mitchell (then a Zen monk named "Mu Gak Sunim" living in Cambridge and a co-founder of the Cambridge Zen Center) they met Soen Sa Nim and invited him to give a talk at Yale, which he did in the fall of 1974. In early 1975 Bob and the others sat a 7-day retreat at Providence Zen Center and took the Five Precepts. At Soen Sa Nim's request, they formed the New Haven Zen Center in a rented apartment.

Later that year David Mott's father bought him a big house on Mansfield Street. David and his family lived in the downstairs apartment, and the new Zen Center rented

the top two floors, just as it does today. Bob was named the Head Dharma Teacher. "That was my first formal position in Zen," Bob said. In 1976 Bob, Steve and David all took Dharma Teacher Precepts.

Bob stayed in New Haven until 1979, then moved to California to take a job at University of Southern California and to help out at the Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center in Los Angeles. He began to practice regularly there in 1979. However, he lived 35 miles away from the Zen Center. About four mornings a week he would get up before 4:00, dress for work, eat breakfast, and drive to the Zen Center. At that hour in the morning it took about 45 minutes; during rush hour it was almost a two-hour drive. It was a very difficult schedule and Bob eventually went through a period of about six months when he stopped going. With Soen Sa Nim's encouragement, he resumed and in 1981 became Head Dharma Teacher at Tahl Mah Sah.

In 1981 he also began an apprenticeship with Tai Chi Master York Loo. In 1985 Master Loo authorized him to teach Tai Chi and other Chinese internal (ie. non-aggressive) martial arts. When Frank McGouirk, head Aikido teacher at Aikido Ai Dojo (which is near Bob's home), found out about Bob's Zen practice, he made a Dharma room in the back of the dojo big enough for about 15 students. Bob started a meditation group there in June 1985, which meets on Sunday mornings and has about a dozen regular students. The group became an affiliate of the Kwan Um Zen School in December 1985.

### Highlights of the Assembly

An opening speech was given by School Abbot Lincoln Rhodes, who noted that this was the fourth MDT certification assembly held since Soen Sa Nim started teaching in the United States in 1972. Soen Sa Nim explained the meaning of the ceremony, and Master Dharma Teacher George Bowman gave a congratulatory speech thanking Bob for his wholehearted practice over many years. Excerpts from the Dharma Combat and the text of Soen Sa Nim's talk follow.

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Bob: No questions about ducks!  
[Genthner loves to tell jokes about ducks.]  
Bob Genthner (Abbot of Lexington, KY, Zen Center): So, you have hair on your face, but no hair on your head. So, are your face and your head the same or different?

Bob: You already understand.  
BG: But I ask you.

Bob: (taking Genthner's hand and putting it to his scalp, then his beard): Smooth, rough.

BG: (pointing to his beard): Smooth is necessary.

Bob: "Ok. (taps scalp). This is sky. (taps beard) This is earth.

[applause]

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George Bowman (Master Dharma Teacher): If you had to sum up your practice as a martial artist, your practice with Soen Sa Nim, and your practice with your family in one word, what would that one word be?

Bob: You already understand.  
GB: So I ask you.

Bob: Give.  
GB: Is that all?

Bob: You want more?  
GB: No more.

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Ellen Sidor (Editor of PRIMARY POINT): So, for many years you lived and taught on the East Coast. Then you

moved, and now for many years you have lived and taught on the West Coast. So tell me, are they the same or different?

Bob: You already understand.

ES: I don't understand. Tell me.

Bob: California - smog. New Haven - snow.

ES: Is that all?

Bob: You live there, you want more?

Hear this voice? (referring to his laryngitis)

ES laughs and bows.

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Jane McLaughlin (Director of Cambridge Zen Center): Hi Bob. Congratulations.

Bob: Thank you.

JM: Soen Sa Nim always says, put it all down. But another famous teacher said, pick it all up. What does it mean, pick it all up?

Bob: You already understand. Put it all down. [great laughter]

JM: Thank you.

Bob: What famous teacher was that?

You?

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Lincoln Rhodes (School Abbot): Hi.

Bob: Oh, the old man. Have to deal with the old man first.

LR: Fancy meeting you here.

Bob: Yeah. This really is odd, being on the other side.

LR: You and I share rather extensive academic training and we've trained with some of the best intellectuals in the country—Yale, MIT. Wonderful. Then we ran into Soen Sa Nim. So, after you throw away all that great intellectual training, however clever we might be, we even have to throw away the wonderful words we got from Soen Sa Nim, because they can be used in the same way. Then what's left?

Bob: You already understand.

LR: So I ask you.

Bob: You have a good face tonight.

LR: That's all that's left?

Bob: You want more?

LR: No. Thank you.

At this point Soen Sa Nim hit the moktak, signalling the end of the Dharma combat. The audience applauded. After a short intermission, the assembly reconvened. Bob stood up in front of Soen Sa Nim who read Bob's certificate in Korean. Lincoln Rhodes then read it in English: "Master Dharma Teacher Certificate. Dharma name: Hae Um Poep Sa. Name: Robert S. Moore. Date of birth: we won't go into that. The Kwan Um Zen School certifies that the above-named person is authorized as a Master Dharma Teacher. December 6, 1986. (Signed) Zen Master Seung Sahn."

SSN: In the old Chinese tradition there are two kinds of transmission: secret transmission and public transmission. The Sixth Patriarch had secret transmission, because at that time 700 monks were living in the Zen Master's home temple. The Head Monk had been practicing for many years with the Fifth Patriarch and everyone thought he would get transmission. But this Sixth Patriarch was not a monk, he was a layman. If he got transmission, maybe many monks would kill him. So he got a secret transmission at night and went away. For 18 years he only hid. Then he cut his hair and became a monk. That was secret transmission.

Ma Jo Zen Master got transmission from Pai Chang in a big public ceremony. That's a famous story. Before transmission is what we call "inga," which means your practicing is okay. It's possible for you to teach

other people. Inga means many Zen Masters are possible. Transmission means only one Zen Master.

Inga and transmission are different. Our Master Dharma Teacher title is like the Japanese title "sensei." In Korean, we call it "Chong Yong Sun"—your practicing is okay, teaching other people is possible. This title has almost disappeared in Korea, although it still exists in China. In Korea we now have the title Head Monk—"Ip Sung Sunim."

Now we have the Master Dharma Teacher ceremony, which is very important.

Why? In this ceremony we come together and believe him. Also, how strong is his center? If the Zen Master gives inga or transmission only privately to this person, sometimes the other students don't understand. So our Master Dharma Teacher ceremony means that everyone can come here and ask him any kind of question, and he must answer. Good answer, bad answer, doesn't matter. How much he believes in himself 100% is the most important point.

Even my teacher, Zen Master Ko Bong, had young Zen Masters coming to him, challenging him. There is a famous story of the time a young Zen Master asked him, what did the monk whisper in Zen Master Duk Sahn's ear? (this is from a famous kong-an) Duk Sahn Zen Master hadn't heard the drum (announcing meals) but he carried his bowl into the Dharma room. That was a big mistake, so this is a mistake kong-an. So what did the monk say to him?

My teacher was stuck. He was thinking a little bit, like everyone does (even Zen Masters), and he was stuck. This young Zen Master wanted to become a great Zen Master, so he came and hit my teacher. So when my teacher could not answer, the young Zen Master said, "Aigo! Aigo!" This means, "You are already dead!" Then he went away.

After one week the young Zen Master understood. So he came back and said, "Thank you for your teaching." This kind of thing happens. So whether the answer is good or bad doesn't matter. The Master Dharma Teacher test means how much does he believe in himself 100%? Today I saw that Bob Moore is very good. He believes in himself 100%. That is very important. Zen means believe in your true self 100%.

When asked what is Buddha, Ma Jo Zen Master used to say, "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind." That's not correct. These are bad words. Then next he said, "No mind, no Buddha." These are bad words, too. If somebody gave that answer today, they would get hit! But that's okay.

So in this ceremony we check two things: center and wisdom. Checking the center means, does the answer appear quickly or not? If there's no hesitation, that's a strong center. If the answer is sometimes a little slow in coming, that means the center is not clear. Next, we check whether the answer is correct or not. Correct answer means wisdom.

In the future some other people may become Master Dharma Teachers. Wisdom and a strong center are necessary. A strong center means your mind is not moving, your mind is clear like space. You can reflect action. Whether or not your answer is correct, you can reflect action. That is center.

So today we have a Senior Dharma Teacher becoming a Master Dharma Teacher. Congratulations. Our School is very happy to have this happening. In the future, everyone must practice strongly and many Master Dharma Teachers will appear, to help our School, and help all beings. Thank you. □