Wind Bell

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A Question and Answer Session with Suzuki Roshi

July 8, 1969

SR: Tonight I have nothing special that I want to talk about. It may be better to answer your questions; first I want you to give me several questions and then I will try to answer them. Do you have some questions? Hai.

Q: Will you speak of purity and worship?

Q: Will you speak of shikantaza?

Q: You said once that enlightenment was just so much "candy." Could you explain that?

Q: It seems that just following the natural flow is my practice. Sometimes I'll watch my breathing, sometimes just sitting, really involved in whatever I am doing. It seems sort of unnatural to just try and stick to one particular practice like watching the breath.

Q: Could you speak on the practice of not-thinking, or no thought during zazen?

SR: Mostly your questions may be about practice. The idea of purity of mind is connected to how we practice shikantaza. "Enlightenment is just candy," may sound like a blasphemous statement. To stick to just one practice may look unnatural. Maybe, after all, I have to explain how we practice and the purpose of practice. Our practice should be pure or natural and should not depend on being encouraged by some candy. To be natural and pure and not to depend on candy means to have deeper practice. Our intention to practice zazen is not just in terms of pure or impure, successful or unsuccessful, natural or unnatural. Maybe what you mean is deeper than what you say, but if I take it literally it looks rather shallow.

When we say "pure" it is more emotional: good and bad practice in emotional terms. But our practice is more than that. Whether it is Rinzai or Soto, we do not practice zazen to have some special experience. When we say "enlightenment" it does not mean some particular experience according to Rinzai. Whatever the experience may be, if you feel it or understand it, that is not what we mean by enlightenment experience. Enlightenment experience is to go beyond you or your surroundings, or teaching or zazen or enlightenment, or someone who practices zazen in some form.

Of course there will be no idea of koan practice or shikantaza. You may say on one hand, this is shikantaza, and on the other, this is koan practice. But when you experience enlightenment, actually there is no koan practice or shikantaza. And if you say, "This is the enlightenment experience," that is not actually the true experience. How do you practice zazen without expecting something special, without dreaming of something in your mind? Without expecting some special experience you should devote yourself fully to your practice. When that is difficult we count our breaths or we do koan practice. Koan practice or counting breath practice is some help, you know. To help our pure practice, we use a koan or count our breath.

We say, "Counting breath practice." The purpose of counting breath is not to count your breath without making any mistake, even though we try not to make any mistake. To fully engage in practice we count our breath. Even though you have lazy posture, it is possible to count your breaths from one to ten without making a mistake. But that is not true zazen because your body, your activity is not fully engaged in the practice. Your whole body and mind should be engaged in one full practice. And to help this kind of entire practice of body and mind, we count our breath. So counting breaths is just the handle of your cup. It is not the cup itself; it is just a way to take hold of the cup, or it is some way to encourage your true practice. It is not the actual purpose of zazen, but it is an aid to pure practice.

When I say this, you may have some misunderstanding. You may think: "If that is just an aid to practice, it is not so important; it doesn't matter." But that is not so. Even though you make your best effort in counting your

Dedication of the Kaisando at Tassajara

breath, the purpose of counting breath practice is not just to count. And even though it is not the purpose of practice, you must try to count your breath without mistakes. Do you understand? I don't want to explain so much. I don't want to give you another problem by my answer.

When your practice is beyond pure or impure, that is the pure practice we mean. And to sit without candy means to practice our way beyond the idea of the purpose of zazen. We should not even have the idea of enlightenment. Even though you once attain enlightenment, you should not try to have the same experience again. That kind of practice is not right practice.

Now we come to the idea of "natural." You like the word natural. I don't agree with your idea of natural, because you like it so much. You stick to naturalness too much. When you stick to it, it is not natural any more. Our life is not natural, you know. To do something without the idea of what you should do, without any particular way, that may be naturalness, but by naturalness we mean more than that. Before we discuss naturalness, you should know how unnatural human beings are. We are not natural beings; our way of life is not so natural, it is very twisted and unnatural.

Recently, you know, people are going to extremes. To go to the extreme may be natural, according to your understanding of natural. But that is not what we mean by natural. Do you think that what you usually do is natural? We say [in the meal chant]: "To obtain the natural order of mind we should be free from greed." What does it mean? It means to open our mind fully. When we are free from greed, anger and foolishness, we will have natural order of mind. That kind of naturalness is our naturalness. Do you understand the difference? Your naturalness is to be greedy when you feel

greedy, to be angry whenever you become angry. To be angry and to eat as much as you want, that is your naturalness. But that is not the naturalness we mean. It is very different actually.

Naturalness or natural mind may mean more flexible mind, without sticking to something rigid. When our mind has perfect freedom from everything, our mind is open to everything like a mirror. The mirror does not have any image on its face that belongs to it. So naturally it will have various images according to the objects it reflects. That is naturalness; zazen mind. We say, stop your thinking. To think is to have some picture of some thing in terms of long or short, black or white. That is thinking mind. So when we start to think our mind is dead; when we don't think, our mind is open to various things.

Tassajara dining room Buddha

A Memorial Tribute to Charles Brooks

by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

Charles Van Wyck Brooks, seminal teacher of Sensory Awareness and old friend and supporter of Zen Center since Suzuki Roshi's time, died of a lung ailment at his summer home on Monhegan Island, Maine, on September 15th. He was 79.

Charles had a tremendous and perplexed passion for living. He loved life, plunged into it, wondered about it. He hated any kind of belief system or repression, political or personal. Born in 1912 in Palo Alto, he lived the first ten years of his life in Carmel. His father, Van Wyck Brooks, often called "the father of American literature," was the most prominent American literary critic of his generation; his many books were widely read and reviewed. Charles grew up in the heady and exciting atmosphere of literary foment at its height.

Educated at schools in Westport, Connecticut and at Harvard in the early thirties, Charles joined the American literary exodus to France after college. In France he wrote short stories and did translation work. During World War II he worked as a ship's fitter, and after the war went to New York City where he became a carpenter and a well-known furniture designer (his furniture was shown in the Museum of Modern Art). During this period he began studying calypso dance with Katherine Dunham. He had a powerful

passion for dance and for percussion playing, both of which were often featured at lively parties in his studio in New York during the fifties.

At the age of 46 he met the Sensory Awareness teacher Charlotte Selver, who was then working extensively in New York. He immediately fell in love both with the work and with Charlotte. By 1961 he was leading classes in Sensory Awareness and in 1963 he and Charlotte were married. In 1974 Charles published *Sensory Awareness: The Rediscovery of Experiencing*, his beautiful and comprehensive explanation and appreciation of the work he helped Charlotte develop over many years of conducting workshops all over the world.

In the early days of Zen Center and of the Esalen Institute (where they were early workshop leaders), Charlotte and Charles came into contact with Suzuki Roshi, and they collaborated with him on several occasions. Since that time they have been dear friends and major supporters and associates of Zen Center. Their yearly workshops at Tassajara have been a feature of Guest Seasons there from the beginning, and at Green Gulch they have held many weekend retreats and three month workshops. They have been frequent attendees of the Sunday talks at Green Gulch, sharing the honored seats at the front with George Wheelright.

As a boy, Charles spent time with the American painter Arthur Dove, whose works and whose memory he continued to cherish throughout his life. In *Sensory Awareness*, Charles writes of his experience of Dove in words that could as easily refer to our experience of Charles:

> For with Dove people came into more connection with the reality of the water beneath and of the wind around and of the little rowboat in the midst of it. Not through anything he said; simply through his presence as it had been with us twelve-year-olds in the woods. This was not just a visual or imaginary connection, as with most people and most painters, but a connection of the total organism....That this connection could reach the canvas, and through that me and others, was possible only because between world and canvas was interposed no preconception and no calculation, but only the living pathways of a man.

Charles in Maine

A Breath of Fresh Air: Charlotte Selver and Charles Brooks

by Lee Klinger Lesser

For the past twenty years I have studied and practiced Sensory Awareness with Charlotte Selver and Charles Brooks. At age 19 I was invited into a world of experiencing based on sensations. It was something beyond my doing and it was something I could trust. It was like a breath of fresh air and I was very hungry for it. Charles and Charlotte are woven into the fabric of my life. They have always been there encouraging me and others to open to the best in ourselves. The night I found out that Charles had died I was working on assembling this article for the *Wind Bell*. The article was initially planned to honor and give thanks to Charles and Charlotte for their teachings and innumerable contributions to Zen Center. On October 16th a memorial service was held for Charles at Green Gulch Farm. Person after person spoke to Charles with love and humor, and many objects were placed on the altar: a yam, a hammer, a pruning saw, a beige sweater, a book by Korzybski, Charles's own book. Charles's presence filled the zendo: his own struggle towards freedom, and his generosity and perseverance; his wit,

Charlotte

charm and outrageousness; the beauty and power of his hands and the truth of his touch; the trees that he planted, the house that he built, the furniture he designed, and the meals that he cooked. Charles's own life effort will continue in the many lives he touched. Richard Lowe, an old friend and student, recited a poem to Charles:

> *...[Charles] struggled so to become his own.*
> *And it was from his own he gave us*
> *what he'd really come to find:*
> *a love of play and dance and earthbound care*
> *and a larger sense of mind.*

Charles and Charlotte have felt a connection and deep commitment to Zen Center since its beginning. Suzuki Roshi and Charles and Charlotte were friends and mutual admirers of each other. Suzuki Roshi wrote of their work: "The work of Charlotte Selver and Charles V.W. Brooks is the inner experience of entire being, the pure flow of sensory awareness when the mind through calmness ceases to work—deeper than mind-made awareness. What is this 'entire being'? If you want to say something about it, you should know how to be it."

Thanks to Mary Alice Roche, one of the founders of the Sensory Awareness Foundation and longtime friend to Charles and Charlotte, we have Charles's own words describing how he came to meet Charlotte, his marriage proposal five years later, and their sudden impromptu wedding. Charles begins by describing the friend who convinced him to attend one of Charlotte's workshops in New York City in 1958:

> [My friend] was a very enthusiastic student. I would have been very hesitant to go into something that was entirely unknown to

me....I had a tendency to think that these things were not so much for men, but I was a little reassured because my friend had been a Lieutenant Commander in the Battle of the Bulge....He said the effect of these classes on him was that a fist he had felt in the pit of his stomach—apparently for a long time—in the course of these classes it dissolved. And I thought, "Well my goodness, I've got a fist there, too. What would happen to me? It would be great if it did dissolve!"....When I started, I was very much taken with Charlotte's personality, and her way of speaking, and the whole atmosphere of the class. It really was entirely new....So I became a student immediately; really never ended from that day to this.

In June of 1963, Charles and Charlotte were driving across country to California. Near the Kansas-Colorado border their Volkswagon van was damaged in an accident. Needing to stay over the weekend while it was being fixed, they went up into the Rockies to a place called Twin Lakes. According to Charles :

> [Twin Lakes] really was lovely. On one walk we saw a garden fence with rambling roses all over it, and lupines and larkspur blooming inside. Over the gate was a sign that said "Justice of the Peace." And Charlotte said, "What's that?" She thought it was peaceful enough already, I guess. I said, "He will marry people. That's probably his main business here."...Coming from the other direction was a handsome, tall, silver-haired man, very dignified, walking toward us. And when he came to that gate, he turned and went in. And I guess I thought this is the moment....Anyway, I thought it would be a nice thing to say to Charlotte, so I said, "Should we get married?" And she said, "Oh, Yes!" So we went in and he said, yes, he would marry us, but first we would have to get a marriage license....We went in whenever the marriage bureau was open...and came running back and he invited us in. His wife appeared at this moment which should have been a welcome addition, but it wasn't. Because Charlotte was very impressed with his wife's hair—a huge monument of hair curlers, towering hair curlers—and something about her voice which didn't quite match her husband's looks and bearing....Anyway, he ushered us in, but didn't stop in the living room, and took us into the bedroom. I don't know what train of associations caused Charlotte to feel that this was not the proper place for a marriage. I didn't have any special feelings about it. The only trouble was that the man had great difficulty reading. And so the whole affair seemed to Charlotte to be a little less than the fairy tale she had dreamed of. Nevertheless, we went out with legal papers in our hands. Then we continued our drive on to Los Angeles."

On October 5, 1991, three weeks after Charles died, I was one of fifty people who gathered at Fort Mason for a weekend workshop in Sensory Awareness led by Charlotte. It was a benefit for the Green Gulch Zendo; Charles was to have been co-leading. We began the workshop breathing in and breathing out in memory and in honor of Charles. As Norman Fisher invited us to breathe together, he said "Charles believed in breathing!"

Charlotte sat before the group in stillness and in readiness. At age ninety, she looked frail and fragile. But that external appearance, though it has some truth, is also very deceptive. Charlotte has an astonishing core of strength that is both solid and fluid. It is continually replenished by her passionate love for and commitment to her work and practice.

On one side of Charlotte, as she sat before us, was her hearing equipment, because she is very hard of hearing. On the other side of her was a walker, because she had fallen two nights before and hurt her hip. Over and over, Charlotte has asked, "What does this moment ask of me? What is most acute?" With all that is now happening in her life, Charlotte answered these questions by joining us at the workshop, to share the work to which she has devoted the last seventy years of her life.

Charlotte began by saying that what impressed her most when she met her teacher Elsa Gindler was that she was working with what was most basic in life. That was what Charlotte wanted to do, and that is what she has done. She has encouraged her students to sense and trust their own experiences, and to become aware of the influences of breathing and gravity. She works with what the ancient Chinese called the Four Human Dignities: standing, lying, sitting and walking. Discovering in these our own capacities and our hindrances, we learn to be present for what life asks of us moment by moment. This is the basic work of Sensory Awareness and it is what Charlotte models with her own life.

During the workshop, Charlotte stood up with her sore hip to explore and demonstate the movability of our hands and feet. As I watched, I recalled a time eighteen years earlier on Monhegan Island, Maine, at the end of Charlotte's first nine month study group. On her way to Maine, Charlotte was in a car accident and was rushed to the hospital with two broken hips. About four weeks later, against medical advice, Charlotte arrived on the Monhegan ferry boat, lying on a stretcher looking pale, wan and frail, with a tired smile on her face. A few days later we began carrying Charlotte on her stretcher up to the schoolhouse where we were working. One day she decided to work on the movability of the hips. We must have been a decidedly dull group that day, because Charlotte pushed herself up from her chair with her two broken hips to demonstrate movability in the hips! We were quite terrified. She was quite delighted.

There is a book entitled, *In Spite of Everything, Yes.* It could be the title for a biography about Charlotte. Over and over again, in spite of anything and everything, Charlotte finds a way to say yes to life. In the following poem Rumi seems to be speaking directly about her:

Days are sieves to filter spirit,
reveal impurities, and too,
show the light of some who throw
their own shining into the universe.

The following stories were collected several months ago from friends and students.

Wendy Johnson

Whenever I think of Charlotte, I remember a blustery February day when I was working in the garden. I heard an exclamation of unbridled delight and looked up to find Charlotte bent over a spectacular bed of newly blooming anemones. Charlotte had just returned to Green Gulch where she and Charles would be leading a three month study group. I hurried over to greet her. She stood up and turned to me, tears streaming down her face. "This garden—these anemones—must be responded to!" she said.

Kathie Fischer

I first met Charlotte at Green Gulch when I was a new student. One afternoon I was sitting zazen on the floor tan when Charlotte sat down on the zafu beside me. I have such a clear picture of her bowing to her cushion with care, respect and warmth, sitting down with a quiet chuckle, settled and glad to be there. I sat very strongly next to her. . . .[Charlotte] has taught me many things about sincerity, strength and humor. I am always moved watching her touch or pick something up—words or objects. The words or things come alive and become friendly in her hands or voice.

Jill Harris

I first met and worked with Charles and Charlotte at Esalen in 1968. A few years after leaving Esalen I came to a workshop they gave in San Francisco. After one of the sessions I went up to say hello to Charlotte and she greeted me warmly, asking how I had been since we'd last met. I hesitated and said, "Actually, I've had a very difficult time." There was a pause and then she asked me "Was it important for you?" I must have been holding my breath, because I felt so relieved and received by her question, the first real question anyone had asked me in a long time. "Yes," I said,"It was very important for me." She nodded and said, "I'm glad to hear that." Several months later I was at a workshop at Green Gulch. I went to Charlotte to ask whether it was possible to make a commitment for the first three months of her upcoming nine month study group. She was sitting on a low stool and I came down on

Charlotte and Charles at their home in Maine

my knees to meet her at eye level. But when I opened my mouth to speak, no words came–instead my eyes filled with tears. After a moment she said, "It's hard sometimes, for me, too!" Then she added, "But the door is always open."

Richard Lowe

It was my first workshop with them. We were asked to simply attend to how gravity affected our arms and back while lying on the floor. It seemed like nothing, but after a half hour something gradually let go in me—like a hundred pound weight had melted off my back. It was marvelous, yet my mind was still busy. During the break that followed I wandered outside to sit on a bench in the garden and ponder what had happened. A few minutes later Charlotte approached and sat next to me....After a long pause she turned towards me until I was forced to look at her. She frowned. "You look so serious out here in this beautiful garden," she said gently placing a hand on my back. It was a satori punch. I was suddenly alive to the garden; the sound of the birds, to her and to my own neurotic pondering. From then on I was hooked.

Connie Smith Siegel

On a recent occasion during a working session of our West Coast Sensory Awareness Leaders' Guild, Charles and I were partners in exchanging various objects: a large log, a very heavy stone, and a portable telephone. I was reminded of Charles' respect for natural objects as we negotiated the roughness of the log, and the ponderous weight of the stone between us. I was a little flippant with the telephone, but my attitude changed when I noticed his continuing respect....

Seeing the different objects in Charles and Charlotte's house in Muir Beach is like being with old friends—the wood and stones and pots and paintings have come from an elemental, magical world, and reflect two lives very fully and richly lived. I have been warmed by the generosity of their lives: Charles's fish chowders in Maine, always flowers by the door and kind advice in new places. I am constantly surprised at the different aspects of Charlotte, especially one summer in Germany: her wild laughter at the circus, her quiet absorption in the rooms of Morandi's paintings, the stories of her rambunctious youth over wine and sausage, the stillness of the room as we worked together the next morning. In that stillness is the smell of the straw mats on foggy Monhegan mornings, the sound of dogs barking in Mexico, the flowing creek in Tassajara, and the sunsets we watched together, to the very end.

Ken McCarthy

I first heard about Charlotte through the Open Center catalog when I was living in New York.... I thought I'd like to see this person and what she was up to so I joined the class. At first, and for a long time, I was perplexed and disappointed. We stood on one leg and then the other. We sat down and stood up, again and again. Charlotte asked a lot of questions that seemed to have very obvious answers. I was starting to look for ways to justify the cost in time and money. Then Charlotte said something that stunned me. Her words triggered one of those rare moments of insight that comes out of the blue and changes your life forever. We were doing an experiment which involved placing one's hand on various parts of one's organism. Charlotte said something like this: "Can you feel that there is something living beneath your hand?" At this point my hand was on my chest. It was a simple question, but it arrested me....Theoretically I knew I was alive, but the idea that I was living and could feel the evidence of my existence at all times, in all places, in all circumstances—this was news to me.

The next day I walked across the park to class....The park, where I have easily spent thousands of hours, had come alive. Every bush, every tree was calling to me. It wasn't dramatic, nothing earthshaking. But suddenly I realized that everything around me was, like me, alive. We had something in common, me and these trees and blades of grass. We were members of the same club and I became deeply curious about the forms their lives took.

Charlotte is not a philosopher and she is not a psychologist and God knows she is not a moralist, but when I take the time to think of what Charlotte has meant to me, I always come to the same conclusion: she helped me become a human being. (I'm still working on it of course.) What do you call a person who works such fine magic?

Norman Fischer

Whenever I picture Charlotte and Charles, in my mind's eye I always see them in their wonderful house on the hill at Muir Beach, which overlooks the wide ocean and Green Gulch. We walk up the steep driveway, use the old knocker on the big door. The door swings open, and there are Charlotte and Charles, very small and very present. They immediately throw open their arms and we all have a good hug....Charlotte and Charles are wonderful, even beautiful conversationalists, and to speak with them and share tea and food is a relaxing and delightful experience. They both speak in a lively and colorful way, but they also listen; they want to know all about what we are doing, and they take genuine delight in our joys and express genuine concern for our sorrows. We can see in Charles and Charlotte, in the way they speak and appreciate everything, the real fruits of their many years of Sensory Awareness work. They truly enjoy the gift of living; they express it in all they do; you can't help but feel it—you receive it from them.

Ceremony in Koshland Park commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima

Just Sitting

Sesshin Encouragements by Tenshin Reb Anderson
Tassajara, March 23, 1989

(In the background are the sounds of the creek, of blue jays squabbling, and of intermittent rain.)

As you can hear for yourself, the teaching of thusness has been intimately communicated by Buddhas and Ancestors. The meaning of this practice of Suchness is not in words, and yet it responds to our energy, it responds to our effort. It comes forth and meets us. We sit here and the blue jays sing it to us, the stream sings it to us, because we come and listen. This is our practice of sitting, just sitting. It is a themeless meditation, a *seamless* meditation. It has no form, no beginning, no end, and it pervades everything completely. It leaves no traces, and if I try to trace it, it's not that I trace it, but that it responds to my tracing. So I will trace it in these dharma talks. Not that I can, but it will generously and compassionately respond to my tracing, to my speaking, and to your listening.

Shakyamuni Buddha transmitted the teaching of thusness, the practice of thusness. He said,

> Please train yourselves thus: In the seen, there will be just the seen. In the heard, there will be just the heard. In the reflected, there will

> be just the reflected. In the thought, there will be just the thought. When for you, in the seen there is just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the imagined just the imagined, in the thought just the thought, then you will not identify with the seen, and so on. And if you do not identify with them, you will not be involved; if you are not involved, you will not be located in them; if you are not located in them, there will be no here, no there, or in-between. And this will be the end of suffering.

This is deportment beyond hearing and seeing. When in the seen there is just the seen, this is deportment beyond seeing. When in the heard there is just the heard, this is deportment beyond hearing. This is called not-thinking. This is themeless meditation. And it is seamless meditation. There is no seam between you and the heard; there is just the heard. There is no seam, and the heard is not a theme. There is only the heard, and the seen, and the imagined. This is having no object of thought.

Shakyamuni Buddha also said, "If you approach the five skandhas, if you approach colors or sounds, or if they approach you, this is misery."

Again, approaching sounds, approaching colors is not just the colors being the colors, but you approaching them. This is misery. Approaching feelings, approaching perceptions, approaching emotions, approaching consciousness, these approaches, or being approached by these phenomena, this is misery, this is suffering. But if we do not approach these phenomena, if there is no seam between, then these very same skandhas, these very same colors and sounds, are bliss. This is what Shakyamuni Buddha said. We can see the roots of the Zen tradition of objectless meditation in the Buddha's teaching of how we experience.

Now, in my vain tracing, I jump to the twenty-first ancestor, Vasubandhu. His teacher was Jayata Daiosho. To make a long story short, when Vasubandhu was talking with Jayata, the Ancestor Jayata said,

> I don't seek enlightenment, nor am I deluded. I don't worship Buddha, nor am I disrespectful. I don't sit for long periods, nor am I lazy. I don't eat only once a day, nor am I a glutton. I am not contented, nor am I greedy. When the mind does not seek anything, this is called the Way.

Hearing this, Vasubandhu realized the undefiled knowledge. *Hearing* this. Now those words are gone. What were they about? Can you hear the spirit of enlightenment, can you smell and taste the spirit of enlightenment in those words? Does it sound familiar? Does it sound like your school song? Maybe it shouldn't be your school song, because then maybe you would be identifying with it. Maybe that's too much.

Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi with the Abbots at the Abbots' Birthday Baseball Game

So after Vasubandhu had realized the undefiled knowledge and started to teach, he taught his successor, Manora Daiosho. And Manora came to Vasubandhu and said, "What is the enlightenment of the Buddha?" Vasubandhu said, "It is the original nature of mind." Manora asked, "What is the fundamental nature of mind?" Vasubandhu said, "The emptiness of the sense organs, the sense consciousnesses, and the sense fields." Hearing this, Manora was enlightened. *Hearing* this, the Ancestor was enlightened. What are you hearing?

The realization of *just conception* is the truth, the teaching, the enlightenment of the Sages. For the mind to stop, to terminate, on just conception is the way Buddha functions. Vasubandhu does not deny a level of perceptual experience where there is no sense of self, and no self-clinging. However, this level is unknown to us in our daily life. The level of our normal experience, where we know things clearly, is concepts. In the practice of sitting, awareness of body, awareness of breath, what we're aware of at the level of knowing, is a concept, or a string, a beautiful train of concepts of the body. If the mind can realize just the concept of body, your work is done. There is direct or immediate bodily experience, and it is from this immediate bodily experience that the conceptual experience of body is created. Just sitting practice is just the mind terminating on the concept of sitting, on the concept of the body and the mind and the breath, sitting.

I looked up the word "just" in the dictionary. In the term *shikantaza*, the word *shikan* is sometimes translated as "just," or "only." *Ta* means hit, and *za* means sit. It literally means "hit sitting," but that prefix really intensifies

"sitting." So it means "sitting." Shikan means just or only, but it also means "by all means do it," or "get on with it." It has been translated into English as "just," or "only," and although that wasn't necessarily the meaning of the original Chinese, the English word "just" is kind of a wonderful word. As an adjective, "just" means honorable, fair, as in "just in one's dealings." It means consistent with moral right, fair and equitable. It means properly due, or merited, like "just desserts." Before I came down here from Green Gulch, the Just Desserts company had a seminar there. So "just desserts" means proper retribution for what you've done. It also means honorable after-dinner sweets. And these people from Just Desserts have a very good reputation, in two ways: one is, they have a good reputation for their tasty desserts, but they also have a good reputation for their moral conduct. And they impressed Green Gulch by the energy and enthusiasm of their conference. Your sitting is kind of a just dessert. "Just" also means valid within the law, legitimate. It means suitable or fitting. It means sound, well-founded. It means exact, accurate. It means upright before God, righteous. Just, upright, before the Truth.

"Just."...Think about "just." Live "just." Just concept, just sitting, just the heard being the heard, just the seen in the seen. Upright hearing, righteous hearing, exact hearing, accurate hearing, sound hearing, hearing in accord with the Law, honorable hearing. "Just" is a big word in Buddhism. It's all over the place, everywhere just exactly fitting right on what's happening. That's the sitting we do, perfectly settled right on itself.

The Green Gulch garden

Green Gulch

A friend of mine was waiting for the Fillmore bus in San Francisco. And there was an old man there waiting for the bus, an old black man. Somehow my friend got into a conversation with him, and he told her that he was one hundred years old. And of course she asked him, "How did you get to be so old?" And he quoted from the Bible: "Not a thing will I withhold from you if you stand upright before me." It responds to that kind of energy. You do your part: you put the just sitting out there. That's your job. You just sit. That's your energy, coming right down exactly on your energy; precisely, exactly, upright, honorably you, being your experience. And you will get a response called enlightenment. It's already there, completely pervading you already. You just have to put a little energy forward in order to realize it. Not exactly a little energy, or a lot of energy, but exactly just the energy of this moment, whatever it is. That's why we don't need anything else but what we've got. We don't need to be more awake or less awake. We don't need to have more food or less food than we already have. We just need to be just this. This is our upright, honorable self that we have right here. We've got to celebrate it, we've got to be there for it.

As I said last night, I was deeply touched by what I heard from you and read by you, about your intentions during this sesshin. So I feel that what I'm saying here is not so much other than just reminding you of what you already know, what you already intend. Mostly, what I will be doing besides reminding you will be simply ad-justing you, just "justing" you. That's all. That's all I can do. I'm not correcting you, I'm adjusting you. Of course, I can't really adjust you; you're already adjusted, but sometimes I may feel that you'd look a little more "just" if you sat like this, rather than like that. If

I see your mudra over here, I may think, "I think you'd be a little bit more just if it was over in this area." Of course, this way is just too, but somehow, I think you could be even more just if your mudra were over here a little bit more. So I may adjust it over there. It's just my aesthetic opinion. It's just my personal adjustment for you.

I try to steer clear of any kind of judgment in the adjustment, I just adjust. And then it's for you not to think about being judged, but rather whether you feel more just after the adjustment. At first, you may feel sometimes, "Gee, this is kind of wacko. I feel kind of off. I thought I was straight forward, and now I feel like I'm leaning somewhat." But, maybe in that doubt that you feel after a postural adjustment, or after a verbal adjustment, in the re-orientation that you experience at that point, even though it may be sort of a surprise and you may wonder what's going on, doesn't that remind you of something that you heard before about the Buddha Way?: I'm not seeking enlightenment, and I'm not deluded. I'm not right or wrong. I'm in some place that's beyond hearing and seeing. So, if you were in someplace that was hearing or seeing, and then you get adjusted into the place that's not hearing or seeing there's a slight disorientation for a little while. Suddenly you're living someplace where you can't get ahold of anything.

When you're just sitting, you can't get ahold of anything, because you're just sitting. You're not sitting *and* getting ahold of something. You're just sitting, you're earnestly doing just that. And in some ways, if a person knew you a little bit, and could make a proper adjustment, they would adjust you out of sitting *and* doing something else, back to just sitting. When you lose that something else which may have given you some orientation or some location, of being here, or there, or in-between, at first you may wonder what's going on. But you might trust that new space, that space where you don't know exactly what's happening. At least trust it for a little while.

Now I'd like to jump to Bodhidharma. This is the same thing; I hear the same thing here. He didn't have any kind of special teachings for his disciple, his main disciple Hui-k'o. He just said, "Outside, have no involvements." Chirrrpp! That's it! No involvements. "Inside, have no sighing or coughing. With your mind like a wall, thus you enter the Way." With your mind like a wall: in other words, *just*. With your mind *just*, or your mind *thus*. Thus you enter the Way.

So that's what he said to Hui-k'o. He didn't say too much, but that's the teaching for a lifetime, right there. That's all you need: "Outside, stop all involvements. Inside, no sighing or coughing in the mind." No sighing, no shrinking away from exactly just this. What's the term? Oh, "shrinking violet." Inside, no shrinking violet: "I can't live up to this experience, it's too much for me! It's too fast, it's too intense, it's too yucky!" None of that! Also, no coughing or scoffing. Like, "This is beneath me. I've got better things to

do than think this way. There are better birds than blue jays to listen to. Now, woodpeckers are different. They're really interesting." No coughing in the mind, and also no shrinking away. Don't get rid of it, don't shrink away from it. Just, inside let it be thus. Let your experience be like a wall.

I always forget the most important things, of course. So many wonderful and important things I've forgotten. But I just remembered one that I already told you, but I want to tell you again. And that is, I really think it's helpful to keep your hands against your abdomen while sitting. And part of the reason why it's so wonderful is because, when your hands are against your abdomen, they are just exactly against your abdomen. They're just there. If you don't put your hands against your abdomen, where are you just going to put them? If you don't decide where they're going to be, then they can kind of be a lot of places, and it's a little harder to tell exactly just where they are.

And then to make it all the more exact, all the more fitting, I would also say not just to put your hands against your abdomen, but particularly to put the outside edges of your baby fingers against your abdomen. So you really have an exact fit there. You can put your hands against your abdomen in various ways. But if you put your hands together like this, and then bring your baby fingers against your abdomen, it has the additional advantage that it brings your arms away from your body a little bit, without you making an effort to bring your arms away, which may tense your back up. Just by pressing the fingers against the abdomen, the arms naturally will come away.

This is quite a difficult thing for most people to do, difficult only because it takes so much attention. But if you do it, it makes a radical difference in the amount of just sitting, of just presence that you can have, over if your hands, your mudra is just floating around someplace in your lap. It also makes it easier to sit up straight, and all kinds of other wonderful stuff. And, it's an advanced guard against drowsiness, because the first thing to go, maybe even before your eyes shut, will be these little fingers. They may slip away from your body even before your eyes shut. But anyway, as soon as they go away, you've got a warning that your attention is drifting. So it's a nice kind of a little button, to just keep pressing right there.

One other thing before I go. And that is, when eating oryoki, when you lean forward to wash your bowls....This is one of the cases when being tall is sort of a disadvantage. Somebody who is quite tall is many feet away from his bowl. So if you're tall and you wear glasses and you don't have them on, you can't even see your bowls down there, right? So what you want to do is get your eyes down there to look: "Say, what's happening down there? There's some bowls and food and all kinds of stuff!" That's okay to do, if you want to get your face way down there; but the thing I'd like to

stress is, keep your back straight. So if you bend over, bend over with a straight back. Don't hunch over. It's another one of those "just" types of things. In other words, be aware of your back. It makes quite a difference, and it's good exercise for your back, too, incidentally. Most of these things happen to be good exercise.

Also, when you're cleaning your bowls, try not to put your elbows on your knees, using your elbows to hold yourself up by leaning on your knees. Use your back. See the difference? This way [leaning on elbows] is kind of friendly, actually. "Well, here I am, I'm working on my bowls, and, you know, what's the problem?" It's okay, really, it's not bad. It's just that it's different from this way [back straight]. This way is very precise. It's more present, and it's also good for your back. But when you hunch your back, your consciousness goes. I don't know what happens to it. And you can get way bent over without noticing that you're really doing that. So these little things like keeping your back straight and being on time, these are very much the meat of justness, too.

I just thought of that poem that Simone Weil concentrated on, the poem called "Love," by George Herbert. I think it's about justness. I think it's about some of our emotional uncertainty about whether we can really be just, some of our lack of faith that we really could be just, in all the meanings of "just."

> Love bade me welcome, yet my soul drew back,
> Guilty from dust and sin.
> But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
> From my first entrance in, drew nearer to me,
> Sweetly questioning if I lacked anything.
> "A guest," I said, "worthy to be here."
> "You shall be he," said Love.
> "I, the unkind, the ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
> I cannot look on thee."
> Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
> "Who gave you these eyes, but I?"
> "Truth, Lord, but I have marred them; let my shame
> go where it doth deserve."
> Love said, "And know you not who bore the blame?"
> "My dear, then I will serve."
> "Then you must sit and taste my meat."
> So I did sit and eat.

Peter Bailey, poet, calligrapher and artist, died last April after a long illness. Professionally and affectionately known as Red Dog Pie Face, he had worked closely on *Wind Bell* and other Zen Center publications for over twenty years. Thanks to Ben Irvin, David Schneider, Dan Irvine and other friends for their stories about Peter and for their help preparing this brief tribute.

Peter was born July 4, 1924 in San Francisco. His family moved around, living in Seattle and Los Angeles before Peter went to college to study Fine Arts at Pomona. He left in a huff before graduation and, legend has it, walked all the way to San Francisco. He was drafted during World War II and served for five years. Peter fought in the Battle of the Bulge and, in an act of particular courage, saved a fellow soldier's life.

When he moved back to San Francisco in the late 1940s, Peter lived in Sausalito with his partner, architect Ben Irvin. Ben recounts that he was an enthusiastic and congenial cohort. Early in their acquaintance he agreed to go on a two day cross-country ski trip; it turned out to be one of the first times he had ever skied. He was ready to go at the drop of a hat: hiking in the Sierras, backpacking the John Muir trail and skiing in Idaho, Utah and Colorado.

In the 1950s Peter and Ben were leaders in the newly formed Sausalito Art Center, which sponsored an Arts Festival on a sandspit by the Bay. In Marin City, where there was a large Black population, they helped put together a successful art exhibit on the history of African-Americans. It quickly became a popular field trip for Bay Area public schools.

In 1955 Peter began to work full time for East Wind Printers, doing all their art work and layouts. It was through East Wind that Peter first made contact with Zen Center. The owner of East Wind died in the late 1960s, and when Peter and Ben grew apart, Peter moved above the Savoy Tivoli in North Beach and began to work free-lance out of his apartment. He designed and produced publications and brochures for Zen Center and Esalen Institute.

Peter was a cheerful, joyous person with an innocent charm and sweet smile. He responded to others with great sympathy and unconditional love. The apartment in North Beach was a rich realm of the senses, with art work on the walls and classical music in the air, good coffee and food. He knew an incredible amount about art and the world, and generously shared his knowledge on any subject. He loved literature and communicated his delight in art, books and records to his many visitors. Peter was quite witty, and was himself a good poet. He was working all the time, always experimenting, willing to try anything.

David Schneider, a Zen Center student who collaborated with Peter on several projects, enjoyed working with him, savoring his deep enthusiasm and humor. David recounts a memorable evening when printer and calligrapher Clifford Burke was in town. Peter set down a big stack of blank papers, pen, ink and a bottle of wine: "Peter dipped his brush into the ink and boldly stroked a word across the paper. Clifford and I contemplated it. Then Clifford approached the table, made a mark, then a series of marks. Peter screeched with enthusiasm....We howled and wrote and painted and invoked the great mad Chinese geniuses of brushwork...going on until the wine was gone, and the ink was gone, and the paper was all used up."

Peter suffered from arthritis; this contributed to a drinking problem which gradually became serious, causing further health problems. In 1984 Peter moved with his studio into the Zen Center residence at 300 Page, where he offered a Sunday morning calligraphy class. In the face of a debilitating illness which too often left him foggy and shaking, Peter continued to write poems, do art work, and serve as an inspiration to friends and acquaintances until his death in April of 1991. Among his last words were, "I love everybody."

PRACTICE

lie
stand up
sit down
it's nobody
else's
butt . . .

Even Heaven has its murk!

All art work for this article by Peter Bailey

The Story of Hui Neng—Encouraging or Discouraging?

A lecture by Carl Bielefeldt
May 18, 1991

When Michael invited me to do a seminar here, I guess he told me—but it didn't register—that I would be giving the Dharma talk on Saturday. When it did register it made me quite nervous. I asked Michael, "What on earth would I talk about that would be appropriate for a Dharma talk?" And he said, "The only advice we ever give about the Dharma talk is that it be encouraging to people."

And that was like an arrow into my heart, and probably a good joke for Michael, because he knows that much of what I say about the Dharma at Stanford is probably pretty *dis*couraging to people. In fact, in religious studies we seem to specialize in discouraging people about religion. We pick religions apart and show their contradictions; we turn them upside down to reveal the soft underbelly: superstition, politics, economics, the manipulation of people's fears and so on. I guess that's considered a more objective, sophisticated way to talk about religion than giving Dharma talks that are encouraging to believers.

On the other hand, I'm not sure what it is that's encouraging and discouraging to people about religion. I may be weird in this but I often find myself most encouraged by those parts of religion that are the messiest, that reveal religion as an ordinary human phenomenon. And I often find myself discouraged by religious ideals: perfect beautiful systems of ideas, saintly ideals that seem so far removed from my own experience of life. Today I want to talk a little bit about that feeling of being simultaneously discouraged and encouraged by Zen Buddhism.

This weekend I'm doing a seminar on the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* I thought I might talk about the hero of this sutra, the Sixth Patriarch, Hui Neng. After all, he's one of the most famous figures in Zen Buddhism, so his story must be important.

Hui Neng was a layman living in what the Chinese call "south of the pass." That is to say, beyond the mountains that were in his day (7th century Tang China) the boundary or the 'pale' of Chinese civilization. Hui Neng lived down near what is now the area of Hong Kong and Canton, beyond the reach of what the Chinese considered the civilization of the central kingdom; he was a barbarian.

And he was an impoverished barbarian, for his father had died when he was a child and he made his living collecting and selling firewood. One day

when he was selling firewood in the market place, he heard a monk reciting the Diamond Sutra. He asked the monk where he had gotten this Sutra and the monk said, "From the Fifth Patriarch, Hung Ren, living on East Mountain."

So Hui Neng went to visit the Fifth Patriarch, and the Fifth Patriarch asked him, "What do you want?"
"I want to be a Buddha."
"How could someone like you from south of the pass become a Buddha?"
"There may be north and south among people, but there's no north and south in the Buddha nature."
Well, the Fifth Patriarch knew from this that Hui Neng was what Buddhists like to call a "vessel of the Dharma," someone into whom you can pour the truth. But surprisingly he didn't tell him, "Now you should become a monk and practice Zen." Instead he sent him out in back of the monastery to work with the peasants who took care of the monastery.

One day the Fifth Patriarch, Hung Ren, decided that he would retire and transmit the patriarchy to one of his disciples. He called all his disciples together and said, "We're going to have a poetry contest. I want each of you to write a poem expressing your understanding of Zen, and then I will choose the best poem and that person will be the Patriarch."

Well, the other monks studying under Hung Ren all knew that there was one monk, Shen Hsiu, who was the head monk and the obvious heir to the Fifth Patriarch. And they said to themselves, "Why should we waste our time writing poems; he's going to get it. We'll just let him write his poem." But Shen Hsiu was not so confident that he had really understood Zen Buddhism. He developed a strategy whereby he could test the tester. He went out in the middle of the night and wrote his poem anonymously on the wall. If the Fifth Patriarch liked it, he would admit that it was his; but if the Fifth Patriarch didn't like it, he would say, "Hm, I wonder who wrote that trash." This is the poem that he wrote on the wall:

The body is the bodhi tree,
the mind is like a clear mirror;
at all times we must strive to polish it
and must not let the dust collect.

That seems like a pretty good poem. *The body is the bodhi tree.* This very body is the locus of the Buddha's enlightenment—our own body, not the bodhi tree in India where Shakyamuni was enlightened. *The mind is like a clear mirror.* Clear mirror is a standard metaphor used by Buddhists for the enlightened mind of the Buddha. Our own mind is the enlightened mind of the Buddha. *At all times we must strive to polish it and must not let the dust collect.* There's nothing to do but keep that mind clean—that's Zen Buddhism.

Carl Bielefeldt with his family

When Hung Ren saw the poem he said, "Pretty good poem. I want everyone to memorize this poem, and if you memorize this poem and practice according to it, you will not fall back into evil destinies. You won't become an animal or a ghost or a hell being in your future lives." But he took Shen Hsiu aside and said, "Not yet." Meanwhile our hero Hui Neng was out back working with the peasants. And he heard a monk who had memorized the poem reciting it and immediately, we are told, he knew, "Not yet." So he told the monk that he would like to go and pay homage to this poem where it was written on the wall, and then after he got there, he said, "And by the way, would you mind writing a little poem that I have (he was illiterate and he couldn't write) to commemorate this great poem?" And this is the poem that he wrote:

Bodhi originally has no tree
The mirror also has no stand
Buddha nature is always clean and pure
Where is there any room for dust?

Bodhi has no tree. There is no locus for enlightenment. The mirror has no stand. There is no such thing as a mind fixed by the mirror frame, that we can point to as the Buddha mind. Buddha nature is always clean and pure, where is there any room for dust? What is the problem?

Well, when Hung Ren read this poem he said, "Forget that poem, erase that poem." Then he went to Hui Neng and said, "Come see me tonight." As the story develops later on, they make it even better. In a famous scene Hui

Neng is out working on the rice, and the Fifth Patriarch comes up with his staff and he just bangs the staff three times and goes out of the room. Because Hui Neng is Hui Neng, he knows immediately what that means: "Come and see me in the third watch of the night."

And so he does. He goes to see the Fifth Patriarch in the middle of the night when everybody else is asleep and receives the transmission of the Fifth Patriarch. And the Fifth Patriarch says, "I want you out of here before dawn because there will be a lot of jealousy once the other monks realize that the robe of Bodhidharma has been transmitted." The story goes that the Fifth Patriarch saw Hui Neng down to the banks of the Yangtse river, where he sent him off in a boat, and the last we see of Hui Neng he is rowing across the river in the middle of the night, going back to the south, into oblivion.

Now my question is, is this an encouraging story, or is this a discouraging story? Sometimes when I read this story, I feel very encouraged. It seems to express an extraordinary optimism about our possibilities, maybe even my own possibilities. After all Hui Neng was nothing; he was nobody. He was Everyman. He was worse off than I am—couldn't read, couldn't write, didn't know anything about Buddhism, didn't know anything about culture. He was a barbarian. Never practiced Buddhism, wasn't a monk, didn't do zazen. Sounds a lot like me.

Look at Shen Hsiu, the other monk. He's class—a high class Buddhist monk, leader of the sangha, spent his life studying the Dharma, knows all the books, can write poetry. He's's respected by all his fellow monks. The obvious heir to the patriarchy. He's establishment Buddhism. Hui Neng comes in from nowhere and just by the strength of his own understanding, he gets Zen Buddhism, he gets the patriarchy.

That's one side. But sometimes when I read this story, I get quite discouraged, because is Hui Neng really so ordinary? Is he really like me? He seems more like a spiritual genius of some sort. He has no background, no training, no understanding. As soon as he hears the Diamond Sutra, one of the most difficult Sutras in all of Buddhism, he understands it, no problem. He goes up to see the Fifth Patriarch and immediately engages in Dharma combat with him. Still doesn't do any practice, just goes out in back, continues working like a peasant. When it's time to get the patriarchy, he just whips off a poem, grabs the robe of Bodhidharma, and he's outta there. He didn't have to do anything to get Buddhism, he had it.

Look at Shen Hsiu; he's like me. Poor bastard, he's struggling away trying to understand the Dharma, working at it, spending his whole life dedicated to it. He's not like me, he's a lot better than I am, and yet, even he doesn't get it, because he's ordinary. He's second rate. Just like most of us, working his ass off to understand religion and not getting anything from it. When I

look at it that way, it looks pretty discouraging. Maybe Zen Buddhism is not for everybody. Maybe it's for a certain kind of spiritual elite—the kind of person who has very sharp spiritual faculties, or good karma, who can just waltz in and understand it in ways that I never will be able to. I'm happy for that kind of person, but what about the rest of us?

Of course when I teach about this story at Stanford, if it's a serious academic class on Zen, I remind the students that this is not history. In fact, we know almost nothing about Hui Neng as a historical figure. He wasn't famous in his own day. He became famous when someone decided that he would be a convenient vehicle for authenticating their own religion. He became a symbol for their own orthodoxy, their own right to claim the lineage of Bodhidharma. So according to scholars the story of Hui Neng is a fabrication for polemical purposes, for political purposes. The glorification of Hui Neng is a political statement made by those people who want to claim that they represent the true lineage of Bodhidharma, as transmitted to the true patriarch, Hui Neng. And that the followers of Shen Hsiu, the poor devil who was defeated in the poetry contest, are not the orthodox lineage.

Does that help, knowing that? Or does that hurt? In one sense, obviously, it's discouraging. If it's true that this whole story is politics, it means that we can't have a kind of innocent faith in the beauty of the history of Zen Buddhism. We can't have an innocent faith in the meaning of the lineage of Zen and in the people who are said to represent that lineage. In a way, we're on our own. History isn't going to help us because when we look at history with the eyes of the historian, it looks pretty messy, pretty ugly. Zen Buddhists were so engaged in politics that they were battling each other over who had the right lineage. And they were making up stories that were glorifying their predecessors and putting down other people's predecessors. Not very edifying, not very inspiring. And so, rather discouraging.

On the other hand, something about that very fact makes me feel a little more comfortable about Zen Buddhism. It isn't the history of saints alone—of great men, pure men, perfect men (all men, notice). The history of Zen Buddhism is about people more or less like me: greedy for power, combative, maneuvering for prestige, willing to falsify the records, falsify myself in order to get something for myself. Somehow I feel more at home when even the great monks of the golden age of Zen were more or less like us today, struggling over the meaning of lineage, who has the power, who knows the truth. So I go back and forth with this story.

And then sometimes I see this story as talking about something else. Something that's not just encouraging or discouraging, but what you might call deeply discouraging—profoundly discouraging.

The City Center courtyard

If this story is not history, it may also not just be politics. It may not just be about people in the past, whether they actually said it or whether they just said that they said it. It may be floating free, talking about me or about us in the present. It may not be a story about Hui Neng and Shen Hsiu; it may be a story about us—not a historical account of what happened, but some clue to what *is happening*. In that case, what does it tell us about what is happening with us?

If it's about me, then am I Hui Neng, or am I Shen Hsiu? Or is it that the story's about one person, Hui Neng-Shen Hsiu? What kind of person is that? One of the odd things to me about this story—and the reason it's deeply discouraging—is that Buddhism doesn't seem to work for either Hui Neng or Shen Hsiu. Buddhism doesn't do anything for Hui Neng. He doesn't change. For him it's a game: he hears about Buddhism, he understands it; he doesn't become a monk, he doesn't practice anything. He takes a trip to see the Fifth Patriarch, but where does he change, where does he struggle, where does he overcome himself? He doesn't have to overcome himself. He seems strangely unmoved by Buddhism even though he's the patriarch. He doesn't need Buddhism. But look at Shen Hsiu; it doesn't do

him any good either. He works away at it, but does he change? Nothing happens to him either. He's sound asleep in the middle of the night when the patriarchy is transmitted.

If this story is about me, it seems to be saying that Buddhism doesn't work. You're never going to get what you want out of it. Is that encouraging? Or deeply discouraging? In some sense, it means that there's one person named Carl who doesn't need Buddhism because he already has it; he isn't going to change through Buddhism because he doesn't need to change. Then there's another person named Carl who wants something out of Buddhism and he isn't going to get it; he's going to go on and on, trying to understand, trying to practice, and failing. Forever, maybe. Always asleep when the patriarchy is transmitted.

Sometimes in sesshin, you find yourself sitting with these two people, side by side on the same cushion as it were: one person who doesn't need it, and one person who needs it desperately but isn't going to get it. Sometimes I think we could see Zen Buddhism as a way of life based on the marriage of these two people. I don't know if they ever become one, but at least they're married—living together in friendship and mutual respect, forever. Side by side.

There's a famous saying by a Zen Master: *If you want such a thing, you have to be such a person. If you are such a person, why would you want such a thing?* To me that expresses this strange marriage. The person who wants such a thing, who worries about such a thing and tries to get such a thing, is not such a person. And the person who could have such a thing doesn't care, doesn't want it, doesn't need it.

Dogen has a nice line in the *Gakudo Yojinshu*. He says, "You only get it when you're still half way. If you find that you've gone all the way, keep going." Somehow I feel that if I understood Zen Buddhism better, I would have something like that sense about the story of Hui Neng...but...not yet.

Thank you.

Excerpts from *Cultivating the Empty Field, The Silent Illumination of Zen Master Hongzhi.*

Long time Zen Center student, priest and friend Taigen Leighton, in conjunction with Chinese teacher Yi Wu, has translated this work by a Twelfth Century Chan Master. Taigen is presently living in Japan, working with Shohaku Okamura Sensei on further translations.

The Bright Boundless Field

The field of boundless emptiness is what exists from the very beginning. You must purify, cure, grind down, or brush away all the tendencies you have fabricated into apparent habits. Then you can reside in the clear circle of brightness. Utter emptiness has no image, upright independence does not rely on anything. Just expand and illuminate the original truth unconcerned by external conditions. Accordingly we are told to realize that not a single thing exists. In this field birth and death do not appear. The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered to each speck of dust without becoming its partner. The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces, and mirrors without obscuration. Very naturally mind and dharmas emerge and harmonize....

The Acupuncture Needle of Zazen

The important function of all buddhas,
the functional importance of all ancestors,
is to know without touching things
and to illuminate without encountering objects.
Knowing without touching things,
this knowledge is innately subtle.
Illuminating without encountering objects,
this illumination is innately miraculous.
The knowledge innately subtle
has never engaged in discriminating thinking.
The illumination innately miraculous
has never displayed the slightest identification.
Never engaging in discriminating thinking,
this knowledge is rare without match.
Never displaying the most minute identification,
this illumination is complete without grasping.
The water is clear right down to the bottom,
fish lazily swim on.
The sky is vast without end,
birds fly far into the distance.

Hodo Tobase Roshi with a student

Creation in the Instant: An Interview with Painter Gordon Onslow-Ford

On May 13, 1991, Michael Wenger and Kaz Tanahashi met with Gordon Onslow-Ford. Discussion focused on the life and art of Hodo Tobase Roshi, who preceded Suzuki Roshi as abbot of Sokoji. Tobase Roshi invited Suzuki Roshi to come to San Francisco in the 1950s. Gordon, born in 1912, studied calligraphy with Tobase for several years. There will be an exhibit of Tobase Roshi's art in the Zen Center Art Lounge, November 1–December 15, 1991.

MW: We're in Gordon's studio in Inverness, the fire is going and we're talking about Gordon's work, about Hodo Tobase, and the relationship between them.

GOF: I was very fond of Hodo Tobase. Fond isn't a strong enough word. I had a bond with him. Tobase was the fourth or fifth son of a farmer. The monastery of Eiheiji asked his father to give them a child, so Tobase was given to Eiheiji when he was eight or nine years old. He was looked after with great affection for four years and then he was entered into monastic training. He was really a child of the monastery. He had the greatest affection for it. It was his home.

After World War II, he was sent here by the Japanese Government to give consolation to all the Japanese-American farmers whose land had been taken away during the War. He arrived to a very sad situation. He was oriented entirely towards the Japanese-American community rather than towards the general public. He didn't speak English, although I have a feeling that he understood much more than he let on. Tobase wasn't a scholar in any way, he was a monk who had great wisdom about the mind. He knew about human beings. He wasn't particularly interested in politics or modern art.

He was perhaps five-foot-three and very robust. As well as being a calligrapher, he was a cook. He spent twelve years as a cook in his monastery. When we went to a Chinese or Japanese restaurant, he used to walk straight into the kitchen and talk to the chef. We had such dinners as I've never had, before or since. He was also a wrestler, which stood him in good stead once or twice defending his groceries on Bush Street.

MW: How did your interest in calligraphy start?

GOF: I met Saburo Hasegawa, a well-known Japanese painter and calligrapher, through Alan Watts. I took him for a walk in Muir Woods. Hasegawa was a man of Tea. He was dressed in an immaculate brown kimono. We walked for two hours and he didn't say anything and I didn't say anything. Afterwards we went to my studio, which at that time was on board the ferry boat Vallejo moored in Sausalito. When we got on board, after looking around, he indicated that he would like to do some calligraphy. We cleared an area of paints and brushes and spread newspaper on the floor. Hasegawa took out of his sleeve a two hundred year old ink wrapped in a brocade, an ink stone, a roll of paper and a brush. He placed the paper flat with small stones at each corner, ground the ink rhythmically and gently, and then was still for some time. It seemed that it had taken him the best part of the afternoon to prepare to write.

He made the character for infinity that contains all the brush strokes employed in square writing *(Kaisho)*. And then he made a one-two-three which is a test of the calligrapher's skill. The six lines have to be placed correctly on the paper; each line is given a different weight and the spacing between each line is different.

After my first calligraphy lesson, I was convinced that I was a barbarian and that I had to pursue this. The next day I invited a few friends, among them Lucienne Bloch, the painter, to the ferry. In front of a blazing fire, Hasegawa gave us tea and made some calligraphy. When Hasegawa left after a week, he was in good shape and I was exhausted, but hooked on calligraphy. I sent him a haiku:

A sheet of paper/on the ferry deck/how white the mountain water.

Anyway, Lucienne Bloch was so impressed with Hasegawa that she went around Japantown looking for a calligraphy master who would teach. "No, no...there's no one here, but there's that old monk Tobase in the Zen Temple on Bush Street and he may know something about calligraphy." So she went to Sokoji to ask Tobase if he would teach calligraphy and he said "yes." I never heard Tobase say no; he always said yes. If someone asked him to do something: "Yes." Always yes. His affability was somewhat stern and people never dared to ask him to do something that was untoward.

Tobase's first few classes at the Asian Academy met in the subterranean kitchen/dining room on Monday nights after the students finished supper. Later he suggested that we meet at his temple, Sokoji, at 1881 Bush Street. This was in 1952. He had a wonderful kitchen. There was the big hall, the zendo, and behind that a spacious kitchen. We had the most friendly and enlightening meetings.

Tobase was a benevolent tyrant. He'd give us a tremendous amount of work. Just to study four characters a week, to be able to write them with a feeling of what they meant was enough, but there was always something else. I gave my best energies to calligraphy for five years and learned by leaps and bounds. It was just what I had been lacking. Because the surrealists in Paris with whom I had grown up had made intuitively many of the discoveries of Zen but they didn't have any metaphysics; they didn't know how to talk about it. They were poets and painters and revolutionaries and they didn't have the wisdom of Buddhism behind them. So my calligraphy studies complemented my life as a painter.

I know that this was an enormous adventure for Tobase, too. He had no expectation of meeting the general American public, he was there to comfort the Japanese-American community. This calligraphy class was an unexpected encounter for him.

MW: Why is calligraphy so important? What did your relationship with Tobase Roshi bring to your life and to your work?

GOF: I had discovered that the line, the circle and the dot were the three elements at the root of art before I met Tobase Sensei. But I was making line, circle, dot elements in a rather mechanical way that did not have the blood and bones of calligraphy. After studying *Kaisho* and *Sosho* (square writing and grass writing), I continued working faster until grass writing became illegible and changed into painting. As the line speeds up, it moves from one world to another. The fastest lines possible are the line, the circle and the dot. When a meandering line changes its kind of motion, it slows up, but a circle can go round at full speed, a line can dash up and down at full speed and a dot can hit the paper with maximum intensity. This confirmed my

conviction that line-circle-dot elements make up the "seed" world, that is, as far as art is concerned, the ground of existence within and without.

Little by little I discovered through my meetings with Tobase Sensei that calligraphy—not writing about something but expressing yourself in line—was the way of talking about the spirit. That gave a fluency and assurance to what I was doing. Western calligraphy is different. It's done with a rigid nib with a strong technique. It is done with the fingers and the wrist while Chinese and Japanese calligraphy is done with the whole body/mind.

My painting is a form of meditation. For a day to have depth I need to paint. It was working with Sensei that clarified this feeling. I wrote a book called *Painting in the Instant* in which I tried to make a synthesis between the automatism of surrealism and the spirit of Zen in calligraphy. The book revolves about the Instant. You cannot think about the Instant any more than you can think about the Big Bang. They are beyond conception but they are present.

KT: How did Tobase teach—in what way?

GOF: He chose some saying—usually a Zen saying of four or five characters—and he wrote it. Then he made a small copy for everyone in the class. We had to study that in meaning and in brush stroke. We had to know it by the next time we came. We had to be able to do it in Kaisho and Sosho. He used to correct with a red ink brush on top of what we had done. If he liked it he put a red circle on the side; if he didn't, he indicated very boldly on top. This was so expressive, we could tell exactly the spirit of the character.

Tobase Sensei's calligraphy

KT: When you were training as a painter, maybe you copied Western paintings...

GOF: When I went to Paris in 1937 I did go to study with Andre L'Hote for six weeks and with Fernand Leger for four days, but I realized that my way was not to paint with a student mentality. Of course, I learned from Leger as he was a great painter. When I left his class he congratulated me and I went to see him from time to time in his studio. Right from the beginning I was involved in an adventure. I think it is true to say that I was original from the beginning; not very good, but I was on new territory.

The surrealists were interested in dreams and myths and making a synthesis between the dream world and daily living. We got into terrible trouble—there weren't any gurus—and there were disasters in all directions. Matta [the seminal surrealist artist] and I saw that the future of art lay in discovering the worlds beyond dreams. And we found a way to get in there.

KT: That was before World War II?

GOF: Yes. I started painting automatically. Automatic lines have their own reality and it soon became clear to me that I was in the inner world, beyond dreams. Once I discovered that, I had a direction which I have followed ever since.

MW: You had that in 1940?

GOF: In 1938. I started off as a good surrealist being interested in dreams. I had a notebook and I tried to write down my dreams. If you make a drawing of a dream, you can suggest some episode but the rest disappears. Remembering a dream and then painting it is an illustration of a past event that misses the dream reality. I wanted to find a way of expressing the functioning of the mind directly as it happens.

The spiritual in art, as I see it, is a message from the invisible, intangible inner worlds. While painting it appears directly from mind to canvas. It awakens awe. The spiritual in art is always growing from the edge of the collective unconscious.

KT: Often people kind of mix up spiritual with religious....

GOF: I do not wish to try and speak for traditional religions. When asked what my religion is, I say I'm a painter.

KT: When you were copying the same thing over and over again, it was different from your own discipline—wasn't it confusing?

GOF: Learning Chinese calligraphy for me is more than copying. It is acquiring a new kind of sensitivity that increases my potential as a painter. With a knowledge of Japanese and Chinese calligraphy, additional accents—whiskers, tails—become available. I was fascinated with the Chinese and Japanese characters; it was like imprinting something on my memory. Just like the early landscapes I did served to imprint beauty on my memory, to give me a bank of beautiful memories. The symmetry and the beauty of the Chinese characters is a whole facet of existence; it gives you a whole aesthetic attitude toward life.

KT: Your own painting with oil or watercolor...or using Chinese or Japanese brushes—How do you see the difference?

GOF: Studying Chinese calligraphy was something new for me. I never set out to become a Chinese calligrapher. I was always after my expression as a painter. My calligraphy studies led me to throwing paint in the air. Using the brush as a means to express a form or an object is using the brush with an ulterior motive. But in calligraphy, you are concentrating just on the line that you are making. When you have a character, you've got it in your soul: you've got the whole balance of it. That allows you to express how you feel about the character. Calligraphy, as I use it in painting, is a way of expression that happens as it is being made.

Tobase Sensei said to me that if he saw a character written by a Zen monk over the last three hundred years, he could tell who wrote it and how he was feeling.

KT: Did you feel that you could understand the quality of Tobase's calligraphy when you were just beginning?

GOF: I felt every brush stroke that Tobase Sensei made from the very first. When he was writing he captured my full attention. Critical considerations never entered my mind. The more I got to know Tobase's calligraphy, the more I appreciated it. Hasegawa and Tobase Sensei were very different.

Hasegawa's calligraphy was elegant, formal, and scholarly. Sensei's calligraphy was masterful, vigorous, lively.

MW: You studied some meditation with him. Did he suggest that as an adjunct to calligraphy or was calligraphy an adjunct to meditation or were they both their own thing?

GOF: We really only meditated occasionally and never when there was a full class. But sometimes when I was there with Tobase, he said, "Let's sit." He had wonderful advice about meditation, about how to breathe, how to bring the world in. I really have the impression that Tobase did his best to give me all that he could. I think he was a person who was genuinely loved by all his students. He was a ball of certainty—the kind of energy people could move around with a feeling of security.

KT: Would you tell a little about the exhibition of his calligraphy at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art? When did it take place?

GOF: I was on good terms with the Director of the San Francisco Museum of Art (as it was called at that time), Dr. Grace McCann Morely. She had majored in Hindu Art at Berkeley and later became the first director of the National Museum of Indian Art in New Delhi. I said to her that there's a Zen master here who is a calligrapher, and she offered Tobase Sensei an exhibition. We were given a big gallery and the show was striking. It was a Zen manifesto for those who could read and for those who could not. Tobase Sensei's *Mystery Elegance* was a forward at the entrance and it remains an appropriate statement of priorities to this day.

KT: You see his pieces in an aesthetic way... in a spiritual way?

GOF In a sentimental way too.

MW: How would you describe how you took your study with him further?

GOF: I've taken calligraphy beyond Sosho, the grass writing. I work in the air. I don't work with a brush. I discovered that the speed with which you make a calligraphy determines the nature of the calligraphy. Basically, each inner world has a range of speeds within which it appears. The inner worlds appear faster than you can think. If you work spontaneously, you have a chance of catching them. You know it but you couldn't get it unless you could work faster than you could think. Once you've got it down, it's an inspiring and elating experience. You enter a kind of second childhood; you cast care aside. But you have to be able to cultivate the power of paying attention. That's really what great art is about: paying attention. Students often are distracted. A little part of their mind is wishing for or thinking of something else.

A painting by Gordon Onslow-Ford

KT: You know if you study Oriental art, maybe one tendency will be to make your art look Oriental. For you the influence seems to be not superficial at all. You don't work on that level—to get influence. It seems to be more in your heart.

GOF: On the one hand, art has the flavor of the place where the painter lives. Where would my art be today without the sunshine in the fog? On the other hand it is an expression of one's state of awareness. I would like my painting to be a bridge between Europe and America, between America and the Orient. East and West are meeting around the Pacific. The art of our age now coming into focus points towards a one-world art.

I have been on my own for the past forty-five years and I'm just beginning. Honestly, I'm just beginning. But I hope that other people will be able to take what I've done and be able to grow from it. Art comes from the inside out. Art doesn't come from trying to depict something out there. It's what the mind awakens.

If you pay full attention to what you are doing, to what is happening, you will find something new. It is only when you are tired or thinking about something else that you do what you already know. Creation happens in the instant. In the instant everything is present, everything is fresh. All that there is, is in the instant. It doesn't have anything to do with speed—you can paint slowly in the instant as well as you can paint fast. But you pay full attention. When it comes off, it's in the instant.

Zen Center Comparative Balance Sheet

4/30/91–End of Fiscal Year

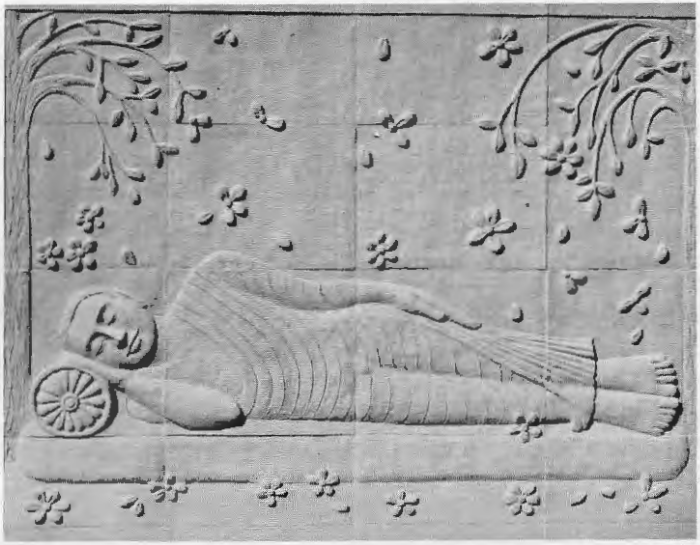
ASSETS	Balance 4/30/91	Balance 4/30/90	Difference
Current Assets:			
Cash	$548,318	$562,037	($13,719)
Accounts Receivable	326,051	330,330	(4,279)
Inventories	12,841	10,893	1,948
Prepaid Insurance	41,513	40,897	616
Total Current Assets	928,723	944,157	(15,434)
Buildings and Equipment	4,732,123	4,595,479	136,644
Less accum. depreciation	(652,533)	(565,639)	(86,894)
Total Properties	4,079,590	4,029,840	49,750
Common Stock: Everyday, Inc.	300,000	300,000	0
Notes and Accounts Receivable, less allowance for losses	57,965	59,156	(1,191)
Everyday, Inc. Note	337,225	337,225	0
TOTAL ASSETS	$5,703,503	$5,670,378	$33,125
LIABILITIES AND FUND BALANCE			
Current Liabilities:			
Accounts/Payroll Payable	70,413	143,022	(72,609)
Accrued Taxes	780	688	92
Deferred Income	259,940	204,912	55,028
One Year Long Term Debt	18,550	15,573	2,977
Total Current Liabilities	349,683	364,195	(14,512)
Long Term Debt			
Mortgages	1,035,846	1,055,522	(19,676)
No-Interest Loans/Other	43,489	9,183	34,306
Total Long Term Debt	1,079,335	1,064,704	14,631
General Fund Balance: Begin Year	3,901,963	3,636,568	265,395
Income Over (Under) Expense	(48,368)	604,897	(653,265)
General Fund Balance: End Year	3,853,595	4,241,465	(387,870)
Restricted Funds*	420,885	0	420,885
TOTAL LIABILITIES & FUND BALANCES	$5,703,503	$5,670,378	$33,125

*Restricted Funds:		
	Property Fund	$363,638
	Capital Campaign Fund	18,290
	Hospice Program Fund	38,957

Zen Center Statement of Income and Expenses

End of Fiscal Year

INCOME	Year Ended 4/30/91	Year Ended 4/30/90	Difference
Income from students	$503,246	$462,684	$40,562
Self-support income	1,491,077	1,275,504	215,573
Royalties, interest	353,895	380,616	(26,721)
Total Income	$2,348,218	$2,118,804	$229,414
EXPENSES	2,504,077	2,160,029	344,048
INCOME (UNDER) EXPENSES	(155,859)	(41,225)	(114,634)
CONTRIBUTIONS	107,486	112,923	(5,437)
INCOME PLUS CONTRIB. OVER EXPENSES	(48,373)	71,698	(120,071)
NET INCOME FROM PROPERTY SALES	0	533,179	(533,179)
NET WITH PROPERTY SALES	(48,373)	604,877	(653,250)
Restricted Contributions	16,075	0	16,075
Property Fund Income	26,349	0	26,349
NET WITH ALL INCOME	($5,949)	$604,877	($610,826)



"Buddha's Death," a ceramic relief by Lorraine Capparell.

Related Zen Centers

Buddhism is often likened to a lotus plant. One of the characteristics of the lotus is that it throws off many seeds from which new plants grow. A number of Zen centers have formed which have a close relationship with San Francisco Zen Center. A partial list of these follows:

Centers with Daily Meditation

Within California

Berkeley Zen Center, 1931 Russell St, Berkeley, CA 94703, (415) 845–2403
Sojun Mel Weitsman, Abbot

Hartford Street Zen Center
57 Hartford St, San Francisco, CA 94114, (415) 863–2507
Philip Whalen, Abbot

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga
Contact Doris Griffin (408) 741–0562, Angie Boissevan, Director

Kannon Do Zen Center
292 College Ave, Mountain View, CA 94040, (415) 948–5020
Keido Les Kaye, Abbot

Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School St, Santa Cruz, CA 95060
Wednesday zazen 7 pm, lecture/discussion 8 pm.
Katherine Thanas, teacher, (408) 426–3847

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
6367 Sonoma Mountain Rd, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, (707) 545–8105
Jakusho Kwong, Abbot

Outside California

Hoko-ji, Taos, NM (505) 776–8677, Kobun Chino, Abbot

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center
3343 E. Calhoun Pkwy, Minneapolis, MN 55408, (612) 822–5313

Weekly Meditation Groups

Within California

Cole Valley Zen Group, 1000 Cole St, San Francisco, CA 94102
Zazen Sundays 6:30 pm. Contact Linda Cutts for lecture/instruction times
(415) 863–3136

Community Congregation Sitting Group
Community Congregational Church of Belvedere–Tiburon
Friday 6–7:30 pm, Contact Yvonne Rand (415) 388–5572

Henzan-ji, 783 29th Ave, San Francisco, CA
Mondays 6 pm. Contact Jerome Petersen, teacher, (415) 863–3136

Malibu Sitting Group
Zazen Sunday morning, Thursday evening
Contact Peter Levitt (213) 456–0078

Mill Valley Sitting Group, 43 Oxford Ave, Mill Valley, CA 94941
Monday evenings. Contact Steve Stucky (415) 383–8863

Modesto Zen Group
Tuesday 6–8 pm. Contact Stan Cunningham for location (209) 577–8100.

Monterey Zen Meditation Group
Tuesdays 7 pm; Katherine Thanas, teacher
Contact Sarah Hunsaker (408) 659–0132

Oakland Sitting Group, 4131½ Piedmont Ave, Oakland, CA 94611
Thursday 7 am, Contact Vicki Austin (415) 864–2813

Occidental Sitting Group, 3535 Hillcrest, Occidental, CA 95465
Wednesday evenings and last Saturday of month
Contact Bruce or Chris Fortin (707) 874–2274

Orinda Zazen Circle, 88 El Toyonal, Orinda, CA 94563
1st and 3rd Sundays 9–11 am
Contact Fran or Al Tribe (415) 253–9125 before 9 pm

Peninsula Sitting Group, Skyline at Hwy 84
Wednesday 8:30 pm, Tuesday and Friday 6 am followed by service.
Contact Kathy Haimson for directions (415) 851–7023.

Thursday Night Sitting Group, Thursdays 7–9 pm
Marin Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 240 Channing Way, San Rafael,
Contact Ed Brown (415) 752–3905 or U.U. Fellowship (415) 479–4131

Outside California

Chapel Hill Zen Group, 131 Stateside Dr, Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Patricia Phelan, teacher, (919) 967–0861

Eugene Zen Practice Group, 1515 Hayes, Eugene, OR 97402
Wednesday mornings. Contact Gary McNabb (503) 343–2525

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SCHEDULES:

SAN FRANCISCO

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
5:25-7:05 am zazen & service
5:40-6:30 pm zazen & service

SATURDAY
6:30-7:40 am zazen & service
7:40 am temple cleaning
7:55 zendo breakfast
9:25-10:05 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
(8:45 am zazen instruction)

SUNDAY no schedule

GREEN GULCH FARM

SATURDAY THROUGH THURSDAY
5:00-7:00 am two zazens & service
5:15 pm zazen

FRIDAY
6:30 am zazen & service

SUNDAY
5:00-7:00 am two zazens & service
8:30 am zazen instruction
9:25 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
12:45 pm lunch
Daily schedule subject to seasonal change.
Call office to verify.

ONE DAY SITTINGS: once monthly; SEVEN DAY SETTINGS: twice yearly; THREE AND FIVE DAY SITTINGS: offered periodically. Each year there are residential practice periods of two–three months' duration at Green Gulch, City Center and Zen Mountain Center. For more information, please write to the City Center.

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