

# Wind Bell



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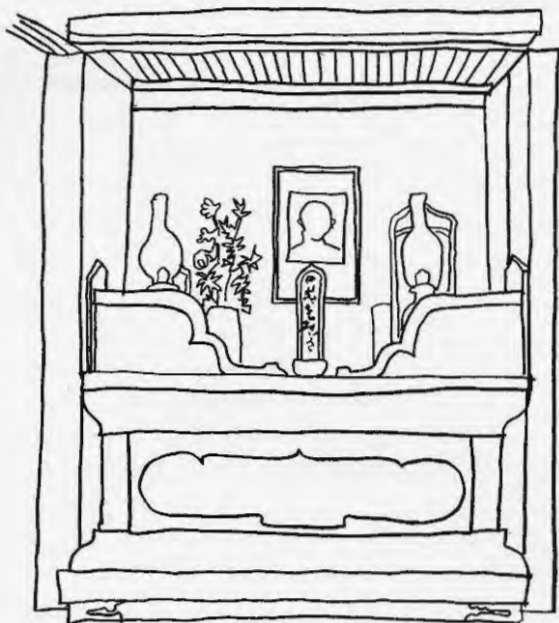
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An Announcement:

On Sunday February 4, 1996, Shunbo Zenkei Blanche Hartman is being installed as Abbess of Zen Center in the traditional Mountain Seat Ceremony. She will be joining Abbots Sojun Mel Weitsman and Zoketsu Norman Fischer in the spiritual leadership of the community. The next issue of *Wind Bell* will feature coverage of this event.



The kaisando  
altar at  
Tassajara

## UNDERSTANDING ORDINARY MIND IS BUDDHA

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi  
May 1969

3/30/69

The point of my talk is just to give you some help in your practice. So it is just help. As I always say, there is no need for you to remember what I said as something definite. I'm just trying to help you, so it is just a support for your practice. If you stick to it, it means that you stick to the support. It is not the tree itself. When the tree is not strong enough, it may want some support. But most important is the tree itself, not the support.

I am one tree and each one of you is a tree. And by yourself you should stand up. When a tree stands up by itself, we call that tree a Buddha. In other words, when you practice zazen in its true sense, you are really Buddha. So Buddha and tree is one, in that sense. It may be that sometimes we call it a tree; sometimes we call it a Buddha. Buddha, or tree, or you, are the various names of one Buddha.

When you sit, you are independent of various beings and you are also related to various beings. When you have perfect composure in your practice, it means you include everything; you are not just you. You are the whole world or the whole cosmos, and you are a Buddha. So when you sit, you are ordinary mind and you are Buddha. Before you sit, you may stick to the idea of you or the idea of self: that is fear; or ordinary mind. But when you sit, you are both ordinary mind and Buddha. So when you

sit, you are not the same being as before you sit. Do you understand? Because when you sit, both you and ordinary mind are Buddha. You may say it is not possible to be both ordinary and holy. You may think so. If you think so, your understanding is, we say, heretical understanding or one-sided understanding.

We should understand everything both ways, not just from one standpoint. We call someone who understands things from just one side, "*tambancan*". *Tambancan* in Japanese means a man who carries a board on his shoulder. Because he carries a big board on his shoulder, it blocks his view and he cannot see the other side. Almost everyone is carrying a big board and cannot see the other side. He thinks he is just ordinary mind; but if he takes down the board, he will understand. He may say, "Oh, I am Buddha too. To be a Buddha with ordinary mind? It's amazing!" That is enlightenment.

So when you experience enlightenment, or when you are enlightened, you will understand things more freely. You won't mind whatever people call you. "Ordinary mind." "Okay, I am ordinary mind." "You are Buddha." "Yes, I am Buddha." How can you be Buddha and also ordinary mind? "I don't know, but actually I am Buddha and also ordinary mind." It doesn't matter. Whatever they say, that is alright.

The Buddha, in its true sense, is not different from ordinary mind. So ordinary mind, in its true sense, is not someone who is unholy or who is not Buddha. This is a complete understanding of our self. When we practice *zazen* with this understanding, that is true *zazen*; you will not be bothered by anything. Whatever you hear, whatever you see . . . that is okay. But in order to have this actual feeling, it is necessary to be accustomed to our practice. Intellectually, we may understand ourselves; but if we haven't the actual feeling along with it, then it is not so perfect. So that is why you must keep up your practice. If you keep practicing this way, then naturally you will have this understanding and this actual feeling, too.

Even though we can explain what Buddhism is, if someone does not have the actual feeling along with it, you cannot call that person a real Buddhist. Only when your personality is characterized by this kind of feeling can you be called a Buddhist. It is necessary for us to be always concentrated on this. There are many koans and sayings on this point. And although those sayings differ, they are actually all the same. Ordinary mind is dual, so even though we are doing quite usual things, whenever we do something, that is actually Buddha's activity. Buddha's activity and our activity are not different.

Someone may say that our activity originated from or is based on Buddha's mind—that such and such is Buddha's mind, and such and such is

ordinary mind. You may have various explanations, but there is no need to explain in that way. Whatever we do, we cannot say, "I am doing something," because there is no one who is independent from all others. When we say something, we make a sound. What is the sound? When I say something, you are hearing it. So I cannot do anything just by myself, or just for myself. I cannot say that I alone am doing something. If someone does something, everyone is included. So there is no explanation needed actually. Moment after moment we should continue this kind of activity, which is Buddha's activity. But you cannot say this is just Buddha's activity, because it is you who are doing it, actually. You may say, "I don't know who is doing what." But when you say that you limit your activity. You want to intellectualize your activity, but before you say something, the actual activity is here. That is actually who we are. We are Buddha and we are each one of us.

Our activity is both cosmic activity and personal activity. There is no need to explain what we are doing. When you want to explain it, that is alright; but because it is impossible to understand it, you should not feel uneasy. Actually you are here. Right here. So before you understand yourself, you are you. After you understand, you are not you anymore. But usually you stick to the you which is not you, and you ignore the reality. You feel uneasy with the reality, and you feel some satisfaction which is not real. As Dogen Zenji said: "We human beings attach to something which is not real and forget all about that which is real." That is actually what we are doing. If you realize this point, you will have perfect composure in yourself, and you can trust yourself. Whatever happens to you, it doesn't matter, you can trust yourself.

That belief, or that trust, is not usual trust or usual belief in something which is not real. When you are able to sit without any image or any sound, with open mind, that is true practice, and that you can do it means that you have absolute freedom from everything.

Our life is momentary, and at the same time, each moment includes its own past and future. In this way, our momentary and eternal life will continue. This is actually how we live our everyday life and how we get freedom from various difficulties, how to not suffer from difficulties and how to enjoy our life moment after moment. That is our practice based on true understanding.

I was sick in bed for a long time and I was thinking about these things. I am just practicing zazen in bed. I should enjoy my bed. (Laughing) Sometimes it was difficult but . . . (laughing) if it was difficult I laughed at myself. "Why is it so difficult? Why don't you enjoy your difficulties?"

That is, I think, our practice. Thank you very much.



## SEPTEMBER DHARMA TRANSMISSION CEREMONY AT TASSAJARA

### Abbot Sojun Weitsman Speaks About the Ceremony (From a talk at Tassajara)

These last eight or nine days, Pat Phelan and Gil Fronsdal have been going through the Dharma Transmission ceremony with me, with the help of Blanche Hartman and Vicki Austin. I want to say just a few words about Dharma Transmission.

In our Zen Center lineage we have various kinds of ordination. The first is lay ordination, which is a confirmation of a person's practice. Then there is priest ordination, which is a more involved commitment to practice. When a person becomes a priest, they are giving up much of their ordinary activity and practicing primarily within the Sangha. Then the culmination or final ordination is Dharma Transmission, which is given to a person for various reasons, but mostly when they have reached a stage of maturity after practicing for many years.

*Facing page photo: Gil Fronsdal, Abbot Sojun Weitsman and Patricia Phelan during Dharma Transmission ceremonies this fall at Tassajara*

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Pat, for instance, has been practicing for 24 years, during the last several of which she has been on her own at Chapel Hill, where she currently leads a Zen group. So we have Dharma Transmission after twenty years or so, sometimes a little earlier, give or take, though usually we wait for a person to have practiced that long. The person should have mature practice and good understanding. We say the person should be enlightened, but enlightenment is a broad subject. Still there should be some element of enlightenment in a person's practice. They should be enlightened, and be able to teach and have rapport with people, and be able to carry the Dharma with them wherever they are.

In this Dharma Transmission, there is nothing to transmit. Rather, "transmit" means when the student's understanding meets the understanding of the teacher; then it's like water flowing from one cup to another. Water flows easily both ways. So we could say, "entrust." Dharma "entrustment" is actually more accurate. But we say transmission. So this is a ceremony of entrustment with the lineage and with passing on the understanding, the true teaching of our school.

Upon completion of this ceremony, I will have given birth to two new teachers, even though they will have been teaching for a long time anyway. Yet this kind of final confirmation actually makes them independent. Being independent doesn't mean they don't relate to anyone. It just means that they have the authority, their own authority, to teach; and they can go anywhere and do that.

Each one is different. I will have seven Dharma heirs so far, and each one is completely different, and I do not expect the same thing from each one. We all go through the same process, but we come out as ourselves. What each one will do, no one knows. Each one will follow his or her own path and have a different way of teaching the Dharma, but it will all be the same.

## Dharma Talks

Following the Dharma Transmission ceremony both of the newly-transmitted priests gave a Dharma talk, which is excerpted here. After each talk is a brief description of Gil's and Pat's teaching activities, and how to get in contact with his or her group.

## EMBODYING THE DHARMA: THE WILLINGNESS TO BE PRESENT

by Pat Phelan (*Taitaku Josho*, "Pure Effort, Constant Realization")

For the last eight days or so, Gil and I have been traveling to many different altars, offering incense and bowing; and each day we come to the zendo and chant the names of the Buddhas and Ancestors, and with each name we offer incense and do a floor bow. And also we have been writing all the names of the Buddhas and Ancestors on white silk with a paint brush. We've done that three times now. And this may sound like some form of ancestor worship that has been imported from a different time and place, but in Zen we use the body as an entrance to our whole being. So in a sense, by chanting the names it enters our tongue, our ears; by doing the bowing it enters our muscles and legs. By writing it enters our hands and fingers. So part of Dharma Transmission is realizing the connectedness with the causes and conditions that have made this way of life possible. So we embody the Ancestors.

There is a passage in a poem by Wendell Berry which goes,

And there are ways  
the deer walk in darkness  
that are clear:  
I know this,  
not by will,  
but by willingness,  
by being here.

I think practice is a balance between our will to practice and our willingness to allow practice. We need both the will and determination to practice, as well as the willingness to give up our expectations about what we want practice to do. As you know it takes discipline to get ourselves onto the cushion day after day, to maintain our posture, to make the effort to continue being present. And I think of self discipline, effort, and energy as one side of practice, the side we consciously work with; but we need to balance our conscious effort by letting go of our hopes, expectations, and goals so that once we get ourselves onto the cushion we can allow our wider, less conscious area, our deeper intention, to surface.



We can't really direct our practice the way we might direct our study for a driver's license exam. A part of the effort we make is the effort of letting go, of disengaging from our habitual practice. In Dogen's fascicle, "Only a Buddha and a Buddha," which is one of the fascicles we have been studying for Dharma Transmission, he quoted a dialogue which goes, "Long ago, a monk asked, 'When hundreds, thousands, or myriads of objects come all at once, what should be done?' The Master replied, 'Don't try to control them.' "

And Dogen commented on this. He said what the master means is that in whatever way objects come, don't try to change them. Whatever comes is the Buddha Dharma, not objects at all. Don't understand the master's reply as merely a brilliant admonition, but realize it is the truth. Even if you try to control what comes, it cannot be controlled.

I think most of us do not need to sit zazen for long before we realize how little control we have over our attention and our habitual thinking. Luckily this practice isn't to control our thinking in zazen, but to try to be awake to the experience of our body and mind.

As children we are taught to control ourselves, to control our tempers, our desires and appetites, our bowels and so forth, and for the most part we succeed. Often we try to control more and more, attempting to avoid pain and create pleasure. But we are really not in control. We don't know when we'll get sick, have an accident, or die. Or when those we love will. This fear of being out of control, more than anything else, propels us to want to be in control. We try to control anything we can—how we comb our hair, dress, present ourselves to others, what their impression of us is.

I think part of what practice is is finding out how to let go of control, to let go of this false sense of control. The aspects we emphasize in our posture are an upright back, sitting in a position that supports stillness. These promote mental and physical stability, and from this stability, this stable posture, we can begin to let go of control. We need to find a balance between our efforts to be present and our inherent trust in our inherent Buddha Nature.

When we try too hard to be alert, when we go overboard, it leads to tension and being on guard, so that our consciousness tends to be directed by our thinking mind. When this happens a kind of rigidity sets in which narrows our field of practice, what we think we can control. In the midst of the rigor of our upright sitting, trying to be present, we need to find a way to allow a relaxed quality, a sense of ease for our body and mind. So even though we are upright, which takes some effort and strength in our muscles, at the same time we should be relaxed, allowing a sense of joy.

So I think from being really engaged in zazen our will and our willingness are finely tuned, and our effort and ease are completely integrated. This is what's meant by effortless effort.

One of the complaints I hear frequently about zazen is that people are either sleeping or thinking, and they think that's wrong. Actually the stability of our body and mind goes beyond these two opposites of the thinking mind either being asleep or over-active.

I have found that when people stay with zazen practice long enough, sooner or later they will fall asleep (laughter). In the beginning I take this to be a good sign, a sign that people are starting to trust the process and let their guard down. If people never fall asleep, they may be directing their practice too much. At some point our posture should be stable enough and our presence grounded enough to let things get out of control. It's a sign of trusting practice.

Intention can help us to not get lost when we're in less conscious states or falling asleep in zazen. Intention is both the intention that brought us to practice this moment, as well as our original inspiration that brought us to practice in the first place. The usual meaning of intention is the state of mind with which we act; and right intention in Buddhism is to find some absence of emotional obstruction, a consciousness which is free from the limiting considerations of self-interest.

I started sitting zazen in Oregon. At that time I felt a great sense of relief and gratitude. It seemed as though I had been looking for this for years and years. I felt gratitude for the meditation practice itself, for the group of people I sat with whose presence kept me on the cushion for the full period.

Bowing is another practice which feels so right to me: that we bow to our cushions, to each other and to the altars. For me bowing is an expression of gratitude for the causes and conditions, known and unknown, which bring us to practice and that sustain us. And also gratitude for that which does the practice, for that which has the ability to let go.

Most of us need a physical practice to work on the habitual activity of our body, speech and mind; so we sit down and practice zazen, letting our habitual patterns begin to unwind. We give our body, speech and mind new activities, activities which lead to disentanglement.

For example, there are several positions we have for our hands, intentional positions. These aren't accidents and they affect our state of mind, so when we are sitting still in zazen we have this cosmic mudra where our hands overlap, connected but open. And when we do walking meditation we hold the hands in a contained fist-like manner. When we bow we bring our palms together with our fingers closed in gassho.

In each of these positions, the hands are brought together, which supports the mind in coming to one-pointedness; and when we bow—when we do floor prostrations during service we physically drop—and I don't know about you, but whenever I try to maintain a train of thought during the nine bows of morning service, I find it's pretty difficult. It's hard to let the body drop and try to hold on mentally. So this practice is balanced. I think it's a way that the body leads the mind in letting go.

The sutras that we chant for the most part don't make sense in the way that we're used to. And that makes it harder for the mind to jump into its habitual response.

As we practice, a vow sometimes forms of itself. We bring this vow into our activity by dedicating whatever we are doing to the fulfillment of our vow. The vow becomes our intention for the mind with which we act. Intention is how we bring practice to whatever we are doing.

In Zen practice we emphasize motive or intention with which we act, rather than whether the results of our activity are successful or not. Sometimes even though we have very good intentions, wholesome intentions, the outcome may not be so good. We cannot control how our actions will be received or what the outcome will be. Still we should not disregard the effects of our actions. We need to take responsibility for them, although it will not help to get stuck in remorse. Try to stay with your intention, your inmost request, and make your state of mind a priority, instead of just trying to get as much done as possible.

I don't know which is more accurate, to say that practice is the intention to develop our vow, or the vow to develop our intention. Still at some point we need to decide whether what we are doing is important enough to bring our presence, our full being to it. This will make the difference between whether or not our activity, our time, whether or not we ourselves are awake or asleep, dead or alive.

Before I stop, I would like to thank everyone here at Tassajara for making this event possible—for bringing in supplies, cooking, preparing meals, cleaning up, cleaning the baths and cleaning the lanterns, and generally taking care of everything, so we could just stop, and stumble around in the dark bowing, chanting, and sweating over white silk. I also want to express my appreciation for Shunbo Sensei and Shosan Vicki Austin for setting aside ten days of responsibilities and demands to come here and devote themselves to the infinite details this medieval ceremony requires.

Finally I want to express my heartfelt appreciation to Sojun Sensei, whose teaching is continuing Suzuki Roshi's way.

## THE CHAPEL HILL ZEN GROUP: PAST AND PRESENT

A description sent to *Wind Bell* by the group

The Chapel Hill Zen Group came into existence in 1981. It was formed by a small group of friends who took turns meditating in each other's homes. Some of the original members, including Lois Bateson and Frank and Mo Ferrell, had previously practiced at Zen Center. Dainin Katagiri Roshi visited several times to lead retreats. In 1991, the Group asked the abbots of Zen Center to send Taitaku Patricia Phelan to be its priest. Pat was a Practice Leader and Director of the City Center at the time.

At the beginning of October, 1995, the group moved to a new home at 5322 NC Highway 86 in Chapel Hill. This is the first time the group has had a place to meet that was not borrowed or rented space in someone's home. The building occupies about 3,100 square feet set on 2.69 acres of wooded land. Although originally built as a private home, the building's main room measures a generous 45 by 24 feet with a hardwood floor and wood paneling. Because the Unity Center of Peace used the property as a church, it has wheelchair access and is already adapted to public use. The

*The Chapel Hill Zen Group zendo*



space is ideally suited to our needs. It has the right amount of room and is located on a major highway.

We feel grateful and fortunate that a member, who wishes to remain anonymous, was able to purchase the property and rent it to the group until we could afford to buy it. We are also grateful for the unflagging support of Abbot Mel Weitsman and former Abbot Tenshin Anderson, and President Michael Wenger of the San Francisco Zen Center. The Chapel Hill Zen Group has been able to reach this point because of everyone at Zen Center who has understood what it takes to grow a small temple away from a major population center and has felt personally responsible for making it happen.

## REFLECTIONS ON RECEIVING DHARMA TRANSMISSION

by Gil Fronsdal (*Ryuge Kojun*, "Dragon Tusk, Sunlight Revere")

It seems like the day before yesterday that I came to Zen Center for the first time, knocking on the door to receive zazen instruction and to check out Zen. And only yesterday that I returned a few months later to be a guest student. Those weeks as a guest student felt like a coming home; I was very happy, especially in zazen. I have memories, almost smells, of being in the men's dorm downstairs. Even now there are times I feel that my place at Zen Center is in the basement in that guest student dorm.

As a guest student I was deeply taken by Zen practice and decided that what I wanted to do with my life was to throw myself into it. But at the same time I felt that I needed to take care of loose ends, because I was twenty years old . . . with many loose ends.

One of which was to finish college at U.C. Davis. From Davis I would come down to Zen Center to be a guest student and participate in one-day sittings. Once I signed up for sesshin, but about a week before it started I called up the office and explained that something very important had come up, and I wasn't able to sit sesshin. What I didn't say was that the important something was fear.

While I was finishing college, I sat by myself twice a day for forty minutes, except Sundays, which I figured was a good time to take off. At first I was doing it because I was unhappy and I wanted to be happier. I thought that I would become a nicer guy. People would like me more, I would have more friends, and so forth.

What surprised me was that within a few months of sitting regularly, the various reasons for sitting all fell away. They didn't have any meaning any more. I wasn't trying to have more friends. I was just sitting. And I thought it was very strange that I kept sitting because I'm a person who is supposed to have a reason for everything I do. I was perplexed; why did I keep doing this strange activity of sitting without any reason?

At some point I realized that zazen was the best way I had for expressing myself. Just like an artist would paint or sculpt, so my deepest form of self-expression was through zazen. I wasn't sitting in order to do anything, or attain anything. I would simply sit to express myself.

I had no idea, which some people have, that meditation is about not thinking. I didn't have any problem with thinking. So I just sat there coming back over and over again to my posture and breath. I didn't get particularly concentrated, but what I discovered instead was self-expression. Maybe you could say I discovered myself and some sense of deep inner integrity that comes from leaving oneself unconditionally alone.

After college I came to Zen Center, not so much to continue my zazen practice, but for support in how to integrate that sense of integrity into my daily life. Living in the Page Street neighborhood and working at the Tassajara Bakery, living at Green Gulch and working in the fields, then going to Tassajara, were for me clearly motivated by wanting to extend that integrity into all aspects of my life.

It occurred to me today that Buddhist practice can be characterized as having three major concerns: First, great appreciation for, or trust in, the present; second, understanding or discerning one's deepest intention; and third, bringing these two together.

Appreciation of the present moment includes the recognition that the most wonderful things which we have in our life can happen only if we are in the present. For friendship, joy, generosity, compassion, and appreciation of beauty to arise, you have to be in the present. So if we can trust in the present moment and remain aware in the present, these wonderful qualities of our life have a chance to come forth.

One of the most profound things I would like to teach, now that I am starting to be a teacher in the Soto tradition, is that the present moment is trustable—if you are present for it. If you can be fully, wholeheartedly, non-reactively here for what is going on in the present, then the present moment is trustable. If you are not present, if you are worrying about the future or preoccupied about the past then maybe the present is not so trustable. When we are really in the present moment then we say that, "It responds to the inquiring impulse." If we are present for this wonderful interconnected reality of our present experience, then the inquiring

impulse is present and what responds is trustable, even in the midst of great difficulty.

I feel quite fortunate that even though I was confused as a young man, I discovered something through Zen practice that was trustable. Zen practice then became learning how to expand and develop that trust to include the rest of my life. Perhaps some people may be lucky to have such trust most of the time, but for people who don't have it, Zen practice becomes, in part, discovering what is preventing them from trusting, what is keeping them from appreciating the present moment. What is their actual frustration, what is their suffering, what is their mistrust?

The suggestion of Buddhism is that the very thing which is keeping one from appreciating the present, the thing that is keeping one from trusting, the very thing which is causing one suffering, that is a gate to becoming free, to becoming awake.

I really appreciate this, that in Zen practice, none of our humanity is denied. We are discovering a way to be present for everything—for our full humanity—so everything becomes a gate to freedom, to compassion, and to ourselves.

For some people this takes awhile, perhaps a long time. For the people that it takes the longest time, often the practice has the most value.

The second aspect of our practice is understanding or discerning the deepest intention of our heart, of our mind, of our body. Sometimes we can do it reflectively, but I think the very process of *zazen*, of unconditionally leaving ourselves alone in *zazen*, of being fully present, will allow that deepest intention to surface.

Often we are driven by surface motivations; concerns arising out of fear, craving or perhaps culturally conditioned desire. The fulfillment we try to have in our consumer society has very little to do with our deepest intention. So we need to take time in our life to step aside from the normal currents of society to give our deepest intention a chance to surface.

There is a beautiful story that relates how after six years of ascetic practice, Siddhartha—the Buddha-to-be—felt discouraged and didn't know how or whether to continue his spiritual practice. So he wanted an omen to encourage him in his spiritual quest. He then placed his begging bowl in the river near the bodhi tree. And the bowl started floating up-current. This was an unusual enough event that the Buddha took it to be the omen to continue practicing. One way I understand this story is that Buddhist practice goes against the currents of much of popular culture.

So, outside of what family, friends and society might expect, we discover our deepest intention, or we let it find us. One of my teachers said it is very important to personalize Zen and make it one's own. This means

being careful that our practice is not based on our surface concerns and whims, but rather on our deep-seated heart, on the deep faith-mind.

The third aspect of Buddhist practice, and what I think is the heart of Zen, is bringing the first two together, so they become one. Then the whole situation that we find ourselves in becomes indistinguishable from who we really are and how we really want to act. We begin to enter into everything,

I greatly value that Zen practice has so much to do with the body. It's a physical practice, not a mere cognitive or mental trip. Zen is something you enter with your body. Through the body our being embodies the coming together of the present moment and our intention. If we don't understand the training, if we do not participate with our body in the training of Zen, that bringing together won't happen.

Part of the transmission ceremony was bowing several times each day to the many altars around Tassajara. We bowed at the kaisando, Suzuki Roshi's memorial room. We bowed to the abbot; we bowed to the guardian spirit of the toilets; to the bodhisattva of the study hall; to the altar in the kitchen; to the bodhisattva-custodian of the baths; to the Suzuki Roshi ashes site; to the altar at the gate house.

On the second day, as Pat and I started going on these rounds, I felt that I was bowing to places that had significance for me, places where I practiced, places that had changed me and had entered me, places I had entered with my body. And during times of that mutual entry, we became in a sense, inseparable.

When I walked around, I felt a resonance with these special places. And then the bowing became an expression of gratitude and appreciation to these places and the people with whom I had shared those places. Traditionally, circumambulating around a monastery and bowing is a way to protect it and the practice there. Probably one of the best ways we have of protecting the practice place and our practice is having gratitude for it.

I spent a year during my early practice at Tassajara reflecting deeply about my intentions and what I should do with my life. Then one day I was sitting on the porch of the upper barn overlooking the creek and these concerns came very much to the forefront. And in the midst of sitting there, intent on the questions, suddenly there was a shift within my body. In a flash my body realized or decided that I should become ordained a Zen priest. There was no question, no doubt what I had to do. I wanted to respond to the suffering of the world at its root. The only way I knew how to address the root of suffering, which I understood to be clinging to self, was through Buddhist practice. I didn't know whether I would be effective in this dedication, but that was what my body, my being, decided.





*Blanche Hartman, Gil Fronsdal, Abbot Mel Weitsman, Patricia Phelan, and Victoria Austin all helped to make the Transmission ceremonies happen.*

So then I formally entered the Bodhisattva path as a Zen priest, and my life has continued . . . one step at a time. For some people at Zen Center my path may look like a rather unusual meandering, but in front of me was always the next thing to do. "If you don't see the path as it meets your eyes, how can you know the way as you walk?" I have tried to step forward to what was appropriate from both within me and outside of me. But it is actually hard to know if I always made the appropriate choices. One of the beautiful lines in the *Shin Shin Ming* is the expression, "to be without anxiety about non-perfection." I think that's a wise line, because if we are going to worry about things not being perfect, then we will worry until the day we die.

So I find it strange to be sitting here in a brown robe. I don't know how I got here, even though I told you part of my story. The ceremony was quite moving for me, and I am very grateful for the people who were there helping, especially Blanche Shunbo Hartman and Vicki Shosan Austin. Also I feel very grateful for Mel—Sojun Weitsman Roshi—not only for the teachings I received over the years, but also for his trust in me. The Transmission ceremony is in part someone trusting you, expressing their trust. As I understand it, the trust goes in both directions—there is a meeting of two people in trust.

In going through the Transmission ceremony I feel I have stepped through a gate, there is no turning back, and I don't know what is on the other side. So I'm curious. I certainly feel a greater sense of responsibility both for the lineage which I have now joined and for Zen Center. We may say that transmission is a very personal affair between teacher and student and has little to do with the institution, but even so I feel a responsibility for Zen Center. I have great appreciation, gratitude, and love for our Zen practice, and I hope we can continue to share in it together. Thank you.



*Pat and Gil enjoy a break from their ceremonial activities in the Tassajara swimming pool.*

## **GIL FRONSDAL AND THE MID-PENINSULA INSIGHT MEDITATION GROUP**

Gil Fronsdal is an unusually well-rounded student of Buddhism with a background both in scholarly study and intensive meditation practice, both in the Zen and Vipassana traditions. Here are some of the highlights of his study and also information about his sitting group in Palo Alto, for those who might be interested in joining.

Given the Dharma name *Ryuge Kojun*, "Dragon Tusk/Sunlight Revere," Gil began sitting at Zen Center in 1975 and was ordained as a priest by Zentatsu Richard Baker in January of 1982 while practicing at Tassajara. In the winter of 1988 he returned to the monastery to be *shuso* (head student) with Tenshin Reb Anderson. Traditionally, a practitioner holds this position when he or she is ready to begin giving public lectures and developing as a teacher.



*The  
bathhouse  
altar*

Gil also studied in the Theravada/Vipassana tradition in Thailand, Burma and in this country. His teachers have been U Pandita, Joseph Goldstein and Sharon Salzberg. Under the tutelage of Jack Kornfield he completed a four-year Vipassana teacher-training program. While pursuing a Masters degree in Religious Studies at the University of Hawaii, he continued his studies in the Zen tradition with Robert Aitken Roshi. Currently he is in the doctorate program for Buddhist Studies at Stanford, and lives with his wife, Tamara Kan, a botanist, in Woodside.

While leading the Mid-Peninsula Insight Meditation Group in Palo Alto, Gil also offers retreats and classes at Spirit Rock and lectures at Zen Center and at the Berkeley Zen Center. The Palo Alto group meets on Monday evenings from 7:30–9:00 P.M. at the Friends Meeting Hall, 957 Colorado Street. Please call 415-599-3456 for more information. A beginner's group meets on Thursday evenings from 7:00–8:30 P.M.

Regarding the Transmission ceremony, Gil says:

I feel a tremendous gratitude in having practiced at Zen Center and to have participated in the Transmission ceremony. I feel that the ceremony is an intimate acknowledgement of participation in the awakened world of our lineage. It's like stepping through a door and I don't know what I've stepped into yet. My devotion is to the world of practice and I look forward to continued practice and to supporting other people to practice.

## TASSAJARA STONE DINING ROOM . . . Here We Go Again!

Furyu Schroeder

If you check your old *Wind Bells* from Spring 1993 through Winter 1995, you will find the detailed story of Zen Center's long-standing effort to rebuild the Tassajara Stone Dining Room. We launched a capital campaign for the dining room in 1993 in high hopes of raising funds and beginning reconstruction by fall of the next year. Instead, all of our energies were suddenly redirected by the shocking news that we would have to dismantle and relocate the much loved Tassajara bathhouse. This change in direction was due to the discovery of an unstable hillside, poised to descend on the building "at any moment" by geologic reckoning. Not willing to risk just how long the mountain might hold (It hasn't come down yet . . . at least as of this writing,) we, and our many helpers, moved at uncharacteristically high speed to raise funds and begin reconstruction in time for the summer guest season, Zen Center's most important source of financial self-support.

As you undoubtedly know from last year's *Wind Bell* (Winter 1995), or hopefully a recent visit to Tassajara, all went incredibly well. The new bathhouse is beautiful and has weathered great storms and intricate plumbing problems to gain her place as a worthy addition to the assembly of venerable buildings at Zen Mountain Center.

Each Tassajara building has special qualities and memories which endear them to both students and guests: the zendo, the heart of Tassajara, originally intended as a simple, "temporary" structure to replace the old zendo, which burned down in the spring practice period of 1976; the kitchen, with its inspired stone work, saved from destruction that same year by a fire wall and the quick response of the student emergency crew; the cabins and pine and stone rooms, which we all know and love, replaced or repaired one by one, hopefully in the same spirit as their plain and sturdy ancestors. And of course, the Stone Dining Room, year-round resource for students and visitors alike . . . in winter the place to eat, study, warm up and hang out on a rainy day-off, in summer the place to serve and greet our guests.

The dining room was built in the late 1800s and was a centerpiece of Tassajara Hot Spring's colorful and somewhat bawdy past . . . casino, speakeasy, massage parlor. Tassajara's resort reputation has been kindly yet persistently transformed since the arrival of Suzuki Roshi in 1967, with an early-hour meditation schedule and rules of ethical practice. With affection and respect we honor the builders in these rugged mountains who took

delight in the beauty of the valley and created these wonderful buildings, including this dining room, which through necessary seismic upgrading we hope to preserve and enhance.

So this is to let you know we are again launching a capital campaign with every hope to begin work on the Stone Dining Room by fall of 1997. We thank you for your tremendous support in the past few years, through the extensive and costly repairs to two of Zen Center's most important buildings, the Green Gulch zendo and Tassajara bathhouse (twice!). And we ask you now to consider helping with the dining room in whatever way you can.

The estimated cost of this project in 1993 was \$750,000. Although almost half of that amount has already been raised—with your generous donations, a challenge grant of \$150,000, a \$25,000 grant from the Pinewood Foundation, a \$25,000 gift from a major supporter, and over \$60,000 from the recent Zen Center Art Auction—we still have a long way to go. With your help and support, together we can preserve this fine building for future generations. If you have any good ideas, suggestions or friends who might be able to help, please contact the Development Office in San Francisco. Hopefully by next year's edition of the *Wind Bell*, we will be well on our way to a happy ending to the Stone Dining Room story!

*The Stone Dining Room*





## THE WALL BY CABIN ONE

Bill Steele

Tassajara Fall Practice Period 1995

As I drove up the road leaving Tassajara there was no question in my mind: I am leading a charmed life. This place that I love so much had once again given me the opportunity to care for it and be with people whose practice guides me through life.

This was the third year that I have worked at Tassajara during the practice periods. Each year has had its own unique flavor. I knew that building a wall at this time of year right outside the door of the zendo could be trouble! I consulted with Reb before the work began. He told me that he understood and that everything would work out fine. Something about the look on his face told me, "This could be another one of those teacher-student tricks." He was right; so was I.

We posted a zendo schedule by the cement mixer so we could mix during kinhin. This actually worked most of the time. My crew was made up of John-John and his son Jeff from Muir Beach; Salvador, with whom I have worked for twelve years; Artimio, my right-hand man; and two brothers, Javier and Juan. It would have been hard for me to imagine better

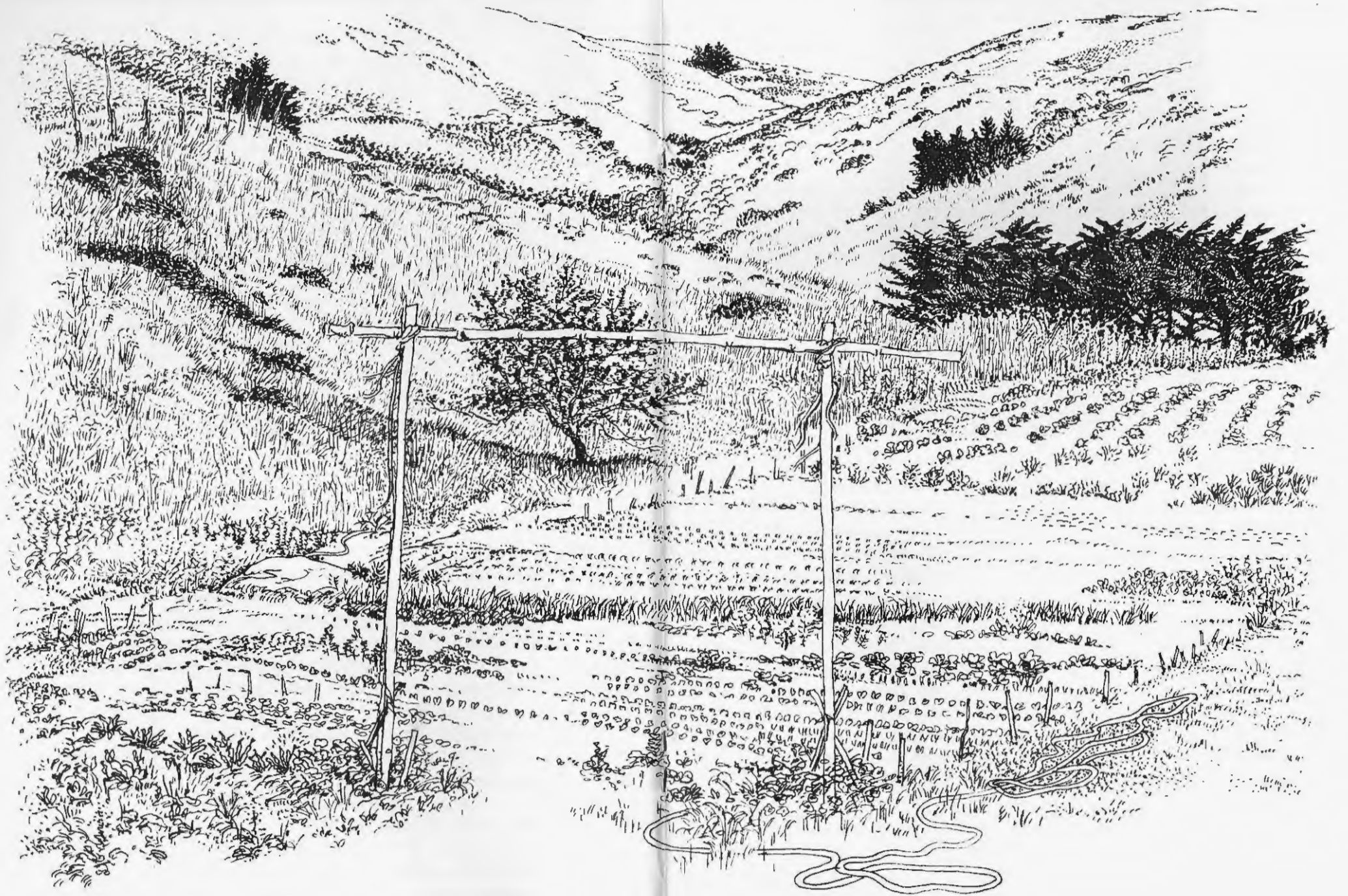


*Ceremony at Tassajara to dedicate the new wall*

people to throw into a situation like this. The distinction between monks and workers began to dissolve for me as we worked as quietly as possible, ate zendo food, and followed our schedule.

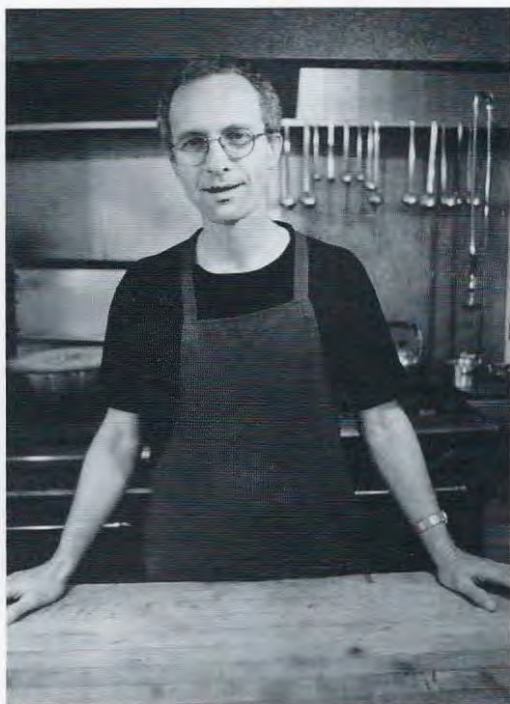
We made a road down into and across the creek out by the Tony Trail. We hand-picked and carried rocks in the backhoe across the bridge to Cabin One. John had a good image of the rock wall in mind. Because he is a third generation rock man, he is wise enough to let the rocks tell their own story. There is something very alive about the rocks at Tassajara. It's as if they are in charge, running the show if you will. And these rocks require a certain attention that had a settling effect on all of us who were fortunate to work building the wall by Cabin One.

*Bill Steele is a longtime practitioner of Buddhism who has been responsible for many wonderful earth-moving projects at Zen Center. In the words of the current Tassajara director, "He operates a backhoe so it looks like he's performing a ballet."*



The kitchen garden at Green Gulch Farm





## ENTERING THE DHARMA

by Mick Sopko

*In the spring of 1995 Mick Sopko was head student for the practice period at Green Gulch Farm. Traditionally this is a time when a student, lay or ordained, is first invited to formally take on teaching responsibilities. A priest is given the title of "shuso," while a lay person is called, "head student." Usually the head student's first lecture concerns the story of what life circumstances brought him or her to Zen practice. This is Mick's story.*

*Each of our stories is so wonderfully unique in its details and nuance, and moving in its own way; yet often in hearing someone else's story we recognize what is universal in all our lives. Perhaps we feel a sense of transiency or suffering, perhaps a tone of sincerity, large-heartedness, or way-seeking mind.*

*Mick has been the bread baker at Green Gulch for the last two years, conducting occasional workshops and working with several apprentices. He lives there with his wife, Sukey, who is the head gardener. Their daughter, Anna, is a junior at Stanford. Mick was recently elected to the Zen Center board.— Ed.*

My mother is always saying how I was conceived in Biloxi, Mississippi. My Dad was in the Army at a base there during World War II, before my Mom left for New York to be with her Mom for the next couple of years. Appearing on Earth at the Mississippi Delta. Maybe that's why I love the country blues.

My grandmother's house was a big Victorian in Flushing, Queens, in New York City. Two World's Fairs were held there, and it's not far from the home of Louis Armstrong. This house has appeared continuously in my dreams. On a tree-shaded block, down the street from the church and also from Moishe's Candy Store, it was filled with floors and rooms, with many dark and secret places—like the one where my grandfather made his own wine from the Concord grapes growing in the backyard. In a big kitchen, my grandmother cooked chicken papricasz and made apple fritters, pies and cookies. Lots of family always seemed to be around. Emotion often ran high for one mysterious reason or another. At some point the language would change to Hungarian or Slovak and fur might start flying or silence might descend.

We visited that house quite often when my two sisters and I were young. We'd wear our Sunday clothes when we were just visiting, but we were more casual the times we stayed over. I loved that house. I remember it better than my parents' house. Was it just because I was very young and very impressionable? Or was there something strong and memorable taking place in the house, something of the old world, something about several generations sharing the space?

I loved to explore the rough and sunlit attic. The finished basement had mirrors and an incredibly stocked bar (lots of Ginger Ale!), and high-ball glasses with decals of naked girls. I found the recording of "Peter and the Wolf," listened to it over and over, and was both scared and sad whenever the strings played the wolf, then comforted by Leonard Bernstein's beautiful voice as he narrated the wild events so clearly, with emotion but without judgment.

We were a working class family. My dad was away all day and at night often brought work home. My mom cooked and took care of the house. I started working when I was nine. My first job was a paper route, and I did a lot of manual work in subsequent years. In the summer, I'd look at the lucky kids going off to summer school, not sweating, dirty or bone tired. In the fall, worried about upcoming exams and equations that didn't add up, I'd envy the carefree construction workers.

I played a lot of sports when I was a kid: baseball, football, basketball, and I was pretty good at them all. I ran fast. I was catcher for several seasons in the Little League and broke three fingers during that time.

I remember how painful it was, but also that in time the breaks would heal, and I'd be none the worse for the experience. Actually, I'd feel somehow better off for having passed through that gate of suffering. More of a little big man. Someone who had seen the dark side. I was younger than the other guys and shy. I tried hard to fit in though. Tried to learn the complicated gestures, moves and words.

Girls liked me. I liked them too. I loved them. This is when I was between six and fourteen. Somewhere though I got scared of love, as it suddenly seemed so powerful and pagan and full of incredible possibilities of surrender, of pleasure, of expanding beyond who I thought I was. I think the volume of enjoyment that I divined to be possible became too much for me to bear on some level. Alone with the hungry sharks of joy. (I just read somewhere someone saying that Love is like a religion with a fallible god.) The church was not helpful to me in this regard. I lost faith in the primitive energy that I had been developing some familiarity with. I began to close down and withdraw. My eyesight got bad. I got sick and lost the hearing in my right ear. That isolated me even more because I was anxious about missing what people said to me and responding inappropriately, if at all. I started smoking cigarettes (and therefore not breathing deeply). My posture was poor. I began to doubt and question everything and started a secret, desperate dialogue with myself about right and wrong (which continues). I had a problem with trusting myself, which means with trusting other people, too.

I went to City College of New York, in Harlem, just up the street from Columbia. I met some interesting people there and saw many cool scenes. I still felt desperate, but since I was thinking of myself as an artist, that was okay, even important, as a motivation or a badge. I wore dark glasses. I wrote. People started appearing to help me. I fell in love again. I listened to jazz. I realized that while, say, whistling was fun, whistling in tune was important. I heard a voice and I began to listen to it. This voice was whistling or singing something. My friend Alan told me how to get out of the Vietnam draft. I'm not particularly proud of how I did it, but I think now with sorrow about the number of old chums I saw in the waiting room who might not have been as lucky as I.

I spent a number of years wandering around, but it was in 1969 that I got pretty interested in Zen. A number of books were recommended to me by Alan. These included *Zen Flesh*, *Zen Bones*. I also got hold of *Zen Mind*, *Beginner's Mind* and *Three Pillars of Zen*. Those books were all I needed for inspiration and practical advice. I began doing zazen at home. I had Suzuki Roshi's picture on my altar. I was also practicing Aikido and "Zen" macrobiotics. I was surrounded by appropriate influences.

I was living in a small one-bedroom walk-up in the East Village. Not smoking anything. Trying to straighten up and get it together. Working as a driver for "Anytime Messenger Service." Unattached, solvent, feeling really healthy and having a sense of direction.

I noticed an article in the Architecture section of the *New York Times* about a newly renovated carriage house on the East side. It was the new home of the Zen Studies Society, a "society" created in 1956 to support the efforts of D.T. Suzuki on the East Coast. I built up my courage one day—it was right around the time of my twenty-fifth birthday in 1970—and walked up to the front door and knocked. Arnold Silberman answered the door. The building was formally closed for interim but he invited me in to help with some cleaning and painting. He didn't have to let me in, but he did.

This was where I started sitting formally. Tai-san, the zendo's founder and abbot (who became Eido Roshi a few years later), showed me how to sit. The honorary founder was his teacher, Nakagawa Soen Roshi, who was a Rinzai master, and abbot of Ryutakuji, a small monastery in Mishima City, between Tokyo and Kyoto, which was founded by the great master Hakuin. Eido Roshi also studied with Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, who had a teaching style indebted to both Rinzai and Soto schools. (Yasutani Roshi was also a teacher of Maezumi and Aitken Roshis.)

Compared to the somewhat formal style we practice here at Zen Center, our practice in New York, especially when Soen Roshi was around, seemed lean and kind of off-the-cuff, improvised even. We sat facing the wall, Soto style, but patrolled the zendo with sticks and sudden exclamations. The atmosphere was taut. Very quiet and dimly lighted. The brief services were fast and energetic, punctuated by shouts. During sesshin we'd chant "*Enmei Jukku Kannon Gyo*" 108 times, vigorously, by candlelight, with a monitor walking behind us using the keisaku as encouragement. There were many occasions for dokusan, but they were brief and charged. We sat a couple of periods in the morning and two or three at night. It was almost entirely a lay practice and very well attended in the evening, though hardly at all in the morning.

I went to Dai Bosatsu monastery in 1971. We actually called it the Catskill Zendo in the beginning. I was the first resident. It was just an old hunting lodge, fronting a small lake on 1400 acres of land of mostly hardwood forest. The lake was Beecher Lake, named for Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, who used to vacation there with her family. Between three and five of us lived there year round. A young monk named Chuck Carpenter was in charge. (We read about him in a news clipping the other day. He'd finished second in the "Great

Midwestern Think-Off," answering the question, "Does the life of a fish have meaning?" with, "It is neither with nor without meaning.") He was pretty strict. We had a six-day week of sitting five hours and working four hours a day. He thought it would be a good idea not to use the central heating. We could see the frost gathering on the inside of the walls. Sitting in the zendo late at night we heard the water freezing in the flower vase on the altar. I learned it was possible to stay warm by focusing on a spot in my hara, or lower abdomen. If that spot was warm then so was "I." It was, of course, imperative not to let my mind wander. I realized this over and over, and as the winter rolled on and forced me to, I became more proficient in doing it.

I'm grateful to Chuck now for his strictness and insight. I grew to feel a great sympathy, for example, for the creatures of the forest, for the suffering they must endure every winter. No hats, no socks, no food! Especially the birds, with their skinny legs. They sure seemed happy every morning as we made our hungry ghost offering at the base of the large maple tree outside the kitchen window. The chickadees would perch on our hands and shoulders as we fed them. Bluejay, Nuthatch, Sparrow, Finch and Grosbeak, and sometimes Cardinal, all gathered for breakfast.

*Walter Blum  
works with  
Mick as an  
apprentice.*



*Weighing  
out the  
dough  
for round  
loaves of  
panetone*



I also became, like the animals perhaps, unusually attentive to the signs of spring. The changing sounds of the warming creek, the density of the air, the sounds of the branches, the feel of the wind and the smells it carried of wet earth and buds, the sight of a crocus, or best of all, a robin! These perceptions weren't cursory. They were saturated with desire and wonder and gratitude, and I've had similar ones only infrequently. They were visceral in their intensity. They were about resurrection.

I wound up spending two winters and springs there. I don't really remember the other seasons so well, as seasons. They were times when many people came to visit and practice. We had many sesshins. Soen Roshi invited various friends of his for extended stays. Many of them turned out to be "Living Natural Treasures." Painters, sculptors, musicians, diligently working their incredible skills for the benefit of anyone who happened to be around. I was somehow determined not to be too impressed, and went sternly about acting like I thought a good young zen guy should. I must have absorbed a lot of what was going on through my skin, though, because I do remember some things, and am very impressed now as I think of them.

Makishima Sensei was an eighty-year-old painter. He was at least half

and sometimes completely blind. He was also a Greek Orthodox priest. While he was there, he worked on a large oil of Buddha preaching with his flower on Vulture Peak to a multitude of heavenly and earthly beings. Mahakasyapa was there in the corner, smiling away. Chester Carlson, the inventor of the Xerox machine and benefactor of the New York Zendo (and San Francisco Zen Center also, as it turns out) was there too. Soen would give Makishima painting assignments like, "depict Ryutakuji as reflected upside down in a carp pond;" "paint a smiling Jesus on the cross;" "paint not a smiling but a laughing Shakyamuni." Nakazono Sensei was a sculptor who roamed through the woods every day searching for fallen limbs from which bodhisattvas were struggling to escape. With his tools he facilitated their appearance. Watazumi Doso was a master of the flute-playing school of Zen. He played the Dharma bamboo flute, not the shakuhachi. His flutes were actually of all sizes, ranging from eight inches to almost three feet. He and Soen were old friends. They addressed each other as "Sky boy" and "Earth boy." Waking before dawn, we could sometimes hear the alternately rasping and lilting flute playing against Soen's deep-voiced singing and splashing in the cold lake.

It was a generation ago. There were giants walking the earth. I was really lucky to be around.

I moved down to the city where I became director of the New York Zendo. I was in love again. Paula was a weaver. We soon got married and moved into a nearby apartment. Anna was born. I met some wonderful people in that sangha. We sat a lot of sesshin together. We received the precepts and were given dharma names. My name, *Maishin*, means, "Bravely-march-on Mind," or "Courageous Mind." *Koji* means "layman." That's a kind of joke that came up around our reading some selections about a character called "Layman P'ang." In naming us, Soen and Eido appeared to be guided by our ordinary names. I was known as "Mike" in those days. My fellow resident, Ray Crivello, became *Reimon*, "Spiritual Gate." Paula's friend, Marsha Feinhandler, a potter, became *Koshu*, or "Fine Hand." Min Pai, a karate master and healer, was *Kushu*, or "Empty Hand." Paula lived in the Soho section of Manhattan so she became *Soha*. "Original Fragrance." Peter Matthiesen was *Ishin*, "One Mind."

Peter was married to a writer named Deborah Love. She suddenly developed cancer, and we visited her in the hospital. She was young and rather beautiful. Now she was dying, completely wasting away, almost disappearing. Seeing her, I was scared. Peter was our host in the hospital room. He seemed extremely calm and warm and incredibly . . . something. Present? in the face of death. This presence made a strong impression on me.

Eventually, at the Zendo, there were charges of impropriety against Eido Roshi. Soen came from Japan to investigate and mediate and work some medicine. It didn't seem to work too well. It seemed time for me to leave.

Paula and Anna and I moved a little north of the city, where we rented a house that belonged to the sister of Edna St. Vincent Millay. I contracted myself and my van to a messenger service and drove all day. Paula stayed home and took care of Anna and eventually set up her loom again. I chopped down trees for firewood from the abundant hard- and soft-wood stock on the property. We had a vegetable garden. We subscribed to *Mother Earth News*.

Paula became sick. She was diagnosed with bacterial endocarditis, a heart disease, and was hospitalized. A blood clot spontaneously lodged in her brain and she went into a coma. I thought of Peter and his hospitalized wife. I needed some strength. Our sangha friend, Jurg Tauber, a Swiss doctor whose father worked with Carl Jung, kept me well informed regarding medical options. He told me I should just stay there and help out. Min Pai came and laid his empty hands on her and saw Paula's spirit hovering above her body. She died within a week. That was almost exactly eighteen years ago, on April 22. Jurg and some of his friends came to the hospital that day with their instruments and played string quartets through the corridors. Paula's son Karl joined in with his flute. Karl and I wandered around the city later and wound up at a showing of Kurasawa's *Yojimbo*, about a masterless samurai who uses his wits to make his way in and set to rights a cruel world.

Anna, who was three, stayed for the better part of six months with my sisters who were living together in Boston—an arrangement for which I'm eternally grateful. I worked during the week and visited on the weekends. I looked out the window a lot and played the saxophone. I kept thinking I might see Paula walking up the road again. I didn't know a person could feel so bad.

I gradually realized that Paula might have died, but that she was still around. She survived in her own children, Karl and Anna, as well as in her many friends and students. My sister Joanne took some of Paula's tools and materials and, almost immediately, began the study and eventually the work of weaving. Though she worked in cotton more than wool, her pieces had much of the same subtle understanding of color. Some invisible thing was passed on. As I reflected on what I knew of Paula's life, it occurred to me that she lived as though she knew she might die soon. She wanted to fit a lot into her apportioned time. There was gravity in her search for beauty. There was a time limit. And finally I felt that for me too,



after all, time was short. I didn't know how short, and I didn't exactly feel anxious about it, but I began to feel motivated in a way that was new to me. I truly felt that I had absorbed some of her spirit. I felt it physically in my eyes, my hands and my heart. Time is short. I could no longer make any mistake about it. While her leaving was a terrible loss, it was also an incredible gift.

Ray by then had moved out to California and was living at Green Gulch. Lots of families and kids were there, he said. That sounded like a good place to bring up Anna. I wound up speaking to Karin Gjording, Baker Roshi and Ed Brown, who was president of Zen Center at that time. They invited me out. My younger sister Deborah and I drove out from Boston in the van with Anna buckled into a lawn chair between us. This was October of 1977. (Deborah stayed for awhile, returned East, and eventually came out here to live. A few years ago Joanne and her family did, too.) As any single parent knows too well, it's pretty hard to be the only one who's responsible for both the yesses and the noes. Green Gulch was an excellent situation in that regard. There was plenty of attention and concern for all the kids and child caring was a community job. Michael Sawyer actually was the full-time child care person. He operated out of a tipi at the foot of Spring Valley.

Next we went to Tassajara, along with fifteen other children and assorted parents. That experiment lasted three years. We had adjusted sitting schedules for parents, separate noisy meals for kids, a childwatch during zazen hours where a rotation of parents would patrol the grounds listening for cries and whimpers. Extensive childcare, of course, and eventually a tiny school! Norman was one of Anna's first-grade teachers—one on one. Emila was too. That's where I met Sukey. She taught Anna to read. I fell in love again.

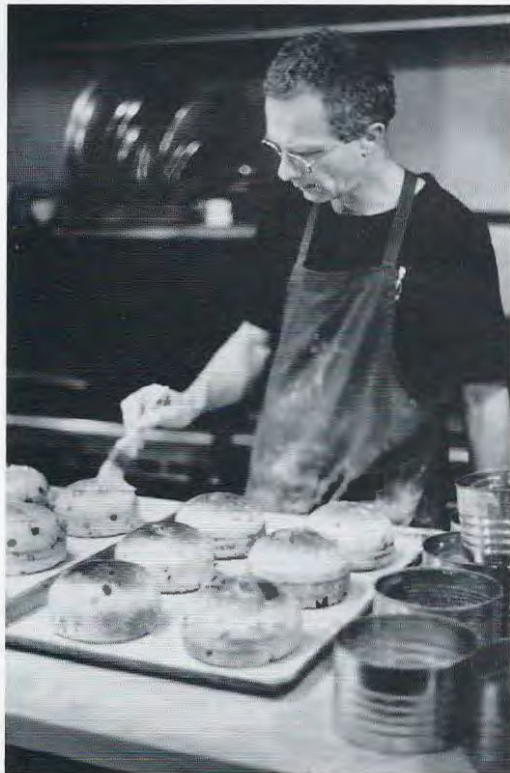
We three moved up to the city, lived next door to, and started working for Zen Center—myself at the Bakery and Sukey at Alaya Stitchery, which at that time was making sitting cushions. Right before we were to get married in 1983, Baker Roshi resigned in a long and perhaps still-drawn-out saga of impropriety and misunderstanding. Reb married us in April. Amidst the high and painful emotion of that time, our wedding seemed blessed by the community with good wishes for success. Our life was pretty stable for the next ten years, but I think it safe to say that I'd become a little disillusioned with teachers.

During this time, I studied music, played in a band and began to write songs. I also became more concerned with the dynamics of the bakery business, eventually becoming manager at the production facility and then at the retail site at Cole Street. Soon I had no more time for music.

Ultimately, after several million dollars in transactions, I decided to leave my job. Things had stopped adding up. I'd learned a lot but I'd been investing a tremendous amount of energy, more than I knew I had, into a situation that, after all, wasn't able to support me. By support I mean satisfy me, motivate me, enhance my perception of the universe, bring out the best in me, pay me back with that special currency that turns the receiver into a donor. I was exhausted.

So I just stopped. It was maybe the best thing I ever did. No plans. Just wait and see what happens. I began to sit regularly again, baked bread on a tiny scale; read a lot, wrote, walked around; enjoyed my family. Slowly and with stunning coincidence, the wheat separated from the chaff and it developed that Sukey's and my dreams actually started to come true. We came to Green Gulch almost two years ago. I'm grateful for the opportunity to practice in this way again.

I can safely say that this has been my story so far. Thinking about it and reciting it have been liberating for me, but the fact that you've been the witnesses has really made it true, and I'd like to thank you for that.



A NEW BOOK  
BY DARLENE COHEN

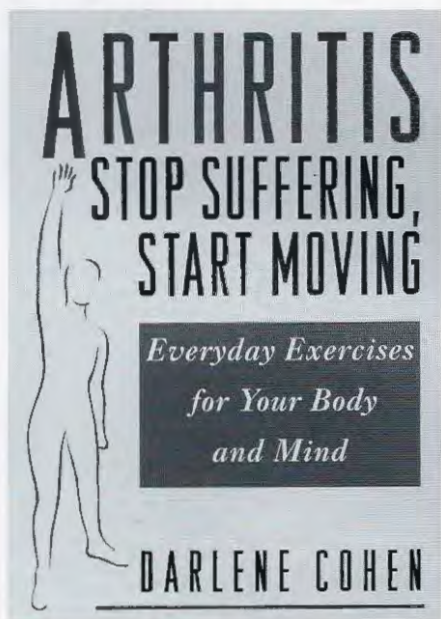
ARTHRITIS:  
STOP SUFFERING,  
START MOVING  
Everyday Exercises for  
Your Body and Mind

Darlene Cohen's book for those suffering from arthritis or other forms of chronic pain is now available. Recently chair of the Board of Zen Center, Darlene has been practicing Zen since 1970 and was lay ordained in 1974. A few years later, while living at Green Gulch Farm, she developed rheumatoid arthritis, a painful and crippling immune system disease.

Working with Meir Schneider, and applying her own insights from Zen practice, Darlene developed her own approach to living with arthritis. Those of us who have known her over the years can only marvel at her patience, buoyancy, and good humor in the face of her travails. Here is a quote from the book:

The practice of Zen meditation is to observe one's own bodily sensations, thoughts, and perceptions, and emotional feelings as they occur. When you meditate on these events, you aren't trying to change them . . . There is no goal involved . . . Your daily life itself can be the key to your healing if you live it in a manner that incorporates the information that your body is always giving you. The way you get out of bed, the way you walk, the way you work and enjoy yourself—all these motions and activities can make you stronger and more whole.

Darlene has a masters degree in physiological psychology from Connecticut College of Women and is also a certified movement therapist. Her book is intended to empower people in their own lives in their efforts toward self-healing. In addition to cultivating awareness, Darlene's approach emphasizes the healing movements in everyday tasks such as washing dishes, vacuuming, and putting on shoes and socks.



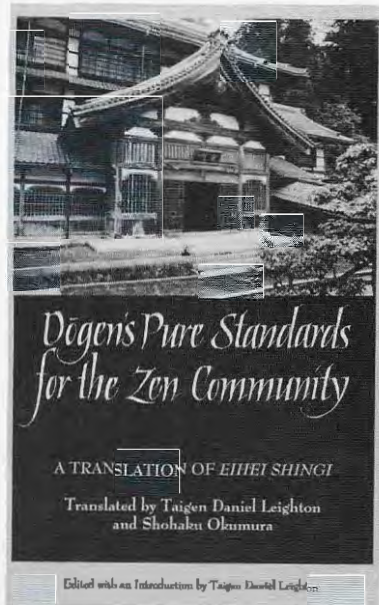
## A TRANSLATION OF THE EIHEI SHINGI

Taigen Daniel Leighton and Shohaku Okumura have made a translation of the *Eihei Shingi* which is now available. Entitled *Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community*, this work includes the well-known "Instructions for the Tenzo (*Tenzokyokun*)," as well as "The Model for Engaging the Way (*Bendoho*)," "The Dharma for Taking Food (*Fushukuhampo*)," and others including "Pure Standards for the Temple Administrators (*Chiji Shingi*)." Several of the pieces have not been previously translated, so we are fortunate to have this work as a whole available.

While many of us have some familiarity with Dogen's more philosophical writings in the *Shobogenzo*, this work guides us through his more practical everyday principles and encouragements. Aimed primarily towards those in monastic training, the writings are also relevant for lay practitioners, as they are intended to evoke the spirit of practice throughout one's day.

Here, for instance, is a passage about the garden manager:

The job of garden manager [*enju*] is most difficult and extremely troublesome. [Only] people who have the mind of the Way served in this job. People without the mind of the Way cannot fill this position. [The garden manager] always must be at the vegetable garden to plant seeds in accord with the season. With the face of buddhas and ancestors, [they must have] horse and donkey legs, like farmworkers and field hands. Without holding back their own life energy, throughout the day they must carry spades and hoes, plow and till by themselves, and haul manure. They can only wait for the vegetables to ripen, and then must not miss their time. When they plow the ground and sow seeds, they do not wear their . . . robes . . . or *okesa*. They only wear coarse workclothes. However when it is time for the whole community together to chant sutras, do *nenju*, go up in the hall [for the abbot's lectures], or enter the room [for interview with the abbot], the garden manager must definitely go along with the assembly. They must not fail to practice. Morning and evening in the vegetable garden they must offer



incense, do prostrations, chant and recite dedications . . . without ever becoming lazy or negligent. Even at night they sleep at [a hut near] the vegetable garden.

And here is the beginning of "The Dharma for Taking Food:"

A sutra says, "If you can remain the same with food, all dharmas also remain the same; if all dharmas are the same, then also with food you will remain the same." Just let dharma be the same as food, and let food be the same as dharma. For this reason, if dharmas are the dharma nature, then food also is the dharma nature. If the dharma is suchness, food also is suchness. If the dharma is the single mind, food also is the single mind. If the dharma is bodhi, food also is bodhi. They are named the same and their significance is the same, so it is said that they are the same.

As you can see from these passages, *Dogen's Pure Standards* is a wonderful resource for awakening and inspiring way-seeking mind.

Taigen has also provided an introduction, and the work has two Forewords, one by Ikko Narasaki Roshi and one by Jusan Kainei Edward Brown. Happily the book is handsomely and spaciouly laid out with an easily readable typeface.

*City Center library and bookstore*



## WIND BELL EDITOR

Ed Brown, who originally accepted the position of editor of *Wind Bell* on a trial basis, has agreed to continue on a more "permanent" basis. Ed is probably best known for his *Tassajara Bread Book*, *Tassajara Cooking* and *Tassajara Recipe Book*. He presently writes a cooking column for *The Shambala Sun*, which appears bimonthly.

He offers the following thoughts about *Wind Bell* and his job as editor:

I have enjoyed editing the last three issues of *Wind Bell*, partly because it has been an opportunity to read lectures and articles more carefully and intently than I would otherwise be inclined to do, and I have found this to be richly rewarding.

One problem, though, is that I have not gotten them out in a "timely" fashion. My apologies. This has been primarily due to two reasons. One is that I have been working on another book, tentatively titled *Potato Fiascoes and Radish Teachings*, which has consumed a large portion of my time and attention. The other is that I do not seem to be particularly inclined to "pester" people about submitting their lectures and articles in a timely fashion. Hopefully with my book largely completed, I will be able to devote more of my energy to the second of these, and develop my capacity to simply inquire, "How is your piece coming along?" instead of demanding, "Where is it?"

One of my intentions as editor is to encourage wider participation, which could be of various kinds. I would like to invite readers to submit pieces for consideration, or to contact me about prospective pieces which might be included in future issues. Secondly, I am often looking for someone to help, either by writing an article about a specific event or subject, or transcribing lectures. If anyone is interested, please let me know.

Also I and Rosalie Curtis, our layout designer, are always on the lookout for black-and-white photos of community events or practice places.

May all beings be happy, healthy and free from suffering.



## FINDING OUT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE ORDAINED BECOMING A LAMP FOR ONESELF AND OTHERS

A Dharma Talk by Abbot Sojun Weitsman

Next Sunday we will have a priest ordination, and this occasion brings up questions about what it means to be ordained. We can look at this by examining what ordination has meant in our tradition, and also by considering our practice in the present day.

As I have said before, when I was about to be ordained I asked Suzuki Roshi what it means to be ordained as a priest and what I should do. He said, "I don't know." Then I asked Katagiri Sensei and he said, "Oh . . . I don't know . . ."

I hadn't asked to be ordained. Suzuki Roshi asked me. I was quite surprised when he asked me. But I thought that since he did ask me, he would at least tell me what to do. But he didn't tell me much.

At that time there were few American priests at Zen Center. I was the fifth person to be ordained. The first one had left, two were in Japan, and the fourth was out of sight. So I didn't have any role models except our Japanese priests: Suzuki Roshi, Katagiri Sensei, Chino Sensei and Yoshimura Sensei.

I tried to observe everything Suzuki Roshi did. I would follow him around and imitate him. Suzuki Roshi told me later that there is a practice of following in the teacher's footsteps: moving as the teacher moves; observing and absorbing the teacher until sometimes you can't tell the difference between the teacher and the student. Without explicitly saying so, he was drawing me into that as an aspect of my training.

Chino Sensei and Katagiri Sensei (as they were known then) taught me how to put on and wear my robes, as well as other things that I needed to know. I also learned that it is necessary to ask questions. So little by little, through observation and by asking questions and following closely, I learned a little about how to become a priest. But I wasn't told much. And when I did anything wrong, I was scolded. Many times I didn't pick up on something as I should have. There was a good deal of mystery in my relationships with my teachers: this was their style.

At that time, in the sixties, our morning service consisted of the "Heart Sutra" chanted in Japanese three times, and after morning zazen we recited the robe chant, also in Japanese. One time Suzuki Roshi, Katagiri Sensei and I were in the ante-room at Sokoji and I asked: "What is the meaning of the (robe) chant that we do in the morning right after zazen?" Suzuki Roshi hesitated and Katagiri Sensei started looking through



*Zen Center abbots Zoketsu Norman Fischer and Sojun Mel Weitsman  
at Tassajara*

the drawers to see if he could come up with a translation. Suzuki Roshi stopped him and pointed to his heart and said, "love." This is how he used to teach. He didn't like to explain things literally, but always went right to the essence.

I began to realize how important not knowing was, even though I felt that I needed some answers. So I practiced with "don't know" in front of me as my priest's koan, and it is still there. From time to time people want to define a priest, or the role of the priest, or the functions of a priest. There are historical functions and role models, and we should know what they are and practice and absorb them. But at the same time we must be open to what the present situation calls for and be ready to respond to new situations, differences in culture and country, and the circumstances of place and time. Suzuki Roshi was concerned that in the transition from Japan to America the true essence should not be lost. But at the same time, he made a big effort to follow as well as lead us.

Soon after we had established the Berkeley Zendo, I asked him what I should do to help develop the practice. He said, "You can do what you want." He was giving me permission without telling me what to do, and at the same time watching and observing. He was granting me a lot of trust,



Photos: Pat Leonetti appears to be enjoying her time as shuso at Tassajara during the 1995 fall practice period.

At right: Benji Jane Keleher and Pat are on their way to bathe Manjusri.

Facing page: Seated from left are Abbot Norman Fischer, Tenshin Reb Anderson, Pat Leonetti, Abbot Mel Weitsman and Shunbo Blanche Hartman.



and I wanted to do my best. When it looked like I was becoming arrogant or assuming too much of a teaching role, he would let me know with a remark or sometimes just a look or a glance. I said to him once that I felt that his stick was always on my shoulder. So, he gave me a lot of freedom and at the same time I felt like I was never out of his sight. I think he wanted to see what it would look like to have an American priest develop an American zendo. I think it was something of an experiment for him.

During Suzuki Roshi's time, when things were just beginning, we didn't study so much. He went through the one hundred cases in the *Blue Cliff Record* and commented on the *Lotus Sutra* and the "Sandokai" and talked about Dogen a lot. That's what I remember most. He told me that he wanted to comment on the *Platform Sutra*, but he didn't have time. So when we were with Suzuki Roshi, our attention was focused on his teaching and his understanding of dharma. After his passing in 1971, we began studying and teaching classes, developing the Study Center; and learning something about Buddhism and Zen. After many years of study, we could verify how accurate Suzuki Roshi's understanding of Buddhism was.

When the founder is gone it is natural to learn more, study more and widen our knowledge, and to define our practice and to create categories and standards. Although our priests learn the liturgy and the service positions, train in the various monastic positions and study the appropriate literature, we have never established a formal curriculum for training. But I



think we are in a position where it will be helpful to do so.

So, 24 years after the founder, how do we think about priest practice, lay practice and monk's practice? Aside from not knowing, what is a priest?

Priest ordination is not as common as it was fifteen years ago, when it was considered to be the prime aspiration for a Zen student. Since that time we have not been ordaining so many, but allowing space to harmonize lay and priest practice.

My rule of thumb for ordaining a priest is that the candidate is already practicing as a priest does. Then, after at least five years, ordination can be a natural step of acknowledgment and an encouragement to continue.

I think of a priest as someone who doesn't have any other ambition and whose whole life is devoted to practice. His or her practice is whole-hearted and selfless, with a strong desire for understanding the dharma. One is ready and willing to help and support others, and that willingness comes before one's own attainment. One's practice is steady and continuous; not contentious, overly competitive, materialistic, or easily discouraged. Most importantly, one is not doing it for one's own self-aggrandizement. A priest remains upright and honest and sets an example for practice.

Sometimes people ask if they can be ordained as a priest and I may say, "yes" or "no" or "perhaps sometime." If I say to someone that it might be a good idea sometime in the future, just responding in that way allows

a person to consider what it feels like as a possibility, and then to sit with that for awhile. We may have the desire, but to ask the question and get a response puts it into a new light.

Many people are excellent students and actually practice in this way, and yet it wouldn't be right for them to take on the burden of priesthood. This is why lay ordination is so important. As a lay person one practices in the world and utilizes the forms of the world as the forms of practice, which is a very advanced way to practice. This can also be an important part of a priest's experience. Whereas a priest is more visible and puts on the full robes, shaves the head and is a more graphic example, inviting feedback, a lay person is less visible and must practice in a sometimes hostile or unsympathetic atmosphere, without getting lost or discouraged. Suzuki Roshi once said that one must be a good lay student in order to be a good priest.

Lay ordination and priest ordination are two tracks and in the middle is the monk. The terms apply to both men and women. According to the way I understand it, a monk is one who is practicing in a monastic situation and can be either lay or priest. Monk indicates the kind of practice one is doing rather than the type of ordination one has. When we attend practice period at Tassajara, we are all monks doing monks' practice.

Eventually, some of the monks should and will become priests; and some will spend an appropriate amount of time in residence at Zen Center and then return to a more worldly life, and hopefully continue practice as a lay person involved with Zen Center while living in the larger society. This style of lay practice is very important and vital. Lay ordination is an acknowledgment of that connection. To be ordained into the sangha as a lay person or a priest is equal. We take the same sixteen precepts. But a lay person lives and sets an example within society; and the priest takes care of the sangha, makes the practice available and is responsible for carrying the tradition forward both in its old and new aspects.

Many lay people, who have practiced a good number of years, have actually taken on the responsibilities of a priest. They are practice leaders, teach classes and hold key positions. For some time I and others have been thinking about how to acknowledge and give formal recognition to this kind of practitioner. We will continue to work on this. As far as I know, this type of formal recognition will be something new for our school. We have the unusual circumstance of having longtime resident students who are not priests, but who cannot properly be called lay persons either.

In Japan, college-age boys from temple families go to the monastery for a few years of rigorous training before returning to the family temple. They have a different kind of training than we do. They are all ordained

as novices, so the atmosphere is quite different. They also come from a cohesive culture and have not yet journeyed into their adult life. Here at Zen Center we have many kinds of people from diverse backgrounds, experience, ages and purposes, which makes our system far more complex.

In the history of Buddhism the celibate monk has always been treated in a special way. Having given up all worldly desires and ambitions in order to practice devotedly, the monk has always been supported by the laity. In return, the monk practices virtuously and acts as a teacher and guide for society. As we say in the meal chant upon receiving the food offering, "[may] our virtue and practice deserve it." Although our priests are not expected to be celibate, they are expected to be faithful in relationship and not promiscuous.

One of the problems that arises with priests is that people may think that because this person is a priest, he or she must be very special. Then, many people may want to be a little bit special. But my feeling is that a priest is a servant of the sangha. In other words, rather than standing on a pedestal, priests should direct their energy toward serving the sangha. When priests selflessly serve and provide leadership with sincere effort and humility, they are spontaneously honored by the sangha. Respect has to be earned. The function of a priest is to set that kind of example for the sangha and provide the glue which holds it together. It is a rather humble position and at the same time a noble position; but the respect must be earned—it is not automatic—and one of the worse things a priest can do is use the position to lord it over people, or as a means to acquire a powerful advantage.

It can also be a problem if a sangha of priests is seen as an elite or privileged group. There are some schools that only recognize the monks as sangha. But for us, the sangha includes all practitioners, and in a wider sense, it includes all beings, and not only humans but trees, rivers, mountains and the animal kingdom.

Originally the sangha was the monks who were supported by the laity. But in our sangha there are various cooperating support systems for the resident sangha members, which includes self-support, and sometimes priests going out to work. I think it's a good idea for a priest at some point to go out to work, test their practice, either visibly as a priest or less visibly as a lay person, and then come back again and be visible as a priest.

Because of the overlap of priest and lay, we may feel confused at times. But I'm not worried about the confusion. The priest has the priest path within the practice, and the lay person has the lay path within the practice. Rather than interfering with each other, they can and should

be mutually supportive. We are all in the same place, but each one is in a different stage of development and understanding. And yet we can all practice together harmoniously if we know where we are moment by moment and treat each other with love and respect, being aware of both our abilities and shortcomings.

In the Asian countries there is more of a distinction between priest and lay. For instance in Japan if you are a carpenter, that is what you do; if you are a potter, that is your identity; if you are a priest, you function as a priest. The crossing over of practices is not so common. The practice that we have is very unusual in that lay people here practice in a way that might look like monk's practice somewhere else. We have a peculiar situation and it's not easily defined. We can't make the ordinary distinctions. I think that with awareness of the problem the defining will come by itself. We have to be able to sit with our headache—if that's what it is—when it is a headache. But as I say, I don't know what it is. Without ignoring it and without forcing it into some pattern, it will work itself out.

When people are ordained they are not automatically teachers, although someone may already be teaching before being ordained. At a certain stage a priest (or lay person) can counsel students in this practice. After being shuso, a student may be asked to begin counseling other students. There is a certain amount of psychology that goes with counseling, but students with critical psychological problems are referred to therapists. The counseling that is done in dokusan and practice discussion is directed toward helping the students in their understanding of Dharma and helping them to sustain their practice. A good counselor should be able to meet every situation and help those with whom they meet to see themselves clearly. Sometimes a lay person can do this very well and a priest may not be able to. Sometimes a priest is completely immersed in practice but is not necessarily a teacher. That person is simply a monk—a sincere student whose life of practice is itself a wonderful teaching. Some of the best teachers are those who teach without teaching. Through their ordinary daily activity they are always teaching the Dharma and inspiring the sangha knowingly or not.

Some priests do not lecture or teach classes. Other priests always seem to have a very hard time, but their effort feels very genuine, and they shine unconsciously as teachers. This practice reveals many facets.

Now after more than 35 years of taking the backward step, we are testing the waters of socially engaged Buddhism. I have always left social engagement to each individual to do what seems appropriate, but I think we can do much more in this area. Still we sometimes forget that opening our doors so that people have the rare opportunity to practice is an

important social service. In the future though, we can be finding out more ways to use our energy for social engagement on various levels.

Someone posed the question that priests in most religions have been mediators between god and people, or god's representatives. What about the Buddhist priest? Most koans are about the non-dual nature of heaven and earth; the absolute and the relative. A Zen student should realize that there is no gap between heaven and earth, and embodying this fundamental point helps others to realize it. You could say that the function of the priest or lay student is to express determination for realization and practice regardless of the obstacles, and to be the seamless place where heaven and earth meet, becoming a lamp for oneself and others on the path..

*The Tassajara gatehouse altar*



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Information may be obtained from the Zen Center, 300 Page St, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 863-3136 or from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Hwy, Sausalito, CA 94965, (415) 332-5215.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center usually offers two three-month practice periods: September to December and January to April, when the Center is closed to visitors. During the Guest Season in the summer months, visitors may come as guests or as students. For more information on the opportunities available, please contact the office in San Francisco.

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