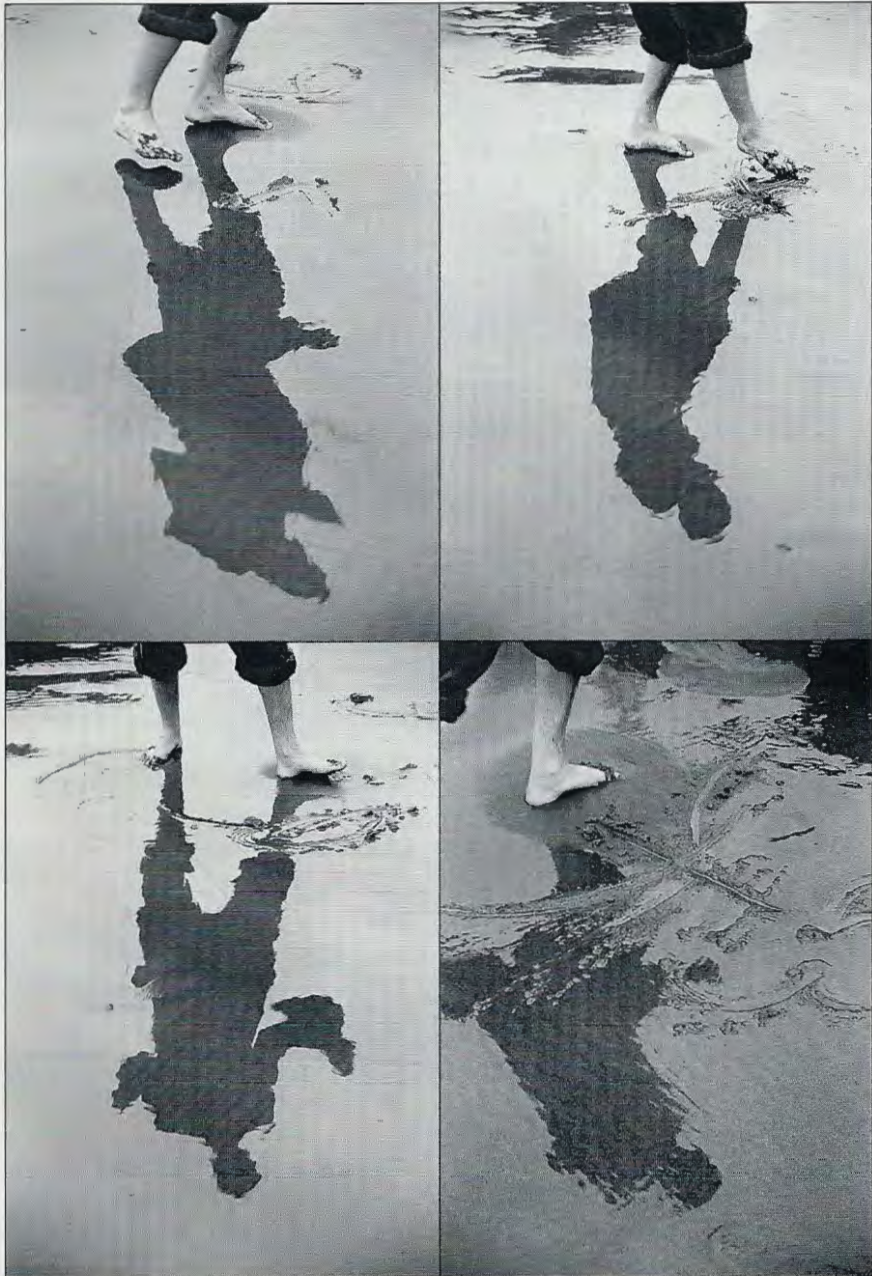


Wind Bell

Publication of
ZEN CENTER
Vol. 31 No. 2
Summer 1997



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Front Cover: A Zen student practices calligraphy at Muir Beach near Green Gulch Farm. Photographs by Judith Keenan



Allen Ginsberg Remembered

by Zenshin Philip Whalen

In late September of 1955 Gary Snyder had arranged for us to meet Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac at the corner of First and Mission Streets outside what was then called the Key Terminal. Ginsberg was smiling and bobbing gently to some invisible music. Jack Kerouac was wearing his red James Dean windbreaker, smoking a cigarette and looking like a young movie star. We all went off to a cheap restaurant in North Beach to eat dinner and talk. Although Kerouac had already published his first novel and had a contract for *On The Road* he was worrying a great deal about how to publish the rest of his work which remained in manuscript form. The rest of us had written lots of poetry that no one seemed to want. We talked about Kerouac's theory of spontaneous writing as it might be applied to poetry.

I think that this may have been the germ of Allen's creation of *Howl*, complete open uninhibited recording of immediate experience without correction or meticulous rewriting. A few weeks later Allen read his *Howl* for the first time. The poem succeeded in blowing away all the fog and fustian of the American literary establishment. On visits to Ginsberg's cottage in Berkeley I watched as he reframed various phrases and sections of the poem while Kerouac encouraged him to cut out as little as possible.

This resulted in the final version that Lawrence Ferlinghetti published in 1956. The San Francisco police seized the edition and arrested Lawrence Ferlinghetti and his partner Shig Murao. Great publicity surrounded the ensuing trial in municipal court.

Ever since our first meeting Allen had spoken many times about the advantages of fame, which guaranteed success in the pursuit of perfect love. Fortunately for him this indeed became true. Although he wanted fame and excitement he also gave away a great deal of money after he started getting it, as well as food, clothing and shelter for impoverished friends. If you were in jail he would pay for a lawyer to get you out of it. If you were sick he paid for doctors and hospitals. If you just needed two hundred dollars to score some dope to feed your habit he gave you two hundred dollars. Through his help and influence many of us were able to get our work published in magazines.

This was his character long before he took up the study of Vajrayana. He became a disciple to Trungpa Rimpoche in the same year (1973) that I was ordained as a Zen monk. Allen continued his Buddhist practice with Gelek Rimpoche until his death.

We were friends for fifty-two years. When he died it seemed to me as if a huge and extremely necessary part of the universe had disappeared.

Allen Ginsberg, Michael McClure and Philip Whalen



In Faith That We Are Buddha

by Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman

Tassajara February 26, 1997

What I want to say comes back to one teaching on which my life turned, which is expressed so beautifully in the Jukai and priest ordination ceremonies: "In faith that we are Buddha, we practice Buddha's way." Initially I heard this teaching as, "You are perfect just as you are," but various expressions of it keep coming up. The new Zen reader, *The Roaring Stream*, has a chapter on each of forty-six teachers from China and Japan, and in each one this teaching somehow appears. "Just this is it." "Ordinary mind is the way." "Just this one." On and on.

I would like to share with you some of the quotations I have particularly appreciated. For example, in the *Record of Linchi*, the master instructed his group saying, "Followers of the way, the dharma of the Buddhas calls for no special undertakings. Just act ordinary without trying to do anything particular. Move your bowels, piss, get dressed, eat your rice, and if you get tired, then lie down. Fools may laugh at me, but wise people will know what I mean. A man of old said that people who try to do something about what is outside themselves are nothing but blockheads. If, wherever you are, you take the role of host, then whatever spot you stand in will be a true one. Then whatever circumstances surround you, they can never pull you away. Even if you are faced with bad karma left over from the past or the five crimes that bring the hell of incessant suffering, these will of themselves become the great sea of emancipation."

On another occasion he said, "There are some types of students who go off to Mount Wutai looking for Manjusri. They're wrong from the very start. Manjusri isn't on Mount Wutai. Would you like to get to know Manjusri? You, here, in front of my eyes. Carrying out your activities from first to last, never changing. Wherever you go, never doubting. This is the living Manjusri."

From the basis of "in faith that we are Buddha we enter Buddha's way" we can actually read and study the Buddha's teaching in a way that will bring forth the Buddha that you are to manifest in your every activity.

Since Linchi emphasizes taking the role of host, let's examine that. The role of host is to be right where you are and welcome whatever comes. Respond to whatever comes, from your spot. This host is the one who is at home. I have been much impressed by how this is

incorporated into the teaching of tea ceremony, and I was also struck by this quality in Jerry Fuller's presence, as he was dying. In tea ceremony the host's whole attention is on making the guest comfortable, taking care of the guest. Jerry had been such an ardent student of tea, so that he was thoroughly attuned to making people comfortable, even as he was dying.

One example which comes to mind was his saying, "Osaki ni," to Pat Leonetti, who was his tea student and was also taking care of him. "Osaki ni," is a phrase used in tea ceremony. One takes the sweets or tea which is offered and places it between oneself and the next guest and says, "Osaki ni," meaning, "Excuse me for going first." Then one returns the sweets or tea to a position in front of oneself, and proceeds to eat or drink. Shortly before he died Jerry said to Pat, "Osaki ni." And I was deeply moved to hear that.

I began thinking of me and Lou. This year we will have been married fifty years, and I was thinking how it will be like that when one of us dies. "Osaki ni." Because the one who is left behind is the one for whom it's the most difficult, I think. This was clear to me during my heart attack—that for me it would not have been a problem to die. But for Lou it would have been a problem if I had.

Another example of Jerry being a host taking care of a guest happened on the day he died. When I first visited him at the hospital, he didn't have any beads with him, and I was telling him how helpful I had found it to chant the refuges during my heart attack. Since I had my beads with me, I lent them to him. And when I went to visit him, on the morning he was dying, he said to Fu, "Oh, Blanche is coming. Hand me those beads she gave me. She would feel better if I had them in my hand." Isn't that amazing that it would even occur to him? Then we chanted the refuges with him for a while. Meanwhile someone had gone to the airport to get his mother, who is not a Buddhist, so when it was nearly time for his mother to arrive, he said, "I think that's enough of the Buddhist stuff for now." Because he wanted to make his mother comfortable.

While these examples come to mind of the depth of training in being a host that occurs from total dedication to studying tea, still the same thing can come from total dedication to zazen or in studying the Way in any of the ways that we have available to us.

The host meets the guest wherever the guest is and makes her welcome. I think this is not so different than someone asking Yun Men, "What is the teaching of the Buddha's whole lifetime?" And he said, "An appropriate response." The characters actually mean something like, "each meets each" or "one meets one." So the teaching of the Buddha's

whole lifetime is to meet each person, each situation, each circumstance directly. I think this is host.

Just this one is the particular jewel in Indra's net that can reflect every other jewel and that can be reflected in every other jewel. This image of Indra's net is one which I love. Each jewel is different, and yet they are totally interconnected and interpenetrating. Each one is a perfect expression of the whole, and each one of us is like this. So not looking outside ourselves, how can we find a way to be completely this jewel which reflects all the other jewels? To be, to find a way to express the one who requires it? To find a way to manifest the one who is not busy in our every activity?

Someone brought up to me a phrase from the *Tenzokyokun* where Dogen Zenji says in his instruction to the cook: "Do not be concerned about the quality of the ingredients you have." Or, "Do not complain about the quality of the ingredients that you have. Just take the ingredients that you have and prepare food for the monks."

Just now is the ingredients that we have. Just this. How will we prepare a nourishing Buddha for the world that we live in? How will we present these ingredients in a way that meets those whom we encounter? This is our practice. How will we totally appreciate this particular way in which Buddha appears in the world? And how will we cultivate it so it can nourish others? So that it can meet others? So that it can in fact recognize itself wherever it looks.

The first time I went to Sokoji Temple for zazen instruction, the instructor was Katagiri Roshi, who was then a young monk. He had come up from Zenshuji in Los Angeles to help Suzuki Roshi, because all these Americans were flocking to sit zazen. Taking care of the Japanese congregation as well, Suzuki Roshi needed some help. So this young monk had come, and he was giving zazen instruction. And in the course of it he said something like, "We sit to settle the self on the self and let the flower of your life force bloom." That was another of those moments that deeply moved me. And it has stayed with me ever since.

How do we let the flower of this life force bloom? What kind of effort do we make if there is nothing to gain? If there is nothing to gain, then we are complete as we are. So, what effort shall we make? And what would be the purpose?

The effort comes from the one who requires it. It is similar to the effort that the daffodils make in order to bloom. The bulbs were there under the ground, but they were doing something, something was happening in the dark that resulted in the blooms that we see when we walk down the path.

What kind of effort do we make to allow this one to completely be

itself and meet the world and appreciate this opportunity? The work of the daffodil preparing to bloom is very quiet. And it doesn't look outward to see if it is doing it right. The bulb somehow finds the bloom within itself. It comes from the very nature of the bulb, this bloom, that we see as beautiful. Yet it was beautiful from the beginning. Completely there, it needs conditions around it to help it bloom. And we provide, in this practice, conditions to help these Buddhas bloom. Still it's all there, all completely present right from the beginning.

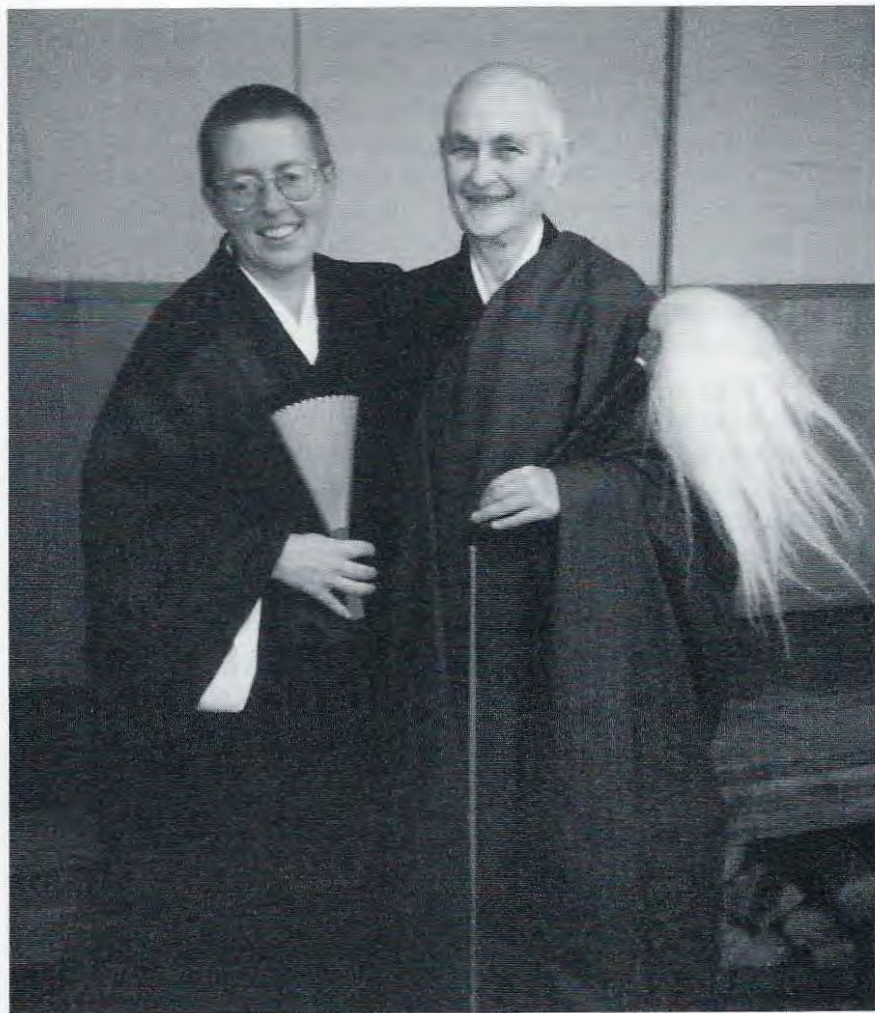
This is our faith. "In faith that we are Buddha we enter Buddha's way." In faith that we can bloom fully in the most appropriate way, we practice this practice.

I was deeply moved by what one of you said at the Shosan (formal question and response) ceremony: "If it was any harder it would be too hard. And if it was any easier it would be too easy." We can hear these things, and we can get a taste. Still we have to sit with it, which is hard. If it is too easy it doesn't get all the way down from our skin through our flesh and bones to the marrow, so that we are expressing it from inside. This is the difficulty of it, why it can't be too easy. No teacher can ever give it to you.

Hsueh Feng, the great teacher who took so long to come to ripeness himself on Turtle Mountain with his friend Yen T'ou said, "The mouth born of my mother and father would never cheat you by giving you an entry to Zen." He was a very compassionate teacher who had many strong disciples. During his study he had worked with many teachers who helped him come to fruition, and this culminated with his friend Yen T'ou saying, "What comes in through the gate is not the family treasure. Hereafter if you want to help beings, let it flow forth from your own heart to cover heaven and earth." It can flow forth from your own heart to cover heaven and earth because it's always right here. It's not outside.

We were talking in Chosan (morning tea) this morning about food, and appreciating how fortunate we are not only to have food but to pick and choose. The conversation started when we came in and there was a tray full of brownies, and our shuso chanted, "Brownies are innumerable. I vow to eat them all." (laughs) We got to talking about how totally fortunate we are to have all the food we need, and how mixed up we can get sometimes by having far more than we actually need. Because we get caught up in picking and choosing. What's the healthiest food, and what's the politically correct food this month?

If you read the collection of Suzuki Roshi's talks that I prepared for this practice period, you will remember there was one about how we pay so much attention to nutrition and food. And just what is the exact



Daijaku Kinst, who was Shuso (Head Monk) at Tassajara for the 1997 Winter practice period, is shown here with Abbess Hartman.

balance that we need, how much protein and how much carbohydrate and how much fat. And what about sugar? That talk was probably given close to thirty years ago. So, we have been talking about this since the beginning of Zen Center.

Then someone pointed out that it's all in the Pali Canon. Monks with their begging bowls were directed to accept whatever is offered. They were told not to pick and choose the houses of the rich people who would give finer food. And not to hoard anything, not to save anything for the next day. And so this is nothing new. Now we just have our particular version of it.

Also we were talking about homeless people, and about feeding homeless people. Someone mentioned that you cannot really help anyone only by feeding them. And it's true. Just giving food to people will certainly be a benefit, but to truly help them will be to treat each person as yourself. Then feeding someone will be more than just a feeling of doing something good, good for yourself. Meeting a person face to face and appreciating each one as a person like you. This is not just assuaging your guilt at having more than you need by giving some to people who have less than they need.

I remember when my Dharma brother, Rick Levine, was a physician at the homeless shelter in San Francisco. He found it immensely gratifying to be a physician for people who really appreciated his efforts, rather than for people who were suspicious of doctors because they were out to make a lot of money, the same patients who might sue him for malpractice. Though it was gratifying he said, "You know, I have only twenty minutes per person. What I can do in this brief time is first and foremost to really meet each person and treat him or her with respect."

This is how we can help people. This is how we can help each other. Right here at Tassajara can we meet each person personally? Can we see ourselves in each other? Meet each other as Buddha? Sometimes, but it's not so easy, is it? If it was any more difficult, it would be too difficult, but we can practice it anyway. We can practice meeting each being as Buddha, which will help us recognize that Buddha is here when we see Buddha there. As Tung Shan said, "Wherever I look I see myself."

Someone wanted to hear more about Nan Ch'uan's "Ordinary Mind is the Way," so I am going to read Suzuki Roshi's version of Chao Chou meeting his teacher Nan Ch'uan:

Chao Chou Ts'ung Shen was a native of Northern China. When he was ordained at quite a young age, he visited Nan Ch'uan with his teacher. "Do you know the name of this monastery?" asked Nan Ch'uan, who had been taking a nap in his room. The boy said, "Sacred Elephant Monastery."

"Then, did you see a sacred elephant?" asked Nan Ch'uan.

The boy replied, "I did not see any sacred elephant, but I saw a reclining bodhisattva."

At this, Nan Ch'uan raised himself up and said, "Have you your own master now?"

"Yes, I have," said the boy.

"Who is he?" asked Nan Ch'uan.

To this, the boy made a formal obeisance, which should be given only to one's master, saying, "Spring cold is still here. Please take good care of yourself."

Nan Ch'uan called in the Ino and gave the boy a seat in his zendo.

So, this is the way Chao Chou was accepted as Nan Ch'uan's student, and Nan Ch'uan allowed Chao Chou to meet him in his room. So one day Chao Chou asked Nan Ch'uan, "What is the true way?"

"Ordinary mind is the true way," said Nan Ch'uan.

"Is it something to be attained or not to be attained," asked Chao Chou.

"To try to attain it is to avert from it," said Nan Ch'uan.

"When you do not try to attain it, how do you know the true way?" asked Chao Chou.

To this question, Nan Ch'uan's answer was very polite (Suzuki Roshi said), "The true way is not a matter to be known or not to be known. To know is to have a limited idea of it. And not to know is just psychological unawareness. If you want to achieve the absolute where there is no doubt you should be clear enough and vast enough to be like empty space."

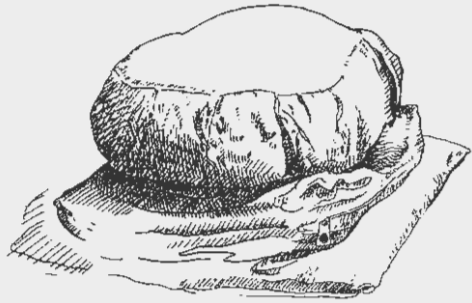
Hereby Chao Chou acquired true understanding of the true way of Zen.

This is such an excellent pointer for practice, not difficult, not easy. To know is to have a limited idea of it. Not to know is just psychological unawareness, so let's be clear and vast enough to be like empty space. This ordinary mind is just ordinary mind. As Linchi said, "You just get up in the morning and wash your face. Just act ordinary without trying to do anything particular. Move your bowels, piss, eat your rice, and if you get tired, lie down."

A student asked Chao Chou to please teach him and Chao Chou asked, "Have you had your gruel yet?" When he says, "Yes," Chao Chou responds, "Then wash your bowls."

Do whatever is next, what's right in front of you. Take care of each thing as you meet it, meeting it as yourself. Recognize Buddha in each thing as a mirror for yourself. Trust that which turns you toward this practice. The one who requires it. Make the effort that will bring your flower to full bloom. If it were any easier it would be too easy, if it were any harder it would be too hard. But this practice is just right for us, which is why we choose this practice —to bring Buddha to life as just this one.





A Ceremony for the Encouragement of Zazen

by Tenshin Reb Anderson

Zazen is the source of all the teachings and practices of the Buddha way. Although the word "zazen" literally means "sitting in concentration," it is not limited to concentration practice. All enlightened concentration practices emanate from and return to zazen. Here, one's mind is concentrated without relying on any contrivance and is not necessarily continuously focused on any particular object. There are concentration practices and if one is practicing thus, zazen is just being upright and unmoving in the midst of such a practice. If we are not practicing concentration, it is just sitting still in the middle of not practicing concentration. It is simply pure presence untouched by all human agency. Many people attempt to concentrate their minds and, according to their own definition, are unsuccessful. Practicing concentration in this way often leads to feelings of frustration and upset. Even if one is successful in achieving concentration by personal effort, the mind is still somewhat disturbed by such striving. In Buddha's meditation there is no such striving. Giving up the desire to pacify the mind, pacifies the mind.

For this reason, if I give beginners zazen instruction, although I usually suggest that they sit upright with a straight spine, eyes open and hands in the cosmic concentration mudra, I do not encourage bending the mind into concentrating on the posture or breathing, nor do I discourage it. If someone asks for instruction on how to concentrate on posture or breathing, I am happy to give detailed instruction on how to practice that way. Although concentration practices may be wonderfully beneficial and develop great mental skill, trying to concentrate on some object like the breath may activate a gaining idea. Gaining ideas are antithetical to the whole project of Mahayana Buddhism, which is to be concerned for others' welfare rather than our own self-improvement. However, we may not realize this right from the start of our practice.

As long as we are engaged in a self-improvement meditation we continue to be trapped in our selves. When we are free of self-improvement projects, we are free of our self.

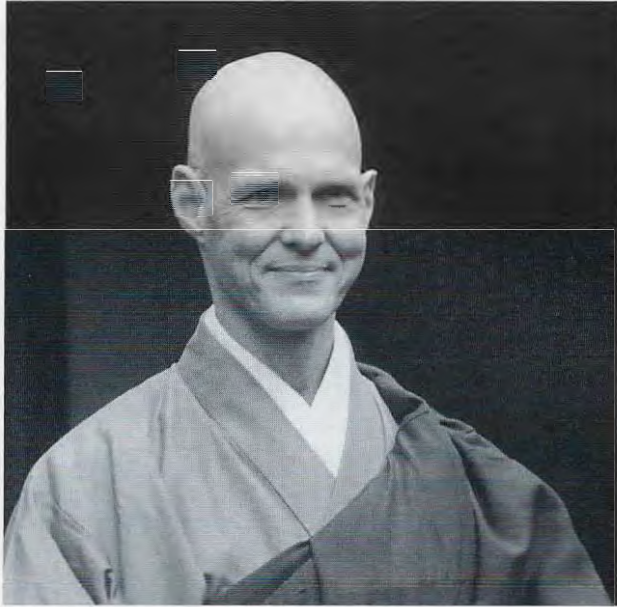
Although it may be difficult to wholeheartedly concentrate on an object without getting caught in some self-serving gaining idea, it is also true that having a gaining idea may be an important step in one's cultivation and realization of a practice which is free of all such gaining ideas. Such practice may help us to forge a strong enough container to tolerate a non-gaining approach to meditation. It frequently happens that if a practitioner pushes personal effort to the limit in a wholesome way, as in concentration practice, they can realize the futility of depending on personal power and then find another entrance into zazen.

The zazen I speak of is neither concentration practice nor not concentration practice. Zazen does not prefer success over failure. Zazen does not prefer enlightenment over delusion. If we are enlightened, we sit still in the middle of enlightenment with no preference for it. If we are deluded, we sit still in the middle of delusion with no aversion to it. This is Buddha's zazen.

The goal of zazen practice is the enlightenment and liberation of all living beings from suffering. That's the goal of zazen, but the goal is exactly the same as the practice. In realizing this goal, one becomes free of self-concern and personal gain; becoming free of self-concern and personal gain realizes the goal.

Although one might joyfully practice concentrating on posture and breathing with no gaining idea, still, zazen is not limited to this form of practice. As our ancestor Dogen said, zazen is "totally culminated enlightenment. Traps and snares can never reach it. Once its heart is grasped, you are like the dragon when he enters the water, like the tiger when she returns to the mountain." In other words, zazen survives every reduction. It cannot be reduced or trapped into mindfulness or mindlessness of the breath or of the posture. It cannot be captured by any activity of the human body or mind.

Zazen doesn't start when we start making effort, doesn't stop when we stop. However, when practicing zazen, there is complete mindfulness and we may very well notice that we are breathing. It's not that our ordinary awareness isn't going on, it's just that the practice does not abide in and cannot be defined by the things we are aware of at the moment. As the great teacher Prajnatarā said, "This poor wayfarer, when breathing in, does not abide in the realms of body or mind, when breathing out, does not get entangled in the various objects of experience. I always recite this scripture." The breath of zazen is to be thoroughly intimate with and liberated through all realms of experience.



This is the breathing of Buddha. Still, one may need to familiarize oneself with and become proficient in the forms of concentration on breath and posture in order to develop enough confidence to selflessly practice the formless breathing of "this poor wayfarer."

Zazen is formless like vast space, yet it manifests forms in response to living beings, like the moon reflected in water. Since we may need forms to help us relate to the formless, when people first come to learn about zazen at a Zen center, they are given instructions in how to perform a formal ceremony of zazen. Beginners usually want to have some activity they can do, so we give them something to do. However, the zazen of our school is not something we can do. The ceremony is for tempering our tolerance for a formless practice that we cannot do. Strictly speaking, awakened Buddhist meditation is not an action done by a person, it is not another form of doing, not another form of karma. It is the function of enlightenment, the concerted activity of the entire universe.

Conventionally speaking, Zen students say, "Now I am going to the meditation hall to do zazen." However, the formal actions which you or I perform in assuming the traditional bodily posture of sitting meditation are not actually the zazen of buddha ancestors. Their zazen has nothing to do with sitting or lying down. These ritual forms which we humans practice are a ceremony by which we express and celebrate our devotion to the actual reality of zazen.

The ceremonial forms are opportunities for persons to embrace and be embraced by the inconceivable totality of zazen. They are Dharma gateways for the body and mind to manifest the truth of zazen. The forms are ways for zazen to come into the body and accord with the mind.

When people are sitting during the ceremony of zazen, I sometimes walk around the room, adjusting their posture. This adjustment is intended as a silent "comment" on their posture. Although I am inspired by the beauty of people's effort in sitting upright and still, nevertheless I may have some suggestions which I feel might encourage more whole-hearted devotion to the ceremony of zazen.

The posture of our body reflects our participation in the ceremony, and our participation in the entire universe. Giving our posture entirely to the ceremony, we give ourselves entirely to the universe. Total devotion to one is total devotion to the other. Resistance to one is resistance to the other. If our spine is curved or humped backward, the chest is caved in, the lungs are constricted and the heart is withdrawn. On the other hand, if our spine comes deeper into the torso so that we are sitting more upright, there is more room for breathing and the heart comes forward. We feel more alive, and feeling more alive we are more open to suffering, and enter more deeply into the joyful and vital realm where the wheel of Dharma is turned.

When a person fully accepts her suffering by assuming this upright posture, she is released. Working with our posture in this way encourages us to fully experience what it means to have a body, to fully enter our own physical presence.

However, when people take the ceremony for zazen itself, they may develop a sense that there is a right and wrong way to practice zazen. Thus they may be uncomfortable entering a meditation hall because they don't want to do the wrong thing. For such people the trap of thinking in terms of right and wrong can be undermining and distracting, so I might refer some of these people to a less formal or ceremonial form of meditation so that they can relax into sitting and walking meditation, without getting caught up in worrying about concepts of right and wrong. Perhaps after body and mind are calm and stabilized by practicing a less ceremonial form of meditation, one might be able to return to formal Zen practice and deal fruitfully with any complications around issues of right and wrong which might arise in response to these formalities.

On the other hand, for some people, the ceremonial forms provide a structure or refuge in which they can tolerate the formless, objectless practice of zazen. The ritual forms are a vessel in which one may enter

into the inconceivable activity of enlightenment.

The meaning of zazen is not limited to the ceremony, but manifests in response to our devotion to the ceremony. As the "Jewel Mirror Samadhi" says, "The meaning is not in the words, yet it responds to the arrival of energy." It manifests in response to the arrival of our energetic effort and devotion.

One of the fundamental texts of our school is the great teacher Dogen's *Ceremony for the Universal Encouragement of Zazen (Fukanzazengi)*. The Chinese character for "ceremony" in the title of this work is composed of two other characters. The first character means "person" and the second means "justice, righteousness or meaning." The ceremony provides an opportunity for the person to be united with the meaning of zazen. Zazen is the selfless practice which comes to meet our sincere devotion to the ceremony of zazen. The instructions are basically established procedures for a formal ceremony that we may perform in a meditation hall or at home. But zazen survives every reduction. Zazen is happening all the time everywhere; we do the ceremony within particular limits of time and space to celebrate the limitless, all-pervasive reality of zazen. This ceremony is the central ritual act of the Zen school. In a Zen monastery, we may practice this ceremony all day long, but it is still just a ceremony, not the totality of zazen itself. Performing the ceremony heals any gap between our life and the true zazen practice of Buddha.

In this ceremony, we try to be thoroughly mindful of every detail of our bodily posture and movement. We have a formal and traditional way of entering the meditation hall, walking to our seat, bowing to our cushion and taking our place. We sit on our cushion according to instructions on seven points of posture that we find in meditation texts throughout Buddhist history. And then we "Take a deep breath, inhale and exhale, rock your body right and left and settle into a steady, immobile sitting position."

Zazen practice is selfless. Its meaning, the enlightenment and liberation of all living beings, is not brought forth by the power of personal effort and is not brought forth by the power of some other. We can't do it by ourselves, and nobody else can do it for us. The meaning is realized interactively in the context of our wholehearted effort. As the "Jewel Mirror Samadhi" says "The inquiry and response come up together." The meaning arises at the same moment as our devotion to the ceremony. Since the meaning arises simultaneously with the performance of the ceremony, there can be no awareness of the actual meaning separate from the form of the ceremony itself. Therefore, although the meaning of zazen can be realized, it is inconceivable. Since enlightenment is

realized right at the same time as the selfless practice of this ritual, it is a ceremony of inconceivable liberation.

The stillness of Buddha's sitting is not merely stillness, it is complete presence in stillness. In such presence, there is not the slightest meddling with what's happening. It is a physical and mental non-interfering with our experience. It is a thorough intimacy with whatever is happening. This is an infinitely flexible stillness that can adjust to the impermanent nature of all things, harmonizing with all situations.

While this upright stillness is an essential awareness, nevertheless, it is an initiatory awareness. It opens the door to a full understanding of how self and other dependently co-produce one another. This understanding of the interdependent arising of all beings is the samadhi of all Buddhas. In this realm of awareness that is the culmination of Zen practice, the liberation of all beings is realized.

Zazen is completely free; it is formless and no person or school owns it. Yet the most essential and intimate aspect of training in the formless zazen of the buddha ancestors occurs in the realm of form. In this regard I deeply appreciate how the forms of sitting practice can help us develop wisdom and compassion.



*Old barn
at Green Gulch Farm*

Dharma Transmission Ceremony at Tassajara

by Sobun Katherine Thanas

Tenshin Anderson Roshi, Senior Dharma Teacher at Zen Center, gave Dharma Transmission to Jiko Linda Cutts during a ceremony the first week in December 1996 at Tassajara. As the fall practice period was drawing to a close, he and Linda went through the ancient ceremony by which one practitioner entrusts another to embody, and in turn transmit, the dharma.

Linda's ceremony came almost nine years after Tenshin had given his last Dharma Transmission to Paul Discoe, Ananda Dalenberg, Jerome Petersen and Katherine Thanas. In the earlier ceremonies done by Tenshin, most of the preparation had been accomplished ahead of time, but this was the first time that a disciple took three weeks (twenty-one days) to circumambulate Tassajara, offering incense at each altar in the early morning before the wakeup bell.

She also copied the transmission documents during the final week. These documents are done on silk by brush and hand-rubbed ink.

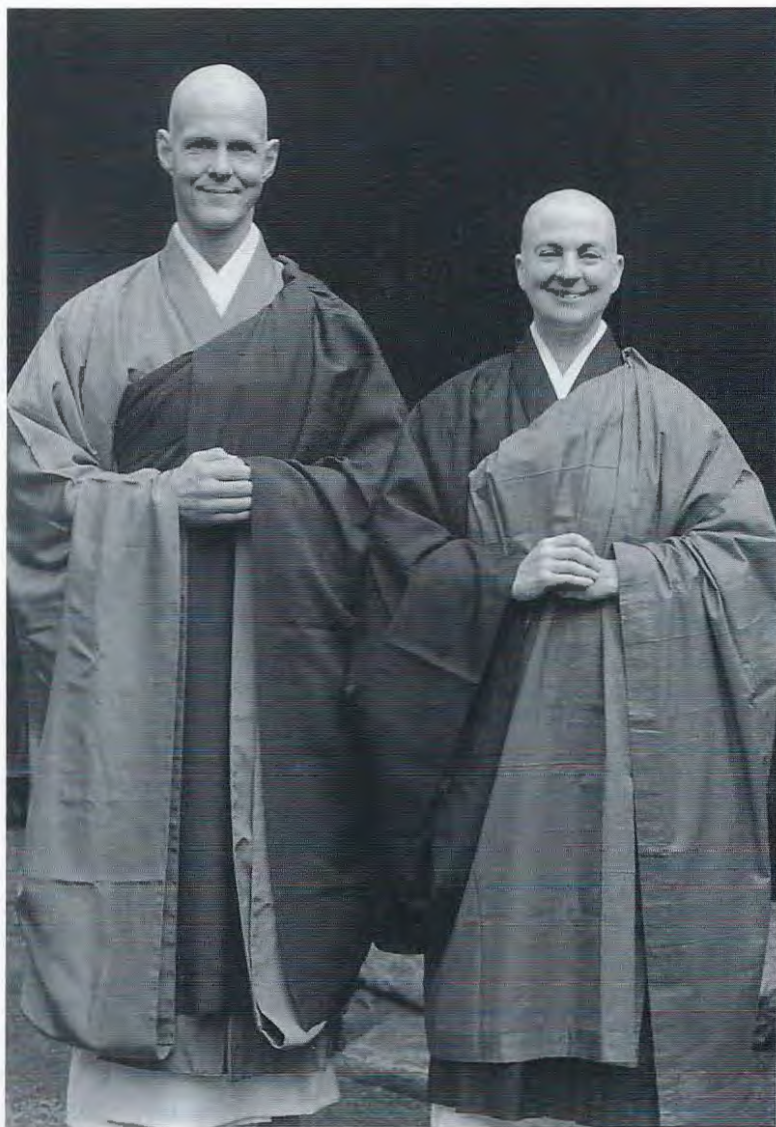
The final week's ceremonies began with Tenshin's statement to her: "The ceremony of face-to-face transmission Buddha to Buddha, ancestor to ancestor, has now been realized." The rest of the week was the enactment of this event.

Tenshin Anderson said as he gave her permission to copy the documents: "Some say a piece of paper is just a piece of paper. Soto tradition says a piece of paper is Buddha, is enlightenment itself. Now I give you these documents, enlightenment itself. Please make a copy on a piece of paper."

One of the documents reveals the inner meaning of the seminal Zen poems, "Merging of Difference and Unity" and "The Song of the Jewel Mirror Samadhi." "The inner meaning extends through the five ranks of the koans," he said. "It reveals the meaning of the scriptural teachings, the *intention* of the poems, and the *mind* of the teachings."

On the sixth evening the *Denkai* or precepts transmission was accomplished in the early evening. The *Dempo*, or final transmission ceremony, took place on the seventh evening late at night.

During the week of unpredictable weather, temperatures dropped twice down to 27 degrees in the morning. Then the climate slowly warmed up to clear nights, a gurgling creek and a final beautiful comfortable evening to welcome Linda into the lineage.



Tenshin Reb Anderson and Linda Ruth Cutts at Tassajara

The next morning Linda Ruth wore her new brown robes to the Buddha's enlightenment ceremony in the zendo. A new baby Buddha was born.

Tenshin Anderson was assisted by Gary McNabb and Katherine Thanas and many students at Tassajara during this ceremony. Linda was lay ordained in 1974 and took priest ordination in January 1975. She has been serving as head of practice at Green Gulch the last few years.

Face to Face: The Meaning Comes Alive

by Jiko Linda Cutts

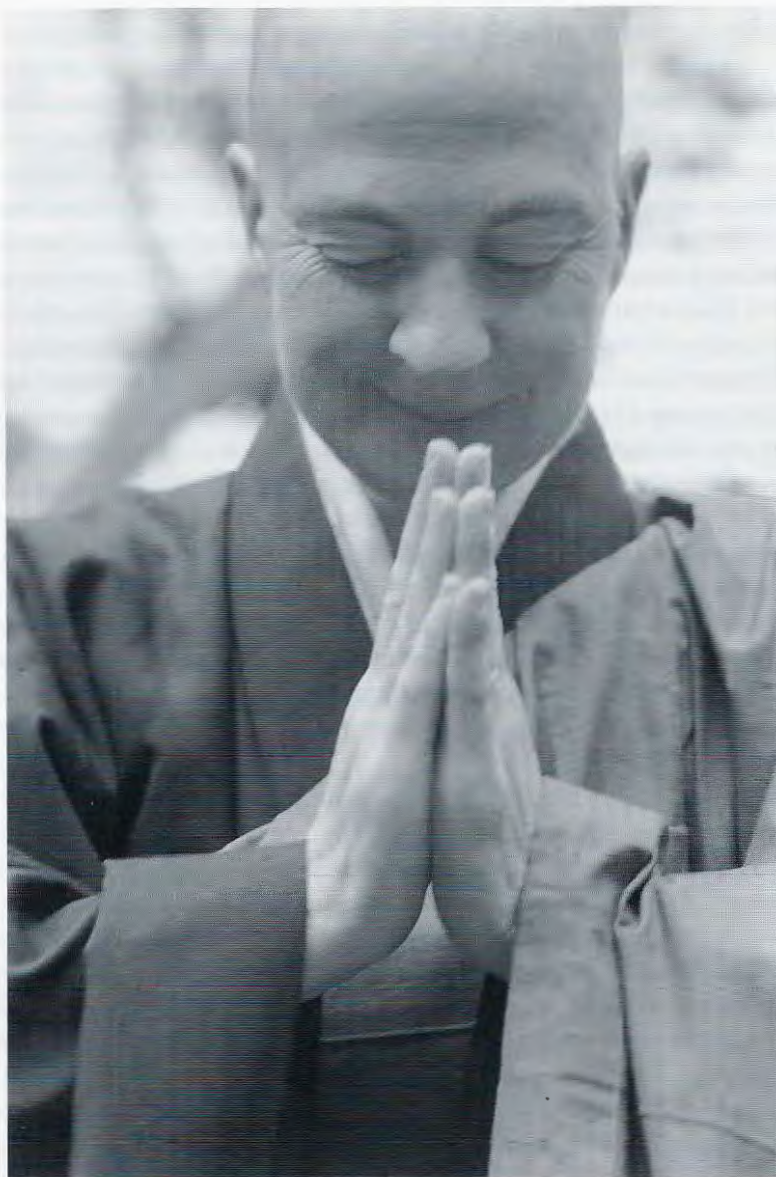
Green Gulch Farm November, 1997

I recently returned from Tassajara where I had been for twenty-one days participating in the Dharma Transmission Ceremony with Tenshin Reb Anderson. It was full autumn when I arrived with red and golden trees, leaves falling and scattered, gigantic leaves from the sycamore trees: very beautiful. During the time I was there it shifted from autumn into winter. The leaves were blown off the trees and it got colder, down to about twenty-seven degrees, quite frosty. Since the ceremony took place in the middle of the Tassajara practice period, much of the time I was able to join with everyone in the simple life there. It's a harmonious feeling there, a joyful feeling, and people are making great effort to study themselves.

Several people have asked me, "What is the dharma transmission ceremony? What does it mean?" Like many things it's not really possible to talk about the meaning of the ceremony in an abstract way as though the meaning existed by itself on paper or in my telling you about it. The night before the ceremony began Reb talked with the students about the meaning of the ceremony, and said that the meaning is expressed through doing the ceremony. Two people are involved completely in bringing all their effort and all their sincerity to meeting the form of the ceremony, and out of that the meaning is revealed. This is the same with all the ceremonies that we do, the ordinations, morning service, segaki ceremony. All the different ceremonies are particular forms that have been created, but the meaning is not just in the form. The meaning comes alive through the effort of the people participating in it.

So Dharma Transmission is about two people using the form of the ceremony as a vehicle, bringing forth their effort, and equal to the effort that is made, the meaning comes forth. That's always true, that whatever you bring to your activity, equal to your effort and sincerity the meaning will be revealed. Even now in this dharma talk you can relate to my words in various ways. You can sit back and keep them at bay, or you can be upright and receptive, and things will be alive for you in a different way. So this is everyone's practice, not just dharma transmission ceremony. It's the ceremony of life.

I could not do this ceremony by myself. Reb could not do this ceremony by himself. No one person can make the ceremony happen. It took everybody. It took many, many people to have this ceremony.



At Tassajara there is the kitchen crew and I received my meals along with the other practice period students. The food was very tasty, and I did not have to worry about cooking or shopping. I was just totally taken care of in that realm and in many other ways.

It was very cold, and I was fortunate to have a wood-burning stove in my cabin. When I used up the wood, the wood pile outside my door

would be replenished. People were taking care of that. I would go out the next day and more wood was stacked, waiting. All of Tassajara helps all of Tassajara really, but I felt it very strongly during the ceremony how I was taken care of, how everybody was coming forward to make the ceremony happen.

Sometimes I felt like I was living in a Buddhist fairy tale with certain tasks and ceremonies to complete. One thing I did was to offer incense at various altars before the kerosene lanterns were lit in the early morning. As I came back into the main part of the grounds from the round of altars, many of the lamps would have been lit, so the pathways were now illuminated. Someone's lighting the lamps was a simple kindness which I received straight into my heart. I also had six jishas or attendants who volunteered to help me. Jisha means "one who carries" and they were ready to carry everything which was needed: incense, matches, a flashlight, an umbrella, a bowing mat. It was like having guardian angels or guardian bodhisattvas who were there to protect me while I went through the ceremony.

And just countless other things were cared for and prepared. Cleaning of the grounds, cleaning and creating the ceremonial space, making the ritual objects used in the ceremony. I was filled with gratitude for the many people who helped make the ceremony happen. I wish to acknowledge the sewing teachers especially: Gaelyn Godwin, Meiya Wender, and Zenkei Blanche Hartman, our Abbess. Also I wish to acknowledge the many other people who put stitches in the new robes which I received. So wherever you look at this ceremony there were people helping to create it. Countless people and innumerable labors made the ceremony possible, especially my teacher Tenshin Roshi and all the Buddhas and Ancestors back to Shakyamuni Buddha and the seven Buddhas before Buddha. I felt held by everyone.

I want to share with you a little bit about the tradition of dharma transmission. One of the chapters in Dogen Zenji's *Shobogenzo, The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, is called "Menju" or "Face-to-Face Transmission." Menju means face to face, two faces that face each other and what happens. The Zen tradition often brings up for study the story of the transmission between Shakyamuni Buddha and his disciple Mahakashyapa. On Vulture Peak in India, Shakyamuni Buddha had gotten up before the assembly to give a dharma talk, and he held up a flower. He didn't say anything and he winked, and Mahakashyapa was in the assembly and he smiled. Then Shakyamuni Buddha said, "I have the treasury of the true Dharma eye, the inconceivable mind of Nirvana. This I entrust to Mahakashyapa." That was the Dharma Transmission between them. Buddha holds up a flower, not saying a word, and the

assembly is sitting there not saying a word, he winks, somebody smiles, and the Buddha entrusts Mahakashyapa.

This is Koan #6 in the *Mumonkan, The Gateless Gate*, and there are many translations and commentaries on this particular koan. So what happened there between Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahakashyapa, what gets transmitted? You can't understand it necessarily just by reading it. In Shibayama's commentary he points out that using the word 'transmit' makes it sound like something going from A to B, and he says this is an inexcusable misapprehension. In Zen the emphasis is on one's own understanding and study and personal experience. You cannot be given something unless you already have it. So to think that something is transmitted from A to B is incorrect understanding of transmission. So another way is to see it as transmission of the untransmittable or transmission as identification of teacher and disciple, identification rather than something going from one person to another.

So in "Menju," "Face-to-Face Transmission," Dogen strongly emphasizes the point that this is face to face, eye to eye. This is not like reading a book and feeling you understand what some teacher says. It has to be face to face, eye to eye. So this intimate practice together, face to face, is part of our lineage. Mahakashyapa and Shakyamuni Buddha practiced together for a long time. Mahakashyapa was one of his ten oldest disciples and was his successor.

Dogen Zenji himself went to China and met his authentic teacher Ruching, and when they met, face to face, Ruching said to Dogen, "The Dharma Gate of face-to-face transmission from Buddha to Buddha, ancestor to ancestor, is realized now." Ruching acknowledged Dogen thoroughly right then. They recognized each other, and then they practiced together further. So this face to face event is very important. The teacher cannot be a teacher unless there is a disciple or student; and a student cannot be a student unless there is a teacher. It is really one word: teacher-disciple. They come up together, each creates and conditions the other. The teacher creates the disciple, the disciple creates the teacher. That's why it's face to face. You need each other to complete the practice.

This need is reflected in various works in the Western psychology tradition. The psychologist Heinz Kohut, talks about the importance for children to have someone reflect back to them, mirror back to them all their interest, their love and excitement about their various activities and states of mind. Someone there looking at the child eye to eye is pivotally important for developing a stable sense of self. In the gaze between mother and child, the eyes dilate and there's a greater intensity, and this reflection back and forth between the child and the parent

actually develops certain capacities of the brain. Without this kind of reflection that development doesn't happen, so the importance of eye to eye, face to face between a child and a parent is immeasurable. This mirroring, the "gleam in the mother's eye," is not dissimilar to the face to face reflecting back and forth between teacher and disciple. The same caring and intimacy is there.

In another comment on this case about Mahakashyapa receiving the dharma transmission, a Zen master said, "A child doesn't mind the ugliness of its mother." I remember when I was little my mother would come to school to help out as a room mother or to bring treats, and I thought she was the most beautiful woman in the world. Just to see her face made me so happy. As I got older I realized that she is not a raving beauty, but she is my mother. Seeing that face reflecting back to you, mirroring you, you don't see all the distinctions of ugly or beautiful, this or that. There's just this face-to-face transmission, reflection back and forth.

Teacher-disciple is also likened to "katto," which is the Japanese wisteria plant, with its twining stems that turn and twist, and little tendrils which attach for support. With some plants you just need a straight wall, but wisteria needs a lathe kind of support, where it can connect at many different places and go up, looking for the sun. With this kind of support, the plant will grow. Too little support and the plant will fall on the ground and choke itself. So twining vines is Dogen Zenji's description of this teacher-disciple relationship.

The wisteria won't flower for seven or eight years. It puts all its energy into growing, sending its roots deep, and climbing towards the light. Then it finally produces beautiful pendulous blossoms, that come in all sorts of colors: white and violet and a reddish violet and purples, very fragrant. Then the seed pods come after the blossoms, and they hang onto the vine all during the winter and then produce more flowers in the spring. Dogen Zenji must have known about the plant very intimately to use it as the model for his understanding of teacher-disciple relationship.

This twining together, this intimacy sometimes looks like enmity. It's pretty hard to practice closely with someone for a long time, yet our lives are entwined. In Aitken Roshi's commentary on case #6 of *Mumonkan*, he points out that the word 'intimate' in Japanese, 'shingetsu,' also means 'realization,' so intimacy and realization are used in Zen literature interchangeably. Intimacy also means, 'apposite,' or 'strikingly appropriate.' Strikingly appropriate is a way to describe this intimacy, which is realization. The inheritance and transmission of dharma through these twining vines includes an intimacy which

is strikingly appropriate. This is the kind of intimacy that meets completely.

Transmission, not as something from A to B, but as identification, points directly to the teaching that each of us is already Buddha. When Buddha saw the morning star and was enlightened, he said, "Marvelous, marvelous, all sentient beings are no different than Buddhas. It's just that because of their ignorance and delusion they do not realize it." To say that all Buddhas and sentient beings are not different does not mean that everybody is exactly the same. All beings, all buddhas and sentient beings are not separate from Buddha Nature, and yet each person completely expresses that in their own way, a beautifully fragrant, pendulous, delicately-hued wisteria blossom that blows in the wind, and sends out fragrance in the ten directions. Each person is unique, and yet at the same time there is sameness, sameness and difference and merging of those two as the truth of the Buddhist teaching.

So to be identified with your teacher means to walk together with all the Buddhas and Ancestors, and yet to express the teaching in your own unique way. This is not exactly copying, but individually expressing the dharma. Shakyamuni Buddha and Mahakashyapa studied together for a long time and Mahakashyapa had studied himself thoroughly and exhaustively. He was now ready to be entrusted to carry on the teaching.

Here is a poem of Dogen's, which is a clear expression of his vow, which is also a good expression of what gets entrusted when Shakyamuni Buddha says, "This I entrust to you Mahakashyapa." The poem has a rather sweet feeling:

Awake or asleep in a grass hut
what I pray for is to bring others across before myself.
Although this ignorant self may never become a Buddha
I vow to bring others across
Because I am a monk.
How august, studying the old words of the seven Buddhas
You pass beyond the six realms.

So awake or asleep in a plain grass hut, Dogen vows to bring others across or to save all sentient beings before himself. Even though he may never become a buddha it doesn't matter. "I vow to bring others across." This is my life's work. The poem has such a grounded simple feeling without being high faluting. The main thing is his effort and sincerity and the vow to bring others across.

The *Lotus Sutra* talks about four vows: to open people to the Buddha's wisdom, to demonstrate Buddha's wisdom, to reveal it or

realize it, and to enter Buddha's wisdom. All four of these vows are included in the vow to bring others across. To acknowledge and practice the vow to bring others across is the most important thing and when we understand and trust that this vow is the most important thing for another as well, then there is teacher-disciple identification. Buddhism comes down to helping people, and maybe the best way you can help people is to pass on the lineage through zazen. We expose people to Buddha's wisdom by teaching them this practice. It's a very concrete way to teach, to offer zazen, upright sitting.

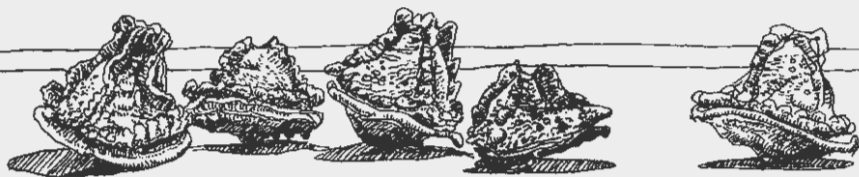
Often when we first begin to practice we have many projections about the older students or the teachers. We may have some misunderstanding about who 'has it,' and we may think, "I don't have it and how am I going to get it?" To see wisdom and virtue residing outside yourself and seek it outside yourself is extremely painful. So to take back these projections, these fixated ideas is the task that we have. This is also part of what it means to study thoroughly, to study yourself and the teaching thoroughly.

I feel extremely grateful to have experienced this wonderful ceremony and all the years preparing for it. I want to thank all the people who helped me. Among them are Abbot Norman Fischer who offered me a sabbatical to prepare for the ceremony, Gary McNabb and Katherine Thanas who served as preceptor. Finally I offer my gratitude and love to my root teacher Tenshin Reb Anderson. Words cannot reach it.

I want to close with a quote from Suzuki Roshi from one of his "Sandokai" lectures:

"Studying Buddhism is not like studying something else. It takes time to accept the teaching completely. And the most important point is you yourself, rather than your teacher. You yourself study hard, and what you receive from your teacher is the spirit of study, the spirit to study. That spirit will be transmitted from warm hand to warm hand. You should do it. That's all. There is nothing to transmit to you."

Thank you very much.



Eucalyptus buttons

On Forgiveness: A Retreat with Richard Baker

by Abbot Zoketsu Norman Fischer

For a long time I have felt that there was more work to do in our sangha regarding the traumatic events of 1983 and beyond, when revelations about love affairs and abuse of power by our then-abbot Zentatsu Richard Baker Roshi came out. I am sure that many of us, both those who have remained students at Zen Center since then, and those who have not, have come to some healing, have understood, in whatever way we could, what happened. But I do not think the story is finished. There's a phrase that appears in the sutra dedication in Dharma groups associated with Robert Aitken Roshi: "May sangha relations become complete." I think a true sangha never gives up the work of forgiveness and understanding when there has been a breach. Instead, out of our faith in the practice, and in the absolute rightness of compassion, we keep making the effort to forgive, even if that effort takes a lifetime and more.

Today I feel very much as if all the painful difficulties Zentatsu Baker and our sangha have had together are fruitful ones. We have learned about betrayal and disappointment, we have learned about self-deception, and we have learned lessons about student-teacher relationships that we had no idea we would ever need to learn. I'm not sure that these lessons are yet clear to us; certainly they are not entirely clear to me, and I see that experience can warp us as well as deepen us. But as long as any of us lives, and beyond that I am sure, we will remain students of what has happened to us.

When Zentatsu came to Zen Center for Abbot Zenkei Blanche Hartman's installation ceremony last year, I felt that finally, after fourteen years, there was an opening for the work of forgiveness to go forward. And so, with the consent of the Zen Center Board and Elder's Council, Layla Bockhorst, Paul Rosenblum and myself (Layla and Paul are both Zen Center priests who now live, work and practice outside Zen Center) organized a retreat to bring together thirty-five students from the 1970s and early 1980s with Zentatsu Baker. The purpose of the retreat was to promote deeper understanding and forgiveness, to actually

listen to ourselves and each other in a deeper way, so that we could more fully understand and appreciate what had happened. It was not an effort to make peace or become friends again. I think one can never hold that as a goal. The path to friendship can never be plotted out. One tries hard to understand, and if friendship comes from that, that is extra. The retreat was held April 16-18 at the Shadows, a retreat center in Nicasio.

Together with Gary Friedman, a Zen Center member and friend and mediator, who facilitated the retreat, we worked out a format that was designed to promote deep listening with fairness and compassion. Our sessions were about three hours long throughout the weekend and each session began and ended with informal zazen. There were small group discussions followed by large group discussions. Each segment of discussions during the weekend was based on a focusing question: "What is your spiritual practice now?" "How did the practice that we did together in the seventies and early eighties at Zen Center inform that practice and what stands out most?" "What was useful and positive about the practice of those days?" "What was not useful or was counter productive?" With these questions the weekend became a group meditation on what the past had been and how it was still alive for us today. We used a mindfulness bell to keep our words calm and kind.

The experience was truly extraordinary; much more than I had dared hope for. Each of the thirty-five people in attendance went deeply into the heart. Each expressed himself or herself beautifully and with accuracy and courage, and each made a heroic effort to actually try to hear, without judgment, what the others were saying. There was powerful anger sometimes, but it was contained; there were many tears and regrets and many apologies; there was much love and appreciation. In the breaks between sessions people huddled together or walked among the redwoods, talking and trying to understand more clearly what had been said and felt.

It seemed to me that finally, after so many years, the forces that had split us apart as a sangha were becoming clear. With all of us together, sharing the many separate pieces of a single fabric of a story, we had a chance to see with greater clarity who each of us was and how the past had unfolded. It was the first time, I believe, that we had been able to be with Zentsu Baker in a calm and neutral space, a space almost free of fear and defensiveness, and devoted to forgiveness. In that space, I think, all of us were able to learn, to go beyond whatever frozen places we had found to hide in to escape the reality of the past.

In her short essay on forgiveness Joko Beck writes, "In our culture the term 'forgiveness' is a very loaded word. The idea 'to forgive' usually implies that there is some form of magnanimous acceptance of another,



During the annual Tassajara family work weekend this April, these folks stacked wood and cleared the wood pile area in the flats. Front row from left: Matthew Ramos, Alex Zapulac, D.W. Ram, Zack Jordan, Gina Earle and Sam van der Sterre ; Second row: John Schultz, Tim Sampson, Terry Sutton, Nathan Wenger and Michael Wenger.

even though the other did wrong. This understanding of forgiveness is *not* what forgiveness practice is about; forgiveness is primarily about seeing through our *own* emotional reactions — seeing what stands in the way of real forgiveness. Real forgiveness has to entail experiencing first our own pain, *then* the pain of the person to be forgiven; and it is from this understanding that the barriers, the separation, between the two beings can dissolve.”

Joko goes on to delineate three stages in the process of forgiveness. First, to see how hard our own hearts are, how really unwilling we are to forgive. Being honest about this will bring us to the second stage, the immediate awareness of all the emotional reactivity within us toward the person we are unable to forgive. And coming from a thorough practice of the second stage is the third, the stage of actual forgiveness of the person, which is not the same as condoning the person’s actions.

Forgiveness, Joko teaches us, means being able to truly understand the other person with sympathy, being able to see that the actions they have taken have come from their own pain and suffering.

In this retreat I think we all came a long way in the direction of forgiveness, and it was a relief and an inspiration to do so. I came away with a tremendous appreciation and admiration for everyone present, especially Zentatsu, who listened with a great effort to many difficult words, and with increased faith that our practice is real and deep. The hurt and sorrow that we have all experienced through the years is not something that we can escape from easily, or should escape from easily. This retreat did not by any means repair all the damage that has been done. Much more work will need to be accomplished in the future, on an individual and group basis, to further the forgiveness process. But I feel very confident now that much more will be done, and that the process of understanding will continue. I feel very strongly that those of us who were closely touched by the hard times of the past have a responsibility, not only for ourselves but for new sangha members of the present and future, to continue this process. And we need to understand this not only as the story of the Zen Center sangha, but as the world's story. If a Buddhist sangha, a group of people dedicated to compassion and understanding, is not willing to try to heal its own wounds and deal with its difficult past with clarity, trying to prevent further harm in the future, does it make sense to hope that others with even more difficult conditions will be able to do their work?

A Tassajara resident trying to decide whether to do zazen or kinhin



Edward Espe Brown

TOMATO BLESSINGS
AND
RADISH TEACHINGS



Recipes and Reflections

by the author of *The Tassajara Bread Book*
and co-author of *The Greens Cookbook*

Nurturing the Heart

An excerpt from a new cookbook by Edward Espe Brown

Ed Brown has done it again. Written an entertaining how-to book about cooking, living and zening. Tomato Blessings and Radish Teachings interweaves short essays and scrumptious recipes into a veritable feast. The selection that follows is called "Nurturing the Heart."—Michael Wenger

One of the primary ways we connect with each other is eating together. Some of the connection happens simply by being in the same place at the same time and sharing the same food, but we also connect through specific actions, such as serving food to one another or making toasts: "May I offer you some potatoes?" "Here's to your health and happiness." Much of our fundamental well-being comes from the basic reassurance that there is a place for us at the table. We belong here. Here we are served and we serve others. Here we give and receive sustenance. No small matter.

I found that serving food in the meditation hall at Tassajara was an extremely powerful practice, powerful because it was a deeply intimate activity. Taking place in silence, the basic transaction of serving food is brought to life, so that the subtle inner workings become apparent. The mind of the server and the mind of the recipient are transparently revealed—you don't have to be a genius.

Suzuki Roshi often said that when we all sat in the same posture, as we did in meditation, it was easy to tell the differences between people. Sure enough, serving one person after another, the flavor of each was apparent: anxiety, greed, calm, respect, anger, fatigue. We were all so nakedly revealed for what we were. And people receiving their food could tell the mind of the server: ease or awkwardness, nervous or composed.

Suzuki Roshi's mind was unique, vast and spacious rather than small and petty. He seemed to be neither conniving to produce particular results nor struggling to avoid other outcomes. His movements were ordinary and unremarkable, yet he was vitally present and precisely responsive. Without rushing or being hasty, his bowl would be in exactly the right spot to receive the food, to receive me. Over and over again, when I served him he was like this. A wave of tenderness would come over me: he was just there, ready to be with what came.

Once in the question-and-answer ceremony after sesshin someone asked Suzuki Roshi what he felt when she was serving him food. Yes, I thought, what is his mind at that time? "I feel like you are offering me your most complete love, your entire being," he answered, and I knew it was true, because that's what I was doing when I served him, and I knew he was receiving me thoroughly and wholeheartedly, without reservation. I felt healed each time I served him.

It wouldn't last long though. As I proceeded down the row after serving the Roshi, my more ordinary mind would return, and I'd become progressively speedier, running a silent critical commentary: "Can't you get your bowl out here more quickly? Where's your mind anyway?" "Do you have to be so greedy?" "Stop being so picky." I had something to criticize about everyone, except Suzuki Roshi.

A part of our training was learning to move energetically, the Japanese Zen ideal of movement with vigor and enthusiasm. So I would try to serve as many people as I could as quickly as possible, which is not the same, you might note (as I was studiously not noting), as being polite or gracious. Basically I would be racing the server on the other side of the meditation hall to see who could finish first.

The people being served tended to get in my way and not cooperate as effectively as they might to see that I got down the row quickly. Once

in a while I would remind myself to try to see virtue. "Calm down," I'd tell myself, "don't be in such a hurry to get to the end of the row." Yet this was difficult because I prided myself on being the fastest server.

I wasn't happy being caught up in this obsession, but I didn't know what to do. Then one day I had a sudden inspiration, "Why don't I treat each person as though he is Suzuki Roshi?" Is there fundamentally a real difference between people or are there just these differences that I make up and believe are important? Isn't everyone basically worthy of respect and careful attention? Why don't I treat everyone as if she is Suzuki Roshi, because each person is at some level Suzuki Roshi. I saw that I could bring the same mind I brought to serving the Roshi to serving each person: the same respect, courtesy, tenderness, and patience.

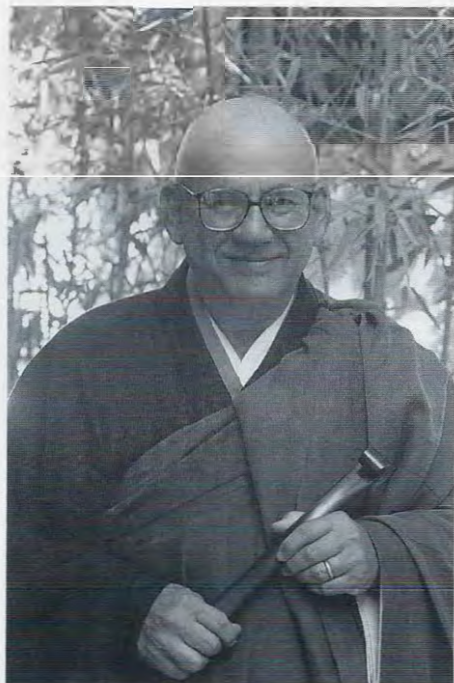
Doing this was difficult at first. By the second or third person after the Roshi my habitual mind was back in play, but gradually I slowed down. I don't know if anyone noticed a difference—no one commented to me about the change—but I felt lighter and more connected, not only to others but also to my own being. The fact that I was no longer belittling and demeaning others meant that some part of me could relax and be at ease as well, no longer in fear of being attached. To honor the person being served is to grow larger-hearted and honor oneself as well.

I have kept up this practice for many years now, so that even when I became a waiter at Greens I continued to make this effort to serve each person as I would serve Suzuki Roshi. I did my best not to get involved with who was who, how they behaved, or how they "deserved" to be treated based on how they treated me: "Here is your food, my heartfelt offering for your well-being. May your heart be at peace, and may you grow in wisdom and compassion."



Stepping Down Ceremony for Sojun Mel Weitsman

On January 29, 1997, there was a ceremony to mark the end of Sojun Weitsman's nine-year term as Zen Center abbot. The ceremony which took place at the City Center was very moving, with statements made by Zen Center president Barbara Kohn, current Zen Center abbots Norman Fischer and Blanche Hartman, former Zen Center abbot Reb Anderson and abbot Les Kaye of Kannon Do in Mountain View and *mondos* (Dharma dialogues) with



members of the sangha. Sojun will continue to teach at Zen Center, as well as remain abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center.

The two statements and mondo that follow will give you a taste of the event and of Sojun's teaching.

Appreciatory Remarks by Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman

If I thought you were sad to be stepping down from the mountain, I would be sad too. But I don't think you are sad. Still, perhaps there is some sadness.

If I thought you would not still be nearby, available for advice and counsel, I would be worried. You will still be nearby, but even so maybe there is a little worry.

But because I think fundamentally you are ready and happy now to be done with the burdensome aspects of being abbot and free to spend your time on more teaching and sitting, and the part that's more fun, I rejoice with you on this occasion of your stepping down and thank you most profoundly for your wise, kind, compassionate and warmhearted leadership.

Abbot Zoketsu Norman Fischer's Statement

Your practice is very plain and very steady, very quiet and very pure. Nothing special at all. And yet your kindness and maybe also your foolishness or just being in the wrong place at the wrong time led you to take up this great burden and guide us with an almost invisible and yet very firm and clear hand these many years when we really needed you.

We hardly noticed how you were able, without even a plan, without even any effort, to heal us, so that we could come from strife and confusion to today—strong and clear and ready to go on with Suzuki Roshi's way. To tell you the truth, I have no idea how you accomplished this. Do you?

In one hundred or one thousand or one million years this sangha will still be repaying its debt to you with the daily offering of our practice.

And for my own part I want to thank you for your guidance and faith in me. Without doing anything, or even using words to encourage me, you got me to do things I never thought I could do, or really ever wanted to do.

So Sojun, today you're the guilty party. May the Buddhas and ancestors grant you long life, health and maybe now even a little peace. May you keep on teaching us for a long time to come.

Mondo

Sojun Weitsman and Mitsuzen Lou Hartman

One third of my life has been spent in this practice and you were my first teacher. I can still remember your original teaching. One morning I ran into your old house on Dwight Way, waving Daisetz Suzuki's *No Mind* and saying, "I just have to talk to you about this book!" And you said, "I don't have to talk with you about that book. But if you want to go up to the zendo and sit, that's fine with me." Well, I didn't realize it at the time, but that was my first step away from practice "based on intellectual understanding." Now it's twenty-seven years later and not only don't I talk about books anymore, I don't *write* books anymore, and I don't even *read* them. So I'll tell you something—your advice was a big mistake. (Laughter) So what do you have to say to me *now*?

Sojun (without a pause): Make the best of a bad mistake.

Observing the Precepts

by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

How to organize this dualistic or paradoxical teaching into our actual life is the purpose of our practice. In zazen practice we cross the right leg over the left and the left leg over the right. Symbolically the right one is activity. The left is more or less the opposite, calmness of mind. If the left is wisdom, the right is practice, and when we cross our legs, we don't know which is which. So here, even though we have two, symbolically we have oneness already. Our posture is vertical without tipping right or left, backward or forward. So this is an expression of the perfect understanding of the teaching which is beyond duality.

When we extend this kind of idea into the relationship between teacher and disciple, naturally we have precepts and the study of how to observe our precepts. Precepts are how we extend the practice of zazen. Zazen, this posture, is not just a kind of training, but is more the actual way of transmitting Buddha's way to us through practice. We need zazen to actually transmit Buddha's teaching, because words by themselves are not good enough to actualize his teaching. So naturally how we transmit it is through activity or through human relationship.

So we have the relationship between teacher and disciple. The disciple must choose his teacher, and the teacher when chosen should accept the disciple. Sometimes a teacher may recommend another teacher for his disciple. Human relationships are not perfect, so if a teacher thinks his friend is a more qualified teacher, he may recommend him or her as a teacher. Between teachers there should not be any conflict. So it is quite natural for a teacher to recommend another teacher for a particular disciple. Then once he becomes a disciple, he should try hard to devote himself to studying the way. At first the disciple may wish to study under the teacher not because he wants to study Buddhism but for some other reason. But it doesn't matter, you know. If he devotes himself completely to his teacher, he will understand. He will be his teacher's disciple, and he can transmit our way. And the teacher should know how to be a teacher. This relationship between teacher and disciple is very important, and at the same time it is difficult for both teacher and disciple to be teacher and disciple in its true sense. On this point both teacher and disciple should make their best effort. This is the relationship between teacher and disciple.

When we have teacher and disciple we have various rituals. Rituals are not just training. It is more than that. Through rituals we communicate in a true sense, and we transmit the teaching in a true sense. That is the meaning of rituals. Observation of precepts is also based on this idea of relationship between teacher and disciple. To observe rituals or precepts is to understand our teaching in its true sense.

We put emphasis on selflessness so if a teacher's or disciple's practice of ritual or observation of precepts is not selfless, then that is not the true way. When we observe one thing together, we should forget our own practice. When we practice with people, it is each individual's practice, yet it is also others' practice. For instance when we practice chanting, we say, "Recite the sutra with your ears." This is to listen to others chanting, so with our mouths we practice our own practice, and with our ears we listen to others' practice. Here we have complete egolessness in its true sense. Egolessness does not mean to annihilate or give up our own individual practice. True egolessness should forget egolessness too. So as long as you understand that, "My practice is egolessness," that means you stick to ego too, because you stick to the practice of giving up ego-centered practice. So when you practice your own practice with others, then true egolessness happens. That egolessness is not just egolessness. It is also ego practice. At the same time it is the practice of egolessness. This egolessness is beyond ego or egolessness. Do you understand?

This is also true in the observation of precepts. If you observe precepts, that is not true observation of precepts. When you observe precepts without trying to observe precepts, that is true observation of precepts. So we say in observation of precepts, there is a positive way of observation and a negative way of observation, but these ways should not be different. To observe precepts should be not to observe precepts at the same time. Not to observe precepts means you do not try to observe precepts, but you observe them. In its true sense anyway we have to observe the precepts.

Our inmost nature can help us observe precepts. When we understand our precepts as the expression of our inmost nature, that is the way as it is. Then there are no precepts. When we are expressing our inmost nature, precepts are not necessary, so we are not observing any precepts. But on the other hand we have the opposite nature, so we want to observe our precepts, or we feel we have to observe them. We feel the necessity of precepts will help us, and when we are helped by precepts that is also the blossoming of our true nature. So when we understand precepts in this negative or prohibitory sense that is also an expression of our true nature. So precepts observation has two sides. One

is negative and the other side is positive. And we have a choice you know, how to observe them. Also, when we cannot observe ten or more precepts, then we can choose some precepts which are possible to observe. We have this choice as well.

Precepts are not some rules set up by someone. They are the expression of our true nature, so if something is wrong with the expression of our true nature, then Buddha will say that is not the way, that is the wrong way. Then you will have precepts. So rules are not first. The actual event or fact is first. So it is in the nature of precepts that we have a chance to choose our precepts. If you go this way, you will have some precepts, and if you take the other way, you will have some other precepts. So whether you go this way or that way is up to you. Either way you will have some precepts, because precepts are not some rules set up by Buddha. Precepts are actually the extended practice of our zazen, not rules in its true sense. When we say rules, rules are for everyone, but our precepts are not for everyone. The precepts are your own way of observing our practice. This is the characteristic of Buddhist precepts.

We have a chance to choose our precepts, and observation of precepts is both positive and negative, both an expression of our true nature and a prohibitory meaning as well. To prohibit some conduct is up to your teacher. The teacher knows whether his way is good or bad for the disciple, knows which way is more appropriate for him. Before you are familiar with our way, you should depend on your teacher. That is the best way, so in this case we have prohibitory precepts, but when you become familiar with your way, you will have more positive observation of precepts.

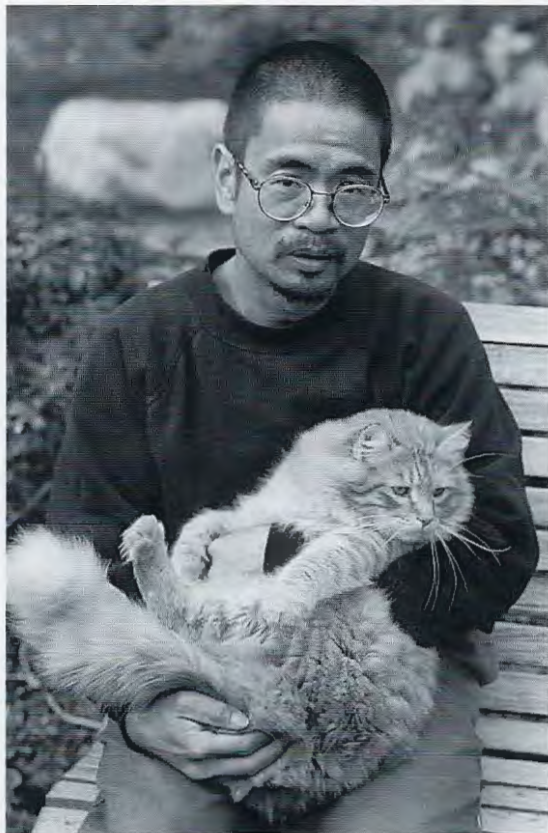
When we talk about precepts I think we have to explain how we understand our nature which is different from the idea of sin or guilty conscience in Christianity. As Buddhists we say that Buddha nature is universal to everyone, and that it is more a good nature than a sinful nature. In its true sense our understanding is that our nature is neither good nor bad. That is complete understanding, but in the usual sense we consider our nature to be more good than bad.

In a Buddhist sense sinful or guilty conscience appears in our mind because of karma, because of our accumulation of personal or social karma, or activity. The accumulation, which results from an inappropriate way of observing our way, drives us to the wrong way. That is our idea of sin or karma. And karma is not just what you do, but it is also more deeply ingrained. On one hand it is accumulated by the individual, and on the other hand it is social, because it is not just created by our body, this body, but also by our ancestors or by our former life. When we understand sin or karma in this way it is rather difficult to surmount,



to solve it just by our confidence or decision. It is more than that. So on this point I think there is some similarity between the Christian idea of sin and our idea of karma, because for both of us sin or karma is inevitable and impossible to get out of. How to get out of it finally is by our practice, where we have no idea of good or bad, possible or impossible. So in our practice we should improve ourselves little by little. Even if you attain enlightenment in some sense, you cannot change your karma as long as you live here. So we have a long way to go.

Because of this impossibility of solving our problem of karma we have vows as a Bodhisattva. Even though our desires are innumerable



*Kern and cat negotiating
the way at Tassajara*

we vow to cut them off, to put an end to them. Something like this, you know. Even though our way is unattainable we vow to attain it. This is the vow we should have forever. Then our Buddhist way will have its own life. If Buddhism is some teaching which is attainable, there is no Buddhism, and there is no need to study Buddhism. But fortunately it is unattainable, so we have to strive to attain it. Here again we have double-structure: we should attain it, but on the other hand it is unattainable. How to solve this problem is to practice our way day by day, moment after moment. To live on each moment is the answer. When we are satisfied with our attainment moment after moment, there we have composure of life. We have satisfaction.

So in our way there is no idea of complete success or complete enlightenment, yet we are aiming at it. We have some ideal, but we know that ideal is not something we can reach. So ideal is ideal and reality is reality. We should have both reality and ideal or else we cannot do anything. Both ideal and reality help our practice, so we should not treat

either one as something desirable or undesirable. We accept ideal as ideal and reality as reality. So even though our practice is not perfect, we accept it without rejecting our ideal. How to do that is to live on each moment where everything is included. There is no other way to be satisfied with what we have on each moment. So that is the only approach to the ideal. In this same way we understand Buddha as the ideal, as the perfect one. At the same time we understand him as a human being.

Although we have our ideal there is no need for us to be bound by our ideal. The same thing is true with rituals and precepts. There is no need to be bound by precepts, and there is no need to be bound by our ritual as some formality. And in Soto practice we do not put too much emphasis on enlightenment. When we say enlightenment, we mean something perfect, a perfect stage you will attain, but actually that is not possible as long as you experience it in terms of good stage or bad stage, high or low stage. That is not perfect enlightenment. So we do not expect anything perfect, but we do not reject it. We have it, always have it, but ideal is ideal and reality is reality, and in our practice we have to have both sides. This is the original nature of Buddhism.

When we start to talk about precepts, it may be necessary to talk about how the teacher points out some mistake of a student. The way he points out the student's mistake is very important, because when the teacher does not understand, that is his mistake. If a teacher thinks what his student did is a mistake, he is not a true teacher. It is a mistake maybe, but on the other hand it is an expression of the student's true nature. When we understand this we will have respect. If we respect our student's true nature we will be careful how we point out mistakes. In the scriptures five points are made about how to be careful.

One is that the teacher has to choose his opportunity. It is not so good to point out the student's mistake in front of many people. If possible the teacher points out his mistake personally in an appropriate time and place. This is the first one. Secondly the teacher is reminded to be truthful to his disciple. This means the teacher does not point out his disciple's mistake just because he thinks that is his mistake. The teacher should respect why or understand why the disciple did so. Then he can be truthful to his disciple. That is the second point.

The third one is very similar but a little bit different. When the teacher talks about his disciple's mistake, he should use most-gentle and most-calm mind. So he should speak in a low voice and not shout. This is something very delicate like truthfulness, but here the scripture puts emphasis on having a calm gentle attitude when talking about someone's mistake.

The fourth one is that the teacher gives advice or points out the disciple's mistake solely for the sake of helping him. The teacher does not do this to get something off his chest. Here the teacher should be very careful because if the teacher notices that the student is making some excuse for what he did or thinks the student is not serious enough, then the teacher should not listen to him. The teacher should ignore him until he becomes more serious. That is to give advice only for the sake of helping the student. Still we should not always be easy with the student. Sometimes we should be very tough with the student, or we cannot help him in a true sense. To help the student we should give some instruction.

The last one is to point out the student's mistake with compassion. Compassion means the teacher is not just the teacher but also the disciple's friend. As a friend the teacher points out some problem or gives some advice.

So it is not easy to be a teacher or to be a student, and we cannot rely on anything, even precepts. We have to make our utmost effort to help each other. And in observing ritual this is also true. We do not observe our precepts just for the sake of precepts, or practice rituals for the perfection of rituals.

There was a famous Zen master who died perhaps fifty years ago, and he had very good disciples who were sincere students. He lived with his students in a monastery near a city which was not so big, and they were very poor. His disciples wanted a bell for their chanting, so they asked him to buy a bell for the temple. He was very angry when his students asked him for a bell. "Why," he asked, "What is the intention of reciting the sutra? It looks like you want to recite the sutra so that people in town may appreciate our practice. If so, that is not my way. We have to practice for our sake not for others. So if we can only chant the sutra without a bell, that is enough. There is no need to buy a bell so that others can hear it. That is not necessary."

Of course we have some rules in our chanting, and without bells it is not a perfect ceremony. But, even though the form is perfect, if our intention is not right, it is not our way. So there are rules but actually there are no rules. We have precepts, but there are no precepts. Precepts are set up according to the circumstances. So in a small monastery we can choose precepts which are suitable for a small monastery.

You may say our way is very formal, but there is some reason why we are so formal. It is not just formality, and even though we have 250 or 500 precepts it doesn't mean we should observe all of them one by one. This is our way of observation, our way of practice.

OLIVER

BY KEITH JOHNSTONE

OLIVER LIVED IN A LITTLE COTTAGE BY THE SEA, AND HE WAS IN FULL MID-LIFE CRISIS. HE'D HAD SUCH HOPES WHEN HE WAS YOUNGER, BUT NOW IT SEEMED AS IF NOTHING HE TOUCHED HAD EVER PROSPERED. EVEN WORSE, HE WAS PINING FOR A MATURE RELATIONSHIP WITH A WOMAN, AND YET HE NEVER SEEMED TO MEET ANYONE WHO WAS IN THE LEAST SUITABLE.

ONE DAY, IN HIS MISERY, HE WROTE A NOTE THAT EXPRESSED HIS FRUSTRATION AND LONELINESS. HE FOLDED IT CAREFULLY, ADDED HIS ADDRESS, PLUS A PHOTOGRAPH OF HIMSELF, AND SEALED IT ALL INTO A BOTTLE AND THREW IT INTO THE SEA.

HE WATCHED THE TIDE EASE IT AWAY, AND EVERY MORNING HE WAITED FOR THE MAILMAN, EAGERLY AT FIRST BUT THEN WITH RESIGNATION. HE WAS SURE THAT THE BOTTLE HAD BEEN SMASHED ON THE ROCKS, BUT ONE DAY A LETTER ARRIVED, AND HE OPENED IT, HARDLY DARING TO BREATHE. IT ENCLOSED A PHOTOGRAPH OF A WOMAN WHO HAD BEEN SITTING ON A BEACH AT THE END OF THE WORLD WHEN A WAVE HAD DEPOSITED THE BOTTLE AT HER FEET. SHE WROTE THAT SHE UNDERSTOOD HIM, THAT HE WAS HER TRUE SOUL-MATE, THAT GOD HAD MEANT THEM FOR EACH OTHER.

OVERJOYED, OLIVER POURED HIS HEART OUT IN A SECOND LETTER, ENDING WITH "... I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR YOU FOR THE WHOLE OF MY WASTED LIFE, AND I FEEL SURE WE WILL FIND TRUE HAPPINESS TOGETHER." AND THEN HE SEALED IT INTO A BOTTLE AND HURLED IT FAR OUT INTO THE SEA. BUT SHE NEVER REPLIED.

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 94703, 510/845-2403. Sojun Mel Weitsman, Abbot.

Dharma Eye Zen Center, 333 Bayview St, San Rafael 94901. Mon-Fri 5:15 A.M. zazen and service; Monday 7:30-9:30 P.M. zazen, tea and discussion; Sunday 7:15 A.M. zazen and service; first Sunday each month half-day sitting 7 A.M.-noon. Contact Steve Stucky, 415/258-0802.

Hartford Street Zen Center, 57 Hartford St, San Francisco 94114, 415/863-2507. Zenshin Philip Whalen, Abbot.

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga, 408/741-9562. Ryan Brandenburg, Director.

Kannon Do Zen Center, 292 College Ave, Mountain View 94040, 415/903-1935. Keido Les Kaye, Abbot.

Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School St, Santa Cruz 95060, 408/457-0206. Wednesday zazen 7:10 P.M., lecture/discussion 8 P.M. Katherine Thanas, teacher, 408/426-3847.

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Rd., Santa Rosa 95404, 707/545-8105. Jakusho Kwong, Abbot.

OUTSIDE CALIFORNIA

Chapel Hill Zen Group: Use mailing address to request information—P.O. Box 16302, Chapel Hill NC 27516; meeting location, 5322 NC Hwy 86, Chapel Hill NC 27514; 919/967-0861. Patricia Phelan, teacher.

Hoko-ji, Taos NM, 505/776-5712. Kobun Chino, Abbot.

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, 3343 E. Calhoun Pkwy, Minneapolis MN 55408, 612/822-5313.

Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha NE 68131-0566, 402/551-9035. Nonin Chowaney, teacher.

One Pine Hall Zazen Group, zazen and kinhin M, W, and F, 6:30-7:30 A.M. Contact Robby Ryuzen Pellett, 206/298-3710. Need to bring own cushions.

Weekly Meditation Groups

WITHIN CALIFORNIA

Bolinas Sitting Group, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 30 Brighton Ave, Bolinas. Thursday 7:30 A.M.—9 P.M. and one Saturday a month 9–5 P.M. Contact Taigen Leighton, 415/458-8856 or Liz Tuomi, 415/868-1931.

Mill Valley Zazen, 275 Miller Ave, Mill Valley. Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:30–7:10 A.M. zazen and sutra chanting. Contact Layla Smith, 383-2546 for information or zazen instruction. Small donation asked to help cover rent.

Modesto Sitting Group, 501 N. Thor, Turlock 95380, 209/634-2172.

Monterey Bay Zen Center, Cherry Foundation, 4th and Guadalupe, Carmel 93924. Tuesdays 6:30 P.M. Katherine Thanas, teacher. Contact Robert Reese, 408/624-7491.

North Peninsula Zen Group, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1600 Santa Lucia Ave, San Bruno. Meets Thursday evenings 7:30–9 P.M. Contact Darlene Cohen, 415/552-5695.

Oakhurst-North Fork Zen Center—Empty Nest Zendo, 54333 Two Hills Road, North Fork 93643, 209/877-2400. Wednesdays 6:30 P.M. and Sundays 9 A.M. Leader, Grace Shireson. Oakhurst Thursdays 7 P.M. Leader Ronna Adler, 209/683-6247.

Occidental Sitting Group, 3535 Hillcrest, Occidental 95465. Wednesday evenings and last Saturday of each month. Contact Bruce or Chris Fortin, 707/874-2274.

Orinda Zazen Circle, 88 El Toyonal, Orinda 94563. 1st and 3rd Sundays 9–11 A.M. Contact Fran or Al Tribe, 510/253-9125 before 9 P.M.

Peninsula Sitting Group, Skyline at Hwy 84. Wednesday 8:30 P.M., Tuesday and Friday 6 A.M. followed by service. Contact Kathy Haimson for directions, 415/851-7023.

San Rafael Sitting Group, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Court St. between 5th and Mission in parish offices to right of church. Wednesdays 7–8 A.M. Contact Taigen Leighton 415/458-8856.

Thursday Night Sitting Group, Marin Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 240 Channing Way, San Rafael. Thursdays 7–9 P.M. Contact Ed Brown, 415/669-1479 or U.U. Fellowship, 415/497-4131.

Topanga Zen Group, 310/455-9404, contact Peter Levitt.

OUTSIDE CALIFORNIA

Eugene Zen Practice Group, 1515 Hayes, Eugene OR 97402. Wednesday mornings. Contact Gary McNabb, 503/343-2525.

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San Francisco, CA
Permit No. 8459

Wind Bell is a publication of San Francisco Zen Center, a Buddhist group with its main offices located at 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. Published twice yearly, *Wind Bell* is available for subscription at a cost of \$3.00 per issue. Please send subscription requests to the address above.

Zen Center is comprised of three practice places: the City Center, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. The City Center and Green Gulch Farm offer a regular schedule of public sittings, lectures, and classes, as well as one-day, five-day, and seven-day sittings and practice periods of three weeks to three months. Guest student programs are also available.

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) 383-3134.

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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