

cloud-hidden friends letter

ISSUE #2
1983

OUR PAGES ARE YOUR LETTERS

Cloud-Hidden Friends
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94121

The "Cloud-Hidden Friends" are a small non-sectarian religious correspondence group. We meet mostly by sharing our thoughts on the Dharma together in our "Letter".

Rather than giving some definition to the word "Dharma", we would rather emphasize the freedom of the individual to come to his own understanding about such. As a group we would aim more at a dialogue, and would emphasize the spirit and practice of the Dharma rather than some doctrinaire or sectarian formula.

In that spirit we look to Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki and Alan Watts as our "honorary founders". Although they are usually associated with Buddhism, and Zen in particular, their spirit was also a free and universal one, including Christianity, Hinduism, and Taoism etcetera. Their Dharma then seems to somehow belong equally to us all.

In a more universal spirit then we are a zen group. However we might also turn to someone like Thomas Merton to exemplify the kind of openness and dialogue we have in mind. In his later years, he commented that he could see no contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism, and that he had determined "to become as good a Buddhist as I can".

Since our pages are your letters, we ask as our "subscription fee" that you write us a letter now and then in the "spirit of the Dharma". Poems, songs, tales, drawings and such are all more than welcome. We will try to publish everything we receive, but this might not always be possible. Letters should be of a reasonable length, and if you so request, we will type them up for you. It is presumed we will forgive each other a few typing errors etcetera, since perfectionism could easily paralyze us.

It is hoped that our letters will somehow help us open our hearts to each other, and deepen our sense of the Dharma. Hopefully in this way too more than a few deep friendships might develop.

It is our intention to be as democratic in spirit as is possible. It does seem that we do at least need a "Clerk" of some sort to do the photocopying, coordinating, and mailing etcetera. This role might be thought of as similar to that of the "Clerk" in Quakerism, and it seems a good model for us to follow. Your comments on these matters would be appreciated.

Our phrase "Cloud-Hidden" is taken from the title of a book by Alan Watts. He in turn borrowed it from a ninth century poem by Chia Tao. Lin Yutang translates it as follows:

SEARCHING FOR THE HERMIT IN VAIN

I asked the boy beneath the pines.
He said, "The master's gone alone
Herb-picking somewhere on the mount,
Cloud-hidden, whereabouts unknown."

A.C.D., Clerk

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 Joel Weishaus
 1115 Copper N.E.
 Albuquerque, N.M.
 87106

8 Dec 82

Dear Cloud-hidden friends;

We live in an exciting time, excellent time to realize the essence of things. This because of the immense scientific changes we experience almost daily, changes that affect our view of the world even before we can integrate yesterday's revelation. So we stand back and breath slowly and deeply, and finally laugh, even as the best scientists laugh, finally.

When I was older than I am now, I got it all mixed up. I had given up on life, not the force of life, but the fact of life. I wanted only to find the Truth. I wanted to be a Zen hermit, or a furabo (fu=wind, ra="a piece of tattered cloth", bo=monk). I wanted only to sit in zen, and make poems. Of course I wasn't sitting correctly, as I was running from my self. You can't sit and run at the same time.

This was all made easier, ironically, by the time. The Haight-Ashbury was thriving, the "Love-in," the "Be-in," all the would-be personalities donned spiritual garb and gab, and their attendants danced around them with starry eyes and muddy feet.

In this rare atmosphere I followed The Way, or thought I did, sitting in cold groves, monasteries--here and in Japan--, warm zen centers and friends' apartments...finally finding my dream isolated cabin in the mountains of Lake County, Cal., spending a year there.

It was in that cabin, alone, no where to roam, that I admitted I had been running, not sitting. And that it's easy to be a saint, much more difficult to be a man, to accept a life that does end, to accept paradox and pain, to accept ego hurt, to accept my self.

I left my cabin, and now, eight years later, it's only a fond memory. I think of how wonderous, magical that time--the '60s and early '70s--were. I think it was an honor to have walked the streets of San Francisco then, when long hair meant "friend," and we were changing the world's culture, if only a little. But, as my friend Marian Mountain wrote, "There is nothing deader than yesterday's enlightenment." Anyway, it is an honor, too, to be living today.

Now, I've lost most of my hair, and I live twelve hundred miles inland, this beautiful New Mexico. I live, I work, I dream, I love, getting high on my everyday mind.

One's death is the rarest of gems; one's life, however, is the setting.

Love & Gassho,

Tom Thompson
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Naugatuck, Ct. 06770

Dear Friends:

I have an half an hour to write this letter before I mail it on my way to work. The first thing to say is I really am enjoying the first issue of Cloud-Hidden Friends Letter. A great idea! A letter from old friends. And it is interesting to see that Robert Breckenridge is from Calistoga, as I used to live up on the mountain there about ten years ago. In a little hut. Use to open the door, sit on my porch, do meditation and watch the animals. It was partially there on Mt. St. Helena that I learned that animals really like the energy meditation gives off and that they have no fear of people that meditate. I think of Hanshan meditating with tigers, yogis with cobras, me with deer, racoons, and chipmunks.

Speaking of yogis, the way that I follow is Siddha Yoga. Please be clear that Siddha yoga is not necessarily Hinduism, or especially the Siddha Yoga Dham of America Foundation. For me, it is the fun process of spiritual evolution and realization that includes anything that works, including Zen/Zen Buddhism, especially in the non-tradition that Cloud-Hidden Friends represents. In my relationship with my Guru, now moved on, he enabled me to realize in reality so much of what was once theory and speculation. Baba Muktananda was my Zen Master in the truest sense in that he had the same Mind as Bodhidharma. Why did Baba come to the West? Ho!

What else? I was born in 1949. I work part-time as a Psychiatric Technician. I teach Yoga and Meditation at the Woodbury Yoga Center which pretty freely follows the teaching of Baba Muktananda, Dhyana Yogi Madhusudandas, but remains free of their organizations. We were once called an outlaw Baba center. It was taken as a compliment. Our aim is to liberate ourselves and others, not perpetuate belief systems or organizations.

I am also first and foremost a single parent of a five year old daughter. Her name is Kelly and she is a radiant being. Her mother is still around at times, but she is married to someone else now. Kelly is with me.

Well, my half hour is up. you can figure how many words I type a minute now. Not a hell of a lot. I think I'll wait and mail this tomorrow.

TOMORROW- On the way to work, I was thinking how Baba Muktananda once told me that the true name for all the various religions and sects in India is not Hinduism, but Santana Dharma, or Eternal Truth. Baba says that Santana Dharma includes everyone and everything because it is the Truth of Ultimate Reality or God. In it there is no maya as all things are truly Satchitananda or BlissConsciousnessBeing. Baba quoted the Upanishads or Vedas- "Truth is One; The paths to it many." When I spoke to Baba about my conflict with Zen and Siddha Yoga, he said that basically there was no difference esoterically, only exoterically because of the different cultures they are now practiced in. Both aim at true attainment of the Self. I practiced with Baba because he showed me that Self.

Working in Psychiatry is very interesting. Way back when I was in college in Indiana, I was going to medical school to become a psychiatrist because I had the impression that a psychiatrist knew all about the Mind, and the meaning of life. Fortunately I very quickly found out this wasn't so and went on to find some people who did understand the human predicament (among these Suzuki Roshi- I have many good stories to tell of hitch-hiking Indiana to San Francisco, getting busted by Highway Patrol for No Thing, etc.etc. etc. doing Zazen in holding tank- but now is not the time to tell them).

Now I work in a small In-Patient unit of a small general hospital. We have a pretty open-minded staff for a psych unit but one thing that does really bother me is a good percentage of our patients are not truly mentally/emotionally ill and do not need psychiatric help. It is true they are depressed and upset, but no more so than you or I have been when we began searching for meaning in our crazy lives. Their depression is healthy and spiritual, the neurosis of great

104, saints, but we do not support it, we medicate them, run them through group therapy, tell them not to think about such things, shrink their heads down to size and return them to family, friends and work as moronic as all others.

Every once in a while someone escapes all of this. I have sent a few people to meditation centers or zendos with good results. It is hard to do, as many of our clients have pretty rigid religious upbringing (as does our staff) and thus are frightened of questioning the belief systems they were raised in. It was frightening to me when a patient told me that the only way she could escape the guilt of her religious conditioning was through suicide. What this young lady needed wasn't a psychiatrist but a good deprogrammer. She had been a member of a cult, a socially acceptable cult, her entire life and couldn't break free, because her conditioning was being subtly reinforced by everyone- including the psychiatrist! Psychiatry doesn't make you free, but rather a good cog in the wheel. At least that is how it works around here. Her priest was called in and instead of helping her transcend the dogma of her religion, he told her that suicide was one of the worst of all sins and that she would definitely go to Hell if she did it. Now she is drinking herself to death but that is acceptable with in her tradition. Its funny, but there is still hope for her. She may eventually turn to AA, which can really help her get free. AA is a true HOBO religion. It is pretty funky, but ultimately their message is that it's all up to your s/Self. Attain that s/Self and there will be no need to drink. It works for millions! And many alcoholics are Dharma Bums who took to drink instead of zazen. I know quite a few who do both, William James said in the Varieties of Religious Experience -

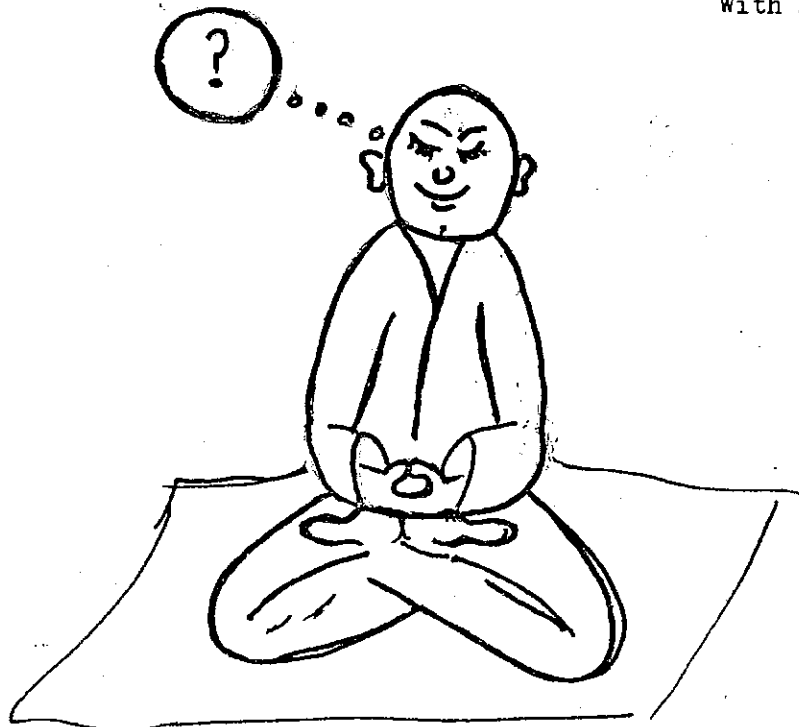
"The sway of alcohol over mankind is unquestionably due to its power to stimulate the mystical faculties of human nature, usually crushed to earth by the cold facts and dry criticisms of the sober hour. Sobriety diminishes, discriminates, and says No; drunkenness expands, unites and says Yes. It is in fact the great exciter of the Yes function in man. It brings its votary from the chill periphery of things to the radiant core. It makes him for the moment one with truth... the drunken consciousness is one bit of the mystic consciousness."

The next time we see a drunk (or are drunk ourselves!) we will remember that all we are experiencing is a frustrated Buddha-Bo who hasn't discovered zazen, -or AA. HoHo.

Well, I'm being called to meditation and besides I've rambled on enough. Flow of Consciousness/Play of Consciousness. I wish the Cloud-Hidden Friends Letter much success. It is very good to be in touch with so many fellow travellers on the Way. We are all HoBoes in this life. The Great Way is not difficult.

With Love-

Tom



Marian Mountain
Coastlands
Big Sur, CA 93920

105.

Dear HoBo Friends,

Radio and TV advertisements seldom move me to action, but now and then I find myself responding emotionally to a clever sales pitch. When you hear one of those masterpieces of persuasion sponsored by the telephone company I wonder if you experience the same gut-wrenching as I do.

"Reach out and touch someone. Call up and just say, 'Hi!'"

Who among us doesn't fall short of our ideal image of ourselves as warm, loving, thoughtful friends? And what easier way to give ourselves a few psychological brownie-points than to pick up the phone and call someone? Especially someone who lives 2500 miles away? If your long-distance phone bill has escalated to the point where you are thinking of claiming Ma Bell as a dependent on your 1982 income tax you might want to consider an alternative to the telephone habit. How about cultivating the long-neglected art of letter-writing?

"Reach in and touch someone." That's what happens when we sit down to write a personal letter. Reaching out touches the surface of the relationship. Reaching in touches the deeper levels of the collective heart/mind. Even if you are in the habit of exchanging letters with friends and relatives in other parts of the country you may not be aware of how much an occasional letter to and from friends who live in the same town or the same house can add to the quality of the relationship.

Because letter-writing brings us closer to both our inner self as well as our outer self (the other person) the open letter format of THE CLOUD-HIDDEN FRIEND'S JOURNAL seems to be an ideal one to foster deep spiritual relationships. Another advantage of the open letter format is that it encourages equal participation from everyone involved in the project. There is no division between an elite staff of writers and a common crowd of subscribers. One disadvantage (one which could restrict participation) is the widespread extent of letter-writer's block. My estimate of the extent of letter-writer's block is based on a limited survey of my own family where four out of five of my grown children suffer from this disease. If you happen to be one of those average Americans who find it difficult to write personal letters to close friends, and couldn't conceive of writing an open letter to a publication such as this one, I have a suggestion that may help you overcome your problem.

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This is an exercise Freud developed to help professional writers who were blocked. The exercise trains your fingers to follow the flow of your thoughts. The secret is not to stop writing. Write down everything that passes through your mind. Don't worry about punctuation or whether you are making sense or whether the thoughts are important or relevant. Don't censor anything. If no thoughts come to your mind DON'T STOP WRITING. Just write: "Nothing is in my mind. My mind is a blank. All I can think of is that I hear that plane passing overhead...."

If you practice automatic writing you can train your fingers to keep writing through the blank places in your habitual thinking process. Soon your thoughts will begin to flow again. Something exciting also will happen. You will discover that these mental blanks are not really empty but are simply quiet pools in the ordinary rippling flow of the surface mind. If you concentrate on these quiet pools, always keeping your fingers recording even the most insignificant, or repetitious, or apparently blank spaces between thoughts you will begin to be aware of new shapes and feelings floating toward the surface of your consciousness. These under-thoughts are usually hidden by the surface chatter of our minds. One of these new feelings or ideas may capture your attention long enough to take shape as you begin describing it. You transcend your writing block by immersing yourself in it completely.

What I have been describing is a way to encourage the creative free-flow of ideas for the first draft of a letter. Unless you are exceptionally talented in expressing your thoughts you will want to write at least a second draft of any open letter intended for publication. In the second draft you can eliminate unnecessary repetitions or extraneous ideas, correct your grammar, punctuation and spelling, improve your choice of words, and perhaps rearrange whole sentences or paragraphs to change the emphasis.

After you are reasonably satisfied with your letter you may want to set it aside to reread a day or two later. At this time you will be able to read it from a more detached viewpoint to see whether it says what you intended it to say. This ability to refine and clarify ideas is one of the reasons I prefer writing to friends rather than phoning them. Another reason is cost. I happen to think that the 20¢ stamp is a great bargain.

What do you think about it?

With palms together,

Marian

LETTERS RECEIVED

10/1.
Tim Aston
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Heriot Bay
British Columbia
Canada, VOP 1 HO

Dear Friends:

Just received CHF Letter #1 and appreciate it greatly. Here by the North West rainy winter coast the voice of the Dharma is like a light in the forest. The chanterelle mushroom is past, the last of the turnips and carrots are stored. Snow on the high mountains.

Born July 27, 1942, in a small logging community in north east Washington. As a childhood i had the hills and fields, streams and sweat lodges of the Colville, Spokane and Nez Perce Indians to grow with. After high school i followed the will full path of a child, drifting in and out of jobs and cities, bars and honkey tonks from 1st Ave. Seattle to North Beach San Fransisco, and south to Guerro, Mexico. In 1965 i drifted into San Fransisco Zen Center and the first true direction i had had in my (physical) adult life. Then i had to face the painful realities of growing up and like the child i was i kicked and screamed yelled and cried for the next three years, then 1 1/2 years at Tassajara monastery. I have three beautiful children- Gabriel age 10, Ramona and Melissa age 9.

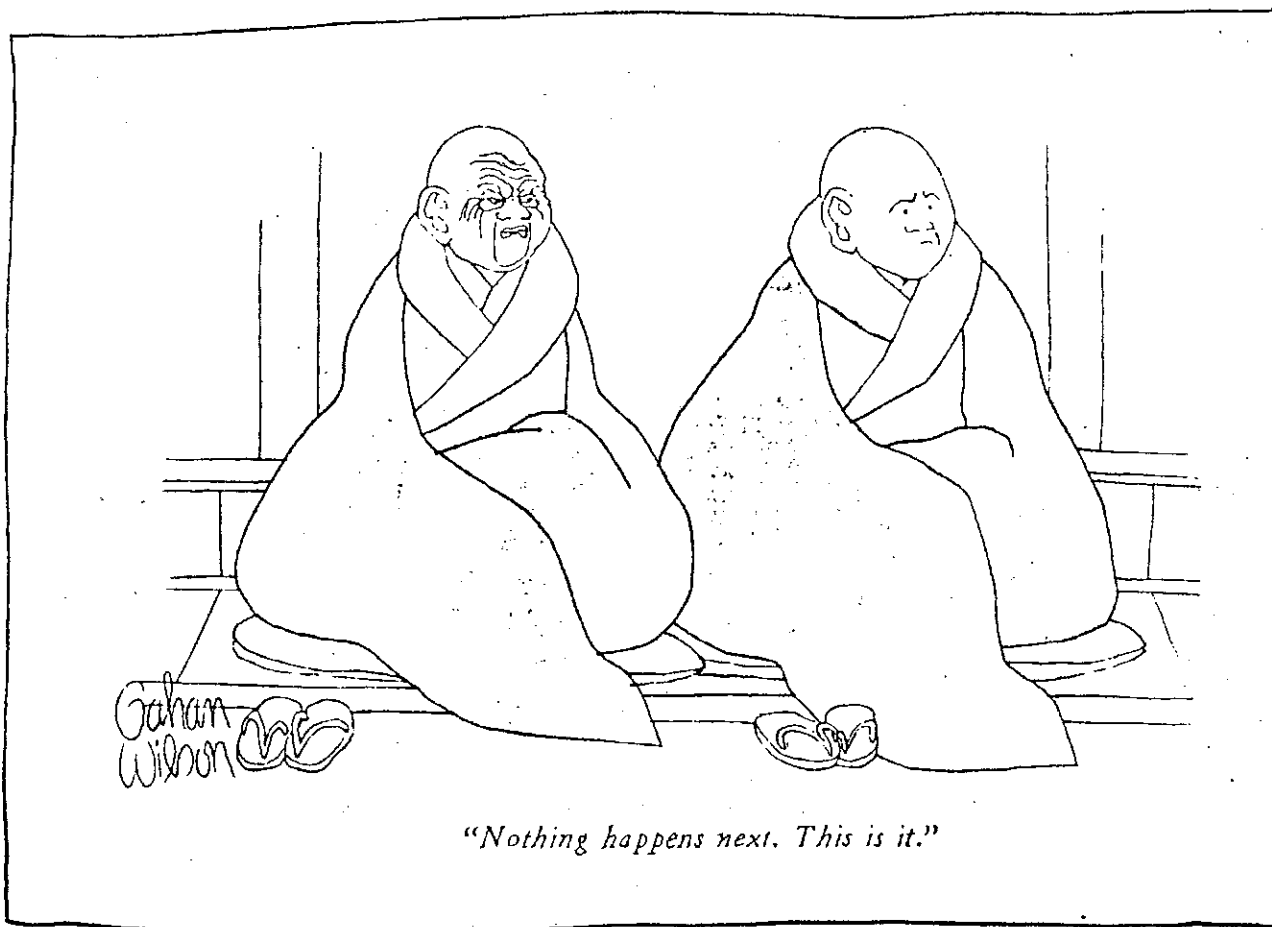
After I left Zen Center, i wandered here and there for many years searching for the meaning of practice in Buddhism, and allowing my ego, vanity and pride to lead me hither and yon in the world of "spirits", "devils", and sense-object attachments and in a "hell-world" i held only the tools that i knew from memory not practice, and they were the Bodhisattva's vow and how was i to express it in my daily life. This, o this my ideal, and in my muddy-water trying to attain, i fell, striving to apply i stumbled- this was my spiritual struggle, how to help others when it seems i am too weak to help myself.

In a way, it seems i've actually learned so little outside of what it takes to sustain my pride, feed my fears and add to my confusion. and these plus resentments nearly killed me. yesterday i started a letter in which i said one very true thing, "And what we were taught in Zen practice was to recognize illusion for what it is and not be caught by it." Quite plainly, written there on paper, it seems quite simple, yet by knowing this i was caught by the knowing of, and the knowing of by the way of Pride- as i said it nearly killed me, by seeming to know illusion.

There are no goals in Buddhism and to attach to one is to erect an obstacle and with obstacles come fear, anger, resentment, guilt, sense of failure and other "hell worlds. That became my problem or if you will "koan". Yet only now, today have i recognized the koan/the same as before how to help others? And the answer Help others! And the koan How to?- and this is life practice.

Ho!

Tim Bo



Dear Boes

Here's a cartoon from the New Yorker, 1982 (or maybe 1981?).

I can't help but point out, re: Ananda's Open Letter (page 4 of issue #1) about the good ole' days in China when "it was possible for Bodhi children to go 'hoboing' from one end of the country to the other, and be most welcome to stay at almost any temple...", that someone provided the wood and bricks to build the temple, and someone built it, and someone grew food every day nearby, etc., that someone being starving wretched peasants working the land belonging to the temple. I'm sure that "a day without work is a day without food" was a romantic exception, and that most monks were upper class and never dirtied their hands. (It was unusual that Hui Neng couldn't read, and

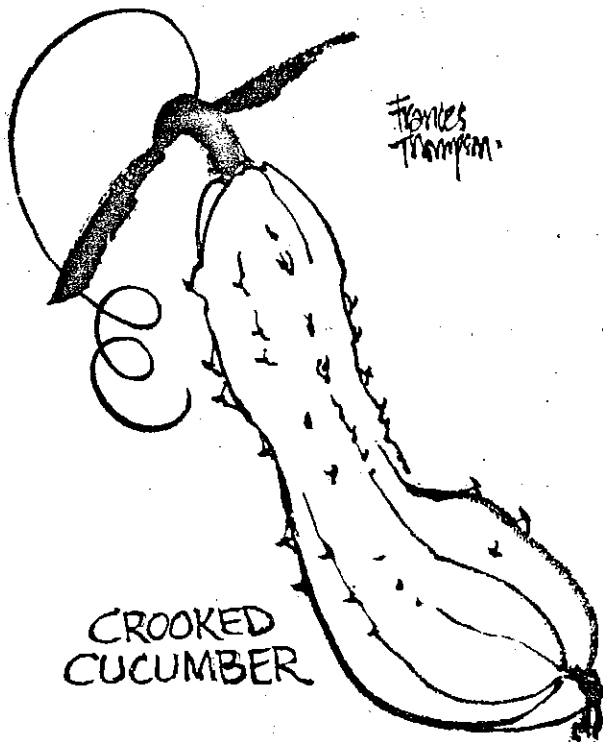
who but the very upper classes were literate way back then?). The revolutionaries did the Chinese people a favor by demolishing the whole exploitive system. Too bad they threw out Zen and Buddhism with the landlords, but how much enlightenment could you see if you were pulling a plow with your starving body, your baby had just died that morning, your little hut of a home was taken over by the landlord because you couldn't pay the tax on the pig trough and all the people who were killing you were JUST SITTING in a big room and ringing bells now and then?? Surely asking each participant in a zendo to contribute a little money or effort for his or her space is a more just system.

Also, I'd like to give Ananda's idea - "perfectionism could easily paralyze us" a push from the other direction. Eido Tai Shimano Sensei (now Roshi, I think?), when visiting Tassajara from New York Zen Studies Society, was hanging around the kitchen one day and he said, "Don't even think about enlightenment, look behind the stove, is it clean there?" Certainly Zen training is taking care of each thing at each moment; handling what comes up as thoroughly as we can. When cleaning kitchens, clean behind the stove. If communicating an idea to others with words is the task, we do as best we can. Writing English clearly must be one of the most difficult skills around and few people can do it. Many people have something to say that others would like to hear, or read. So we go ahead, trying to remember high school grammar, maybe looking up a spelling in the dictionary, and if our typewriter won't type "m", we have to write in all the "m's". I'm printing this piece because I don't type well. Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch, was illiterate and had to get his friends to help him read and write. I enthusiastically support our agreement that any way, as long as it comes from the heart and is given from one to another with whatever skill we happen to have, is

just fine. I also happen to feel quite strongly in support of some vigilance here, so as not to slip over a fine line and begin to do things sloppily, letting the grease build up behind the stove and calling it "spontaneity", when in fact what it is is not caring very much about other people - the people who have to look at the stove or read a sloppy page.

I don't want these criticisms to be taken as a criticism of the Cloud-Hidden Friends Letter altogether, which I think is a great project. I'd like to thank Ananda Clude for getting it started, and thank all you other Boes for your communications, which I enjoyed reading.

Ho! Frances Thompson.



(Note: Shunryu Suzuki's Buddhist "nickname" meant "Crooked Cucumber. Ed.)

MARIAN POIRIER
9111 35th NE
Seattle, Washington 98115

Dear Ananda and Friends,

Not knowing anyone in San Francisco, your letter was most intriguing lying on top of a stack of mail awaiting my arrival. Therefore, opened first. I both enjoy and welcome the experience of sharing with fellow travelers.

My voyage through this universe has been filled with blessings. I have had wonderful contrasts of love and hate, and light and dark, alone and crowded. The gift of aloneness in the mists of tragedy has set me apart in that I have gained so much strength from the shocking experience of fear. Somewhat similar to the young tree that is lovingly shaken by the wind to encourage growth to its root base for stronger support. I am loved. My passion for life and learning has also added to my personal strength and in developing "centering" techniques for quieting my mind.

Dreams have become one technique and also my best friend. As they come to me in forms as a means to awaken me to my true spirit, they are not always gentle, however, always with a message. Once this last summer, I was coming awake to the thought that ...MY GREATEST FEAR OF ALL IS THAT THERE IS NO FEAR! I had based so much of my life's thought in past years on working my way from what might be fearful that to realize that there is nothing to fear and thereby take responsibility for my actions, was very fearful in itself. That must make me responsible for all of what I do - everything that I do is exactly for me to do and live with. Living with that thought, holding it for a moment, is still exciting. Much similar to being excited in reading, at a later time, Alan Watts' "Security of Insecurity". It makes sense to me.

As time has passed, the experience of watching others make the choice of living in fear saddens my heart. Then, they are all doing what is best for them to do and that is what is best for us all. Sometimes in watching people fall into the traps of fear, I think of the purpose that the weeds in my vegetable garden serve. In pulling out the weeds, the soil is irrigated and there is room for water and sun to flow in and through the earth. All is well and as it should be.

Children have passed through me to this life that constantly nourish my spirit - pushing me to continued growth. They are young girls of brilliant light and color showing me fresh expressions of their reality - full of illusions such that are similar to my own. The girls know the value of sharing energy and passing on vibrations of love and truth. We are loved.

Having reached a celebration of 36 years, I am excited about finishing college and looking to careers unknown with confidence. Finally, the confidence that I have learned nothing more than the value of sharing and serving my fellow traveler and receiving love.

Looking forward to our sharing with each other and wishing you good health, I will close for now.

YourHobo friend,

Marian

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It occurred to me that I might also share these thoughts with you, originally from a letter to Marian Mountain :

As I consider water to be a very spiritual entity, I walked with the girls to a very spiritual place today. It is not far from our house; water running through a part of a playfield. Rocks in the stream allow the water to become vocal. The flow of the water does not question why the rocks interrupt its flow - the life of its passing is strong and continuous. Some of the rocks appear to cause pain to the water - I hear an almost crying sound and then at the same time, laughter.

My mind left the image of the water and its journey, to travelers in life's stream. Some finding laughter from life's disturbances and others pain. Without either, my fellow travelers would all go unnoticed, flowing swiftly through a cradled existence.

When I cup the water, it comes without question, then escapes to return on its mission. It will stay as long as I can convince it that its mission is complete. How is it different with people - much, and yet, very little.

Am I convincing the water to stay, or is the water convincing me that I hold it?

When I have a very high thought, am I holding the thought OR is the thought convincing me that I have had a hold of its completeness?

Such is life - life has rocks. Do I have a shape or sound without the rocks? Or do I believe to feel the rocks of life so that I will have a shape and sound and the sound is the rocks convincing me that I made them?

Marian

Norman Moser 113,
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Berkeley, CA 94710

For the Cloud-Hidden Friends:

SPIRITUAL JUDO

The usual assumption about power is that there is only one kind-- physical. Spiritual power exists too, though the two are of course not unrelated. I don't mean only the kind of spiritual power you find in church, synagogue or temple. Spiritual power sometimes manifests itself mysteriously in the arts, in the streets, in the schools, and occasionally in politics or the martial arts as well.

"Intelligent passivity can shape events quite as much as activity. Intelligent yielding is the key to guerrilla warfare", says Chris Humphrey, WHOLE EARTH, INNER SPACE, in a passage derived from the Tao Te Ching. Just such intelligent yielding has helped me through several curious encounters in my life, including four violent incidents in the past couple of years living on my own in Santa Fe, Austin and elsewhere.

Not commanding respect for a tall, muscular build, I had to develop other ways of handling situations, and quickly, in childhood and teen years, instinctively resorted to the kind of "intelligent yielding usually called judo, though I didn't know its name then and still have not had one lesson in it.

There are various sorts of power, and what spiritual power teaches has specific relation to physical situations. The best spiritual teaching counsels not to look away from physical reality but to specifically open your eyes to it-- to where you are, who you're with, what's going on, etc. This can come in handy when confronting real or supposed opposition. It makes you very alert and quick. You can't pretend. If you do, you not only make a fool of yourself. You quite possibly endanger yourself as well.

Best not to be fooling around with violent people, of course. If, however you mistakenly or accidentally find yourself amongst people who are not brothers or do not comprehend your way, you then have to bring your powers to bear, whatever they are. For well over a decade I lived in San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, usually in ghettos. Yet at no time did I carry a weapon and seldom was attacked-- and never by blacks,

But there is a different breed of people where I am living in recent years. Apparently they do not understand my outspoken style. My method has still held up miraculously well, with assistance from my own brand of judo, even with an increase in incidents. Unlike burly poet Charles Bukowski, I still do not "carry steel"

Can't resist a story told on Bukowski. Having little respect for zenmasters, at a party he followed one down steps to the street haranguing him for his phony (gentle?) manner. He regretted it, he said later. The master 'threw him' and calmly walked off. Bukowski has a healthy respect for zenmasters-- if not zen itself-- ever since.

Zen is in fact largely the art of spiritual judo, and Watts or someone else describes it this way. You lean into or backwards with the student's sally and throw it back out to the universe or back onto him. This is exactly how I try to live my life, though I have never formally been a student of Zen. Some people don't need the temple, it seems. The trick is to roll, revolve, constantly evolve, turning yourself inside out as you go.

(originally published in THE SUN, 1978)

--Norman Moser

A LETTER FOR ANANDA AND THE CLOUD-HIDDEN FRIENDS

Dear A.C. (Aceydeucey):

As I have mentioned before, I always write for publication. Any restrictions of publication must be made clear when one communicates in writing. I have written a couple of stories and a book under a copywrite, but I don't expect any restrictions on my letters. I fully appreciate the risk; I accept that and so I write for publication all the time.

Probably my extensive experience in the courtroom allowed me to unify my "public" utterings with my "private" opinions. I have such trouble separating these now that I have a hard time selling my book: it is truth: truth must not be prostituted: therefore it is not for sale.

After all, when one bends over and grunts, he emits - from either end: BULLSHIT. The effluent flowing out of the south is really no different from the ideology or propaganda flowing out of the north. Incidentally, the metaphors from the Amer-Indian: North is the intellect and south is growth (where fertilizer is relevant).

These words (and ideas) are not crude dirty 60's language but highly sophisticated sacred terms: A monk once asked Ummon what the Buddha is. Ummon answered: "a shit-stick." A better translation of the Japanese might be "ass-wiping stick" or more freely: "corn-cob".

And since I choose my words rather carefully, I am rather offended by editing of any kind. BUT, I bow to the inevitable here too, rather than be attached to a pride or an emotion - but that does not deny my intent. I intend what I write and hope others honor it (the blacks use the word "respect").

I don't believe you had communicated the intent of "Cloud-hidden Friends". I suppose your central concept is creating that dialogue which will form a network - of which I approve heartily and join eagerly/

It is curious that your "Cloud-Hidden" letter arrived the same day that I was working on RinzaïRoku #13: "The Buddha-Dharma needs no skilled application." to which Schloegl added the following footnote:

"It is, and acts, of itself. It needs no help to do so. We intend - and intentions, however good, are fundamentally directed by the I, ego, self and thus NOT the Buddha - and they obscure the acting (or activity) of the Buddha (center). The sun shines - that is its nature. Clouds may obscure it to our eyes, but the clouds do not affect the sun. In Zen practise, those obscuring clouds need to be worked away so as to become aware of the sun (or the moon)."

This ties in nicely with the distinction exo/eso teric: that which is hidden within or behind the clouds. Does your choice of label infer that the Friends are to hidden behind clouds; are the Friends that which obscures the Buddha; or are we to discover the cosmic energy flowing amongst the Friends???? I expect the "adept" to track the "truth" through and behind the mists and clouds of ambivalent mind.

Is the adept to be believed when he says that it never seriously occurred to him to inquire concerning the unconscious conditioned loading he has put on a word - especially a word in a question of great emotional value to him???

Don't take offense - that is the nature of the self: to fear exposure: the stripping away of the Clouds of Doubt. Confidence and security comes from the realization of that which is hidden behind those clouds. Then the body, being, existence - what I call identity - becomes (in truth, IS) a tool for usage in conveying meaning. What I am referring to is that I exploit elements which you provide in order to communicate - but I don't wish to offend - that only shuts down communications, and the dialogue.

I use the word "adept" as a stage between "disciple" and "master" in which the adept is more than a novice or learner, but less than perfection, a sense of accomplishment, the one who has arrived. The adept spends years practising and tests himself continuously on others until he does arrive.

I have been studying a book of vipassana (Kundalini) also and that same day your letter arrived, I was at this passage:

" - yet through words we can look beyond and see their meaning, without carrying the words with us. Sariputta, when he was a young man, met a monk called Assaji walking for alms-food during the time of the Buddha, and he thought him very wise and believed that he would be able to speak and explain the details of the Buddha's teaching. But when asked, Assaji perceived a great intelligence in that young man, and said that he was still new to the Teaching and could not explain it at length. So Sariputta asked him not to bother about the words, but to please tell him the meaning. This Assaji did. And later he became the right-hand disciple of the Buddha, the disciple of great wisdom.

"So the meaning is far more important than the words, but the words could lead to the meaning. I do not reject this view. But the essential thing is not to cling to words, and not to acquire fixed ideas about their meanings and definitions. We have to approach each word anew, with a fresh mind, a mind free from beliefs and biases which would otherwise block our seeing. If we are open enough, we will be able to see and understand the new, and something within us will tell us what is true." :DHIRAVAMSA

If one listens to his own bullshit - then only one truth exists: he has beclouded himself alone - for he is obsessed with clouds: exotericism, dogma - and is unable to see the light. The Amer-indian sez: "Sit right down in the center of your Lodge (of being) and look out (eastwards) from the darkness and await the rising sun. And, just in case your lodge is not oriented eastwardly, then take up the rocks of your law and roll up the skins of your lodge on all sides - let the pure air come in from the Prairie (life and the Ten directions) and bathe in the Great Spirit."

Our communications (the CONversations of Friends or friends) must be a dialogue. My definition of a dialogue is a continuing response by the listener to what the speaker has said.

On

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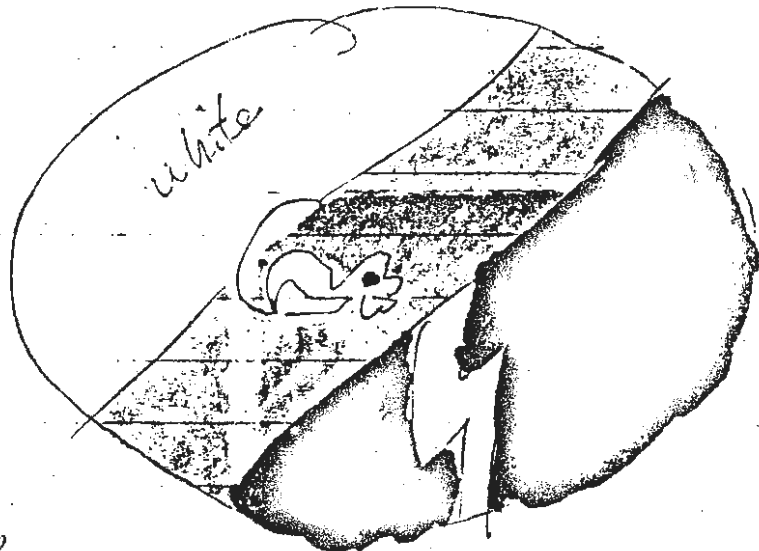
I am in the process of unsticking myself from a global obsession with the woes, tribulations, evils, inequities and inadequacies (of the world) of our present bureaucratic culture of mass-mediocracy. I have always been IN this world intimately, but also intimately OF it. I have cared passionately and deeply for truth and justice - only to learn that coping, dealing with, competing against or effecting change or reform is not merely complex or difficult, it is actually impossible by any means. My problem is the obsession of creating Heaven on earth (the Messiah complex or syndrome), when, as Jesus said: "The Kingdom (heaven) is already here, within us.

Damn - its hard to let go of all of this world. Right now, I am still thoroughly OF this world but only periferially IN it. And every time, I dip back IN it, I become frantic with frustration, anger, even hate (look what they did to my world!). That is a deep and thoroughgoing NOTOK attitude towards all men and the physical world. Knowing is great but is less than half the battle. Realizing is better and necessary. But ACTUALIZING is the essence of the search. And it is on this POINT, upon which -I SIT.

any articles by me or other trash or want me to put some-
for you - let me know and I'll tailor something for you.

Thank you for your ear and the opportunity to lay my trip.

y. M.



(loosey gals
that time)

HoBo Friends:

I am not a real poet (that class of humanity having many heads). My poetical aspirations are called, "Sanity Papers". The last stanza is a death-bed verse and moves me deeply, although where it really comes from I do not know. I believe in mixing life with an overdose of imagination as reflected in the letters of the cloud-hidden friends.

My wife and I visited Shunryu Suzuki Roshi shortly after our marriage. And when we had declared ourselves SHIN Buddhists, a zen student said, "Shin is for ignorant people; zen for the intelligent!"

My wife replied, "That is why you are zen and I am shin." I waited for Roshi to offer an appropriate sermon, but the old monk merely laughed and laughed. Hopefully, HoBo friends will include the poet, Issa, and the myokonin of this muddy world in their spiritual lineage.

The motive for writing this letter is to urge someone on this unwieldy staff to write a review of Will Petersen's excellent journal, "The Plucked Chicken". Here is an old dharma friend, a man of zen complexion. Always, I have considered myself a proletarian of Amida's Great Assembly, but never a HoBo until Ananda the Clerk, at a very late date, found that *Long Life is Not Old Age*. My Buddhist career began 30 years ago with a fist full of Koyasan icon picture-cards, and now approaching the end of life smelling of incense.

Elson B. Snow, Editor
Wheel of Dharma

BUDDHIST NUNS

*... that hear the world's cry and avoid
the wind and flame of discontent...*

Ordained on floating platforms
they are well versed
having dignity
and well mannered
in the cold or heat
of the seasons,

In their youth
the pure land is visited
and they return
with original speech and
beautifully decorated with
ornaments unseen in this world,

Even a dense cloud
covering the earth
leaves the mind undisturbed
motionless as a withered tree
refraining from cereals
living on pine seeds,

Course shelters sustain life
and skies turn golden color,
a trembling is felt:
"there are strange figures
appearing and disappearing
like shadows and cloud",

Gift of a silver urn
to hold relics of
remaining ashes
and before morning
the entire mountain is
covered in heavy snow.

Ananda Dalenberg
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA94121

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Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:
Dear Yellow Mouse:

Dharma Greetings To Everyone!

Yellow Mouse, in his last letter, comments on the meaning of the "esoteric" and the "exoteric", and in a fine phrase refers to those "who have freed themselves from dependency on any ideology or dogma, NO MATTER HOW TRUE".

That got me thinking about a dilemma I have been wrestling with for years. I think of it as a kind of Zen koan problem. I keep going back and forth between being a layman and being a priest or monk, even though I feel I must choose one side or the other once and for all. The choice is difficult because I believe that neither way is superior to the other, and that both can be the fullest expression of the Dharma. Furthermore I find them equally attractive. The way of a layman is a more natural and free one, out in the big wide world with everyone. Yet as a priest I identify with institutions, temples, Sacred Scriptures, rituals, a peaceful and cloistered environment, and so on. Nor am I able to integrate the two sides, as I think they ultimately should be. Instead I just flop around between the two, and in a not at all graceful manner.

I have recently begun to think however that I am caught here by what is actually a social problem, not a religious or spiritual one. Obviously in some basic sense monk and lay lifestyles are social forms. It may then be a fundamental mistake to exaggerate their religious importance. Surely that would be an easy enough mistake to make, considering the amount of propaganda there is on the subject.

I then find it very helpful to start over again from the beginning, and rethink the whole problem in terms of the esoteric and exoteric- the inner heart of it contrasted with an outer fixed and definite form. In that context it is quite clear to me that what I really seek is the esoteric, or "inner heart of it". It is also clear that the categories of "monk" or "layman" both belong to the outer exoteric side. I then have been needlessly flopping around between the two for years, although I may have had no real choice but to go through the whole thing. All along I have known I should "seek within", and I keep on repeating it to myself, but somehow it is hard to listen.

Turning to Buddhism, I think it would be fair to say that the heart of the Teaching is represented by the term "Prajna" maybe best translated as "Compassionate Wisdom". Without Prajna all the teachings, practices, and rituals are said to be worthless. The way I think of it, Prajna is the "Spirit that gives the Breath of Life to the Teachings." Without Prajna we are left with just so many lifeless and empty forms. Unfortunately even in such a sorry state they are still quite capable of leading us around by the nose for years, and at the same time requiring enormous amounts of energy in order to merely survive.

Another good translation of Prajna might then be "Spirit", especially in its root sense of "spirare" or "to breathe" as the vital essence of life. The "Holy Spirit" then would be the vital essence of the spiritual life. It is interesting that its symbols are wind, fire, and water, with their qualities of movement, change, penetration, non-resistance, and vitality.

All depends on Prajna or Spirit. Even the outer exoteric depends upon it, and soon would dry up and blow away without it. That is slowly becoming more and more obvious to me. I hope then too my exoteric concern with "monk versus lay" also soon dries up and blows away. Then I could more easily get on to the heart of it.

For some reason I don't really understand, it seems somehow necessary to give up the outward form in order to realize the inward meaning. Maybe this is because the outer is almost by nature something fixed and unyielding, and thus is

continued

continued

something we can wrap up, possess, and make a part of our own ego structure, something we can use as a base for power, fame and gain. But in the spiritual path we obviously have to give up all of this. I think that is why Yellow Mouse's phrase about those "who have freed themselves from dependency on any ideology or dogma, NO MATTER HOW TRUE" keeps on ringing in my ears. I take that to be not some theological statement but a matter for practice, a kind of ever on-going yoga.

I must confess though I am not yet willing to go all the way. Under the category of ideology and dogma, to be included would be such as Buddhism, The Four Noble Truths, attaining Enlightenment and so on, "no matter how true". So dearly do I love those old teachings. Yet I know that in holding on to them I may be strangling the Breath of the Spirit from them.

I think that too is the thrust of the Heart Sutra. For me it is a Sutra about giving up the externals to reach the inward heart of it all. In particular I'm struck by the line "No cognition, no attainment, with nothing to attain the Bodhisattva depends upon Perfect Prajna". Here Prajna is the Heart, the Breath of the Spirit, upon which all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas solely depend. The full title of the Sutra might then be translated as "Heart of Great and Perfect Compassionate Wisdom". However, as I have confessed, I'm not very good at giving up the externals.

Even so I'm quite convinced that "Heart" is what it is all about in Buddhism, and the same goes for other religions, whether Catholic, Taoist, Navajo or whatever. When there is Perfect Prajna, I'm sure that the exoteric externals will just naturally follow along behind, and both will be in harmony. Maybe at that point too our individual external differences will not be so much a problem, but instead a source of delight.

While pondering upon all of this, a playful verse kept occurring to me, of which I could only remember a line or two. Also, it didn't seem to have much to do with the esoteric and exoteric, so I neglected to look it up. However finally I did so, and it does seem to relate somehow:

He taught them laws and watchwords,
To preach and struggle and pray,
But he taught deep in the hayfield
The games that angels play
Had he stayed here forever,
Their world would be wise as ours-
And the king be cutting capers,
And the priest be picking flowers.

G. K. Chesterton
"The Song of the Children"

SMALL TALK, NOTES AND NEWS

1. Clerk's Corner: The response to our first issue was more than anticipated. Perhaps an issue every two months will not be enough. I'd estimate the next one will be out in about two months. This issue is a little late, although please note it not far from the Chinese New Year. Happy New Year!

We now all have had at least some chance to know each other. I find it quite amazing how much a letter can reveal of someone. Some of you I now know better than many people I have seen almost everyday for years. Presumably our correspondence will in some ways begin to reflect that fact. Now we may have more of a sense of being a group- not in the abstract, but of real live individuals instead of a sea of unknown faces.

This page is mostly intended for "small talk" instead of mighty spinnings of the Dharma, as in the first section. It might include news items, changes of address, soybean recipes, scholarly notes, book recommendations, organizational politics and concerns, propaganda, and so forth.

Please consider typing your letters single-space. The number of our pages is somewhat limited, and we need your cooperation in some kind of "equal time" policy.

Many thanks to those who have sent along stamps. We even have received a small check or two. I have said that our budget can get along quite well without such. However that statement may be tinged with too much pride and willful independence. Actually we need each other.

We still need fillers for an empty quarter of a page here and there. Poetry, small drawings, favorite quotes etc. would do just fine.

I'd greatly appreciate it if you would send along the names of a friend or two who might be interested in receiving a complimentary copy. I've tried other ways of spreading the word, but this would be best. Not that we aim at having hundreds of subscribers, because in a way smallness is our virtue.

2. The poem Gary Snyder sent in honor of our first issue is one of his favorites. However it is not exactly one of his own, but a translation of an Ainu original. My apologies, I thought it was so good it must be his.

3. Also apologies to Francis Thompson for two mis-spellings, here corrected as "monastery" and "temperamental".

4. Robert Breckenridge writes that he is now back at Harbin Springs. His address there is in c/o Harbin, Box 782, Middletown, CA 95461.

Ananda Claude Dalenberg, Clerk