

# cloud-hidden friends letter <sup>159,</sup>

ISSUE #5

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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RECAPTURING INNOCENCE

Properly functioning, Homo Sapiens is a curious creature and early-on starts asking questions. As time passes, he may get the feeling that he is not getting the right answers; then one day he suspects that he is not asking the right questions. Exit, the age of innocence.

With great care, he goes forth anew, armed with a fresh set of questions and soon finds out that not only are the answers still wrong, but that he is made to feel guilty for even asking.

With a little luck, he may discover a thing called dualism. Webster gives the word little praise, but the Taoists know much about it, as they know much about all simple things. Briefly, it suggests that man, by nature, is a dualistic creature who cannot conceive of anything except in terms of something else. We cannot go to the West without coming from the East, nor can there be an up without a down, or love without hate. We are reminded that some primitive people, somewhere, have no word for war. I submit that they have no word for peace either. There are no nice days in Honolulu because there are no bad days; in fact there is really no weather there as New Englanders know it.

Expanding on this simple theme is the "one-ness of opposites" so well expressed in Allan Watts' writings. Up and down are just different manifestations of the same thing, like the head and the tail of a coin. The term "altitude" is used to embrace the concept of up/down, as is "longitude" for east/west. Love and hate are not really opposites at all. They both imply involvement as opposed to the alienation when one is not loved or hated, but ignored.

We often feel alienated when we think of our "selves" as opposed to our environment. The Taoists know that self and environment are one and the same thing. The Taoists are at peace with their universe, feeling much a part of it. Many of the people who gave us wrong answers, know nothing of these things and have set up barriers between us and them. But we can get the answers ourselves by turning the coins over, one-by-one.

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Like the coin, the guilt that others try to hang on us can be turned over to discover innocence. Ask someone what innocence is and they will probably come up with a definition for ignorance. This would suggest that you can not be informed without being guilty of something. I don't buy that, and neither did Plato who stated that the unexamined life was not worth living. Neither did Allan Watts when he suggested that the ideal life was a circle, starting with the savage (the child) and ending with the sage (second childhood?) rather than climbing the ladder of success which leads straight up and ends only when you are lost beyond hope.

I submit that innocence was lost only when you stopped building sand castles on the beach and started wearing bathing suits with labels. I think that innocence can be recaptured, but this is only the latest of my series of rewarding applications of dualism. I think I might wind up on the beach (where it all started anyway), building sand castles, not caring if the tide destroys them, but caring very much about the color of the sky, the sounds of gulls, the coolness of the air around me and the warmth of the sand beneath me (and hang the labels). I may be in the company of a child. We need not speak, we are not opposites, but mere reflections of one-another; two sides of Allan's coin.

Without me, the author, there would be no you, the reader and vice-versa. Without us there would be no communication. Without them there would be no us. Many thanks to them: Cloud Hidden Friends.

John A. Walsh  
9 Country Club Rd.  
Acton, MA 01720

7/8/83

Dear Ananda; and All Cloud-Hidden Friends:

Seems you have been a lost old friend, with whom I am breaking into your domain, with this letter. I have thought many times of writing, although there is little to be said, that has not been said.

Updating you on sojourn efforts, .These have been temporarily delayed. In part because of last years heavy snowfall. To wit: It is still on the ground in the elevations I would be traveling. However, I did get to California to check these things out, and spent 10 days investigating situations. California has changed dramatically in the year and a half I have been away. In fact, so much so, I am inclined to stay away, and be more a continental drifter, than coastal climber.

A new possibility has extended my outlook, with the purchase of a trailer. A semi-nomadic life, like a "rollin stone", agrees with me.

Due to continuous movement, I have been unable to complete a 4th rewrite on a paper to CHF. It will save, wherever it is at.

I have found the Middle Path has taken me to the object of my concerns. That concern is Wisdom, and its unifying ability. Wisdom has won out over my selfish desires.

A concept has crystalized clearly in my mind. The "Common Life", or "Spirit", shared in all beings, animate and inanimate. A fondness for flowers, animal lovers, and "back to nature" ways, manifest the connection of all reality. And the different individuals are more like shades and colors of the karmic processes. This brings equality to all of Creation. To carelessly step on an insect, becomes the same as to carelessly kill someone in a car "accident". It is time for the Western Mind to move on from its Dark Age thinking of man as the center of the Universe. All life is important, and self-justified.

In the lower realms of thought, I have found the dualistic mindset of Wisdom/Knowledge. Wisdom being a unifying aspect, and knowledge being a diversifying aspect of the mind's manifestation. I suspect that people with extreme aspects of this manifestation to be the cause of much of the world's (humanity's) violence. Again the balance of the Middle Path exceeds my expectations.

.... Just finished brewing some comfrey tea. Care to join me?

Unity in Each, Each in Unity,



Robert C. Finch

DANCING UP THE MOUNTAIN

1.

Toes snug in thick socks,  
boots bound around ankles,  
knees flexing & genuflecting,  
chest flying outward lungs  
crashing against ribcage,  
head rising above it all.

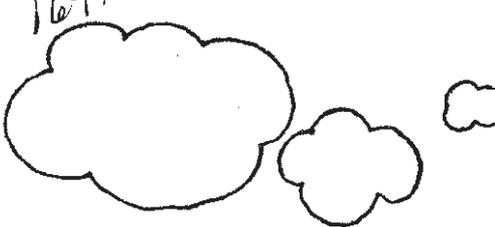
Climbing within one's self  
while planting boots  
in bootprints planted,  
skirting wire  
of watershed land  
to flat open space  
where tracks suddenly circle:  
the hiker had to dance.

2.

Leans a backpack,  
woolen cap atop,  
no arms through packstraps,  
no head in hat,  
just voice from somewhere  
hailing me, and my reply:  
"Guess it was you  
I followed up here!"  
comes the retort:  
"I was following someone else!"

Following each other  
to nameless peaks,  
exchanging visions,  
exchanging lies.

-Joel Weishaus

1641  
  
Joe Lawrence Lembo  
P.O. Box 99444  
San Francisco, CA 94109

Dear Cloud-People:

I am hovering in your midst because of Marian Mountain. I had written her a letter to praise her book, The Zen Environment, (which I found "empty and marvellous"). And she sent me my first copy of this HoBo chainletter.

You may be wondering who I am? Good question. So am I. By way of introduction, let's just say I'm a "Professional Bohemian," i.e. an Artist, Writer, Photographer, Folk Musician, Masseur, and Fellow seeker.

The greatest influences in my life have been (and still are:) Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, Alan W. Watts, and Joan Baez. All Bodhisattvas in their own right. They've all contributed to my well-being and have "filtered & fibered my blood," as Whitman would say.

My roots are what you may call "tangled." I am 36, born and raised in Paterson, N.J. (Hail, Ginsberg & William Carlos Williams) by an Italian Catholic father and Cherokee mother who was brought up in a fundamental southern Pentecostal household. I spent most of my childhood attending a Methodist church (because it was conveniently located), but since moving to California 6 years ago, I began to think for myself.

I came upon Buddhism quite naturally and by accident. About 3 or 4 years ago I was hitting bottom, so to speak. I went on top of Russian Hill to watch a lunar eclipse. As I was sitting there gazing at the moon -- watching the heavenly bodies coalesce and merge into one -- the moon appeared to me as the yin & yang. Up to this point I had absolutely no prior knowledge or interest in Eastern philosophy. After that I was very calm and flowing with the Tao. Later I read that the ancient Japanese also viewed the eclipse of the moon as the yin/yang -- that's how they got the idea to render the symbol.

Then I wrote to Henry Miller and asked: "What are the best books to read on Zen?" He simply replied: "No special books -- just follow your nose." (That, in itself, was a Zen answer, altho' I didn't realize it at the time.) So I read every book Alan Watts ever wrote and studied Zen until it dawned on me there was nothing to study. Smile.

I am currently interested in Tantra. However, I feel one should not hold on to any specific doctrine or religious practice. Then it becomes dogma. Too much ritual is like the "spiritual clap," i.e. like admitting you are not where you should be. It is because we want to be that we are not, then you finally give-up (or wake-up) and discover you have been there all along. Alan Watts used to say, "Life is like water. The more you try to grasp it the more it just slips through your hands." If you want to have running water, you must let it go.

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But, alas, when this old world starts getting you down, you do need to be reminded that you are the Buddha, and all of his doings are your doings and vice versa. It's good to return occasionally to your favorite Zen books. It's a form of refreshment. But rebirth can only occur in the void, i.e. when you have stopped trying to make it happen.

Non-attachment is the key. And this includes attachment to one-self. As you all know, it is the self that suffers. So if you do away with the ego, there is nobody left to suffer. While typing this letter I had a satori. I was going to list some of my artistic accomplishments and some of the famous people I've met. But then it dawned on me that there REALLY IS NO SELF, or else why would I be trying to inflate, reaffirm, applaud, exult who I am through what I've done and who I know? Think about it. I am nobody without these things, I don't even exist. Thank God.

So I shall not bog you down with any autobiographical claptrap. But I shall continue to dance to the rhythm of life, wearing hand-me-down shoes from other Dharma Bums. Even if I have to patch em."

Watts once wrote, "the high art, the upava, of a true Bodhisattava is possible only for him who has gone beyond all need for self justification, for so long as there is something to prove, some ax to grind, there is no dance."

Anyone who is a fan of Whitman, Lawrence, Miller, Watts or Baez is cordially invited to drop me a note. (Also friends of HoBo's are especially welcomed). Alors, I leave you with some Haiku I wrote.

Namaste,



Full moon eclipse perched  
on a hilltop high, gazing:  
yin and yang satori.

No other place is  
different: it is just the  
Whole, thus rearranged.

My life: a fleeting  
moment etched on film, O' so  
transparent am I.

O' futile struggle,  
death of ego: this new mind is  
crested with the waves.

The bottle washed  
upon the glistening shore,  
without a message.

The sunny beach now  
writing haiku, these sand swept  
thoughts: the way of Zen.

Those who awaken  
their Buddha-nature shall not  
hunger after truth.

Marian Mountain  
Coastlands  
Big Sur, CA 93920

166,  
Dear HoBo Friends,

A dharma buddy wrote me recently: "I notice these days you seem to be mentioning Suzuki Roshi more and more." This, along with a note from Ananda in the #4 issue of the CHFL explaining to the readers, that the numerous references to the late Suzuki Roshi of San Francisco Zen Center did not indicate any kind of sectarian identification, got me to pondering. Should I make an effort not to mention Suzuki Roshi so often in my letters? I quickly abandoned that possibility. Trying not to mention Suzuki Roshi in a letter which attempted to expound some point of dharma was like being ordered not to think of the word hippopotamus for the next 5 minutes. (For new readers of the CHFL I should explain that Suzuki Roshi was my first Zen master. It has been almost 19 years since we first met in this life and a little over 12 years since we parted. But for me the living presence of my Zen teacher is just as strong today, perhaps stronger, than it was during the period of our physical relationship.)

An old friend and mentor of mine used to have the same problem as I have. Whenever we got together for a discussion of spiritual matters (usually after a lecture given by Suzuki Roshi) she would bring up some anecdote about her late tea master. She often repeated these stories. I didn't mind the repetitions because something wonderful always happened when she talked about her tea master. I could feel, in her enthusiastic description, the living presence of the man himself. There had been some kind of transmission between the master and the student that could be passed along to a third person who had never met her master in "real" life.

I hope everyone who was fortunate enough to have been a student of Suzuki Roshi won't feel hesitant to share anecdotes of him in this open forum. I also hope students of other Zen masters or other spiritual teachers can be persuaded to pass along lots of stories of their own teachers. After all, transmission isn't just some formal ceremony. It is transmitting, at every opportunity, the living presence of our teachers.

Here is a short lesson that Suzuki Roshi passed on to me in a private discussion about 16 years ago. He said: "Zen teachers don't really get started until they are 60. Before that time they have too much ego." Having reached the magic age of 60 this spring I would like to confess that though I haven't noticed much difference in the size of my ego in the last 16 years, I don't attach as much importance to it now.

With palms together,

*Marian Mountain*

LETTERS RECEIVED

Yellow Mouse

TO THE CHF:

(1) Tom T: There was a fellow in Phila., named Baba Guru (?) who was asked by an interviewer what a Guru was. He said: "A Guru is someone who gives permission, where no permission is needed."

But your "finger pointing to the moon" brings up Gutei's finger: Gutei raised a finger whenever he was asked a question about Zen. A monk began to imitate him in this way. Whenever anyone asked him what his master preached about, he would raise the finger. Gutei heard about this, seized him and CUT OFF his finger. The monk cried and fled, but Gutei called out to him. The monk stopped and turned his head to Gutei and Gutei raised up his own finger. In that instant the monk was enlightened.

THANX: "All teachers are selling water by the side of the river," LOVE IT ! As for the NEED for GUIDES on the path or Way: We have had our awareness conditioned out of us by society at large; but we are active and willing participants in the process. Thus we happily kill knowledge of our TRUE Selves. With such obsession, addiction, compulsion, we need some kind of stimulating input that encourage us to open (like a flower) and live (awaken).

(2) Richard B: "Joy in the morning and sleep at night" Let me add: "Eat when you are hungry and walk where you list." That's freedom, true liberty. In your quote from Lao Tsu there is a semantic hook with which he has played you (like a fish). = "I", "MySelf".

(3) Bro Finch: TOUCHE !! Now that is what I call a valuable dialogue. The notes that follow herein are the chaff. I will be sitting on this needle of violence for some time assimilating. Thank you, Thank you.

"Its hard to approach a moving target". The metaphor is not "approach", its "shoot". You certainly tried to nail me down. Its true that I try to move rather fast. I ask you: just what am I ? Well, I guess that depends on what you are saying. According to the "truth"(?), I am not a thing but a movement: n'est pas? As I live, I MUST grow and therefor I change. Do I have power to do otherwise ? I can try to stabilize myself but failure to grow is death - I'm not quite ready for that yet. But why should, ought, need I become STILL. We both know one answer to that one. But is it a stillness IN the body or OF the body ? WATCH IT ? You may be the one who NEEDS me to be made rigid (like nigger mortis) in order for your understanding to be certain, secure.

"Anonymous" BOSH !!! Tell me: Is ROBERT anonymous? Who is Robert ? What does that tell me? That this government, society, culture has registered you as one of those ROBERTO's tells me zilch. Is a FINCH short, fat, blonde; does he have a hot temper. What do these traditional names mean anymore? Did your mother really choose RRRRRObeRRRRt (roll the r's) because she hoped you would actually be brightly famed: from Old High German (AD 300) HRODEBERT = HROD: fame + BERAHT: bright from the roots (indo-european BC 8000) KAR: HARD = HAROD = HROD, mighty, bold, praised, + BHEREG: shine, white, BHEREGt = BRIGHT; = KHAROD-BEREGHT = ROBERT.

The Native American has a different theory. Whereas the white man goes through life hiding who he is, the warrior creates a shield for himself and on it he paints his life. He exposes who he is, where he came from, what he aspires to and where he is going. That "others" can't read his shield is not his problem: he is not responsible for the problems that they have; he IS deeply responsible for his own Self, problems, behavior. So, the Chief sits down in the center of his lodge and smokes a pipe to - ? the Great Spirit. These, my friend, are words of ZEN.

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continued

I did not answer, yet, the middle paragraph about evil. We know that (a) it is only man who judges good and evil. We know that Shiva, the God of destruction is the God of Creation: one can only create by destroying. Even growth in understanding destroys old ideas. On the other hand, evil comes into existence whenever there is a purpose, goal or achievement which is frustrated or thwarted. Buddhism uses the word "Desire" to say the same thing: We must eliminate all desires. But have we arrived at enlightenment: have we rid ourselves of ALL desires, including desires for good ???

(4) Marian Mt. (is that Marian Meru?) Marian = a devotee of the Virgin Mary; also a variant spelling of MARION = either masc. or fem., goes back to Middle English from the Old French where it is a diminutive of MARIE from Latin MARIA from the Greek MARIAM from the Hebrew MIRYAM (moses' sister) defined = REBELLION (about BC:3000)

The words "formal Zen teacher" by definition means stress on dogma which demands adherence, which necessitates rigidity which makes for obedience and kills the very spontaneity advocated by the masters.

You said that "ordinary people helped Suddhana expand the incomplete understanding he had acquired from his formal Buddhist teachers". Of course, with "ordinary" people he was free to expand. Luckily the teachers had not destroyed his ability to expand.

In your little dog story, you admitted that you EXPECTED TO BE LOVED. Correct me if I'm wrong, but Zen Masters (the one (Rinzai) who grabbed the stick and hit back) move faster and depend on nothing, expect nothing and respond to everything. They might have kicked the dog before he could bite them. The

Native American might have eaten him for lunch.

THANK for the : "A is A because A is not A". Its exciting: The "A" has four different meanings, thus: "A" is concept A because thing A is not concept "A".

WONDERFUL !!!

YELLOW MOUSE

P.S.

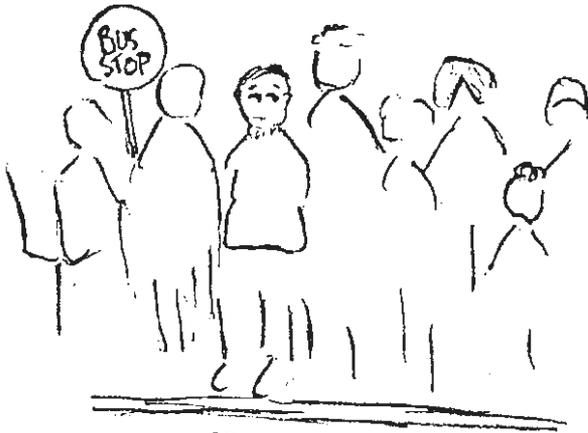
In Phila., each business day (about 220 per year), there are at least four Juvenile courtrooms operating, each with a list of 60 cases. Thats 240 times 220 or 53,000 cases (each gets listed an average three times so there is actually only 17,000 completed per year). If you consider just the 16,000 young (9-18) black (less than 5% white) males who are thrown up against the bar rail and shouted at by officers in a ritual they can't understand, you begin to understand the word: jeopardy. Its about 240 kids terrorized every day.

But Phila, is only ONE such city. You can multiply this by 100 for the nation. Consider this: 24,000 in one day; the court operates an average 6 hour day, lets say.  $6 \times 60 = 360$  minutes into 24,000. Each and every minute of every public working day, there are 67 kids terrorized in this nation. If that doesn't make you weep, you can't be reached. And this will not cease until one comes along who will cut the Gordian Knot with a noise that noone will like. Lets hope it is Buddha or Jesus and not another Hitler or Alexander.

Y.M.

## TEN OXHERDING PICTURES, for the Cloud Hidden Friends:

## 1. Seeking the Ox



Alone in the wilderness, lost in the jungle, the boy is searching, searching!  
The swelling waters, the far-away mountains, and the unending path;  
Exhausted and in despair, he knows not where to go,  
He only hears the evening cicadas singing in the maple-woods.

## 2. Finding the Tracks



By the stream and under the trees, scattered are the traces of the lost;  
The sweet-scented grasses are growing thick—did he find the way?  
However remote over the hills and far away the beast may wander,  
His nose reaches the heavens and none can conceal it.



## 3. First Glimpse of the Ox

On a yonder branch perches a nightingale cheerfully singing;  
The sun is warm, and a soothing breeze blows, on the bank the willows are green;  
The ox is there all by himself, nowhere is he to hide himself;  
The splendid head decorated with stately horns—what painter can reproduce him?

## 4. Catching the Ox



With the energy of his whole being, the boy has at last taken hold of the ox:  
But how wild his will, how ungovernable his power!  
At times he struts up a plateau,  
When lo! he is lost again in a misty unpenetrable mountain-pass.

5. Taming the Ox



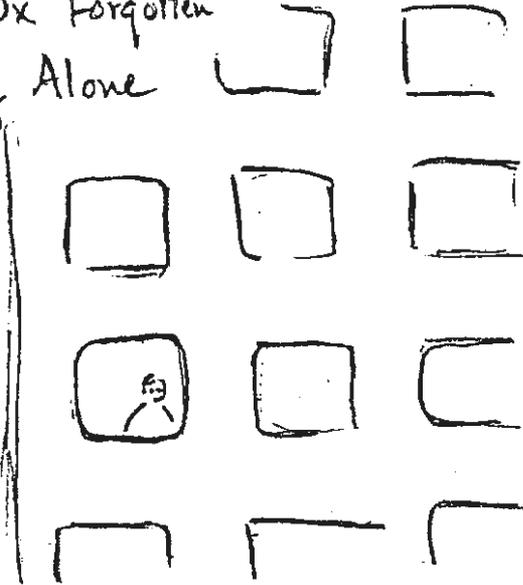
The boy is not to separate himself with his whip and tether,  
 Lest the animal should wander away into a world of defilements;  
 When the ox is properly tended to, he will grow pure and docile;  
 Without a chain, nothing binding, he will by himself follow the oxherd.

6. Riding the Ox Home



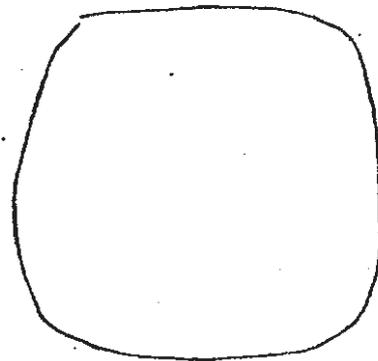
Riding on the animal, he leisurely wends his way home:  
 Enveloped in the evening mist, how tunefully the flute vanishes away!  
 Singing a ditty, beating time, his heart is filled with a joy indescribable!  
 That he is now one of those who know, need it be told?

7. Ox Forgotten  
 Self Alone



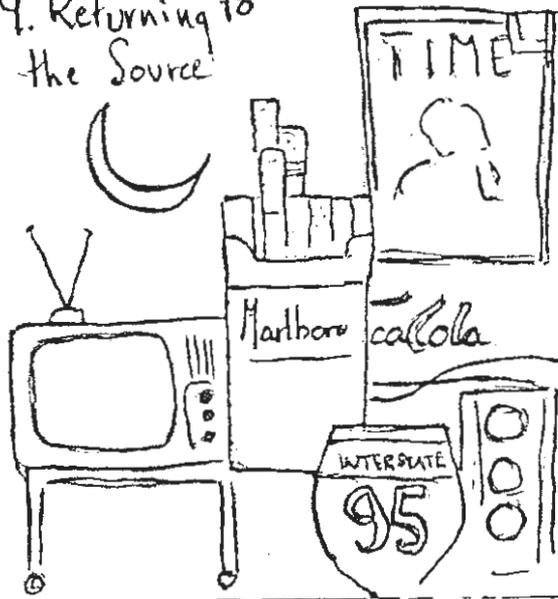
Riding on the animal, he is at last back in his home,  
 Where lo! the ox is no more; the man alone sits serenely.  
 Though the red sun is high up in the sky, he is still quietly dreaming,  
 Under a straw-thatched roof are his whip and rope idly lying.

8. Both Ox and Self Forgotten



All is empty—the whip, the rope, the man, and the ox:  
 Who can ever survey the vastness of heaven?  
 Over the furnace burning ablaze, not a flake of snow can fall:  
 When this state of things obtains, manifest is the spirit of the ancient master.

9. Returning to the Source



To return to the Origin, to be back at the Source—  
 already a false step this!  
 Far better it is to stay at home, blind and deaf, and  
 without much ado;  
 Sitting in the hut, he takes no cognisance of things  
 outside,  
 Behold the streams flowing—whither nobody knows;  
 and the flowers vividly red—for whom are they?

10. Entering the Marketplace with Helping Hands



Bare-chested and bare-footed, he comes out into the  
 market-place;  
 Daubed with mud and ashes, how broadly he smiles!  
 There is no need for the miraculous power of the gods,  
 For he touches, and lo! the dead trees are in full  
 bloom.

From Mrs. R.M. Pirsig  
 c/o W. Morrow & Co.  
 105 Madison Ave.  
 New York, N.Y. 10016

Editor's Note:

I have taken the liberty of adding the 10 verses by Kakuan that are usually included in the traditional series (from D.T. Suzuki's "Manual Of Zen Buddhism").

Ananda

172.

Robert Breckenridge  
Harbin Hot Springs  
P.O. Box 782  
Middletoown CA 95461

Dear Cloud Hidden Friends,

Issue #4 of our letter brought me to responding immediately in my mind and I couldn't stop it as I lay on the sofa doing my form of California Style meditation that I began after the knees started complaining so painfully in the teahouse at Stillpoint Hermitage a year ago. I finally had to give in and get up and write some <sup>of</sup> it down.

As I read through #4 I found myself hoping that someone might respond to whatever it was that I wrote for #3 although this idea hadn't really come to mind before . . . . .

How can Ananda be ... Ananda, how can you be organizing, typing, duplicating addressing, stamping, mailing, etc.etc. the chf letter and doubt your adequacy as a friend? And you're too honest for false humility. Yes, wanting to extend friendship to all life everywhere.. not difficult for the animals, plants stars and all but difficult with the unfriendly ones. So I take it to wanting to be friends with everything; unfriendly people, our enemies, injustice, greed, suffering, death. This could get us crucified or something it seems but I think I've found a way out that works pretty well but not perfectly for me; It's one thing to make judgements, another thing to take action. We can take action without judgement & condemnation. Let's all be friendly with Ronald Reagan, for example, and possibly vote for someone else.

I really got involved with Marian and Tom talking about Gurus & Masters. Tom asks, "Are they necessary or not?" Is this a guru's question or a disciple's? Lot's of teachers ask good questions. But I'm giving an answer so maybe I'm the guru now. All of us cloud-hidden friends can take both sides bouncing the ball of wisdom between ourselves. Take it a bit deeper and we can in ourselves be both master and disciple. The inner teacher, inner guru, the Holy Spirit, the Tao, the capital "S" Self is in touch with true wisdom, never lost it, never will. But sometimes we don't know how or refuse to listen and any person or event that pushes us back to listening is the Guru/master so what in the material world or who is not our teacher?

So this circles back to the issue of friendliness. That blankety blank @#\*\*\*###XXXXXX so and so who did such and such to me is a teacher too when I can get "hurt" forgive, learn something and be friendly while getting out of the way if necessary. Not so easy to do this all the time. This reality that I live in is simply not being run according to my ego's plan all of the time but I can often remember that there's probably something else of value in it.

Here I am floating along on my cloud as you folks float by on yours. Hearing your songs I pick up the tune, add a few notes and a riff or two of my own. This responding a kind of verbal cloud hidden spiritual jazz session. Beep peep tink bop diddy boop whoosh zing zing ziiinnngg. But of course when nature calls we best get back to earth.

*Breck*

LETTERS  
RECEIVED

MARIAN POIRIER  
7282 29th NE 173  
Seattle, Washington 98115

Dear Hobo Friends,

As the summer comes to an end, I am fondly thinking back on a great camping trip to the Olympic Mountains. We spent four camping days on the Olympic peninsula, part of the time in the Olympic rain forest. The rain forest is unique to this part of our country with over half a year spent with rainfall. Therefore, because of all this moisture, all that lives there is also unique.

We learned more about this evergreen vegetation from a dear young, blonde-haired, blue eyed "Ranger Rick". The Ranger was giving a talk about the forest and I was thrilled that he included in part of his talk about "Nurse Trees".

Earlier that day, I noticed trees growing in a long perfect row with their root system, like long fingers, wrapped around and down to the ground from fallen trees. These fallen wooden skeletal remains appeared to be like planter boxes of decaying wood forming long rows of fertile peat moss. What had happen was that the fallen trees had shallow root bases, the result of fast growth, and then pushed over during a high wind. As they fall to the earth, they take smaller trees with them; making room in the forest for more sunlight.

The seedlings then drop onto these fallen trees and begin to grow in the soft moss covered bark. Finding both moisture and warm sun, the young parasites grow quietly upward toward the forest opening and the blue sky.

As so often happens, I find this nature story to be such a kind and gentle lesson. A lesson for this spirit that gets caught all too often in the STRIVING TO LEARN...ALSO TRYING TO TEACH.

Perhaps in thinking for a moment about this little story of the "nurse trees", I really don't need to go or do anything to learn to go to "The Light"- all that I really need will come to me. The only responsibility I might really have is to use energy on my journey. The fuel for the journey will come from my environment.

With fond regards,

*Marian*

7/27/83

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To All, Cloud-hidden Friends:

Being on the unemployment line now, again, has allowed me to take one step backward, and two steps forward. The clouds of maya are falling away, back to earth. I am finding myself naked.

Since material productivity is encouraged in the present system of things, most people unquestioningly submit themselves to the present order, as has been the case throughout history. We have taught to build and save, only to see these earthly pursuits disappear in times of crisis, and the end of life. (Most of us have seen retirees shrivel up and die, or stricken with disease and losing the material fortunes of a lifetime.)

One thing I have noticed, that those running through this economic maze, during these hard economic times, are running faster, to their end. And for those whose hearts are not wholeheartedly in the race, soon find themselves weary, dropping out, and changing direction. But it still amazes me to see how many, including myself, taking part in this deception, and being part of this employment scheme.

A second thing I have noticed, and which is becoming clearer with each change in my life is that the longer certain elements of my life are unchanged, the more blinded I become, to maya. For I am realizing that even though we are taught to be robots on an assembly line, mass production economy, that there is never any action which is repeatable. Even though one goes through the motions of getting up, going to work, coming home, each moment is totally different, and precious unto itself.

Most people turn to religion, when things get tough. And I find it ironical, that through this time of economic crisis, that the talk of things getting better, should actually be more people are taking comfort in religions. (Of course religion opiates..., rrehaps it would be better if those in power were to tell the people that unemployment should be encouraged, just to get people to religion, and to round out the edges of the people racing faster for materialism....

Robert C. Finch  
P.O. Box 2I9  
Basile, La. 705I5

Peace, Unity,



## ON THE ROAD WITH D.T. SUZUKI

(An excerpt from a book, perhaps to be published some day in Japan)

I clearly remember when I first read a book by D.T. Suzuki, it was in September of 1951, and I was standing by the roadside in the vast desert of eastern Nevada hitch-hiking the old Route 40. I had found his book a few days earlier in a "meta-physical" bookshop in San Francisco. I was on my way to enter graduate school at Indiana, and here by the highway in the long wait for another ride I opened my new book. The size of the space and the paucity of cars gave me much time to read, Essays in Zen, First Series. It catapulted me into an even larger space; and though I didn't know it at the moment, that was the end of my career as an anthropologist. It took a semester to finish up affairs at Indiana. Back on the west coast in the spring, I found a few others who had been touched by D.T., including Alan Watts, and we shared our discovery with yet others.

The ground was already prepared. I move in circles that were acutely critical of the direction of American politics and economics, but were also painfully leaving the hope of an ideal Socialist world behind. We were post-Stalin, and found some inspiration in the relict Syndicalist-Anarchist traditions of the Finnish and Italian workingmen's societies of San Francisco, and the teachings and example of Gandhi. As working poets and artists we were repelled by the neo-conservatism in fashion in the academies then. We got our poetics from William Carlos Williams, Ezra Pound, D.H. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein, Wallace Stevens, William Blake, and folksongs. Most of us were reading the Chinese poetry translations of Arthur Waley, Witter Bynner, Florence Ayscough, and of course Pound. We were exploring haiku and further Zen through the books of R.H. Blyth. We were people of the far west, loving our continent for its great wild beauty, feeling no ties to Europe. Our politics and aesthetics were one. Dr. Suzuki's exposition of Zen gave us an idea of a religion and an all-embracing view of nature to augment that of scientific Ecology, which had already begun to instruct us.

We took Dr. Suzuki as our own, and didn't realize at the time how unique he was: a Japanese man thoroughly at home in English, writing with a full cosmopolitan command of the occidental intellectual tradition, and presenting a compelling, creative picture of a school of Buddhism that barely knew what he was up to. And moreover, a school considered moribund by many Japanese and actively disliked by some leading Japanese intellectuals! All that came later.

For us, in our energy of the fifties, early Buddhism, Lao-Tzu, Gandhi, Thoreau, Kropotkin, and Zen were all one teaching. We stood for original human nature and the spontaneous creative spirit. Dr. Suzuki's Zen presentation of the "original life force", the "life-impulse," "the enlivening spirit of the Buddha"-- the emphasis on personal direct experience, seemed to lead in the same direction. Some of my colleagues of those days took all this to mean no constraints at all, even in matters of form and manners. Fellow poets Lew Welch, Phillip Whalen, and myself read in Zen the call for commitment and discipline, at least up to a point. For some of us, the Berkeley Shinshu Church's study group-- hosted by the gracious and wise team of Rev. Kanmo and Jane Imamura, gave us our first taste of the living Buddhist tradition. That and further reading in D.T. Suzuki led me to re-enter Graduate school in Far Eastern languages and take courses in Chinese and Japanese so that I could travel to Japan and try traditional Zazen practice.

The daily realities of a Rinzai sodo came as something of a shock, but I survived and worked out ways to stay with my teacher. I had playful thoughts about how Dr. Suzuki had lead me into this, but absolutely no regrets. What hurt me was the incomprehension of Japanese poets of my own generation with whom I could share a few hours comradely talk until the subject of Zen came up, and then I lost them. Eventually I came to understand that many Japanese identify Zen with authoritarian-

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ism, feudalism, and militarism, and why. I also came to see that Dr. Suzuki's presentation of Zen is in many ways a creative leap out of the medieval mentality that brought Zen to that point, a personal way of pointing Zen in a fresh, liberating direction, without even saying so. D.T. Suzuki gave me the push of my life and I can never be too grateful. Now, living again in America, I see the evidence of his strong, subtle effect in many arts and fields, as well as in the communities of Americans now practicing Zen.

Finally I got to meet him: Rainy season of 1963, at a little dinner party at Ryoko-in, Kobori Roshi's temple in Daitoku-ji. I went along as one of Mrs. Ruth Sasaki's researchers. Burton Watson, Phillip Yampolsky, Seizan Yanagida and Dr. Yoshitaka Iriya, leading Zen scholars, were also there. I took the opportunity to ask Dr. Iriya once more about the walking route over the mountains from Kyoto to the Japan Sea, a four day trip. He had completed it as a young man on the occasion of deciding to make his life work Chinese literature. Dr. Iriya sketched some forks and passes for me. Then I got to bow my head to Dr. Suzuki and say a few stumbling things, and I almost wept. And I had to leave quite early, for before dawn I was starting on my walk to the Japan Sea. I carried that powerful face (and those eyebrows!) with me the whole trip.

Gary Snyder  
20 July, 1983

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#### NEWS & NOTES

1. This is our fifth issue, and out a little late. I would like to ask a favor of all of you for our next issue, even though as clerk I should be less presumptuous. The Alan Watts Society For Comparative Philosophy is sponsoring a celebration to coincide with the tenth anniversary of Alan's transformation-passing-death. It is planned for Friday evening Nov. 18 and Saturday Nov. 19 at the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco. It would then seem quite appropriate if our next issue were devoted to Alan. Might I ask then all of you who feel the urge to join in to send in letters of appreciation-celebration, hopefully before Nov. 7.

Some of you have begun to correspond personally as a result of our Letter, which is part of the whole idea. Let's have more of it. I was about to try to design a post card as an aid in that direction, to be included in this issue, leaving you with few excuses to not dash off a note to someone. However I was soon reminded that I am not at all an artist.

Also, by the way, it would be a good idea if the title and design on the front page of our Letter were changed every year. Some of you may be interested in coming up with a 1984 version. Frances Thompson kindly did our 1983 version, and it would seem fair that others lend a hand.

To some extent, the concept for our Letter is derived from the old style Quaker meeting. They had no formal doctrine, clergy, or sermons, such being not essential since "There is that of God in every one". The meetings are mostly silent, with people standing up to speak if the spirit so moves them. The only qualification is, as I understand it, that one speaks directly from the heart. In a way we are attempting to do the same, but in the form of letters, with the kind assistance of the post office. Anyway the object is not to clam-up, but to communicate.

In our last issue I requested that maybe a few of you might volunteer to send in a real dumb letter, so we could all then relax and not worry about being so perfect all the time. Thanks to those of you who have responded.

2. Rene Pittet address, omitted in Issue #4, is 79862-022 A, P.O. Box 1000, Sandstone, Minnesota, 55072