

WIND BELL

Monthly Newsletter of Zen Center

MARCH 1964

VOL. III, NO. 2

COMING EVENTS

On Sunday, March 22 at 2 p.m. the celebration of Hina Hoya, the Universal Festival for the Ancestors, will be held at Sokoji Temple. There will be no 9 a.m. lecture on that day, although 8 a.m. zazen will be held as usual. All are invited to come to the 2 a.m. celebration in the Main Hall downstairs. Some refreshments will be offered after the service. . . .

April 9 is Buddha's birthday. This occasion will be celebrated with a service in Sokoji Hall on Sunday, April 13 at 2 p.m. There will be no 9 a.m. lecture on that day, although 8 a.m. zazen will be held as usual. Refreshments will again be offered after the 2 p.m. service. . . .

The next Sesshin is scheduled for the weekend of April 24, 25, and 26. It will begin at 5:30 p.m. Friday evening and will end Sunday afternoon at 5:00 p.m. There will be three meals served on Saturday and two meals on Sunday, but there will be no meal served Friday evening. Those who are unable to arrive by 5:30 p.m. on Friday, please arrive as soon as you can. . . .

Bishop Reirin Yamada of Los Angeles and Head of the Soto Sect in America has been invited to come to San Francisco to lead the Sesshin. Final scheduling of the Sesshin is dependent on his plans. . . .

LETTER FROM JEAN ROSS

The following is an excerpt from a letter received from Jean Ross when she was in Japan in December 1962. Jean was in Japan for about a year. During most of that time she stayed at various monasteries but she also had opportunities to see something of the country. This letter was written about the Sesshin (an extended period of strong practice of meditation) she attended at Eihei-ji, the oldest and largest Soto Zen Monastery in Japan. Eihei-ji is a monastery devoted primarily to training young priests. It is quite cold during the winter Sesshin at Eihei-ji because of the mountain snows which surround the temple.

SESSHIN AT EIHEIJI by Jean Ross

I arrived at Eihei-ji the morning of Nov. 26th. It was cold and clear, and some of the trees still retained their bright Autumn tints. Many of the temple buildings were braced by timber 6 inches in diameter, in preparation for heavy snow. I was conscious of being very fearful - fearful that I wouldn't be able to survive the intense meditation that lay ahead.

During the five days prior to, and also during sesshin, I wore three or four sweaters, black stockings that extended from my waist to my feet with an extra pair of heavy socks, and a sturdy wool skirt. The men of Eihei-ji, inside and out of the Temple, wore only their robes. Their feet were bare in the getas (sandals).

In spite of my shame that I required so much additional comfort, I asked if I could buy an electrical futon (quilt) warmer. I also asked Rev. Totsugami if I could use two pillows during sesshin, hoping the second one would ease the pain of feet and ankle. He drew himself up with a trace of scorn and said, "He (No-o)!!" This "He" set my pace--I did not use any electrical appliance, nor did I have the additional pillow. However, one thing was favorable: sesshin meditation would begin at 4:15 a.m. instead of 2:15 a.m., and would last only 40 minutes with walking meditation in between.

On the morning of Dec. 1st, I found that Sodo (meditation hall) was heated by two large hibachis, and that I was to be seated directly opposite one. When we started to meditate, Rev. Totsugami announced in

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a clear strong voice that Sesshin had begun. The first period of zazen lasted one hour and forty minutes instead of the promised forty minutes. This made me so angry that I forgot all my fears. My posture was very bad, and I was continually being poked in the back--the signal to straighten up.

During tea (served twice a day) and meals, we were expected to maintain our Zazen posture. I was sure I would be sick with pain, and I shifted position, rationalizing to myself that tea and meals should be periods of relaxation. I felt very selfish because I had extra food (bread and peanut butter, fruit, and candy) in my room. Did any of the others have the same?

The second day I forgot decorum. When I was corrected during lunch, I took it as a joke and tried to make others laugh. Afterwards I scolded myself because I was not serious enough. Did my ego require an amused response from others?

On the third day it was bitter. I found myself out of patience with all details. I was a primitive animal seeking comfort and just existing until the next break period. I missed one session of walking meditation because I was so disturbed.

On the fourth day, I decided my small self was powerless to handle the situation. I began to repeat the names of all the Zen Priests I knew, hoping one of them would help me. There was no response. Finally I decided to call on Buddha, thinking my Buddha Nature would stir a little. For the first time I could concentrate. I felt as taut as a wire that is pulled too tight, but at last there were short periods of meditation.

On the fifth day, someone changed my pillow (trying to be helpful I suppose). This was disturbing because I had battered the old one into a firm support. The new one was small with what seemed to be foam rubber stuffing. I was determined not to say anything, because if there was any difficulty, the fault lay with myself--not the pillow.

There were periods when I became "lost." For example, just before lunch during chanting everyone else turned around facing outward away from the wall, and I was not even aware of their turning.

During the afternoon the thought crossed my mind that there are no answers to the vital questions of life. When one asks a question, it means the death of the situation which caused the question to arise in the first place.

Dec. 6th found me first to be bone tired. It was a case of a timid heart in a shaking body. My small self couldn't manage things: calling on others or thinking about Buddha no longer helped: what was left? Surprisingly enough I began to be aware of three Zen Priests meditating with me. The first seemed to have tremendous strength on which I could lean. The second irritated me and seemed to be saying, "Do it yourself!" The third I felt was completely detached.

During my awareness the shaking of my body ceased and I was calm. I felt mentally clear and wide awake. At one period I became conscious of a bird singing and of a carpenter hammering. I felt that Buddha Nature was flowing through the bird and coming out a song, flowing through the carpenter's arm and emerging as the sound of the hammer.

On the seventh day we meditated from 4:15 a.m. until 1 a.m. the morning of Dec. 8th. During this time again there were periods when I was at ease, scarcely conscious of physical discomfort. I remember thinking about emptiness. In the state of "emptiness" I would have an ego (or small self) that was inactive, with Buddha Nature in a constant flow through me. Neither one of them would be a permanent stationary feature.

The service at 1:00 a.m. in Butsuden on Dec. 8th found me faint. The floor seemed to be rising to meet me. However, the Zen Priests, as grey with fatigue as I was, had enough control to act normally. This gave me strength.

I slept late and when I got up, I felt discouraged that my small self was so primitive and inadequate. There had been good moments during Sesshin, but I had not been able to sustain them. It wasn't until the 10:30 a.m. service in Hatto that I felt that a sense of proportion was returning.

There must be a new beginning.

MODEL SUBJECT NO. 49 FROM THE HEKIGAN ROKU (BLUE CLIFF RECORDS)

with a commentary by Engo Zengi, translated by Reverend Susuki, Master of Zen Center

San-cho and 'The Golden Scales' Escaping From the Net

64-03-BC, 492

Introductory Word:

Engo introducing the subject said: Seven piercings and eight holes, snatching the drums and carrying off the banner (In war-time to pierce the enemy's lines in seven or eight places and to snatch the enemy's drums and banner is metaphorically compared to the great activity of San-cho in the main subject). A hundred ramparts and a thousand entrenchments, watching the front and guarding the rear (comparisons to Sep-po's way of attending to San-cho). Or sitting on the tiger's head and seizing its tail: such is not good enough to compare to the great activity of a skillful Zen master (San-cho). Even though an ox-head disappears and a horse-head appears, this would not be miraculous enough (in comparison to the skill of Sep-po). So ponder what you will do, if you come across a man of such surpassingly great activity.

Main Subject:

Attention! San-cho asked Sep-po: "What does a mysterious golden-scaled carp escaped from the fishing net eat?" Sep-po said, "I would like to wait for your coming out of the fishing net and then answer you." San-cho said, "You, who have fifteen hundred disciples do not understand what I say." Sep-po said: "This old monk is too busy in managing temple affairs to attend to you."

Appreciatory Word (by Set-cho with notes by Reverend Susuki)

"Do not say that the golden carp which has jumped out of the fishing net is staying quietly in the water. (He is) loosening the heavens, moving the earth, shaking his fins, opening out his tail." (This refers to San-cho's statement: 'You, who have 1500 disciples...etc.')

"Spouting water to a thousand feet, a great white whale will leap through the flood. After a great thunderstorm, a cool wind came." (This refers to Sep-po's statement: 'This old monk is too busy...etc.')

"Oh this wonderful pure clean wind, who knows the mystery of such tremendous cleansing power!"

Interpretation of the Main Subject (A direct translation of Engo's remarks in the 'Hyo-sho', with some notes by Reverend Susuki).

Sep-po and San-cho--with questions and answers, giving and taking, crossing words with one another--neither won nor lost. Just think what kind of wisdom they have. San-cho had received Rin-zai's transmission and had traveled many places. It is no wonder that he was treated as a high monk. Look at the following questions and answers made between Sep-po and him. Perhaps not many people can understand the deep meaning of this dialogue without being in the realm of radical Buddhism.

San-cho asked Sep-po: "What does the mysterious golden carp escaped from a fishing net eat?" Now ponder what he meant. What is the food for that golden-scaled fish? Sep-po, who was also a great master said to San-cho: "I would like to wait for your coming-out from the net and then answer you."

Fun-yo called the kind of question that San-cho asked, "a question presenting one's own understanding," (and in the Soto school they call this kind of question a "metaphorical question.") You may say that San-cho was a real golden-scaled carp escaped from the fishing net with a great incomparable wisdom and activity. However, Sep-po, a skillful master, did not give San-cho full play, saying: "I will wait for your coming-out of the net." Look! Those two masters are standing at the top of the ten thousand foot cliff!

However, but for San-cho's next instantaneous statement, the question and answer would not make full sense. San-cho said to Sep-po: "Although you are a teacher of fifteen hundred students, you do not know how to question and answer." To this Sep-po said: "I may have been mistaken to listen to you, because I am very busy in managing temple work." Look! He became very droll!

In the manner of confrontation of the two great masters' skill, there are no restrictions: sometimes grasping, sometimes granting, to the strong with the weak, to the humble with the polite. According to the circumstances, they express themselves at their own will. If you try to understand this subject with the idea of winning or losing, you will never see San-cho, even in your dreams.

"Such is the two well-trained Zen-masters' way," said Engo, "at first they are tough and later droll. Do you still ask which has won or lost? The way of confrontation between other Zen masters is not always like this."

In order to make clear what a good Zen master San-cho was, Engo then said: Once San-cho was a head monk of Rin-zai's monastery. When Rin-zai was about to pass away, he gave his students the last sermon and said: "After my Nirvana, you should not destroy the treasury of my right Dharma eye." San-cho came up to him and said: "How dare we destroy it?" Rin-zai said: "If someone asks you about my right Dharma eye, what will you say?" San-cho gave a "Katsu!" (a loud shout). Rin-zai then said: "Who would expect that my right Dharma eye is going to vanish into that donkey's belly!" Hereby San-cho made obeisance to Rin-zai (to show his utmost respect to Rin-zai). San-cho was Rin-zai's true successor, and questions and answers between them were like this.

FROM A LECTURE

The following is the gift of Reverend Susuki's response to a question from one of his students during the Wednesday evening Lecture, February 26. The question refers to the lines from Engo's Appreciatory Word:

"After a great thunderstorm, a cool wind came,
Oh this wonderful pure clean wind,
who knows the mystery of such tremendous cleansing power!"

Question: Is it necessary to go through thunder and storm in order to attain the clear calm healing wind?

Answer: "Not always. If there is no thunderstorm, you cannot undergo it! Once when I was traveling alone in northern Japan, I met a man accompanied by a dog held by a great dog chain. The first thing he said to me (we were on a boat going to a small island) was 'Be careful, the dog is very dangerous.' We became good friends. He told me that if it was my business to save all common people, then I should know what happened to them. I had to experience what they experienced. He for instance had women and drank sake. I should practice the same in order to understand him.

"If the occasion comes to drink, it may be all right. If you have to do something, if it is inevitable, then there is the possibility of real training. But if I drank sake in order to train myself, then I would not be doing it in the same way as he, so it would not work. He agreed.

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"It is dangerous to undertake something on purpose in order to train yourself. We monks go to Eiheij monastery for training but it is not always successful. If you go of your own will, often there is wrong motivation. You expect something when you have completed it; you expect to gain enlightenment or improve your character or something.

It is quite dangerous. You must be very careful of your motivation when you do something on purpose. If we have had wrong motivation, then when we come out of the monastery, we become arrogant or conceited. We have spiritual pride in what we have done. That is very dangerous.

"There are many ways to train, the monastery is a good one. While you are there, you have to do many things. You know, if you walk through the fog, your garments will become wet, without any effort or being conscious of it, they quite naturally become wet.

"That is why we begin training with the basic teaching of transiency: there is no self and all things are changing. If you really understand these two points, and if you just remain faithful to the truth, you will be rid of useless ambitions and one day acquire good character.

"Sometimes we want hard training. If you are in discomfort or pain then it might be quite difficult to accept the fact of no self. If your legs hurt you want to have the stick on your shoulders. It takes your mind off your legs; it is a very kind thing that stick. Thus, sometimes we want hard training; but if you have the right attitude in all you do, you will be successful in your training of yourself.

"But I do not ignore the thunder or the rainstorm. It is quite interesting to walk in the storm and rain."

ZEN CENTER

Zen Center was formed to help maintain a place for meditation and instruction in Zen Buddhism. It is entirely supported by contributions from its members and friends.

ZAZEN AND LECTURE SCHEDULE

Monday through Friday

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|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Morning zazen | 5:45 - 6:45 a.m. |
| Afternoon zazen | 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. (except Wednesday) |
| Lecture Wednesday | 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. |

Saturday

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| zazen | 5:45 - 10:00 a.m. |
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Sunday

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| zazen | 8:00 - 9:00 a.m. |
| Lecture | 9:00 - 10:00 a.m. |

NOTE: No zazen on dates containing a 4 or 9 (except Sunday when there is always zazen). No zazen on Wednesday afternoon (because of lecture in evening).

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