

WIND BELL

Monthly Newsletter of Zen Center

APRIL-MAY 1964

VOL. III, NO. 3

NEWS

The long-awaited addition of an assistant priest for Reverend Suzuki has at last become a reality. Reverend Dainin Katagiri has arrived from Eihei-ji, Japan, to join us here at Soko-ji Temple. Prior to coming to San Francisco, he spent some time with Bishop Yamada in Los Angeles. We take this occasion to welcome him officially and to invite everyone to meet and talk with him.

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On April 13th, Buddha's birthday (Hana Matsuri: literally Flower Day) was celebrated at Soko-ji Temple by a parade and a service. The colorful parade followed a fourteen-block course in the vicinity of the Temple. The parade was led by a sound truck playing Japanese music and a flower covered wooden elephant bearing a statue of the child-Buddha. The elephant was drawn by children in traditional Japanese costume.

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A sesshin was held the weekend of April 24, 25, and 26th, led by Bishop Reirin Yamada of Los Angeles, head of the Soto Sect in America. All of us who attended extend our sincere thanks to him for coming so far to help us.

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As you have noticed, the Wind Bell has a new format, which we hope will make it a more effective newsletter to our members and friends. At present this publication is included within Zen Center's budget. But with the addition of an assistant priest and an enlargement of the Zendo (necessitated by increased participation in dally zazen), we face new financial obligations. We hope that through contributions from all of you interested in Zen Center, we will be able to continue sending out the Wind Bell free of cost. (If you would like to make a regularly monthly donation, please write for a pledge form. If not, contributions of any amount are always welcome.)

If you have suggestions of announcements or items for the Wind Bell, please direct them to either Trudy Dixon or Dick Baker.

SOJOURN AT A SOTO ZEN MONASTERY IN JAPAN

The following is an account by Grahame Petchey, last year's president of Zen Center, of the first four days of his four-month stay at Eihei-ji Temple in Japan last fall. "Tangaryo" is the room and the trial period during which a prospective monk must wait in meditation prior to being admitted into the regular life of the monastery.

TANGARYO by Grahame Petchey

My train arrived in Fukui station early in the morning, just twenty eight hours after my plane left San Francisco. I had no difficulty in recognizing Rev. Suzuki's son, Hoichisan, who had come from Eihei-ji that morning to meet me. We found our way through pouring rain to the tailor's shop where I was to pick up my robes before going to Eihei-ji. The tailor and his family were all up to meet me. They derived a great deal of amusement from measuring my various limbs and comparing sizes with their own; each time they repeated a phrase which was to become all too familiar to me during my stay "Okii desu ne" (big isn't he!). We gathered all my various robes and equipment together in a giant size "furoshiki" and took the tram to Eihei-ji.

We stopped at a small temple near the entrance to the monastery. Here we assembled the tra-

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1881 Bush Street · San Francisco
Rev. Shunryu Suzuki · Fillmore 6-7540

ditional luggage of a travelling monk. A front box (kesa gori) containing the Buddhist Robe (okesa), books of Sutras and a copy of Shobogenzo, eating equipment (oryoki), and a small sum of money to pay for a funeral in case of one's death. A back box containing a razor and sharpening stone and other toilet necessities. We then made a visit to the local barber where I said farewell to all but the last stubs of my hair. Hoichi then shaved my head after the manner of Buddhist monks. By now it was lunch time and it was decided I should enjoy one last good meal before entering Eihei-ji. I went to a restaurant and had my lunch, feeling very conspicuous, with my newly shaven head. As I stood up I banged my head on the ceiling and understood for the first time in my life the usefulness of having hair. My misfortune caused much laughter in the crowded restaurant, but I was too embarrassed to share the joke!

Back again at the temple I prepared to leave. I put on my robes, kesa gori, waraji (straw sandals) and large hat. At the last moment Hoichi pointed to my wedding ring and thus I said goodbye to the last connection with my everyday life. Although I had little idea of what lay ahead, I felt somewhat apprehensive and very much alone in my new world. We must have made a very strange sight for the hundreds of tourists at Eihei-ji that day; Hoichisan struggling with my all too large suitcase and a six-foot-two monk with bamboo hat in one hand and zafu (zazen pillow) in the other making their way toward the main gate.

At the main gate I was required to take off my waraji and luggage and prostrate myself three times. I had to wait until the crowds of visitors made sufficient room for me to perform the bows. Hoichi then showed me the manner of using the restroom. It seemed very complicated and I very much feared that if I once took off my koromo (a black robe worn over the kimono) I would never be able to put it back on. We then proceeded to a small room where I was to await my first test. I was told to sit in seisan posture (legs folded underneath); Hoichi then said goodbye. From now on I was on my own.

I waited for what must have been an hour. I very much regretted having spent most of the morning in this same posture as it soon became a very painful wait. At length the shoji opened and a voice asked "What is your name?" My first test or mondo was much limited by my lack of Japanese. Later, when I heard the shouts and scolding of other young novices seeking entry I became very thankful that mine was so limited. Having passed my first test I was led to Tangaryo (approximately - training room) where I was to remain for one week as a test of my sincerity.

There was another young monk sitting out his term in Tangaryo. I arranged my luggage as instructed by the senior monk and he checked each piece, making sure I knew their names. He then gave instructions to the other novice to teach me the manner of using the oryoki (eating bowls). This is a rather difficult practice somewhat resembling tea ceremony in that each movement and position follows a prescribed pattern. I was still practising when the bell rang for Banka. In great haste we prepared, the young monk throwing my robes upon me in an effort not to be late. We hurried towards the Butsuden only to arrive and find we had forgotten our zagus (a zagu is a small square of cloth a monk uses when bowing). Nothing was said at the time but when we returned to Tangaryo we received a scolding the like of which I had never known. I wished to protest but found it prudent to say nothing. This was at least a wise judgement - as I found out later.

Little time had passed when the wooden gong sounded for dinner. Holding our Oryokis high in the air we marched through the corridors to the kitchen. I was to receive my first and most memorable meal at Eihei-ji. I tried as best I could to follow the ritual as I had been shown but somehow found everyone was ready to eat when I had scarcely laid out my bowls. I was scarcely half-way through when the other monks were beginning to make signs for me to hurry as they had already finished. The entire meal including the washing of the bowls took only fifteen minutes. I would not care to comment on how the food tasted other than that this was a very good reason for eating quickly. When I returned to Tangaryo I was ordered to practise the eating ritual over and over again.

My days in Tangaryo were among the hardest of my life. I felt entirely alone in a world where everyday values didn't seem to count and an extraordinary emphasis placed on those things we normally regard as unimportant. No mistake went unnoticed and no one showed the slightest sympathy for my greater-than-average difficulties. Everything was new and strange to me, language, culture, clothing, food, sleeping, rest room, etc. We had to practice Zazen in Tangaryo all day and only left our tiny room to attend services, eat, or go to the restroom. We had frequent visits from senior monks to discipline us or to remind us not to fall asleep on our pillows. These long hours gave me much time to question my motives for being at Eihei-ji.

Soon my spirit was broken and all motivation gone. As escape seemed impossible there was nothing to do but remain on the pillow and do as I was told. Eating was still an ordeal and since during services we had to sit in seisan posture this afforded no relief for painful legs. Another novice had arrived so we were now three. When we felt no one could hear we would sometimes whisper to one another; this helped to relieve the monotony somewhat. The subject was always the same - those things which were most difficult and those things we missed most.

On the fourth morning a senior monk sent for me and asked me to write my name fifty times on a piece of paper. I had no idea what it was for but I greatly enjoyed writing my name since it

seemed to me that I had practically forgotten it. He wrote my Buddhist name by the side of my everyday name. When he had finished he said "namu cardu" and explained I would use it when I was introduced to the other monks. He then told me to return to Tangaryo and put on my okesa and besu (a kind of tabi). Together with the other novice who had been with me in Tangaryo since my first day I was led to the Sodo (Zen practice hall). We then had a short ceremony for our entering the Sodo for the first time. I began to feel that my days in Tangaryo were over but hardly dared let myself believe it. After the ceremony, we were given sweet tea and little cookies in a senior monk's room. We then visited each monk in turn. In doing this we had to shout in a loud and clear voice, (as, in fact one always must when formally addressing a monk at Eihei-ji,) "Zanto yoroshku" and bow four times. We did this in almost every room in the monastery. Only when it was all over did I learn that Tangaryo was over. The following week was to be the anniversary of Dogen's death and the senior monks were too busy to cope with novices in Tangaryo. "Goodu timming desu ne?" was the general comment. I had to agree.

I was now a Zanto at Eihei-ji and my stay in the Sodo had begun.

MODEL SUBJECT No. 52 from the HEKIGAN ROKU (BLUE CLIFF RECORDS)

With an Introduction and Commentary by Reverend Suzuki, Master of Zen Center.

Jo-shu's "Donkeys cross, Horses cross."

Introduction by Reverend Suzuki:

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Jo-shu (Personal name: Sramanera) of this subject was a native of Northern China. When he was ordained (at quite a young age), he visited Nan-sen with his master. "Do you know the name of this monastery?" asked Nan-sen, who had been taking a nap in his room. The boy said, "Sacred Elephant Monastery." "Then did you see a sacred elephant?" asked Nan-sen. The boy replied, "I did not see any sacred elephants, but I saw a reclining Bodhisattva." Nan-sen raised himself up and said, "Have you your own master now?" "Yes, I have," said the boy. "Who is he?" asked Nan-sen. To this the boy Sramanera made a formal obeisance which should be given only to his own master, saying, "Spring cold is still here. Please take good care of yourself." Nan-sen called up Ino-oshu (who took care of the monastery) and gave him a seat.

One day Nan-sen allowed Jo-shu to meet him in his room. Jo-shu asked Nan-sen, "What is the true Way?" "Ordinary mind is the true Way," said Nan-sen. "Is it something to be attained or not to be attained?" asked Jo-shu. "To try to attain it is to avert from it," said Nan-sen. "When you do not try to attain it, how do you know the true Way?" asked Jo-shu. To this question, Nan-sen's answer was very polite. "The true way is not a matter to be known or not to be known. To know is to have a limited idea of it, and not to know is just psychological unawareness. If you want to achieve the absolute, where there is no doubt, you should be clear enough and vast enough to be like empty space." Hereby Jo-shu acquired full understanding of the true way of Zen.

When Jo-shu was sixty-one years of age, he heard that his former master in his hometown was not well, and he went all the way back from South China to take care of him. His parents heard about his coming back from the South and wanted to have him home. But as soon as Jo-shu learned of his parent's wishes, he left his old master before they came.

He used to say, "I must ask my way from a child of seven, if he is good enough. But I shall be a teacher of any old man of a hundred years." At the age of eighty he resided at Jo-shu (North China). He appreciated the bare life of ancient patriarchs, and used only a broken-legged chair, repaired by a piece of firewood. Throughout the forty years during which he lived the simplest form of life in Jo-shu monastery, he never wrote a single page of a letter, begging for his support.

Main Subject

A monk said to Jo-shu, "The famous stone bridge, I have just seen it; but it was nothing but a simple stepping-stone bridge," and requested his answer. Jo-shu said, "You did see a simple stepping-stone bridge, but did not see the actual bridge." The monk then asked, "What is the stone bridge you mean?" Jo-shu said, "It is that which donkeys cross and horses cross."

Commentary by Reverend Suzuki

This monk came to Jo-shu ignoring the great master's prestige, and said "I did not see anything but a common stepping-stone bridge," and requested his answer. Jo-shu in return gave him an interesting gift problem, saying, "you did not see the real stone bridge, but only a simple stepping-stone bridge." Now the monk was caught in Jo-shu's gift-box of duality (intellectual problem: right or wrong, this or that, phenomena or noumena, interplay of the subjective and the objective) and asked, "What is the real stone bridge?" Now Jo-shu, wishing to free the monk from the idea of some special stone bridge, answered "Donkeys cross and horses cross."

This usual manner of instruction is not like Toku-san or Rin-zai, who answer by means of sticks or scolding voice. Jo-shu just answered with simple common words. This 'koan' looks quite common, but it does not allow you to become accustomed to it.

Once Jo-shu asked a head monk of the Zen-do (Zen practice hall) who it was who had built the stone bridge. The head monk said "Riyo built it." Jo-shu asked again, "When he was building it, on what did he work? (i.e., did he work on subjective bridge or objective bridge or what?)" The head monk could not answer. Jo-shu said, "People talk about this stone bridge, but when asked this kind of simple question, they cannot answer."

One day when Jo-shu was cleaning the main hall a monk came and asked him, "Why is there dust in the hall to clean?" Jo-shu said, "Because dust comes in from outside." The monk said, "I cannot recognize pure clean hall to have dust in it." Jo-shu said, "I see one more piece of dust here." Those were the old Zen master Jo-shu's way.

The Zen master is supposed to be tough enough to remain faithful to the way, but all the better to be not so tough and follow the way.

Appreciatory Word by Set-Cho:

Without setting himself up as an isolated peak,
Old Jo-Shu's Zen is insurmountably high.
Who knows he is catching giant turtles,
In the vast ocean of Buddhism?
That old scholar Kan-Kei may be compared to Jo-Shu
Only to make us all laugh.
Suddenly breaking the arrows was quite futile.

NOTE:

Kan-kei (895) was a disciple of Rinzaï, and contemporary with Jo-shu. He was asked a question similar to the one Jo-shu asked in this Main Subject. Kan-kei's question and answer was as follows:

A young monk: "I have just come from the famous Kan-kei Valley, but I saw nothing but a small lake."

Kan-kei: "But didn't you see the real Kan-kei Valley?"

The young monk: "What is the Kan-kei Valley you mean?"

Kan-kei: "Breaking the arrow suddenly."

SUBSCRIPTIONS

There is no charge for a subscription to the Wind Bell, but Zen Center welcomes voluntary subscriptions of \$2.00 a year to help meet publication expenses.

ZAZEN AND LECTURE SCHEDULE

Monday through Friday		Saturday
Morning zazen	5:45 - 6:45 a.m.	Zazen 5:45 - 10:00 a.m.
Afternoon zazen	5:30 - 6:30 p.m. (except Wednesday)	
Lecture Wednesday	7:30 - 9:00 p.m.	Sunday
		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).

ZEN CENTER
1881 BUSH STREET
SAN FRANCISCO

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