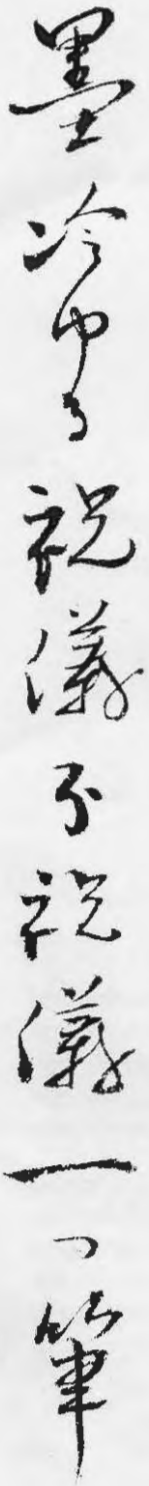

Ink stone cold
joy and grief
one brush

Wind Bell

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Contents

Cover calligraphy and poem by Mitsu Suzuki Sensei

Mitsu Suzuki Sensei is celebrating her seventy-seventh birthday this year. A seventy-seventh birthday is called *kiju*, meaning "joy of long life," and is a very special occasion for a Japanese person. With great warmth and boundless gratitude for all she has shared with us, we at Zen Center offer her a deep bow.

In honor of her life and teaching, Gregory Wood and Kaz Tanahashi Sensei are translating her poems into English. The book, a bi-lingual edition entitled *Temple Dusk* is forthcoming from Parallax Press in the summer of 1991. An excerpt from the book is included in this issue, along with several articles about her life.

In Response to the War by Sojun Mel Weitsman

The events in the Persian Gulf came on so fast and escalated with such ferocity that most of us were caught up in a dramatic whirlwind that carried away the whole country, indeed, the whole world. We were left feeling helplessly bypassed, as if the processes of the present did not include us. We felt unheard, angry and frustrated.

With sudden shock for many people, the reality of the domination of our lives by the military, industrial, political machine has finally been unveiled.

A great majority of people go along with this stance; the magnetism of power and a desire for protection dim the light of conscience and responsibility to mankind and to the world. Imagine what it would be like actually to see a hundred thousand people torn to shreds with our approval and not even acknowledge any sorrow for the massacre.

As I write this we have seen a videotape of the sadistic violence of some police officers who unleashed their pent-up fury on a speeding black motorist while twenty policemen stood around and watched. Isn't this a reflection of the example from on high? The parallel to the Gulf War is just too striking.

Right now it seems like our efforts in peacemaking and all the hard-won gains toward fairness and equality are being undermined. Now, more than ever, we must renew our intentions far beyond any discouragement we may feel. Peace and enlightened behavior are a way of life to be practiced without attachment to reward or result. It is important to not create more animosity and instead to exercise Great Patience. Let us continue to cultivate peace in our daily lives, beginning with ourselves and our surroundings.

From the Metta Sutta

May all beings be happy.
May they be joyous and live in safety.
All living beings, whether weak or strong,
In high, middle or low realms of existence,
Small or great, visible or invisible,
Near or far, born or to be born,
May all beings be happy.
Let no one deceive another,
Nor despise any being in any state.
Let none by anger or hatred risk harm to another.
Even as a mother at the risk of her life
Watches over and protects her only child,
So with a boundless mind let one cherish all living things,
Suffusing love over the whole world,
Above, below and all around, without limit.

Thoughts on the Relationship of Teacher and Student

From a lecture
by Sojun Weitsman

Berkeley zendo

There's a word I was discussing with somebody this morning: *sendaba*. In Sanskrit it's *saindhava;* in Japanese, *sendaba*. It has four meanings—one word with four meanings. Dogen Zenji explains that when Shakyamuni Buddha was speaking about it, he said that sendaba means salt, a chalice, water and a horse.

Dogen tells this story of the relationship between a king and his attendant. When the king requested sendaba, his attendant knew what he meant. If the king wanted some seasoning, he'd say "sendaba" and his attendant would bring him some salt. If he was thirsty and said "sendaba", his attendant would bring him a chalice, and if he wanted a bath, he'd say "sendaba" and his attendant would bring him water and a washcloth. If he wanted to go somewhere he'd say "sendaba", and his attendant would bring him his horse. He didn't have to explain what he wanted. He would just say "Sendaba."

This kind of understanding and sensitivity illustrates the affinity between a student and a teacher when they're closely in accord with each other. When the student's mind is in accord with the teacher's mind, they can have this kind of mutual response. This example illustrates the oneness of the teacher's and the disciple's intuitive understanding, when self-centeredness is completely dropped.

There's another story that Dogen tells in the Shobogenzo which illustrates this pretty well. Suzuki Roshi also told this story. The three characters are, in Japanese, *Issan, Kyosan and Kyogen*. Issan was the teacher and Kyosan and Kyogen were his students. The *Ikkyo* school of Zen is a combination of Issan's name and Kyosan's name. That was one of the five schools of Zen in China. Issan and Kyosan together, a teacher and a disciple, started that school, and Kyogen was another student of Issan.

Katagiri Roshi's ashes were interred at Tassajara during a ceremony in March.

One day Issan was in his room sleeping, maybe in the afternoon when it was warm. In most hot countries, people take a snooze in the afternoon, a siesta. Kyosan, his student, came by, opened the door and saw that he was sleeping. Just before he closed the door, Issan said, "Oh, don't be so formal. Why don't you come on in. I'm not really asleep, just kind of dozing."

So Kyosan went in, and Issan said, "I was having this daydream. What do think it was?" Kyosan bowed to him and without hesitation went downstairs to the bathroom and got a pitcher of water and a towel and brought it up to Issan. Issan washed his face and said, "That was wonderfully refreshing. Thank you."

About that time his disciple Kyogen was walking by, and he looked in on them. Issan said "Oh, come on in. Kyosan just brought me this wonderful pan of water and a towel to wash my face with." Kyogen smiled and went downstairs; he brewed some tea and brought it up with three cups. He said, "Since Kyosan already brought you a towel and water, I made some tea." And so the three of them sat down and drank tea. That's the end of the story.

How does the student know what the teacher wants, actually? What does the teacher expect of you? This should always be in the student's mind: "How am I supposed to respond? What am I supposed to do?"

Sometimes the teacher will give you something very specific to do or study. But a teacher is not necessarily a dictatorial or instructive person; different teachers have different styles of teaching. Some teachers are like a great high wall, and there's no way to ascend that wall. They are like a sheer cliff, and you're always trying to find a way into the teacher's mind. Other teachers are very open and friendly and seem like your pal. These are two extremes and there are all the variations in between. You can't say that all teachers are the same, but there are certain characteristics that teachers share.

A good teacher will stimulate a student to seek, to find out what they are supposed to do. One of Suzuki Roshi's ways of teaching was to suggest or to hint. He'd say something in a very casual way about what could be done in some circumstance without saying more about it. He would mostly point you in a direction, and it was up to you to find your way. If you were a sincere student, he would give you a good problem.

If you were aware, you'd realize, "This is what I'm supposed to do." If you weren't you'd think, "He's just thinking about that." So his way of instruction was very subtle. He didn't tell you what to do directly. But he always pointed out what to do in some way. And you had to be tuned in enough to pick it up. If you weren't alert, you might think nothing was happening and eventually go away.

This is one way a teacher chooses students without really choosing. For the sake of the three treasures a teacher should help and encourage people to practice. But to try to cultivate a lot of personal students in order to be a teacher can be egotistical.

There are some who will only take the best students, and there are others who will accept everyone. But when it comes down to it, a teacher may have only a few actual students even though he or she is a teacher to many. It's possible to spend your whole life with a teacher and never understand what he was doing or what your relationship to her is.

A teacher-student relationship does not necessarily have to be formal, but a teacher knows right away when a student is responding. Those students who don't pick up on the suggestions either stay around for a long time and wonder what's going on or else they leave. A teacher sometimes has no students; it's true—no real students. A teacher can have fifty people around or a hundred or two hundred people and not have any students. Some teachers have lots of students. Some teachers practice very closely with their students, and other teachers are very aloof and their students hardly ever see them.

Some teachers have attendants. A student may work closely with a teacher as an attendant, or in our particular tradition, as *jisha* or *anja*. In the monastery these are positions in which the student is very close to the teacher. The *anja* makes the teacher's bed, washes the dishes, brings food for the teacher, keeps the house clean, and takes care of all the mundane affairs. Through this work the anja has a very good opportunity to understand the teacher's mind.

The *jisha* is usually an older or more advanced student. The jisha helps the teacher with his or her work by writing letters, acting as an intermediary between the teacher and other students, setting up the teacher's schedule and appointments, more of a confidante. In both cases teacher and student are establishing a relationship based on a deep intuitive affinity.

A teacher can have a lot of idiosyncrasies, and may not be so intelligent, or may not be good at doing things, but should at least have a good understanding, a right understanding. A teacher may not be personable, but the important thing is that he or she has the right understanding and can communicate the right Dharma. Dogen says, when you meet a teacher, don't criticize shortcomings; just be receptive. To be a good student you have to be able to use the teacher's mistakes and shortcomings to help you.

Everyone has a good side and a bad side, including our teachers. A student should be able to tell the difference, making an effort to avoid assimilating and communicating the teacher's faults as if they were the true Dharma or

Retreat and workshop space at Tassajara

some skillful means. But when a teacher's faults seriously tip the balance that person should stop teaching.

You may go around forever looking for the perfect teacher. You may see a teacher and say, "This teacher has a lot of shortcomings. I'm going to go and find another." And if you go to another, pretty soon you may see that this teacher has shortcomings, too. So you go to find another. When you read their books or hear some lectures you think, "That's a good teacher." You go to study with that teacher and pretty soon you begin to see the flaws, and you say, "This teacher has a lot of shortcomings, a lot of flaws." You can do this endlessly. At some point you have to stop and just practice with somebody.

In the same way, the teacher accepts the student's shortcomings. We expect the teacher to be something wonderful and perfect. In this imperfect world, no one is perfect. On the other hand, in this perfect world, there's nothing that's not perfect. If we can understand this point, we can be discerning enough to find our own way. It's important to let go of our image of the ideal teacher or we will not be able to see the teacher in front of us.

When Te-shan met his teacher Lung-tan (Dragon Pool) for the first time, he said, "I have long desired to visit the Dragon Pool. But now that I am here, I see neither pool nor dragon." But it wasn't long before gentle Lung-tan turned Te-shan completely around.

Staff meeting at Tassajara

The students' practice is kind of like the salmon when they go up river. They go up the river, and as they go they have many difficulties. The river gets narrower and narrower and there's less and less water. They have to jump over high rocks and waterfalls to get up the river, and it takes all their energy to do it. As they continue up, their energy gets more and more concentrated, and their path gets narrower and narrower. The salmon's endeavor becomes more and more concentrated until his body, mind and circumstances are all one thing. This is very close to the way a student practices.

Enlightenment is right there in the midst of that practice. The salmon's path is enlightened from beginning to end. You can't say that when the salmon spawns, that's the point of enlightenment; the salmon's enlightened activity is in each turn of the way. On each moment's circumstance the salmon shows its enlightenment. The salmon has to have this quest. Suzuki Roshi called it our inmost request, arousing the supreme thought.

What the teacher wants to do, you know, is to practice with the students in the realm of realization. The teacher responds to the student, and the student responds to the teacher, until finally communication becomes very subtle; there's not much difference in the understanding of the teacher and

the student. When that understanding is perfect, we don't have to call it communication. It's just One Mind. *Sendaba.*

Even though there is this subtle affinity, the student is the student and the teacher is the teacher. And they're two completely different people. They don't look alike; they don't necessarily act alike. And eventually the student should go beyond the teacher. This is how Zen Buddhism stays alive: the student develops beyond the teacher. Then the teacher may ask the student to go away: "You are on your own," and the student can go away and develop independently.

It's very important to have communication so that the student can figure out how to continue when the teacher is not available. Sometimes the student will come to the teacher, but the teacher will ignore him, and the student has to find her Way independently for awhile. A teacher knows how to throw a competent student back on his own resources.

We're usually courteous and welcoming and we invite people in saying, "How do you do," and so forth. But basically it's up to the student to want to do something. If the student keeps ignoring the teacher or ignoring their relationship, the teacher has other things to do than to worry about that. But the teacher is always concerned about the students anyway. Sometimes the teacher must wake up the student with a challenge. Some students will respond very quickly when you say something, and some students you have to beat over the head before they get the point. But I don't like to beat people over the head. I would rather we sit back and have a cup of tea.

It's nice to have a small sangha where the teacher is accessible to students. Many sanghas grow very big and the teacher is not so available to everyone. But when you have a small sangha, you can have a more intimate relationship with the teacher. That is always ideal: to have a small sangha where people can practice closely together and have an intimate relationship.

Relationship to the teacher and sitting zazen is the basis of our practice. Those two things: sitting zazen and discussing your understanding with the teacher, bringing questions and listening to lecture. Listening to lecture and bringing some question is very important.

In some sense what you do is your own practice. You're independent and what you do is just what you do. But what you do also affects everybody else around you. If you don't take that into consideration, you don't have the mind of a well-rounded student. So we practice in our daily life by taking into account the fact that what we do affects everything and everybody around us in some way. If you know how to do that, every situation you're in becomes a vehicle for practice. So you don't really have to be with your teacher all the time. You can freely come and go with your teacher if you

understand how to practice. Interacting with those around us in a non-self-centered way is how we practice. Then all circumstances and people around us can become our teacher.

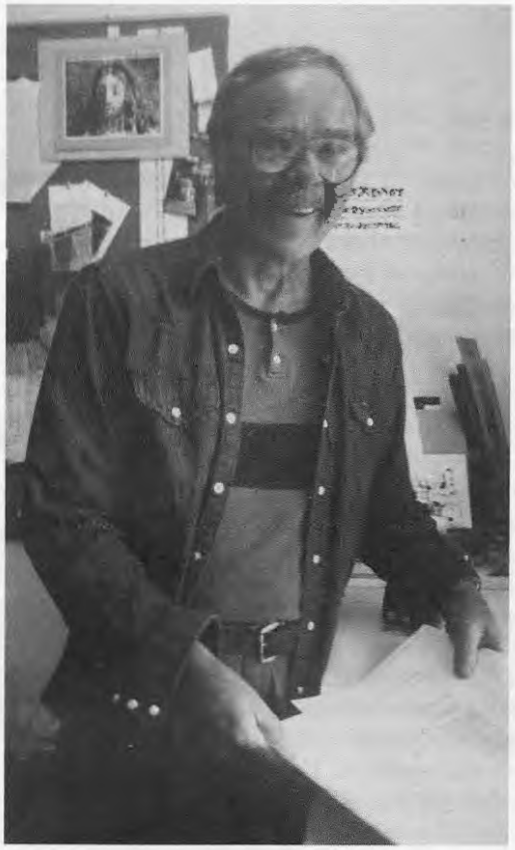
So I can say my teacher is a specific person in a specific place. But actually, everything is our teacher as well. All circumstances are my teacher. If you really understand that, then you know what and who your teacher is. Some teachers ask for strict obedience. But a student-teacher relationship can be based on mutual respect and affinity. Loyalty is based on trust and non-manipulative love. We always respect our teacher as Buddha. We bow to our teacher; we bow to Buddha. In the same way we respect everyone as Buddha. We respect the temple pillar as Buddha. We can bow to the pillar and we can bow to our cushion. We can bow to our dinner or breakfast and to the toilet.

When the jisha and the anja take care of the teacher, they do so with generosity and genuine kindness. In that way, they forget themselves. When you're really absorbed in taking care of someone, you can forget yourself. This is a wonderful kind of practice. The teacher needs to know how to respond to the jisha and the anja without taking advantage of them. A mature teacher doesn't want to be worshipped by people. Sometimes a teacher may take advantage of people, take advantage of their devotion, make a kind of worship out of it. Teachers should always avoid this kind of manipulation.

Of course taking advantage of a student sexually should be strictly avoided. A teacher should be aware of his or her weaknesses and susceptibilities and be able to check a dangerous situation when it arises. The intimacy of a teacher-student relationship can easily bring forth sexual feelings which can be transformed into genuine love beyond self-interest.

Actually, what the teacher is trying to do is to help the student to be independent. One of the most satisfying things for a teacher is to see a student self-motivated and full of faith and confidence. When the student is independent, then she can be halfway around the world and the student and teacher are on a parallel level.

The two of them may be doing completely different things; yet they are always practicing together, taking care of the three treasures. When the teacher and student are independently motivated to take care of the Dharma together, then helping others and cultivating their own practice becomes the way to go.



Peter Bailey
(1924-1991)

Peter Bailey, long time Zen Center artist, calligrapher and graphic designer for our publications, died on April 23 after a long illness.

Peter, a North Beach regular in the fifties, sixties and seventies, was involved with the beats and the Haight Ashbury scene. His work appeared in the *Oracle*, as well as journals of calligraphy, often under the name Red Dog Pie Face.

In the mid-sixties he began working on *Wind Bell*. He joined the Editorial Board of *Wind Bell* in 1983 and moved into the City Center building in the mid-eighties. Though plagued by arthritis and other ailments he regularly did walking meditation at the time of morning zazen. Peter's free and open style helped create the distinctive look of *Wind Bell* and of Zen Center pamphlets and fliers.

A show of his work will be on display May 17-June 30, with a reception at 7:30 on Friday May 17 at the City Center at 300 Page Street.

There will be more on Peter in the next issue.

Zen Center News

Abbots' Council Statement on Sex

Since the early days at Zen Center, teachers have suggested guidelines with regard to the forming of sexual relationships at Zen Center, the simplest being the admonishment, "Don't hurt each other." There was an informal policy at all three practice places known as the "six month rule." It was presented to discourage students from starting a new sexual relationship during the first few months of practice, to enable them to devote themselves completely to the practice. Although it was not formally enforced, it was an acknowledgment of the potential for suffering and disruption that sexual involvements can bring.

In 1990 Zen Center hosted a conference titled, *Toward an American Vinaya.* One impetus for the conference was widespread concern over the behavior of some Buddhist teachers in America, especially the occurrences of respected teachers becoming sexually involved with one or more of their students.

At a meeting last summer, a group of second generation Zen teachers (including both Zen Center Abbots) discussed this issue and considered the possibility of coming out with a group statement upholding a policy of no sexual relations between teachers and students. The teachers present decided instead to formulate policies with their own groups.

The Zen Center Abbots' Council has put together the following statement as a working draft. The Council agreed that each person who teaches and holds private interviews at Zen Center would commit themselves to this policy. The Spring 1991 issue of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship Newsletter contains a thorough discussion of this issue.

> *Over the years we have come to realize more and more the very great harm, both psychological and spiritual, that results from teachers becoming sexually involved with their students, both for the teacher and student involved and for the community as a whole.*
>
> *Therefore, when people come to Zen Center they can be assured that the teachers here have all made a commitment to not be involved sexually with the students at Zen Center.*

Planned Giving

When you are doing your estate planning, if you wish to make a bequest to Zen Center, please contact the Development Office at 300 Page Street in San Francisco, and we will be glad to assist you in considering your options.

New Positions

As of May lst, Vice President for Fund Raising and Development Robert Lytle is passing on his responsibilities to Linda Ruth Cutts. Robert has been working since 1986 to develop the funding base at Zen Center and to create a master plan for the three physical plants; these seeds are bearing fruit and we are deeply grateful to Robert for his great contribution.

New Vice President Linda Cutts has been practicing at Zen Center since 1971; she was ordained in 1975 and was *Shuso* (Head Monk) at Tassajara in 1980. More recently, she has been Head of Practice in the city and Board Chair. She also leads a sitting group in San Francisco's Cole Valley. In her new position she will be leading the upcoming capital campaign. She looks forward to developing our understanding of the funding needs of Zen Center, enabling us to provide a secure financial base for the future.

With this issue of *Wind Bell*, we are introducing a new editor-in-chief. Editor Michael Wenger was appointed President of Zen Center last September and is busy with his new responsibilities. Michael has been on the *Wind Bell* staff for many years and has been editor-in-chief since 1986. We wish to thank him for his excellent work and devotion to the *Wind Bell.*

Our new editor is Laurie Senauke. She has been practicing at Zen Center since 1980, worked at Greens Restaurant, and lived at Tassajara for three years; more recently she served as Abbots' Assistant and Board Chair. She has been on leave from Zen Center since last October, occupied with bringing baby Silvie into the world. We welcome her back in this new position.

This Fall voting members of Zen Center chose five people to serve on the Board of Directors. Fu Schroeder and Marc Lesser were re-elected, and Grace Damman, Blanche Hartman and Steve Stucky were selected to join the Board. New appointed members are Ty Cashman, Huey Johnson and Gladys Thacher.

This year Secretary Victoria Austin stepped into a new role as Abbots' Assistant. She also teaches yoga in and around Zen Center.

New Secretary Rosalie Curtis is also the new *Wind Bell* layout artist. Rosalie has been practicing at Zen Center since 1982 and has been Head Cook at Tassajara and the City Center. She has her hands full now and we wish her well.

Mitsu Suzuki Sensei

Mitsu Suzuki Sensei was born April 23, 1914, in Shizuoka City, Japan, into the Sakai family. People wondered if she had come mouth first out of her mother's body, since she loved storytelling and would take main roles in dramas. After studying at Anzai Primary School in her native city, she received a four-year education at Shizuoka Prefectural Girls' High School. She also took private lessons studying sewing, the koto, and flower arrangement.

In 1966 at the age of 22, Mitsu was married to Masaharu Matsuno, a reconnaissance soldier on a seaplane carried by the battleship Nagato. The next year, when she was seven months pregnant, she had to see her husband off to battle. The following year their daughter Harumi was born. Soon after seeing Harumi's first picture, Masaharu was killed in action in China.

When Harumi was three, Mitsu started working for a kindergarten. She was trained as a teacher at Nara Womens' College for one year with the help of the War Widow Aid Association. During World War II she worked for a prefectural kindergarten-nursery school. After air raids by US bombers started, she and her two assistants would have to take the children into the bunker every day. The entire city of Shizuoka was burned in 1945.

After the war she was intending to stay as the director of the kindergarten for the rest of her career. But Shunryu Suzuki, abbot of Rinso-in Zen Temple in Yaizu, heard about her reputation as a teacher. He requested persistently that she help restore the historical kindergarten attached to his temple. Finally she accepted his offer and moved to Yaizu in 1949. His wife died later, leaving three children, Yasuko, Hoitsu and Otohiro.

In 1958 she married Shunryu who was 57. The following year Shunryu left for San Francisco to be abbot of Soko-ji Temple. Mitsu stayed in Japan and took care of the children and two kindergartens. In 1961 she moved to San Francisco, hoping to bring him back to Japan soon, but she has resided in the United States ever since. "I went for wool but ended up shorn." When Shunryu Suzuki Roshi died in 1971, she remained at San Francisco Zen Center; she taught tea ceremony to students until she retired in March 1991.

Okusan's 77th birthday party

Seventy-seven Years of My Life

Mitsu Suzuki

The best part of my life has been that I could experience love as a mother. Although I live in the United States, the thought that I have a daughter in Japan has always enriched my life.

I was raised without a mother, so I was hungry for a mother's love. As a child I had to take care of my clothes and everything myself. I was a determined and proud person, and I didn't like that part of myself; I wanted to be a warm-hearted person. I wanted to develop my spiritual life, so after I finished girl's high school I went to the Christian church and was baptized. My family members didn't like me going to church; they said if I became a Christian I'd have less chance to be married.

I got married in 1936. My husband was in the Navy-Air Force reconnaissance. Neither of us had any idea that the war between China and Japan was going to start. The next year, on the day of the Bon festival, July 13, the war broke out and he had to leave. He was stationed on a warship that carried seaplanes. I was pregnant at that time. Every day was a horrible experience, because the wives of other soldiers received telegrams that their hus-

bands had been killed. There was news on the radio that they bombed some parts of China and two airplanes did not come back. I thought that one of them might be his airplane. Then my mother-in-law received a telegram that he had been killed.

One of my husband's jobs was to choose targets for bombs. When he was going on a mission to China I would write to him: "Please remember that these people in China also have wives and children; I would like you to target rice fields instead of cities and towns. Drop bombs to surprise the snails in the rice fields."

About three years ago we had a fifty years memorial service for him and I told this story to the friends who attended. Someone said, "Did you really write that kind of letter?" And I said, "Yes I did. The suffering of Chinese people would be the same as my suffering."

My first husband was a very cheerful and mature person. He was very thoughtful; for example, he took care of all the details when my father visited us. I wanted my daughter to be like him and not like me. When I was pregnant and he was away, I was sending messages to the child in my womb—sending my wish that this child would be like him. And I am blessed because actually Harumi's nature is similar to her father's, although she never met him.

Looking back on seventy-seven years of my life, my ideal was the life of marriage. Unfortunately I was only a wife for ten years altogether during my two marriages. But I feel fortunate; both of my husbands were very fine people.

I'm very grateful that while in America I have been living in a Buddhist temple. My friends tell me where I live is so special, not like typical American society. I don't know life outside this community and it's been wonderful to be here.

I could not really teach tea ceremony in a formal way—I didn't have the correct tea utensils or formal tea room. And I didn't have enough knowledge myself to teach formal tea ceremony. But because I was studying Zen, I wanted my students to grasp the heart of Zen. That is, in a very narrow space, a one mat room or two mat room, you establish a universe. Here there is harmony between host and guest. The host is always thoughtful of the guest, thinking how to create and serve delicious tea to the guest. The guest, instead of trying to look for the host's mistake, watches and wishes for the host to make delicious tea. So there is a real warm harmony; this is the spirit of tea ceremony. In this country, people tend to think of their own matters and not worry about others' business. I wanted people here to learn this spirit of harmony.

Buddha's birthday in Japantown

I'm very fortunate that my students are all Zen students. They probably understand the spirit of tea more than other Americans. Among tea teachers, even in Japan, few people want to study Zen, which is very strange because tea ceremony started from Zen practice. Dogen Zenji said, "Dignified bearing is itself Buddha Dharma." He taught that everything we do in our daily life—how we converse with each other and how we take meals, go to the bathroom, how we use water—all is Zen. Tea ceremony is just like that: however and wherever you meet someone else, being fully thoughtful of the other is most important. That is the mastery of tea ceremony.

My students have been studying, maybe harder than Japanese students, although they have many difficulties like pain in their legs sitting seiza. Because of his age, Issan (Issan Dorsey, late abbot of Hartford Street Zen Center) would often forget the movements. I would just hit his hand to correct him, asking him what was next. He would say, "I don't know." So I would say "I've told you this a million times—please say you forgot, not that you don't know!" A Japanese student who spilled tea would say, "Oh, I'm extremely sorry, my mistake". Here I would just clean up for my students. They wouldn't even say thank you. They might have thought that this was some accident, not their mistake. I was often shocked with their reactions. If I asked them to say they were sorry, they would look puzzled, wondering why I'm asking them this.

One real challenge is that people here are not really trained from childhood in precise physical movements like using right hand or left hand. In American education you don't need to learn this. All movements in tea ceremony involve right and left. But my students are really open for suggestions and instructions, and they have been following my instructions in a faithful way.

I first asked Hojo (Shunryu Suzuki Roshi) what he would think of doing haiku when we were in Tassajara. It was about 1970, shortly before he died. He thought it was a wonderful idea. I started writing haiku and sent some to Japanese magazines, but then he became very sick and I could not do that.

Hojo had also originally encouraged me to study tea ceremony and bought me an issue of a magazine featuring the tea ceremony. I started after that. Hojo left me these two things: tea ceremony and haiku. These two arts have enriched my life and have also enabled me to stay here. Otherwise I would have had nothing to do and my life here would have been very difficult.

The best thing about haiku is that you see things clearly, and appreciate the wonder and beauty of nature. Gratitude for the air, sun and water comes from appreciation of nature. Being aware of how, in such a deep way, we are enriched by nature. You have to see things in nature in a very honest way, and you have to write in a direct straightforward way. To penetrate our self, and to cleanse our self—haiku has that function.

Okusan with Taiko drummers

Katagiri Roshi, Okusan and Suzuki Roshi

Normally in Japan there are leaders of haiku groups and you work together as a group. Since I'm here just by myself, I write haiku by myself. To send haiku to magazines to be evaluated is the usual way to write and develop your skill, but I started out when I was older, and I just write in my own way. I don't care about being accepted or having awards. I'm a very poor haiku student in that way.

For example, my haiku are appreciated by Eiheiji magazine, I guess because they're often Buddhist; but in haiku groups in San Francisco my poems are not selected so often. I'm not doing so well here.

Before Hojo died, when he was very sick, he asked me to go back to Japan. He wanted to be re-ordained, to renounce his life as a householder again. He wished to devote himself to his students twenty-four hours a day. I said "Hojo-san, if you are getting well, I will respect your wish, but I cannot leave you here so sick. Who would cook Japanese meals for you?" I wrote to Hoichi (Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi's son and Dharma heir) and asked for his opinion. He wrote, "Mother, please stay in America and take care of him." Hoichi wrote to both Hojo and me and said that I should stay. So Hojo gave up his idea. He didn't bring it up again.

I said to Hojo, "After you die, what shall I do?"
"Stay here and help these people."
"How can I help them? I've only been able to help them because I've been with you."

Della Goertz and Okusan

Hojo said, "You are an honest and fair person, so you can help them." Even after twenty years, I feel grateful every day for his trust.

Hojo said to his American students, "It's all yours; American Zen is all yours," and I feel exactly that way. I have taught tea ceremony at Zen Center, but Zen Center has its own life and it's beyond my opinion. Here at Zen Center we see new people all the time. I feel that I am friends with the many people here even though I often don't know their names. People are coming from all over the world; lately we see more Asian people. When I see Tenshin-san and Mel-san, I ask them to take good care of Zen Center, that's all. And when I see Baker-san, I also say please take care. It is wonderful that people come from various countries looking for the Way.

By the end of March I will stop teaching tea, and pass my students on to other teachers. Students can choose their own teachers; some may choose not to continue. At that time I'll be withdrawing from any official position in the tea organization, and will continue as a member. In April, I will have no work and I will have to see how I feel and what I want to do. I've taken care of myself for 77 years and I feel that is enough. My life has been good and it's all right if I don't wake up tomorrow morning.

I have had my full life so every day I pray to the Buddha that I will die without troubling others, while I can still take care of myself. It's a kind of responsibility of doctors, monks and lawyers to establish a system whereby one can choose the best time to end his or her life. I think this is a system that should be legalized. This may sound strange to young people, but this is how I really feel at this moment. So I tell Harumi all the time that if I don't wake up tomorrow morning, if she hears that news, please say "Hurray,

mother." Even though Harumi and I have been separated, I've said everything I wanted to say, and done everything I wanted to do. She has hundreds of my letters and she feels that we are very close. She says, "Even after you go, I'll read all your letters, so we'll have a closer relationship." She is Zen, so she understands my feeling.

Tenshin-san said, "Please stay here, it will be helpful for many of us and for Zen Center." I am very grateful, but I have to think also of my own health. Most likely I'll go back to Japan. I'll be a grandmother and a great-grandmother, and become part of the family I left in Japan. I have two great-grandchildren. My daughter Harumi has visited Zen Center twice, and Hojo loved her and she enjoyed visiting here. I have a small room in Harumi's house in Japan. Harumi has two altars, one is for Hojo, and upstairs there is an altar for her father and the Matsuno family. (Harumi's husband took her father's name since she was the only child.)

First I felt very funny about coming to America. Americans and Japanese hated each other and fought each other. People in Japan expected to be killed during the war. It was strange when American people took care of us, I couldn't really understand. Of course now I feel very comfortable being here. Japanese people usually don't express their opinions so clearly. Probably I wouldn't have been able to stay here if I had been quiet and humble, a typical Japanese person. I'm very outspoken; in that way I'm like an American, and that's why I have been able to stay here among so many different kinds of people. *Translated by Kaz Tanahashi Sensei.*

Kaz Tanahashi and Okusan

Excerpts from *Temple Dusk*
by Mitsu Suzuki Sensei

Swiftly walking away
someone set a lamp
in the darkness
under the tree

Spring 1970 Tassajara

Hojo and I stay in Tassajara during the month of August. Dharma discourse evening after evening blood and sweat. Hojo and I write Haiku together.

Along the creek
finding tea room flowers
dew moistened trail

Fall 1971 Tassajara

Hojo is getting sicker and sicker. Although I try to cheer him up by putting away his bed, he still has not improved.

Narrow veranda
an acorn tumbles down
temple dusk

Fall 1971 San Francisco

Spring storm
the room is filled with incense
I sit by myself

Spring 1972 San Francisco

The ashes ceremony for Hojo is held in San Francisco on February 11. Another is held in Japan on February 17.

Narrow path
toward the cemetery
generations of abbots
fallen camellia blossoms

Spring 1972 Rinso-in Temple, Yaizu

Dusk surrounds the valley
the wooden mallet's sound
signals zazen

Summer 1973 Tassajara

Monastery gate
huge wooden bolt
fragrant wind

Summer 1976 Tassajara

Dharma discourse
bell resounds, valley
young tree leaves

Spring 1978 Green Gulch Farm

Gift of peonies
a day of old age
fulfilled

Summer 1979 San Francisco

Wearing the late teacher's
dharma robe
memorial service
frosty morning

Winter 1980 San Francisco

Shadows of tea craft
serene on the shelf
memorial tea for Rikyu

Spring 1980 San Francisco

Dialogue of bells
enters into winter
dokusan

Winter 1980 San Francisco

Zen temple
in a foreign land
growing old
green walnut

Winter 1981 Tassajara

One path
in forgetting
wholeheartedly
dew evening

Autumn 1981 Tassajara

Spring melancholy
left to the rain
tea room kettle boiling

Spring 1982 San Francisco

Summer butterfly
one meeting one lifetime
deep valley

Summer 1982 Tassajara

Year's first tea fire
hanging scroll
"nothing to possess"

January 1982 San Francisco

Ink stone cold
joy and grief
one brush

Winter 1983 San Francisco

Where is my final destination?
Foreign land
bell echoing
last evening of the year

Winter 1986 San Francisco

Zengyu Paul Discoe with Okusan

Stories from Suzuki Sensei's Students

Shunpo Blanche Hartman

In December of 1979 Suzuki Sensei came to Tassajara at the time of my *Shuso* Ceremony. Shortly after she arrived I went with her to visit Suzuki Roshi's stupa carrying incense and rice crackers and a canteen of water, and picking a few fresh flowers along the way. That year Sensei had been considering carefully whether to remain here with us or to go back to Japan; she had just recently returned from a visit to Japan.

We had walked silently up the steep trail for quite a while when Sensei said, "I have decided. I will not go back to Japan. I will stay here and continue to teach my students." I told her how happy I was and we continued walking silently toward our visit with Suzuki Roshi. A little further along she said, "*Now* he is a good husband for me."

When we arrived at the stupa, Okusan greeted Hojo-san in a happy conversational tone (in Japanese) and spoke with him for a bit. Though I couldn't understand the words, I feel sure she was bringing him up to date on all her news since she had last visited him, including what she had just told me. We then offered him rice crackers, fresh flowers, incense, and a lighted candle; we poured fresh water on his stone stupa, did three bows and chanted the *Hannya Shingyo* and a dedication and returned to her cabin.

Later on that same visit I went to Suzuki Sensei's cabin early in the morning to build a fresh fire for her. When I got there she was already up and had been outside. She was quite happy and excited as she said, "I'm so glad I came. I've never been to Tassajara in frosty weather before. I've already written two haiku!"

In the summer of 1980 I was summer *shuso*. One day when Suzuki Sensei was visiting I was *doshi* (officiating priest) for morning service, and my husband Lou was *doan* (ringing the bells). After service I saw Sensei; her eyes were sparkling and she had a very mischievous look. With great delight she said, "Oh! I am going to write to Hoitsu (Suzuki Roshi's son and successor in Japan). American way! *Wife* is doshi, *husband* is doan, watching, watching when to ring the bell!"

Shuun Lou Hartman

Suzuki Sensei rode home with me after her December '79 visit. We both appreciated spending the entire four hours in complete silence. Not a word was exchanged during the trip, but I could see that she was writing from time to time. After we got home she told me that she had written several haiku.

Rosy Penhallow

The first time Okusan and I drove to Pt. Reyes we sat in the back seat to eat our picnic lunch. She had prepared egg salad sandwiches better than I'd ever tasted and fixed green tea in the trusted metal pot. We walked to the light house, at the edge of a magnificent sea, stopping every so many steps as Okusan composed haiku. She descended those one-hundred-and-eight stairs and climbed back up every one of them. More haiku. It was Spring. Sunny, clear. Cormorants flying.

One day Suzuki Sensei was chopping vegetables as she was preparing lunch in her famous kitchen and accidentally cut her finger with the sharp knife she was using. She cried, "Oh, I am so sorry!", to the wounded sacred body that has been entrusted to her care.

Yvonne Rand

I have known Mrs. Suzuki since the fall of 1966, and had much direct contact starting the next year when I began to work for Zen Center, first at the temple on Bush Street and later at the City Center on Page Street. I remember the rhythm of Okusan's life as a model of calmness and thoroughness. She manifested reliability in the manner of the rising and setting of the sun and the coming and passing of the moon.

The rhythm she followed reflected the activities that invariably occurred on particular days of the week: Tuesday for tea ceremony; Thursday for washing her long heavy black hair, letting it dry during the warm hours of the afternoon; Friday for shopping and errands. One evening she would go to visit friends, another to visit Otohiro, Suzuki Roshi's son who lived in San Francisco. I always took great comfort from Okusan's example of an orderly life: she took care of the recurring features of her life well and carefully.

During the summer of 1971 I drove Roshi back and forth between San Francisco and Tassajara and sometimes Okusan would join us. Okusan took care of Suzuki Roshi and she saw all the signs of his sickness. When she and Suzuki Roshi returned to San Francisco in August that year, we began taking care of him together.

We had no meeting to decide about this. We just continued doing together what we had already done together for some years, only now our work taking care of him began to intensify and change. He went to bed in San Francisco upon his return from Tassajara and only left it once (for Richard Baker's Mountain Seat Ceremony) before he died in December. During that Fall, Okusan and I were together continuously. I would sit by his bed while she would cook, clean or tend. Sometimes he wanted his arms or legs or back rubbed to ease the stiffness from being bedridden. Sometimes he wanted a drink of water or orange juice. As his interest in eating faded, we would both search for things that would spark his appetite. Often I just sat nearby, available to get something or deliver a message or just sit. One or the other of us was with him around the clock. We became like one body in three parts.

I felt a deep connection with Okusan during this time together. We said very little to one another in sharing the process of being with Suzuki Roshi. We were connected somehow from being with him, from our mutual effort to keep him comfortable. Deep satisfaction came in just being there together. Okusan was like a mother to me in many ways. I felt an unmistakable heart connection that I could not explain. When I told her one day about my feeling for her she acknowledged that she, too, felt some deep connection which arose out of the shared journey called, "Suzuki Roshi is sick. Suzuki Roshi is dying."

That time was, in retrospect, a time of great teaching about how to die; the experience marked me forever. Whenever I see Okusan I can see in her eyes that she, too, remembers our bond and connection. Suzuki Roshi taught me, of course; I wonder if she realized how deeply she taught me as well. She was always there. She is a teacher in the very living of her life with us. She is part of the bridge between America and Japan. She is my good kind mother, helping me along the way.

Furyu Nancy Schroeder preparing tea

Michael Wenger

When my son Nathan was three years old he learned a Japanese song about Spring called *Haru Na Kita*, which he sang for Okusan. She laughed and sang along with him. One week later she gave us a tape she had made singing her favorite kindergarten songs.

One day after I had been President of Zen Center for about six months, Okusan invited me to tea. She said, "Michael-san, you have a very hard job. In Japan everyone would know and would try to help you. In America if you are a leader, everyone gives you their problems. But I know and Buddha knows how hard it is. Please come to my tea room if you need help."

Marilyn McCann Coyote

I first came to Zen Center in 1974, acutely aware of having missed the opportunity to study with Suzuki Roshi. When I heard that Suzuki Roshi's widow, Mrs. Suzuki, gave classes in tea, I felt that perhaps I was being offered a reprieve on this missed chance.

I would have taken any class that she offered, and so, in January of 1975, I attended my first tea class with Suzuki Sensei or *Okusan*, as I came to regard her. I decided to study with her for five years or so, to see if I liked tea. I knew that it would take some time to master it, but I never imagined that under her tutelage I would still be studying sixteen years later, trying to absorb the wealth of her teachings and emulate her daunting example.

At first, she was extremely strict with me. She would grab me and move me physically and rather roughly around the tea room. It was embarrassing and disorienting and soon I hated and dreaded her classes. At the same time I felt that this was just her way of teaching and that her admonishments were not personal; this gave me the necessary detachment to continue. It took me ten years to realize that in tea I had found a way to express my understanding, ten years to fully appreciate Suzuki Sensei as the greatest teacher of my life.

For her, the essence of Buddha's teaching is clearly expressed in the words of her oft-repeated maxim, "think of the other." Whether this other is human, vegetable, or animal, she skillfully manifests this teaching in even her smallest acts. To "think of the other" in every moment connects us to the great stream of life outside our own limited consciousness. Okusan's teaching has forced me to consider what it means to be fully human in the world—in these times, for this life, as a woman.

For instance, I would agonize when being offered a sweet in the course of tea ceremony. "Do I take the smallest? How do I avoid appearing greedy?" A maelstrom of questions would assail me, making me ill at ease and far from the present. "Always take the one closest to you. Sometimes it will be the biggest, sometimes the smallest," she said one day, in a way that made me see that it did not matter. Following her simple rule there is no ego involvement; there is a better feeling for everyone.

Okusan's teaching of remembering the other includes taking good care of herself. She exercises and massages herself daily. She walks regularly and has acupuncture once a week; all this is an expression of self-respect and gratitude to Buddha for her body. Once, while talking to me about caring for myself, she dropped down on her hands and toes on the tea room tatamis and demonstrated the correct way to do push-ups, with characteristic devotion to the matter at hand.

Suzuki Sensei has an original sense of style. For formal occasions, she has several elegant and beautiful kimono and obi. In the tea room and for her excursions around town, she has adapted a kind of Sixties dress, creating something completely original, functional and lovely. Her meditation "fat pants," Japanese undershirt and Japanese farmer's jacket, are made for her in subtly beautiful Japanese cottons or corduroy. The fabrics are always matched in a fascinating way and accented by an interesting belt, hand bag or shawl. This way of dressing is completely her own: practical, beautiful and elegant, bringing pleasure to others without being "showy" and expensive.

Another surprising aspect of Okusan's caring for others is flirtatiousness: a playful expression of life energy which serves to delight and make others feel "seen." It is as if she is keeping herself alive and vibrant for the pleasure of others. At times this makes her appear uncannily ageless.

One day I accompanied her on a trip to Japantown. A young Japanese man stopped in front of us, hip and fashionable with his pony tail and elegant couture clothing. He pulled off his dark glasses, spread his arms wide and shouted "Suzuki Sensei" in an ecstatic voice. She recognized him as a young man who had visited her at Zen Center years before. I watched the two of them bowing and laughing as she beamed and laughed, fussing over him outrageously. The next week an old Japanese man came to her tea room door at Zen Center. Completely at ease with herself, she was the same charming woman, making an extravagant gift of her energy and vitality. I had to marvel at her fluidity which embraced these two men from such widely different milieu.

Completely attentive to others, Okusan is able to cut through differences of culture and language and speak directly to the heart. Holding no thought about the impression she makes or her personal status, she is free to concentrate her formidable powers of observation on the person before her. In this way she is always focused on basic human values, addressing circumstances directly and naturally with her whole life. This is the most consistent and important teaching she has shared with me over the sixteen years that I have known her.

And so finally, I feel that I *have* studied with Suzuki Roshi. Okusan's love of her husband and his way is so intense and complete that she dedicated her personal life to embodying it, becoming his best student. Her eyebrows tangled with her husband's eyebrows, to paraphrase an old Zen expression, and both of their eyebrows were tangled with Buddha's. She is an inspiring teacher whose life has been a ceremony of transmission that I feel privileged to have participated in. Thank you, Okusan. A deep gassho.

Former abbot Zentatsu Richard Baker with Okusan

Fu Nancy Schroeder

During my last tea class with Suzuki Sensei, I began to cry, and she said, "I'm not dying, you know. It's very important for you to learn that things end. Things aren't always the way we'd like them to be." Once again her stern grandmotherly love was oddly soothing and required me to meet her from some deeper layer of myself. Then she talked a long time about Suzuki Roshi, who spent many weeks in her care just before he died. She spoke about how much he liked having the doors open so he could hear the *han* and bell signaling the start of zazen. As I listened to her stories, I began making her a cup of tea. I added water to the powder and started to whisk, then noticed many tiny lumps floating in the bowl. I began to apologize, and she said, "Just enjoy the lumps."

Darlene Cohen

Through the years one of the most rewarding aspects of spending time with Suzuki Sensei has been the result of her continuing fascination with the difference between "Japanese way" and "American way". She is continually weighing the very different customs between the two traditions and settling on a preference which, as far as I can tell, is based on compassion and good will toward ALL people.

For instance, she has always been a source of great encouragement for me personally, telling me that in Japan a person who was very obviously in physical difficulty would never expose themselves on the streets but would stay home all the time. She told me a Japanese person with a degenerative disease would never go about as I do, biking, walking, dancing, actually holding movement classes to show other people how to move. She said she greatly admired that aspect of "American way", that Americans always try, always have good spirit, are not ashamed of their difficulties. One day as I was riding my bike back home from the park, I crested the Haight Street hill and let fly, blissfully careening down Haight Street at full speed. Before I turned onto Laguna in a huge arc to avoid traffic, I spotted Suzuki Sensei standing at the bus stop there with a Japanese friend. I hollered "Okusan!" as I whizzed by. Okusan immediately turned to her friend and said "She's *very* sick!"

On the other hand, one day Suzuki Sensei asked me why we Americans get so upset about the Japanese practice of killing whales for commercial use when we practice such cruel methods of obtaining meat from cows and sheep. I said "Okusan, cows and sheep are very stupid, while whales are very intelligent." She shook her head and said "I don't understand why Americans think it's so important to be smart."

Suzuki Sensei told me one day that she was annoyed because a student at Page Street had opened the window in the kaisando behind the life-size carving of Suzuki Roshi and even though she had asked him to close it again, he had refused, saying the building needed fresh air. The next day she asked him to close it again, and he had refused again. Finally she said to him, looking very grieved, "When I passed by, I heard Suzuki Roshi coughing." Horrified, the student immediately closed the window. I said "Okusan, you don't play fair!"

One time our good friend Daya Goldschlag came to visit from Spokane, Washington and she and her teenage son, Kelly, and I and my teenage son, Ethan, and Suzuki Sensei all went to Zaoh for dinner. It was a wonderful reunion and we all sat there, eating and basking in the warm feelings we all had for each other. Suddenly Suzuki Sensei, without warning, burst into loud song. It was in Japanese and it had a very bright, happy rhythm to it. Well, it wasn't a short song. She went on for a few minutes and the song became more energetic and she began drumming the tabletop to accompany herself. When she finally finished, her face beaming, everyone in the restaurant applauded and stamped. The waiter brought us sake on the house.

Hekizan Tom Girardot

Mistake after mistake, Sensei says, "Tom-o-san, why do you want to study Tea?" Several years later she says, "Tom-o-san, Tea has entered your heart."

Ed Brown

Honoring Suzuki Sensei

Okusan is serving green tea
and pickled cabbage.
She heats the cups
with water from the elephant
thermos and brews the tea
in a small ceramic pot.
There is a small wooden saucer
for each tea cup.
Her kitchen isn't elegant
or stylish, yet each
thing seems to have its place
and belong where it is.
The pickles are crunchy, salty,
cool. Sometimes there are
rice crackers or even the
inquiry, "Would you like
some toast?"
She pours the tea, making one
cup at a time.
"Please go ahead," she says,
offering me the first cup.
I can't believe how precious
the cup feels in my hand
or the bouquet of the tea.
Earthy, aromatic, ocean-spray,
green vegetables.
In one taste of your tea, sensei
I know the depth of your
being...
your boundless bottomless heart,
and inside I feel the secret joy
and profound gratitude
of knowing that I belong here
in this world—
there's a place for me
at Okusan's table.

Gregory Wood

Plums

was it plums
that you mentioned to me
blossoming
in December
under the bridge
on a street corner
in Japantown
were they fooled
by an unexpected gift
blooming far too early
and unprepared for the shock
of Winter's cold
even as we laughed
imagining the trees as people
shocked and shivering in the cold
what amazement I felt for you
as if spring
had already arrived

Okusan with Abbots Mel Weitsman and Reb Anderson

Laurie Schley Senauke

I began studying tea with Okusan in 1981. I was very clumsy and awkward and my tea partner was a tall, graceful ballet dancer. In those days Okusan was a much stricter teacher, and she didn't hesitate to make fun of me during class. It was pretty hard. One day I was waiting in the hall for my class to start and I ran into the *ino* (person in charge of the meditation hall), whose office was in the same area. He began to criticize me, unfairly I felt, about my zendo attendance. We were still arguing loudly when Okusan opened the door to let me in. My face was red and I was on the verge of tears. Okusan didn't say anything, but after class she invited me in to her kitchen and made me a scrumptious bowl of noodles. I began to realize what a versatile, warm and kind person she really was.

In 1990 I was studying tea with Okusan and helping her on her weekly shopping trips to Japantown. I was also pregnant; she was a thoughtful advisor on how to talk to and care for my unborn child, cautioning me to avoid violent movies and television programs and to generate calm and joyful states of mind. She told me about her own pregnancy, about how awful her morning sickness was. To Okusan, the baby in my womb was already a full-fledged person and we joked about how she was her youngest tea student. Okusan also talks to plants, animals and rocks, illnesses and medicines, and she related that Suzuki Roshi had called his cancer, "My special friend."

Sesshin Lecture

by Zoketsu Norman Fischer

Actually there is no Sunday lecture today. We have canceled the usual Sunday lecture, but when we cancel it this is what happens: everyone comes anyway. So we don't even bother to tell anyone it's canceled since we know you will come anyway. So this is not the usual Sunday lecture. This is the final lecture of our 49 day Practice Period that began on January 6 with an ordination ceremony—do you remember that? That seems like a long time ago. And it is also the final lecture of our seven day sesshin. So all of you are now transformed from Sunday lecture-goers into hard-core Zen students who are, with the rest of us, closing in on the end of 49 days of continuous practice. How do you feel? Do you feel more enlightened now?

During Practice Period and during sesshin we have been emphasizing calmness and quietness and also we have been doing a lot of walking meditation. So today, since all of us are in the Practice Period now, we'll be quiet, and instead of having tea and discussion as we usually do, we'll have walking meditation out in the garden after lunch. I hope you don't mind this change in our usual schedule. I hope you enjoy the quiet and the walking. This will certainly help us in our last day of sesshin.

Since you've joined the Practice Period rather late, let me catch you up a little bit on what we've been working with.

We've been going back to the oldest teachings of Buddha, simple teachings that form the background of our Zen way. We begin with the importance of spiritual friendship, the need in our practice to develop a lovely relationship, an intimate relationship, with one person or more than one person, a

relationship based on trust and not on desire or need, a relationship that comes out of our actual commitment to living the way of peace no matter how difficult that may be. And this is what our spiritual friend does; he or she manifests this commitment in her own life and encourages us in our commitment. And we know that this sharing, this encouragement, is the loveliest, the most intimate relationship we can have.

And we begin with a simple, straightforward way of life, a life of restraint, of being careful with our bodies and our thoughts and our speech, and a life of developing intensity and presence in whatever we are doing.

So for seven weeks now we've kept a strict schedule, we've taken care of each other, and we've been as aware as we could possibly be of all acts of body, speech and mind. It's been a good and a fruitful seven weeks.

And of course we've practiced zazen a lot. And we've been emphasizing breathing. Settling the body and—breathing in aware that we are breathing in. Breathing out aware that we are breathing out. Breathing in aware of our whole body; breathing out aware of our whole body. Breathing in calming the whole body; and breathing out calming the whole body. We've been practicing like this, very simply and gently.

But it's not always easy: as we enter more deeply into our breath, sitting for a long time in sesshin, we may experience many things—maybe physical pain, or visions, or unusual sensations or sounds, or sudden emotions coming up from the distant past or from we don't know where. And these days, with the fighting going on in the deserts of the Middle East, the suffering that is occurring is very much with us in our zazen, and we are breathing in with our feelings of grief and fear and shame, and breathing out calming our feelings; breathing in aware of our feelings, and breathing out aware of our feelings.

And many of us during these seven days have had remarkable, wonderful experiences of settling body and mind. This has been particularly inspiring to me, to hear about these experiences and to know that our efforts in practice are effective in deepening our commitment and our actual ability to make a difference in this world that is so often so full of suffering. My practice has been encouraged.

It's so wonderful to be able to breathe, to share life with everything by our breathing, to feel the nurturing quality of the breath, to feel the basic sanity, the pattern, the wildness that we hold in common with all life. This morning Blanche said to me, how marvelous, how miraculous is the relationship on this earth between the plants and the animals, each breathing for the other. She said it's almost overwhelming to realize how it is—the whole planet breathing together.

Newly ordained priests Setsuan Gaelyn Godwin and Shinzan Jim Abrams.

Another thing we've been doing this week is reading poems. Here's a part of a poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins that we enjoyed:

The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air We Breathe

Wild air, world-mothering air
Nestling me everywhere,
That each eyelash or hair
Girdles; goes home betwixt
The fleeciest, frailest-flixed
Snowflake; that's fairly mixed
With, riddles, and is rife
In every least thing's life;
This needful, never spent,

And nursing element;
My more than meat and drink,
My meal at every wink;
This air, which by life's law,
My lung must draw and draw
Now but to breathe its praise....

We've also been studying the Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing. The Sutra sets forth sixteen practices in the development of full awareness of breathing. I won't try to summarize all Wendy and I have said about the sutra this week. So far we've talked about the first twelve of the practices and today I want to finish by talking about the last four practices. Actually it's okay if you miss the other twelve because the steps are not really in a progression. When you write something down you have to write it down step by step and it looks as though it is meant to be practiced step by step. But this is a crude way of looking at things; our experience is really a lot more subtle than that. Actually each step is the first step. And each step is the last step. Everything can be realized on each step, on each breath. Here are the last four practices:

13. "I am breathing in and observing the impermanent nature of all dharmas. I am breathing out and observing the impermanent nature of all dharmas." He practices like this.

14. "I am breathing in and observing the fading of all dharmas. I am breathing out and observing the fading of all dharmas." He practices like this.

15. "I am breathing in and observing liberation. I am breathing out and observing liberation." He practices like this.

16. "I am breathing in and observing letting go. I am breathing out and observing letting go." He practices like this.

(from Thich Nhat Hanh's translation published as BREATHE! YOU ARE ALIVE, Sutra on the Full Awareness of Breathing, *Parallax Press, Berkeley, 1990.*

This last tetrad is about insight practice. It doesn't say anything about calming practice as the other twelve practices do. They speak of both insight and calming: breathing aware of the body, and breathing calming the body; breathing aware of the feelings, breathing calming the feelings. But now we have established calming of body, feelings, and mental states. Here we deepen our insight about these things. And what is the nature of the insight the sutra speaks of? Insight into how things actually are in this world: how they really are, apart from our wishes and concepts about them.

Breathing in we understand that everything is impermanent, everything is fading. Everything comes and everything goes. Nothing is substantial. Nothing can be held onto. Each breath appears, then is gone, then another one comes. And the closer we get to the breath, the more intimate we get, the more we understand deeply that we too, and everything we know and love, is also fading.

Now this seems a little grim in a way, doesn't it? I think most of us would admit that it does seem grim if you think about it. But it's only grim if you understand fading as the opposite of abiding or not fading. If you enter into your breath fully you see that there's actually no such thing as fading or not fading, no such thing as living or not living. These things are concepts in our minds. I do not mean that they are not real: they are real. But only as concepts in our mind.

We are human beings and we must feel love and hate, elation and terrible grief. But underneath these things, we come to see through our practice, there is a wider world, beyond our concepts— a wild, radically sane world, in which we can accept what occurs, aware of our feelings of grief or happiness, but not pushed around by them.

"I am breathing in and practicing letting go. I am breathing out and practicing letting go."

This is the last of the sixteen practices. It is the beginning and it is also the ending. It is the practice of just sitting. Just sitting, without technique, without awareness even, without a goal: just fully engaged in being here, without anything left over. Just being alive as we actually are.

This kind of acceptance doesn't mean not caring. In fact, with this real total acceptance comes a transformation in our ability to care—we care for everything very deeply: not just victims, not just suffering people, but all people, even oppressors, and not just all people, but also animals and plants—and also, for ourselves. And we begin to have a great hope. Not a hope for something, or that something will happen, but just a hope, an inexhaustible hope. And we keep on going with our practice.

Thank you very much for listening to my talk today.

The True Dragon

A Lecture by
Suzuki Roshi

10/17/68 - fall

Dogen Zenji says, "Don't practice your way like a blind man trying to find out what is an elephant." A blind man touching an elephant may think an elephant is like a wall or a robe or a plank. But the real elephant is not any of those. And he says, "Don't be suspicious of the true dragon, like Seiko."

In China there was a man named Seiko; he loved dragons. All his scrolls were of dragons; he designed his house like a dragon-house and he had many figures of dragons. So a real dragon thought, "If I appear in his house he will be very pleased." So one day the dragon appeared in his room, and he was very scared of him, and almost drew his sword to cut him. The real dragon said, "Oh, my!" and he hurriedly escaped from the room. "Don't be like Seiko!" Dogen Zenji says.

Most of us are practicing our way like a blind man or like Seiko. That is why we have to start our practice over and over. You think you are practicing real zazen, but it may not be so. So if you notice that you haven't been practicing true zazen, you have to start the practice of true zazen again. Over and over we have to start our zazen, because we are always apt to practice zazen like a blind man, or like Seiko.

Here is another story which was told by Master Nangaku. When Baso was practicing zazen, Nangaku, who passed by, asked him, "What are you doing?" "As you see, I am practicing zazen." "Why do you practice zazen?" "I want to attain Buddhahood." And Nangaku didn't say anything but he picked up a tile and started polishing it. At this, Baso started wondering what Nangaku was doing and asked him, "What are you doing?" "I am making a jewel." Baso asked, "How is it possible to make a tile into a jewel?" Nangaku replied, "How is it possible to attain Buddhahood by practicing zazen?" After this story Nangaku asked Baso, "When the cart does not go, which do you whip, the cart or the horse?"

Dogen Zenji says usually there is no person who hits the cart to make it go. Usually people hit the horse instead of the cart. But there should be a way to whip the cart. When you practice zazen almost all of you know you should whip the horse. And to whip the horse you practice zazen. You're giving the whip pretty hard to your practice, without knowing how to whip the cart. But we should know there is another way to practice: to whip the cart instead of the horse.

Horse is a symbol of mind; the cart means body. It also means zazen form—formal practice of zazen. Horse means attainment, spiritual attainment, and cart means physical practice. Usually, you know, we understand zazen practice as formal practice. Our shikantaza is formal practice and koan practice is more mental practice. But this kind of understanding is not complete. This kind of understanding is the understanding of blind men like Seiko. True practice is not formal practice or so-called shikantaza or koan practice. None of those. Those practices are just the practice to whip the horse.

This is like, Seiko loves the dragon, carved dragon, not real one. So, each one of us must think on this point. Each one of us practices zazen in his own way, with his own understanding. And he continues that kind of practice, thinking, "This is right practice." So, even though he is sitting here in the zendo he is involved in his own practice. In other words, he is carving, carefully carving his own dragon which is not real. That is what most of the people are doing. Some people may explain what zazen is in a philosophical way, or some people try to express our zazen in literature or painting or in a scientific way, without knowing that that is their own dragon, not real one.

That is not wrong. That is all right, but we should know that there must be the way to whip the cart. We should know that there is a true dragon which has no form or color, which is called nothingness or emptiness, and which includes koan practice and so-called shikantaza, and various Hinayana ways of practice or pre-Buddhistic practice. This is the practice transmitted from Buddha to us. But at least when we do something there must be that which is supposed to be the true dragon, real dragon. In this way we practice zazen.

You come and practice zazen in this zendo where there should be the true dragon. But the instant you think, "This is the true dragon," that is a mistake. But knowing that, if you come to this zendo, you should practice zazen with people forgetting all about your carving or your painting. You should practice zazen with the people in this zendo, with your friends, completely involved in the atmosphere we have here. Sometimes I allow people who are sticking to an old way to do that, but strictly speaking, those who practice zazen here should be completely involved in the feeling we have in this zendo, and practice our way with people according to my instruction. That is what you should do.

But people who do not know what real emptiness is, or true dragon, may think they are being forced in this way: "Sokoji is a Soto Zen temple. I have been practicing Rinzai way." But that is not true. We are practicing the way transmitted from Buddha to us. We are Buddha's disciples. And we practice zazen with Buddha, with patriarchs.

For some people that which does not have some particular form is not true being. So they may say that it is an imaginary dragon. But for a Buddhist, there is a way to understand reality in two ways: with form and color or without form and color. That is, to whip the cart instead of the horse. If someone whips a cart, people may say he is crazy. But there is actually a transmitted way to whip the cart. To practice formal way is to whip the cart.

But for an ordinary person, to see the carved dragon is to not see the true dragon. That is so-called one pure practice—*ichigyo zammai*. Usually, "*ichigyo zammai*" is understood to mean being completely involved in some kind of practice. It is so, but at the same time, even though we are deeply involved in a kind of practice, at the same time we should have complete freedom from it. Do you understand?

Usually when you become very much attached to something, you have no freedom from it. But for us, because of complete freedom, it is possible to be involved in or to be attached to something completely. That is shikantaza, true shikantaza. So shikantaza is not even a matter of whether you practice zazen or not. Even though you do not practice our way in the cross-legged position, if you have this point you are always practicing zazen. Usually when you become very much attached to something, you have no freedom from it

Dogen Zenji said: "Sickness does not destroy a person, but if you do not practice zazen, that no-practice will destroy a person." Do you understand? Sickness does not destroy a person. You may say: "Today I cannot practice zazen because I have a headache. If I practice zazen I shall die, so I cannot practice zazen." But Dogen Zenji says, "Sickness does not destroy a person, but no-practice will destroy you."

It is not so easy to talk about what real practice is. If we want to figure out what Dogen Zenji meant, without having this kind of experience, to talk about this point may be completely wrong. But we can figure out what he meant through our practice. His practice is something beyond formal practice or spiritual practice, or even beyond enlightenment. The more you try to figure it out, the more you feel distance from your practice and from his practice.

And yet this is a practice which we cannot escape. Actually we are practicing his way day by day, but for us there is no time to figure out what he meant completely. And even though we human beings continue his way forever, we will not be able to say: this is his way. The only thing we can say is, this is the way which has no end and no beginning, and from this way we cannot escape.

Because of this practice, various beings survive in the world, and everything is going in this way, including we human beings. So there actually is no problem for us. But as a human being who lives the Way in this world, the constant effort to keep up with the way the whole universe is going, and to practice our way is necessary, as long as this universe exists. With this feeling, with this complete calmness of mind, we should practice our way.

After sitting one year, most students will actually have this quality of practice, but when you try to figure out what your practice is, there you have a problem, or you create a problem which does not belong to your practice. If you just sit, there is no problem for most of our students. But sometimes you create problems, that's all. And you fight with the problems, that's all. You are creating it, actually. In your zazen there is no problem.

When you practice your own personal practice, you have a problem. When you just sit, being absorbed in the feeling we have in our zendo, there is no problem at all.

We should make our effort on this point more, instead of carving our own dragon. In this way you have complete freedom from everything, including yourself. To talk about freedom is quite easy. But actually to have it is not so easy at all. Unless you are able to have freedom from yourself, you will never have freedom from anything. Or, if you only have freedom from yourself, you will have freedom from everything. How we attain this freedom is our practice. You should not listen to the various instructions as something forced on you. The instructions will help you only when you are ready to practice zazen according to the place where you practice, forgetting all about the old way of practice you have been making.

I am not emphasizing Soto way instead of Rinzai way, but as long as you practice zazen in Zen Center, you should practice Zen Center's way, or else

you will just be involved in personal practice. You will be carving your own dragon, always, thinking: this is the true dragon. That is a silly mistake. You shouldn't create this kind of problem for your practice.

As some Zen masters say, "Our way is like taking a walk, step by step." This is our practice. When you stand on one leg, you know, you should forget the other leg. This is step by step. This is true practice. You know that if you stick to right leg or left leg, right foot or left foot, you cannot walk. This is how we practice our way. This is complete freedom.

Thank you very much.

Suzuki Roshi with Okusan

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SCHEDULES:

SAN FRANCISCO

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
5:35-7:05 am zazen & service
5:40-6:30 pm zazen & service

SATURDAY
6:30-7:40 am zazen & service
7:40 am temple cleaning
7:55-8:25 am zendo breakfast
9:25-10:05 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
(8:45 am zazen instruction)

SUNDAY no schedule

GREEN GULCH FARM

SATURDAY THROUGH THURSDAY
5:00-7:00 am two zazens & service
5:15 pm zazen

FRIDAY
6:30 am zazen & service

SUNDAY
5:00-7:00 am two zazens & service
8:30 am zazen instruction
9:25 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
12:45 pm lunch
Daily schedule subject to seasonal change.
Call office to verify.

ONE DAY SITTINGS: once monthly; SEVEN DAY SETTINGS: twice yearly; THREE AND FIVE DAY SITTINGS: offered periodically. Each year there are residential practice periods of two -three months' duration at Green Gulch, City Center and Zen Mountain Center. For more information, please write to the City Center.

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