

# Wind Bell



PUBLICATION OF SAN FRANCISCO ZEN CENTER  
VOL. XXXII NO. 2 FALL / WINTER 1998

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*Suzuki Roshi  
leaving Japan  
to come to  
San Francisco,  
May 1959*

## *Both Buddha and Ordinary*

*BY Shunryu Suzuki Roshi*

**T**HE POINT OF MY TALK is just to give you some support for your practice. There is no need for you to remember what I say. If you stick to it, it means that you stick to the support, not the tree itself. A tree, when it is strong enough, may still want some support. But the most important thing is the tree itself, not the support.

I am one tree, and each one of you is a tree. You should stand up by yourself. When a tree stands up by itself, we call that tree a Buddha. In other words, when you practice zazen in its true sense, you are really Buddha. So Buddha and the tree are one. Sometimes we call it a tree and sometimes we call it a Buddha. "Buddha," "tree," or "you" are many names of one Buddha.

When you sit, you are independent from various beings, and you are related to various beings. And when you have perfect composure in your practice, it means that you include everything. You are not just you. You are the whole world or the whole cosmos, and you are a Buddha. So when you sit, you are ordinary mind, and you are Buddha. Before you sit, you may stick to the idea that you are ordinary. So when you sit you are not the same being as you are before you sit. Do you understand?

You may say that it is not possible to be ordinary and holy. You may think that. When you think this way, your understanding is one-sided. We call someone who understands things from just one side a *tamban-kan*, someone who carries a board on his shoulder. Because you carry a big board on your shoulder, you cannot see the other side. You think you are just the ordinary mind, but, if you take the board off, you will understand, "Oh, I am Buddha, too. How can I be both 'Buddha' and 'ordinary mind?' It is amazing!" That is enlightenment.

When you experience enlightenment, you will understand things more freely. You won't mind whatever people call you. Ordinary mind? Okay, I am ordinary mind. Buddha? Yes, I am Buddha. How do I come to be both "Buddha" and "ordinary mind?" I don't know, but actually I am "Buddha" and "ordinary mind."

Buddha, in its true sense, is not different from ordinary mind. And ordinary mind, in its true sense, is not something apart from what is holy. This is a complete understanding of ourself. When we practice zazen with this understanding, that is true zazen. We will not be bothered by anything. Whatever you hear, whatever you see, that will be okay. To have this kind of feeling, it is necessary to become accustomed to our practice. If you keep practicing our way, you will naturally have this understanding and this feeling. It will not be just intellectual. You will have the actual feeling.

Even though someone can explain what Buddhism is, if he does not have the actual feeling, we cannot call him a real Buddhist. Only when your personality is characterized by this kind of feeling can we call you a Buddhist. The way we can become characterized by this kind of understanding is to be always concentrated on this point. How to be concentrated on this point is rather difficult to explain. Many koans and sayings bring out this point. Ordinary mind is tao. Even though we are doing quite usual things, whenever we do something, that is actually Buddha's activity. Buddha's mind, Buddha's activity, and our activity are not different.

Someone may say our activity is based on Buddha's mind, that "such and such" is Buddha's mind, and "so and so" is ordinary mind, but there is no need to explain it in that way. When we do something, we cannot say, "I am doing something," because there is no one who is independent from the others. When I say something, you will hear it. I cannot do anything by myself, just for myself. If someone does something, everyone will be doing something. Moment after moment, we continue this kind of activity, which is Buddha's activity. But you cannot say that this is just Buddha's activity, because you are actually doing something too. You may say "I," then, but we don't know what "I" that

is. The reason you try to say "who is doing what" is that you want to intellectualize your activity. But before you say anything, the actual activity is here. Who you are is here.

Although our activity is cosmic activity and personal activity, there is no need to explain what we are doing. We may want to explain it, but we should not feel uneasy if we cannot, because it is impossible to understand. Actually, you are here, right here. So, before you understand yourself, you are you. After you explain, you are not really you anymore. You have an image. But usually you will stick to the one who is not you, and you will ignore the reality. As Dogen Zenji said, we human beings attach to something which is not real and forget all about what is real. That is actually what we are doing. If you realize this point, you will have perfect composure in yourself, and you can trust yourself. Whatever happens to you, it doesn't matter. You can trust yourself.

That trust is not the usual trust or the usual belief in what is not real. So when you are able to sit without any image or any sound, with an open mind, that is true practice. When you can do that, you are free from everything.

Still it is all right for you to enjoy your life, moment after moment, because you are not enjoying your life as something concrete and eternal. Our life is momentary, and, at the same time, each moment includes its own past and future. In this way our momentary and eternal life will continue. This is how we actually live our everyday life, how we enjoy our everyday life, and how we get freedom from various difficulties.

I was in bed for a long time, and I was thinking about these things. I was just practicing zazen in bed. I should enjoy my bed. (Laughing) Sometimes it was difficult, but (laughing) if it was difficult, I laughed at myself. "Why is it so difficult? Why don't you enjoy your difficulties?" That is, I think, our practice.

## *Why Did the Dragon Come to the West?*

*The Life,  
Times  
and Teachings  
of Shunryu  
Suzuki Roshi*

*By Bill Redican*

*Many, many thanks  
are due to Gil Fronsdal,  
pictured here, and to  
all of his collaborators  
at the Sati Center for  
organizing and hosting  
this conference, which  
enabled so many to meet  
Suzuki Roshi again or for  
the first time.*



**I**N MAY OF 1959, Shogaku Shunryu Suzuki came from Japan to begin his work in San Francisco. In May of 1998, more than two hundred people came to Palo Alto to learn about and reflect upon his life, his teachings, and his profound effect on the lives of so many people. Entitled "The Life, Times, and Teachings of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi," the conference was organized and hosted by **Gil Fronsdal** and sponsored by the Sati Center for Buddhist Studies in conjunction with the Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies.

The conference was held on May 30 and 31 at the Lucille Stern Community Center in Palo Alto. Twenty-one speakers gave one or more scheduled presentations, several more made written contributions,

many former students offered personal recollections on Suzuki Roshi's life and teachings, and five short films about Suzuki Roshi—created by film students at San Francisco State University—were premiered. Photographs were displayed of Suzuki Roshi, his family, his teachers, and the temples where he had practiced in Japan.

Perhaps the strongest sense of those who attended and participated in the conference was the deep affection and appreciation felt for this "most selfless man," as an early student described him—a reflection of the sincere openness and humanity of this teacher. The conference evoked many of the means by which he taught Buddha's way. It proved to be less compelling for many of his former students to recall the specific content of his teachings than it was to remember how he moved Tassajara rocks or put on his sandals or laughed.

**Okusan (Mitsu) Suzuki Sensei**—Suzuki Roshi's widow, now 84, sent a letter to the conference from Japan, where she is living with the family of her daughter Harumi. **Kazuaki Tanahashi** translated her letter for the conference. Okusan described Suzuki Roshi as a person free from desire, except for the desire to transmit the buddha way. Okusan said she learned Buddhist practice just by watching him. In his last summer at Tassajara he worked until exhausted, and Okusan implored him, "You are cutting your life short!" He answered, "If I don't cut my life short, my students will not grow." If his life had not been ended by cancer, he might have carried out his dream of retiring in Berkeley and discussing buddha dharma all night long.

The conference was also honored by the presence of **Hoitsu Suzuki Roshi**, a son of Suzuki Roshi and current abbot of his father's former temple, Rinsoin, in Japan. **Kazuaki Tanahashi** translated Hoitsu's presentation. Hoitsu described his father as having a quick temper, especially as viewed through the eyes of a young son, but he eventually understood that his father became upset when his children "showed our big ego, when we were insensitive to other people." Shunryu gently taught Hoitsu how to chant sutras, and he took him to hear the dharma talks of the most prominent *Shobogenzo* scholar of the time, Kishizawa Ian. Kishizawa Roshi's talks were completely incomprehensible to the young boy, but Hoitsu distinctly remembers his formal voice and manner. Hoitsu treated the conference to a parody of a Toshiro-Mifune-style voice thundering, "Dogen Zenji, high ancestor!"

This conference was the first major gathering in which Suzuki Roshi's life has been viewed from a historical and biographical perspective. We now have a much clearer understanding of how his early experiences influenced his life and his teaching, and how it was that he came to complete his life's work in San Francisco. The presentations of

**Professors Carl Bielefeldt and Richard Jaffe** (reprinted in this issue of *Wind Bell*) described the changing social, political, and religious environment of Japan during Suzuki Roshi's early life.

**David Chadwick** gave an overview of the first part of his forthcoming biography of Suzuki Roshi, *Crooked Cucumber: The Life and Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki*. ("Crooked Cucumber" was a nickname given the young Shunryu by his first master, Gyokujun So-on.) David spoke about the period of Suzuki Roshi's life from his birth to his departure for America. His biographical work has revealed many surprising aspects of Suzuki Roshi's life. For example, few in America would have suspected how extensive Suzuki Roshi's academic background and Zen training were. He graduated from the distinguished Komazawa University second in his class (with a major in Buddhist and Zen Philosophy and a minor in English), completed a graduation thesis on a chapter of the *Shobogenzo*, practiced at both Eihei-ji and Sojiji monasteries, and studied with several of the leading Soto Zen masters of Japan. David also described the extreme poverty and discrimination that the son of a Buddhist priest would have endured in the early 20th Century in Japan.

David spoke about the roots of many aspects of Suzuki Roshi's personality and character: his early love of animals and nature, his quick temper, and his remarkable absentmindedness. His experiences in college had a deep impact on Suzuki Roshi: He realized that formal education involves explanation, whereas actual education consists of letting a moment simply exist without explanation.

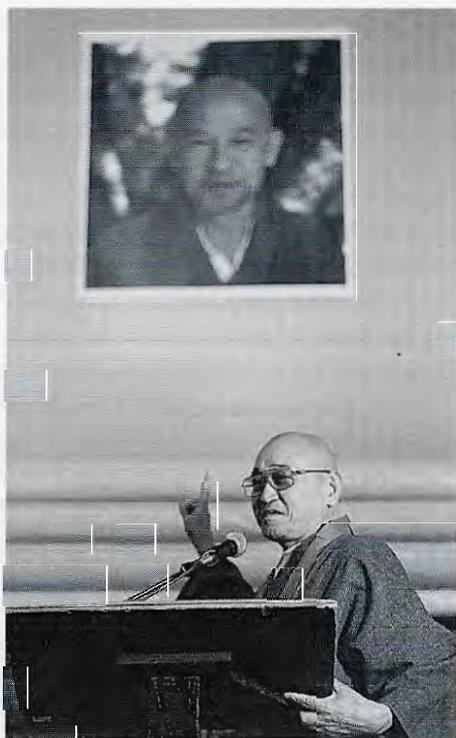
A large part of the conference was devoted to recollections offered by several of Suzuki Roshi's earliest students, many of whom are now senior **dharma** teachers themselves. Gil Fronsdal, in organizing the conference, felt it was important to preserve not only Suzuki Roshi's teachings but the perspectives of his earliest students in America as well.

His students spoke with eloquence and deep feeling of their love for Suzuki Roshi as well as their appreciation of his faults. For **Reb Anderson**, Suzuki Roshi was a teacher who allowed his students to bring themselves fully to him, with all the vulnerability and trust that such openness entails. **Ed Brown** described serving Suzuki Roshi a nearly raw potato and watching him eat it with grace and aplomb. **Blanche Hartman** said he made her feel that it was all right to be exactly who she is. He never allowed her to give him more respect than he gave her. But he also told her sternly: "Don't ever imagine that you can sit zazen. That's a big mistake. Zazen sits zazen." **Les Kaye** described Suzuki Roshi as a fisherman on a vast ocean who used neither bait nor hook, yet his students were eager to jump into his boat. **Laura Kwong**

recalled how he taught her how to bow: "Put your head on the earth at the same time you lift [your hands], so you're lifting Buddha's feet, you're lifting your life, or you're lifting truth. But you must always put your head on the earth and lift at the same time." **Yvonne Rand** brought the yucca leaf that Suzuki Roshi had used as a sumi brush to write "*tathagata*" for the original cover of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. She described her beloved teacher as someone who met each of his students with great respect, without bias, and with a radical presence. **Kazuaki Tanahashi** spotted Dogen lurking in the fields of Suzuki Roshi's teachings, ready to leap out and pounce upon delusions. **Katherine Thanas** felt completely met and acknowledged by Suzuki Roshi. He taught her to "follow the yes" within. One of his essential teachings that she recollected is to become one with whatever we do. **Mel Weitsman** recalled Suzuki Roshi walking up to him and saying simply, "It is enough to be alive."

Limitations of space prevent summarizing all of the presentations here, but the full proceedings are being edited for future publication. Copies of the five short films shown at the conference are now available on one VHS tape for sale at all three Zen Center bookstores.

*"I was so close to Shunryu Suzuki," his son Hoitsu Suzuki is saying, "so I couldn't really understand him. Later I came to the United States and I was shocked at how much you love him. So you put up [his] photograph so high up there. But in our temple he's just down there [points lower]—just the ordinary place. (laughter)*



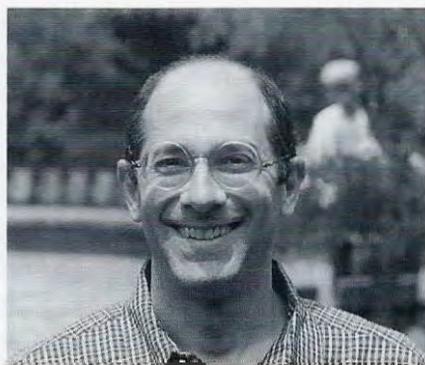
# Suzuki Roshi and the Modern Soto Denomination

Sati Conference May 30, 1998

by Prof. Richard Jaffe

IT IS A PLEASURE TO BE HERE TODAY to speak about Suzuki Roshi and the Soto denomination during the modern era. As many of you know, I am now teaching about East Asian religions at North Carolina State University. My path to becoming a Buddhist scholar passed through Zen Center, where I practiced full-time from 1979 to 1985. My years of practice have undoubtedly shaped my choice of research questions. In fact, the topic of my dissertation, clerical marriage in modern Japanese Buddhism, was catalyzed by a passage in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* that stayed with me for many years. Suzuki Roshi states: "Here in America we cannot define Zen Buddhists the same way we do in Japan. American students are not priests and yet not completely laymen. I understand it this way: that you are not priests is an easy matter, but that you are not exactly laymen is more difficult." [*Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, p. 133.]

Although I did not realize it when I first read that passage, Suzuki Roshi was alluding to the self-description given by Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, in the *Kyogyoshinsho* [*The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization*]. In the passage Shinran mentions that he, along with other disciples of his teacher, Honen, had been sent into exile and now was "neither monk nor layman." Suzuki Roshi's statement intrigued me, and I became deeply interested in how American Zen students came to practice in such a way. In reflecting on Suzuki Roshi's life and teachings after having spent several years studying the emergence of the openly married clergy among the so-called "monastic denominations" in modern Japan, I see that Suzuki Roshi was not just describing American Buddhism in that passage, but modern Japanese Soto Zen as well. Indeed, it may well be that one reason Suzuki Roshi was comfortable in the United States was precisely because the complexities of a hybrid half-monk, half-lay practice were more openly acknowledged here than in Japan.



*Former S.F. Zen Center practitioner Richard Jaffe returned to the Bay Area to give a talk at the conference.*

Suzuki Roshi, born in 1904, grew up during a watershed period in the history of Japanese Buddhism. Soto Zen and the Japanese clergy as we now know them are in crucial ways the product of the massive social and institutional engineering that occurred after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. It is possible that had those changes not occurred Suzuki Roshi would not have been born; his son, Hoitsu, would not be the abbot of Rinsoin; and we would not refer to him as Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. In addition, the Soto denomination would possibly also have a very different structure than it has today. It might not be composed of two head temples—Eiheiji and Sojiji—with “one essence”; or be headed by a single Chief Abbot (*Kancho*) drawn alternately from the ranks of the Sojiji and the Eiheiji wings of the denomination.

Beginning in the last decades of the Edo period (1603-1867) and continuing through the Meiji period (1868-1912), state and local authorities, bent on utilizing the resources of the temples and monasteries for their own ends, recarved the landscape in which Buddhism was practiced. Suzuki Roshi belonged to a generation of clerics forced to wrestle with the implications of these massive changes. It seems to me that one reason why he may have been so successful here in the United States, where there were no models for the kind of Zen community that he was trying to build, is that he had come of age in a period when Japanese Buddhism, including Soto Zen, was also being rebuilt. In order to better understand Suzuki Roshi's life and teachings, it is useful to know more about the changes and challenges that Soto clerics of his generation faced.

One of the most profound changes confronted by the Buddhist clergy during the modern period was the loss of status. “Status” has multiple meanings, of course, referring to one's actual state-recognized position in the formal social structure and in the broader sense to the value given to one's position by fellow subjects. In both senses the

Buddhist clergy "lost status" during the modern era. In an effort to modernize Japan and keep better control of the populace, the Meiji oligarchs dismantled a centuries-old system of social status in which the Buddhist and Shinto clergy had held a relatively high position. Exempted from certain responsibilities, favored by more lenient treatment for minor legal missteps, entrusted with a quasi-governmental position by the Edo authorities, the Buddhist clergy had received many perquisites. Under the new Meiji regime, both the Shinto and Buddhist clergy were thrown back into the restructured social system as ordinary subjects. Their legal privileges were abolished, and the government ceased to enforce adherence to the Buddhist precepts. At the same time, state recognition of Buddhist clerical status was ended, the Buddhist clergy also lost their draft deferment, and, along with all other clerics, were denied the right to run for public office. As a result, ordination was no longer a public act that changed one's position in society. Instead it became a private decision, much like choosing to be a teacher or stone mason; entering the clergy became a job choice and nothing more.

In 1872 the Buddhist clergy were also ordered to take surnames. While perhaps to us today this is no big deal, it is important to remember that for hundreds of years in East Asia people, at least superficially, had abandoned family identity when they entered the clergy. Severing family affiliation by giving up one's surname was a considerable sacrifice, but an essential part of joining the clergy, an act that is called *shukke*, "leaving home," in Japanese. Some Buddhist clerics clearly found the order to take a conventional surname hard to bear. In order to circumvent the spirit of that law, some Buddhists took the surname Shaku (Shakyamuni), as in Shaku Soen, D. T. Suzuki's teacher, or Fukuda (the Japanese pronunciation of the characters meaning "field of merit"), the name selected by the Jodo monk Gyokai of the Zojoji in Tokyo. Suzuki Roshi's father, Sogaku, who became abbot of the temple Zoun'in in 1891, would have been among the first generation of clerics to keep their surnames after ordination.

Suzuki Roshi would have been part of the second generation of clerics legally allowed to keep their father's surname after he was ordained in 1917 under Gyokujun So-on. This brings us to another big change that clerics like Suzuki Roshi had to come to grips with—he was the son of a cleric, born in a Soto temple. From the Meiji authorities' perspective, Suzuki Roshi's birth in a Buddhist temple in 1904 was legal because in 1872 they had issued an edict that abolished penalties for clerics who ate meat, married, grew their hair, or wore non-clerical clothing.

But although those violations of clerical standards were tolerated by the state, after 1878 each Buddhist denomination was rendered free to determine standards of deportment for its clergy. By 1885 the Soto leadership had disseminated a strict ban on the lodging of women in temples and had warned its clerics to continue to abide by Soto precepts with regard to eating meat, marrying, and so on. The leaders made clear that they did not want the clergy marrying and tried to stop the spread of that practice among the Soto clergy. The ban on lodging women in temples remained part of Soto sect law until 1906, when it disappeared from the new Soto Constitution. Thus the marriage of Suzuki Roshi's father to the widow Shima Yone at the turn of the century and their cohabitation at the temple Shoganji were violations of Soto regulations. They were not alone in their disregard for the ban. By the end of the Meiji period in 1912 it is estimated that more than half of the Soto clergy were married, much to the dismay of those in charge of the denomination. Included in the ranks of Soto leaders that opposed clerical marriage was Nishiari Bokusan, the teacher of an important influence on Suzuki Roshi, Kishizawa Ian. Nishiari's adamant resistance to clerical marriage, meat eating, abandoning the tonsure, and not wearing clerical garb should give you a sense of how great the shift in world-view was in the transition from Nishiari's generation to Suzuki Roshi's.

Having been born into a temple family at the turn of the century—when it was still a violation of denominational rules and was stigmatized by many parishioners—must not have been easy. Most temple marriages remained unofficial at best, and it is believed that the majority of temple wives were only married into temples because their other marriage prospects were poor. Suzuki Roshi's teacher, Gyokujun So-on, is a good example of how Soto clerics circumvented the disapproval of the leadership and the parishioners. According to David Chadwick's biography of Suzuki Roshi, So-on never married, but for years he lived with a woman at Rinsoin. The relationship was apparently tolerated by the parishioners as long as it remained informal.

Without an official marriage, however, temple wives had no legitimate claim to the temple should their husband die before appointing a successor. Many of these wives and their children stood one cleric away from destitution. In addition, the children of these frequently semi-covert marriages were the subject of derision, something that Suzuki Roshi probably experienced first hand. As late as 1917 the pro-marriage advocate and future abbot of Sojiji, Kuriyama Taion, describing the lot of temple wives and children wrote: "The children born at temples are called Venerable Rahula. The temple wife and mother of the children is called Princess Yashodhara. Or it is common to call her Daikoku (God of



*Hoitsu Suzuki and Michael Wenger at the Suzuki Roshi conference*

the Kitchen) or Bonsai (Buddhist Wife). They endure vehement reproaches that truly are the extremes of insult. Are these not unavoidable phenomena during the transitional period in which the problem of clerical marriage remains unresolved?" [Kuriyama Taion, *Soryo kazokuron* (*On Clerical Families*) (Tokyo: Oju Gedo, 1917). Rahula was Prince Siddhartha's son, and Princess Yashodhara was Prince Siddhartha's wife.]

The debate over clerical marriage continued well into the 1930s—some Japanese Buddhists complain that the issue of clerical marriage is still not resolved today—when, on the verge of the Pacific War, the Soto Assembly adopted some limited protections for temple wives and children.

In terms of the Soto organizational structure in general, Suzuki Roshi also would have experienced numerous dramatic changes and witnessed frequent struggles as the denomination tried to adapt to the institutional restructuring of Meiji and the growing imperialism of the Japanese state. At the start of the Meiji period, in an effort to create a more centralized religious bureaucracy, Meiji bureaucrats created the chief abbot (*Kancho*) system, with each denomination of Buddhism having one chief abbot. As part of the process of centralization, each denomination was forced to compile a description of sectarian organizational procedures and sect regulations for approval by the government. The process of defining these rules for very diverse organizations was a daunting task that sparked much fighting between factions within the different denominations.

The institutional reshuffling resulted in problems for the Soto denomination. When Eiheiji was named the sole head temple of the Soto denomination soon after the restoration, this reignited the old rivalry between the Sojiji and the Eiheiji wings of the denomination. Sojiji partisans bitterly opposed the move. Although a truce was signed in 1872, the in-fighting continued to plague the Soto denomination through the 1890's. At one point, the Sojiji faction threatened to secede completely, but the Meiji government forced the two parties to a joint conference. The result was a final declaration in 1895 that the denomination had two head temples with one essence and two patriarchs, Dogen and Keizan. After resolving the dispute a denominational headquarters, the Shumuchō, was established in Tokyo. Although by Suzuki Roshi's lifetime the fight between the two factions had ended, great bitterness persisted on both sides.

Finally, Suzuki Roshi was trained in a Soto denomination whose leaders were increasingly supportive of Japanese imperialism in continental Asia. During the first decade of the twentieth century some Soto leaders became strong proponents of missionary activity in Korea. Takeda Hanshi, the Soto cleric who had become the first inspector general of Soto missionary activity in Korea in 1908, was a strong advocate of Buddhist involvement there. Kitano Genpo, who was abbot of

*Dan Welch, Taigen Leighton and Kaz Tanahashi at the conference*



Eiheiji while Suzuki Roshi practiced there, succeeded Takeda as the inspector general of Soto missionary activity in Korea, assuming that position in 1911.

Soto leaders also staunchly repudiated the leftist activity of Soto clerics. The anarchist Soto cleric Uchiyama Gudo stood at the other end of the political spectrum from Takeda Hanshi. In a series of privately published tracts, Uchiyama denounced the emperor system, criticized the draft, and called for the redistribution of wealth to impoverished tenant farmers. In 1909—Suzuki Roshi would only have been five at the time—Uchiyama was arrested for publishing unauthorized books. The next year, when a plot to murder the emperor was discovered, one of the main conspirators was found to possess some of Uchiyama's writings. Uchiyama was sentenced to die for his alleged involvement in the plot and was executed along with other conspirators in 1911. The Sotoshu expelled Uchiyama from the order in 1910 and called a meeting at which the abbots of both head temples were reprimanded by the government. The report on the meeting issued by the Soto denomination concluded that honoring the emperor and protecting Japan were indispensable aspects of Japanese Buddhism. This attitude remained an important and unquestioned element of the Soto ethos through the war years. [Information on Takeda and Uchiyama is drawn from Ishikawa Rikizan, "The Social Response of Buddhists to the Modernization of Japan: The Contrasting Lives of Two Soto Zen Monks," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 25, No. 1-2 (forthcoming). For more on Uchiyama see Brian (Daizen) A. Victoria, *Zen at War* (Weatherhill, New York and Tokyo, 1997, pp. 38-48).] No doubt Suzuki Roshi would have had to find some way to accommodate the growing jingoism of the Soto leadership during the first half of the twentieth century.

Time will not allow me to detail other important developments in the Soto world during Suzuki Roshi's Japan years. I think that it is clear from this brief presentation, however, that in a number of ways, Suzuki Roshi was part of a generation of Soto clerics who needed to create new forms for dealing with such things as legal clerical marriage, temple inheritance from father to son, and new institutional structures like the denominational headquarters. Having grown up in the midst of all those changes must have made Suzuki Roshi a little more adept and agile when he came to the United States, where there were even fewer precedents on which to rely.



*Carl Bielefeldt at  
the Suzuki Roshi  
conference*

## *Soto Zen at the Beginning of the 20th Century*

*Sati Conference May 30, 1998*

*BY Prof. Carl Bielefeldt*

**G**IL TOLD ME THAT I WAS TO SPEAK about the intellectual world of Soto Zen at the beginning of the 20th Century, when Suzuki Roshi was coming of age. I won't be able to talk in broad terms about Soto Zen intellectual life, but I would like to touch on a few people who were particularly important for Suzuki Roshi himself.

Suzuki was born in 1904, in the late Meiji period (1868–1912). He came of age in the Taisho period (1912–1926). This was a *very* volatile time, not only institutionally for Japanese Soto Zen Buddhism, but also intellectually. It was a time when Soto Zen, like Buddhism in general and Japanese culture in general, was going through extraordinary intellectual change. The Taisho period, for example, is often known as a kind of window of liberalism in Japan—a period between the Russo-Japanese War and the Pacific War in which Japanese society experimented with socialism, communism, democratic forms, party politics, and so forth. This is the time just when Suzuki Roshi would have been a young man living in Tokyo, the center of all social and intellectual ferment.

In Buddhist terms, this is really the period in which we see the development of modern Japanese Buddhism. Intellectually speaking, this development goes in two directions: internationalization and popularization. Japanese Buddhism had been persecuted at the beginning of the Meiji period, back in the second half of the 19th Century, and was forced to reconsider itself. It had a very problematic status in society, and it realized that its old forms of teaching and understanding itself had to be redone. Thus we see, throughout the last part of the 19th Century and into the early decades of the 20th Century, an extraordinary effort by all the schools of Japanese Buddhism to rethink themselves.

Part of this evolution involved thinking of themselves as Buddhists rather than, for example, as Jodo-Shin-shu Buddhists or Soto Zen Buddhists. That is to say, Japanese Buddhists stepped back and looked at the Buddhist tradition as a whole for the first time and formulated their place within this much larger Buddhist tradition. So we see, at this time, new forms of Buddhist scholarship that had never existed in Japan: scholars going to Europe and India, studying Sanskrit, Pali, and eventually Tibetan, and trying to understand Buddhism in a broad international mode. This was a mode that they were learning from the

*Bill Redican tells Della Goertz how to order tapes of Suzuki Roshi lectures. (See Page 47 for information.)*



new scholarship on Buddhism being done in Europe and America.

This was one element of the internationalization. But another very important element was placing Buddhism within the context of religion. Religion, or *shukyo*, the term by which the Japanese now speak of religion, was not a traditional category of understanding. Buddhism was not considered a *religion* by Japanese Buddhists until the 19th Century, when they studied Western scholarship—in which the category “religion” was found—and translated the term into Japanese. So for the first time, Japanese Buddhists were asking themselves, “What is Buddhism as a religion? What is religion?” They became very interested in the new “science of religion,” as it was called, in comparative religion, and in the philosophy of religion. They tried to reimagine Buddhism as a whole and their own particular sectarian traditions in terms of this category. “What does it mean to be a religion? What kind of a religion are we?” This was a new, international, and modern understanding of Buddhism as religion.

The second major direction of the development of modern Japanese Buddhism was popular outreach. Buddhists of the Edo period (1600–1868) had been enfeoffed by the government with their own congregations, their own property, and their own self-contained institutional units. Now, in the Meiji period, when they were disenfranchised and thrown into open competition for believers and for the resources of the community, they began to develop new ways of reaching out to that community: new forms of publishing, preaching, and organizing new groups—in short, new approaches to teaching that were directed toward the lay populace in a manner that had never really been tried before.

Soto-shu (the Soto school) was right at the center of this kind of new movement in Buddhism. During this time, we see the development of new forms of scholarship: modern textual studies of the *Shobogenzo*, for example. We see Soto scholars trying to understand Soto Zen within the broader context of Buddhism, by treating it in relation to Indian and Chinese Buddhism. Soto scholars also reformulated the religion as a philosophy. The study of Dogen became prominent during the first years of the 20th Century. And we see Soto very much engaged in public outreach.

At the end of the 19th Century, the Soto-shu published a work called the *Shushogi*, which brought together passages from Dogen’s *Shobogenzo* that were particularly appropriate for lay teaching. *Shushogi* was the subject of many commentaries, lectures, and books sponsored by the Soto-shu to bring Soto teachings to the lay public. The school launched new magazines of various kinds and started new study groups for both monks and laymen.

Suzuki Roshi, then, grew up in a world where things were changing very rapidly. And Soto Zen was reaching out in a way that he would later invoke in a very different context.

Suzuki was ordained in 1917 and took *shiho* from his master Gyokujun So-on in 1926, the year he entered Komazawa University. This was the first year of the Showa era—the era we just completed with the death of the Showa Emperor Hirohito in 1989—a time of great openness and change in Japanese society. For the Soto-shu, it was perhaps noted especially as the year in which the famous Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro published his book *Shamon Dogen* (Dogen the Monk), which is often held up as the first work to bring Dogen to the Japanese general public as a great religious thinker.

When Suzuki Roshi entered Komazawa in 1926, the university itself was in the process of transforming itself into a modern private university. Komazawa, located in Tokyo, traces its origins back to the 16th Century, to an institution called Sendarin, a study center for Soto monks established in a monastery in Tokyo named Kichijoji. Monks during the Edo period went there to be trained in Soto studies. In the Meiji period, this institution was transformed into something called the Soto-shu Daigakurin (later Soto-shu Daigaku). This school introduced more systematic and modern studies not only of Soto but of Buddhism in general. The year before Suzuki Roshi entered, the institution changed its name to Komazawa University, signaling that it was now not simply an institution for monks to study Buddhism, but a modern private university as well. It has become a quite prominent private university in Tokyo and flourishes to this day.

Already in the Meiji period, before Suzuki Roshi attended, the then Soto-shu Daigakurin had been the center for the training of Buddhists who were interested in the new, more international style of study—scholars like Kimura Taiken and the famous Ui Hakuju. The latter was, for many years, a professor at Tokyo University and then Tohoku University. He was one of the leading early Japanese authorities on Indian Buddhism, but he was also very closely connected to the Soto-shu. Indeed, after he retired from Tokyo University, he became a professor at Komazawa University and eventually became its head.

Similarly, in Zen studies, one notes scholars such as Yamado Kodo, who produced the first modern dictionary of Zen Buddhism. Of particular importance for Suzuki Roshi was a teacher by the name of Oka Sotan. Oka Sotan was born in 1860 and became a professor at the Soto-shu Daigakurin. He was the first lecturer in a very important new movement that was started at Eihei-ji at the beginning of the 20th Century—a series of lectures on the *Shobogenzo* that greatly transformed the

Soto-shu understanding of Dogen and the *Shobogenzo*. Oko Sotan went on to become the head of Komazawa University and was one of the leading figures in the teaching of *Shobogenzo* in the early 20th Century. Oka Sotan was the teacher of Gyokujun So-on, Suzuki Roshi's first teacher.

So in the 1920s, when Suzuki Roshi came to Komazawa, the school had a number of important scholars working on the creation of new international Buddhist studies in Japan—scholars like Omori Zenkai, a very interesting man who spent a lot of time in the United States. Omori was very interested in the philosophy of religion and comparative religion. He was teaching at Komazawa when Suzuki was a student there.

Also at the University was Tachibana Shundo, a scholar of Pali who had studied in Europe and South Asia and eventually did a dissertation at Oxford. Some of you may have come across his book, *The Ethics of Buddhism*. It was published in 1926—the year that Suzuki Roshi came to Komazawa.

And there were also scholars working on the new Soto Zen studies, especially focused on Dogen and the *Shobogenzo*—for example, Ando Bun'ei and Jimbo Nyoten, who together produced a very important work that brought together the most famous traditional commentaries on the *Shobogenzo*. By Suzuki Roshi's day, a student could read texts of the *Shobogenzo* together with the commentaries of masters going back to the Kamakura period—a very important resource for transforming Soto Zen studies.

And scholars were also interested in Soto Zen as a philosophy—for example, Okada Giho, who was a professor at Komazawa and eventually became the head of Komazawa University. He went on to publish an extensive and systematic account of the *Shobogenzo*. That is to say, he treated *Shobogenzo* as a systematic philosophy in parallel with Western philosophers like Kant and Hegel, and he tried to lay out the philosophical system of the *Shobogenzo*.

People were also interested in the *Shobogenzo* as religious teaching. Especially important at this time at Komazawa was a man named Eto Sokuo, who was probably the foremost figure in producing the new *Shobogenzo* studies that still continue to this day. He was a specialist in the *Shobogenzo*, and in fact edited the first popular version of the *Shobogenzo*. But he taught a very broad approach to Soto Zen within the context of Buddhist studies. And he did another thing that's important to remember about these scholars: he emphasized the combination of scholarship and practice. That is, typically these scholars were also monks, had their own temples, and tried in greater or lesser degrees



Phil Wilson and David Chadwick

(depending upon the individual) to integrate their study of the *Shobogenzo* with their Buddhist practice.

Perhaps the most interesting and important of this type of scholar at Komazawa at the time Suzuki Roshi attended was the president of the University, Nukariya

Kaiten. He was a man who, very early on, went to Europe and the United States and studied there for several years. While abroad, he published what was really the first well-known book about Zen Buddhism in English, *The Religion of the Samurai*. I don't know if any of you have come across this book, but I encourage you to look it up. It's fascinating.

Nukariya Kaiten combined scholarship with the popularization of Soto. He was very active in trying to re-explain Soto to a lay audience in common terms. In fact, the very year that Suzuki Roshi came to Komazawa, Nukariya published a short book called the "*Shoshin Mondo*," ("*Questions and Answers about True Faith*"), in which he tried to lay out, for everyone, simple principles of Soto Zen as a religion. This book actually became quite controversial. In the years following its publication, Nukariya got into a considerable debate with Harada Sogaku and other people who said, "Soto Zen is not so simple. You can't just package it for laymen like that. This is just pop Zen, and we won't have anything to do with it!" It was quite a debate—called the True Faith Debate—and continued throughout the 1920's, when Suzuki Roshi was studying at Komazawa. He would undoubtedly have been exposed to this debate.

Nukariya Kaiten was Suzuki Roshi's academic advisor at Komazawa, and when Suzuki Roshi graduated he wrote a graduation thesis under him. It's entitled, "*Raihai tokozui no maki o chushin to seru Dogen-zenji no shukyo*," ("*Dogen-zenji's Religion as Seen Especially in the 'Raihai Tokozui' Chapter of the Shobogenzo*"). This chapter,



Yvonne Rand

as many of you know, is quite famous. The main theme of the chapter is the importance of submission to the master.

But much of Dogen's text is taken up with the question of the status of women and his attack on those who regard women as inferior. Accordingly, it has been held up by the women's movement in Soto-shu as an example of the founder's sense of egalitarianism in regard to gender issues. Recently I got a copy of Suzuki Roshi's graduation thesis from Komazawa University. I haven't had a chance to read it yet, but I did look to see whether he was a champion of women's rights. It turns out



Ed Brown, Alan Winter and Les Kaye at the Suzuki Roshi Conference

he wasn't very interested in that issue. He was much more interested in the relationship between master and disciple in general.

But one of the interesting things about that thesis is that Suzuki clearly reflects Nukariya Kaiten's interest in treating Soto Zen as religious experience. He frames the entire essay around this subject. Clearly Suzuki Roshi was interested at this time in *shukyo keiken* (religious experience), a category that had been borrowed from Western philosophers like William James, and in his thesis he cited thinkers like Watsuji Tetsuro and Nishida Kitaro as his sources, along with his advisor Nukariya Kaiten. So he was obviously reading the new literature of Japanese philosophy at this time.

Suzuki Roshi studied a chapter of the *Shobogenzo* in his graduation thesis, but his deeper study of the *Shobogenzo* seems to have taken place *after* he left Komazawa. In 1930, he graduated and went to Eihei-ji for a short period of training. At Eihei-ji he was assigned as attendant to a

famous monk named Kishizawa Ian. This was the beginning of a long association between Suzuki Roshi and this older monk.

Kishizawa Ian was perhaps the leading interpreter of the *Shobogenzo* of his day. He had been a student of the most famous Meiji scholar of the *Shobogenzo*, Nishiari Bokusan, who was also the teacher of Oka Sotan. Nishiari was, in some ways, the leading figure of the Soto-shu in the 19th Century, not only as a scholar but also as an appointed *daikogi* (master lecturer) at the new religious academy called the Kyobu-sho. This had been established by the Meiji government to provide for the study and administration of Buddhism and Shinto. Nishiari represented Soto-shu teaching at that academy and eventually went on to become the abbot of Sojiji and the head of the Soto-shu. But he's best known for the work that he did on the *Shobogenzo*, especially a famous commentary called the "*Shobogenzo keiteki*," which still, to this day, is probably the favorite commentary for most *Shobogenzo* scholars.

Kishizawa Roshi, Suzuki Roshi's mentor at Eihei-ji, was born in 1865. His career was not typical of Soto monks at this time. That is to say, he started out in a secular career as a school teacher and then, after studying with Nishiari Bokusan, converted to Buddhism and was ordained at the age of 32. He received *shiho* (dharma transmission) from Nishiari at the age of 36. Kishizawa went on to become abbot of several temples and then to take up residence at Eihei-ji, where Suzuki Roshi met him, as what is called a *seido* (former abbot).

Kishizawa Roshi lectured at Eihei-ji for thirteen years in the *Genzo'e*, as it's called (the lecture series on the *Shobogenzo*). He published prolifically: he wrote on the five-rank theory of Soto-shu, on the Soto-shu precepts, and so on. But he's best known for a very large commentary on the *Shobogenzo*. During the years that Suzuki Roshi was studying with him, Ian Roshi was lecturing constantly on the *Shobogenzo* in what he called *kattoshu* ("collections of tangles"). He would write about different fascicles of the *Shobogenzo* and publish them in various places, and eventually his lectures were brought together many years later in what I believe to be the most extensive commentary ever done on the *Shobogenzo*, his twenty-four-volume work entitled "*Shobogenzo zenko*."

After studying with this renowned teacher, Suzuki Roshi returned to his own temple, Zoun'in, and then to Rinsoin. But Kishizawa Roshi also left Eihei-ji a couple of years after Suzuki Roshi. He moved to a temple called Gyokudenin, which was located in Shizuoka just a few miles from Rinsoin. And there he set himself up and continued his lectures on the *Shobogenzo*. Suzuki Roshi then commuted to Gyokudenin to study with Kishizawa Roshi from 1932 right up until the latter's death in 1955, soon after which Suzuki Roshi himself left for America.



## *Suzuki Roshi's Teaching of Shikantaza*

*Sati Conference May 31, 1998*

*BY Reb Anderson*

**F**OR THE LAST TWO HUNDRED YEARS in Japanese Soto Zen, the understanding of most teachers has been that *shikantaza*, literally translated as "just sitting," was Dogen Zenji's essential practice. In accord with this mainstream understanding, Suzuki Roshi established *shikantaza* as our essential practice as well. A great deal of his teaching was intended to help us understand what it means to practice just sitting in its true sense. He also told us that his main job as a Zen priest was to encourage people to practice just sitting.

He would often say that our practice is just to sit. Then he would say that that may sound easy, but that actually it is rather difficult to understand what it means to just sit. In order to help us understand what this just sitting really is he went on to say that it is just to be ourselves. Finally, he made it clear, at least to me, that we could not just be ourselves by ourselves alone. We can only just be ourselves and thus realize the just sitting practice of the buddha ancestors by practicing in the same manner as the entire universe and all beings. Perhaps other Soto Zen teachers have taught just sitting in this way, but I have not

heard it so clearly from anyone but Suzuki Roshi. I deeply appreciate the way he stressed this point.

Suzuki Roshi taught that in order to actualize our way of just sitting by being ourselves, we must express ourselves fully. So paradoxically, realizing the selflessness of just sitting depends on full self-expression. Full self-expression in turn can only be realized by meeting and practicing together with all living beings in the entire universe. Therefore, he taught that to realize the full function of the practice of just sitting, we must go and meet face to face with our teacher. Such meetings offer the opportunity to settle completely into the truth of just sitting. Only when we meet intimately with another person can we fully be ourselves. As the *Lotus Sutra* says, "Only a buddha together with a buddha can thoroughly master the buddha dharma."

My understanding of Suzuki Roshi's teaching of just sitting is that it encompasses a dynamic interdependence between two dimensions: an intrapsychic aspect and an interbeing or interpersonal aspect. According to this view, I see Shakyamuni practicing upright sitting under the bodhi tree and attaining the way as only part of the story of just sitting. Only when he met his students and they attained the way together was the full function of the selfless practice of just sitting realized.

So in our practice of just sitting we cannot actually fully be ourselves unless we go to see the teacher and the teacher cannot fully be himself unless he comes to meet us. Suzuki Roshi was a teacher who taught that sometimes we have to disagree and argue with our teacher and that sometimes we have to surrender to our teacher. Similarly, the teacher must sometimes disagree with us and must sometimes surrender

*Della Goertz  
and Betty Warren  
at the Suzuki  
Roshi conference*



to us. This interbeing aspect of just sitting generously encompasses all agreement and disagreement.

To be fully ourselves in this formal student-teacher relationship both must assert themselves completely and recognize each other fully. You will sometimes disagree with your teacher and at the same time you must surrender to your teacher. Your teacher, of course, must bring herself to meet you and must surrender to you. The only way that you can fully be yourself is if your teacher and ultimately all beings come to meet you. When Suzuki Roshi was alive meeting with him was a very high priority in my life. I made a big effort to bring myself to meet him but often as soon as I made this strong effort to assert myself in his presence I became aware of my anxiety and vulnerability and wanted to get away. However, when I didn't present myself strongly, if I was with him half-heartedly, I didn't feel the need to escape. It was only when I presented myself whole-heartedly to him that I felt most vulnerable. When Suzuki Roshi ordained me as a priest he gave me the name Tenshin Zenki. On that day he told me that Tenshin means "Reb is Reb," and then he said, "People may have a problem with that but there is no other way." Today the way I understand his teaching is that when Reb is fully Reb, when you are fully you, we are completely vulnerable. To what are we completely vulnerable? When we are completely ourselves we are vulnerable to the entire universe. The second part of my name, Zenki, may be translated as "the whole works." In just being fully ourselves, Tenshin, we open ourselves to the working of the entire universe, Zenki. This name describes how the entire universe works thoroughly through each person in the practice of just sitting. Over the years I gradually came to understand what a wonderful gift he gave me in that name. Tenshin Zenki is actually a gloss for shikantaza. So now I see that just sitting is not something that I can do by myself. It is not something that Suzuki Roshi could do by himself either. It is something that we do together. We practice it together when we bring ourselves completely to our meeting and completely assert ourselves while completely recognizing each other.

In discussing with a friend the various views of just sitting, he recalled that famous story of the blind men feeling the elephant. One person says the elephant is a wall, another person says the elephant is a huge leaf, another says it is a rope and another says it is a tree trunk. When he said that I thought to myself, "But in this case, there really isn't such a thing as an elephant."

There is not actually something out there that is just sitting. It is just that we may enter the reality of this wonderful practice by giving ourselves entirely into a situation where "the other" comes and meets

us entirely. But since the other meets us entirely just sitting can't be a thing. What we do is not just sitting. Just sitting is the dynamic interdependence of what we give and what comes to meet us. That is not a thing. Nobody knows what that is. Even all the buddhas together cannot fully measure it. However, we can throw ourselves into it. Although I say throw ourselves into it, even this is not a unilateral activity. We still need to have a significant other whom we meet face to face. Therefore, it is not so easy to throw ourselves into such a practice because we may feel anxious or afraid of the unknown possibilities of such concerted activity. Nevertheless, we still have to jump wholeheartedly into the unknown reality of just sitting. There is a story about the great master Yaoshan just sitting. His teacher Shitou, practicing together with him, asked, "What are you doing?" Yaoshan replied, "I'm not doing anything at all." Shitou said, "Then you are just idly sitting." Yaoshan replied, "If I were idly sitting I would be doing something." Finally Shitou said, "You say that you are not doing anything at all. What is it that you are not doing?" Yaoshan said, "Even the ten thousand sages don't know."

I recently saw a good example of the practice of just sitting in the form of the Olympic women's figure skating. These young women—actually 14 to 16 year old girls—fully expressed themselves. They asserted themselves with extraordinary energy, strength, precision and grace. What was so touching to me was, that at the very moment of their fullest self-assertion, they simultaneously surrendered to the entire universe. At the moment of most powerful self-expression—when they were flying through the air performing amazing feats of turning through time and space—at that very moment they were completely vulnerable to the whole world. They were vulnerable to falling on the ice, they were vulnerable to nineteen judges' minute and severe scrutiny, they were vulnerable to their parents and their coaches. A billion people were watching them. Right in the midst of their transcendent whole-heartedness they were completely vulnerable and open to the support and love of the entire world. It is this concerted and cooperative activity of all beings that the practice of just sitting celebrates and realizes.

After their performances these young champions were interviewed. They were shown tapes of their performances. At the point of their total impeccable self-expression and complete openness to the universe, they were asked what they were thinking at that moment. As I remember, they weren't able to say; they didn't know what it was they were "not doing." As Yaoshan said, "Even the ten thousand sages don't know what just sitting is."

Senior Dharma Teacher  
Sojun Mel Weitsman  
hits the makugyo for  
service during the Sati  
Conference



## Suzuki Roshi's Practice of Shikantaza

Sati Conference May 31, 1998

BY Sojun Mel Weitsman

**I** REMEMBER READING a description of shikantaza by a contemporary Japanese Zen master. He described shikantaza as a very special kind of practice in which you sit zazen so hard that sweat pours out of your body. You can sit for only about half an hour because it's so intense. And when I read that I thought, "Boy, that's not the shikantaza that I know anything about or ever heard anything about from Suzuki Roshi!"

I wasn't thinking that such intense zazen is a wrong practice of shikantaza. But it does seem to me that this is elitist shikantaza or Olympic-style shikantaza: trying to accomplish some great feat. Suzuki Roshi always talked about shikantaza as one's day-to-day, moment-to-moment life of selflessness.

One of the main themes of Suzuki Roshi was, "Don't be selfish." At Sokoji, when we were in the middle of a sesshin—maybe my first or second one—for some reason or another he said, "You people don't know how selfish you are." And I thought, "Is that the right word? Maybe he means *selfless*." So that was a turning word for me too, because I really understood that the central teaching of Suzuki Roshi was not to be selfish.

It's a very simple phrase. It's something that our mother always tells us, right? "Don't be selfish." But in Buddhism we learn to be *selfless*—no self. "Be selfless." But Suzuki Roshi said *selfish*, which has a connotation that is a little more personal and is one that we don't like so much.

Suzuki Roshi's simple day-to-day activities—the way he would sit down and stand up, eat his dinner, walk, put on his sandals—this was his expression of shikantaza. Everyday activity with no selfishness—just doing the thing for the thing—that was his shikantaza. We usually say that shikantaza means "just sitting." And that's true. Just putting on your shoes too. But this "*just*" has a special meaning. It means "without going any further" or "without adding anything extra."

When we go about our daily activities we always have a purpose. If I go to the store, I want to buy something. So I have a purpose. And that purpose motivates me to go to the store. But while going to the store, I'm living my life step by step. It has something to do with going to the store and the motivation to do so, but it's totally separate at the same time. It's just this step, this step, this step, totally living the life of walking within walking.

We're always doing something, making up a story about our life. And making up this story about our life is okay. This is our dream.



*Katherine  
Thanas and  
Gil Fronsdal  
at the  
Suzuki Roshi  
Conference*

*Peter  
and Jane  
Schneider  
at the  
conference*



We've been talking about the dream. Everybody has a dream. We have a dream of going to the store. Every thought is a dream. But the shikantaza, or the "just doing," is the selfless activity of just doing *within* the dream. In other words, we move and then we rest. We move and then we rest. Life is a movement and a rest. But in our practice we move and rest at the same time. Within our movement is perfect stillness. Stillness and movement are the two aspects of this life.

I think about shikantaza as a state in which our thought and our activity have no gap. When an athlete is skiing in the Olympics and performing an outstanding feat [Mel is referring to Reb's immediately preceding lecture], body and mind have no gap. Thought and activity are one. The athlete isn't thinking *about* something. The thought is the activity and the activity is the thought.

But shikantaza doesn't require a highly motivated spectacular event like Olympic skiing. It should be our day-to-day, moment-to-moment activity. The simplest activity. And this is what we recognized in Suzuki Roshi. When we say, "This is what he was like," we mean that his shikantaza was right there for all of us to experience. It was not spectacular, yet there was something so wonderful about it. We couldn't put our finger on it. Just putting on his sandals or the simple act of standing up and sitting down. We all do that, but there was something about putting on his sandals that was exactly the same as skiing in the Olympics. It had exactly the same quality.

Shikantaza is rather undefinable. How do we practice shikantaza? It is the very simple practice of lack of selfishness, of lack of self-centeredness, and of just doing. As Reb said, if you put yourself totally into an activity, the universe meets you and confirms you and there's no gap between you and the universe.

That's my understanding. Thank you.



*All of these folks attended the Sati Center conference on the life, times and teachings of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, which was held in Palo Alto May 30–31, 1998. Front row from left: Peter Schneider, Daya Goldschlag, and Gil Fronsdal; standing from left: Al Tribe, Carl Bielefeldt, Katherine Thanas, Reb Anderson, Jane Schneider, Dan Welch, Laura Kwong, Richard Jaffe, Mel Weitsman, Phil Wilson, Paul Discoe, Blanche Hartman, Yvonne Rand, Norman Fischer, Takako Suzuki, David Chadwick, Betty Warren, Kazuto Suzuki, Mitsuyo Suzuki, Della Goertz, Kaz Tanahashi and Hoitsu Suzuki.*



## *The New Tassajara Dining Room and Dormitory*

*BY Barbara Kohn*

*I*N MAY OF THIS YEAR, Ed Brown officiated at the opening of the new dining room/dormitory at Tassajara. As contractor Gene DeSmidt and architect Helen Deganhart led people on a tour of the new building, my mind wandered back over the years since the planning for this reconstruction began. I was filled with gratitude for Gene and Helen and their relationship with Tassajara and San Francisco Zen Center.

The planning began in 1991, when the Development Department of Zen Center, headed by Robert Lytle, was about to begin a fundraising drive for rebuilding the dining room/dormitory to meet earthquake safety standards. A number of Tassajara residents and associates, myself included, questioned the proposed plans, and the process came to a halt. At the center of the controversy was the feeling of some residents that they hadn't been fully included in the planning. So a committee was formed which included representatives of the residential community at Tassajara as well as members of the administration. By August 1993, the original plans were reaffirmed.

*Photo: Ed Brown, chairman of S.F. Zen Center's Board of Directors, offers words of welcome at the dedication ceremony for the new dining room.*

As the committee emerged from a meeting at Tassajara, two engineers who had come with Helen met them with a disastrous report. The steam rooms were scheduled to be rebuilt during the September work period and the engineers were testing the stability of the hillside behind the "steams" for its ability to withstand the stresses of deconstruction and construction. Gene DeSmidt had rebuilt the previous bathhouse only seven years before, and the steam room renovation, the final aspect of that project, was to be completed before the dining room/dormitory reconstruction began.

The engineers' report indicated a more serious geological problem behind the bathhouse itself. And so, one week before the end of the 1993 guest season, we were forced to close the baths. Temporary showers were built to accommodate the residents, and the dining room/dormitory design committee became the new committee to plan a rebuilding of the bathhouse. I went from acting as project manager for the relatively small steam room renovation to being project manager for the rebuilding of the bathhouse. Amazingly, the new bathhouse was designed and built within the next nine months.

Three years later, in the summer of 1996, plans for the rebuilding of the dining room/dormitory were reactivated. Lo and behold! The residential community had changed over those three years and the new residents of Tassajara felt that they, now, should be consulted about the plans. Leslie James, the director of Tassajara, Mel Weitsman, Helen Deganhart and I formed the new dining room/dormitory design committee. The Officers and Directors asked us to give serious consideration to the ideas coming from the community. Helen, with great patience, explained the reasoning behind the 1993 plan and its costs, and explored with the committee various ideas and suggestions. After careful consideration, the committee again reaffirmed the earlier plans and the finalizing process was set in motion. Fundraising went into full gear and the generous response of our constituency made it possible to begin building in the fall of 1997.

On the first day of work period that September the work crews arrived, heavy equipment rolled in and the students moved out of the rooms in the dormitory. With a hammer in my hand and in the midst of a lot of hoopla, I had the honor of smashing the first blow toward the deconstruction of the old building. Large trucks arrived carrying wood, sand, mortar and moment beams (steel crossbeams weighing

over a ton each). For five years new beams for the dining room ceiling had been curing under a tin-roofed shelter at the flats on the far end of Tassajara. At last, the time had come to use them.

Our friend Bill Steele and his deconstruction crew began removing the roof and top floor while Gene's carpenters built temporary shelters for staging areas. After the dormitory had been removed, the dining room porch suddenly crashed to the ground in clouds of dust. It had been attached to the main structure with something like chewing gum and a few nails. Then, when the crew removed the interior walls of the first floor, much of the exterior stone wall structure tumbled down. Apparently the mortar had rotted and the interior walls had been all that kept the stonework in place. Luckily, Artemio, a master stone mason on Bill Steele's crew, rebuilt the walls, and later matched their style when he built pilasters for the courtyard fence along the creek side.

Former abbot Mel Weitsman was asked by Gene to build the dormitory altar and he joined the workforce to do so. Through donations from various building companies and using remilled boards from the old dining room floor, enough wood was available for hardwood floors for the dormitory.

Dave Barrett, a cabinetmaker in Berkeley who had donated his talents to construct the cabinetry in the bathhouse, built counters for the new dining room. As many of you will remember, the ceiling of the dining room had a dark green "crackle" paint surface. Many of us wanted to use that wood in the reconstruction project, and Dave was able to incorporate it in the cabinet doors. The cabinet tops were made from a large maple tree branch that had been removed for safety reasons.

Finally, Tassajara plant manager David Basile, former plant manager Steve Malawsky and our systems engineer friend Bob McGinnis brought thermal heating to the building. This use of Tassajara's hot springs water is part of a continuing series of heating projects.

On the opening day of guest season, the Tassajara residents, Gene's work crews and work period volunteers rushed to finish bits of magic. I arrived about noon on May 8 with my seven-year-old grandson. I was thrilled as I entered the completed building. With great excitement, I encountered the details that gave evidence to the care and attention of the builder and architect. The combination of old and new appealed to my nostalgia for a familiar place while it also offered the pleasure of something fresh and more carefully designed. My grandson was so taken with the atmosphere, combined with the skill and charm of the servers at meals that he said he wanted to keep eating in that place where they treat you like a king!

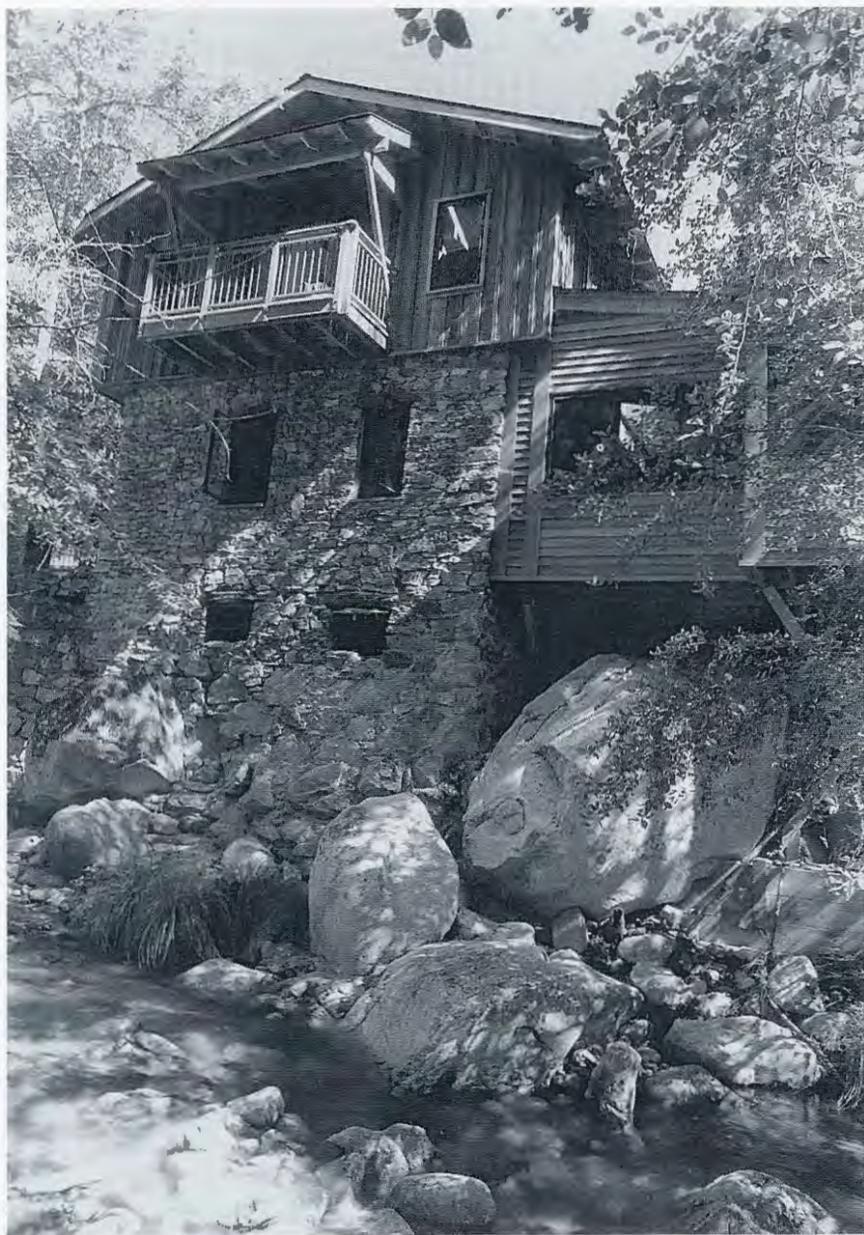
I offer deep gasshos to everyone who made possible this aesthetically beautiful "palace" for us to eat, study, and live in. It is truly a building for the next hundred years.



*New entrance to the student dormitory above the new stone dining room*

*The new dining room porch*





*View of the new dining room from the creek*

## Haiku for Tassajara

All things around us  
are asking for our  
apprehension, working for  
our enlightenment.

—R.H. Blyth, *Haiku, Vol. III*

BY Caroline Miller

**D**riving too fast,  
hurtling south through spring,  
I poison the sky.

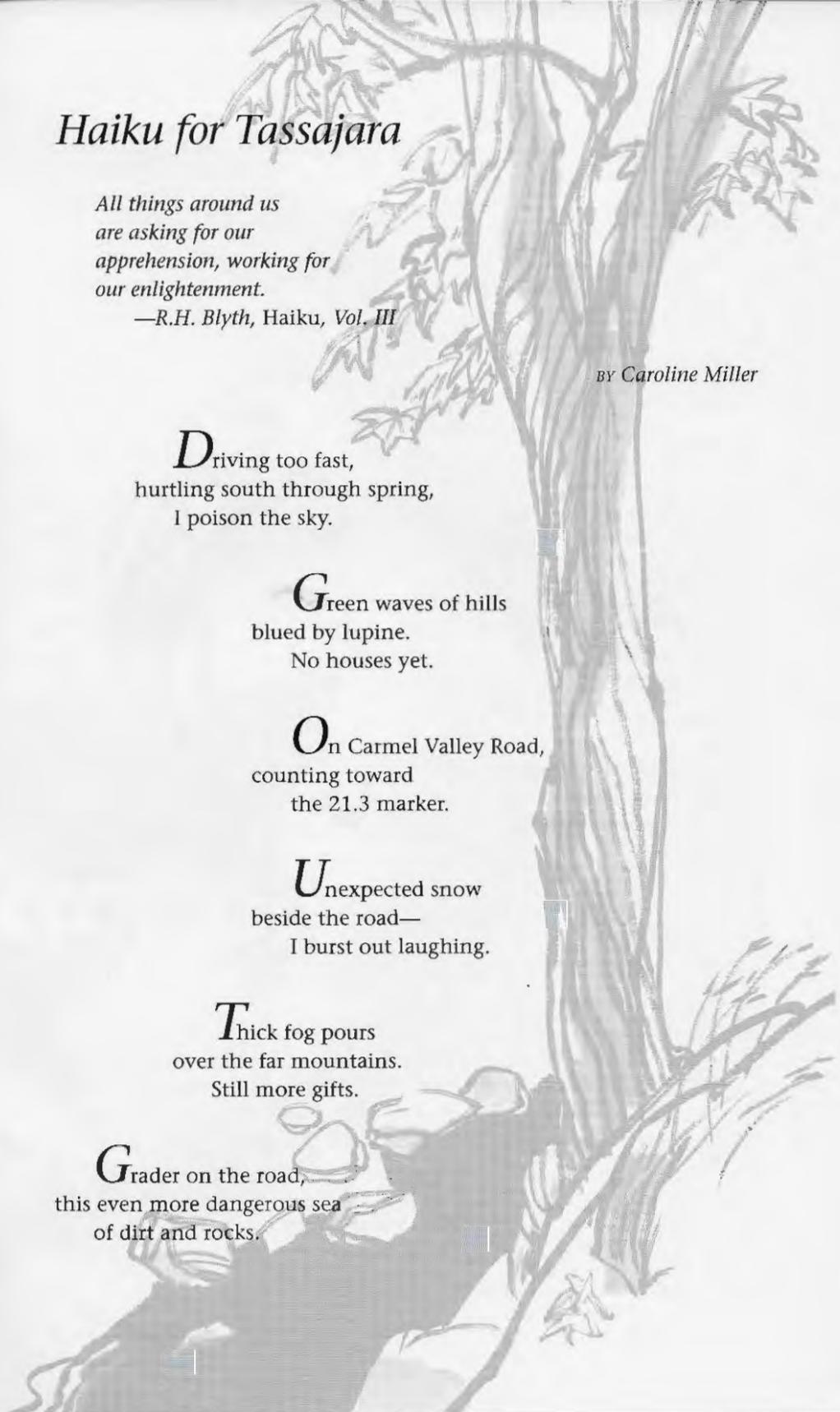
**G**reen waves of hills  
blued by lupine.  
No houses yet.

**O**n Carmel Valley Road,  
counting toward  
the 21.3 marker.

**U**nexpected snow  
beside the road—  
I burst out laughing.

**T**hick fog pours  
over the far mountains.  
Still more gifts.

**G**rader on the road,  
this even more dangerous sea  
of dirt and rocks.



After the hard winter,  
we eat warm bread  
beneath the trees.

Alone in my cabin.  
How could it be  
so cold?

Stream too high to cross.  
The furry wisteria  
begins unfolding.

Constant sound  
of the stream.  
Neither of us alone.

In the steam house:  
red- and green-streaked walls,  
air full of stars.

Pouring hot  
sulphur water on my head,  
I am home.

No lights.  
So close, the huge  
frightening stars.

After firewatch,  
I fall asleep  
facing the wood-stove door.

Narrow path.  
Sheer mountainside.  
Cold fear.

Alone on the ridge,  
a mountain lion leaps  
in my mind.

At Suzuki Roshi's grave:  
black-purple iris,  
lavender shooting stars.

Under the generous  
maple tree, I lie down  
on clean, dry leaves.

Driving home, I know  
I will forget how beautiful  
these mountains are.



## Book Reviews

# BEARING WITNESS

A Zen Master's Lessons  
in Making Peace



**BERNIE GLASSMAN**

Coauthor of INSTRUCTIONS TO THE COOK

BEARING WITNESS

by Tetsugen Bernie Glassman

Pub. Bell Tower

Bernie Glassman's latest book, *Bearing Witness*, is a must-read for anyone interested in exploring the connection between Buddhist practice and social activism in their own lives. In it, Glassman, a Zen priest and social activist known for his very innovative and dynamic ways, shares his latest experiments in bringing Zen practice out into the world. Over the years, Glassman has applied himself to the question that is central to his life work: how to alleviate the suffering brought on by homelessness, AIDS and violence that exist in this country. Over twelve years, he developed the Greystone Mandala, a successful network of community housing and social services located in Yonkers, New York. However, on his fifty-fifth birthday he decided to give up his involvement with Greystone and in the spirit of not-knowing plopped himself down on the steps of the U.S. Capitol for a cold retreat in January 1994 with the question in mind of what he could do to further his commitment to promoting peace and relieving the social ailments of our time. The answer to this question, the formation of the Peacemaker Order, an international group of social/spiritual activists, is the subject of his book. In their lives and their work, Peacemakers make a commitment to upholding the Three Tenets of the order: penetrating the unknown, bearing witness to both joy and suffering, and healing themselves and others. Their practice is deepened through retreats held

at places of extreme human suffering. At Auschwitz they sit and meditate on the pain and reality of the Holocaust. In the inner-city streets of New York they give up their worldly comforts for a few days to get closer to the everyday experiences of the homeless. By sitting and bearing witness to the pain and suffering around them the Peacemakers go through an intense healing process, experiencing the inter-connection between their own personal suffering and the suffering of the world. Glassman's descriptions of the Peacemakers' personal experiments in socially engaged Buddhism offer inspiration and practical lessons for those who are experimenting with this in their own lives and illustrate the importance of a spiritual community to offer mutual support on this worldly bodhisattva path.

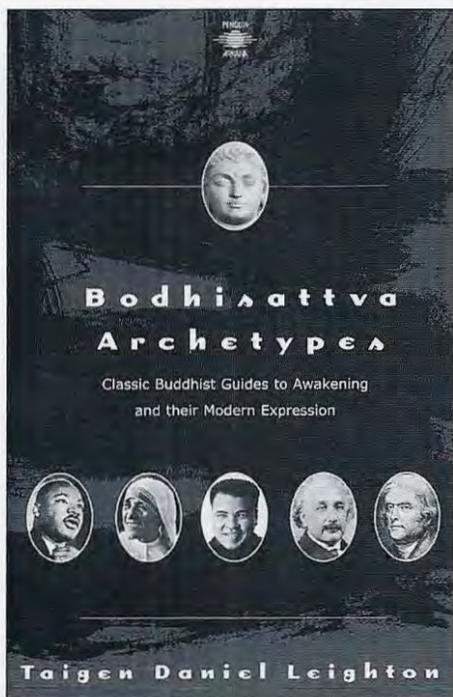
—Rachel Frankford

## BODHISATTVA ARCHETYPES

by Taigen Daniel Leighton  
Pub. Penguin Arkana

In *Bodhisattva Archetypes*, Taigen Daniel Leighton presents a full range of bodhisattva analysis and description. His erudition is impressive, offering the reader information and references that may otherwise require a great deal of research. And Taigen's enthusiasm is infectious, both on the level of inspiration for the bodhisattva path and encouragement for the level of contemplation and "self"-examination necessary in pursuing such a path. Bodhisattva activity, as Taigen points out, originates in and is informed by the wisdom of selflessness as well as by the inspiration of compassion. Yet, bodhisattva activity is not limited to any particular type of person, and no one is barred from the intention or the attempt.

—Wendy Lewis



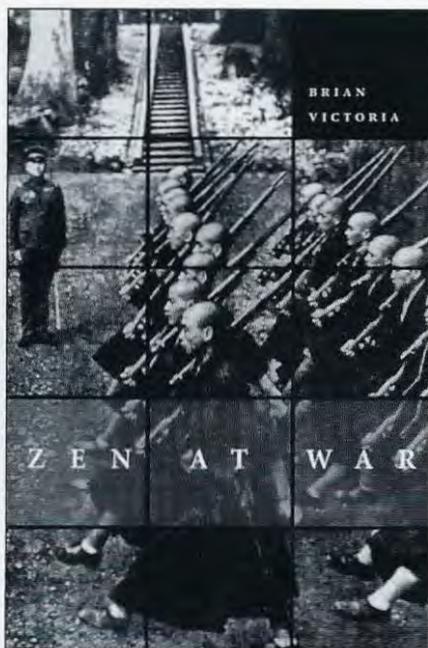
ZEN AT WAR by Brian Victoria  
Pub. Weatherhill

In *Zen At War*, Brian Victoria has presented a sincere consideration of war as a drastic problem for humanity and of the ways that war is antithetical to tenets of Buddhism. The author's shock, hurt and anger in response to the political and religious propaganda from Japan's Buddhist communities and leaders over the last century and more is quite moving. This is a painful topic worthy of examination.

Our historical perspective of Japan has been limited partly through Japan's choice of isolation in regard to the rest of the world. That choice has had a harsh aversive aspect regarding non-Japanese people and cultures which was revealed over the period of time covered by this book, as Japan felt the pressure of an internal need to expand and the pressure of an outside threat to Japan's uniquely guarded culture. In his book, Mr. Victoria presents aspects of that struggle that implicate some of America's, and the world's, most dearly regarded and deeply respected Japanese Zen teachers, scholars and institutions. I am very grateful to Mr. Victoria for presenting his detailed documentary evidence and commentary.

However, I would not unreservedly recommend his book as the definitive view on this subject. Mr. Victoria's task is a difficult one, but his arguments sometimes sound strikingly similar to the propagandist rhetoric of the Buddhist leaders whom he criticizes and denounces. His text is often fraught with aphorism and polemic, as in such statements as, "It was all but inevitable that institutional Buddhism would face a day of reckoning," "Appearances proved to be deceiving," "the last nail in the coffin" (used metaphorically), and so on.

Although the complexities of historical circumstances involved in this period of Japan's history don't excuse cruel, anti-human ideas and behavior, those complexities can inform a deeper analysis of this dynamic period. For example, Western white imperialists have, through the use of a great deal of anti-human cruelty, invaded and drastically



changed or destroyed many countries and cultures. Whether Western white imperialism is or has been good, bad or inevitable, the resistance of Japan and Japanese culture to it can be afforded some understanding. I wonder if Mr. Victoria has considered his own anger and anxiety on his subject to be in part a reflection of the anger and anxiety of the people and circumstances he is examining.

One of the problems with war and warfare is that they *are* anti-human activities, especially in terms of individual lives and property. Nevertheless, I don't see that it is appropriate to evaluate what has occurred simply from an idealistic perspective. I am certainly not opposed to idealism or standards of conduct, yet it seems to me that our ideals have to be able to bear the reality out of which they arise. How can we hold each other accountable without excusing ourselves from accountability and without looking for someone ultimately to blame? Mr. Victoria courageously presents another test case for such an inquiry.  
—Wendy Lewis

#### THE WILL TO ORTHODOXY

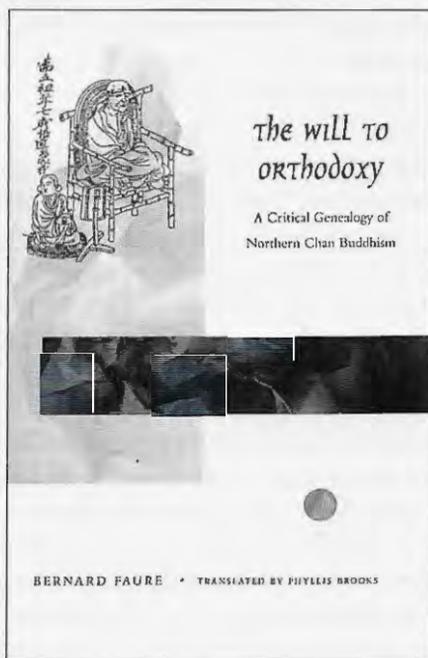
by Bernard Faure

Pub. Stanford University Press

For those with an appreciation of Zen scholarship a new book by Bernard Faure is always an exciting adventure. This new reworking of his doctoral thesis from 1984 explores the development of a self-conscious Zen School in China from the 7th to 9th centuries, both linking it to and distinguishing it from what came before it. Perhaps this excerpt from the introduction will give some flavor of the book:

"I hope that I have not . . . been 'using a conceptual sieve that keeps the chaff and discards the grain,' but rather that, emulating Chan dialectics, I have helped undermine this very dichotomy by showing that the chaff is precisely an 'essential' part of the grain."

—Michael Wenger



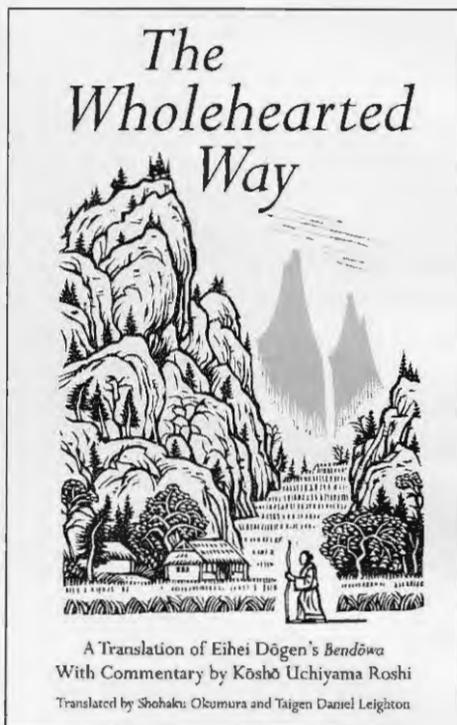
THE WHOLEHEARTED WAY  
*A translation of Dogen's  
Bendowa by Shohaku Okumura  
and Taigen Daniel Leighton*  
Pub. Tuttle

*The Wholehearted Way*,  
a new edition of *Bendowa*,  
published by Tuttle in 1997,  
is a modern translation of  
and commentary on one of

Dogen's great writings on practice/enlightenment. Dogen, the founder of Japanese Soto Zen, lived from 1200–1253. His basic teaching is that practice (zazen) and realization (enlightenment) are not separate, and that the relationship between them is beginningless and endless. In the introduction, Shohaku Okumura intersperses historical information and commentary with translations of the characters that comprise the title as well as other Japanese terms. The collaborative work of Okumura and Taigen Daniel Leighton, an American Zen priest, has produced an enjoyably readable version of *Bendowa* and of Kosho Uchiyama Roshi's commentary, as well as textual notes that enrich the reader's understanding of both the text and the context out of which Dogen wrote.

Zen Center's abbess, Zenkei Blanche Hartman, comments, "This book will take Dogen Zenji's teachings on practice/enlightenment into the 21st century. Uchiyama Roshi's deep devotion, together with his modern here-and-now understanding, is presented with such clarity and precision by Shohaku Okumura and Taigen Dan Leighton that we enter Dogen Zenji's presence as though in dokusan." Zenkei has used *The Wholehearted Way* as a text for her classes at San Francisco Zen Center and at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center.

—Wendy Lewis



## *Suzuki Roshi Tapes*

**S**AN FRANCISCO ZEN CENTER is entrusted with the teaching legacy of Shunryu Suzuki in the form of approximately 300 recorded lectures dating from 1965 to 1971. (An additional 100 or so transcripts exist for which there is no known tape.) Because the original tapes were reaching the end of their expected storage life, in 1995 the Board of Directors approved a project to make a preservation archive copy of each of the original tapes.

The first phase of the project has been completed, resulting in a catalog of all known information about each tape, plus an open-reel archive copy and a backup cassette copy of each lecture (produced by Mark Watts). Happily, a number of lectures long thought lost have been rediscovered and will be transcribed for the first time.

One of the first results of the archive project is the release of four recorded lectures—on two cassette tapes—by Suzuki Roshi for sale to the general public (with more to follow):

Both Buddha and Ordinary (1969)  
Sunfaced Buddha, Moonfaced Buddha (1969)

Why We Practice Zazen (1969)  
Bodhisattva Way (1971)

The tapes will be sold through two or more national distributors. They are also available at the three San Francisco Zen Center bookstores (or by mail to Beginner's Mind Bookstore, 300 Page St., San Francisco, CA 94102, for \$15 + \$2 shipping per set of four lectures).

Fundraising is also underway to complete the next phase of the archive project, which includes the production of a complete set of verbatim transcripts for all lectures. Any financial assistance would be most gratefully received. Please contact Michael Wenger, Dean of Buddhist Studies, at City Center.

## *Gifts of the Workplace*

BY Katharine Cook

**M**Y FORMAL LEAVE-TAKING of Zen Center was marked two years ago May by a Departing Student Ceremony held in the Page Street zendo. In this ceremony I walked around the aisles of the meditation hall with my head bowed and palms joined and was acknowledged to be leaving the temple to "enter the marketplace with gift-bestowing hands." Although the Ino almost forgot to do the ceremony, for me this was the occasion marking the culmination of thirty years of residence at Zen Center practice places—City Center, Tassajara and Green Gulch Farm. What those gift-bestowing hands have to offer, and how I am using them is what I am discovering as I take those thirty years out into the world of family, friends and work.

I worked in Zen Center front offices for ten years, and similar periods in the kitchens and gardens. I had been most interested in the craft of work and in how Zen informed the arts, especially ceramics. My limitations as I understood them at the time prevented me from embracing the full program of formal practices and so most of my experience centered around the process of work in a spiritual community. In 1996 I knew I didn't want to do office work any longer, but didn't know if I had any other real options in today's marketplace. I experienced a great deal of anxiety both around leaving and finding work. What I did was have some flyers made up advertising my skills in companion work, cooking and gardening, posted them and waited.

Ellen, who practices health education counseling, saw my flyer on the Zen Center board and recommended me to a client who was facing surgery for kidney cancer. Needing some cooking and home care while he convalesced, Len turned out to be a kindred spirit, active in community affairs, serving on the board of Spirit Rock. As I strove to understand and meet his needs, I found within myself a practice in cooking and restorative nutrition, and helping someone make changes in his food choices and meal practices. Each morning I arose while he slept, practiced yoga, and prepared our breakfast. After eating together we discussed the day's menu, and I went out to shop arriving at the markets just as they opened. Returning home I prepared his lunch, then dinner. The work environment was very pleasant and peaceful, an apartment in Strawberry overlooking the water, and I discovered I enjoyed working out and living in. Something took. The combination of



*Kathy Cook in the City  
Center kitchen*

cooking for someone and helping him regain his health agreed with me very well and turned out to be a livelihood I hadn't known I had. In some ways I felt like a 90s version of a conscious 50s housewife and saw the virtues in that role that my mother had performed so silently.

Turning out three nutritious meals a day happened almost without my willing it after so many years in Green Gulch kitchens. No sweat. Also, I had had some training in nutrition counseling as well with Kathleen DesMaisons, the author of the current bestseller *Potatoes not Prozac* and Len and I were both interested in the approach to eating outlined in *Entering the Zone* by Barry Sears, Ph.D. Each day we had some talk about nutrition and I kept coming up with things for him to try. Our biggest challenge was to find a breakfast that supported his day. A grapefruit half, packaged dry cereal, Rice Dream and decaf were just leaving Len feeling more tired than before he ate. After trying several ways of bringing protein into the meal, what finally worked was lox

and bagel, a dish from his tradition which he enjoyed but had thought was verboten during the years of American emphasis on high carbohydrate low fat diets. Scrambled yolkless eggs with onion also worked. Lunch was a sandwich with soup or salad, dinner usually a one-pot dish, like a stir-fry with rice. I cooked for Len and stayed with him for three weeks, after which time he was eager to resume taking care of himself.

The next call came from a colleague of Len's who had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. I went to meet Arthur and Susan, a delightfully friendly and energetic couple with a pink Victorian in Pacific Heights. Like Len, they were from the world of public television.

We established a good rapport from the beginning and I was hired with a two month provisional agreement. I came three afternoons a week, planned the menu, shopped and prepared dinner in amounts generous enough to allow for leftovers, and a hearty soup for the next day. After the two months they were happy with the work, and I was offered a permanent job. Interviewing Art to determine his food likes and dislikes, I wound up with a list of vegetables he didn't like. For my own reasons and to benefit him, I took it upon myself to challenge his dislikes surreptitiously. He thought he didn't like cauliflower, but he loved Creamy Cauliflower Soup. Although he didn't like zucchini, Old Favorite Green Soup with 6 cups of zucchini puree turned out to be his very favorite. He had never had a rutabaga, but oven-baked rutabaga "fries" hit the spot with barbecued tofu. Working from *Laurels' Kitchen*, *The Tassajara Recipe Book* and the Page Street kitchen files, I prepared tasty tofu dishes with all kinds of different sauces, some fish and chicken dishes, lots of steamed and baked vegetables and nutritious hearty soups. At the end of each day I wrote out the menu and Arthur graded each dish from B to A++. Green Corn Soup got the all time high score—A+++ and mostly we stayed around A. I developed a list of the favorites and rotated them. Some of the most favorite were "the salmon dish"—salmon filets poached on a bed of potatoes in sauteed onions, topped with steamed spinach and a miso-ginger sauce. (This was served to company.) Barbecue tofu and tofu fish with a mock tartar sauce made from low-fat mayonnaise, yogurt, lemon and pickle relish got rave reviews. I had to write down the recipe for the sauce so he could make it himself.

Susan says "tasty" was the key to making it all work. Arthur's eating habits changed from on-the-go junk to soy and vegetables. He had taken his illness as a wake-up call to change his meal practice and that's why I was there. My hosts claimed to be eating better than they ever had and were both losing weight and feeling good. Susan was very

touching with her gratitude and relief at seeing her husband eating to support his health. Since I worked pretty quietly, again second nature after years of silent kitchen practice, they also felt I blended well with the "Wa" or harmonious energy of the house.

One of the highlights was Arthur's response to ordinary Zen Center broccoli. I prepared it the way we always do — peel the stalks, chop the stems, separate the flowerets, steam the stem pieces first, then add the flowerets so that the stems and flowerets come out done at the same time. I dressed it with a lemon/soy sauce. Arthur was so amazed at how good it tasted that he came into the kitchen dying to know how I had made it so delicious. He had never tasted broccoli that tender and sumptuous before. To me broccoli prep was a habit about as noteworthy as putting on my shoes in the morning. I would never hear a word about it from the Fukuten unless I did it wrong.

Arthur and Susan were generous with their support as well as their appreciation and I drank it right up. They were wonderful employers and their patronage brought out the best in me. Soon I had *Fields of Greens* and the *Moosewood Low-Fat Cookbook* to work from. Part of the pleasure of working with recipes in this pink marble-floored kitchen nook was learning the minds of Ed Brown and Annie Somerville through their recipes, and then finding ways to make their dishes my own. This I had not done in a Zen Center kitchen, and this chance to find out who I was in cooking was exactly what I needed. I discovered that I could take the basic training in the craft of cooking, find my way with it and adapt it to my clients' needs. In so doing I discovered that these skill sets could be highly valued and rewarded.

Entering the realm of mutual practices, Susan let me know that she never put any plastic in the garbage which could wind up as a ring around a sea creature's neck. Working at the Marine Mammal Center she saw what plastic in the ocean can do to sea creatures. I joined her practice and recollected the sea creatures as I cut plastic bags to open out flat. When standing long hours on the marble floor became too wearing for my back and legs, Arthur offered a pair of the latest design in work clogs, and I found a rag rug to put down on top of the marble. We solved problems together. The gift-bestowing hands worked both ways. When he went for radiation I could offer St. John's Wort oil to protect his skin from its effects.

At one point, things became strained at work. I began to feel too isolated cooking for a couple I wasn't interacting with and too much emotional distance from my clients. It was just at the time when Linda Ruth Cutts' article in the *Windbell* describing face to face presence came out. I realized I needed to be spending some face to face time with



*Due to a sprained ankle, Tassajara shuso (winter/spring 1998) Mary Mocine rang the wake-up bell each morning by car. She was driven by Eleanor Graves, who was benji for the practice period.*

Arthur and Susan to complete the circle of giving and receiving. I xeroxed the article, gave it to Susan and we talked. She expressed great appreciation for the article. It turned out that she had thought I wanted to be left completely alone in order to practice meditating as I cooked. We were both relieved to find out that was only partially true and that we needed to be with each other from time to time for the cooking to go well.

After eleven months Arthur was sufficiently recovered to return to his old life, which meant lots of travel. Although we had thought we would be together "forever," one day when they put their fall calendars together, they discovered they weren't going to be home enough to justify having a personal chef. I received a generous severance, and we disengaged and went our separate ways.

Susan describes my work with Arthur as leading him down a path that allowed the teenager in him to become an adult vis-à-vis his food choices and meal practice.

On weekends I worked as a personal companion. The great virtue of companion work I found was the development of trust and intimacy that is required when one is responsible for caring for a person's body and soul when they can no longer do it all themselves. I took care of a remarkable man and to a small degree, his wife, in a beautiful Eichler home in Seacliff, a position, again, which came from a referral from a Zen Center friend. The house was beautifully furnished with French paintings and the walnut walls exuded the most wonderful fragrance

when the warmth of the sun was right. As the house was on a bluff overlooking the Golden Gate channel, the ocean was palpably present. Mr. F. was retired from a long career as a pioneering entrepreneur in the wine business and San Francisco philanthropist. He had a very good heart, patient, kind and forbearing. At 92 years old he walked haltingly with a cane and had lost much of his memory. On a typical day I would prepare lunch for him and his wife, watch over him while he napped, take him to Golden Gate park for an outing and dress him for dinner. We always joked about what I would do if he didn't wake up from his nap—(call him back to life)—and we developed lots of good stories around his dressing and personal care. The walls came down pretty fast, and laughter was the medicine that got us through the day.

Recently I have been working exclusively as a landscape gardener. My first clients either saw my cards and flyers at Zen Center or called for referrals. Mary Susan, a long-time Tassajara guest, owned a house in Bernal Heights with a very lovely small backyard. The borders around the rectangular patch of lawn contained a pear, a plum, a lemon, roses

*Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman poses for a photo op during the 4th of July parade at Tassajara. Her "Lady Liberty" costume was created by Tassajara Director Vicki Austin. Her crown was made from red and blue file folders, and her sash reads, "Liberty Enlightening the World," the name of the Statue of Liberty.*



and other flowering perennials. The garden looked fairly good on the surface, but its foundation had been neglected for too long. The trees hadn't been pruned, nor the soil amended, nor the perennials and bulbs divided. The plants were locked in thick tangled clumps, and the clay soil was compacted and waterlogged from the constant pressure of the irrigation system. The training that I drew on here was the craft of preparing raised beds that Alan Chadwick so diligently taught us in the '70s at Green Gulch. I was able to convince Mary Susan of the importance of rebuilding the foundation of her garden, and with help from a City Center resident, the perennial borders were dug up, the plants divided, and the soil amended. My client expressed delight as the garden began to look as she had dreamed it might. After appropriate pruning, the return of air and light were palpable and she remarked that she and her friend would walk out into the garden at night just to see what was happening there. I was very happy to be doing work I loved on a scale that I could manage for my first gardening job in the "real world."

Laura, another Tassajara guest, called asking for a gardener who could do something like what she had seen at Tassajara. My work there has been to open up spaces between the house and the stream by artful pruning. She expressed pleasure at the increased feeling of spaciousness, the variety of views across the stream and the tended quality of the beds and ground cover. Laura told me she really appreciated the way the new garden was being conceptualized and how lucky she felt she was that she called the Zen Center to find a gardener. Just an intuition she said. I felt the same way.

Currently I am at work on three garden restoration projects. Conan's backyard garden in Mill Valley is basically in place. Although her original thought had been just to restore what had once been there, a garden which was suffering from a long period of neglect, we wound up redoing most of the backyard. After a lengthy clean-up period where we removed everything dead, dying or diseased—or, out of place for one reason or other, I proposed a new garden plan—perennial borders that wrapped around the whole lawn under the trees and a new design for the rose garden. The lovely collection of roses we left intact. We designed, dug and amended raised beds for the perennial borders and they were planted last fall with things that would bloom under the trees—among them *Gartenmeister fuschia*, *Rehmannia elata*, *Corydalis* and *Campanula poscharskyana*. Soft hues of coral, rose, blue and lavender.

We all tried to be patient through the winter while it rained and things held small on the beds. Although it looked bare, I was pleased that the raised beds held so well through the El Nino storms. No plants or soil were lost. I was waiting to see how my first major landscaping

job would turn out, the clients were reserving judgment until there was actually something to look at. With the warmth and spring rains the garden took off and I worked up my courage to ask Conan outright how she liked her garden. "We like it," she replied. "It's not too simple and not too complex." This very well-considered remark I do not forget, and use it to describe my work to potential clients. It meant all the more as this was my first completed landscaping project.

Now we are well into summer and the best surprise has been that the section of the border which was the most difficult to design because it was under trees in a space that didn't have a clear character — no clear bones, as we say in the trade — is what is looking the best.

These days I am up to my ears in some aspect of garden renovation seven days a week. I am having to learn the nursery trade, more about trees, shrubs and groundcovers. I think about my relationship to my clients and "sub-contractors," people I bring onto the job to prune trees and set up irrigation. I consider what are fair business practices. And I depend completely on my assistant, Israel, without whose help I could not do this work.

I met Israel in the check-out stand at Rainbow Foods. I had been advertising for an assistant and interviewing people, but was disappointed with all the candidates for one reason or another. No one I talked to seemed to be able to either show up on time or take direction. This person checking out my groceries at Rainbow was a young, strong-looking Mexican who looked like he could carry heavy loads and he was nice. He asked me if I got a senior discount. I said "How old do you have to be?" "60" he said. I said I was, he said "You don't look that old." That was my opening. I asked him if he knew anyone who needed work gardening, and he said he did and so I gave him my card. That night he called, and we've been working together ever since. He has been an invaluable helper, moral support and friend.

When I work with Israel, he does the heavy digging and carrying, and I do the pruning and design work, weeding, forking and shaping the beds, making the aesthetic decisions, choosing the plants and directing the planting. I also do the fertilizing and insect and disease patrol.

My varied life of joys and sorrows continues with and through the craft of garden renovation. Some of the rarest moments of beauty and satisfaction have been working with stones. There was the day we rolled the boulders off the large square center bed which was slated for a new vegetable garden at Anna's former property high on a Mill Valley hill. Each boulder was placed in the perimeter border bed, and the final placement was perfect according to all witnesses. (The clients were

watching from an upstairs window.) We created a whole new environment for the gardens that were to follow. More spacious, calm and with inviting places to sit.

Likewise doing rock work at a renovation in the Castro, we debated about whether a rather ordinary cast concrete cylinder should indeed go out in a prominent place and become a garden seat. My eye said yes, we tried it and it worked. It was "shibui," the perfect plain and homely counterpoint to the other more beautiful stones and rock walls. Another inviting place to sit.

We made compost at Conan's in a casual way, just piling the apples fallen to the ground, the garden clippings and leaves, turning them, watering and airing them periodically. Without much fuss, elemental processes took over and we had a fine compost we could return to the garden beds.

My biggest frustration with commercial gardening has been the lack of good compost to amend my gardens with. Unlike what we have at Green Gulch, most of what is produced commercially doesn't smell like anything you would want to put in the earth. Only one person that I know of makes and sells good quality compost in Marin and he is in Novato and will only deliver 5 or 6 cubic yards. It was a thrill to be able to use his compost at Anna's old place. You could feel the life force in it.

It feels like most of what I do in the garden is deal with the excesses (from the human point of view) of nature's abundance. More of my time goes into cutting back or out, pruning, weeding, taking away and figuring out what to do with what is taken away than anything else. Planting is the least of it, the very smallest part. Seeing this it is remarkable to me that we planetary humans find ourselves in want so much of the time when Nature is such an abundant provider.

The craft of work—entering the market with gift-bestowing hands. I find that what I want the most for my garden renovation work right now is to find more ways to return the plant material I take from the garden to the earth and work with my clients in doing so. It isn't easy, it costs money and our "disposal" systems are not set up to receive it. The ways I do have are two-fold—composters in the home garden, and having plant material delivered to sites that do compost them, presently Green Gulch Farm or Novato.

The importance and beauty of making compost is perhaps the most important thing I learned at Zen Center. That things cycle and decay to return to the earth and how they do that is one of the most beautiful and inspiring ways that "God" takes care of us and deserves our most careful attention, especially now. I can't imagine that I could have

learned this in any other place than the Green Gulch garden, and in a monastic community.

The other day I was talking with a friend about the strong point of Soto Zen as I saw it. It was that the people who practiced together in the monastery day after day honed the rough edges off each other and came out being soft and round and pliable. They could come out being able to listen, able to hear the cries of the world.

My work has become the craft of compost-making. My craft is in some sense making compost with myself and of myself, with the world and of the world. I have entered the marketplace with gift-bestowing hands in order to create radiance and illumine the present moment.

*Tassajara's upper garden by the zendo steps*



## *In Memory of Uchiyama Kosho Roshi*

*BY The Reverend Takamine Doyu*

**A**T 11:30 P.M. on the evening of March 13, 1998, I received a phone call. "Roshi has just passed away." It came so suddenly, all I could manage was, "I'll be right there," and I hung up the receiver. I got into my car and drove from Seitai-an Temple, located in the northwestern part of Kyoto, straight through the city towards Uji, 15 or 20 kilometers southeast. Deep in the night, driving into the village—everything was bathed in the light of a clear, full moon in the midst of a penetrating stillness.

By the old counting of the calendar, it was exactly February 15, or the same evening Shakyamuni Buddha entered Parinirvana. There, showing a faint smile, Roshi lay sleeping peacefully. Just one month before, Roshi had presented me with a photograph that had been taken only a few days before, along with a copy of part of a poem he had written. The poem was entitled, "The Gate to the Buddha's Village Deep in Life's Mountains." I recalled several lines of his poem—"Being born and passing away, both being finished, Buddha is the depth of Life, of life/death," and "Hallowing the sunset of my life, the depths of the mountain of Life are drawing nearer." Yes, I thought, Roshi has now truly journeyed to the Buddha's home of undivided life/death. All I could do was fold my hands.

With my eyes closed, I reflected quietly on the deep and long connection I had had with Roshi. It was like recalling a dream. The year was 1954, in the early days of Roshi's practice at Shichikurin Antaiji in Gentaku in northern Kyoto. I remember Roshi taking my older sister and me by the hand for our first visit to the temple. My sister and I lived at the nearby temple Genkoan where my father was the head priest. We were to be the models in photographs for a special edition Kyoto Shimbun Newspaper was putting together on Roshi's origami.

Over 40 years have passed since that day. The neighborhood of Gentaku and Takagamine in those days was so quiet. At dawn one could hear the chirping of birds and the clucking of chickens. Then the morning sun would rise above the hills of the Higashiyama. At dusk, the view was one of flocks of crows flying home amidst a pastel sunset. Antaiji

in those days was more broken down than anyone could now imagine. It was a sight! At the time, Uchiyama Roshi, along with Yokoyama Sodo Roshi (both disciples of the late Sawaki Kodo Roshi) lived there together, sitting zazen, going out on *takuhatsu* (begging rounds) and working. As a child, I often went to Antaiji to play—perhaps to pick persimmons or to have Roshi fold an animal out of paper for me.

Once when I visited Roshi, he sat down on the wooden floor behind the wood burning stove in the kitchen and traced a circle, using a compass and pencil, onto a sheet of paper. "This round circle is the earth, and the width of the line I drew with the pencil is where people live and breathe air and look up at the clouds. But, above that layer of clouds is this vast heaven where the sun is always shining." He often explained matters like this to me about religion and about Buddhism. "Make no mistake about it; you will be an adult in the 21st century and by then, the age of religion, the age of the heart will have begun. It is in preparation for that day that I am writing books about genuine religion—books that anyone can understand. That is because writing clear texts and training people are of the utmost importance." Roshi spoke these words over thirty years ago, and today his books are being read by many people in several foreign languages around the world.

When I called on Roshi some days before his death, I never imagined the day of our final separation was to come so quickly. That day, Roshi very kindly responded to several questions I put to him. I would like to record his answers as his last teaching.

"Wanting to feel good or desiring to have some satori experience while sitting zazen is nothing more than the work of human desire. What transcends such desire is the work of buddhadharma. So transcending desire, where does one advance to?—it is the depth of Life. Doing zazen has nothing to do with the value judgement of deciding between this or that. Rather, sitting is facing the depth of one's own life. This is the most important point of zazen functioning as buddhadharma.

"Nor is zazen a kind of mental training or improving one's skills or discipline. Such things are merely devices for being self-satisfied. Zazen as buddhadharma is not a matter of setting some scale of measurement in front of oneself and then measuring the progress. It is just settling on oneself, sitting facing the depth of life. What Shakyamuni Buddha realized is that doing zazen is exactly that kind of thing.

"In Buddha's last sermon he is saying that we sit just facing the profound depth of life. This is the same as his expression *fuhoitsu*, or giving up being self-indulgent. Jesus expressed this as, 'The Kingdom of God is at hand' and 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you.' In Dogen

Zenji's words—"practice and realization are undifferentiated." These teachings are truly important. There is nothing more essential than practicing by applying these teachings to oneself."

Roshi repeatedly quoted from the Agonkyo, particularly the chapter Yogyokyo on the last days of Shakyamuni. He spoke of the words there as being the essence of the Buddha's teaching. "For example, the expression 'fuhitsu' in the text does not simply mean to live or behave in an indulgent manner. More subtly, it means to pursue one's haphazard thoughts and feelings in the way a rabbit might jump and hop around, which is actually what the second Chinese character is comprised of—a rabbit combined with the radical meaning 'to move'. So the expression 'fuhitsu' (*fu* being the character indicating negation) means to let go of these haphazard ramblings in our heads and return to the actual reality of our lives. These emotions and ideas that form in our heads in order to pursue our narrow desires—to just stop chasing after the object of our desire and return to the vivid reality of our life and wake up to that reality—that is the true Buddhist sense of fuhitsu."

These were virtually the last words I heard from Roshi. To cultivate and clarify just a little further, in his own words, the essential expression appearing in the voluminous Buddhist dictionaries—this was the Roshi's vow.

As logical as he was in explanations, in his daily life Roshi had a deep faith in Kannon Bosatsu and Jizo Bosatsu, two well-known bodhisattvas. I believe that Roshi's living out of the inseparableness of his ideas and his faith was his true face.

Roshi wrote:

Hallowing Life with Life—Kanzeon

Returning to Life, moment by moment by moment

And, regarding his attitude of appreciating the true joy of his last days (old age):

At the end of old age, Oh, the peace of a life of just paying reverence!

Hallowing—just hallowing (life)

The joy, the pleasure of hallowing

Roshi said recently, "I recite the Kannogyo every day. I can't help but be awed by and humbled by my Life." When my mother died, Roshi, in praying for her happiness, made a statue of Kannon out of origami. As he was making it, he recited Namu Kanzeon—"I take refuge in Kannon"—with each fold. More recently, I know that Roshi always

felt joyful when he was able to visit the honzon, a statue of Fusho Jizoson, enshrined at Nokein.

Roshi—you, who for 86 years, with an indescribable genuineness, moved, step by step into the depths of the Life of Jiko.

Roshi—your ebullient smile and pure voice will surely resonate within me for a long, long time.

Roshi, I thank you with all my heart for all the deep love and compassion you gave to me.



A MARKER TO THE VILLAGE OF BUDDHA  
IN DEEP LIFE MOUNTAIN

by Kosho Uchiyama Roshi

*(First Marker)*

Buddha is not some other person—Buddha is our Life.  
Ultimately, it is to that immeasurable depth [of Life] that we return.

*(Second Marker)*

Buddha is the end of [both] birth/life and destruction/death.  
Buddha is the depth of Life of one life/death [contains both life and death].

*(Third Marker)*

It is like the depth of one blue sky comprised of light and darkness.  
This is the depth of Life, of one life/death.

*(Fourth Marker)*

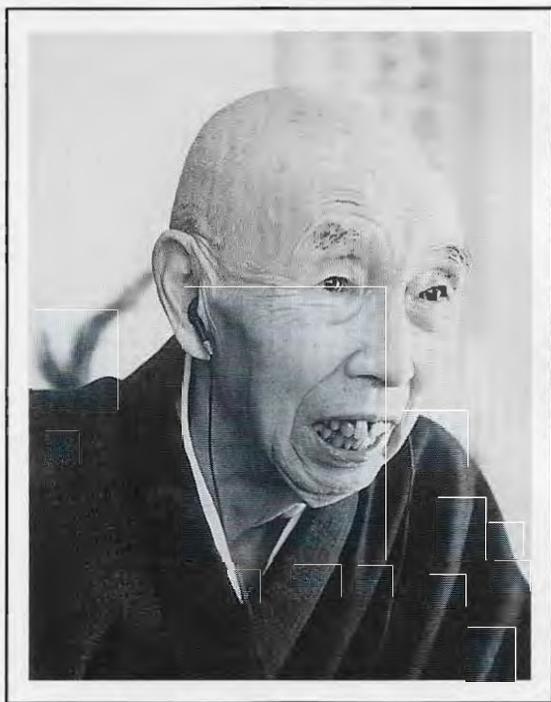
Having no way of perceiving it as it is,  
We can only pay reverence, moving towards the depth of Life.

*(Fifth Marker)*

Giving glory to [Hallowing] Life as the sunset of my life approaches,  
Holding it sacred—that depth of the mountain [of] Life, the village of Buddha.

*(Sixth Marker)*

Life hallowing Life  
Life giving reverence to Life—the peacefulness.  
Appreciating the sacredness—I live out my old age one day at a time.



## *On Uchiyama Roshi*

BY Abbess Zenkei Blanche Hartman

**K**OSHO UCHIYAMA ROSHI has had a great influence on my practice. I first encountered his teaching in 1973 through *Approach to Zen* (his first book published in English, recently republished with some additions as *Opening the Hand of Thought*). I admire the simplicity and directness of his teaching style and of the straightforward practice of zazen and work at Antaiji under his leadership. (It was a section in *Approach to Zen* entitled "Sesshin Without Toys" that inspired me to offer sesshins at Tassajara and City Center with just sitting, bowing and

oryoki meals— no chanting, no dokusan, no kyosaku, no lecture—with a strong commitment to maintaining silence. This “bare bones” style of practice is very invigorating for me, and the participants have also met these sesshins with enthusiasm.)

Uchiyama Roshi had a great interest in the West. He studied Western philosophy in college and he welcomed Western students of Zen at Antaiji monastery in Kyoto when he was abbot there. A number of his disciples are now teaching in the West, including Issho Fujita Sensei at Pioneer Valley Zendo in Charlemont, Massachusetts, and Shohaku Okumura Sensei of Sanshin Zen Community in Los Angeles, who is also the Director of the Soto Shu Education Center. Okumura Sensei has also translated a number of books containing Uchiyama Roshi’s teaching, including commentaries on Dogen Zenji’s teaching.

When I visited Japan in 1992, Okumura Sensei kindly took me to visit with Uchiyama Roshi. He was a most genial host, and as he was making us tea he said, “I think the spiritual life of people in my country is very poor. For example, when I go to speak at an old peoples’ home, someone will say to me, ‘Don’t say anything about death. They don’t want to hear anything about death.’ But I am *very* interested in death. At my age, I think I *should* be. Don’t you think so?”

I have thought of that conversation many times since then, and I think of the verse on the *han*, which calls us to zazen practice:

Great is the matter of birth and death.  
All is impermanent, quickly passing.  
Awake! awake! each one.  
Don’t waste this life.

Uchiyama Roshi was vitally interested in the Great Matter. He explored it deeply through a lifetime of devotion to zazen and the teaching and example of his teacher, Sawaki Kodo Roshi, and of Dogen Zenji. I am most grateful for his life and teaching, for the availability to us of so much of his teaching through the translation work of his disciples Shohaku Okumura and Tom Wright, and for the many able disciples he has left with us to continue the vital and vigorous style of practice of this lineage.

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300 Page Street  
San Francisco CA 94102

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*Wind Bell* is a publication of San Francisco Zen Center, a Buddhist group with its main offices located at 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. Published twice yearly, *Wind Bell* is available for subscription at a cost of \$3.00 per issue. Please send subscription requests to the address above.

Zen Center is comprised of three practice places: the City Center, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. The City Center and Green Gulch Farm offer a regular schedule of public sittings, lectures, and classes, as well as one-day, five-day, and seven-day sittings and practice periods of three weeks to three months. Guest student programs are also available.

Information may be obtained from the City Center, 300 Page St, San Francisco, CA 94102, (415) 863-3136, or from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Hwy, Sausalito, CA 94965, (415) 383-3134.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center usually offers two three-month practice periods: September to December and January to April, when the Center is closed to visitors. During the Guest Season in the summer months, visitors may come as guests or as students. For more information on the opportunities available, please contact the office in San Francisco.

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