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Abbess Blanche Hartman at Tassajara

What Is This?

BY Blanche Hartman
January 16, 1999

WHAT brings us all here today? I'd like to suggest that we are all here to investigate, "What is this?"

Those of you who are here for the first time have, quite naturally, a quality which Suzuki Roshi greatly appreciated. It's called in Japanese, *shoshin* or *hoshin*—"beginner's mind".

In fact, he so appreciated this quality in the people who practiced with him that he named the temple here in San Francisco *Hoshinji*, Beginner's Mind Temple. He often spoke to us of the importance of this beginner's mind. When you're brand new to something, you naturally have this open mind. You ask: "What is it?" "What is this, I wonder?" and "I'll look into it and see what I can see." There's a very pure and fresh feeling to this kind of inquiry and it's very hard to maintain over time.

Those of you who are here for the first time don't have your minds made up. You're just kind of interested and open to what you might find out here. "Is this something that interests me or not?" "Is this something that touches me, that invites me to look further?" There's a phrase that we use in ordination ceremonies: "May your practice always be like this." Because at that time people often have the openness and freshness of beginner's mind. We say, "Please do not get caught in that place where you think you know."

You may think you know, so you say, "It's great, and I love it, and I'm going to do it, and whoopee!" Or you think you know and you say, "Well this isn't really my thing." Suzuki Roshi said in *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*: "For zazen students, the most important thing is not to be dualistic. Our original mind includes everything within itself. It is always rich and sufficient within itself. You should not lose your self-sufficient state of mind. This does not mean a closed mind, but actually an empty mind and a ready mind. If your mind is empty it is always ready for anything. It is open to everything. In the beginner's mind, there are many possibilities. In the expert's mind, there are few."

There are people here who are back for a second or third time. Probably there is still some freshness, curiosity and openness for you. There are also people here who are just beginning our practice period and there are people here who have been practicing for a little longer who may have decided they want to live in the temple. There are those here who have lived in the temple, or at Green Gulch, or at Tassajara for some time and are now living nearby. So this is a very big mix of people, from people who are here for the first time today to people who have been practicing for twenty or thirty years. I think it's kind of wonderful.

And we're all here to practice what Dogen Zenji says is the most important thing and what Suzuki Roshi says is the most important thing. Sitting upright. Sitting upright and being awake. Just to be awake to what is in each moment, to meet it fresh without preconception. Not intellectually but directly.

Why are we here doing this? It may be difficult for you to say why you are here today. But at some point in our life (much like the traditional story of the Buddha's life) having lived like a child with some ease and protection from knowing about difficulties, we become aware that there is suffering. We become aware of what are called in Buddhism the three marks of existence: impermanence, no-self, and *dukkha*, which is sometimes translated as suffering. It means something more like unsatisfactoriness. And we begin to wonder, in such a world where all things are impermanent and without self and there is this taste of unsatisfactoriness, how does one live? How shall I live in such a world?

And for some of us, this questioning may lead us here to Beginner's Mind Temple, to investigate what response Suzuki Roshi made to the awareness of suffering. We ask, "What was his compassionate response to suffering?" Which leads to our own questions "What is my compassionate response to suffering? How shall I discover a compassionate response to suffering?"

Because we are human this question arises in us. Compassion is not some quality that we have to look outside ourselves to find, it's something that is right here all the time. We become aware of suffering and we want to respond to it. How do we respond to it? We all try different ways. At a particular point in my life when I was very aware of suffering and very aware of the ways in which I had tried to respond to it, I felt that I had not yet discovered a way that seemed to answer my need for a compassionate response. My response up to that point was motivated by anger and resentment at what I saw as other people's noncompassionate ways rather than seeing the ways in which I was not responding skillfully.

At a certain time I would have characterized my life's work as "fighting for peace". There is a funny contradiction in this phrase "fighting for peace" which at some point I noticed. It had been going on a long time, but at some moment I happened to notice. "That's odd," I thought. I realized my response to people whose attitudes were different than mine was one of self-righteous anger or rejection or putting them down. I was not hearing them, not actually communicating with them or trying to see where they were coming from. I just knew I was right and they were wrong. Ultimately that did not feel right to me, it had a bad feeling. So I thought, there must be another way to respond to suffering.

Zen Center Board chair Taigen Leighton and Abbess Blanche Hartman share a light moment in the rhythm of their sometimes heavy responsibilities.



BUTCH BALOUT



Kokai Roberts (right) was shuso for the full 1998 practice period at Tassajara. Natalie Bauer (left) was benji and Liz Milazzo gave them valuable instruction in the art of compost making.

When I met Suzuki Roshi I felt from him a complete response to my suffering. His first response was to welcome me, to encourage me to sit, to be as he was, quite still, present and available. He saw me as complete, whole and perfect just as I am. And that was startling to me. Since he said that he sat zazen, I sat zazen. But, you know, this zazen thing has been going on a long time. This cross-legged zazen posture is depicted in the earliest cave paintings which are 30,000 years old.

In *Bendowa*, or Wholehearted Practice of the Way, Dogen Zenji says, "All buddha-tathagatas together have been simply transmitting wondrous dharma and actualizing supreme perfect enlightenment for which there is an unsurpassable unfabricated wondrous method. This wondrous dharma which has been transmitted only from Buddha to Buddha without deviation has as its criterion, *jijuyu zanmai* (self-fulfilling and self-enjoying samadhi). For disporting oneself freely in this samadhi, practicing zazen in an upright posture is the true gate."

Suzuki Roshi said: "Zazen practice is the direct expression of our true nature. Strictly speaking for a human being there is no other practice than this practice. There is no other way of life than this way of life."

From these two great teachers and many others you see a deep faith in this practice of sitting still, sitting upright, clearly observing the coming and going of breath, of thoughts, of sensations, of feelings. Just clearly observing, not grasping anything, not pushing anything away. Not leaning towards or not leaning away from. Just sitting upright, being present. In this practice, there is the possibility of using our open beginner's mind, just sitting with the openness of "What is this, I wonder?" In this way we may see more directly how to live our life.

In the *Mumonkan* (The Gateless Barrier) there is a story about Zhaozhou and Nanquan. It goes like this. When Zhaozhou was a young man he went to visit Nanquan. Zhaozhou was very serious about practice. He asked Nanquan, "What is the way?" Nanquan said, "Ordinary mind is the way." Zhaozhou asked, "Shall I direct myself toward it or not?" Nanquan responded, "If you direct yourself towards it, you will betray your own practice." Then Zhaozhou said, "If I don't direct myself towards it, how will I know the way?" Nanquan replied, "The way is not a matter of knowing or not knowing. If you actually reach the way, if you actually reach the Tao beyond all doubt, you will find that it's as vast and limitless and boundless as outer space. What could that have to do with affirmation or negation, with right or wrong?"

Immediately Zhaozhou had a great awakening. In his commentary, Mumon says, "Although Zhaozhou had a realization at this time, it took him thirty years to confirm it." This is what it's like. You get a glimpse of how things really are, and you say, "oh," but then you fall into your old habits. Those of us who have been practicing for twenty or thirty years are still falling into old habits and extricating ourselves and falling in again and extricating ourselves again. After twenty or thirty years we may catch ourselves a little sooner than we did ten years ago or twenty years ago, but still there is the habit of self-clinging, that habit of thinking there is some real separate thing that we call a self, something different from what we call not-self, something separate, not interconnected, interrelated or intertwined with everything. That habit is strong and we find ourselves grasping it again and again.

What we realize is that there is suffering right there, right there in the separation, right there in the grasping self. And we say, "Oh yes, now I remember." Then we can open our hand and let it go and continue. Our practice is continually letting go of the grasping, letting go of the grasping, letting go of the grasping and returning to beginner's mind, returning to the mind that says, "What is this, I wonder? How shall I respond to this?" We are continually meeting whatever arises in front of us. Continually realizing our inseparability from all that is. We continually sit upright in zazen to return to this mind which is open

and ready again and again. The cultivation of beginner's mind comes through devotion to sitting—immovable upright sitting: being still, being quiet, being present and awake. It is in this state that we can actually study beginner's mind.

Why do we do this? Do we do this just so we'll feel better? I don't think so. Really what is required, before we can actually deeply enter practice, is what is called *bodhicitta*—the altruistic mind of awakening, the mind which realizes that because there is suffering I must wake up. The mind that seeks a way to live in this world of suffering for the benefit of all beings.

Dogen Zenji in *Wholehearted Practice of the Way* talks about his own path. He experienced one of his deepest insights into practice as a small boy while watching the incense smoke curl up into nothingness at his mother's funeral. This experience is expressed when he wrote, "To see into impermanence, to actually see impermanence, is bodhicitta, this is the mind which determines that I must wake up for the benefit of all beings." After some years of practice, going to China and meeting his root teacher in China, Dogen had an awakening in which he said, "Body and mind dropped away." Then he knew, "To spread this dharma and free living beings became my vow."

This I think is the result of awakening. This response of Dogen's was the echo of Buddha's awakening. At first it seemed very difficult when the Buddha realized great enlightenment. He thought nobody would understand. But then, out of compassion for living beings he began to teach what he had learned. This is also Dogen Zenji's path: "To spread this teaching, to spread this true gate of zazen became my vow for the benefit of all beings."

Continuing that teaching, Suzuki Roshi carried the same concern and interest. From the time he was a young priest, Suzuki Roshi wanted to come the United States where he hoped he would meet people with beginner's mind. He didn't want parishioners already set in their attitudes and opinions towards the Buddha dharma, who saw Buddhism as just ceremonies and funerals. He wanted to come where he could meet people with beginner's mind and spread zazen as the most important thing. He didn't go out proselytizing. He just came and sat zazen and as people heard that there was this Zen master in town, they came around. He was sitting in a Japanese-American temple in San Francisco's Japantown and these people came around and they said, "Hey man, teach us about enlightenment. Teach us about Zen." They didn't ask about zazen, they asked to be taught Zen. He said, "Oh, I sit zazen every morning, and you may join me if you like." And he just hung out with the people who came there to sit.

So why did they stay? Why did I stay? Those of you who've been around a while, why have you stayed? And those of you who are here for the first time today, what will encourage you to come back? It's up to you. It's completely up to you. One of the interesting things here is that there's never been any proselytizing. I don't think this practice is something you can do because somebody else tells you it's a good idea. I don't think it's something you can do if your best friend tries to get you to do it. I think it's something you do because you have to, because you need to, because you want to. Because your life needs the support of a practice like this, a practice where you can become intimate with yourself, where you can see what is the cause of suffering in your life. Inevitably the questions arise "How does suffering arise in my life? How does suffering arise in those around me? How can I respond to this suffering in a compassionate way?"

The most compassionate response to my suffering that I have received is Suzuki Roshi's offering of this practice—of just sitting. So, when I saw this line from Dogen's *Bendowa*, "To spread this dharma and free living beings became my vow," I thought, oh, that's my vow too. That was Suzuki Roshi's vow. That's the vow of everyone who really has deeply arrived at bodhicitta, at the mind of awakening. To spread this dharma and free beings is the vow of the Bodhisattva. We are all Bodhisattvas. We all want to respond to suffering with compassion. We all want to offer to each one we meet, who is faced with suffering, a way to live that will ease their suffering.

So I commend to you these two major teachings of Suzuki Roshi. First, always return to beginner's mind. Then when you find yourself caught in duality—right or wrong, good or bad, separate or not separate—whatever duality you find yourself stuck in, let go of your ideas and return to beginner's mind by asking, "What is this, I wonder?"

The second teaching and great offering of Suzuki Roshi is to sit down, be still, breathe, wake up. Suzuki Roshi said to us: when you're sitting, each part of you should be sitting. Your *mudra*, your hand posture, should be doing zazen independently. Your chin and head should be doing zazen. Your shoulders should be doing zazen. Your back should be doing zazen. Your legs are doing their own zazen. You don't have to cross your legs for your convenience. You just cross them and there they are, sometimes painful, sometimes not. But they're doing their own zazen. Don't move them for your convenience. Just give them your kindness and compassion.

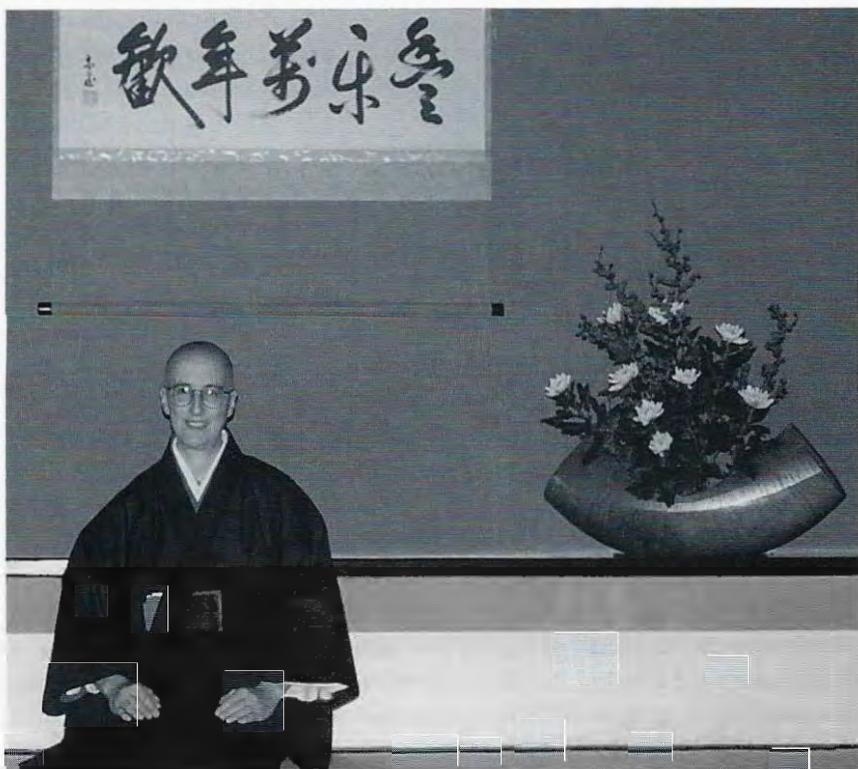
Check your mudra every now and then and see that it's open. This mudra emphasizes accepting everything as it is. It should be nice and round and open. And if you find it collapsing, wake it up again. If you

find it falling apart, bring it back together. If you find it tense and tight, allow it to soften again. Let your mudra sit zazen. Let each part of you sit zazen. Find your balance, leaning neither forward nor backward. That's important, because when you lean forward or backward you become tense and tight. But when you're balanced, the weight just goes right down through your sitting bones. You should align yourself with gravity, so that from the crown of your head right through your sitting bones, your spine is exactly lined up with gravity so you won't fall in any direction. And your neck should be free. So if you notice that your neck is tense, free it up a little bit.

And breathe. Try to allow your breath to come all the way to where your strength is. Your strength is right here below your navel. Your center is right here. So try to let that be strong. Have you seen those daruma dolls, the Bodhidharma dolls or balloons? They've got a weight in the bottom and they're round. They have no legs. You push them over and they come right back up. That's what we're like. We're really weighted and sinking into the earth, and we just rise up from that base like a flower.

Katagiri Roshi said, "We sit to settle the self on the self and let the flower of our life force bloom." So let yourself be settled, still, upright and awake and when you find yourself grasping anything, just let go. Please keep your beginner's mind. "For disporting freely in this samadhi, zazen is the true gate." "Strictly speaking, for a human being there is no other practice than this practice." These are statements of Dogen's and Suzuki Roshi's great faith, offered to us out of deep compassion. Please take them to heart.





Meiya Wender in Japan

On Practicing Chanoyu, the Way of Tea, in Kyoto and Marin

BY Meiya Wender

"TARABO," AN UNASSUMING reddish-brown tea bowl, sits by itself in a glass case at the Urasenke Museum and Research Center in Kyoto. It has been sitting there for several hundred years now, since its birth in the 16th century at the hands of Chojiro, the first potter in the Raku family lineage. What makes this bowl so special? The museum curator giving my small class of tea students a guided tour argues with quiet passion that the bowl was created through the inspiration of Sen Rikyu and embodies his very heart and genius. She advises us to come



A raku tea bowl

back and visit the bowl every day; to understand how a teabowl, one of the most important objects used in the Way of Tea, could express and communicate its maker's deep compassion.

Being able to see tea bowls such as this one and sometimes even handle and drink tea from them is one of the extraordinary delights and privileges of being a student at Midorikai, the Urasenke tea program in Kyoto for foreign students. After many years of practice at Zen Center which included having held a variety of staff positions, one as director of Green Gulch, I conceived of this sabbatical year in Japan (1997–1998) as an opportunity to immerse myself thoroughly in the world of tea. I hoped to learn the arcane details necessary for making possible the full use of the Green Gulch tea house.

So there I was in Kyoto, one of a small group of foreigners sponsored by the Iemoto, the 15th generation Grand Master of the Urasenke lineage of the Way of Tea, to study for one year in the epicenter of the tea world. The curriculum included Japanese history, tea history, ceramics, Japanese poetry, seasonal ceremonies and motifs, as well as the most essential and practical matters such as taking care of the ashes, making a charcoal fire to boil water and, of course, the actual procedures for making a bowl of tea. As Rikyu famously said, tea is very simple. All you have to do is make a fire, boil water and make a delicious bowl of tea for your guests. This is very much like saying that to practice Zen one need only go into the zendo and sit. It's very simple, and it takes a lifetime of study.

The connection between tea and Zen goes back hundreds of years. Every culture has ways of offering food and drink to guests; usually the preparation is done ahead of time and/or out of sight of the guests. In chanoyu the very act of preparing tea is a practice; a focus of attention and an offering. This concept came directly from tea offerings made in Zen temples and particularly from the instructions for practice as given by Eihei Dogen Zenji in his 13th century monastic rules. The procedure

for eating the kaiseki meal served during a full length tea gathering, for example, is very similar to our oryoki practice.

Zen is still considered an integral part of the study of tea. The most important thing in the tea room is the scroll—almost always written by a Zen monk. The words of the scroll set the theme and tone for the tea gathering. Most of the old, fabulous, famous tea rooms of Japan are in Buddhist temples. In particular, there is a strong historical connection between the wabi schools of tea and Kyoto Rinzaï Zen temples. Since Dogen Zenji moved away from the political/cultural capital in the 13th century, a similar relationship did not develop between tea practitioners and Soto Zen. These days, most Japanese monks do not study tea and tea practitioners are not necessarily interested in Zen. Interestingly, there is a tradition of Buddhist nuns teaching tea as a livelihood since, unlike their male counterparts, they often do not have as many options for their means of support.

Tea as taught by Sen Rikyu in the Momoyama Period (late 16th century) was an intense spiritual practice, alive and innovative. There are many stories of how Rikyu valued true heart to heart connection in the tea room above all else: he praised a man who while making many mistakes made tea with his whole heart; he walked out of a tea gathering held by someone who he thought was insincerely trying to impress him. He was the first to hang scrolls by contemporary Japanese Zen masters in the tea room. While he did not abandon the use of formal (and valuable) Chinese bronzes, lacquerware and ceramics, he also dared to adopt such lowly objects as a fisherman's basket or a piece of bamboo for a vase, a wooden well bucket for a cold water container.

From his vision it is not hard to see how the bowl called "Tarabo" could emerge. Somewhat irregular in shape, with a dullish surface, it looks like it might have just been dug up in a vacant lot next door. It's a far cry from the technically perfect and glistening celadons and tenmokus of Sung China. I imagine it as warm to the touch, a living being, something you know you always had, but forgot about until it comes to your hands filled with frothy, slightly bitter green tea. Something not separate from you, something that forges a connection, or reminds you of your connection with all beings.

For Rikyu, Tea was something alive. He expressed his understanding of this vitality through this humble and, in a sense, revolutionary bowl that was light-years removed in feeling from the elegant and refined Chinese ceramics popular at the time. For those of us who practice tea today, "Tarabo" represents the legacy of his effort. How, through tea, can we also express our deepest intention, creativity and heart? How do we find the aliveness of "Tarabo"?

Chanoyu is very formal, but if too much emphasis is placed on rules and tradition, on doing things correctly, forms become rote and lifeless. Guests can be overly polite in the tea room and then critical of others' mistakes in private. "Correctness" rather than stretching to one's limits can become the most important thing. The expectation that one's deepest yearnings or creativity are expressed in the tea room can be lost. But if we think that we can do whatever we want without having thoroughly studied the forms so that it is as though every cell of our body is imbued with the ancient ways, we also run into problems. Tea can become just another occasion for the display of personality. Pride and arrogance may be encouraged rather than humility, gratitude and respect. As Dogen expressed this in Genjo Koan, "To carry yourself forward and experience myriad things is delusion."

The challenge is how to appreciate and play in the space between the two extremes of clinging to tradition and being overly innovative. Can tea be the practice of awakening, such that "myriad things come forth and experience themselves?" I think we can stay in the middle ground through relying on Buddha and Dharma and particularly through immersing ourselves in Sangha.

Historically, Chan monks in China made offerings of tea to the Buddha or to Bodhidharma, then drank tea together themselves. Centuries later these forms were adapted and developed as a lay spiritual practice and social form by a rising merchant class in Japan. At Green Gulch, we have inherited this highly developed Japanese form, but have reintroduced it back into a semi-monastic context. Perhaps an American form of tea will reemphasize tea's Chinese roots: tea as an offering, tea as a communal experience. The aspect of tea as an offering is crucial protection. Just as we dedicate to others the merit of chanting sutras, we continually give tea away.

The practice of tea seems to fill a deep need for a way to relate to each other and to objects that our culture doesn't provide. It brings people together in a way which is not exactly religious and not exactly social, but somewhere in between. Together, host and guests create a unique temporal/spatial moment in which everything extraneous can drop away. There is just host, guest, fire, water, sweets and tea, freshly picked flowers, and calligraphy with the words of our Zen ancestors. Perhaps the tea scoop was carved by one of our teachers. In this dance,

everyone has a particular part to play, which may be as simple as entering the room, appreciating the objects in it, and drinking a bowl of tea. Through playing out his or her role, each person has the opportunity to realize their deep connection with the other participants, the tea utensils, the room itself and with the universe. This is what gives life to Tea or, perhaps, how Tea infuses life.

Meiya is responsible for taking care of the Green Gulch tea house.



BUTCH BALUYUT



Replacing Old Houses at Green Gulch Farm

BY Basya Petrick

*T*IME HAS ITS WAY EVERYWHERE, and time has had its way at Green Gulch. Over the years, as the gardens deepened in their beauty, as slender young trees grew and offered fruit, as students matured into teachers, and as children who once had to be reminded to be quiet near the zendo produced children of their own, the student and teacher housing at Green Gulch silently aged and began to slowly dissolve back into the elements from which it was created.

Basya: Old Green Gulch houses and trailers, please speak, tell us about yourselves, what would like us to know?

Houses: Have mercy! We're so old and some of us were never intended to be houses at all. Some of us started out in life as bull pens; now we are worn and frail. It's true that our owners care for us, and from a certain point of view, we still seem charming. But, frankly, we are beyond repair. Forgive



These trailers with shacks added on for extra space are an example of the housing at Green Gulch Farm.

our indiscretion, but we are beginning to rot and mold. There is an overall feeling with us of sinking, an ambience of compost, of gravity and weight and falling down.

Think of it this way: in a universe such as ours, tending as it seems toward chaos, what are the odds of a group of boards arranged in the shape of a house keeping that shape forever? We have each held our form long enough and provided the shelter you needed. What we'd like to know now is this: When will the bell ring for us? When will we be released?

The Millennium's Edge Lecture series and the generosity of members and foundations have provided the initial funds to launch the replacement housing project at Green Gulch. Additional contributions are needed to build adequate housing for the students and teachers who sustain the ancient dharma dialogue. Please join us. Donations and requests for additional information about replacement housing may be directed to Jordan Thorn, Vice President, San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page Street, San Francisco, CA 94102. 415-865-3790.

Children's Tea at City Center

BY Mary Watson

In gratitude we light this incense to all Buddhas and Bodhi-sattvas throughout space and time.

May it be fragrant as Earth herself, reflecting our careful efforts, our wholehearted awareness, and the fruit of understanding slowly ripening.

May we and all beings be companions to Buddhas and Bodhi-sattvas.

May we awaken from forgetfulness and realize our true home.

THese words would accompany the lighting of incense for our children's tea at City Center which, until recently, occurred in conjunction with lecture on the first Saturday of the month.

Our format was very simple. The children attended about ten minutes or so of the regular lecture. The lecturer devoted this time to speaking directly to them, though his or her words usually applied to the child in all of us. Then the children left the Buddha Hall and went to the residents' lounge where we had a silent lighting of incense, accompanied by the ringing of a bell as a sound offering to the Buddha, and an offering of food and tea. This was all done by the children. Before the ceremony we would go over the procedures with each of them. Then we would draw their attention to the cookies, fruit and tea in front of them and encourage them to taste which ingredients were used to make the cookies, what flavors were in the tea, and to think about the origins of the fruit. We ate and drank mindfully and in silence, then talked about the experience. Usually one of the children had chosen the tea and we would play a game to try to guess which type of tea it was. We talked about the blossoms of the trees which produce fruit and about the flavors of the cookie. We introduced ourselves and had a brief discussion about the portion of the lecture which they had listened to. One of the adults would tell or read a story which had a Buddhist orientation and we would do an art project related to the story or which reflected the season of the year.

I was inspired to suggest the children's tea to Zen Center ten years ago after having attended several retreats with Thich Nhat Hanh. To him, children are not an adjunct or hindrance to ceremonial form and practice, but an integral and very important part of it. I have not heard of any retreat he has given in which he did not speak with the children first and at which there is not a developed program for them. This is not babysitting so that the adults can practice. It is what he believes is vital to the healthy functioning of any Zen practice group. I also feel that our community in San Francisco is not complete or balanced without the inclusion of children. Their inclusion is in part a vehicle for us to pass on the dharma of Buddhist practice to the next generation.

The first tea I recorded was in August 1988. Robert Lytle talked to the children about how Buddha is in all of us, about what it means to be awakened. He had the children offer incense to the Buddha in the Buddha Hall. Some other lecturers also began the children's portion of the lecture in this way. That same year, Robert Thurman was the guest lecturer on the day scheduled for the children to attend. He enjoyed it so much that the portion of his talk that was directed to the children was much longer than usual. He spoke about reincarnation and rebirth, about which the children were remarkably well informed. One of the children said he remembered a past life when he was a cobra. As the children filed out of the Buddha Hall, Robert Thurman said to him affectionately, "Goodbye, cobra-face." In 1990, Robert Aitken Roshi talked to the children about compassion and practice. He spoke again to them in 1994, about "not talking stink." In 1996, Richard Baker Roshi lectured after many years of absence from Zen Center. The Buddha Hall was packed with people and the room was filled with strong feeling. I was so grateful for the presence of the children and I know it must have been helpful to Baker Roshi as well.

Other lecturers have been Wendy Johnson, Reb Anderson, Mel Weitsman, Pat Phelan, Linda Ruth Cutts, Tom Girardot and Ananda Dalenburg. The regular staff of Zen Center lecturers such as Michael Wenger, Blanche Hartman, Darlene Cohen, Vicki Austin, Paul Haller, Barbara Kohn, Lou Hartman, Gil Fronsdal and Mel Weitsman have engaged the children with provocative questions such as "Is the Buddha alive or dead?" "Is a snail Buddha?" "Is the Buddha a superhero?" They have spoken on various themes, such as the story of the girl who offers Buddha a bowl of milk, about the changing nature of our lives, how our lives are a gift, how the precepts can help us, on the parable of the burning house from *The Lotus Sutra*, how breathing and counting to ten can help when we're angry, and about the Buddha in all of us. Speaking to the children can present a challenge to the

lecturer, but I think it is a good one. It is often through simple stories and messages for children that we all can learn.

The children attending in the early days included Sarah and Davy Weintraub, Jeanine Alexander, Audrey and Keiran Haller, Rachel Gelfond, Cloe Cassidy, Daniel Watson-Weller, Dhyana Cabarga, Jamie and Jessamyn Meyerhoff, Anova Wren and Nova Ray.

Suzuki Sensei ("Okusan"), Suzuki Roshi's widow, was still living at Zen Center during this time, and was my teacher of Japanese tea ceremony. In 1989, she began to visit our children's teas. She introduced the sounding of the bell as an offering in our ceremony. Okusan had been a kindergarten teacher in Japan and sometimes would sing Japanese songs to the children.

Deanna Dorsa began in 1990 to drive up from La Selva Beach the first Saturday of each month to help. She was very interested in ceremonial forms for children and wrote an M.A. thesis on that topic. Deanna participated until 1997, bringing wonderful literature and art projects to the group. She especially emphasized the seasonal changes and how they affect us. She even brought home made cookies!

In March 1997, Lynn Stone joined me in doing the children's teas. She was a long time Zen practitioner and very much enjoyed her involvement with the children. She was an artist, and brought her energy, enthusiasm and creative abilities to our tea activities.

Some highlights of our projects were making May baskets for the children to take home, making origami paper cranes for Peace Day, baking cookies for Hamilton House (a shelter for homeless families), and learning the story of the baby Buddha in April. Literature that stood out for me included "The Story of Jumping Mouse" by John Steptoe, "Badger's Parting Gifts" by Susan Varley, "I'm in Charge of Celebrations" and "The Other Way to Listen" by Byrd Baylor, "Dawn" by Uri Shulevitz, "Time of Wonder" by Robert McCloskey, "Many Moons" by James Thurber, and "Seven Blind Mice" by Ed Young.

When I first started working with the children there were a number of Zen Center families with children living in the neighborhood. This is no longer the case. It is now the challenge of the community and of families who do practice at Zen Center to find a way to include the children. If parents are interested in reestablishing our monthly teas, I encourage them to work with Zen Center to find a way to do so. It may be that different forms of children's practice will evolve from the needs and values of the sangha. For me, this work with the children's teas has deeply enriched my life and I am grateful to have had this opportunity for practice.

Meditating with Anger



*Rita was
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1998. She
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Buddhism
After
Patriarchy.*

*BY Rita Gross
City Center July 22, 1998*

I THOUGHT THAT THIS WOULD BE a good occasion to talk about what I have experienced and learned about anger through practice.

I want to begin by telling a story of an event that took place a year-and-a-half ago with one of my teachers, Khandro Rinpoche. She is one of the few women rinpoches in the world of Tibetan Buddhism, and I have been very much magnetized by her presence and her teachings. She was giving a set of teachings, and a woman asked her: "What should we do with anger? How should we deal with anger?" And her reply was very sharp and very cutting: "Anger is always a waste of time." And the woman was sitting not too far from me. I could feel her energy, her kind of frustration and puzzlement and disappointment at that answer. She said, "But"—you know there's always a "but" with anger—"what about things that are wrong? What about things that deserve anger?" And Khandro Rinpoche replied, again very sharply, "I didn't tell you to lose your critical intelligence." And that's the frame in which I want to discuss anger, because that actually has been my experience through practice with anger. "It's always a waste of time. I didn't tell you to lose your critical intelligence, to get rid of your critical intelligence."

As many of you know, I've done a lot of work, a lot of contemplation, about women and the dharma. I was a feminist before I became involved in practice. I was pretty angry when I began to sit. And I did not begin to sit because I wanted to find a way to work with my anger. In fact, I think if someone had told me that it might not be so easy to keep my head of steam going I might not have been quite so interested



NIKOLA DUB

The Tassajara zendo from the upper garden

in sitting. I had a really good head of steam going, and I felt quite okay about it. I think that's often the case with people who are involved in some justice issue. We feel that anger is a motivator to keep us going. If we didn't have anger to keep ourselves involved in a particular issue, what would we have? What would keep us going? A lot of us, in the early '70s, felt that anger was a much better alternative than what we had lived with before. I still agree with that. As someone who was socialized in the '50s, I actually went through a long period of self-hatred before I came to anger and anger is probably better than self-hatred. The kinds of things I wanted to do with my life didn't fit into the female gender role. My first solution to this problem was just to turn it in on myself. And I spent years basically cursing the fact that I had been born female. One day, I had an insight that it really wasn't me that was the problem, it was the system I was living in. That was a tremendous relief to feel that: "It's not me, there's nothing wrong with being female." But that didn't solve the anger problem. It turned outward. So I became very good at cutting rhetoric and white-hot outbursts of rhetorical fury. Of course I was always trying to control that too, because it's not politic and it's not polite. Needless to say, I wasn't

doing too well even though I felt pretty okay with being angry and felt it was quite justifiable under the circumstances. I think that's probably about the position of the woman who said, "But, what about things that we should be angry about?" With that kind of head of steam I somehow became involved in sitting practice. That's pretty unusual for academics to do, especially academics who are in the study of religion and the study of Buddhism, but it happened. I found myself, for quite a while, in a kind of wasteland, a kind of no-man's-land situation. When I first got involved with Buddhism, I already had a pretty good reputation as a feminist theologian or a feminist scholar of religion. And all of my friends in academia, especially my feminist friends, thought I had lost my mind. It was like, "What has happened to Rita? Rita's sold out." It was understandable to them that you could inherit a male-dominated religion and try to work with it. Some of them were making that choice, but that you would convert to a male-dominated religion? I had to be out of my mind, according to them. I think you're aware that Buddhism still looks pretty male-dominated to much of the outside world, and I don't think that reputation is totally undeserved.

My Buddhist friends, meanwhile, were saying to me, "Oh Rita, that's okay. When you grow up, when you get to be a real Buddhist, then you won't care about this feminism shtick anymore. You won't have any attachments." They said that when I got to be a real Buddhist I would be detached and not care about justice issues.

I think that for some reason feminism among justice issues gets trivialized and becomes the object of hostility a lot more easily than many other justice issues. And I don't want to try to explore that tonight, but I think that's the case. So they had a particularly live one on their hands—a Buddhist feminist, an oxymoron.

I was pretty much alone. I live in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, which is not exactly a hotbed of Buddhism. I have very strong ties with Vajradhatu, and I do a lot of programs in Boulder, Colorado, and in other places, but that still means that day by day my practice is by myself. And in some ways I'm very glad for that because I haven't had too many people always trying to yank me and jerk me; you know, do this and do that, develop this way. So in some ways it was good.

What happened to me was actually very scary. After a while of practicing really intently, I realized that I just couldn't work up that head of steam. It just wasn't there. It wasn't very satisfying. I started to get really scared: "What's happening to me? Maybe my Buddhist friends were right. Maybe I'm not going to have this thing in my life anymore." Clearly what was happening was that I had made a pretty good ego out of anger. As that started to dissolve, I got scared.

Simultaneously, I noticed that people were listening to me better. When I talked to people, instead of putting up a wall and going the other way, people were listening to me. And that's where it's at—that as the emotionalism, as the cloudy murky rage starts to subside, the intelligence can come through, and people can actually hear what we're saying. That's what Khandro Rinpoche was talking about when she said, "Anger is a waste of time. Don't lose your critical intelligence." Very powerful, very provocative.

As I was experiencing that, I was starting to be able to distinguish between pain, which is the pain of the human existence, which isn't anyone's fault, and the kinds of things that we do to each other through passion, hatred, and delusion. I was starting to see something that I think is really important for those of us who are trying to do our bodhisattva work in an engaged way in social justice issues: that there's always going to be basic human suffering. That's not the fault of any particular thing wrong with the way the world is put together, period. I think it's very helpful to know that and to be able to find one's way into accommodating the basic pain and having some distinction between basic pain and the things that are the result of passion, aggression, and ignorance.

So what was happening with practice—and I didn't realize this until much later—was like a test tube that has a number of ingredients in it and it's all shook up. You shake the tube, and nothing is clear, nothing is settled. And then with practice, that situation settles and stills, and the emotionalism subsides, and it leaves some intelligence, some clarity. In the Tibetan Vajrayana tradition, anger is connected with the Vajra family. The Vajra family is in the eastern gate of the mandala and is connected with the element water. This is very telling because water, when it is turbulent, is murky, and you can't see anything. But when water settles, it becomes an absolutely clear, perfectly reflecting mirror surface. When anger transmutes, it transmutes into clarity. The energy of anger becomes mirror-like wisdom. Same energy, different application. So this means, among many other things, that it's not so much that we need to throw away our anger as that we need to distill it: to settle the emotionalism, that cloudy, heavy, painful feeling. You feel this energy in your body that hurts, and you know you can't say anything sensible while you feel that way. And yet, that's when people really are tempted to sound off. To go back to Khandro Rinpoche's statement, she said, "Anger is always a waste of time." And that's absolutely true in my experience. I think what began to happen to me, when I could no longer get up a head of steam, was that I was beginning to see: "Who is this helping?" Who it was helping was me,

myself, and I. The pain was so great, an outburst of anger would give momentary relief. But it didn't do anything. It did not pacify the situation. It did not make people more understanding of the predicament I felt. It did not make people more willing to take a feminist critique of society or Buddhism or whatever very seriously. It's hard to take angry people seriously, partly because of what they bring up in us, partly because of the defensiveness we feel when somebody is lashing out. So I think that's very important: to somehow begin to see the absolute total counter-productivity of these tumultuous klesha-driven outbursts of anger—that they're not helping anything. They're not good skillful means. Is there an alternative?

I think one of the problems we face in our culture is that everything is always couched in either/or terms—either we stand up for ourselves or we're going to get rolled over. Certainly I think that's the logic that fuels a lot of our reactions. I certainly felt that way: that if I didn't put up this good front, I was just going to be pushed aside. But I think that there is a middle path between acting out aggressively and caving in. One holds one's ground gently and non-aggressively, in body, speech, and mind; one doesn't go away; one doesn't stop talking unless that would be the most skillful thing to do at that moment. I think that to reach that place between acting out aggressively and just caving in, we need to develop a kind of self-confidence without arrogance, to develop maitri, more self-acceptance, more ability to be with who we are. There's a phrase in *Shambhala, the Sacred Path of the Warrior* that I really like, which describes this situation as "victory over warfare." That's a wonderful phrase, victory over warfare. I think that's what it's about; that we have unconditional self-confidence so that we can stand our ground without being defensive, which is of course not always so easy to do. What I now do is try very hard to refrain from speech until I feel that I've reached that point. If something really riles me up and I'm tempted to flash off a letter or a speech, I check my body energy and often decide I'd better wait awhile.

So, I think that's some background to Khandro Rinpoche's statement: "Anger is always a waste of time." I think we have to unpack the word "anger." It's not so much avoiding feelings of irritation and frustration—it's acting out on them. Maybe we should use the word "aggression." But then, you know, then there's the "but." That's what this woman had in mind when she said, "But what about things that are really terrible?"—like battery, or murder, or all kinds of very aggressive things that are done to people that we need to take issue with. And that's when Khandro Rinpoche said, "I didn't tell you to leave behind your critical intelligence."

In this particular perspective on anger, as one of the five basic energies of the five buddha families, as I've already said, anger masks or veils clarity. The clarity is there, but as long as we're totally caught up in that body energy I talked about, it's very hard to get to the intelligence. That's why it's so important to let the anger settle. But anger or aggression, in this particular set of teachings, always contains some kind of intelligence. There's something going on that is worth paying attention to. The problem is we can't pay attention to it until we let the aggression settle. If we start investigating this a little bit, what we usually find is that very close to the surface of anger is pain. Very, very close. If we look at ourselves, in some ways it seems like pain is even a bigger problem to deal with, to admit, than anger. I think it's very helpful, when we're dealing with people who are angry with us, to stop, and instead of getting defensive and starting to give it back, try to see where and what the pain is. What is really behind this?

When I was an ideological angry feminist, it wasn't that there wasn't anything worth attending to in what I was saying. There was a tremendous amount of insight in my critique. It was just not being expressed very well. So finding a way to get down to the genuine insights and letting them out—that's a very important part of dealing with anger. It's not so much that we need to get rid of our anger as that we need to distill it: to boil out the stuff that isn't so productive and get down to the stuff that has some intelligence in it, and begin to develop skillful means for working with that situation.

One of the most important things to distill out for me has been ideology or fixed mind—cherished beliefs and opinions. If you think about it, heavy opinions are pretty much the opposite of the mirror-like wisdom that reflects everything absolutely without distortion. Opinionatedness is actually very aggressive, if you think about it. If you ask a teacher, "What do you most want your students to give up?" often the answer is fixed opinions and beliefs.

Well, you know, this is going to bring up another one of those "buts," but if we're going to be concerned about the world, about justice issues, about poverty, sexism, homelessness, racism, homophobia—if we're going to be concerned about those things, don't we need strong convictions to be socially engaged? And I would say, no, what we really need is flexible wisdom, a kind of very flexible mind, not a know-it-all opinionatedness, because that's just going to turn people off. I think this is the middle path. People often think that if we don't have strong opinions about something, then we don't give a damn, right? No, there's a middle path between cherishing opinions and just not caring, period. We need to find that flexible mind, that curious, open, very

malleable, very workable mind that is a mind of bodhichitta, is a mind of caring, but caring in a very open and flexible way.

So what is it about practice that allows this to develop—what is it? In this particular context, I want to bring in a couple of slogans that get used with meditation practice a lot in my tradition. One of them is touch and go: that when we practice, we don't censor or judge the thoughts that come through, which is one of the great reliefs of practice. It's not about censoring, it's not about judging all the stuff that comes up. But it's also about: don't lead, don't follow. In other words, the thoughts come but they also go. We don't entertain them. We don't dwell on them. And my favorite statement for that is that we don't believe in our thoughts, which to me is a tremendous relief—that I don't have to believe in all my crazy thoughts. Now, there is usually a lot more space around the thought. And I can recognize, "I don't have to believe in this thought."

I want to conclude by suggesting that for engaged Buddhists, for people who have something that really is of concern, some real care about the world and things that are going on in the world, finding this kind of practice and this kind of way of working with anger is absolutely essential for staying the course. You know, the story of a lot of people who are very involved in social issues is that they have a lot of fire fueling their social concern, they're very zealous, and then they burn out. It gets to be too much. I think the missing ingredient there is practice, where we can learn to touch and go with our thoughts, not leading, not following them, developing a mind in which we don't have to believe in our thoughts, so that we have the energy to actually work with the situation intelligently and in a caring fashion.



NICOLA PALLI

Sesshin Talk on *Blue Cliff Record Case 52*

BY Norman Fischer
City Center October 31, 1998

WE ARE ALL MANY PERSONS. Some of these people we know and others we don't—only someone else knows them. Some of these people we like and some of them we don't like. Some of them we long for, and others we want to run away from. All of this is music; it's the music of our lives if we could only stop to listen. Music doesn't have any meaning; you can't explain it. Eating a meal doesn't have any meaning either, but if there's no eating there's no life, and if we don't hear the music we can't dance. This is our practice—to eat our meals and clean up; to dance to the music of our lives, each one in our own way, and then die when it's time.

To live this way is very simple and also very profound. Nothing flashy is necessary. This is like master Zhaozhou in Case 52 of the *Blue Cliff Record*. Since there's no pointer to the case, this is my pointer. The case is called Zhaozhou's "Asses Cross, Horses Cross."

A monk asked Zhaozhou, "For a long time, I've heard of the stone bridge of Zhaozhou, but now that I've come here I only see a simple log bridge."

Zhaozhou said, "You just see the log bridge; you don't see the stone bridge."

The monk said, "What is the stone bridge?"

Zhaozhou replied, "Asses cross, horses cross."

This is a case about master Zhaozhou, one of the most wonderful and beloved Zen teachers in the tradition; a personal favorite of mine. Throughout the *Blue Cliff Record*, the *Mumonkan*, the *Shoyoroku*, everywhere in the tradition we find stories of Zhaozhou. And I think why he is liked so much is that he is very simple and ordinary. He doesn't send out firecrackers and wave flags; he doesn't shout, doesn't beat, doesn't have beautiful words and phrases. He just goes about his everyday business, living his life, engaging with people as best he can, and yet there is a tremendous profundity in his teaching. Even though his words



Norman Fischer

were never startling, they say of Zhaozhou that he had a light playing around his lips when he spoke.

Zhaozhou ordained as a boy at the local temple and when he was about 20 years old, time to take full ordination, he heard about master Nanquan and went to visit him. The initial meeting between the two of them is very well known. Nanquan was either taking a nap or was sick when Zhaozhou went to visit him, so he was lying down. Zhaozhou greeted him. Nanquan said, "Where did you come from?"—a question that they always asked; a question like many Zen questions which is very simple and ordinary and at the same time very profound. "Where do you come from?" "San Francisco." "Where?" "I don't know." This was the kind of question the master would ask to try to ascertain something of the practice of a young novice like Zhaozhou. So Nanquan asked, "Where did you come from?" and Zhaozhou answered, "I came from the Holy Image Temple," which was the name of the monastery where he had been. Nanquan said, "Did you see the holy image?" Zhaozhou

said without any hesitation, "I didn't see the holy image but now I see a reclining Buddha." Nanquan was impressed with that answer and Zhaozhou's spirit and said, "Well, do you have a master?" Are you coming seeking a teacher or are you coming sent by a teacher? Zhaozhou gave a very famous answer, something like, "Winter days are very bright, I hope your good health continues." Maybe some of you recognize this line. This is the line that's spoken by *shusos*, head students, in the head student entering ceremony.

Zhaozhou didn't leave the monastery for 40 years, until Nanquan's death. He was about 60 years old and felt it was time to test his practice, to go to the graduate school of Buddha-dharma as the monks of those days did, traveling, going to different temples, meeting different masters; a time-tested and important practice of Zen. And this is how you do it—you spend 40 years in one place and when you gradually get the hang of that, you go around to other places to try to understand more. When he embarked on this pilgrimage, Zhaozhou made the famous saying, which I admire very much, "In this pilgrimage if I

meet an old person of 80 or 90 years, experienced in the Dharma, who needs to learn something from me, I will teach. And if I meet a young girl of seven years old who has something to teach me, I will sit at her feet and learn." This is a good attitude for life in general.

He went 20 years pilgrimaging in that way and when he was about 80 years old he thought, well, I am not quite ready but I might as well start teaching. So I think 80 years old is a good time to start. According to legend he lived to 120 years, so he still had 40 years of teaching. Apparently, he taught not in a remote, large mountain monastery as many of the old Ch'an masters did but in a town called Zhaozhou. He was master of a Quanyin temple there. There was a famous bridge in the town called the Bridge of Zhaozhou, like the Golden Gate Bridge, a famous site that tourists would go to see. That's the bridge that figures in our case today. Let me tell you a few little stories about Zhaozhou just to warm you up to him. I would like it if the result of my dharma talk would be that everybody would feel happy to have met Zhaozhou. That would be worthwhile.

Here is a very famous dialogue between Zhaozhou and Nanquan: Zhaozhou asked Nanquan, "What is the way?" Nanquan replied, "Ordinary mind is the way." Ordinary mind is the way, not a special mind, not a special thing to do, just ordinary mind is the way, every moment of mind is the way. This is a problem, because if ordinary mind is already the way, how do you practice? If somebody says, the way is this special mind over here, then you say, oh good, I am going to go that way and practice. But if someone says ordinary mind is the way, it's all there is, how do you get there? It's so easy it's impossible. So Zhaozhou said, "If ordinary mind is the way, how do you approach it then?" Nanquan replied, "If you intend to approach it you are on the wrong track." Zhaozhou said, "If you can't intend to go toward it then how will you realize it?" Nanquan said, "It's not a matter of knowing or not knowing. To know is delusion, not to know is stupidity. If you really attain the way, your vision is like infinite space, free of all limits and obstacles."

In zazen, in sesshin, our job is not to accomplish something, but rather to release ourselves to the music of our lives. To stop holding onto our lives and desires and intentions and just let ourselves fall into the vastness of the way, of the ordinary mind way. This way isn't outside of ourselves, or beyond ourselves and our desires. It's right in the mysterious middle of it. And to find that out we need to let go. I would like to emphasize posture and breathing, that you make a very strong commitment to sitting up straight and to breathing in your belly, in and out, to being with each and every breath as much as possible, using

your posture and breathing as your anchor point and just being there, returning over and over again to that, abandoning everything else. Abandoning everything else doesn't mean you don't pay attention to it, doesn't mean you suppress it or dislike or like it. You just let it go. We come back over and over again to the present moment of our posture and breathing. And in that way without intending anything, just by being present, we will discover our ordinary mind which is nothing flashy, nothing special, just vastness throughout.

A famous case that you all know of, I am sure, is the case of Nanquan's cat. Apparently, in Nanquan's monastery there was an East Hall and a West Hall. Maybe in the East Hall the monks were always in retreat and the West Hall housed the support monks, who did the monastery's work. The monks of both halls had oftentimes different points of view and different interests, so now they were arguing. They were arguing about a cat. Probably the monks on the one side who were running the monastery thought that this cat was very good because it was killing the mice in the kitchen. On the other side, monks thought this cat was killing the mice and that's against the precepts and besides, it's peeing in the zendo. This cat had to go. So they were arguing back and forth like this. I have heard about things like this. Even lately, even nearby. Anyway, somehow it all came down to this cat. And Nanquan picked up the cat and said, "All right, somebody better say a true word of Zen or I'm going to cut this cat in half, right in front of you all." Of course, no one ever does say a true word of Zen in these old stories, and no one did, so he cut the cat in half. That was the end of the argument. As it happened, Zhaozhou was not around at the time. He was in town buying supplies or something; maybe he was visiting a relative. When he came back and heard what had happened, he took off his traveling sandals and put them on his head and walked up and down. Nanquan said, "Oh, it's too bad that you were not here at that time; you would have saved that poor cat." So, that's the story. Now, I think that the reason why he put his sandals on his head was because it was a custom in Chiu to put sandals on your head as a sign of mourning. If Zhaozhou had been there he would have put his sandals on his head and he would have walked up and down expressing the fact that the cat was already dead, even before Nanquan cut the cat in two. Just like you and I are already dead. We think later we'll be dead, but that's baloney. Actually, right now in each breath we are alive and we are dead. We don't know that and that's why we are suffering. If the monks in the East Hall and the monks in the West Hall had known that, they wouldn't have argued. Actually, every morning, every day we should be in mourning. Every moment we should be mourning.

Here's another story about Zhaozhou. Once when the new students were all coming in one by one for their interview at the beginning of the practice period, Zhaozhou asked each one, "Have you been here before?" And one would say, "Yes." Zhaozhou would say, "Oh, good, have a cup of tea." The next one would come and Zhaozhou would say, "Have you been here before?" "No, no, I have never been here before, this is my first visit." "Oh, have a cup of tea." This went on, yes, have a cup of tea, no, have a cup of tea. The prior of the monastery was watching all this and getting very upset. He said, "Somebody comes in and says no I haven't been here before and you say go have a cup of tea and somebody else comes and says yes I have been here before and you tell him go have a cup of tea. What is the meaning of this?" And Zhaozhou said, "Prior?" And he said, "Yes?" Zhaozhou said, "Have a cup of tea."

Once a novice said to master Zhaozhou, "I am only newly admitted into this monastery. I beseech you, reverence, to please teach and guide me." Zhaozhou said, "Have you had your breakfast yet?" The novice said, "Yes, I have." Zhaozhou said, "Please wash your bowls." A famous story of Zhaozhou.

There are many short answers of Zhaozhou's that are very famous. Of course, the most famous of all is: Once a monk asked Zhaozhou, "Does the dog have Buddha nature?" Zhaozhou said, "No." This is the famous "mu" koan. It's less well known that another time pretty soon afterward a monk asked, "Does the dog have Buddha nature?" and Zhaozhou said, "Yes, of course." Once someone asked, "What is the way?" and Zhaozhou replied, "The cypress tree in the courtyard." Another monk asked, "Who is Buddha?" Zhaozhou shot back, "Who are you?" A monk asked, "What is the most important principle of Zen?" Zhaozhou said, "Excuse me, but I have to pee. Just imagine, even such a trivial thing as that I have to do in person." A wonderful teacher, Zhaozhou. And if you think about all these stories, it's very ordinary stuff. It's not like master Yunmen saying, "Body exposed to the golden wind." It's not like master Rinzai with his shouts ringing in the ears of his student for days on end. It's not like master Deshan with his staff, 30 blows every day. I think master Zhaozhou must have been very much like Suzuki Roshi. As with Suzuki Roshi, I think with Zhaozhou sometimes you didn't know whether anything was going on or not. Whether there's any Zen or not. When Rinzai shouted at you, you might or might not have understood, but you knew something was going on. When Deshan reared up and whacked you, you might not have understood, but you knew, this is definitely Zen. But when Zhaozhou says, "Have a cup of tea" or "Wash your bowls," you don't really know. Well, you might think, there is nothing going on, he is



Tassajara Buddha

just telling me to wash my bowls. But I think that at the same time those who have the eyes to see and the heart to know felt in those simple words, as with Suzuki Roshi's simple words, something is going on. The secret of this kind of practice is that Zhaozhou and Suzuki Roshi are not trying to do anything. For them, really and truly there is no such thing as Zen practice, or maybe Zen practice is just a convention, just a language. There is only one life, which means life and death. So there is no need to make a special point of something. But life moment after moment on every moment has an inexpressible depth. "I don't know" every moment. Every moment, even the simplest, most ordinary moment of our life, is vast. All ordinary moments are extraordinary because all ordinary moments are unknowable, empty and radically impermanent, gone even before they come. Every moment is like that, if you look. And Zhaozhou's and Suzuki Roshi's practice was not to think about this or marvel at it, but simply to be fully aware of it in each activity of life, whether they were speaking to a student or going to the toilet or eating a meal. So Zhaozhou is not saying anything more

than have a cup of tea. It's just a cup of tea, but it's just a cup of tea. Wash out your bowls is not saying anything special, there is no trick, is there? It's just wash out your bowls, but it's just wash out your bowls. Everything is included. It's not conscious, it's not intentional, it's not Buddha-dharma or something like that. It's just naturally living your life the way your life really is. So in sesshin we should live like that, this is the way to live, with no special intention, but simply paying attention to our lives, being there in our lives as they really are.

What prevents us from doing this? Our enormous habit of self concern. Every moment, how am I doing; is this good or bad; this is right or wrong; look at him, look at her, look at them, look at us; why is this that way; I want that this way; that was good then, what about now? We are full of self concern, we don't want to adjust, we don't want to enter the vastness of this moment. So we have to let go of our self-clinging mind, and see that. Zhaozhou is there, Suzuki Roshi is there. So you don't have to do anything; you just have to undo something, come back moment after moment, as an anchor to the fundamental thought of your being embodied, of your being in the posture of your breathing.

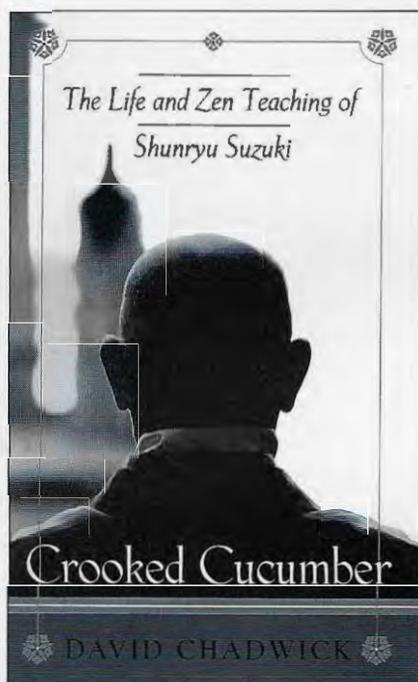
Finally I get around to the case! The case says: A monk asked Zhaozhou, "For a long time I've heard of a stone bridge of Zhaozhou. But now that I've come here I just see a simple log bridge." It was the famous stone bridge, of course. But also, when the monk is speaking of the stone bridge he is also speaking about Zhaozhou himself. I came all this way to see a famous master of Ch'an and I see you? This is how we know that Zhaozhou was not an impressive guy. If you are a monk walking 200 or 300 miles with your little straw sandals to get to see the storied master Zhaozhou, you are expecting something. And you arrive; here is this guy. Not much to him. This is how the Ch'an monks of old were. They were very present and forthright and they called a spade a spade. "You know you're not too impressive. I came all this way and heard all this stuff about you; there's not much here, is there?" Imagine, if you were Zhaozhou. How would you feel? What would you say? Zhaozhou said, "Oh, you see a log bridge"—just a log bridge, no important Zen master here. It was okay with him that he wasn't much. But that's only half of what he said. If that's all he said then he would be clinging to being nothing special. He added, "—you don't see a stone bridge." This is true for us, too. There is not much to us, just a log bridge. But do you see the stone bridge in your own life? Zhaozhou said yes, you're right, just a log bridge, but you don't see a stone bridge.

Too bad, not for me; too bad for you. I think the monk heard the master and he suddenly lost his arrogance and asked in all humility, "What is the stone bridge of Zhaozhou?" Zhaozhou said, "Horses cross, asses cross." Our attachment, our stupidity, our enlightenment, our heroism, our cowardice, our confusion, clarity, compassion, selfishness, all of that goes across the famous stone bridge of Zen and arrives safely on the other side. It is a bridge; it is a crossing point. In and of itself it's nowhere, just a bridge.

You are alive and then you're not, and that's it. It's so easy to forget that this is the case. It's very easy to forget. If you walk across the room in your house from one door knob to the next, and at one door knob you vow that between the time you walk from this door knob to the other you will stay with your practice, you will not be able to do it. By the time you get to that other door knob, you forgot already. This is the human mind. It's unbelievable when you think about it. It's an absolute marvel. And think of the centuries and generations that went into that stupidity. It's truly a marvel. This is the mystery, this is the music of humanity, unbelievable.

We need to resort to drastic measures. It's a shame. Just so that we can remember a little bit more often the simple fact that we are alive right now. It's a total situation. And it's never going to happen again. We should dance through sesshin with that spirit, trying to pay attention, that's all, to each breath in and each breath out, paying attention to eating and serving, bowing, cleaning, resting, walking, sleeping, changing clothes, coming back over and over again to where you are. And letting go of everything. Don't wish for anything, don't intend anything, just dive into the ocean of Dharma. The most important thing is that the spirit, the feeling, with which you do all this is a feeling of kindness. It's very important that you have a feeling of kindness and lightness in the doing of this. Because your tricky mind will try to make this into another form of self-clinging, and the antidote to that is simple kindness. Just being kind, to yourself, and to everyone practicing together with you, not only in the room, in the sesshin, but also in the surrounding sangha and everyone everywhere else.

Please do make your best effort to practice in the way that I am encouraging you to practice. Don't try to do anything; be gentle and kind with yourselves and every moment let go. In the end this is the only way to find peace, to let go of suffering, and it's the only way that we will ever truly be able to benefit others. Let's help each other in that effort.



Introduction to
Crooked Cucumber: The Life and
Zen Teaching of Shunryu Suzuki

BY David Chadwick
Broadway Books, 1999

"The teaching must not be stock words or stale stories but must be always kept fresh. That is real teaching."—Suzuki Roshi

ONE NIGHT IN FEBRUARY OF 1968, I sat among fifty black-robed fellow students, mostly young Americans, at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, Tassajara Springs, ten miles inland from Big Sur, California, deep in the mountain wilderness. The kerosene lamplight illuminated our breath in the winter air of the unheated room.

Before us the founder of the first Zen Buddhist monastery in the Western Hemisphere, Shunryu Suzuki-roshi, had concluded a lecture

from his seat on the altar platform. "Thank you very much," he said softly, with a genuine feeling of gratitude. He took a sip of water, cleared his throat, and looked around at his students. "Is there some question?" he asked, just loud enough to be heard above the sound of the creek gushing by in the darkness outside.

I bowed, hands together, and caught his eye.

"Hai?" he said, meaning yes.

"Suzuki-roshi, I've been listening to your lectures for years," I said, "and I really love them, and they're very inspiring, and I know that what you're talking about is actually very clear and simple. But I must admit I just don't understand. I love it, but I feel like I could listen to you for a thousand years and still not get it. Could you just please put it in a nutshell? Can you reduce Buddhism to one phrase?"

Everyone laughed. He laughed. What a ludicrous question. I don't think any of us expected him to answer it. He was not a man you could pin down, and he didn't like to give his students something definite to cling to. He had often said not to have "some idea" of what Buddhism was.

But Suzuki-roshi did answer. He looked at me and said, "Everything changes." Then he asked for another question.

Shunryu Suzuki was a Japanese priest in the Soto school of Zen who came to San Francisco in 1959 to a small Japanese-American congregation. He came with no plan, but with the confidence that some Westerners would embrace the essential practice of Buddhism as he had learned it from his teachers. He had a way with things—plants, rocks, robes, furniture, walking, sitting—that gave a hint of how to be comfortable in the world. He had a way with people that drew them to him, a way with words that made people listen, a genius that seemed to work especially in America and especially in English.

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, a skillfully edited compilation of his lectures published in 1970, has sold over a million copies in a dozen languages. It's a reflection of where Suzuki put his passion: in the ongoing practice of Zen with others. He did not wish to be remembered or to have anything named after him. He wanted to pass on what he had learned to others, and he hoped that they in turn would help to invigorate Buddhism in America and reinvigorate it in Japan.

Buddhist ideas had been infiltrating American thought since the days of the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau. At the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, Soen Shaku turned heads when he made the first public presentation of Zen to the West. His disciple and translator, D. T. Suzuki, became a great bridge from the East, teaching at Harvard and Columbia, and publishing dozens of widely

read books on Buddhism in English. When confused with D. T. Suzuki, Shunryu Suzuki would say, "No, he's the big Suzuki, I'm the little Suzuki."

The first small groups to study and meditate gathered with Shigetsu Sasaki on the East Coast and Nyogen Senzaki on the west. Books informed by Buddhism by Hermann Hesse, Ezra Pound, and the Beat writers were discussed in the coffeehouses of New York and San Francisco and by college kids in Ohio and Texas. Alan Watts, the brilliant communicator, further enthused and informed a generation that hungered for new directions.

Into this scene walked Shunryu Suzuki, who embodied and exemplified what had been for Westerners an almost entirely intellectual interest. He brought with him a focus on daily zazen, Zen meditation, and what he called "practice": zazen extending into all activity. He had a fresh approach to living and talking about life, enormous energy, formidable presence, an infectious sense of humor and a dash of mischief.

From the time he was a new monk at age thirteen, Suzuki's master, Gyokujun So-on Suzuki, called him Crooked Cucumber. Crooked cucumbers were useless: farmers would compost them; children would use them for batting practice. So-on told Suzuki he felt sorry for him, because he would never have any good disciples. For a long time it looked as though So-on was right. Then Crooked Cucumber fulfilled a lifelong dream. He came to America, where he had many students and died in the full bloom of what he had come to do. His twelve and a half years here profoundly changed his life and the lives of many others.

On a mild Tuesday afternoon in August of 1993 I had an appointment with Shunryu Suzuki's widow of almost twenty-two years, Mitsu Suzuki. Walking up the central steps to the second floor of the San Francisco Zen Center's three-story red brick building, I passed the founder's alcove, dedicated to Shunryu Suzuki. It is dominated by an almost life-size statue of him carved by an old Japanese sculptor out of a blond cypress stump from the Bolinas Lagoon. "Hi Roshi, 'bye Roshi," I muttered, bowing quickly as I went by.

Mitsu Suzuki-sensei was the person on my mind. We had been close, but I hadn't seen her much in recent years. Soon she would move back across the Pacific for good. I was a little nervous. I needed to talk to her, and although there wouldn't be much time, I didn't want to rush. What I sought was her blessing.

"Come in, David," she said in her sweet, high voice from the kitchen door at the end of the hall. I stepped inside and there she was, looking strikingly young for the last year of her seventh decade. "No

David Chadwick and Marilyn McCann Coyote saying goodbye to Okusan (with her back to camera) at San Francisco Airport. They were part of a large turnout of Zen Center practitioners who accompanied Okusan to the airport when she returned to Japan in 1993 to live with her daughter.



hugs," she said quickly, holding her hands out to ward me off, then rubbing her ribs. About fifteen years earlier I had been a bit too exuberant in expressing my affection, and my hug must have bruised some ribs. I bowed, tipping my body as Japanese do (without joining hands), and said something polite in Japanese.

She stood almost a foot below me. Her face was round and childlike as ever, her hair long, straight, and black, with just a bit of grey here and there. She wore homemade loose pants and a blouse printed with chrysanthemums, the same material on top and bottom, an earthy brown and soft blue. The tiny kitchen was filled with knickknacks as always, the wall covered with art, photos, a calendar. After some polite chitchat about family members and about a book I'd written, I brought up the purpose of my visit.

"Some publisher may be interested in . . . it has been suggested to me that I . . . might . . . um . . . write some on Suzuki-roshi. Collect the oral history—stories about Suzuki-roshi, people's memories."

"Oh, thank you for writing about Hojo-san," she said, with the pitch ascending on the thank. Hojo-san is what she always called her husband. *Hojo* is the abbot of a temple; *san* is a polite form of address.

"So you really think it's okay for me to do a book on Suzuki-roshi?"

"Oh, yes, yes," she said emphatically. "Tell many funny stories."

"Umm . . . funny stories, yes . . . but not just funny. Serious and sad ones too, everything, right?"

"Yes, but people like the funny stories. Mainly you should tell funny stories. That will be good. Hojo-san liked funny stories. Everyone will be very happy to read them."

"There may be some people who don't think I should do the book."

She sat back down across the table from me and looked directly at me. "When I speak now, it is Suzuki-roshi's voice coming through my mouth and he says, 'Please write a book about me and thank you very much for writing a book about me.' Those are his words. I speak for him."

It was time to go. She offered me a green metallic frog that fit in the palm of my hand. "Here, take this," she said. "It belonged to Hojo-san. He would be happy for you to have it. He loved frogs very much," she said, drawing out the first syllable of very. "I'm giving everything away. When I go back to Japan I go like the cicada. It leaves its shell behind. I will do that too."

"I want to come visit you there and ask you about Hojo-san."

"No, no, no," she said adamantly. "No more English. I will leave my poor English behind me."

"Then I will speak in my poor Japanese," I said, in my poor Japanese.

"Okay, please come visit then. But keep your voice small when you do. Your voice is too big."

"Okay," I said in a tiny voice and passed her at the door, assuring her as she instinctively cringed that I wasn't going to hug her.

"Remember," she said, "tell many funny stories." Then, "Why would anyone not want you to do a book on Hojo-san?"

"Various reasons. You know he didn't want anything like that. It would be impossible not to misrepresent him. And you know what Noiri-roshi said over twenty years ago?" Noiri-roshi was a colleague of Suzuki's, a strict and traditional priest, now old and revered.

"No, what did Noiri-san say?"

"That Suzuki-roshi was one of the greatest Japanese of this century and that no one should write about him who doesn't know all of his samadhis [deep states of meditation]."

"Good!" she said clapping, with delight in her voice. "There's your first funny story!"

BUTCH BALUPUT (2)



Volunteer servers (above) and cooks (below) for the "Crooked Cucumber Dinner," a benefit dinner for the Suzuki Roshi Archive Project, held at City Center on February 13, 1999.





Be Kind With Yourself

*BY Shunryu Suzuki Roshi
February 23, 1971*

I WANT YOU TO HAVE THE ACTUAL FEELING of true practice. Although I practiced zazen when I was young, I didn't know exactly what it was. I had some feeling of practice, but it was pretty difficult to talk about. Sometimes I was very impressed by our practice at Eiheiji and other monasteries. When I saw some great teachers or listened to their lectures, I was very moved. But it was difficult to give order to those experiences.

The Way is to have full experience, full feeling in every practice. I thought I did my best, but I didn't make enough effort. My practice was what we call "stepladder" Zen. "I understand this much now, and next year," I thought, "I will understand a little bit more, and a little bit more." That kind of practice doesn't make much sense. If you try stepladder practice, maybe you will realize that it is a mistake.

If we don't have some warm, big satisfaction in our practice, that is not practice. Even though you sit, trying to have the right posture and counting your breath, it may still be empty zazen because you are just following instructions, and you are not kind enough with yourself. You should be very kind with yourself. Do not count your breathing just to avoid your thinking mind, but to take the best care of your breathing. Just to follow your breathing doesn't make sense. If you are very kind with your breathing, one breath after another, you will have a refreshed warm feeling in your zazen.

Perhaps we are not kind enough with ourselves. We understand our practice, but we understand by following some instructions. You think that if you follow the instructions given by some teacher, then you will have good zazen, but it is not so. The purpose of instruction is for you to be able to be kind with yourself. When you have a warm feeling for your body and your breath, then you can take care of your practice, and you will be fully satisfied. When you are very kind with yourself, naturally you will feel this way.

A mother will take care of her child even though she has no idea of how to make her baby happy. Similarly, when you take care of your posture and your breathing, there should be some warm feeling in it. When you have a warm feeling in your practice, that is actually a good example of the great mercy of Buddha. And whether you are a priest or lay person, this practice will extend to your everyday life. When you take the utmost care of what you do, then you feel good.

Tozan Ryokai attained enlightenment many times. Once when he was crossing a river, he saw himself reflected in the water and said, "Don't try to figure out what you are. If you try to figure out what you are, what you understand will be far away from you—you will not have even an image of yourself." Actually, you are in the river. You may say that it is just a shadow or a reflection, but if you see carefully with warm-hearted feeling, that is you.

You may think you are very warm-hearted, but when you try to understand how warm, you cannot actually measure the temperature of

your feeling. Yet when you see yourself in the mirror or water with warm feeling, that is actually you. And whatever you do, you are there.

When you do something, Manjusri, the bodhisattva of wisdom, is there. When you have good practice in your everyday life, there is Manjusri and there is the true you, the real you. When you do things with your warm-hearted mind, that is actual practice, that is how to take care of things.

Some of you are monks and some are not monks, and each of you will go your own way. Those who are not married and those who have already married have their own ways of extending practice to their everyday lives. Although our situations are different, practice is just one—and you meet Manjusri. Even though he is one, he is everywhere, with everyone and with all things. Whatever you do, whatever practice you are involved in, there is Manjusri. The secret is not to forget



Abbess Blanche Hartman shares a hug with Kosho McCall before his shuso ceremony at City Center. Zachary Smith (right) served as benji.

BUTCH BALUWUT (2)





These people all attended Kosho Jack McCall's shuso ceremony which concluded the winter 1999 practice period at City Center.

the true mercy of Buddha who takes care of everything. If we lose this point, whatever we do, it won't make any sense.

So we put emphasis on warm heart, warm zazen. The warm feeling we have in our practice is, in other words, enlightenment or Buddha's mercy, Buddha's mind. It is not a matter of just counting or following your breathing. Counting breaths is tedious. So maybe it is better to just follow our breathing. This is easier and less of a disturbance to our practice. The point is, one after another, inhaling and exhaling, take care of your breathing, in and out, just as a mother watches her baby. If a baby smiles, its mother may smile. If a baby cries, its mother is worried. That kind of close relationship, being one with your practice, is the point. I am not talking about anything new—the same old things!

When your practice improves, and you have good control over your desires and everyday life, then you will have big freedom from everything. That is the goal of our practice both for priests and for lay people.

Take care of your practice. Be very kind with yourself.

Related Zen Centers

Buddhism is often likened to a lotus plant. One of the characteristics of the lotus is that it throws off many seeds from which new plants grow. A number of Zen centers have formed which have a close relationship with San Francisco Zen Center. A partial list of these follows:

Centers with Daily Meditation

Within California

Arcata Zen Group, 940 Park Ave., Arcata 95521. Contact 707/442-9155 in Arcata or Maylie Scott in Berkeley at mayliescott@earthlink.net.

Berkeley Zen Center, 1931 Russell St, Berkeley 94703, 510/845-2403. Sojun Mel Weitsman, Abbot.

Dharma Eye Zen Center, 333 Bayview St, San Rafael 94901. Monday–Friday 5:15 a.m. zazen and service; Monday 7:30–9:30 p.m. zazen, tea & discussion; Sunday 7:15 a.m. zazen & service; first Sunday each month half-day sitting 7 a.m.–noon. Contact Steve Stucky, 415/258-0802.

Hartford Street Zen Center, 57 Hartford St, San Francisco 94114, 415/863-2507. Zenshin Philip Whalen, Teacher.

Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz Mountains near Saratoga, 408/741-9562.

Ryan Brandenburg, Director.

Kannon Do Zen Center, 292 College Ave, Mountain View 94040, 415/903-1935. Keido Les Kaye, Abbot.

Santa Cruz Zen Center, 113 School St, Santa Cruz 95060, 408/457-0206. Wednesday zazen 7:10 p.m., lecture/discussion 8 p.m. Katherine Thanas, teacher, 408/426-3847.

Sonoma Mountain Zen Center, 6367 Sonoma Mountain Rd., Santa Rosa 95404, 707/545-8105. Jakusho Kwong, Abbot.

Outside California

Chapel Hill Zen Group, Use mailing address to request information— P.O. Box 16302, Chapel Hill NC 27516; meeting location, 5322 NC Hwy 86, Chapel Hill NC 27514; 919/967-0861. Patricia Phelan, teacher.

Hoko-ji, Taos NM, 505/776-5712. Kobun Chino, Abbot.

Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, 3343 E. Calhoun Pkwy, Minneapolis MN 55408, 612/822-5313.

Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha NE 68131-0566, 402/551-9035. Nonin Chowaney, teacher.

One Pine Hall Zazen Group, zazen and kinhin Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 6:30–7:30 a.m. Contact Robby Ryuzen Pellett, 206/298-3710. Need to bring own cushions.

Weekly Meditation Groups

Within California

Bolinas Sitting Group, St. Aidan's Episcopal Church, 30 Brighton Ave, Bolinas. Thursday 7:30-9 p.m. & one Saturday a month 9-5 p.m. Contact Taigen Leighton, 415/458-8856 or Liz Tuomi, 415/868-1931.

Mill Valley Zazen, 275 Miller Ave, Mill Valley. Tuesdays & Thursdays 6:30-7:10 a.m. zazen and sutra chanting. Contact Layla Smith, 383-2546 for information or zazen instruction. Small donation asked to help cover rent.

Modesto Sitting Group, 501 N. Thor, Turlock 95380, 209/634-2172.

Monterey Bay Zen Center, Cherry Foundation, 4th & Guadalupe, Carmel 93924. Tuesdays 6:30 p.m. Katherine Thanas, teacher. Contact Robert Reese, 408/624-7491.

North Peninsula Zen Group, St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, 1600 Santa Lucia Ave, San Bruno. Meets Thursday evenings 7:30-9 p.m. Contact Darlene Cohen, 415/552-5695.

Oakhurst-North Fork Zen Center/Empty Nest Zendo, 54333 Two Hills Road, North Fork 93643, 209/877-2400. Wednesdays 6:30 p.m. & Sundays 9 a.m. Leader, Grace Shireson. Oakhurst Thursdays 7 p.m. Leader Ronna Adler, 209/683-6247.

Occidental Sitting Group, 3535 Hillcrest, Occidental 95465. Wednesday evenings & last Saturday each month. Contact Bruce or Chris Fortin, 707/874-2274.

Orinda Zazen Circle, 88 El Toyonal, Orinda 94563.
1st & 3rd Sundays 9-11 a.m. Contact Al Tribe, 510/253-9125 before 9 p.m.

Peninsula Sitting Group, Skyline at Hwy 84. Wednesday 8:30 p.m., Tuesday & Friday 6 a.m. followed by service. Contact Kathy Haimson for directions, 415/851-7023.

San Rafael Sitting Group, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Court St. between 5th & Mission in parish offices to right of church. Wednesdays 7-8 a.m. Contact Taigen Leighton 415/458-8856.

Thursday Night Sitting Group, Marin Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship, 240 Channing Way, San Rafael. Thursdays 7-9 p.m. Contact Ed Brown, 415/669-1479 or U.U. Fellowship, 415/497-4131.

Topanga Zen Group, 310/455-9404, contact Peter Levitt.

Vallejo Sitting Group, Behind 812 Louisiana, Vallejo. Thursdays 7-8:30 p.m. Contact Mary Mocine 415/861-8756.

Outside California

Clear Spring Zendo, 1201 Castle Hill #201, Austin, TX 78703. Zazen, kinhin, service, classes, discussion. Contact Flint Sparks, Ph.D., 512/479-8677.

Eugene Zen Practice Group, 1515 Hayes, Eugene OR 97402. Wednesday mornings. Contact Gary McNabb, 503/343-2525.

New Jersey Zen Sitting Group, 1032 Woodgate Ave., Long Branch, NJ 07740. Zazen, kinhin, service, classes, discussion. Contact Brian Unger, 732/870-8822.

Silver City Buddhist Center, 1301 Virginia St., Silver City NM 88061-4617. Zazen, service, classes, discussion, ceremonies. Contact Dr. Paul Stuetzer, 505/388-8874.

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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 to 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 Street, San Francisco CA 94102, 415-863-3136, or from Green Gulch Farm, 1601 Shoreline Highway, 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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