

*Yvonne Rand, Saturday Afternoon*

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*morning class*

to a more formal practice, there are also a number of people who began to change the way they understood how to live in the world out of their exposure to Suzuki-roshi, and to the experience of being with somebody who could be so radically present.

I don't know if I'll have a chance to tell you this story later, so I'm going to tell it to you now. I think, in the video that we're going to see tonight, there's a photograph of Suzuki-roshi holding some glasses up to his eyes. The glasses belonged to my great-grandmother—the kind of glasses that would have a hinge on the nose piece and in the middle of the ear pieces, so the whole business would collapse to the size of one lens. And then you could push a button and the glasses would spring out.

After the Zen Center moved to the Page Street building, where the Center is located now, the usual practice was that we would all have tea together. The staff and Zen Center officers would have tea with Suzuki-roshi in the morning before the day would begin. So one morning at tea, I produced these glasses and gave them to Suzuki-roshi. And he took them and pushed the button and they popped open, and the photograph is just at that moment where he's got the glasses right in front of him. And he looks like a little kid with this wonderful new toy. He spent the rest of the tea closing them and popping them open [laughter] with this kind of "Oh!"—so characteristic of his playfulness and ability to be completely totally present with what was happening in the moment.

Something that came up from comments earlier in the day reminded me of a conversation that several of us had when Suzuki-roshi walked into the old living room in the Page Street building—what is now and has been for a very long time the Buddha Hall. And he kept trying to work out how we were going to enter into the room. By this time we'd covered the floor with tatami mats, and there was a certain complexity in the traffic flow. And finally he said, "I'm imagining this room in the way that I imagine the Buddha Hall at Rinso-in, with these four big pillars." You may remember this. These four big pillars and the way we move, the way we enter the room and leave, is because of the placement of those pillars. Now, we're talking about a room which has no pillars in it [laughs]. These are imaginary pillars. But the way the room was laid out was so much in Suzuki-roshi's body that that was the way he could reconfigure the traffic pattern for coming and going, for bowing, and chanting.

And I remember being struck by his saying, "I can only teach you what I know, the way I know it. And I want to teach you what I know and the way I know it as thoroughly as I can. And then after you know what I can teach you thoroughly, then it will be up to you to change it." And, of course, he was talking about what he knew, in this case, about entering and leaving the room, that was in his body, that was underneath language. And I'm really struck by that wonderful invitation that he gave us to let him teach us what he knew, but without any restriction,