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(HQD00310)

題名 - THE INTERVIEW WITH MR. MASAJI YAMADA

Dear David,

Here's the translation of the interview with Mr. Masaji Yamada about Suzuki roshi.

## ABOUT MR. YAMADA

- the 'sewanin' (sponsor) of Rinsoin
- the 'sodai' (representative) of neighbourhood associations in the area where Rinsoin is situated
- 79 years old
- His grandfather was a village chief when the area was a village. (It is now a part of Yeizu city.)
- His family has the history that is older than Rinsoin.
- The interview was done in his farmhouse, which was relatively large in the neighbourhood.

(First I (Kyoko) explained the purpose of the interview and he asked me what Suzuki roshi had achieved in the States.)

I thought of declining this interview after I got your call because I don't remember much about Shunryu-son.

<Kyoko: I would appreciate to hear any little thing you remember about him. Any firsthand information would be appreciated.>

He was quite forgetful. He would leave his hat or his 'zutabukuro' (monk's bag) and didn't come back for what he had left, so we had to return it to Rinsoin.

He was a gentle person. Didn't seem particularly ambitious. There was nothing nasty about him.

For some years after the war, the life at Rinsoin must have been hard. They were borrowing money and other things, which they were too poor to repay.

It's admirable that they have managed to overcome it all.

They put up and took care of school children from Tokyo and soldiers during the war.

I heard Shunryu-san taught English at 'chugaku' (which corresponds to senior high school in the postwar educational system) somewhere in Shizuoka Prefecture either before or during the war.

In those days priests weren't so worldly as they are today. They used to be more decent.

Shunryu-san was a man of mild nature. He always talked smilingly.

His teacher, So-on-san led a perfectly monastic life.

Both Shunryu-san and So-on-san recited sutra well. But, neither of them preached.

They were priests as priests should be. We could feel their humanity. They devotedly followed the religious path in all aspects of life. For example, they walked wherever they went.

Shunryu-san was an ordinary priest.

<K: Do you remember anything about the rethatching of the roof of Rinsoin?>

Neighbours came to work. People used to work hard and help one another in a rural community (like this area) in those days.

Shunryu-san did heavy labour, too.

Thatch was stored in the attic every year (for the rethatching that was done every few years).

<K: Do you know if Shunryu-san had any disciples?>

Well...there were one or two monks practicing at Rinsoin.

There was an unsui who was practicing at a small temple nearby for ten years. The practice monks did those days was hard and strict. They would get up very early in the morning and wipe the floor with a wet cloth.

<K: I've heard dankas objected Shunryu-san's going to the States.>

Well, I don't know about it. I think it was rather that Shunryu-san took advantage of Shuncho's request to work in the States in order to flee from troubles he was encountering here. Dankas were criticizing him for having an affair/affairs. He didn't make it secret. He would go downtown and have a good time. It was widely known. Dankas were not very happy about it. So, he might have thought his designation for the abbotship of the temple in San Francisco was a good chance for him to get away from it all. Also, there had been that incident which had happened to his wife. The unsui who attacked her was found not guilty.

I've heard Shunryu-san stamped his feet (with mortification?) when he rushed back to Rinsoin and saw his wife lying. That incident might have contributed to his decision to go to the States as well. That woman who have recently come back from the States is not legally married to him, isn't she? What's her family name? It's not Suzuki, is it?

<K: I understand they had got married just before Shunryu-san left for the States. Mitsu-san went to San Francisco to join him a few years later. I've heard that some people who used to know her as a kindergarten director still call her Matsuno sensei, but she is 'Mrs. Suzuki' now.>

I see. It's a strange coincidence, but I met her in Umegashima Onsen (a hot-spring resort in Shizuoka City) while I was staying there for recuperation for one month just after the war. When she saw me at a meeting at Rinsoin the other day, she recognized me and greeted me.

On the whole, Shunryu-san was a gentle and unselfish man, quite free from avarice.

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Kyoko Furuhashi