

cloud-hidden friends letter ¹⁴¹

ISSUE #4 WINTER, 1983

OUR PAGES ARE YOUR LETTERS

Cloud-Hidden Friends
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94121



The "Cloud-Hidden Friends" are a small non-sectarian religious correspondence group. We meet mostly by sharing our thoughts on the Dharma together in our "Letter".

Rather than giving some definition to the word "Dharma", we would rather emphasize the freedom of the individual to come to his own understanding about such. As a group we would aim more at a dialogue, and would emphasize the spirit and practice of the Dharma rather than some doctrinaire or sectarian formula.

In that spirit we look to Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki and Alan Watts as our "honorary founders". Although they are usually associated with Buddhism, and Zen in particular, their spirit was also a free and universal one, including Christianity, Hinduism, and Taoism etcetera. Their Dharma then seems to somehow belong equally to us all.

In a more universal spirit then we are a zen group. However we might also turn to someone like Thomas Merton to exemplify the kind of openness and dialogue we have in mind. In his later years, he commented that he could see no contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism, and that he had determined "to become as good a Buddhist as I can".

Since our pages are your letters, we ask as our "subscription fee" that you write us a letter now and then in the "spirit of the Dharma". Poems, songs, tales, drawings and such are all more than welcome. We will try to publish everything we receive, but this might not always be possible. Letters should be of a reasonable length, and if you so request, we will type them up for you. It is presumed we will forgive each other a few typing errors etcetera, since perfectionism could easily paralyze us.

It is hoped that our letters will somehow help us open our hearts to each other, and deepen our sense of the Dharma. Hopefully in this way too more than a few deep friendships might develop.

It is our intention to be as democratic in spirit as is possible. It does seem that we do at least need a "Clerk" of some sort to do the photocopying, coordinating, and mailing etcetera. This role might be thought of as similar to that of the "Clerk" in Quakerism, and it seems a good model for us to follow. Your comments on these matters would be appreciated.

Our phrase "Cloud-Hidden" is taken from the title of a book by Alan Watts. He in turn borrowed it from a ninth century poem by Chia Tao. Lin Yutang translates it as follows:

SEARCHING FOR THE HERMIT IN VAIN

I asked the boy beneath the pines.
He said, "The master's gone alone
Herb-picking somewhere on the mount,
Cloud-hidden, whereabouts unknown."

A.C.D., Clerk

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Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends-

In early April, I had the great, fantastic experience of finally seeing a person I have held in high esteem my entire life-Gary Snyder. Gary did a poetry reading at Western Connecticut University, at times accompanied by Paul Winter. It was a beautiful evening, at times reminding me of the old Beat coffee house readings in Greenwich Village. At any rate, to actually see Gary in the flesh was a very important experience for me and I'll try to tell you all why.

I grew up in Westchester county suburbia during the fifties and sixties. Somewhere along the line I began to slowly realize that I did not want to commute to N.Y.C. every day, or become a businessman, lawyer, doctor, etc. I wanted something else, definitely something else, but at the time there seemed to be no options or alternatives. If you didn't want to do what everyone else wanted to do, you were crazy. And the prep school I attended was a huge cloning machine for Harvard/Yale puppets. Somewhere along the line, like so many of us Cloud-Hidden Friends, I realized I was going to take the road less traveled by, but there were no guides along the road, and the first few miles were terrifying. I knew I was going somewhere, but I had no idea where.

One day somewhere in the sixties somewhere in Woodstock, N.Y., someone gave me a copy of Kerouac's Dharma Bums. I read the book from cover to cover in a matter of hours and it did not take me long to find out that Japhy Ryder = Gary Snyder and that Gary Snyder was alive and well, at that point in Japan, I believe. Just to know that someone else had taken the road less traveled by and had made it and was leading a worthwhile life meant everything to me. Although I do not know him personally, Gary was one of my first guides on the path.

And so that night in April, I went to see him. I did not introduce myself to him, after all, what was I going to say? Instead, I simply had his Darshan. As I said, it was a calm, beautiful evening.

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It was like going back to the beginning and seeing clearly that I have definitely taken the right road. As one of our honorary founders, Alan Watts, said of Gary Snyder (I don't remember the exact quote, but it's in Alan's autobiography), "Any universe that manifested Gary Snyder can't be all bad."

To continue on this line of guides along the path, and some thoughts Ananda's letter in issue 3 stirred up, I find myself in an interesting predicament. As a teacher of Yoga and Meditation, I am often asked about the necessity of a Guru, Rishi or spiritual teacher along the path. The only honest answer I can give is that a spiritual guide is necessary and not necessary. The problem with a Guru is we begin to think they have something we don't have, an experience, knowledge, understanding or level of spiritual evolution. And so, instead of discovering our true nature, we tend to look to them for answers. But a true Guru is a finger pointing to the moon, and will warn the disciple not to mistake the finger for the moon it is pointing to—and the finger should be pointing right at YOU!

My experience is that my Guru, Swami Muktananda, helped me awaken to my true Self, but upon awakening I discovered that that Self or Buddha nature was already always present and already always available to everyone. So, in fact, what did he do for me? Nothing. And I am eternally forever grateful to him for it. As Harada Rishi indicated, all teachers are selling water by the side of a river. All true teachers are cosmic compassionate con artists selling us the rights to our very nature. I for one was dumb enough to be conned and I'm glad I was. How do we tell an honest con artist from a dishonest con artist? One Buddha by the name of W.C. Fields said, "You can't cheat an honest man."

My Guru is dead now; I feel no need for a replacement. I tell those that come to the Center that they are what they are looking for, and that they'll know that if they slow down, drop their chronic searching and are quiet enough. The way to do is to be. Let go. Flow, don't row.

You might say that I got to the point where I realized, through the Grace of my Guru, that Gurus are not necessary. Ho! The paradox of spiritual life,

I'd be interested in hearing other people's experiences with or without guides on the path. Are they necessary or not?

Lots of Love - Tom

Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends,

In my previous letter I was so intent in saying that I, me, mine was into another piece of writing that I never shared anything concerning my own endless searching.

In 1947 after four years of learning how to juggle concepts in a conventional liberal arts diploma mill I took a job in the casualty insurance world investigating the hows and whys of auto accidents, house fires and other catastrophic happenings including on-the-job employee deaths.

For sure my occupation must have intensified my search for meaning and identity. For example, once I arrived on the scene of a fatality caused by a roof collapse even before the medical examiner. I can clearly recall the smell of death amidst the timbers and plaster. To condense these searching and knocking years it seemed that I was following some faint foot path from the woods of Protestant materialism through the fields of the Quakers to the plateaus of the Catholic mystics, then to mountains of the zen masters. This has led me to approach the endless shining void and trying to keep " don't know mind! Better not to have typed one word on this page & to gulp back my words than possibly lead some reader to the gate of hell. Is it not enough to say, "Joy in the morning and sleep at night, what else?"

Meanwhile back at the establishment I found these growth experiences were looked upon with suspicion and fear by my male companions and I withdrew from any meaningful contact with them except in gestalt groups I was doing. There I could give unconditional love and caring to both men and women. Night after night, group after group I knew the care and concern of "the everlasting arms" when I needed them and when I needed to give them. I am now recalling the circle of beautiful faces and I am filled with indescribable warmth. It was then that I found I could not raise my consciousness without the compassionate female mind coming to catalyze it. Thus a synthesis of my feminine and masculine energies was completed. These are usually fragmented in early family life and are now threatening our universe.

I will continue to nourish and be nourished by other beautiful and transcendent relationships which gave me myself and others. Lao Tsu says it best, " It is true I must begin with myself but I must never be an end in myself. Thus I will endlessly become myself." and " He who, being a man remains a woman, will become a universal channel."

Much peace,
Richard

P.S. If there are any C.H. Friends coming to Boston this summer or later you should know that the Cambridge Buddhist Association, a cloud-hidden group for 23 years has a beautiful new home at 75 Sparks St. Cambridge Mass. The Roshi is Maureen Freedgood, a most unusual woman. Come and sit with us if you are in the area.

LETTERS
RECIEVED

Rene
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San Francisco, CA
94121

Dear Cloud Hidden Ones,

Having survived both the North Beach and the Haight-Ashbury realms of New-Age alternatives, it is with particular interest that I respond in kind to this non-sensationalized Cloud-Hidden letter. In my serialized view of the last 30 years, I have tended to look at the late 70's and the 80's as a kind of reassertion of the acculturation thrown off by the counter-culture in the 50's, 60's, and early 70's. In the last 15 years I have been extremely put-off by the commercial sensationalism surrounding the alleged wholistic growth movements in California and lesser imitative centers of experimentation the world over. I suppose a Buddha for every Body is basically a good thing, but how basic are all these admixtures of real and imagined discipline propagated by media exposure and re-interpreted indiscriminately by the national populace without intimate guidance. Your letter is probably a creative attempt by Ananda Dalenberg to dive deeper into a mysterious spirit, obscured by a commercial ornamentation (Sears & Roebuck Devotion) and create a more original form in which to practice. Trungpa's use of the analogy "re-plowing the south forty", comes to mind. It seems only natural that Buddhism, after beginning to flower in America, should Mahayanaize its own hybrids and begin to relegate the "iron-(computerized) bird that flies" to historicity.

Using the U.S. Postal Service for Non-Sectarian Plot-less-ness appeals to my space-age bandit psychology -- "Not-robbing the empty bank, even though there is tremendous opportunity for advancement". Pure Bodhisattvaism! The Post Office deserves exactly what it gets - Letters!

In writing to Katagiri Roshi the other day some poems occurred, which, I suppose belong rightfully to him now, but since I kept copies of them and this is cloud-hidden communion, I would like to share them with you.

It should be remembered that these poems are written in prison where the subtlety of Buddhistically cultivated psychology and relationship are practically non-existent except on a misappropriated, paranoid and self-preserving sort of level.

Even Shunryu's worst student
Is visited by the Master
His crooked-finger Gassho,
As fine as any Lover

Katagiri came First
To the great cold North
Now there are Buddhas
In all the snow-banks

Winter comes and goes,
But the Buddhas never move
Will such treasure go unnoticed
In the barren landscape ?

Continued

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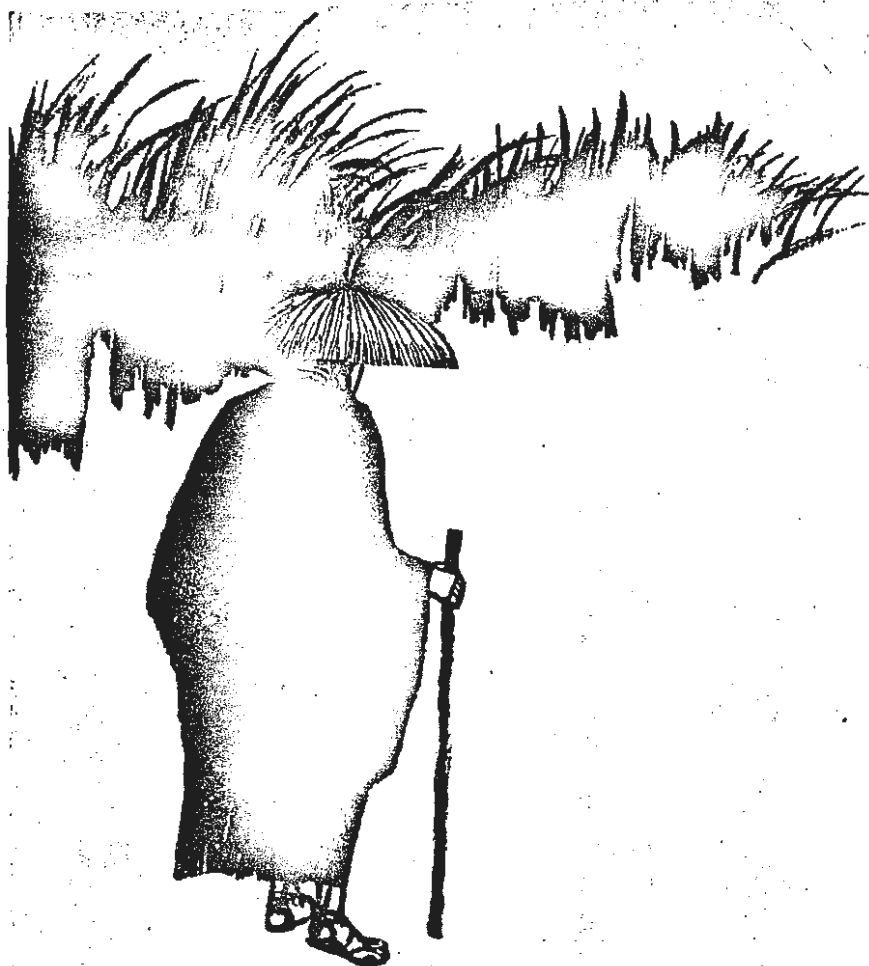
Although Suzuki Roshi and Katagiri Roshi are the teachers I have been closest to, I have never had much to say about them, even to my self. Katagiri once said, "It is enough to say 'Good Morning', and then get on with your life". I would guess this means not to get stuck looking for some special meaning or relationship. If it comes, it comes...

Suzuki Roshi was the first dead person I ever saw in my life. From Sesshin I went upstairs and bowed to the floor within inches of his body. Although I participated in the tremendous grief felt by everyone afterwards, something in me remained untouched and didn't accept him as my teacher.

I wanted to do something, to make some personal statement. Rinzai Zen was more attractive with its aggressive approach and esoteric koans. To echo Katagiri's meaning it has taken me many years to catch up to this Soto Zen Practice that "just came to me quite naturally" in the course of my life. To "just sit" is a tremendous koan without resorting to various ways that might be more appealing or "right" for you. Anyway, it is about time I said something about my greatest teacher. This great gift of transmission he gave us all took a while to mature in me. Perhaps it just sat and waited for me to get tired of the treasure hunt.

Cloud -- ridden

Sandstone, 6-9-83



CLOUD-HIDDEN FRIENDS LETTER:

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RESPONSE TO ISSUE #2:

ACE DAHL (your lead-in section): "(Merton) commented that he could see no contradiction between Christianity and Buddhism - -"
DISAGREE.

I point to Transactional Analysis language of OKness. The doctrine of Original Sin (as used by the capital C-Christian) indicates that each one of us begins life as evil, sinful, ab-initio BAD: ergo: NOTOK. Eric Berne stated catagorically that we are born Princes and we are turned into frogs later: thus we are born OK. Buddhism tries to get us to concentrate on our center and the truth of the acceptability of that core "truth". "We are our own only problem, so sit down in the center of your Self and solve the problem: realize the truth."

I conclude that the contradiction between all of the churches' (read: institutional) Christianity and Buddhism is a vast void and that never the twain shall (or can) meet. The corrupt usage of "original sin" is far too deeply ingrained in the Christian ethos and psyche to accept the "truth".

Of course, Christianity is NOT what Jesus brought to us. Even the name is corrupt. When HE said, "Beleive on my name", he was referring to YHSWH, which as you can see, implants S (pronounced sh) in the Tetragrammaton: the HOLY name of God (not geehovah). Thus we get the ancient Joshua (the same), but (if YHWH is Yahweh) said Yahshweh (say it!). But, more important, what does it mean? If YHWH = I AM THAT I AM or I AM THAT WHICH I AM, then adding the Hebrew S (which means "HERE" or "ON EARTH" or even "NOW"), makes the name = IAM HERENOW WHAT IAM. That is the Buddhists 360 degree total awareness of the here and now without attachment to the past or future. Or true dogma would make that man Jesus = GOD ON EARTH.

We can see, of course, then that we have no trouble "believing" on this truth that there is in Everyman, the indefinable, the inaffable, IAM and THUS he is, of course, by definition, OK, which contradicts CCCChristianity.

For clarity, I call myself a Jesusian, as distinguished from a Christian. I am a follower of Jesus, while they are followers of Christ. The word Jesus is ancient Hebrew; the word Christ is Greek for the Anointed. Which idea do we subscribe to? I trust that man; I find joy in his word; I BELEIVE he was right, correct. If I do so, then I MUST (it follows automatically) be an opponent of the institutional Christ followers.

To conclude: we either stand on the concept that God caused man to be BAD: NOTOK or we stand on its contradiction: God made exactly what he wanted and what he made is, was and will always be acceptable unto him. No place in between, no compromise, exists or can exist. We believe in, trust, love God or WE DO NOT. Its a simple as that.

TO Joel Weishaus: White House: Domain of Purity:

You might try capitalizing self as Self depending on whether you are indicating the little self (ego or what I call identity) or the larger Self (the center or point at which the cosmic energy, force, power enters and quickens us).

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 TO Tom Thompson: BlissConsciousnessBeing: The word "Being" catches me. Study brought me the answer: BHEU: to be, exist, grow. Use the black language's "bes", "Bees" as in: "Where's Momma?", "She bees in the Kitchen". It is a valid African tense: the existing continuance tense. He doesn't say she IS IN the kitchen, he says that she normally is to be found in the kitchen. English has no way of stating that (at least not in "proper" usage.) But this IS the meaning of "BEING". What is a "being"? It speaks of the continuing existence of the thing referred to. A human being refers to that which is "being" human. (See LIVE below)

Once again, this is a gerund and not a "thing". A "being" is, by definition, A HAPPENING, and not some materialistic THING. This problem is found in all of our western linguistics: we search to find God: necessarily a thing (God is a noun and used as an object in that sentence.) But we (Buddhists) know that "God" is a force, energy, power. "God" is NOT a "thing", but an energy flow (that power that "gives" each of us life). As we "know" and use electricity, but don't know WHAT it is, the same with God. They are NOT a WHAT. ELECTRICITY, GOD, LOVE, etc are verbs; happenings, not things.

LIFE = LIF: the state characteristic of living organisms;
 growth; the interval of time during which a thing
 exists and/or functions

ALIVE = ONLIVE = ONLIFE = ANLIF = AN + LIF = LEIP

AN: concerning the ground or basis of;
 or about the state, condition, process
 or occurrence of; near, against

LEIP; to stick, adhere

= LIBBAM = LAIBJAM = LAEFEN = LEAVE: to have remaining,
 still left, to go away from; to abandon
 or forsake, to stop doing or using

= LIBEN = LIFIAN = LIFE: to continue or still be here

= LEIPH = ALEIPHEIN = the anointed (with oil): truly here

THUS: the process and state of BEING truly still remaining

Thus "LIFE" is not a scientific process which starts with the intake of food, passing through the stomach and the nourishment of the cells to the muscle action in the doing of whatever the brain has directed: the view of modern science and its culture. No, it is ENDURING, BEING HERE (and inferentially, not somewhere else.

TO: Francis Thompson and his Crooked Cucumber: (love that!!)

GREAT !! JESUS sez: "Cure the Lame." and "It is your faith that cures you."

If "I" am OTHER than straight, then I am LAME. And THUS, I AM NOTOK.

The "crooked cucumber" is obviously different - OTHER - and STILL OK. WOW !

Truly the body deserves a name, choose what represents the truth. Was Suzuki crooked? Is a cucumber unstraight? Are YOU (WHO?) BEING (happening, right now) NOTOK? ZAAAP ! So, I'm Yellow Mouse.

And back to dear "part the clouds so we can see" Claude:

" - a social problem -. Obviously in some basic sense monk and lay lifestyles are social forms." No, it is the DISTINCTION between them which is the social form: THIS or THAT, y'know?

continued

continued

" - the heart of the (Buddhist) Teaching is - 'Prajna' - translated - Wisdom, Spirit that gives the Breath of Life to the Teachings - Spirit - in its root sense of 'spirare': 'to breathe' as the vital essence of life)".

First: What is the difference between a live body and a freshly dead one, between a running-around lively person and one whose bodily functions have just immediately ceased? Answer: the "spark of life" has left it in the dead one. Whatever label used for this concept, we can have no doubt that such a "spark" must exist. To keep away from dogma, we can call it: that energy which, when present, permits life, and when absent, denies life. Thus it is some form of energy, force, power.

This is not some theological statement nor is it any kind of dogma, ideology, etc. It is a fundamental truth about life. And all men must subscribe to this inevitable truth. We all understand this, but we find it difficult to actualize it. The reason is that we do not exist in the absence of "it". We, like the fish, cannot be aware of the water we swim in, for we cannot stand off separate from "IT" for in such case, we would be dead. What happens is that "we" (WHO?) transform that energy into matter, consciously or sound asleep. You see, "IT" is not someTHING which we might manipulate: a tool external to ourselves. IT IS US.

PRA-na; Pra-krit = PRA = PER: before, in front of, earlier, forward, through, first, toward, chief; a prefix in all indo-european languages which includes and precedes, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit.

DHARMA from DHER: to hold firmly or support

= DHER - MO = FIRMOS, FIRMUS = FIRM

= DHR - ONO = THRONOS = THRONE: to be firmly supported

= DHER - MN: that which is firmly established

THUS statute or law = in Sanskrit: DHARMA

= DAR (old Persian): to hold = DARIUS: holder (of the throne or realm?)

Related DHE: to set or put

= DHE - TI: thing laid down or DONE, law, DEED

: a judgement, DOOM, DEEM (dhe-ma)

= DHE - KE: to do or a doing: FAKERE = FACERE (latin)

= DHE - DHE: THESIS (greek): a thing placed or proposed

: DADHATI (Sanskrit) he places

YELLOW MOUSE

1501
5/2/85
Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:

After reading the CHF Letter a few times, and laying it down for awhile, (a couple months. Time is relative.), I really didn't have much to write about. Not that I do now, but I did center in, last night on Yellow House. And since Y.M. you approve of dialogue in the Letter, I thought I would greet you first.

To Y.M... On the nature of the CHF Letter. So far, I have seen a lot of semi-nostalgic deification of the process on attaining Zen. Its some kind of romantic notion, which each of us holds, that as we get older, we get wiser, and to the religiously oriented, it is a real ego-substantiation action, to believe that as we get older, we are getting "purer". (This is the reason I didn't have much to write about until now, concerning the CHF.) I think this nostalgic attitude, is used to generate hope, and serves as a foundation, for the future. I would like to see the Letter, rather than a hope-of-attaining, ego-centric exercise, to one of modification. I like the word modify, rather than getting better and worse. I think the lessons of the Mantras, are the breakthroughs, which the members gave as examples in #1, & 2, are good modifiers. In describing Zen, hidden beyond the clouds, one may write about the clouds of darkness (their events, and processes) and reach through in a narrow, narrow line for a Mantra, which shines like a ray from the sun (Note: A Mantra about mantras.).

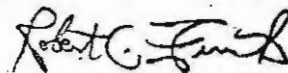
Y.M., is an event evil?, is a purpose evil? I say no in both cases. Consider all events modifications, rather than problems, evils, failure, etc... This eliminates good/evil complexes. Thereby Heaven and Earth are united. And there is no need to bring Earth (evil) up to Heaven (good), or bringing Heaven (good) down to Earth (evil).

Y.M.- Its hard to approach a moving target. Trying to set my sights on a person moving from exo to eso and back again, is tough. Hard to find you at any one moment. Are you running and hiding? Using the extremes as your means of escape? Many thoughts can cloud THE ISSUE, and feed an illusory ego (which you say you just can't quite let go-Earth.). Again many thoughts are violent. Its hard to tell if its against yourself or everyone else (Note: You acknowledge a, "NOT OK attitude towards all men and physical world".). It makes you hard to approach Y.M. (Even your name sends symbols of somebody running and hiding, keeping you anonymous) I love aloneness too. And I don't believe God made man because He was lonely. Well you've thrown a challenge for someone to invade your territory Y.M., and break it through the extreme absolutes you hide behind. Well, here I am. I must agree with everything else you had to write....

For everyone else, and Y.M. too, I have a Mantra.... I find water very spiritual too. There is a lake, high up in the mountains. It is deep, and intensely blue, and very cold, from the freshly melted snows on neighboring peaks. I am that lake, and I still the cloudy surface, so I may see deep to the stillness below, until finally the watcher enters the water, and is dissolved, and flows through the outlet....

Robert C. Finch
P.O. Box 219
Basile, La. 70515

TAT TVAM ASI,



Marian Mountain 151
Coastlands
Big Sur, CA 93920

Dear HoBo Friends,

Ananda's clear statement in which he shared some of the background details of his personal vow to take everyone and everything as his teacher is, I feel, worth expanding upon. Ananda said his vow was an outgrowth of his faith in the Buddhist principle that everyone and everything has (is) Buddha-nature. I was surprised when Ananda first wrote me about this vow because he said he hadn't had much success in arousing interest in the vow among his fellow Zen practitioners. The realization that everything and everyone is my teacher had been one of the important developments of my own zen philosophy and practice so I had assumed that most mature Zen students would have had the same kind of realization. Instead of responding to Ananda's vow with disinterest I would have expected them to greet it with enthusiastic support. As I thought over the matter I remembered that my own realization hadn't developed fully until after I had left my Zen teachers and fellow Zen students and had struck out alone on a kind of zen pilgrimage. Perhaps the attachment to a formal Zen teacher is so powerful that it tends to blind students to the existence of more subtle zen relationships.

This tentative hypothesis of mine can be supported by Buddhist scriptures and stories. The first example that comes to mind can be found in the life of Buddha. It was only after Buddha left his two gurus, and left a small group of friends with whom he had been practicing asceticism that he came to the enlightening realization--under the Bo tree--that everything and everyone had Buddha-nature. Another example can be found in the life of the great Zen Patriarch, Joshu. It was only after Joshu's Ch'an master died and Joshu started out on a pilgrimage that Joshu took a vow to become the student of anyone he met on his journey who had something to teach him about Buddhism--even if it was only a small child. And there is a wonderful story in one of the Buddhist scriptures about the pilgrimage of a monk named Suddhana who discovered over 50 teachers among ordinary people he met on his journey. These ordinary people helped Suddhana expand the incomplete understanding he had acquired from his formal Buddhist teachers.

Ananda speculates that Joshu's famous koan of MU (Does a dog have Buddha-nature? MU!) is about real dogs and not merely literary or symbolic dogs. I had an experience in the early years of my Zen training which convinces me that Joshu's dog is real. After a particularly warm and supporting talk by Suzuki Roshi in the livingroom of my Los Altos home, I felt as if I had been accepted into the infinite arms of the Cosmic Buddha. After Suzuki and the other students left I took a long walk. It was a beautiful spring day. "This is Nirvana," I

thought. Suddenly a small pug dog ran out of the yard of a house I was passing and bit me on the leg. Instantly my emotional high was deflated. I cried all the way back home to Samsara but I have always been grateful that Joshu, in the form of a small pug dog, taught me something unforgettable about the difference between my illusion of Nirvana and the reality of Nirvana.

I can sympathize with Ananda's dislike of the term "Roshi" with its sanctimonious overtones. Sometimes I think that a true Roshi is a reluctant Roshi. Shunryu Suzuki, for instance, never thought of himself as a Roshi. He always called himself Sensei or Reverend Suzuki. It was only after he was scolded by Alan Watts for not using the word "Reverend" correctly that Suzuki reluctantly agreed to allow his students to address him as Roshi. Suzuki Roshi wasn't attached to the position of Zen master. He said, "A master who cannot bow to his disciple cannot bow to Buddha." And he also said, "Sometimes we may bow to cats and dogs." A student once asked Suzuki, "You are our teacher but who is your teacher?" Before Suzuki had a chance to reply she answered her own question. "Oh, I know! Okusan, your wife, is your teacher." Suzuki chuckled and agreed. Another student told me of the time she attended a lecture in San Francisco and watched Suzuki carelessly knock over a vase of flowers on the altar. The student was impressed by how calmly Suzuki accepted Okusan's scolding in front of a large audience of students and visitors. It was an enlightening lesson for everyone. A zen teacher of mine once summed up the essence of the Diamond Sutra as: "A is A because A is not A." A Roshi is a Roshi because a Roshi is not a Roshi.

Then there is the other side to the insight or vow that everyone and everything is our teacher. Everyone and everything is also our student. When Joshu took his vow to become the student of everyone he met who had something to teach him about Buddhism he also took a vow to teach everyone he met what he had learned about Buddhism.

I have an idea that most of the contributors and readers of the LETTER have had at least one interesting experience in which someone or something other than a formal master, guru, or priest gave him a valuable spiritual lesson. Marian Poirier gave us a charming example of how an apple or cherry tree can be a teacher to human beings. I'd like to hear more personal anecdotes supporting (or refuting) this viewpoint.

With palms together,

Marian Mountain

THE RITUAL,
Taking Leave of a House

LETTERS
RECEIVED

10 2

to Reb

Once again I sit
in the cavepit of a house
when there is more dark
than light and hold together
the remaining ties of a raft.
Is that the wind outside
or is that wind in here?
No heat now, house,
rice scattering in the morgue
like windblown winter leaves.
Another weft of the journey, ended.

The keeper of the house.
This house doesn't need me,
doesn't need anyone.
Is it keeping me
am I keeping it?
From this end locked in.
Sail, sail,
shores yet to reach.

The line I follow,
longer than me.
Longer--not bigger.
I always did like large mouthfuls,
now it's swallow my cracker lump,
no salt, no milk.
It swallows me.

Never mind,
paddle, paddle,
just begun
to weave.

1.20.66 San Francisco/Page & Ashbury

NORM MOSER

4-11

1541

Extraordinary Ordinariness

Being a kind, concerned; Father; Son; Brother; Husband;
Lover; Friend; Neighbor; Citizen; Wife; Mother; Daughter
Sister;

Being a gentle; decent; fearless; softspoken;
Precise; genuine; simple; wholesome; humble;
Aware; sensitive; tender; loving; mindful;
Honest; caring person.

Being a devoted student; teacher, servant. A
Moral; mortal; thorough; tamed and trained
Human being.

Being an insurance salesman; An old man in a
Cave; A secretary; a doctor; a gardener; a
Carpenter; a Lawyer; a farmer.

Being a patient; disciplined; generous; joyful;
Energetic; inspired; ready to listen and hear;
Non-aggressive; intelligent, awake man or
Woman.

Babies sounding the bell of wisdom, teething on the Vajra
Of Skillful means.

Having received the Ordination of Ordinaryness, I can continue
my studies and practice for the pleasure they bring me. What do we find
then? Awakeness, experiencing the workings of MIND-PERCEPTION-EMOTIONS.
Seeing things as they are, simply and directly, without grasping, re-
jecting, or prejudice of any sort. Sharing that experience of being
with ones world. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. Still, one cannot forget
the process that leads to this simplicity. The path or way to this
Castle of Miracles. Unravelling with great effort, step by step the
fabric of dualistic understanding, takes many years and good teachers.
The effort continues and gratitude demands that we share the pleasure
of our discovery with others. So we reach out from our mountain tops.

Best,
Alan Marlowe

A, C. Dalenberg
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
94121

155.

Dear Friends:

The Buddha once said "Noble Friendship is the entire Holy Life". There are of course many other ways to sum up his teaching, but this one represents an ideal particularly close to my own heart. I must admit however that it would be very difficult for me to then explain why I am not a better friend myself.

That same ideal is I think found in a somewhat different form among the followers of Maitreya Buddha- the future Buddha who will hopefully be coming soon. What his teaching will actually be no one really knows, but his name "Maitreya" means "Friendliness". I think of him then as the "Buddha whose essence is Friendliness", and with him will come an "Era of Friendliness". His many faithful followers pray that that Era may come soon.

I don't know very much about faithfully praying and such, and what I do know has come to me only in my later years. As a child I had some religious experience, as most if not all children do, but I never felt very pious, and never took prayer very seriously. Even upon becoming a Zen priest, I would only go through the motions, and the significance of prayer continued to elude me..

Its meaning for me came as a kind of sudden discovery, rather than as a gradual development. I was one day reading about Maitreya and how the faithful had over the centuries carved on rocks in the mountains of Tibet, China, and Mongolia the inscription "Oh Come Maitreya Come!". It suddenly struck me that it was a prayer, and I realized it was not only theirs, but also my very own, and that at the bottom of my heart I have been repeating it over and over again for years, but without quite realizing it- "Oh Come Friendliness Come!". It even made me feel quite pious, maybe for the first time, it being an emotion not very popular among self-reliant Zen types.

I began to think then that maybe too I had a few other prayers half or almost totally hidden, and Lo and Behold indeed I do. I suspect it has taken me so long to discover them because of a very large overdose of ego and self-pride.

I also have come to understand the meaning of the Maitreya prayer in a more universal sense, not limited to just mankind. It should also mean friendship with all life everywhere. I don't quite know how to explain it, but I think too that it should mean to be a friend of the Great Earth, and of the Great Open Sky.

Trying to be a friend, but with a long way to go,

Ananda Claude

156

May 17, 1983
3217 Humboldt Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

Ananda Claude Dalenberg, Clerk, and Cloud-Hidden Friends,
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, California 94121
Dear Claude and Friends,

What a pleasure to hear from you and read the collection
of letters in issue one! I deeply appreciate your effort
to send out Dharma words in a new form. Over the last few
years I too have pondered the appropriateness of hierarchical
priesthoods in this late twentieth century secular society.
How can they possibly touch the hearts of the American people?
But then can any social form do any better? I have no answer
other than to be here and sit tight.

In the Midwestern heartland
Hot summer and cold winter
Wet spring and crackling fall.
Today the crabapple trees on my block
Blossom glorious pinks and reds.

Yours,
Erick Storlie

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Norm Moser

1. Here is issue #4, along with apologies for being a little late. The next issue is planned for early in September. I am worried about the quality of the letters we have been receiving. I think it is far too high, so much so it might intimidate those not so adept in verbal skills. Maybe one of you Bodhisattvatypes could volunteer to write a real dumb letter, so we could all breathe a lot easier. As a matter of fact, I have often found stumbling and awkward letters to be deeper and more moving than the more polished kind.

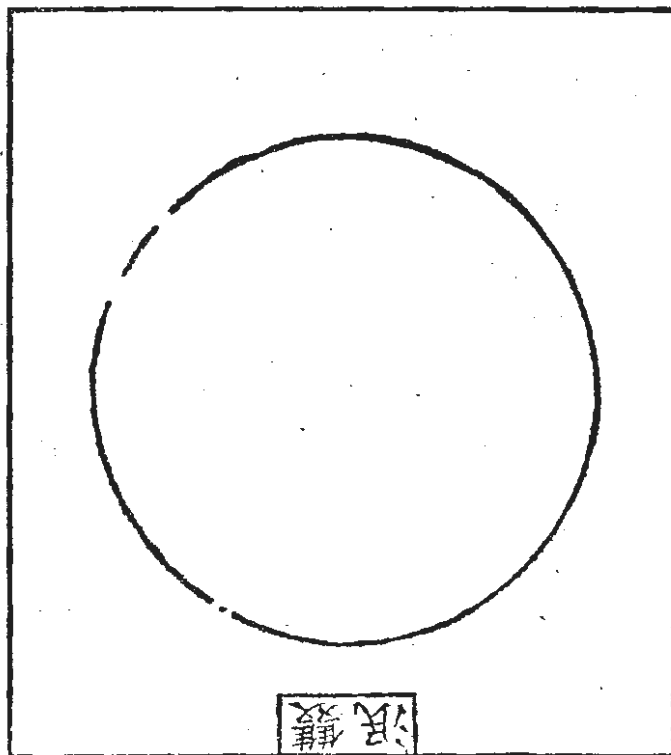
You may have noted that there are quite a few references here and there to Suzuki Roshi of San Francisco Zen Center. This does not mean, however, that the C. H. F. Letter is intended to have some sectarian identification. On the other hand our Letter is not intended to in any way conflict with belonging to some religious group either.

It would be appreciated if your letters are of a reasonable length, in harmony with our "equal time" policy. Also please make side margins wide enough to be easily stapled.

2. We received very little personal news this month. Please feel free to send us such. Come to think of it that would also include me. During the past three months my one daughter has had scarlet fever, chicken pox, a month long unusual virus, but the other daughter has only had chicken pox. Also our dog died, plus three gold fish and two hamsters. I'm feeling fine.

3. Tom Thompson's new address is Woodbury Yoga Center, 122 West Side Road, Woodbury, CT 06798.

4. Oxherding Pictures # 10. Translation by Daisetz T. Suzuki.



BOTH VANISHED

Both the man and the animal have disappeared, no traces are left.
The bright moon-light is empty and shadowless with all the 10,000 objects in it.
If anyone should ask the meaning of this,
Behold the lilies of the field and its fresh sweet-scented verdure.