

cloud-hidden friends letter

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ISSUE #12, JAN.-FEB. 1985



The wheel of the Dharma (Tibet)

Our phrase "Cloud-Hidden" is taken from the title of a book by Alan Watts. He in turn borrowed it from a ninth century Chinese 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."

The "Cloud-Hidden Friends" are a small non-sectarian religious correspondence group. "Our pages are your letters", so we ask as our "subscription fee" that you write us a letter now and then. Letters should be in the universal spirit of the Dharma, and we would emphasize practice more than mere belief.

We look to Daisetz T. Suzuki, Alan Watts, Nyogen Senzaki, and Shunryu Suzuki as our "honorary founders". They are usually associated with Zen Buddhism, but the Dharma spirit they represent was a free-ranging and universal one, going quite beyond the usual sectarian confines of Zen. They were pioneers in a Buddhism for the West.

Thomas Merton might be another example of the kind of spirit we have in mind. In his later years he commented that he could see no contradiction between Buddhism and Christianity, and that he had "determined to become as good a Buddhist as I can".

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

CHFL, 753 44th Av., San Francisco
CA 94121

1. This is issue #12, marking the beginning of 1985. For the CHF Letter 1984 has certainly been a good year. Indeed recently so many fine letters have been coming in we can't quite keep up with them. We are limiting the size of each issue for various reasons, not the least of which is the postage factor. Our apologies then if your letter is published a little late.

It might be noted that it would seem quite in the spirit of it all if there were many such Letters as the CHFL. We would encourage and cooperate with any of you who might be interested in starting such. For example there might be a letter focusing on Taoism, or one on Yoga, Krishnamurti, Sufism, Quaker Universalism, Nembutsu etc., and the more the merrier.

We have assembled some velo-bound copies of the 1984 issues, and have distributed them to a half dozen interested libraries. We have a few left over if you are interested, at \$10 each. We also have a few of the same for 1983.

Welcome to the newcomers in this issue: Deneal Amos, Jerry Bolick, Mike Dixon, Silas Hoadley, and David Riggs.

There is a change of address for the Alan Watts Fellowship: 187 College Ave. Somerville MA 02144. (617-628-9871). They usually meet once a month, and occasionally sponsor a week-end retreat.

2. The New Year will soon be here. Certainly it is one of our great Holy Days, even when somewhat drowned in alcohol. In Japanese Buddhist temples the great temple bell is rung 108 times. In both Japan and China it also marks a universal birthday for everyone. Most appropriately it also marks a great celestial event. In the orbit of the earth around the sun, the point at which it is closest to the sun is "Perihelion Day", on or about January 1. So:

HAPPY NEW YEAR-BIRTHDAY-PERHELION DAY EVERYONE !!!!!

Ananda

A POEM FROM MAGGIE

Untitled

Narrow stereotypes of self and others
Bind our options, reduce our probabilities
Impose
Upon an infinite, ever-changing Universe,
A tiny rigid construct,
Which on impact,
Shatters,
And we are left with naught.

Our fields, in collision,
Strike forth such sparks as to
Illuminate
The Abyss of Greater Being,
Yet, we are afraid.

Maggie Novack
1651 St. George/E-2
Roselle, N.J., 07203

Maggie

LETTER RECEIVED

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Tim Aston
Sacramento

November 29, 1984

Yoooo, Ananda and other kindered friends:

I have wanted to write for some time now, but have been dragged down by the wrestling of forces and spirits adapting to this city life. Autumn comes and I have certainly have missed the changing of seasons in the Northwest. Now it is the end of November and I've just spotted a hummingbird through the window and off the left shoulder of my Manjushri wall hanging. Perhaps he's flown from the north coast to remind me the firewood has not been cut and stacked and my family of coast whitetail deer have no protection from the loose dogs of the neighborhood. How are my friends the quail and grouse, do they still feed around the compost pit on frosty mornings and foggy afternoons; my quick feathered friend? Will the master of the winds, Eagle, come again this January perched by the hundreds on the tall firs of Breton Island and feed from the herring laying down their milky spore in the seaweed beds of Heriot Bay? Have the Salmon people made their way up Drew Harbour creek, Hyacynth Bay creek, and into the reaches of Granite Bay to leave their spawn and flesh to mix in the sandy bottoms of new life and decay? Will Raven, and crow, and seagull have enough oyster and clam this season's low tide, or has the two-legged land walker ^{cleaned} the beds again? Yes, brother hummingbird, we have much to discuss and think about, come again in the Spring and by summer we shall journey together to the homeland and gather about us our friends, the sea-lion, the Eagle, the whale and talk of old experiences and things to come.

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LETTER RECEIVED

David Riggs
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SF, CA 94103

Dear CHF,

Written upon reading the last installment of the Tathagata Zen discussion, especially after reading Aitken-Roshi's salvo-- both a salute and a shot across the bow.

Such a heap of meditation manuals and techniques and paths and progressions and stages and rules and regulations. Lets see, what am I supposed to be not thinking of now? Or was it something I was supposed to be not doing? [meanwhile being very mindful of not doing it.] Or maybe I'm supposed today to just be completely with what I'm already doing.

My Dad said he didn't know what I was doing, but was it anything like when you go for a walk at night and its clear and cold and you don't talk, because you don't need to? Or when you sit down with a cold drink on a hot day and look across the lake and the paper stays on your lap unread? I said, Yeah, that's it. But that's not really true. Its not usually that nice, not that concentrated, not that helpful.

I work pretty hard at my meditation, so I take a day off now and again. I was doing that last week. I wandered up to my roof, sat down on a bucket. Just blanked out for a while. Then I started to see the neighboring buildings, their roofs and fire escapes and windows. Such a nice scene. Details of my neighborhood. Everyday stuff.

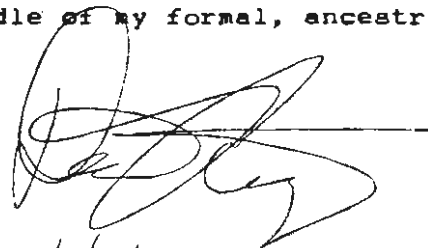
I never saw the roofs before. Lived here five years. Too busy with my meditation.

What's going on here? I've busting my ass following a formal practice and I don't have the time (or space or energy) to notice and enjoy my neighborhood.

Maybe 10 minutes of zazen on a stump is the way to go. Do you go to the zendo to summon up your Buddha nature? Do you think if you try harder you'll get more Buddha nature? Maybe its better to just sit down when the Buddha nature comes and let it run its course. When it goes, get up and go about your life. Its pretty hard to figure out how to get out of the way of your Buddha nature, but if you find yourself out of the way, its not so hard to just sit there and enjoy it while it lasts.

Maybe that works just as well as all this grunting and groaning in the ascetic schedule. Certainly its obvious that the schedule is no guarantee of peace and light.

Maybe I'll try it. Right here in the middle of my formal, ancestral Zen Practice Period schedule.



11/8/84

Elson B. Snow
Buddhist Churches of AM.
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San Francisco, CA 94109

DEAR HOBOES:

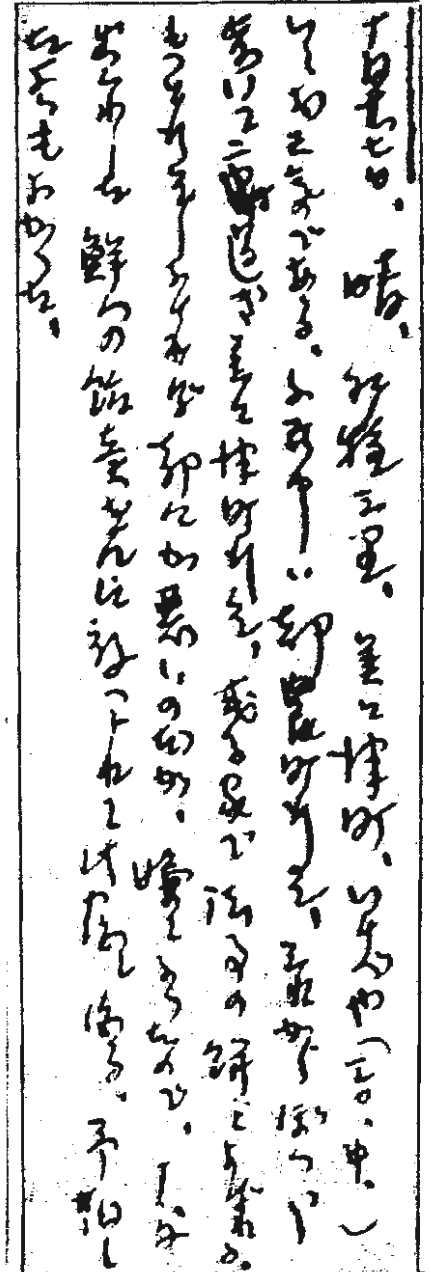
It is the cleric, Ananda, who told us he wanted to be a "recorder" of sorts. He placed us, the readers, under an obligation: if you want to read about the coming and going of a certain type of people who can be classified under a certain ideology, then you must contribute a letter to pay for your subscription. For this reason, I write this letter. I find it amusing. The original Ananda was also a first class cleric, but he used the power of memory and committed nothing to writing.

Lately, I have been intrigued by certain heroes which had they been found outside the Buddhist environment would be considered saints, or at least looked upon as saintly creatures. There are so many of these personalities in the buddha-dharma who have no taint or coloration of the sacred in the theological sense, that we are spiritually refreshed in recalling their solitariness and rambling nature to loosen the strings of existences.

Last month I bought a small book of Hanshan's poetry. I read two verses and loaned the book to a friend. It is quite zennish, so it is questionable whether it will be returned. As my loyalties are with the myokonin, a personality exclusively belonging to the pure land tradition, I can be quite happy for awhile in reading the stories of Genza, the dirt farmer and geta maker. The truly loose and foot-free individual of our times are the week-end warriors. They are the bourgeois, "It is difficult for such a person like you to know a holy person, really," said the Buddha, "since you are still overwhelmed by sensual delight, sleeping with your wives, using perfumes and dressed opulently." Present day Buddhists are not spiritual veterans, either. They are bourgeois and part-time proletarians. He is either an urbanite 'round the clock, or cloud-dweller on holiday visiting the pacific shoreline or tramping the foothills on his two days off.

Then, there is the sot. By this term I do not mean the socialized sake drinker. For this is the well-known style of the play boy in the U.S. He does not age; he does not grow up. He is a game player. As a hobo, Santoku is different. He closely resembles our Los Angeles poet, Charles Bukowski, "My contribution was to loosen and simplify poetry, to make it more humane. I made it easy for them to follow. I taught them that you can write a poem the same way you can write a letter, that a poem can be entertaining, and there need not be

"Do not write in tears, The poem written in tears is both cowardly and superficial. Until the tears have completely dried, sit in silence, alone, and think."



- - - SONTOKU (1882-1940)
1930, Notes

anything necessarily holy about it." This is something Sontōku might have written in a slightly more modest way, and as a nature poet would lack the street profanity of Bukowski's guerilla poetry.

mizu ni kumo kagake mo Above the water passes the shadow of a cloud
ochitsukasenai mono ga aru something will not let me be at peace.

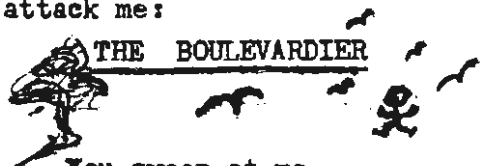
Santōku, an alcoholic poet, knew how easy it was to say, "give up" and how difficult ~~was~~ to actually resign. Few people know the ultimacy in letting go. The realization is difficult in urban America as we are a cross between a proletarian and bourgeois. Spiritually, neither fish or fowl! Sontōku was a true hobo whose simplicity deceives us. On paper, he does not seem to have proper discipline to write haiku or in any of its deviant forms:

futte Suddenly!
kage ga kasumete itta kaze something grazing past in the wind.

A mysterious unseen activity always seem to swirl around his poems. If he were living today, instead of the 1930's in pre-war Japan, the poet would surely be more of a city dweller in his taste, but not likely to lose fascination in keeping poetical journals filled with religious images. I think Sontōku would follow today's freeways and learn how to survive on the streets: "The man who comes from hell does not shout and run. Silently, gazing at the earth, he walks."

Accidentally, I found a copy of the TANNISHO in the esperanto language. My professor commuter friend said, "What the hell language is that you're reading?" In other words, soothing language telling me that this book will not be borrowed, stolen, or taken from me by bribes or beggary. I am lucky in learning one single thing from the Buddha: Seek value in things that have no worth. For the hero in the Tannisho does not know if the words he use in praising the Buddha will take him to hell, or lead him to the Pure Land in the West.

During the transportation strike in North San Mateo County, I would walk three miles to the BART station to commute to San Francisco. Every morning, except for my working slide days, a starling nesting in the trees lining the boulevard would attack me:



You swoop at me
one more time,
Blackie,
I'll put you
in a poem
where you cannot
get out.

elson b snow

信報

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Letter Received

Tom Thompson
WOODBURY YOGA CENTER
122 West Side Rd.
Woodbury, Ct. 06798

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Dear HoBo-anandas-

So happy to receive Issue # 11 of Cloud-hidden Friends today, and good to hear from both old and new friends. I've been out of touch for awhile, unintentionally so, as things are really hopping here at the Center. Since I have no profound truths or insights to share, or great ideas, (I haven't had a complete thought in months), I'll just talk a little about what has been going on here at the Center.

The Center is more or less in rural New England, one hour from either Hartford or New Haven, the nearest town of size near-by is Waterbury. Woodbury, where the Center is, is a quiet, conservative Republican town. Not the sort of place one might think a yoga center would survive/thrive. But we're doing real fine.

We've had a small regular group attending the Center for some time, attending the meditation programs on Sundays and taking various courses on meditation, death and dying, hatha yoga, what-have-you. And then last Spring we invited Asha Devi, Dhyanyogi Madhusudandas's most advanced disciple, to visit the Center for a couple of weeks. Dhyanyogi is a 103 year old master of Kundalini Maha Yoga and Asha Devi is his representative in this country-she is also an advanced soul and master of Kundalini, even Guru to many, but she always gives total credit to Dhyanyogi for all the grace she manifests. At any rate, Asha Devi and her husband Deepak came to the Center last June. We expected a small group to attend our twice daily free meditation programs and even a few people to take Shaktipat initiation and become disciples, but her reception here was truly amazing. People came from as far away as New York and Boston. Our free programs often had upwards of 40-50 people (where did we put them all in this old farmhouse?) and even the day Asha Devi left to return to California, she was initiating people-over forty people received initiation!

And so our Center has grown to include many new sincere practitioners, including a few old Zen Buddhi! Please understand that here at the Center we do not set one tradition up against another, but rather honor and respect them all. Everyone is welcome to come here and teach whatever they have to offer. What we really are is a community of spiritual friends who meet together to meditate- we have everyone, Catholics, Unitarians, Jews, Moslem, Hindu, various and sundry Buddhi, and even a few we have not been able to identify yet. (We suspect they are spies from Mars.)

At any rate, everyone is very pleased at the direction the Center is taking. It is growing and developing a life of its own, bubbling over with spiritual grace.

In a couple of weeks, Frans Bakker will present an 'Easy Death' seminar here, based on the teachings and Book by Da Free John. I highly recommend the book. Janaki and I have met Frans before and he is a true vehicle of spiritual power, and clear representative of Da Free John. When Frans gives a seminar, it goes on at many levels. When my Baba (Muktananda) use to teach, people would often have a direct realization of what he was saying, thus the teaching was not just intellectual but also truly spiritual and transcendental. I also have this same experience around Frans. A lot more than words are being transmitted during his workshops. So we're looking forward to welcoming him here at the Center.

Janaki and I've also been out to U-Conn at Storrs to meet Ken Ring and give a presentation on Kundalini Yoga to his students, who will also be coming here to the Center this Thursday. Ken is a researcher in the field of Near-death experiences and his new book, Heading Towards Omega, is fascinating, especially to us as he gets into the similarities in transformation between near-dead and people with awakened Kundalini. In our Yoga of Death and Dying class ~~at~~ the Center, we've been teaching that correct meditation is the most complete ~~way~~ way to understand and overcome the fear ~~of~~ death and dying as during deep meditation one actually goes through a very similar process as the one undergone at the time of death. The experience of meditators is very similar to those who have near death experiences. Estab!

Blah, blah, blah. I could go on but I won't, at least not much longer. Asha Devi will be returning soon, John White will be doing a Workshop on 'What is Enlightenment', Janaki and I are doing our own workshops and lectures, but I guess what I'm happiest about is the beautiful people who are this Center. They are all a bunch of characters, without exception! Not a normal person among them! We get together at least twice a week (we now have free meditation programs every Wednesday and Sunday at 7pm) chant, meditate, sing, dance, party and just enjoy this magnificent frolic. We aren't a very structured or organized place, but I sense the Joy and Love here more than make up for all our lack of structure,.

Janaki is also selling shirts with "Inner peace is world peace" on them. If anybody is interested, write for details. They are nice shirts And I hope all of you have plenty of Love and Joy in your life! And

just remember, don't mistake the finger for the moon it is pointing to!

Jerry L. Bolick

Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:

Late last July, while in the midst of a two week seminar at the Institute of Buddhist Studies in Berkeley, I had the opportunity to have lunch and a ride back across the Bay with Elson Snow. As is usual with Elson, one interesting comment or thought led to another. I don't know what triggered the question, but Elson asked if I knew a man named Claude and if I had heard of the publication he was involved in. I had indeed met this man named Claude, but was not familiar with the publication, which was non other than the Cloud-Hidden Friends' letter.

I spent much of the next week pouring over copies of the letter Elson had sent to me. The experience was gratifying and sometimes quite moving; it was somehow like coming home; it felt so familiar, so right. The path can be lonely and the discovery of friends along the way so warming and comforting. I am grateful for this opportunity to subscribe to the letter.

By way of introduction, I just turned 41. I've been married to Irma for the ~~48~~ past 17 years and we have three children, Mark, Paul and Erin, and a pesky dog named Milton. These five beings (and me of course) have been the focus of my life and, as I come to see things clearer, the focus of my practice for some time. In the periphery are a growing circle of Dharma friends and friends connected with the early child-rearing years; but closer to the center is a very large extended family. Below our flat, on the first floor, is my mother-in-law, my landlord. Above her, in the middle flat, are my fellow tenants, my mother and sister. Further out in the city and in the general Bay area are upwards of 50 or more in-laws, nieces and nephews and great neeces and nephews.

Being a city dweller, I do not carry wood and draw water. Quit by accident, rather than by design, I have been working as a paralegal for downtown law firms for almost 9 years now. I quite understand A. Watts' desire to understand the Buddha Nature of a London cab; for me it is the desire to appreciate the Buddha Nature of a Muni #7 or a gleaming 40th floor office in the financial district. Such is the life of the house-holder in 1984 and such is the stuff of practice in the city. How surprised I was, and continue to be, that this is my practice; and how warm the growing sense of gratitude that this is my practice.

Upon reflection, my first contact with the Dharma came with my first reading of the "Dharma Bums". That was in my late teens and on the edge of a very tumultuous time in my life. The seed was planted, but not cultivated until much later. In those days I preferred to be called "Beau"; little did I know that I would some day receive the salutation "Bo" from a "Buddhist janitor" who had a place in the pages of a book that made such an impression on my amazed New Jersey mind.

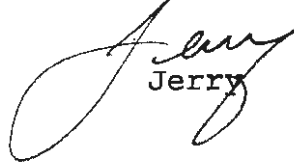
Years later I went on to study Philosophy and Religion at SF State, & but I do not recall Buddhism making much of an impression one way or another. A few years after graduation however I found myself searching bookstores for materials on the Dharma. The interest grew into a desire to "do" Buddhism and led to further reading, sitting and searching on the path. And as the intensity grew, so did a sense of loneliness. Amidst a very full life, with caring friends and family, I felt increasingly alone in this pursuit. On the other hand, I was unable to give up my efforts.

Several years ago my sons joined the scouts and to my surprise the program was sponsored by the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Church of SF. Although I had never heard of Jodo Shinshu prior to this time, I began attending services and studying the teaching. And in what seems now like one steady stroke I find myself immersed in a sangha that grows wider and deeper day by day.

My interest and experience with the teachings of Shinran continues to grow and last year I began to pursue a Masters in Buddhist Studies at the Institute, albeit in the style of the house-holder, one class per semester. At some date in the future I hope to wear the big sleeves of the Jodo Shinshu minister. However, in the mean time, I would like to listen to the Dharma in as many ways as possible and exchange the struggles, adventures, lows and highs of the way with fellow travelers like yourselves. I thank you all for the opportunity you provide me to this end.

Until the next time, when I hope to enter into the continuing dialogue.....

Palms together, in peace



Jerry

Jerry L. Bolick
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San Francisco, Ca. 94117

John Boyd
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 Islington, Ontario
 Canada M 9 A, 5 B 2

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Dear Cloud Hidden Friends:

At the risk of being thought to be somewhat repetitious, may I again comment on what I have come to consider to be one of our major, most perplexing, ultimately limiting and largely unrecognized factors in our enigmatic quest for self-knowledge or enlightenment - I promise (for the time being) not to return to this clouded topic!

I refer of course to our paradoxical need, attraction and subsequent attachment to, all kinds of externalized authority figures, and institutionalized systems of thought or belief, that promise us an endless number of pathways to personal redemption, inner peace or salvation. It is in the very nature of these authorities or systems of thought that they must each claim to offer us the best, most effective or complete means by which we can hope (May - expect!) to achieve our goal of finding a framework for personal freedom, purpose or salvation. Their ability to persuade us of their infallibility or righteousness is powerfully applied by, and rooted in, a most profound understanding of the human psyche in all its vagrancies.

As some of you already know, I have been for quite some time now deeply concerned with trying to understand this most perplexing and limiting factor within the great enigmatic equation of human life and all its mysteries. How do we navigate beyond our inescapable attachments to specific forms?

Is it possible to venture beyond the confines of our personal sense of insecurity? Can we break through the line of terror that confronts us at the outer limits of selfhood? An area where we are faced with an uncompromising demand for the complete surrender of the self (ego), before being able to know that this terror can only exist within the grand illusion of our ontological separation from the All. A point at which all terrors simply vaporize into silent laughter - at the precise moment when they are really seen and accepted with clear and wide open eyes. How then do we transcend these self created boundaries, so that we can embrace the great unknown with total abandonment, and perhaps begin to see that this existential terror of not-knowing and non-being is a particularly virulent and pernicious expression of our own fearfulness? We need to discover for ourselves that there is no boundary beyond thought and its ontological attachment to fear. That time itself cannot exist beyond the boundaries of thought!

How can we come to realize that there is a "whole new perspective" a life awaiting us beyond these outer limits of our perceived selfhood, where personal fearfulness and our sense of impotency or helplessness, no longer hold any power over us? Does not our "normal" conditioning most conveniently design things in order to "gently pressure" us to back away from the fruits (and terror) that accompany self transcendence (going beyond the ego state), and thus have us settle for the safety and security (at any cost) that are so generously offered to us by all authorities and systems, in the form of thought structures? It is within these comfortable security structures that we generally seek asylum from the fear of non-being - from the perceived existentiisl void.

Alas, what a price we "pay" for this "comfort"! For is this not exactly how we ultimately deny ourselves access to the hidden power of unconditional love (the highest possible expression of human quality); to the freedom to be who and what we truly are; to knowing the beauty of uncertainty; to having inner peace, and perhaps most importantly, to the realization that it is through attachment, desire or greed that we generally set ourselves up to believe in, and uphold the value of external authorities?

With love and in friendship,
 John Boyd

P.S. I would like to acknowledge that the present unique format of our CHFL and the circle of friendship that has evolved around the simple process thus

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conceived and initiated by Ananda, is to be treasured and highly commended in my estimation. It is an exciting new form (forum) of/for communion, where the total acceptance of what is and how we all are, embraces a degree of unconditionality which is truly remarkable - let us deeply cherish this one of a kind opportunity to be with each other in this way - a personal thanks to us all ! May we long continue thus !

J.B.

LETTER RECEIVED



New Canaan Academy

Canaan, New Hampshire 03741

(603) 523-4385

Deneal Amos

Hey/Ho, Brother Ananda Claude,

I, for one, want to say that I had no questions about your observations regarding the two faces of the Zen tradition (?) (Words!) What worldly phenomenon doesn't have it's Yin and Yang aspects? I didn't think you were making a distinction, but a very important observation. I believe that there isn't an institution in the country that isn't going through an identity crisis. Some/many of these institutions are, so to speak, just in their adolescence, and just beginning to discover the context of the veiled warnings the "old folks" are always issuing. Just like people, there are many sides to their existence that are not explicit in the physical form.

I'll risk myself enough to say that I took the Vow of the Bodhisattva before I ever heard of it. I felt spoken for personally and I felt that you reminded people of a fact--the fact--that validates the existence of our institutional structures. They are truly the imitation of reality. In the same way a candle is part of the light of the sun. Everyone needs to meditate to remember where his heart is. (His Original Face.)

You know, I've wanted to write something for C.H.F.L for a hundred different reasons, a hundred different times. But I don't do things, I follow the Way. There are things that I do to help me follow the Way. I just hope I don't get them confused with the Way. I never feel closer to the Way than when I've reached that moment of stillness with others, whenever it happens.

Ho, Bo, I'm with you. Or is it without you, I'm not?

Yours,

Deneal

LETTER RECEIVED

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Normal Moser
2110 9th St. #B
Berkeley, CA94710

Dear Ananda-birds:

As usual, I very much liked practically every word in Nov.'s issue. Especially Ananda's floating Zendo, and the wonderful story about the old Japanese priest traveling around India w/a one-liner people liked. And a settin on a log w/friends or without friends for a few minutes of rapport w/nature, one's innards, or the Buddha, also greatly amuses and reminds me of me Carolina upbringing. We usta set out on the porch in swings or on steps/bannisters, whatever, and swap lies and swat flies, tell tall tales--or sometimes just watch the sunset or moonrise, or both.

In recent years, I've come to the not-so-surprising conclusion that these surprise-meditations that arise so naturally out of the rhythm of one's daily life, or the loveliness of twilight, are really the best kind, partly just because of their natural source but also partly because of the surprise of the (turns of) the conclusion(s) sometimes.

For several years I, too, did formal (or half-lotus=semi-formal?) meditations^{at} either DeNeal Amos' casual homey-temples or at my place. I liked that fine when I did it daily, or almost daily, for c. 20 to 60 minutes, occasionally more. I was never a priest, although Amos always said I missed my calling and should've been: that I was as ready as he to lead up one of our groups. I always kidded him that he missed his calling too: he was a fine painter, probably still is.

Somehow in recent years I've taken more to the more casual form of meditation Ananda Claude is discussing in his charming piece, even it would seem, approving it. I just do it as I'm moved to, and not until--and if that means I never do another (semi?) formal meditation, well, so be it. Could be, the place where I've arrived they're often no longer necessary. Besides, writers, painters, all those of us in the arts, are forever reflecting, meditating, mulling things over, and not only our creations. In fact, it could well be said that our achievements grow out of these very same meditations and reflections.

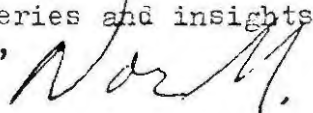
Bringing up the point that there may be no or little difference between what painters/writers, etc, do almost daily and what folks in Zen or certain kinds of Yoga^{do}, making one truly wonder what Reps and Ananda are talking about w/their 10 minutes of meditation, or--god forbid--one moment? What the dickens could be accomplished in only one moment? Reducing the pressure a bit? Or--if in absurd job-situation--single moment of what I call 'purifyin'? Well, I dunno--puzzlin. And almost scarifyin. . . .

Or is mebbe Ananda pulling our leg just a wee bit here and there w/the one-minute bit? Posi-ble. I usta tell m' friends/girlfriends, still do sometimes, that when in doubt about whether I'm putting you on, might's well assume I am--because I probably am, loving a joke or a leetle fun as much or more than th nex feller. Tell ye what, Ananda, I'll let ye have yr one-minute of Zen whenever ye can git it, but only if ye allow artists' or anyone's normal daily reflections or meditations (or moments of being High, gotten in natural manner) as being of exactly the same coin. I mean, if our Buddhism or other way of awakening the True, or Higher, self means anything at all, it means what it does to us (this precious Coin) because it arrives from, is indeed one with, our daily living, our experience(s), insights &/or pleasures, even joys, we discover right thereⁱⁿ our own lives.

So while I was originally amused enough to laugh at Reps/Ananda's one-minute Zen, there could be, on some reflection, a rather serious rough-n-ready insight full of more fresh discoveries and insights here.

Yours in Brotherhood,

12-13



290
Mike Dixon
P.O. Box 2015
Borrego Springs
Ca. 92004

Ho! Boes,

I have been enjoying all of your letters through the kindness of Ananda who has been sending them on to me even though I heretofore have neglected to send in a proper subscription. By way of introduction let me say simply that I am an artist, a painter by trade and that I spent a lot of time studying with Suzuki Roshi when the group was based at Sokoji on Bush St. in S.F. Since Zen Center moved from Sokoji my practice has been primarily a solitary one. I practice zazen regularly, and have occasional, and to me important meetings with fellow Dharma brothers such as Ananda. Perhaps it is the solitary nature of the beautiful poem by Chia Tao Searching for the Hermit in Vain which makes it so moving and memorable to me. What follows are a few anecdotes relating to myself and Suzuki during the time we were practicing on Bush St., which I thought might be enjoyed.

Every Saturday morning we would have an extended period of zazen including breakfast and a work period. Each Saturday we would sweep, dust and scrub the zendo in the same manner. I have never been known to be an especially helpful or considerate individual and this Saturday I was simply minding my own business, sweeping the floor of the zendo as I had done for years. There was a new student who had joined us that morning and I noticed that he was standing about apprehensively wondering just what he should be doing. I went to him and handed him my broom without a word. Immediately upon his having taken it I turned to find Suzuki, whose presence in the room I was previously unaware of, wordlessly offering me his broom with outstretched hand. It was a very significant event for me.

Another time I was at Sokoji in the afternoon on some business or other when Suzuki expressed a desire to see the cherry blossoms which were enjoying their brief bloom at the Japanese Tea Garden in Golden Gate Park. I had never been alone with Suzuki before outside the temple and felt impressed that the two of us were going off somewhere together. All the way to the tea garden and back he said nothing, but just sat calmly looking out at the passing scene. I thought perhaps he would want to park and make a real visit of it, but as I drove up to the garden and the profusion of pink blossoms came into view, he simply gazed at them for a moment then said, "Very beautiful.. let's go back now."

Once Suzuki and I went on a mission to some obscure yard in an industrial area of San Francisco, I think to retrieve a shipment of some kind. In any case we entered one of those

little shack-like yard offices where a small group of tough workmen were gathered discussing a football game in a boisterous and somewhat aggressive manner. Suzuki swaggered into this group and immediately started talking about the game in a gruff tone of voice which I had never heard him use before. The men were not plussed until it dawned on them that this was a small, shaved headed, black robed Japanese person in their midst. I was so impressed with the whole scene that I can remember nothing else that transpired there.

*yrs from the desert,
Mike Diton*



292

4692 E. Arkansas Ave.
Denver Co 80222
10/29/84

Dear Cloud-hidden Friends;

I wish to respond positively to Ananda Claude's affirmation of an open type of Zen in the November issue of C.H.F.L. That is what I thought Zen was all about!

I don't wish to get into what may be a parochial debate, but I would hate to think that Zen could be limited by the same crabbed and fusty institutionalism that has plagued Christianity for most of its existence.

For Yellow Mouse: Crabbed [Crab apple, akin to Scot.Scrabbe, SW dial. scrabba, wild apple]
1. Peevish, cross. 2. hard to understand, intricate. 3. Hard to read, illegible.
Fusty [fust, a musty smell: Early Mod. E. a cask: O Fr., tree trunk] 1. Smelling stale or stuffy; musty ; moldy 2. old- fashioned .

As one who became enthusiastic over the numerous similarities between Buddhism and Christianity as well as experiencing the benefits of meditation, I later found that I had become too positive about what I had learned and shared with other people. I was not warned by my superiors to cease or desist. I just learned via the grape vine that I had fallen " under the influence of the devil". I was eased out of my position and have not been able to find another. Secular employment also seems closed. I have been asked about my "pagan meditation" and have never denied it.

There are probably not very many among you who have ever associated Zazen with the devil, but there are people out there who do although they may appear sane in almost every other respect.

Is the main purpose of religion personal growth and spiritual development or submission and external control? There are those who will always choose the latter hoping they will be safe and perhaps end up in charge.

Gassho,

Lori Paul

=====

A Note from the Editor:

If you are unable to have your letters typed, send them along anyway to our amateur typing department.

It would be very very helpful if you would leave a one inch margin on your letters, on both sides. Photocopying is then much easier. Your cooperation on this matter would be most appreciated.

Ananda, Editor

LETTER RECEIVED

Silas Hoadley 293
48 Catalpa
Mill Valley, CA
94941

For The Cloud Hidden Friends

Dear friend Ananda:

Thanks for your latest. Old and reliable "one breath practice" should satisfy your last point -- Please.....inhale.....exhale.... such is the flavor of buddha sangha hood --

Now we have been involved with the unfoldment of Zen Center, and with the recent events, have extended to its problems. One problem looming I call "Managing the Icon". The icon is the various images of our late teacher Shunryu. And just as he did not write "Zen Mind Beginner's Mind", he did not author the authority by now-time Zen Center. He did point out our own inherent authority-encouraged us to include it too, and move on.

Zen Center was and is a kind of fiction invented to emphasize that encouragement. Zen Center is also a social institution - a corporation - a legal person - with the social right to hold, produce and manage worldly wealth. As well we know, probably before we ever heard of Buddhism, worldly power affects our lives - and it is that worldly power that Zen Center is always in danger of confusing with the clearly authoritative being manifested in Shunryu.

In the long run -

Yours,

Silas

LETTER RECEIVED

Yellow Mouse

For the CHF:

A question/comment/complaint (???) for youse (dat's plural, y'know) : As you know, I have pointed to something I have called a dialogue. The other confreres of the CHF Letter don't seem to engage in such a thing. Is the idea offensive? Is it not understood? Is there reluctance to join in? Am I being ridiculous? (Any other options you may insert.)

To MA-REE-ANNE of the Mt.:

Is there a difference if there isn't any difference? Tall and short are different - if and when that difference becomes relevant? If size just doesn't really matter, then there truly is no way to distinguish tall from short. The only way value, meaning, betterness (worseness) becomes real (= meaningful; which is redundant thus real is incorrect being meaningless) - occurs, is by its deployment by a person. Thus all meaning is projected by self. "Shortness" can only matter to you because IT MATTERS TO YOU because you MAKE it matter to you. So ANY WAY, path, game, folly, vanity matters when the individual person chooses it. ALL WAYS MATTER EQUALLY for each are chosen by a human being. Our only "need" to justify the choice is because we elevate some "other" person beyond that equality. In fact, there is no way to justify the choice - in fact if we play the game "justify" - it really doesn't matter if we do - or don't.

Atomic power, bombs, war and my (and your) fears or confidences in them are part of our environment. "Should" we ignore that part of our environment or "should" we protest? It really doesn't matter which. Of course, once you have made your choice, then it matters to you because you have made it matter. But - no matter. As Lord Keynes said: "In the long run - we are all dead, anyway."

Yellow Mouse

294

115 Blue Rock Road
South Yarmouth, MA 02664

Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends,

Many thanks to all of you who gave me so much to "chew on" re my query on activism and/or sitting.

You are right on, Marian, Wu-wei is the natural way of life with no "tacked on" thoughts. Complimenting this thought come the words of Master Seung Sahn, with whom I sat some years ago: "Keep don't know mind", "Put it all down", "Only Don't Know" which is also the title of his most recent work. (Four Seasons Foundation, 1982).

Gratitude to Yellow Mouse and also to Ananda for "Oceans of Compassion" that are needed to surround our planet and especially the Pentagon right now.

So in this Advent Season much peace, much love, much compassion to all CHF also. I like the "floating zendo", Ananda, and your ten minute zazen!! It just might save our planet. Who knows?. Think of some soldier (U.S. or U.S.S.R.) sitting nervously in his ICBM bunker! Could he do anything better (& his officers)

Remember Hakuin Zenji's, "Song of Zazen":

(Speaking of the virtues of perfection such as charity, morality and the many other good deeds of merit) - - -

All these issue from the practice of Zazen
Even those who have practiced it just for
One sitting
Will see their evil karma erased
No where will they find evil paths
But the Pure Land will be at hand
This very place the Lotus land of purity
This very body is the body of the Buddha.

With palms together,

Richard Boerstler

P.S.

Note new address.

Joe Lawrence Lembo
P.O. Box 99444
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 771-5572

Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:

I have recently finished writing a book, COSMIC CONVERSATION: Reflections on Whitman, Lawrence, Miller & Watts.

In this modest attempt at resurrecting my favorite authors, I invite the reader to share some enlightening visits with me to: The Walt Whitman House & Tomb in Camden, The D.H. Lawrence Ranch & Shrine in Taos, The Henry Miller Memorial Library in Big Sur, and The Ferryboat Vallejo in Sausalito.

I allow my four great mentors to return and speak, with me as a humble channel for their visions. Visions, perhaps, more timely today than ever before.

But...be forewarned! Anyone wishing to travel with me needs a special passport - a metaphysical passport issued to those who seek truth in the magical realm of art and imagination.

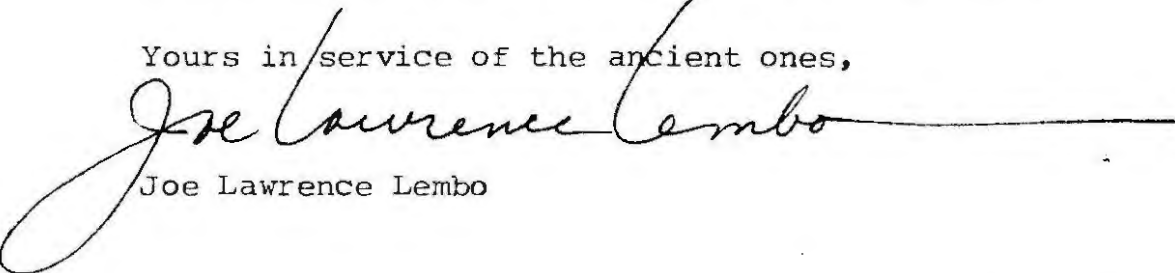
The book includes: 13 short essays, 19 illustrations (orig. artwork, photographs, correspondance, etc.), and cover design. 122 pages.

What I need now, is a publishing angel.

Anyone interested in reading the manuscript, as a possible publishing venture, is invited to contact me. Or, if you know of a publisher who may be interested in this sort of thing - please let me know.

Alot of work and love has gone into this book, and I remain optimistic that it will eventually get printed.

Yours in service of the ancient ones,


Joe Lawrence Lembo

"THE DEAD DON'T DIE. THEY LOOK ON AND HELP."

- D.H. Lawrence

FINIS

12-19
