

cloud-hidden friends letter

3/15

ISSUE # 14. Third Issue of 1985



The Buddha and his two disciples, Sāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana

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 # 14, and the third of 1985. The next issue will be out in another two or three months.

One way of thinking about the CHFL is as a way for people to speak up and share their thoughts with each other, instead of remaining forever a passive listener. It is also true however that the CHFL would be nothing if we don't listen to each other. Maybe we also need then good listeners, for one can go many a moon without finding a single person willing to really listen. Certainly we don't need more shouters, the world being quite noisy enough already thank you. That however is no excuse to avoid our "subscription fee", which is a letter from you for our pages every now and then. Remember that the CHFL is dependent upon your participation.

2. Gia Fu Feng, the founder and teacher of Stillpoint, passed away recently. Stillpoint is a Taoist retreat center in Colorado, which is where CHF Robert Glenn Breckenridge has recently been in residence. Stillpoint is of course in a state of shock, and it is too soon to say what might happen next there. Gia Fu was inimitable. He very completely lived his life, and may more of us do the same.

Robert Glenn's address is for the meantime 1315 Spring, Calistoga, CA 94515. Note his letter in this issue about Stillpoint and Gia Fu.

3. Marian Mountain has moved from California and hopes to find a place soon maybe in Idaho. In the meantime her address is : c/o Carl Wiseberg, 5000 King's Valley Road, Crescent City, CA 95531.

4. We have received some correspondence from the Wider Quaker Fellowship, a group which may be of some interest to some of you. They number several thousand people world wide, and are open to members of any faith. Their principle activity is in the form of mailings from the Philadelphia office, with a non-sectarian yet Quaker emphasis.

5. The Alan Watts Fellowship is continuing to meet about once a month for brunch and a discussion of Alan's tapes and books. For more information write to The Alan Watts Fellowship, 939 Boylston Street, Boston, MA 02115. Telephone 617-437-9424.

6. If there is someone who you would like to suggest for a free complimentary issue of the CHFL, please let us know. Please also note that although there is no charge for the CHFL, you can rest assured that a modest contribution of some sort will not be rejected.

7. There still are a few velo-bound annuals of the CHFL available for 1983 and 1984, for a price of \$12 each.

Jerry Bolick
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Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:

Greetings, with a low bow to you all.

Ananda's letter concerning ten minute zazen (November 1984), struck home in many ways. The struggle to establish a consistent practice in the midst of an active life is and has been a very real, perhaps the very real, problem for many of us. What to do? When to do it? How to do it better? These are tough questions and can cause much distress; but it does seem that help abounds, if we are only open to it.

A dharma sister of mine, revealing herself as the Bodhisattva I believe she really is, has on several occasions admonished me: "Don't beat yourself up. What you are doing is perfect, just the way it is." (Her favorite mantra is "thank you").

Just recently a teacher and fellow student remarked that it was important that we keep clear our purpose, so as not to become distracted along the way.

Both of these, in my mind, serve as reminders of a teaching well-known to us all, that is to be careful not to mistake the pointing finger for the moon. Regardless of our choice of practice, it is easily seen that it is often times all too easy to lose site of our purpose, to become distracted. For example, it is not our purpose to sit on a pillow for a prescribed period of time each day; it is not our purpose to recite the Buddha's name a certain number of times each day. But that sitting or that recitation may very well be the one way out of 84,000 that we do fulfill our purpose. On the other hand, it is important to remember that another way might be to sit on a log, in silence; or yet another might be to not sit at all. Further, what is appropriate today may not be appropriate for tomorrow.

Just as our lives evolve and change in the only way they can, we should be aware and open to the possibility that the nature and structure of our practice may also change. The problem, of course, is what appears to be our universal aversion to change. Oh please give me something to hang on to and I know I'll make it!!!

In the last few years I have attempted to stop beating myself up and let my practice evolve on its own; to some extent I think I have stopped beating myself (although I do pinch once in awhile) and feel much more relaxed and natural in my activities. I do very little formal sitting anymore, but rather perform a variety of practices (devotions) throughout the day, all directed at bringing my attention back to the moment, trying to appreciate more the interconnectedness of all things at all times and to try to foster a sense of gratitude for the gift of each moment. I suppose it is a kind of mindfulness practice, but in the flavor of Jodo Shinshu.

At the heart of my practice is a simple gassho and the recitation of the Nembutsu (Namu Amida Butsu), which I often follow with "itadakimatsu" (thank you). I have taken to performing this practice upon entering my office at work and upon leaving, before taking food, before running and at various other times during the day when I am awake enough to remember I'm alive.

In the mornings I offer incense at my homemade altar and may simply do gassho, recite the Three Treasures and the Nembutsu; when there is time I chant a gatha. Sometimes I follow this or even replace it with a few moments of zazen or simply sit quietly, listening to the familiar sounds

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of my life. This process, which seems to be mixed with a lot of bowing, takes about 10 to 15 minutes, generally....perfect for the time available.

This morning routine is my "formal" practice, such as it is, not proper zazen to be sure, but certainly of the ten minute variety of practice of which Ananda speaks. I have come to realize though that the real meat of my practice has become more the "one minute" variety and, seemingly, has become deeper and broader. As Ananda points out, this brief variety can be practiced anywhere, anytime. I have found that, increasingly, my job, my relationships with my growing children, my growing wife, extended family and friends, my life activities in general, are all becoming the source for continued self-reflection, sparked by a simple attempt to express gratitude. All of this is becoming the very stuff of which the "real work" of life is made. This stuff is available to us all in every moment of our existence. All we need do is avail ourselves of the opportunity, moment by moment. HOW WONDERFUL!!!

In the spirit of brotherhood,
With palms together

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerry". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping tail.

For the Cloud-hidden Friends:

FINDING MY WAY TO ZEN CENTER

It was 1967 in San Francisco, that foggy city in the throat of the sea. It was a year of hippie exploration, down right soul searching and Vietnam agony all mixed in one. We were living on Bryant Street at the time in a big two story victorian flat on the poorest Mexican edge of the warehouse district. The bedrooms on the top floor had slanted ceilings and mine looked out the back over the slow sunny mission valley. Life was good then but we didn't see it, our government was murdering Asians to preserve big business and the multi-nationals, and was obscuring some of the finer things in view, Somehow, maybe because we were young and idealistic, we hadn't learned yet that depression and war, war and economic boom, were truly the American way. But the rent was cheap, college was easy, and the girls were eager and free. That could surely have been enough, but it seemed the easy life just left more time to question and despair, and protest. No one we could see was being threatened by the communists, there was plenty of work, and Johnson's explanations were unmistakably hollow. The contradiction between our effortless prosperity and the endless rain of napalm pouring down in the name of freedom left our lives absurd and meaningless. No amount of marijuana and LSD could change that but we tried, and we took some refuge there. We were hippies though we never called ourselves that. We did wear our hair long with feathers and beads, took LSD and smoked grass, protested the war, but the word "hippie" was a media invention. An invention that wanted to destroy the beauty of free loving youth. It, this new youth movement, was affecting army enlistments adversely so there had to be something wrong with it. After the great media blitz against the hippies began, it only took a few years to discredit and annihilate. But in '67 it was still alive.

Living in the same building on Bryant Street were several other fellow travelers, among them two men. Both were about my age and both also went to S.F. State. Their names were Nathan Fearman and Bill Bagely. Nathan was a big red headed Jew from L.A. with a long full beard and very watery eyes, probably from smoking too much dope. Bill was a small wiry man with sandy hair and a spindly beard and soon to be "born again". One day these two announced that they were off to learn Transcendental Meditation as taught by disciples of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Maharishi as he was more commonly addressed had recently come into vogue because of the Beatles. They (the Beatles) had flown over to India to be with the guru and now it seemed his name and hairy white image were appearing all over town. Nathan and Bill invited me to go with them but I declined when told that it cost \$50 to attend - up front. I didn't like the idea that I had to pay cash in advance for spiritual instruction and still don't. So they went without me.

That evening on their return both Nathan and Bill seemed a bit dazed. I asked them what had happened. They both professed that it had been a wonderful, blissful experience but beyond that they claimed to have sworn not to reveal the meditation technics and instructions. It seemed, as Bill explained, that one needed a mantra (chanted or intoned incantation or prayer) and that the only way to get one was to see the teacher (pay \$50.) The teacher had special insight and was able to give you the mantra that would specifically fit you. Bill and Nathan couldn't tell me theirs', for it would not be right for me and might even cause harm. But I was persistent and after much coaxing and a joint of good shit and with Bill out of the room, Nathan relented and gave me his mantra. It was OM MANE PADME HUM. I was to say it over and over as I breathed. I don't recall that Nathan told me what the words meant. It wasn't important. Mostly, he explained that they were sacred syllables with meanings beyond mere words, in the realm of the spirit. Just sounds, vibrations repeated, would get you high.

I began to practice that very night in my room. I lit a candle, left the window wide open and fresh mission air just breezed right in. I liked the quietness and the simplicity of not moving or outwardly working at something.

320 How could I fail? It was a kind of revelation to be very concentrated and doing "nothing" at the same time. I heard the many city sounds passing through me, it seemed for the first time. It reminded me of when as a kid I would lie down in the weeds in a big wide open field and watch the clouds passing. I did not keep track of how long I sat there but on ending I felt refreshed. Nothing had been accomplished. I had nothing to show for my effort but it didn't seem to be a problem. I sensed that words such as progress and accomplishment would come to have new meanings in my life from now on.

For about two weeks I practiced a little each evening in the quiet of my room alone. I wasn't able to tell my two cousins David and Stephan what I was up to. I knew them to be thorough going athiests who would scoff at anything "spiritual." Though it isn't necessary to hold any particular religious beliefs, meditation I knew, was somehow still tainted and suspect. Their parents had raised them on Marxist philosophy and maybe this was part of the reason meditation, yoga and the like seemed irrelevant to them. As for me these quiet meditative periods became a time to look forward to and to reflect upon. Gradually I extended the time I sat and constantly tried to sit straighter and concentrate, which I have found to be a never ending process. I could not sit full lotus (which I will leave you to define), but could just manage the half lotus. Even in this position I could last no more than about fifteen minutes.

One evening as I was practicing I had an experience that reinforced my previous efforts and insured their continuation... It was a total experience of both mind and body. Suddenly without any special effort on my part the landscape of my being expanded seemingly without bounds. My breathing was not just my lungs expanding and contracting but an infinite ocean and its' tide. My body was a gigantic temple in which all sounds and smells and things of the world could exist side by side. My thoughts seemed to arise and depart like small bubbles without any particular meaning. That was the meaning as I experienced it, it wasn't a thought, I wasn't high on some drug and it needed no outside confirmation. I just knew it was true. How long the experience lasted I don't know. It had been real and profound. Somehow it was not the kind of thing I could communicate to others and I didn't try. But I was moved and I began reading books about meditation, Buddhism, and Zen, and most importantly I continued to sit regularly and with vigor.

Meditation now became a central daily function. I discovered through my reading that the supposed secret mantra was to be found in a number of books widely available to the public. My deep experience in meditation seemed also to have a convenient label... I read several books on Zen and one Zen Flesh, Zen Bones, particularly delighted me. I loved the zappy little tales and their directness, for example "What do you do if you meet a zen master on the high road? Give him the upper cut." The emphasis an experience rather than logic or rational understanding impressed me. Indeed, I learned that there was a zen teacher and a temple right here in San Francisco. A friend who had been there lent me a brochure entitled Zen in America. It was a large awkward fold out affair about Tasajara, the Zen Mountain Center, something about the pictures of Suzuki Roshi, the steep mountains, and westerners sitting meditation fascinated me, but Americans with shaved heads put me off. Still I found the address of the City Center and resolved to go. I further learned learned that everyone (including me) was welcome and that it was free.

The building which housed the zendo (meditation hall) was on Bush Street, upstairs in what appeared to be a former Christian church. The structure was not particularly impressive, drab in color, and it took close examination to read that it was in fact the home of the Zen Center. On several occasions I came at the proper hour but at the last moment walked on by and didn't go in. Something held me back, some fear. Later I would castigate myself and try again. Finally I did get in the door. No particular Buddhist markings were in evidence as I climbed the old staircase on the way to the meditation room. I smelled a distinctive scent I knew to be incense. At the top of the stairs was a coat rack and a place to put your shoes. I left my shoes there with the

others and walked into the main room. People were already seated around what seemed to be a converted balcony. They were all facing the wall except for one bald headed Japanese fellow in very austere looking black robes who faced out, away from the wall. I didn't know what I was supposed to do. My bewilderment must have been obvious for with a brief hand movement and possibly other subtle gestures the Japanese man indicated that I should just go take a seat. Other than occasional muffled sounds from the people sitting and the opaque street noise, the place was quiet and also calm. I did my best to sit straight as I had at home and to breathe naturally. After a short time I felt someone coming up behind me but I didn't turn around and tried not to move. The first thing I felt was a gentle but firm hand pushing in on my lower back. Then hands on my shoulders directing them down and slightly back. I tried to let go and to follow these non verbal manual instructions. Then the hands tilted my chin down. My hands were changed dramatically. I had been keeping one hand on each knee and touching the thumb and first finger lightly in a small O. Next he put my two hands together palms up one on the other with the thumbs touching, seated on top of the lap created by the two thighs and the heels of the feet. Again the small of my back, the shoulders and shin were gone over lightly. Then he whispered "good", rose and moved on. I was chilled by the simplicity of the act I had just received. Looking back and down the row I could see it was that bald Japanese man. It was Suzuki Roshi my first spiritual teacher (after my parents).

After what seemed like a very long time a bell rang and people began to move about and get up. I followed. Then there was a foreign set procedure of bows which everyone seemed to know but me. We filed out and into another room and did more strange bows, and then chanting I guessed must be in Japanese. I felt like all left feet and tongue tied but no one paid me any mind and this torture didn't last too long. Then we all filed out again. People put on their shoes and coats and left. It was over. That was it. Beyond the word "good" no one had even attempted to speak to me. There was no proselytizing or hard sell conversation. Nobody asked for money. As I hit the sidewalk the cars on Bush Street streamed by as unconcerned as ever. But the fading sunlight seemed to be smiling, just a little. From the rain gutter of the old church dry weeds had grown long and dried a straw brown color. They bent effortlessly and beautifully down the side of the building. A slight sea breeze was nudging them back and forth. It seemed that they were waving to me so gentle and like an old friend I had forgotten but now remembered.

Michael

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Dear Cloud-Hidden Friends:

What treasured blessings of pertinently potent doubts we share with each other across the pages so devotedly nurtured by Ananda! What a luxury to know that we all search to refine the limits of our understanding and appreciation for yond perplexing realms where thought and reason seem to serve us less well than our ego centered selves would wish - the grand frontier which is always tempting us with its promises of inner peace, enlightenment and the true experience of a oneness that knows no separation. These richly paved pathways that we walk together - for make no mistake. we are privileged who walk so many cloud-hidden pathways with doubt/full questions by our side as our companions. So, many thanks to us all who journey thus - for simply being who and where we are!

And what monumental questions friend Erik (and others) put before us all this time around - part of a profound challenge, so it seems to me, of questioning the old/traditional forms that we need to break loose from as part of any growth process - any move forward. The old forms obviously retain much of immense value, but they also offer us many traps and comfortable hiding places. To stay put is ultimately to die. We need to recognize the profound need to move on, to constantly let go and to update everything with the passing of time.

I am not a practicing Zen Buddhist, but I think the time has come for us to question the "infallibility" of the more traditional/conservative approaches to everything - including the practice of Zen Buddhism.

The organic laws of life insist that we need to change with the times or perish. This is why I was particularly excited by the relevance of Marian Mountains initiative in daring to question some of the more rigid forms of imported Zen Buddhism. Her's was/is an important departure from the limiting constraints of rigid forms that cannot be modified, and to question the wisdom (particularly in North America and the West) of trying to practice Zen Buddhism exclusively within the traditional parameters imported from the East.

I have recently been reading over some of Shunryu Suzuki's illuminating wisdom in "Zen Mind, Beginners Mind", and I am struck by what is (to my way of thinking) his dogmatic assertion (repeated over and over again) that all we need to do is to practice zazen - that that is all there is, and that it is all that simple (difficult) !

I humbly find such an assertion too simplistic and unacceptable for our high-tech society that is so inescapably caught up in a frenetic period of social change. What do others feel? Can we move forward without too much in

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the way of attachments to rigid or traditional forms that are bound to restrict our need for more organically adaptive forms and practices?

Marian where are you ?

Yours in friendship and with love,

John H. Boyd

A Few more Moserisms

Norman Moser
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OBSERVATIONS

If a person is wearing a mask, watch out. It's almost certain to represent an image, a person, which is the exact opposite of what such persons truly, really are way down deep. The mask's purpose, then, is to lead you astray so you don't find them out.

This is one of the many reasons folks have a hard time sometimes understanding me : I dropped my mask years ago. At first I hardly noticed it myself, just a slip, little innocent thing, accident -- but it felt so good, so liberating, I never put it back. But woe be unto the likes of those who drop their masks in a society such as ours. It throws most people off. They simply aren't used to it.

Never mind who you happen to agree with on a position truly arrived at; it may be who you'd least suspect. Politics, philosophy, even occasionally poetry or mysticism will mysteriously produce some strange bedfellows for anyone. Pay no attention to such b.s. All ye need to concern yourself with is who you are and how you got there.

Norman

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CHF letter:

Thank for the Yantra, ACC - is it an anandayantratantra ?
 or an tantranandayantra ?
 or an anandatantrayantra ? (etc)

To Barbara Hinshkowitz: You betcha "dialogue is dangerous", DIA-: through, over, across, apart, between, in opposite directions THUS from one to another (across, through some medium), one with another FROM the PIE root DA, DAI: to divide, see as divided or be divided, THUS separate, separated entities. DIAlogue requires the guts to risk unity with an "other" (a contrary); the effort and risk of passing the LOGOS across and through the medium, milieu, cosmos. DiaLOGue presents the opportunity to learn (which is change - and we fear its danger).

To Erik Storlie: "SHOULD" ??????? WHO? sez so ? I thot the Buddha wuz de boss. Oh well, I just kicked yer bucket (and, damn, the moon disappeared.) Oh, yeah - an' "outsiders" are always hostile and superior - doncha know ? Please: "Zen practice" define, please. If it is "sitting" - well, then sit ! If it is eating - just eat ! Is it "something special", after all ?

To Acey Deucey: "There is that of God in every one." GOD = GOD (OldEng) FROM GHEUE: to call or invoke = GUDAZ (-AZ: he who or that which) is invoked (Teut). WHO? do you invoke ? Money ? Some "out there" savior-rescuer ? BUDDHA? (= awakened; the past participle of BGDHATI: he awakes and/or becomes aware FROM BHEUDHI: to be aware or to make aware. Thus call to (invoke) (present tense) he who or that which has been (past tense) awakened. WHO? DAT ?

If "Yoga" is a "yoking" then Jesus 11 Matthew 28-30: "Take my yoke upon you - for my yoke is easy -."

YOKE: to harness, to conect, join or bind together = GECC (OldEng)

FROM YEUS: to join = YUGO, YUGAZ (Teut) = GECC: YOKE

= JUGUM (Lat): YOKE

= ZUGON (Grk): YOKE

= YUNG = JUNGERE (Lat): to JOIN; JUNCTION

YOGA: union, a yoking FROM YEUS: to join = YOUNGO = YOGA; union
 = YUGA: YOKE, pair, age

"Bowling": every morning I bow to the four winds (AmerIndian). North: cold intellectual knowledge; South: warm growing funky touching; West: the inner experience of one's own ignorance; East: passive enlightenment. But, of course, there is only the inevitable to bow to anyway. WHO?

Thank you, Rich, for the LaoTse reminder to lose, loose everything including oneself - one'sSelf.

To Maggie: "If I knew (who is the ME) would I be asking ?" Who is asking ? WHO? is asking. I am trying to force (yes, Finchly, I am violent) you to focus on defining exactly WHO wants to know the answer to your question. As for your "moon in the brook", see IT in a pail of water and then kick over the pail ! You know the Buddha is only a shit-stick anyway.

Can we play at, in and with life ?? instead of the heavy-duty sober-serious (as per Ananda) responsibility trip ?? Hey Maggie, do me sum-more ! I love it. ("Do me!" is what the kids yell when you are tossing them in the air.)

To Bob Smith: "how best to work ?" Effectiveness rather than good intentions; bastards who are willing to kick ass, to make things happen - the willingness to go to hell - crucifixion - (if necessary) in order to help others or minimize the hurt done by others.

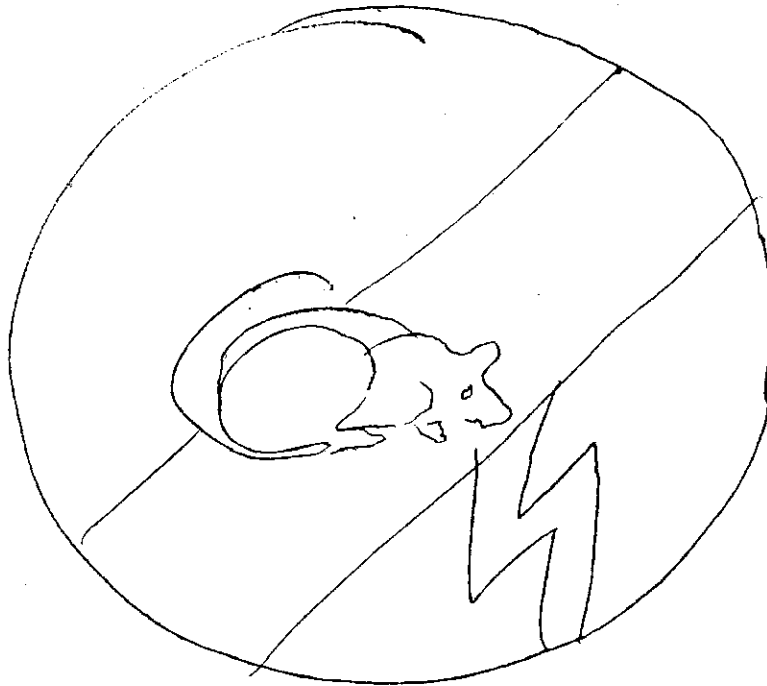
To Joel PureLodge: Both the Aryan (Indo) and the Mincan (Greek) are Indo-European peoples. The Proto-Indo-European peoples (PIE) originated north of the Black Sea and began their outward thrusts about 10,000 bp (before present): Westward, Celtic; Eastward, ProtoAryan; Southward, the SeaPeoples (later Greeks); Northward, Baltics.

"Men who seek liberation must avoid attaching themselves to women." Of course - Men who seek liberation must avoid ATTACHING themselves to EVERYTHING - including non-attachment.

To Ol' Mose: "Reality is a western word." Is that real, rhetorical or ideological ??????

To the AmerIndian, "west" is where the sunsets - where it gets dark and hard to see - what happens when you look inside anything - its color black (not romantic sunsets). Then it comes out: "Reality" is the LOGOS of projection of internal "darkness" onto the environment, cosmos. Nicht Wahr ?

YELLOW MOUSE



R.G. Breckenridge
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 May 1, 85

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 It's been several months since I sent my "reports" about the April 1st to October 27th transcontinental "Walk For The Earth" to friends, relatives, and sponsors—parts of which appeared in the "Cloud Hidden Friends Letter".

When the Walk passed through Colorado several of us stopped in at Stillpoint, where my old friend, of San Francisco Mill Valley, American Academy of Asian Studies, Alan Watts, beatnik days of the 50's and Big Sur, Esalen, Fritz Perls hippy days of the 60's, Gia Fu Feng presides: defining himself as a "Sage" not a "Saint". After the Walk, I came back and I'm here now. Two other walkers remained as residents and several others have or are planning to return for visits.

Our days begin with Taoist Meditation (Which is doing whatever it is that is meditation for you) around 4 A.M. Around 5 A.M. twelve to fifteen or twenty or so residents and visitors gather together sitting on the carpet in a circle in front of the fireplace, sitting in lotus, ½ lotus, ¼ lotus, squatting or sometimes semi-lounging with a wide assortment of pillows in various sizes, shapes, colors, thicknesses, hardnesses put here and there for comfort. Sipping tea, occasionally making announcements, gossiping, bantering and listening to Gia Fu who sometimes says that he supports us here just so he can have an audience because he really loves to talk. He also says that therapists should pay their patients because it feels so great when you do a good bit of therapy.

This morning Gia Fu announced that he was going to give a lecture on mysticism. Then he proceeded to say that mysticism is very old with many traditions and outward forms but that all the teachings are really the same in essence. Mysticism is realizing the presence of God saying; "This is God, that is God. This is Tao, that is Tao. This is God, This is Tao. That is Tao, that is God." Then I tuned Gia Fu out and began practicing it silently in my mind as a meditation (with a little relaxed smile on my lips because meditation seems to feel better that way):

"This is God, that is God, This is Tao, that is Tao.
 This is God, this is Tao, that is God, That is Tao
 God is Tao, Tao is God, God is Buddha, Buddha is God
 Earth is God, Earth is Tao, Sky is Tao, rocks are God
 Animals are God, Christ is God, Zen is God, we are God
 Patriarchal Zen is God, Bodhisatva Zen is God is Tao
 Homeless Wanderer Zen is God, Ananda is God, Peace is God
 Alan Watts is still God, wood is God, Chopping wood is God
 Truth is God, Illusion is God, Nirvana is God, Samsara is God
 War is God, Death is God, Joy is God, Consciousness is God
 Pain is God, All is God, All is Tao. Even Ego is God but.....

Ego is God but it can't know that. It must believe that it is separated so that God can have something that is other, someone else to grow and play and surprise himself with. Man has Self and Self is with God. Man has Ego and Ego believes it is alone and separate from God. Ego believes in Separation, Death, Struggle, Learning and Loss.

Belief in Separation and Death is the source of the Ego's fear which it feels at all times in various degrees and attempts to escape by reviewing the past in order to make the future secure. Self knows, hears, sees, tastes, smells, senses God and knows no fear. God creates and man extends the creation. Self extends creation with love, peace and joy. Ego extends the creation with separation, fear and struggle. The "Saint" often withdraws from the world and seeks and often finds union with God through piety and prayer. The "sage" also seeks and often finds union with God but lives in the world manifesting both Ego and Self in various mixes. Sometimes sages are nice and sometimes they are not. Sometimes they are both and sometimes they are neither and many would probably say that all this differentiation of Ego and Self is just a lot of elephantshit.

Stillpoint is like an ancient Chinese or early Japanese Sangha. Gia Fu gathers enough money to support the community's rather simple lifestyle. Some pay and some don't. Some can contribute money and some can't. Visitors are always welcomed. Some stay a few hours, some a day or two or a week or a month, a year or two or more. It's hard to define "residents" except to say that those who stay for awhile become residents until they leave and many return to be residents again. We're Americans, Australians, Chinese, Danes, Germans, Swiss (In alphabetical order of course) Black, Brown, Yellow and White, Female and Male, Old and Young.

We meditate, congregate, have sessions, eat, bathe, cook, wash, read, gossip, banter, fight, laugh, cry and occasionally have good parties in the trailer and barn. After the sessions, we eat breakfast, clean, wash, cook, build, chop, milk, butcher, repair, etc. until noon. After lunch we do whatever until going to sleep in our private cabin-hermitages which are scattered along the creek and in the hills of these 180 acres of wooded Rocky Mountain foothills bordering the San Isabel National Forest about five miles from Wetmore. Long walks are highly recommended.

Drop in for a visit any time but bear in mind that there are often problems with expectations and idols. Fritz Perls used to say, "I am not here to live up to your expectations!". Stillpoint is not here to live up to anyone's expectations of what any community or sangha or master or human or you or I should be. A Course in Miracles says that the purpose of life is forgiveness. Grievances bind us to the past and separate us from the eternal now which is God. Forgiveness sets us free to be with God in the Now. Letting go lets go.

Living with the people around here, I sure do get more than plenty enough opportunities to practice forgiveness and it's often easier to forgive someone after you cuss them out - especially the ones who laugh too loud, use foul language and say mean, nasty, stupid things! Well, I feel I'd better shovel my way out of here and go for a walk.

Robert Glenn

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THINK JAPANESE



Joe Lembo's Zendo
P.O. Box 99444
San Francisco, CA 94109

Dear Cloud-People:

I recently renovated my living space and decided to decorate my livingroom in Japanese motif. The Japanese idea of simplicity is very easy to live with.

I had fun going to flea markets, Japantown, and thrift shops looking for bargains to decorate with.

After I spent all my money and decided "no more objects" - there was a wonderful large pottery vase beckoning me from a shop window, at a very reasonable price.

Of course, I hesitated. Some of the thoughts that ran through my mind were: "Be minimal", "Think Zen," "Don't buy it - practice non-attachment."

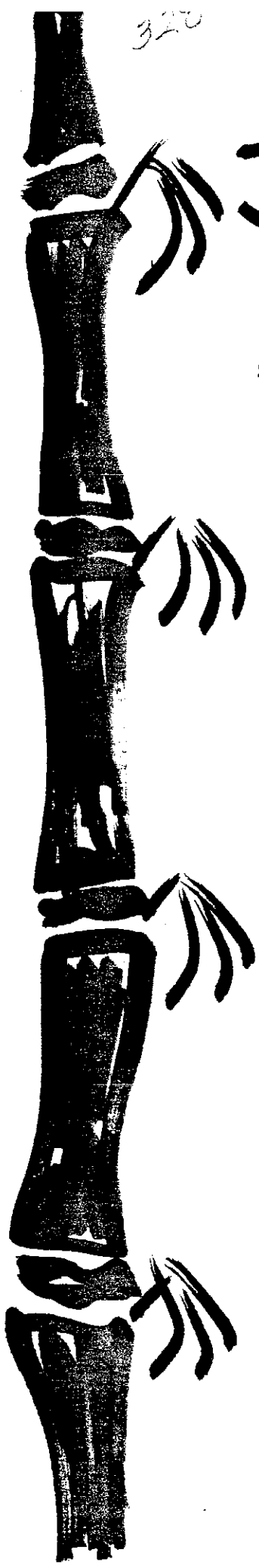
As it turned out, I passed by that store every day for a week making believe I could live without that vase...looking at it out of the corner of my eye. Finally, I broke down and bought it!

The reason I tell this story is because I'd like to point out what I consider to be AMERICAN NON-ATTACHMENT: if you don't buy it today, you'll buy it tomorrow!!!

Any Cloud-Hidden Friends visiting San Francisco are invited to stop by for tea at Joe Lembo's Zendo. But you must take off your shoes at the door. (415) 771-5572.

Wu-Wei,

JOE



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Ananda Claude Dalenberg
753 44th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94121

Dear Friends and Bodhi Fellows :

Many of us feel somewhat trapped by the hurried lifestyle which seems to be almost everywhere these days, and that would include myself. One would think that in the richest nation on earth everyone would have time to devote to the more important things in life, but it almost seems that the opposite is true. We don't seem to have time for being with those we love, communing with the stars, and facing the great matters of life and death. Instead we seem to go round and round in endless trivia, and of course have no time to write a letter such as this.

One of the most important things in my life is meditation, and that doesn't actually require so very much time. It seems to me a ten or twenty minute period once or twice a day is about enough, although I haven't always had such a relaxed approach. Even so I do find that some kind of real effort is needed, at least for myself. Following the Tao should be somehow more natural and easy.

Somehow I get into a hurried attitude, where the present moment isn't really deserving of my full attention. Instead I have to hurry on to some other matters which will be coming up just a little bit later. I should know enough about myself by this time to realize that those other matters generally turn out to be just more trivia. Such a state of mind is certainly far from ideal for meditation, which requires some real attention and settling in to the present.

Such a hurried attitude seems to be a general affliction these days. Even meditation teachers so often seem to be flying around everywhere, having all these important things to do, with little or no time left for just a friend.

In looking for an example of a different kind of way, I often think of my grandfather. Somehow he had time for things, such as being a good farmer and raising a big family. What I remember the most clearly about him are the grandfather clocks that he made. He had some interest in woodworking, so when he retired he decided to try his hand at making clocks. He planned to make a clock for each of his grandchildren, as was the folk tradition in the old country. Fortunately that meant I also received a beautiful clock, and I'm quite proud of it. I've rarely seen a finer example of devoted folk craftsmanship. He would often be asked if he had some special technique or method. His reply was that what was most important is the attitude, which was the reason why he took as his own motto "one clock, one year". In his case he figured it took that much unhurried time and devotion for him to make a clock the way it should be made.

My father also loved those clocks, so when he retired he decided to carry on the family tradition. However he was a much more modern and impatient sort, and couldn't rest content with anything much less than "one clock, one month". For him it was difficult to slow down that much, which he tried to correct with his own motto "the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get".

It is interesting how the generations progress. I too loved those clocks, and some time ago I seriously considered going into clocks as a business. After pondering about it all at some length however, I realized that my own state of mind was such that I wouldn't be at all content with anything less than "one clock, one week". At that point it all becomes quite a different kind of thing, so I decided it was best not to go ahead with it.

I must confess that I'm more than a bit concerned about what my own legacy for my children might be. Without some real care it could be no more than the equivalent of a houseful of junk.

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After my brief romance with the clock business, I decided to continue at Zen Center as a Zen priest, although there again not quite content. It was interesting to find however that the practice of meditation actually requires an attitude similar to that of "one clock, one year". Some unhurried care and concentration is needed, and some real love and devotion. There is only one place to face the great matters of life and death, and that is in the present. To be forever hurrying on to somewhere else is not exactly a formula for peace of mind.

Somehow we have to slow down enough for the more important things in life. There should be an abundance of time for meditation, nature, and for being with those we love. Surely such things are what life is all about, or at least it should be so.

Among the more important things in my life I would include things like writing this letter to the CHF. It does mean for me that I must be present to some unusual degree. I don't mean to suggest here that our CHF letters remind me of some beautiful old grandfather clock, although to be perfectly honest I think they are not half bad. Indeed it is a surprisingly rare thing we do, this moment we take in some kind of stillness, to write to, and listen to each other.

Anyway I thought ought to be able to slow down enough to salute all you friends and Bodhifellows, and to encourage us to enjoy floating around in the clouds a little bit more.

Sincerely,

Ananda Claude Dalenberg

P.S.

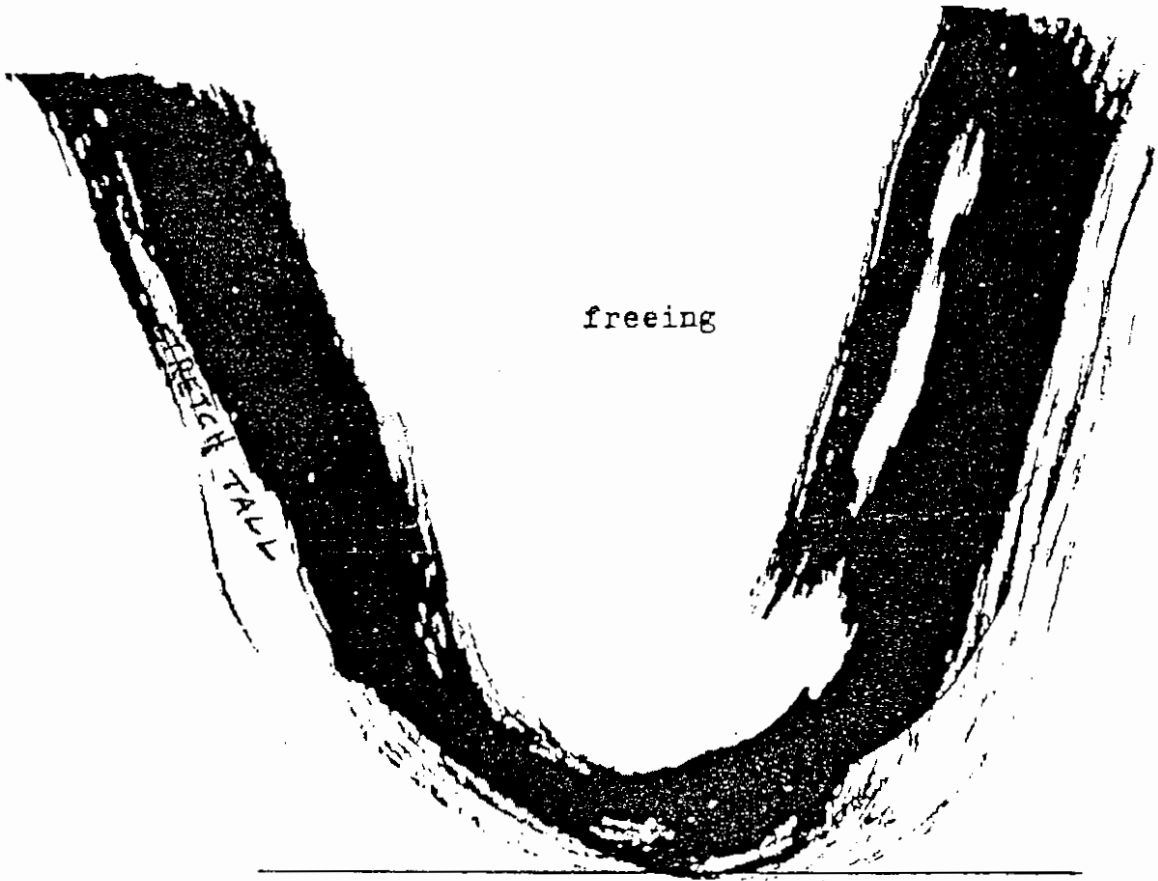
I've been playing with the definitions of a few Sanskrit terms recently, as in the following. I find myself taking it quite seriously, and would appreciate some feedback.

Bodhifellow : In Sanskrit "Bodhisattva". Bodhi-being; someone who aspires to Bodhi or Awakening.

Bodhifellow Sangha : In Sanskrit "Bodhisattva Sangha". In the broadest sense, the natural community of those aspiring to Bodhi, sometimes taking a more organized form at a local level.

Bodhifellow Ordination : Taking the Three Refuges Precepts plus Bodhisattva precepts, such as the Ten Basic Bodhisattva Precepts of the Brahmajala Sutra.

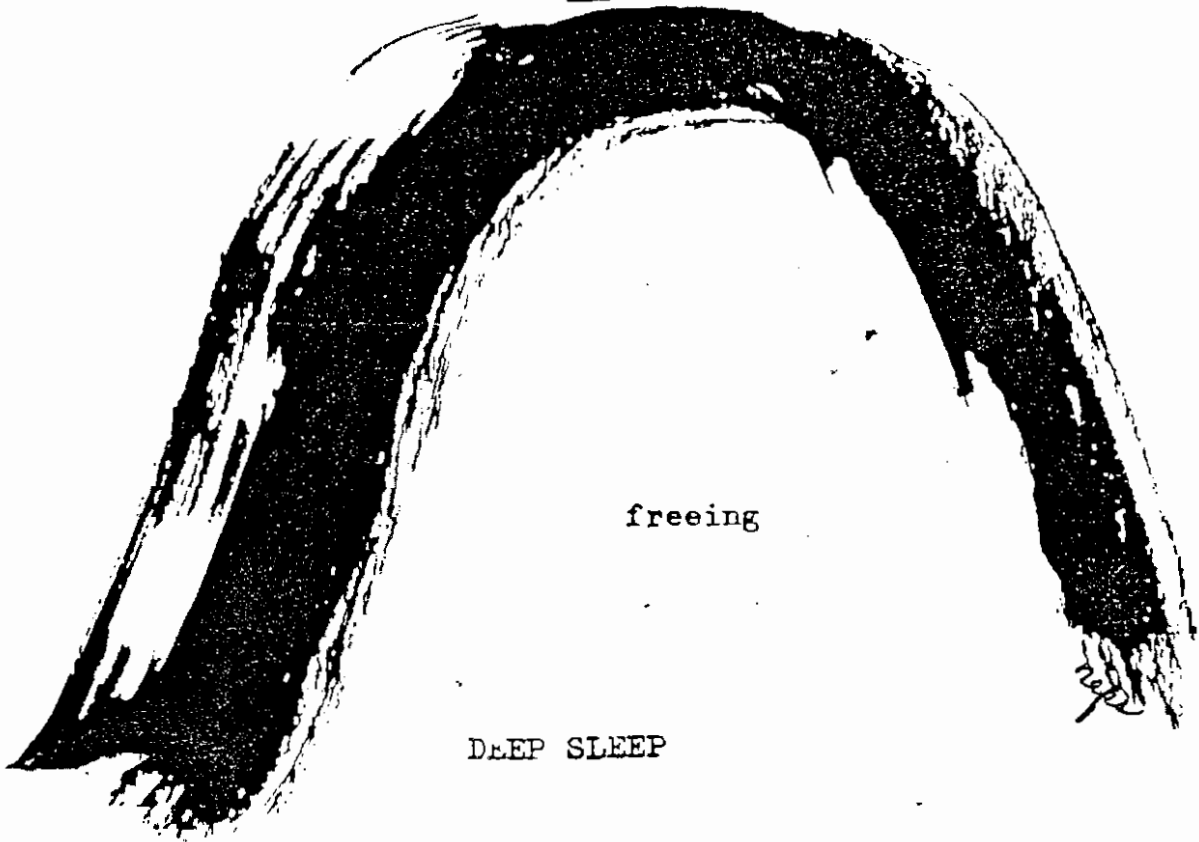
DEEP WAKING



freeing

ordinary

suffering



freeing

DEEP SLEEP