

Twenty Years of Buddhism Captured in Book



Chadwick: "A lot of stuff is idealized."

Inside, Outside Of Monastery Studied

By David Steinberg

JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

SANTA FE — There's a quote on the back of David Chadwick's book "Thank You and OK! — An American Zen Failure in Japan" from a Zen priest.

It quotes Zentatsu Richard Baker Roshi as saying the author's years of expensive Zen training had been wasted.

Chadwick set the record straight on that quote.

"I think my agent wrote that. I had told him once that Dick (Baker) had said something like that to me 20 or 25 years ago," the author said in a phone interview from his home in the San Francis-

co Bay area.

But Chadwick said everything between the covers of his new book are his observations. Only the names of people he met in Japan — and the city's name — have been changed to protect their privacy.

Chadwick said he did that for fear of hurting people's feelings.

The book is based on Chadwick's four years living, studying and teaching in Japan.

It was the culmination of studying Zen Buddhism for more than 20 years in San Francisco. He began intensively studying the Japanese language in 1969 and found he had an aptitude for it.

"So when I went to Japan in 1988 I had a fairly good vocabulary. I could talk to people and I studied the language constantly in the country. I gravitated to people who didn't speak English," Chadwick said.

Despite the prohibition, he spent hours talking to a Zen priest in a monastery during his meditation breaks.

The book details Chadwick's observations inside and outside the monastery — housewives, bureaucrats, students.

"A strong subtheme of the book is dealing with the Japanese bureaucracy and the importance of having faith (during those dealings)," he said.

The book's subtitle — "An American Failure in Japan" — is a spoof of the misunderstood comments about what Zen is.

"A lot of stuff is idealized, as if it's a perfection, a system to get beyond our problems, our weaknesses," Chadwick said.

"That's sort of an impossible goal and it isn't really what Zen is about. Zen is more finding ourselves in the midst of our imperfections and failures and suf-

IF YOU GO

WHAT: David Chadwick signs copies of his book "Thank You and OK! — An American Zen Failure in Japan"

WHEN: 4:30 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Garcia Street Books, 376 Garcia St., Santa Fe

HOW MUCH: Free and open to the public

ferings of life."

Though the subtitle is meant to be a joke, he said, at the same time it is a theme of the book in the sense that it probes people's feelings, including some Zen teachers' own feelings of failure and inadequacy.