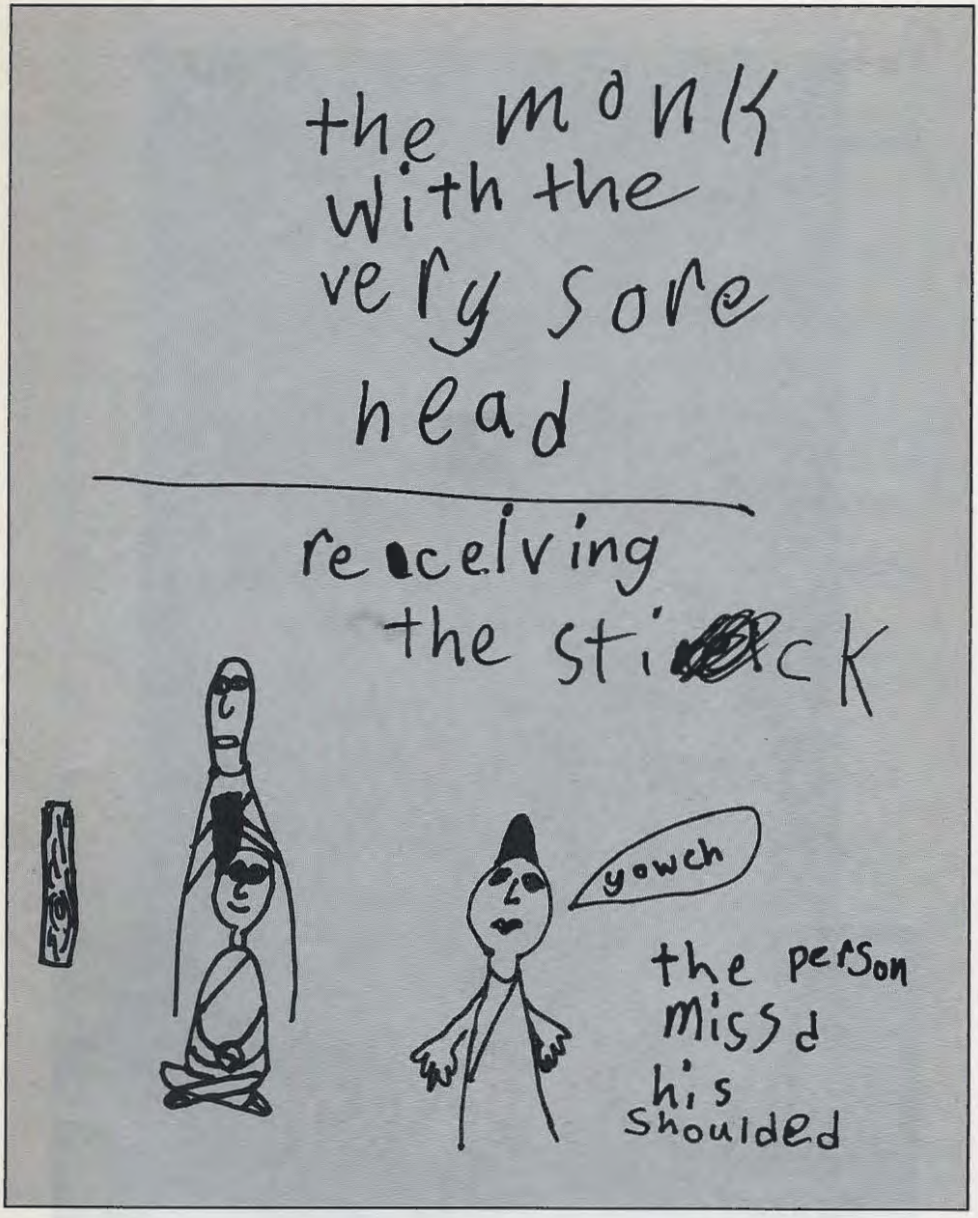

Wind Bell

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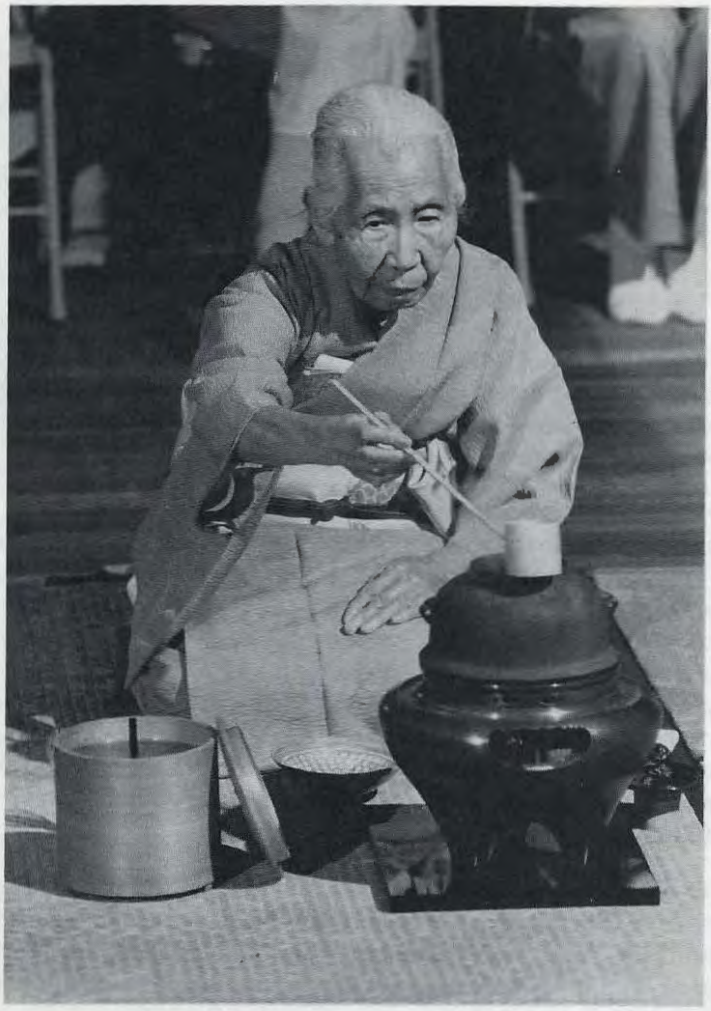


Nakamura Sensei's Last Tea Class

Randall Weingarten

In late October 1991, during the month of *Nagori*, the time of reverence for tarnished, worn-out, well-used and well-loved tea utensils, Yaeko Nakamura Sensei—Green Gulch Farm's resident Tea Master—decided with her family to return to Japan. Although strong of heart and voice and in excellent health, Nakamura Sensei had grown more frail. Over the next few weeks, the tea house at Green Gulch came to reflect her leaving.

I came to the tea house on Monday, November 4, to help Nakamura Sensei teach the Monday class; she would be leaving the following Monday. Sensei was in the kitchen, padding around. As in previous weeks she was full of song: fragments of *utai* (Noh chanting), old Japanese melodies, snippets of American folk songs. I told her we had to exchange the *ro* tatami, currently under her sleeping futon, for the one in the tea room. She laughed, expressing how briefly disruptive this all was, but agreed and we set a time. I also invited her to come to the tea room at four o'clock that afternoon. No need to change into kimono. Informal. She looked at me with a smile, then said, "Tired," and went to her room for a nap.

Later that day, Blanche Hartman and Furyu Nancy Schroeder came for a visit with Sensei. The three women sat around the moon-shaped table in the kitchen, talking of Sensei's leaving and where she would live in Kyoto. They sampled the *okashi* (tea sweets), and Fu made a bowl of green tea.

At four o'clock Kathie Fischer and Bill Perniconi arrived. They escorted Nakamura Sensei into the tea room. In the *tokonoma* was a hanging scroll mount with Sensei's calligraphy: the characters for "matsu kaze," the sound of the wind in the pines. Nearby, in contrast to the quiet, elegant calligraphy, was a bamboo flower container with a camelia branch—the flower of the *ro* season—and a blazing assortment of late fall flowers from the Green Gulch garden. Nakamura Sensei delighted in them. A few minutes later Wendy Johnson arrived. Kathie made tea for all, and I acted as *honto*, assistant. Inside, the room was bathed with late afternoon light. Outside, there was a resident volleyball game, and the air was filled with the sounds of youthful frolic.

As we were sitting drinking tea together, Nakamura Sensei spontaneously began singing "Silent Night." We joined her. She laughed and said what a beautiful voice Wendy had, "like a bird," and mimicked her, whistling. She then began singing an old Japanese folk song that had the phrase "matsu kaze" in it. Wendy had the inspiration of inviting the volley ball revelers to come to the tea house windows and say hello to Sensei. Many drifted over. In the spirit of the moment we invited everyone to serenade Sensei with "Silent Night." The shoji screens were flung open and the residents came and stood around. The community joined in singing " . . . Round yon Virgin, mother and child, Holy infant so tender and mild . . . "

We laughed together, gathered our glistening tears into a small Winter bowl and flung it toward the moon.

Ocean Seal Concentration and the Myth of Inanna

Leslie James
Tassajara, December 10, 1992

I want to tell you about two visions I have of what we're doing, and they may get mixed together. One comes from my study of Dogen Zenji's *Ocean Seal Concentration*. I keep reading it over and over; for me it's very powerful—you have to concentrate even to sit there with it. As I read it over and over again several things stay with me.

As you all know, this is the dark cold time of the year, and it's still getting darker and colder. This is the time of year when mammals—some mammals anyway—hibernate. Cave people would go into their caves and there they'd be for months. We have a feeling of wanting to go inside, wanting to get quiet. For us here at Tassajara, there's sesshin, and in a way, all of practice period.

This practice period most of us knew each other from the summer and it felt like a very warm, safe practice period. There was a place in the beginning,

remember that? Golden fall light, lots of friends around, even though not everybody felt friendly all the time. I think one of the effects of that warm feeling was that we could all go down further into our vulnerable places. That's what I've been feeling and hearing from people. You say things like, "I'm so embarrassed this is coming up, I thought this was done with, this is from so long ago. I feel like I'm still a kid." We often come to practice period or to Zen practice because we want to find enlightenment or liberation or happiness, and then are surprised that we have to deal with all this old stuff. But I think what the *Ocean Seal Concentration* is saying—and also the other vision or story I want to tell you about, the Myth of Inanna—what they're both saying is, this is not different. This stuff, the vulnerable, old (or young) things that we have to deal with are, actually are enlightenment.

In the *Ocean Seal Samadhi* it talks about walking on the bottom of the ocean: "The virtue of traveling on the ocean involves travel on the very bottom of the deepest ocean. . . . Only by the compounding of many elements is this body made. At the time of its appearance, only elements arise; at the time of its disappearance, only elements vanish. . . . The time of the ocean reflection concentration is precisely the time of 'only by many elements'." It is not that the mind, the ocean, gets calm and then everything is quiet and peaceful; *at the time* of the ocean seal concentration, everything—whatever—comes up.

It also talks about how we have to—it's not that we have to, we do—walk on the bottom of the ocean by ourselves. All alone. "It's the expounding of only, eternally." Forever alone.

Let me tell you the story of Inanna, here in the middle of the ocean. Inanna is a Sumerian goddess. Some of the texts about her are from 2000 BC. She's called the Queen of Heaven. There are several stories about her; this particular one is about the descent of Inanna.

She's the Queen of Heaven, and for some reason she decides to descend to the underworld; one way of saying it is that she "sets her ear to the great below." She opens her ear or her mind to the 'great below', and abandons the world that she's queen of. Before she sets out, she adorns herself; she takes all of her symbols of power and identity and puts them on. She has a crown, a lapis lazuli necklace, a breast plate, a golden bracelet, a robe, and a measuring rod. She takes all of these and calls her closest servant and tells her that she's going to the great below. Inanna says, "Stay here, and if I haven't come back in three days, go to the gods and ask them to send help for me."

Then she goes (I think of the characters in this story as all parts of myself) to the gate of the underworld and knocks at the door and the gate keeper asks, "Who's this?"

"I'm Inanna, the Queen of Heaven, and I wish to visit the underworld."

"Why? You know that if you go there you can't come back. Why would you go?"

"I want to visit my sister, Ereshkigal, the Queen of the Underworld." So the gatekeeper goes to Ereshkigal and tells her that Inanna is at the gate. Ereshkigal is fierce, her hair "swirling about her like leeks." When she hears that Inanna is at the gate, she slaps her thighs and bites her lips and says, "Great."

She says, "Lock all the gates (there are seven gates to the underworld), and then let her through them one by one; as she comes through each gate, take one of her adornments, so she has to enter the underworld "naked and bowed low." The gatekeeper goes back to Inanna and says, "You can come in." When she comes to the first gate, he takes her crown, and Inanna asks, "What is this?" The gatekeeper says, "Quiet, Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect. They cannot be questioned." So she goes through each one of the gates and with each one, an adornment is removed and she asks, "What is this?" "Quiet, Inanna. The ways of the underworld are perfect. They cannot be questioned." Until finally everything's been taken from her and she comes into the throne room of Ereshkigal, naked and bowed low. Ereshkigal gets down off her throne. Inanna moves toward her and the

Snack time at Tassajara

Jamie and Jessamyn Meyerhoff

judges of the underworld come forward and condemn her to death. And she's . . . dead. She's hung on the wall; her corpse is hung on the wall on a peg. Ereshkigal then goes into great pain. It's unclear whether she's actually in labor or whether it's just *like* she is in labor.

Up above, after three days have passed, the helper goes to one of the gods and says, "Inanna has gone to the underworld. Will you please send help?" And the god, I forget his name, says, "She chose to go; too bad for her. Once you go to the underworld you can't come back." So she goes to the next god and he says the same thing. Finally she goes to Enki, the god of nature. He says, "Oh my poor daughter, why has she done this?" He takes dirt from underneath his fingernails and fashions a teeny little creature. There are actually two of them, the *galatur* and the *kurgarra*. They're neither male nor female, tiny little things, and Enki gives one of them the water of life and one the food of life and says, "Go to the gates of the underworld, buzz around them like flies, and go in. When you reach the underworld, you will find Ereshkigal in great pain and in labor and her hair will be swirling about her like leeks. Go near to her, and whatever she says—'Oh my body, oh my body,'—you just answer, 'Oh your body, oh your body.' Whatever she says, just repeat it and she will appreciate your empathy and will offer you a gift. Ask for the corpse on the wall and then give it the food and the water of life."

So the *galatur* and the *kurgarra* go to the gates of the underworld, buzz in like flies, go to Ereshkigal and find her in great pain, saying, "Oh my body,

oh my body." "Oh your body, oh your body." "Oh my heart, oh my heart." "Oh your heart, oh your heart." "Oh my back, oh my back." "Oh your back, oh your back." Ereshkigal stops and says, "Who is this moaning and groaning with me? I'll give you a gift." She offers them something and they say, "We don't want it. All we want is that corpse on the wall." And she says, "That's the corpse of your queen." And they say, "Our queen, our king, we don't care, we just want the corpse." So she gives them the corpse. They pour the water of life on her and give her the food of life. Inanna arises and prepares to leave the underworld but the demons of the underworld follow and say, "You can't leave; no one leaves the underworld without leaving someone in their place."

So they follow her out of the underworld and each person that she meets, they try to take. Several of them she refuses to give, like this friend she's left behind, that's the first person. The demons try to take her to the underworld, but Inanna says, "No that's not the one." They meet her sons who are in mourning for her. Finally they come to her throne where her husband is sitting in her place. He's not in mourning, he's enjoying the fact that she's gone. He's glad to see her back, supposedly, but she says, "Take him." He runs; he asks for help from various gods who keep changing him into different animals. There's a long section, pretty awful, of him running from these demons. He goes to his sister's and hides, but eventually they find him. They take him into the underworld. Then Inanna starts to mourn his loss and she goes to his sister, who is willing to spend half the year in the underworld. So the husband and the sister trade off.

You wonder what this has to do with you? Maybe you don't, maybe you know. The seven adornments are called *me* in Sumerian. The translators use the Sumerian word *me*, which fits in well with my interpretation All these ornaments are put on to be me, to solidify my identity. And at some point you make a decision to set your ear to the underworld, to the great below. This seems to me very related to concentration, and to admitting that somehow we are alone. We're not alone in a way, it's so wonderful to have you all here, and yet in some way we're alone. So we admit that and set our ear to ourselves, to our . . . guts. We're willing just to be there with our experience, and gently but firmly to tell our friends to stay behind. We ask for entrance into this unknown, and once we have entrance, at these gates things are stripped from us; our identities, our *mes* are taken away.

In the *Ocean Seal Concentration* it says: "Concentration is expression, is actualization, is reaching back for the pillow in the night." And then it goes on to say, "Reaching back for the pillow is the nighttime reaching for the pillow." Concentration is light; when you concentrate, you can actually see what's right there. You can, you do, express what is there, but it's surrounded by darkness. Sometimes when you concentrate it's so absorbing that you don't notice what you don't know. But with a little perspective, it's very clear how

much you don't know. You know what's right now, right here, but farther away it's unknown. So this reaching for the pillow in the night—it's in the dark; you're acting in the dark. And yet it's a true expression. If you act in the dark, it's just you being you. And contrary to the way we usually are, there isn't a lot of strategizing about how this is going to effect everyone else and how they are going to respond. It's dark; you just do it.

"Reaching for the pillow in the night is the nighttime reaching for the pillow." Everything is active, the nighttime itself is active. We aren't doing this by ourselves. At the gates, things are taken away. *We* don't decide which *me* to drop at each gate. Life works on us and things get removed.

The most striking thing for me about Ereshkigal is how fierce and impersonal she is. All the pain and the attachments didn't affect her a bit. "Okay, let her in. Lock the gates but let her in." Once she gets in there, it's just, "You're dead." Nothing special, just, "You're dead; get up on the wall." But it's part of ourselves that's killed. The Queen of Heaven is set aside for awhile. The mind we use in the light, how we put things together, how we rule the world—it's hung up on the wall for awhile. Then Ereshkigal goes into great pain, the pain of giving birth. I don't know if she's mourning Inanna, or if it's just this birth-giving pain.

Then the little empathetic creatures come. Doesn't this remind you of sesshin? Moaning and groaning, "Oh, my back, oh my knees." By the magic of just being with it, being willing to be there with the struggle, the gift of life comes back. But that's not the end. Inanna's ready to go back, greet the world, become the Queen of Heaven again, but somebody has to keep going down there. Again, this is another part of ourselves. The husband has to go down, the sister has to go down. All the different parts of ourselves; we have to make this trip over and over and over again.

In the story it doesn't get any easier. In a way, it was harder for the husband than it was for Inanna in the first place. Mostly because she chose it, and he tried to run away, he panicked. When you read that part of it, his panic is much worse than just going through the gates. That's how it is for us, too. We decide, "Okay, I want something different in my life, this looks like a good shot," and we naively step into something like Buddhist practice. It seems pretty good for awhile, and then at some point, at various times, a kind of panic sets in because we didn't expect it to be . . . *everything*. It's the things we haven't discovered yet, the ways we're identifying ourselves and existing and living and loving. It's all those ways, and we haven't even separated them out; we're just depending on them. So we get some little intimation of how deep this is going and there may be a moment or two (or more) of panic. But as we go along our trust grows. At any particular moment it can seem overwhelming. But trust of the nighttime grows. Trust that

Bocce ball at Tassajara

the nighttime, the part of life that we can't see or understand, is also reaching back for this same pillow: our freedom, our liberation.

The last part of the *Ocean Seal Concentration* is a story. A monk goes to Sozan and says, "It says in the teachings that the great ocean does not retain a dead body. What is the great ocean?" Sozan says, "The great ocean contains all existents."

"If it contains all existents, why doesn't it retain a dead body?"

"It's not that all existents don't have breath in effect."

He's talking about this great ocean that we are walking on the bottom of; it contains everything. Everything's in there including your past, whatever of your past that still comes into the present, whatever comes up. It's all contained within this ocean, and it doesn't retain a dead body. He's saying that anything that's here is not . . . without effect. Everything is worthy of our attention, our respect, our notice. It's not that we *can* notice everything or that we *should* notice everything. It's that whatever we do notice, whatever comes to us, is worthy. There's nothing that is just a kind of dead body hanging around. Something may seem like it's just a little fly buzzing around, but it may actually be a *galatur* or a *kurgarra*.

So listen carefully. It may seem like there's something that should be swept up, cleaned off the surface of the ocean—"Get those dead bodies out of here." But no, there couldn't be such a thing in the great ocean. So it's up to us to set our ear to the great below, and listen for all existents.

Zen Center News

Tassajara Bakery

After several years of struggling with management and financial problems at the Tassajara Bakery, Zen Center is close to signing a licensing agreement with the Just Desserts company to produce Tassajara bread and to operate the Tassajara Bakery at Cole Street.

The Tassajara Bread Bakery on Cole Street grew out of our experience baking bread during Guest Season at Tassajara. The bakery created employment for the practicing community and self-support income for Zen Center. In 1986, Everyday, Inc. was formed as a for-profit corporation to run the bakery and Zen Center's other businesses. This was done because there were fewer zen students involved in the businesses and because new tax laws made it unwise to continue operating them under Zen Center's non-profit umbrella.

In 1987, Everyday and the bakery entered into the wholesale manufacture and distribution of its popular breads, leasing and remodeling a large production facility on Third Street. This was not entirely successful due to inadequacies of the Third Street site and our lack of experience in wholesale distribution. Although the bakery has made great strides in solving these problems, it is currently operating at a barely break-even point. It needs additional skills and energy to grow and thrive.

Zen Center has had a long and close relationship with Just Desserts' President Elliot Hoffman and we believe that his company shares our deep interest in quality products, service and social commitment. Furthermore, Just Desserts has the expertise in wholesale baking and distribution which we lack. Through the licensing agreement with Just Desserts, we will still have quality control over the bread with the Tassajara label.

Zen Center is proud of founding the Tassajara Bread Bakery, and grateful to all those who have been involved as workers, bakers or customers. And we wish good luck to the Tassajara Bakery in this new incarnation.

1992 Zen Center Board of Directors

We are very grateful to outgoing Board members Dan Howe, Huey Johnson, Katherine Thanas, and offer a special thank you to Emila Heller for her effective and generous work as Board Chair.

The 1992 Board is: Abbot Tenshin Reb Anderson, Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman, President Michael Wenger, Chair Alan Margolis, Treasurer Bill Lane, Secretary Jeffrey Schneider, Ty Cashman, Grace Dammann, Martha de Barros, Kathie Fischer, Gary Friedman, Paul Haller, Blanche Hartman, Marc Lesser, Peter Overton, Peter Rudnick, Furyu Nancy Schroeder, Steve Stucky, Gladys Thacher.

Alan Margolis was re-elected to a three-year term and has accepted the position as Chair with Marc Lesser as Vice Chair. Elected to their first three-year terms: Darlene Cohen, Martha de Barros and Kathie Fischer.

Ben Discoe, Hilary Rand and Micah Sawyer

Board Decision Regarding Abbots' Terms

In February the Zen Center Board held a weekend retreat at Mt. Madonna Center. The discussion focused on the upcoming end of Abbot Tenshin's current term, and the following resolution was passed unanimously. (Minutes from Board meetings are posted at the three practice places.)

"We developed the following criteria . . . We support the community as a whole to develop and thrive; our process should be one of consensus; we honor and support Abbot Tenshin to continue as a prominent teacher; we agree that Abbot Tenshin continue to receive housing and financial support at current levels.

"Whereas the Zen Center by-laws limit an abbot to two consecutive terms . . . And because the orderly ending of an abbot's term . . . is a new and thorough-going process . . . And because we are undertaking an inclusive revisioning of the Zen Center organization/community as a whole . . . We resolve to:

"1. Extend [Abbot Tenshin's] term, which ends December 1992, by two years, to December 1994.

"2. Create a ceremony of gratitude to mark the end of his final term as abbot.

"3. Ask Abbot Tenshin to continue as a Zen teacher in residence for at least three additional years . . .

"4. Extend Abbot Sojun Weitsman's term an additional two years until December 1996 . . .

"All other issues regarding abbots' and former abbots' roles will be reviewed during a community revisioning process."

Possible Change in the Corporate Structure

The current legal structure of Zen Center is a "corporation sole." Under this form of governance, put in place when Zen Center was first incorporated during Suzuki Roshi's abbacy, all decisions, whether secular or spiritual, are made by the chief religious officer, the abbot.

In practice, since 1984 Zen Center's secular decisions are made by a Board of Directors (elected by voting members), which includes the abbots; religious decisions are made by the abbots. The Board would like Zen Center's legal structure to be congruent with its actual mode of self-governance, and has

Micah Sawyer and Steve Allen

been working with legal counsel for several years to understand all the implications of such a change.

The Board is now ready to solicit voter approval to change Zen Center to a "California nonprofit religious corporation." The initial Board of the new corporation would be identical to the current Board, and its bylaws would be identical to the current bylaws. Voting members will be receiving more detailed information regarding this decision.

Membership at Zen Center

Members of Zen Center are those who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and wish to express that feeling by joining the community of practitioners and supporting the Sangha. Members may choose a temple affiliation at either City Center or Green Gulch Farm; joining at either location makes one a member of Zen Center.

Members receive the Wind Bell magazine and other mailings announcing activities. Three years after joining, members are eligible to vote in the annual election for the Board of Directors.

For more information, please visit the City Center or the Green Gulch office, or write or call the City Center office, (415) 863–3136.

Jamesburg Chicken House Transformed

Eleanor Edwards Howe

The practice of sitting is an old tradition in the new Jamesburg zendo. [Jamesburg is the way station at the head of the dirt road to Tassajara.] For years before the building became a meditation hall, it was home to a flock of chickens. This fall, after months of hard work by a dedicated group in the local community, the zendo was officially opened by Abbot Mel Weitsman. The ceremony on September 2, 1991 drew nearly a dozen people, several from Carmel Valley.

"Now that we have this nice space for zazen, people will come," said Mel in his remarks during the ceremony. And as an encouragement to the group, Mel brought with him the altar that had once been in the old Berkeley zendo, when that Zen Center was just beginning.

There has been a zendo and a small sitting group at Zen Center's Jamesburg house for many years. But the room used for zazen was in the main house, sharing space with the people who lived there. Through the years the number of people who met for zazen has fluctuated. Almost three years ago the Monterey Zen Center held two one-day sittings at Jamesburg, and resident caretakers Dan and Eleanor Howe realized that a place separate from the

house would be more suitable and perhaps would encourage the development of a local sitting group.

A building was available—the old chicken house at the back of the property. About ten feet by twenty-two feet, the building was spacious enough for at least fifteen zabutons. With windows just under the roof-line and an open ceiling and skylights, the building let in a soft light reminiscent of the Green Gulch and Tassajara zendos. And set away from the house as it was, there was no noise of telephones, traffic around the food stand or the comings and goings in the compound.

There was a slight problem, however. The previous occupants, who had been moved out of the building about a year earlier, had left quite a mess. The building very clearly had been, and remained, a chicken house. It would take a lot of time, effort and money to transform it. But the idea took hold.

When two Jamesburg residents, Mara Freeman and Mark Olson, began to sit zazen regularly, Dan and Eleanor moved the zendo out to a small room connected to the shop. For a year the four discussed how to pull off the transformation. Mark, a contractor, offered to do the carpentry. A donation of a small private library, which was then sold, brought in about five hundred dollars. Still, the most formidable task seemed almost insurmountable—scraping off years of chicken droppings from the walls and floor. Enter Janene Sclawy, a Jamesburg resident whose practice is Siddha Yoga. She had heard of the plan to create a meditation hall and wanted to help. Janene offered to donate 150 hours of community service to the zendo project and immediately set to work scraping down the walls and floor.

In May of 1991, the group formally presented the project to the Zen Center Abbots and to President Michael Wenger, and asked for their approval and for $800 for materials.

In July a community work day was held. About eight people showed up to help install wiring, sheetrock the walls, put up new window screening and clean the grounds. A week later Mark Olson installed a new pine floor, and the following week zazen was offered in the new building for the first time, even though the project was not yet complete.

After work began it was decided to go back to the Abbots and Officers and ask for additional funds to replace the old tin roof and fiberglass panels with a more secure plywood and roll roofing. Mark made skylights to preserve some of the natural light; the new roof could now be insulated and made watertight.

At the opening ceremony in September the smells of the incense, the new pine floor, and the flower petals that were tossed about melded together in a heady aroma. There was no hint of the hundred or so chickens who had once made the building their roost; but somehow their presence was felt. The building that had nurtured years of sitting will now, in its new life, nurture our practice for many more.

Childcare in the City Center courtyard

Growing Up at Zen Center

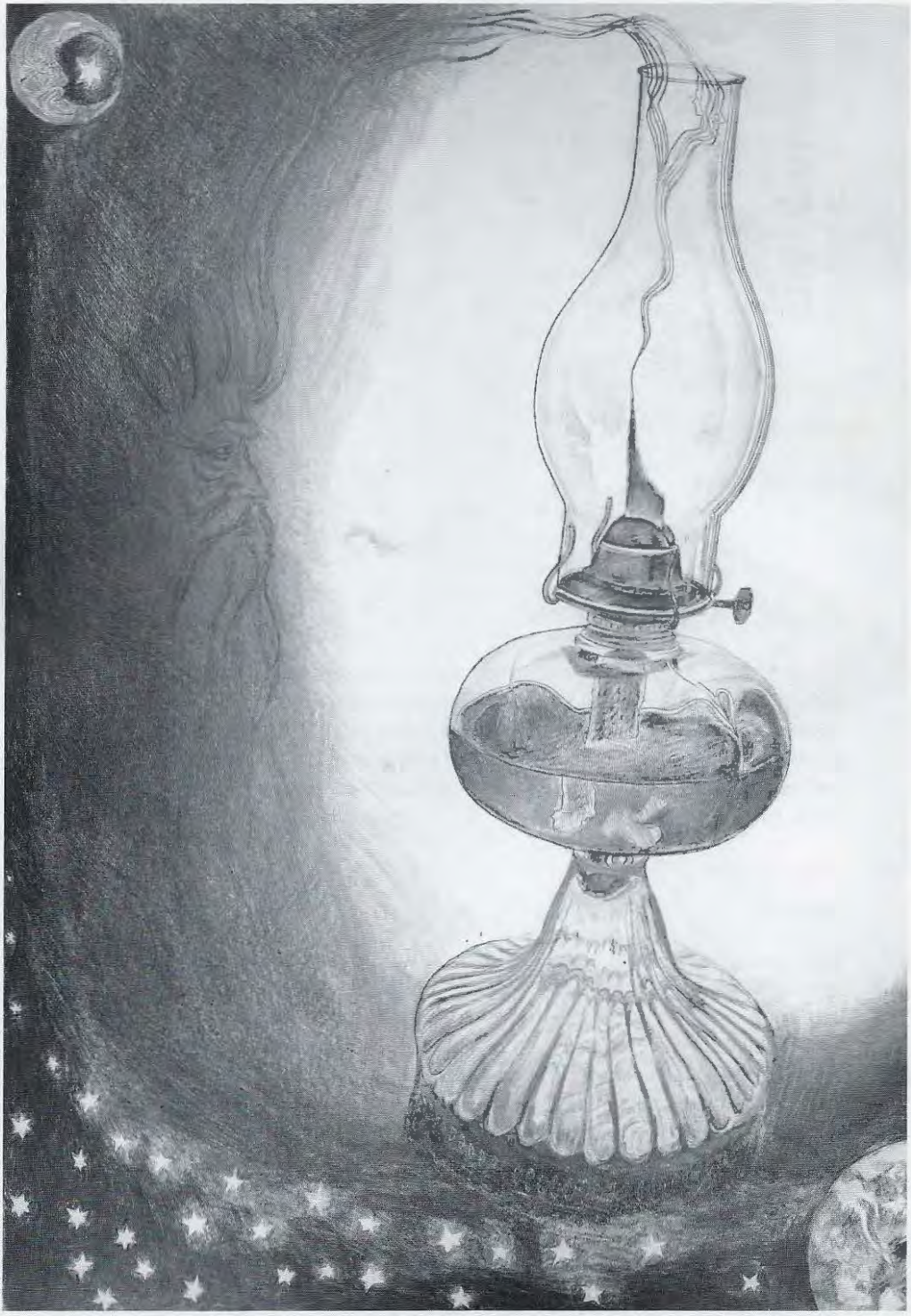
We sent letters to over forty people who have spent or are spending part of their growing up years at Zen Center, inviting them to contribute to this article. Most of them tried to put pen to paper; it turned out to be a difficult assignment. We send gratitude and warm wishes to those who sent items as well as to those who didn't, and humble apologies to any who were overlooked. We invite contributions on this theme for a future issue.

Elena Rivera

Arrival

Tassajara was a crevice, a cracked rock; sulfur poured out of its robes, a hot spring for visitors; water flowed to smooth the bumps while all the while creating new ones. We arrived, my brother, sister and I, on an orange afternoon. The hills were dry and the dust rose beneath the wheels of the jeep. I was fifteen. We stood at the entrance, up above the zendo, after our adventurous ride over rocks on the winding door which had opened at Jamesburg. Tommy came out to greet us with shiny head smiling and something cool to drink.

In my dream I was a monk in India. I was very happy to be there, except that there is a period where everybody should be silent; I don't understand why. I pay admission to the museum; it's a huge mountain with holes. I am silent, everything is silent. I walk.



We looked down from the high spot where we stood and saw that our mother was there; we had felt her immediately among the faceless black robes. She looked surprised, a doe's glance that has smelled change. She had been at Tassajara for a year—she, the deity who came forward. "Mommy!"

We had come from Los Angeles and it was the beginning of summer. We had lived with our father in a house off Santa Monica Boulevard. We had lived in the screened heat of a town making itself into a tragic land, tap dancing classes, two new brothers for the year, and Wonder Woman and Spiderman.

Our mother came up towards us. The Zen students watched, watched silently as she held and touched her children, a laugh echoing in our skin. They watched us, beheld the mother in her black robe and her children, full of her smell and eager to see her. We felt them, these black robes like tall trees. (This was not the first time. We were used to differences. We had lived with Sensei Deshimaru in France, our hair had been touched and cut by Kalu Rinpoche.) A syllable to be spoken, a meal to be made, a chant to be repeated—"Innumerable labors have brought us this . . . "—that was the adventure, and the mountains and hills became a familiarity to dive from, where we put on concerts (which wasn't very Zen), wrote newspapers (which survived the first fire but not the second), and cut gallons of lettuce, onions, and grated carrots.

Jaymz Asher

A Fireside Chuckle

So I got to thinking about ol' Green Gulch Farm and being reared there an' all, and I was reflecting on the notion that my memories and ideas are continually being restructured in retrospect as time flails away. Sounds obvious an' all but, By Gum, it just occurred to me that for several years after moving from Green Gulch I was quite embarrassed about having lived in a Zen monastery. Then in high school it became a small source of pride; it was "cool" and "alternative" when the sixties–seventies revamp was becoming popular. In England I hesitate to mention it because reactions have been particularly snide. However I'd like to believe that the spirit of children has some sort of universal consonance and I still remain imbued with fond sentiment for my childhood at Green Gulch, though at the time my feelings were more ambiguous.

For instance I can chuckle now over certain anguished moments which tormented me as a child. The whole idea of living on a Zen farm with a bunch of mysterious bald people was always embarrassing at school, and having my father show up to my soccer games, bald head a'shining, cheering wildly from the sidelines still wearing half his zazen wear (if not robes), became a constant fear after the first time it happened.

The usual social hierarchy amongst children growing up together was especially prevalent at Green Gulch as I remember. The harassment was passed down the line. As a "little kid" I received endless torment from the "big kids" and doled out my share of it in turn. Excluding the omni-presence of a hoard of parental figures, there were essentially three types of people at Green Gulch for us kids: there were the babies, like my sister, who were too small to torture (at first); there were the little kids, that was me for the longest time; then the big kids, which usually included one or two stray Muir Beach hooligans. Every morning during the school year all of the kids would gather at the base of a hill where cows and horses grazed. We would wait for all the kids to assemble before climbing over the fence and trudging up the hill to the highway where the school bus stopped. I recall one morning as a young'n when the bigger kids waiting with me were particularly friendly; they had given me a chocolate chip cookie to bring to school. It was a giant one, the kind you get out of a big glass jar at a delicatessen and I was advised not to open my lunch box till I got to school or some hoods on the bus might take it from me. Oh boy, did I covet that cookie!—and it surely was huge as it clunked about in my Incredible Hulk lunch box. But I kept to their advice and happily scampered up the hill to catch the bus to school,

Clockwise from top left, Brian Fikes, Nancy Silver, Sam Silver, Kelly Chadwick and Ethan Woods

Buddha's Birthday at Green Gulch Farm

beaming with joy. That kind of thing just makes a kid's day; the world is a happy place, the big kids are suddenly your best friends, school becomes fun, dogs no longer appear to be waiting to bite you, the school bus isn't doomed to drive off a cliff after all, why heck, even brussel sprouts could be edible! Well, maybe not brussel sprouts but certainly asparagus . . . Squash? Eggplant?

When you're a little kid and you have a giant chocolate chip cookie in your lunch pail you're invincible, the Incredible Hulk. Nothing can bring you down when you're the owner of an ENORMOUS CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIE! And so, when I eagerly joined my comrades, the lunch box brigade, out on the benches for recess, I was glowing like a sweepstakes winner, a newly-wed, (a taker of saunas?). With an irrepressible smile I tore open my lunch box like a Christmas gift and revealed the biggest, most gigantic dried cow-pie in the ENTIRE UNIVERSE, crumbling and flaking onto my carrot sticks, scattered over my peanut butter sandwich, contaminating my whole lunch! I heaved the lunch pail to the ground in horror. The sky went black with thunder-clouds, the braying of a million rabid dogs filled the school-yard, somewhere a school bus careened off a cliff, Lucy the cook was steaming up a heaping pot of brussel sprouts for dinner. And eggplant ice cream for dessert.

The big kids got me that day; but perhaps it was just some kind of karma for days to come when I ruled the farm with my tyrannical cohorts, dishing out constant ridicule and harassment to those younger than I, playing my part in the timeless ritual.

No doubt the details of our memories are different, individual, but would it be fair to say that the spirit of children remains the same? Regardless of the environment we were raised in, regardless even of the political climate of that environment? I'd like to believe so. Iraq, Russia, South Africa, California, England, China, Croatia, etc . . . You know, nothing heavy; just the spirit of children . . . you know?

Nova Ray

Diving In

(Nova says, "I spend most of my summers at Tassajara. I decided to write about it because it's my favorite place in all the world.)

Jessamyn and I started our long walk to the Tassajara pool. Jess is my buddy from way back when. We went into the changing room and put on our bathing suits. Then I sailed out to the edge of the pool and did a dive with a flip. Touching the water, I felt like a pin landing on the ground. I didn't seem to make a shiver in the water's pattern. I felt cool and buoyant, without a care in the world.

Free and lively, I sank to the bottom of the pool and did a back somersault. I lay at the bottom of the pool for awhile and looked up at the trees hovering in an endless sea of lights and darks. The shapes were blurry and waterlogged.

Swimming up to the water's surface, I felt very content. Suddenly, Jessamyn started to charge me. I tore across the water and jumped up onto the edge of the pool. I dived back in, swam to the deep end, hopped out, turned, and tried to do a racer's dive. Jess and I quickly switched positions and I began to charge her. She was too fast for me; she skimmed across the pool and stopped suddenly. I smashed into her. We started laughing like crazy.

Soon we were both practicing our front flips and she taught me how to do a tricky somersault act for two people. The water felt cold and soft, like a silk ribbon curling around a present. Jess and I stayed in the pool for an hour and a half straight. It was a good place to be on a sizzling 107 degree day.

We finally hopped out of the pool and leaped into the changing room. My skin felt like a prune. We walked up the dirt road to the grassy lawn holding hands, playfully giggling and skipping our way home in the sunshine. It had been a happy and fun day for both of us . . .

Sarah Nancy Cutts Weintraub

Zen Parents

My parents say some unusual things. For example, a few days ago I pushed my little brother and pretended nothing happened. My mom, instead of saying "Don't push your brother," or something like that, said, "Think about your state of mind when you push your brother." !

Another incident happened this morning: I was about to eat my cornmeal and molasses when I noticed two brown dots on the edge near the side of the bowl. "Daddy," I said, "What are these things?" "They are the pre-voice of the ten thousand molasses," answered my dad. "What's pre-voice?" asked my brother Dave. So my dad explained: " . . . There are ten thousand

Robert Lytle with Robin Clymer, Lauren Wholey and Jessamyn Meyerhoff

Sarah and ten thousand Davey," finished my dad. "If I'm ten thousand I don't have to ask to be excused from the table!" cried Dave. He jumped off his stool and put his head through the arm of my dad's vest, then he began dancing around the room.

To remember to write this I wrote Zen Center Story on my hand. My brother Dave told me to write "Davey is ten thousand," on his hand. So much for a Zen Teaching.

Robin Coonen

For me, growing up at Green Gulch was like having a huge family. At any given time there were at least twenty people to whom I could go to ask advice or opinions. Not only did this give me a sense of assurance, it gave me a range of values and ideas to choose from. While all of my friends outside of Green Gulch adopted only the values of their parents, I had a broad range of values to think over and to decide which to accept as my own.

Bathing babies in the courtyard fountain

Unfortunately, this did not last. The closest I can come to pin-pointing a time for the change was when Baker Roshi, a man whose advice had been very helpful at times, left. A division formed between the people of Zen Center. Some were "for" and some were "against" him; the discontented left. It seemed to me that one day I came home and I didn't know anyone. My vast source of information was depleted at what seemed like a drastic rate. From then on things continued to change. The search for a new abbot began, producing controversy yet again. Little things which mattered so much changed: the main office was locked after certain hours, I was no longer allowed to roam freely, I had to be quiet so as not to "disturb" the guests, Tassajara bread could be found on supermarket shelves, and Greens became trendy.

Green Gulch is still a very beautiful place. I have gone back and walked through it and been asked if I needed any assistance finding my way around. When I do go back, though, I try to look at it as a place I have never been before, simply a lovely place to walk where I may perhaps see a few of the people I knew in my childhood. I would only be searching in vain if I looked for the place of my childhood memories. Green Gulch, like everything else, must grow and modernize in this world of ours.

Nevada Lane

When I was young, not a toddler but also far away from being a teenager, I ate with my parents every evening in the dining room at Zen Center after taking the short walk from 340 Page together. I would serve myself confidently (those red-floored halls were after all my home), bump through the swinging door, and search out a good spot in the hall, looking eagerly around for available after-dinner playmates. The stained glass windows encased in the upper halves of the doors were an enigma to me; somehow I never stopped to notice that the images were of bowing hands. Only in going back to Zen Center after being away for a time did I see the form for what it is. Everything was familiar; chant, eat, silence, clappers, talk, eat, then run off to play on the chartreuse, worn, welcoming carpet at the back of the room with the other children. Tuesday, because of Kid's Dinner, was the anticipated day of the week; running wildly around the rectangular table in the "flop" room almost unsupervised was always pleasant. Besides, we got to buy peach or raspberry push-ups at the Green Grocer afterwards.

I was never self-conscious about living at a Buddhist center. I knew other people lived differently, but it never occurred to me that my experience growing up was strange or unacceptable. Typical of my state of mind at the time would be something like: Dad enters room in robes, head freshly shaven, as friend and I play Barbies on the tatami mats. Friend looks questioningly at me after he has left. "Why's your dad wearing a dress?" "That's not a dress, silly, those are robes for meditation." Friend would now nod knowingly, then say "Why doesn't your dad have hair?" Pause; I didn't know. "I don't know; pass me the dress with the ruffle and the purple polka dots, okay?"

I didn't understand exactly what my parents did for zazen or service although I knew it had something to do with being Zen Center in San Francisco. I don't know if I will ever do a practice period or if the thought of tangaryo will ever stop making me nervous, but it is important to me not to simply leave Zen Center without looking back, for that would be disowning my childhood in a way. So I return to Tassajara each summer, and perhaps one of these years I will grasp what role Buddhism is going to play in my life and how really, fabulously lucky I was to grow up in a community like Zen Center.

Daniel Watson-Weller

(as told to his mother, Mary Watson)

I remember when I was two or three at childcare. I have a picture of Graham. We would eat ice cream at the Mini Park. We would play games. Janine, Dhyana, me and Kieran and a few other people were there. We went to Koshland Park or the Mini Park.

Then me, Kieran, Dhyana and Janine would play in the back courtyard and in the apartment building. I would have my ball and we would bounce it down the stairs. We would have races of balls down the stairs.

This last summer [at Tassajara] I helped make bag lunches. If I wanted, I could taste some of it. I pulled the leaves off radishes; I whipped eggs and made foamy stuff, like a dessert. It was really yummy. Davy and Keiran were there. Katherine, my Buddha mother, was there. I have an American mother and a Buddha mother. At Tassajara we would go to lunch by the stream and feed the fish crumbs.

Especially there's two holidays we do that I like: Christmas and Halloween. In the dining room one year for Halloween there was a yellow light bulb and they hanged a white sheet over it to make it like a ghost. I would go before and put up black and orange streamers—just like Giant's colors. The part I liked was getting candy. In fact, I still have a piece of Halloween candy now. I've saved it for four months.

Buddha's Birthday is at Green Gulch. They send up a big dragon with balloons. I would throw up flower petals like it's raining. I remember the white elephant in the play that went to the bathroom—brown stuff. They wanted to make it more exciting for the kids, I bet.

I go to the Children's Tea at Zen Center. I collect pillows for it. I think a funny lecture was when somebody was talking about the life of the Buddha. They were tempting him with precious jewels and Nintendo. To scare him, evil demons came and when he touched the ground, a big earthquake happened and they ran away. I like when Deanna comes and she reads us a story. I like the tea and when she does her art project. Last time she read a book about a big wave coming. A wise man set his corn fields on fire and so all the people came up and were saved.

Kelly Chadwick

Eric B. and Rakims "In the Ghetto" sends little shock waves through the few remaining drops of macha. Leftover globs of poorly stirred tea powder have been streaked by my tongue toward the lip of the bowl.

Children's service circa 1970

I am often asked, or told for that matter, what a profound effect growing up in a Zen community must have had on my life, how unique an experience it was. It's always very funny to hear my childhood environment described in such reverent esoteric terms. To me, and I think to most of my fellow survivors, it was just life. What one knows as familiar is just reality. I never felt it was more exciting or depthful than anyone else's life. As a child the forces that determine wonder are not any stronger in a monastery than elsewhere.

However, as life continued and I grew older, it became clear that my reality was quite different than everybody else's. Midway through elementary school, I decided that making it through one's childhood at Zen Center and entering the world as a functional citizen was just about the hardest accomplishment in the universe. It's not that it's a bad place per se, I just was never taught that the rest of the world was a little different, that the values and basic assumptions that my parents and everyone else in Zen Center held did not correspond with those of anyone in America east of Oakland and west of D.C. Well, I guess I was told that on a regular basis, but I didn't ever believe it. We did talk about the outside world quite a bit. It was the reason most people claimed to be Zen refugees. I just found it hard to believe that

Hannah Stucky, Sarah Bockhorst and Jason Lesser

this was a country of war-mongering, meat-eating, sitcom-watching, apathetic, racist Christians.

Could it be true? Zen Center and the people associated with it did not have an overwhelming appearance of highly developed consciousness. On the contrary, many seemed a tad lost, slightly confused, or just plain bonkers. How could there possibly be a world so screwed up that all of these people sought out places like Green Gulch where they could sit silently on pillows every morning and night? So at an early age I began to wonder if it was not one giant horrible plot of the Zen Center Board to make all of these confused people feel they could not survive away from its omnipotent supervision. A miniature 1984. The newscasters were actors, the *Chronicle* was published and printed in the hidden basement press below the old furnace, and the personal accounts of the ominous world lurking outside the Bay Area were the words of the brainwashed—once great minds reduced to lowly pawns of the Zen Center Board of Directors. Was this the secret reason my mother had left Zen Center when I was only seven? And what about my father, who always seemed a little funny? Was he somehow involved in the complex Zen State tyranny?

The years sped by and my friends and I learned the many important lessons that this Zen world had to offer. How, far before we reached puberty, to lure beautiful cosmic junkies from the midwest with all those key words like heart, strength, vulnerability, zazen, questioning, and teacher. How to make pipes from old furnace parts, climb any wall, locate the key to any and every

door, memorize the migration patterns of local food distributors, and most importantly that school, unlike quality zazen time, had no real tangible value. Of course my demented but well-intentioned parents deviated a little from general Zen Center parenting practices, but how was I to know?

In '87 my mother and I drove into the heart of the U.S.: Spokane, Washington, our new home. I realized as we drove in on Division Street in our orange '76 VW bus, all horizons endless rows of McDonalds, Ford dealerships, supermarkets, and Arvy's, that all of those messengers passing through our monastery were not brainwashed pawns after all. They were terrified victims of an alien world. After a vague year of smeared together days like the macha in my bowl, I began to grasp my surroundings and found them to be not all that bad. The only problem was I had been, during my many years in and around Richard Baker's empire, rendered incapable of living harmoniously in the "real world." Slowly it became clear that the reality which shaped my childhood was rather unusual, and I would never be able to function in this world using the basic assumptions others took for granted: nothing is actually wrong, that as long as you're not honest about who you are everything will be okay, that one can say whatever one likes as long as it is not dangerous to the structure of our society, pop tops are better than pull tabs, dandruff is worse than cancer, and so on.

What horrible misguidance had I received? Why had my parents withheld such essential lessons from me? My mind had been polluted with virus ideologies and evidently there was no cure. I was lost. I knew I would never be able to function in the society I lived in. Left with a terrible emptiness devouring my soul I turned to the only refuge I knew—indulgence. A life of endless feeding of my insatiable desires. Broken by zazen, delirious from the smell of incense and tatamis, I am left with only one escape—the most difficult path of all—the tantric path! I write this to express my undying gratitude to all the characters of the Bay Area Zen and weirdo community. Without your infinitely faceted array of influences I might have thought it was all about discipline, direction, deep thought and a clear mind. I would not have had the wisdom to follow what I desire. As a renowned English professor at John Woolman School reminded us at least once a week, "Expectation is the absence of wonder."

Anna Sopko

On my fifth birthday I broke my tooth on the drinking fountain near the Tassajara creek. Besides a few vague recollections of cooking eggs in New York City and driving through the Grand Canyon in a blue van on the way to California, I think this is my first real memory. It was at Tassajara that I first learned to love reading, sitting in the tree house by the lower gardens listening over and over to the story of Gilgamesh. I spent what would have

David and Kelly Chadwick and Lew Richmond

been my first grade year getting what my dad now terms a "royal education" with a host of Zen scholars, artists, writers and intellectuals as my personal tutors. I remember sitting at a redwood picnic table in the 110 degree summer heat, neatly copying rows of "Emily, Baby, Mommy" into a blue-lined notebook, because "Y" was my favorite letter.

When I moved to San Francisco so that I could start second grade at a real city school, I naturally assumed that everyone's parents went off to sit sesshin once in a while, and walked down the street every night carrying heavy red-rimmed plates to eat dinner with their friends. But little by little I realized that most of my friends' families didn't bow before they ate dinner. Gradually I stopped talking to my class at school about how much fun I had on Buddha's Birthday at Green Gulch every year.

I don't remember the Japanese chants that I could recite so easily at Tassajara anymore. But I can't forget the community. Today Zen Center, for me, is represented by a collection of people who I meet on the street every evening and who always say hello to me and smile as I walk by. Just this year, as I approach the birthday that, according to some, will mark the legal end of my childhood, I have come to the conclusion that every little person

should be allowed to spend at least a few years of his or her childhood at a Zen Center somewhere in the world. I know that the sense of community and the support I have always felt growing up here is something I will never forget.

Jessamyn Meyerhoff

Dear Friend,

I started remembering all my past summers at Tassajara yesterday. You probably don't remember them very well. Would you mind if I told you about some of them?

The first thing that comes to mind is all the dust and heat and wearing worn out sandles. Coming out of the pool, when our feet were all shriveled up like prunes from being in the water so long. I remember stepping out of the creaky gate, letting it slam behind us and then running to tea.

Before that though, I remember childcare. The bridge that passed over the rushing creek, or still, filled with algae sometimes. I remember bounding across it, stopping in the middle to jump, making the whole bridge shake.

Do you remember the big swing? All the kids would rush out to swing on it, it was so much longer than the other ones. Remember when Jamie would twist us up in the big swing so that when she let go we'd whirl around so fast our hair would swirl out all around us? And when we'd get off we would be dizzy and sick, but it was fun! We'd play Circus on the big swing and House in the fallen trees. Oh, and the haunted house; that was freaky!

I have to go now, friend. Love, Jessamyn

Anna Sopko and Mithra Sawyer

Dhyana Cabarga

During the meal chant before dinner at Zen Center, sometimes Audrey and I would say the chant adding "not":

> Innumerable labors did *not* bring us this food,
> We should *not* know how it comes to us.
> Receiving this offering, we should *not* consider whether our virtue and practice deserve it.
> *Not* desiring the natural order of mind, we should *not* be free from greed, hate and delusion.
> This food is *not* for the Three Treasures, it is *not* for our teachers, family, and all beings.
> The first portion is *not* for the Precepts . . .

Saying the chant this way was fun, and no one knew we were doing it. And we didn't know if our virtue and practice deserved it anyway.

Aron Fischer

When we reached ten, Noah, Jesse, and I shifted from building go-carts and spray painting abandoned sheds to playing baseball and patronizing the snack area. We would return from school at four, eat, leaving cereal spills and buttered toast crusts in our trail, and play baseball loudly during zazen on the lawn outside the zendo. This didn't last.

Green Gulch solved the snack area problem by banning us from it. We protested outside the door, with picket signs. I don't know if it was the picket signs, but we were back in the snack area within a week.

The zazen problem was solved more artfully. Someone had the idea of putting up a flag-pole in front of the zendo, and flying a flag during zazen to signify to us kids that we were to stay off the lawn. What's more, we could decorate the flag. We agreed. One Sunday afternoon, we all sat on the deck with a white sheet and various fabric paints. We put a large, orange and green Buddha in the middle, surrounded by reminders such as "Quiet!" and "Zazen."

We never stopped playing baseball during zazen, but adults kept raising the flag before zazen for several months. The daily flag raising was a neat spectacle. It reminded one of a morning at an elementary school, if the janitor happened to be wearing robes.

29/07/08

Suzuki Roshi—
Questions and Answers

(continued from Fall 1991 issue)

SR: Do you have some other questions?

Q: You mentioned some practice that we could do daily besides zazen which might help us.

SR: Although I said that, right now I would like to put emphasis on emotional activity rather than thinking mind. But it does not mean thinking mind is bad. It too is important. In our daily life it will help us to know this point. But actually the best way is to practice Zen and to have this kind of naturalness which can be extended to your everyday life, your usual activities. That is more what we try to do.

Q: The difficulty seems to be that I use my thinking mind to rid myself of the influence it has on my thinking mind.

SR: I think that knowing this kind of thing doesn't help much. Even though you know it, even though you have a lot of money in the bank, it doesn't help so much. When you actually use it, it will be a great help, but just to know something about it, this kind of teaching or explanation, is not much help actually. So, the best thing is to have actual practice to control your thinking mind, and just to use your thinking mind when it is necessary. Just to know this kind of thing is not enough. The only way to do it is to have the actual power to do it. And to obtain this kind of power we practice zazen.

That is why, when you practice zazen, you must have strong determination or confidence in your practice. The way you practice zazen should not be like reading some book to find out something good, or being fascinated by some beautiful experience. This is very shallow and shows a lack of deter-

mination. So, when you practice zazen, you must have strong confidence: "Whatever happens to me, I will not stop my zazen." You should be willing to die in your practice, that kind of attitude is necessary. It is not just to think something or to find out something.

Q: There are many types of work we can do. We can do work which is just physical, however it is very tiring. And all these different kinds of work entail different considerations. Lately I've been giving it quite a bit of consideration and sometimes I don't really know what kind of work would be most beneficial for a frame of mind which would be good for zazen. I wanted to ask you if there are certain kinds of work or employment that should be avoided and certain kinds that are more beneficial.

SR: Yes, it is of course better to choose your work. But I think there will be two kinds of work. One is physical work without using your mind so much and the other is the opposite, like office work or calculating. This kind of work is mental work during which you cannot practice koan study. You cannot practice koan study when you are counting something. But if it is just physical work, you can do it. I classified it in this way, but most work is not purely mental or physical—maybe a mixture of both. I think the best way is to be concentrated on what you are doing. That is how we apply our practice in our everyday life. Maybe most work is more mental than physical. Don't you think so?

Q: I think it must be better for us if it is more physical than mental.

SR: I don't know which is better. Physical work is difficult and you will be very tired, physically tired. If you are too tired I don't think you can practice zazen after your work. So, even though you practice zazen it will not help you immediately. Little by little you will gain some power, but it will not help you like drinking some honey. When I cough if I take some water it helps a lot; zazen will not help so immediately. But what you gain in zazen will not go away; that is the advantage of our practice. Our practice makes our mind clear and makes our physical and emotional activity natural and strong, and your character will also be more like this, more natural. You will give your good feeling to others. This is also important; when you give your good feeling to others, at the same time you will have good feeling too. Do you agree with that?

Q: What is the place of love and devotion in our practice?

SR: Both love and devotion are very important, but love and devotion should be defined. We do not believe in some label, love and devotion, or some beautiful words. That is just a paper picture. We are not so interested in just a picture; what it means is more important. Love or devotion is something which can be recognized by others so they can respond with confi-

dence. Even though you say, "I love you," "I love our practice," or "Oh, thank you," it doesn't mean much. So again naturalness is important. Something that comes from the source of your hara is more important than some idea or some beautiful words.

Q: For about the last hundred years, in western culture, the idea has emerged that we are civilized. Sigmund Freud said that the repression of many instincts, such as anger, may lead to more problems. If you allow the complete freedom of animal instincts you have chaos, but if you repress them too much people become unhappy and destroy themselves in other ways. How would Zen Buddhism look upon that problem and how would it resolve that? Freud could not see any resolution.

SR: I couldn't clearly follow you, but as for Zen, our way is not like "this" or "that." We don't like to say, "This is Zen" or, "That is Zen." "This is true way, that is not." Tonight I have no time to explain it, but we have some formula to avoid going to extremes, and to have always right judgment about things that you see, about what you do, or about what you want to do. There is some way, not teachings, but some way to observe things more effectively and more clearly, and to know what is wrong with your activity, what you did or what you want to do. So, usually, I am sorry to say, when you ask questions you want to know exactly what is Zen, but we don't want to say what is Zen because something which is said will create problems.

Q: My question wasn't, "What is Zen." It's more, just, how to live? Maybe it would be simpler if I give an example. If I am angry at something and continuously repress my anger it may be bad for me, for my life and for my practice. If I express it, I get rid of it but I may hurt somebody else. So what am I going to do?

SR: I think it's more harmless to express it than to repress it, but at the time you must know what anger is. Actually we cannot be angry with anything, you know. When you are angry with something you should at the same time understand something about yourself. To show, "I am so foolish," you should be angry. Not to stop someone from doing something but to show your foolishness you should be angry. "Oh, I am sorry, I must be angry!" Then it will be a help to you and to others also. At that time you are free from anger, and being angry you will be helped because you don't suppress your feelings.

We have precepts like: Don't be angry. Dogen Zenji's explanation of it is: Anger will be like a beautiful cloud in the sky, or beautiful waves of water when the sun or the moon lights them. Anger is something like that. So according to him there is no need to repress it because it is so beautiful. But when you say it is beautiful it is not so beautiful. When you are just angry, like a boy, like a naughty boy, it may be very beautiful. That kind of

humbleness is more important. If you practice our way you will understand how difficult it is to be humble. It may be better just to be honest whatever you do. We should know that whatever we do or have done is not perfect, so we should say, "Oh, excuse me." If a master slaps his student he should say, "Excuse me." But usually after hitting someone you feel you should kick him too. That is not so good.

Q: You have suggested to us that as students we should try to steal our teacher's way.
SR: [He misunderstands "way" as "wife."] Did I say this or not? I have no idea about my wife being stolen.
Q: Will you please explain how we commit that crime?
SR: How? Do you want to commit that crime?
Q: Steal your way.

SR: Oh, "way." I thought you said "wife." "How can I steal my teacher's wife." Way! Oh, I shall be very glad if you steal my way. To steal your teacher's way may not be difficult, but it may take a pretty long time. If you are patient enough or if you like him, naturally you will eventually steal his way completely. It happens in that way. Even though you don't try to imitate his way, even though you hate to steal his way, it is quite so. I don't know why it happens in that way. To be a teacher is awful, you know, because we don't know who is stealing our way. You reminded me of an awful thing. Students will learn something that a teacher will not want them to learn or to steal. If the teacher is forgetful, his student may be forgetful quite easily. And even if the teacher is very patient it may take a long time for the student to be as patient as the teacher. Something that the teacher wants his students to steal from him they may not steal. Dogen Zenji says, "We must practice hard for our descendants, for our disciples." Not for ourselves. If we know how important it is to have good disciples, then we will practice very hard. When we come to this point, our practice is not just for us. It is for our disciples or for others rather than for ourselves. When we have real relationship of teacher and disciple, that relationship is much deeper than the relationship between you and your children, or you and your wife or husband. It is much deeper than that.

Thank you very much.

Silvie Senauke

Participants in the Hokubei Sesshin

East Meets West at Tassajara

Last fall at Zen Mountain Center, thirty Soto Zen teachers from Europe, Brazil, Japan and the United States met at Tassajara for a two-week intensive training sponsored by Sotoshu Shumucho, headquarters of the Japanese Soto Sect. Termed *Hokubei* or "North American" Sesshin, this historic meeting was the first time Western representatives of Soto Zen lineages met officially with their Japanese counterparts outside of Japan. Three earlier month-long *Tokubetsu* or "special" Sesshins were sponsored by Sotoshu in Japan in 1986, 1988, and 1990, designed for Westerners whose training had been entirely outside of Japan.

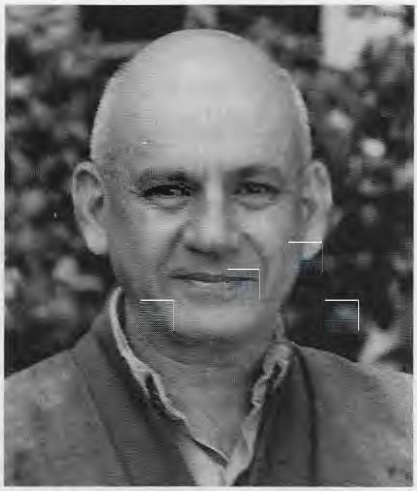
Whether in Japan or America, these gatherings have demonstrated the benefits of face-to-face meeting. The Soto Zen tradition has been flowing to us from Japan for nearly a century now. The open-hearted offering of the Dharma by Japanese teachers was received here with "beginner's mind." Still, the parent generation in Japan and the Western practitioners have felt some natural distancing. This difference in outlook and perception was confronted at Tassajara, both sides offering, both receiving. Participants sensed that the meeting was a historic moment.

The group of teachers and senior monks included two Europeans, nine Japanese and sixteen Americans. The chief lecturer was Taizan Maezumi Roshi, Abbot of the Zen Center of Los Angeles, who gave nine lectures on *Gakudo Yojinshu—Points to Watch in Observing the Way* by Dogen Zenji. Other lecturers were Tsugen Narasaki Roshi of Keijuji Temple in Japan, and Tozen Akiyama Sensei, Abbot of Milwaukee Zen Center, and our Abbots, Tenshin Anderson and Sojun Weitsman [Abbot Sojun's lecture follows this article].

Participants followed the practice period schedule of zazen, oryoki meals, study periods, lectures and work. Tassajara witnessed much informal interchange, as Westerners from different groups and the Japanese participants shared styles of serving meals, playing drums and bells, and chanting. This intimate exchange helped to ground the training and simultaneously to liberate it from cultural stereotypes.

The question of certification of Western teachers and training centers has been a background issue in these gatherings, and time was scheduled for continued discussion. Priests at Zen Center have not been certified within the Sotoshu system since Suzuki Roshi's death. Western teachers and representatives of Sotoshu have been working to create some new criteria for certification, which would have many benefits, including allowing ordained Westerners to be recognized as such when studying in Japan, and providing verification from outside the individual groups. A new proposal to the Sotoshu Shumucho was unanimously approved at the meeting.

The Hokubei Sesshin was a new but natural step in the march of Soto Zen brought to the West by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, Dainin Katagiri Roshi, Hakuun Yasutani Roshi, Kodo Sawaki Roshi, and so many others, and the depth of our gratitude to the early teachers was vigorously underscored in the talks. One day all participants and practice period students made the climb to the ashes sites of Suzuki Roshi and Katagiri Roshi for a monthly memorial ceremony. In the words of Tassajara Ino Setsuan Gaelyn Godwin, "That morning we all gathered in the warm October air and walked in a slow, cheerful procession up the hillside to the memorial site. The *inkin* led, followed by Narasaki Roshi, his two attendants, Zen Center's Abbots, Maezumi Roshi and the rest of the sixty people, in a long snaking line. At the site, Narasaki Roshi spoke to Suzuki Roshi and to Katagiri Roshi in Japanese. It was profoundly moving to stand in the midst of this rare gathering, simply acknowledging the tremendous effort that had been made on our behalf in Japan, and the many decades of devoted effort in this country to teach us and to help us stand up. Tears were falling all around."



Raise a Speck of Dust, Reunite the Dharma Family

Sojun Mel Weitsman
October 13, 1991

First of all I would like to extend my gratitude to the practice period students for sharing their space and practice. It's very unusual to have this kind of meeting the first two weeks of practice period. The *tangaryo* [entering] students didn't even have a day off after tangaryo because they were helping us get everything ready. And I really appreciate the way the practice leaders have kept things together and helped the sesshin to work. I feel a wonderful sense of harmony between both groups, sesshin and the practice period. It seems like momentum is beginning for all of us to continue for the next two months. So we've cancelled all of the flights (laughter). . . . We're sorry to see everyone go, actually. It seems like a shame to gain momentum just when everyone's leaving, but that's good. It makes us want more. A little taste, and that's good.

I especially want to thank Yamamoto-san and Yoshinami-san from the Sotoshu, who organized this sesshin. Last year when Tenshin-san, Keido-san, Jakusho-san and I went to Japan for Zuisse, we stopped in at the Sotoshu and met Yoshinami-san and Yamamoto-san and spoke with them about what we are doing, and how we could work together. At that time both groups were approaching each other cautiously and carefully. Then this year we received a letter from Sotoshu that said we'll have a Tokubetsu Sesshin at Tassajara in the fall. It seems that Maezumi Roshi had talked to the Sotoshu people and suggested that, and it had been suggested by us too, but suddenly here it was. A two-week special sesshin. So we said, "Okay, let's do it."

Since Tassajara runs year round without any gaps, we were not quite sure where to place it. So we decided that it would be the first two weeks of practice period, and somehow we'd put it all together. We didn't know how, and we knew there would be problems, but we would figure them out as we came to them. So that's what we did. I was rather surprised that so many people could do it on such short notice.

I must say that I was really pleased to see how Yamamoto-san relaxed into Tassajara, and that we could communicate so well. By the time he left, I felt that he was really pleased to have been here and to have experienced what was going on at Tassajara. I'm really happy at the way Yoshinami-san is also flowing into Tassajara and the way we're treating him. You know, Yoshinami-san is right at the turning point of our relationship between East and West. I think it was Rudyard Kipling who said, "East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." This is Yoshinami-san's koan.

So both Yamamoto-san and Yoshinami-san have been really encouraging to us. They are between two worlds, getting pressure from the 700 year-old tradition of Japan and the young upstart tradition of the West, trying to make some kind of cohesive relationship that works. That's their job. I really appreciate the work they already have done.

I also want to extend my respect to Saikawa-san, who wasn't quite sure of what he was getting into when he came here. We've had our jockeying around, but he proved to be very flexible and open. One of the highest moments for me was yesterday when we went to the back porch of the zendo early in the morning to do a little chanting practice. There were a few other people from here, from practice period, and instead of doing chanting practice, we just started talking in a very casual way. There was no barrier, no agenda. Everything fell away and we were just standing there talking to each other like old friends, interested in each other and in what each one of us had to say and to give to the other. To me, that's the real accomplishment of this whole thing, that we can just do that. That's the pure practice I'm interested in.

I also want to extend my gratitude to Maezumi Roshi for giving his time and his support, not just to this sesshin, but to Zen Center. I remember in the years after Suzuki Roshi died, when Jakusho-san and I were on our own, and Maezumi Roshi was always very encouraging, confirming, and helpful. He remains that way today. I think we don't always know what he has done for us, but I appreciate it very much. Thank you very much, Maezumi Roshi.

I also want to thank Shosan Vicki Austin, our abbots' assistant, for organizing the sesshin and coordinating it with the practice period, communicating with the Shumucho in Japan, and taking care of all the confusion—not knowing if everybody's coming, when they're coming, or what their names are. She just sailed right through it all.

I feel that there is a koan that epitomizes our situation with Japan and the Shumucho at the moment. This is Case #61 in the Blue Cliff Record, Fuketsu's "One Particle of Dust." There are various ways of approaching this koan, so please give me the space to interpret it in this way. Engo introduces the koan saying "Setting up the Dharma banner and establishing the Dharma teaching—such is the task of a teacher of profound attainment. Distinguishing a dragon from a snake, black from white, that is what the mature master must do. Now let us put aside for a moment how to wield the life-giving sword and the death-dealing blade, and how to administer blows with a stick. Tell me, what does the one who lords it over the universe say?"

The main case: Fuketsu said to the assembled monks, "If one particle of dust is raised, the state will come into being. If no particle of dust is raised, the state will perish." Later on, Setcho, holding up his staff, said to his disciples, "Is there anyone among you who will live with him and die with him?"

And then Setcho has a verse. "Let the elders knit their brows as they will. For the moment, let the state be established. Where are the wise statesmen, the veteran generals? The cool breeze blows; I nod to myself."

Raising a particle of dust is a way of saying "starting a practice place." Starting a place like Tassajara is raising a speck of dust. Zen Center is a speck of dust. Los Angeles Zen Center is a speck of dust. Eiheiji is a speck of dust. If one raises a speck of dust, the state will come into being. If we don't do something, it won't happen. So the question is, what should we do? This was Suzuki Roshi's koan. Suzuki Roshi had been invited from Japan to Sokoji Temple in San Francisco to take care of the Japanese congregation. Many Western Americans started to sit with him. He invited people to sit with him and Zen Center sprang into existence. That was the first speck of dust. It just happened. But in deciding to do something, you don't know what's going to come up along with this speck of dust. I heard one time that when we were buying the building in San Francisco on Page Street Suzuki

Roshi said, "I'm so nervous, so anxious about this that I don't know whether I'm going to the bathroom in the sink or washing my face in the toilet."

Setcho later holds up his staff and says to his disciples, "Is there anyone among you who will live with him and die with him?" The first part, raising a speck of dust, is to decide to do something. The second part, to "live with him and die with him," is how do you maintain it? How do we know what we're doing? Back then we thought, "This seems possible. Why don't we just do it?" But Suzuki Roshi knew that if you raise up a particle of dust you're liable to raise up a whole cloud of dust. So this is like parents and children. Suzuki Roshi was like the parent, and we were like the children. The parent has understanding and maturity; the children just want to go ahead and do something. We still have this kind of problem.

Suzuki Roshi came in 1959. In 1967 we bought Tassajara. In 1969 we bought the Page Street building, and in 1970 Tatsugami Roshi came to Tassajara and developed the monastic system that we now have. There were a lot of people at Zen Center at that time. Some people just wanted to develop a community style. So when we brought Tatsugami Roshi from Eiheiji—he had been Ino at Eiheiji for ten years—to set up the monastic system, it separated the people who just wanted to live in a commune from the people who actually wanted to practice at a monastery. That whole practice period we spent forming the *doan-ryo*, the *tenzo-ryo*, the *rokuchiji*, all of the systems that we now have. He taught us how to chant, how to hit the drum, how to serve. Before that time we had no formal training.

I was *shuso* [head monk] with Tatsugami Roshi, and it was wonderful to practice with him. He didn't speak any English, I didn't speak any Japanese, but he would speak to me in Japanese and I would speak to him in English, and we seemed to understand each other. I don't know how that happens, but it does. Before Suzuki Roshi died we had lots of Japanese teachers. I can recall at least five Japanese teachers I directly practiced with at Zen Center, and it was a really wonderful time. All those teachers were so gracious and generous, and we really enjoyed their presence and enjoyed learning from them.

After Suzuki Roshi died, Zen Center really took off. Katagiri Roshi and Chino Sensei had gone, and we didn't really have any Japanese teachers around. We decided to see what we could do on our own. So for twenty years we've been practicing without Japanese teachers. Zen Center went *psssshew!* like a rocket, and then *kapow!* it crashed. Zen Center made a spectacular rise, and we wondered, "God, where is it going?" But it couldn't maintain itself because it didn't have the structure. It wasn't built to do what it did. And it just crashed.

Tassajara Ino
Gaelyn Godwin

For four or five years the members scattered and the people who remained dealt with their grief. That was the dominant feeling at Zen Center—grief. So in the last years we've had a process of stabilization, and Zen Center's doing pretty well—picking up the pieces and trying to maintain a simple, thorough practice. Now here we are back again after twenty years, making some connection with our Japanese brothers and sisters. We've grown up a bit.

Tatsugami Roshi used to say, "You are all baby bodhisattvas in a baby monastery." We used to enjoy that. "Yeah, we're baby bodhisattvas in a baby monastery." Now we've been out on the street. The kids have been out on the street, and had some hard knocks, learned a thing or two, and now we want to go back to our familial roots and say, "Hi. What can we do now? Is there any way we can continue together?" From my point of view that's what's happening at this moment.

One of our questions is, what do we have to offer each other? When I think what can we give to our Japanese brothers and sisters, I can't think of anything. I feel kind of presumptuous or arrogant. If you have children, then you realize that children are your teachers. I don't know anybody with a kid that hasn't said, "This is my teacher." But the kid does not say, "I am my parents' teacher." That's presumptuous. So the kid can be the teacher, but the kid should not know that he's the teacher. If I say, "I have something to teach you, or give you," that's assuming some kind of role. So really all I can give is my sincerity . . . my dedication to practice.

At a certain point kids always wants to be left alone to do what they want. My son Daniel is almost ten, and whenever I tell him anything, he says, "That's obvious. Don't tell me something that's obvious." So now I keep my mouth shut and don't tell him anything. But I understand his position. He wants to stretch his own arms and legs, and find his own way. I have to let him make his own mistakes, with watchful guidance. And then when he hurts himself, he comes back to me because he knows I'm there for him.

Daniel also used to say, "Let's go out and get some candy." And I would say, "No, we can't buy it. Candy's only for special occasions, and only a little bit." "Then why do they sell it?" (Laughter) It's perfectly logical. He's got his logic down. Why do they sell it if you can't just go out and buy it? But his logic is not tempered with experience. I feel sometimes that we're perfectly logical in our assumptions, but our experience isn't always deep enough to temper our logic. So we have to be very careful. We want our candy, we want what we want, and there it is . . . why can't we have it?

Our practice is the practice of great patience. If we want something too much, this is what spoils our practice. It comes up in all of us. When I started to practice at Berkeley Zen Center, I decided that zazen was what I was doing. Every day I would sit zazen. If somebody wanted to sit zazen with me, that was wonderful. If nobody came, O.K. Feeling good, feeling bad, liking it, not liking it, it doesn't matter. If we have a flourishing Zen Center, great. If it falls apart, O.K. The main thing is, every day we just sit zazen. It doesn't matter where we are, or how we feel. Very simple practice.

We don't like our practice to be complicated, but the more people we have, the more complicated it gets. How do we keep our practice simple in the midst of all these complications? And when we start relating to our Japanese brothers and sisters more closely, our lives will get more complicated. How can we keep our practice simple and pure? How do we meet? Where do we meet? Should we become more Japanese, or should the Japanese become more Western? We can simply respect our differences. We can honor our Japanese brothers and sisters for being Japanese, and they can honor us for being who we are. This is universal practice. It doesn't belong to anybody, but it belongs to all of us.

When I was young, I was looking for my Jewish roots. I was looking for a Hasidic Jewish teacher, and I found Suzuki Roshi. And that's what he was. (Laughter). It's true. I'm sure that deep down he knew it, because where we met was the place where sectarianism or tribalism doesn't matter. You know, Jewish people are a tribe. Japanese people are a tribe. So tribal feelings create a barrier, and we can only go so far. I feel that in a certain way with Japanese Buddhism. But I also feel that Suzuki Roshi had crossed that barrier. It was no longer a problem for him. So we could enter into the same

space. I could be me, and he could be him. And we could both include the whole world within ourselves.

We need to trust each other, offer the best we possibly can, and really try to come to some pure synthesis which may take a long time. Nobody knows. Setcho in his verse says, "Let the elders knit their brows as they will." This means the old people who know a lot will say, "What are those youngsters doing? Are they doing the right thing?" They knit their brows. Setcho says, "Let them knit their brows as they will. . . . For the moment, let the state be established." A positive note. "Where are the wise statesmen and seasoned generals?" That means, where are the Zen masters and mistresses? Where are the leaders? Who's going to do this? And then Setcho says, "The cool breeze blows. I nod to myself." This is a very important point. "The cool breeze blows" means whether it happens or doesn't happen, every day I sit zazen. If it works, great. If it doesn't work, O.K. I just do my best, and every day I sit zazen. This cool breeze means nothing can disturb us, we are not attached to anything. When we come to the zendo, we let go of everything. When we go outside, it's all new! It's up to us. What do we want?

In a way it's like being an illegitimate child. Does the illegitimate child want to be part of the family, and does the family want to accept the child as legitimate? And supposing that happens, how do we act? Does that mean the child takes on all the family customs? After you've been out in the world, you may not want to take on all the family customs. You have your own customs. And does the family really want this ruffian running around the house? These are interesting questions.

So all of this comes up with a speck of dust, but I feel very encouraged. The various facets of this gem—Japan, Europe, South America, all over the world—how do we make this gem shine? We've set up the Dharma banner. We've raised the speck of dust. We're ready for new horizons. So we can make a big effort, but our effort should be to maintain pure practice. That's all. I'm really not asking us to do anything else, but all of us together to maintain pure practice. If we take care of Buddha, Buddha will take care of everything.

As Maezumi Roshi was saying last night, quoting Dogen, "Just turn the Dharma, and then let the Dharma take care of it." We need this trust. We have to have this faith. This has been my experience, my direct experience. So let's not get fooled by anything, or overly ambitious. Just to learn how to let go and be together is enough.

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SAN FRANCISCO

MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY
5:25-7:05 am zazen & service
5:40-6:30 pm zazen & service

SATURDAY
6:30-7:40 am zazen & service
7:40 am temple cleaning
7:55 zendo breakfast
9:25-10:05 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
(8:45 am zazen instruction)

SUNDAY no schedule

GREEN GULCH FARM

Schedule may change during zendo reconstruction. Please call (415) 383–3134 to verify.

SATURDAY THROUGH THURSDAY
5:30-7:00 am two zazens & service
5:15 pm zazen

FRIDAY
6:30 am zazen & service

SUNDAY
5:30-7:00 am two zazens & service
8:30 am zazen instruction
9:25 am zazen
10:15 am lecture
12:45 pm lunch

ONE DAY SITTINGS: once monthly; SEVEN DAY SETTINGS: twice yearly; THREE AND FIVE DAY SITTINGS: offered periodically. Each year there are residential practice periods of two–three months' duration at Green Gulch, City Center and Zen Mountain Center. For more information, please write to the City Center.

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