

Notebook for Suzuki Roshi
1966-1967

Toni Johansen

January 29, 1966

"Wrong! Wrong!"

At last I will write a page in this notebook without tearing it out. Until tonight I have discarded each page as being too incomplete and perhaps even very wrong in my understanding. I tore out each page because I couldn't accept the incompleteness - the wrongness - of my understanding of Zen.

But now perhaps I am learning to accept making mistakes. Maybe I can accept being wrong and go on bravely and sincerely without trying to kick sand over an error I just made or run away from an error I am making.

What exactly did you quote Dogen as saying about how Zen is being wrong one day after the next, or living one mistake after another?

Though I don't grasp completely, of course, what he said, I understand that I will never escape from being wrong.

Perhaps it is because "perfection is unattainable" and yet we are always working for perfection.

Of course when we have an unattainable standard set for ourselves, we shall always be "wrong," that is, we shall never be perfect.

Yet it may be that our perfection lies in our continuing to work for perfection while accepting our continual "wrongs!"

February 3, 1966

(The Deep Dark Secret!)

Katagiri-sensei is laughing at my "deep secret" which I embarrassedly confessed to him. I never have told anyone before - except Tony! - because I feel that I shouldn't even be thinking of it. That is, I very much, perhaps too much, want to be a Buddhist nun. Are you laughing, too? Even though I can laugh at myself, the desire remains.

Not that I do not wish to be wife to my husband and mother to my children. I feel fortunate to have such a fine family. Of course I only think of becoming a nun when the children are raised. But I wonder if it is not very bad practice to be thinking so far in the future.

Really I know that I must live in today completely. In today I have every chance to make STRONG effort and train hard. The complexity of my family relationships gives

me such opportunity to make my effort.

It is hard, though, to think about those years when the children will not be at home, and I suppose I shall teach school, and continue to try to practice as an American housewife

Oh, it is difficult to be writing this - to be honest about my emotions, while at the same time trying to be intellectually in control of these strong feelings. You see, I feel such a reverence for my master that I would wish to work for him and follow his teachings every hour - and YES I DO know I can do that without being at his temple. And I DO know that I will pay homage to Buddha and propagate Buddhism ~~if~~ if I will simply (though it doesn't seem "simple") really make my effort to be that which I am. Now. Here.

But do you remember how you said that in ^{our} culture we seem to have our religion

in our chest, rather than in
our diaphragm - our center?
You said we do not have
our religion where we live,
where our strength ~~is~~ is, but
only in our emotional chest.

No, those aren't your words,
but I think I am experiencing
my "chest" religion as I
write this! I have a pain,
a longing, a beating of wings
of a bird inside my rib cage.
And this feeling is my longing
to study as your disciple as
you do in Japan, cleaning
your temple, sitting with you
in Zazen every day, learning
from your everyday way of
life. And the feeling has to
do ^{also} with leaving you and
studying and training as a
nun and maybe I another
part of my "confession" - someday
helping to bring Buddhism to
to our over-ripe adolescent country.

Now the STRONG part
of my religious feeling, that
part which is wiser, calmer,
and closer to our Buddha-
nature is well aware that
I should find the way in

whatever I am doing. Really,
I am trying to learn to get
under my emotions to the
basic strength and wisdom
of our Buddha nature. But I
am telling you of my emotional
longings so that you will
know where I think I am.

February 14, 1966 (after Monterey)

Oh, such indescribable good feeling! I'm filled with a joy which somehow manages to fit comfortably inside my body without bursting to get out. It is a comfortable bearable joy because there is great peace in the midst of it.

To know that it is not foolish to want to be a nun, is such marvelous relief. To have you understand and accept my deepest longings and struggles brings the greatest encouragement. And to have you explain that my confusion after confusion will add richness and depth - NOT weakness - to my experience, has brought undefeatable hope.

The last entry (February 3rd) contained a sense of apology concerning my surging emotional feelings. But now you see how today I accept and enjoy being an emotional human being. What a gift of myself you have given me!

If only I can not forget
all that I feel today! If only I
don't slip completely back into
the delusion of isolation. We
become so lonely and feel so
utterly inadequate when we
experience that feeling of being
an isolated small self, a
small self that is simply
incapable of enough understanding
to be an adequate expression
of . . . (?) . . . of Buddha.

So often I have had
the almost hopeless feeling that
I have only enough understanding
to realize I do not completely
understand, and would forever
lack the ability to live in
harmony with what truly is.

But for the present -
this great eternal present -
the reaching for perfection
is the most beautiful truth
in itself!

Look at my writing and
you will see that I am today
an exclamation point, an
underline of a word, a ring of
a temple bell.

(Same day, different approach)

"Confusion"

Truely the confusions are "settling in" like softly drifting snow, and I hoped I don't get quite so deep in them this time. I'm not going to feel defeated by the confusion now, though, as you have assured me of its value. But I must admit, I did enjoy the feeling of the ground swept nearly clear of snow as we drove home from Monterey

A great part of the confusion is in the form of self-criticism which seems of the destructive type, but we shall hope not.

For instance, it is becoming hard to believe that you actually could have said that you receive encouragement from me, and that you will enjoy reading ~~something~~ I have to express. Yet I know that if I do not have faith in me, then I am not doing you justice. To have the deepest appreciation for your Buddha nature, I must accept

mine. But today it is not so easy.
How can I worry about failing you? Yet I have begun to worry again about letting you down, letting Buddha down, letting me down.

Another self-criticism can best be expressed by reminding you of your Master pushing you into the mud when you stated the name of the worm you found on the fish's body. It seems that I notice now every bit of pride or egotism as it arises in me, and I shove myself into the mud of my own judgement.

Everytime in the last two days that I have realized that I want to be correct, to be right, I wonder WHO is this, that is wanting to be right???

no one knows what is ^{wrong} love and what is ~~not~~ true love, when he is in a kind of doubt and fear.

Have faith in me and ⁱⁿ yourself and your husband, and come and see me, and keep going on and on. You and your husband at last come to the front door of our way.

Let's have a meal with all of us, you and your husband, and my wife and I myself. But wait! I must consult about it with my tigress.

February 15, 1966

Master-Pupil

Buddhism did not invite me because of its deep and sound philosophy or its rich tradition, though these are extremely valuable. I came to see if there was a human being who could be what I had only an idea that human beings could be. I came with the longing to see religion expressed not simply explained intellectually or structured in rituals, but to see it live. Hardly did I dare to hope it possible, and then you existed and religion was born.

Of course, without you the truth would still be the truth. But for me its existence would be like that of an unborn child, real and undeniable, yet untouchable.

At first it was such a complete dream-fulfilled to find you, that nothing else in Buddhism mattered. Sitting in zazen was merely a waiting period until you would lecture to us. I simply sat waiting for

40 minutes to hear you speak when Zen was finished. It hardly even mattered what you said in your lecture - it was great encouragement just to see you.

And yet, I did hear you and began to follow your teachings as best I could. Zen began to become more Zen and less waiting.

As I listened and heard, I grew critical of my own feelings for you. It seemed that surely I must not feel so strongly, for I feared I was "clinging" to my master, and would this be Zen? Surely I would have to leave you, I thought, or I would never become strong on my own.

For a couple of months I went through a depression that seemed hopeless. I felt I was in the "trap" of Zen, in a challenge for which I was unfit. I almost resented Zen for becoming the only way for me, and longed to find a different commitment, a "lighter" way to live.

But I felt resigned. I had enough intuition, I groaned to myself, to know that Zen was the way, and yet I felt I would never have enough understanding to practice the way. And so, I felt certainly that I was cast in a part for which I was incapable.

What finally brought my total commitment was the simple truth that it was impossible for me to do anything else. I began to approach the practice with less concern for whether or not I did it perfectly, and became more concerned with simply making my effort.

~~Temporarily~~ Temporarily, my worry about becoming too dependent on you, was relieved when I spoke to you about it.

Truly, I do not know exactly what you explained, but you made me feel that I would now have the strength and faith to practice alone, but that the problem (the choice) did not really exist.

And now do I feel

the truth of this! Your strength and my strength are one hand there is no coming or going, staying or leaving.

We are dependent because we are one strength, and independent because we are one strength.

What sense is there to go away from you like a proud, frightened child, when it is impossible to go anywhere without you?

March 3, 1966

"Picking Up"

The day before yesterday I had the pleasant experience of picking up litter from the grassy square between these apartments. It was such a simple activity. Yet it ^{was} new. Never before ~~had~~ had I done that kind of activity without being critical of those who had thrown things carelessly down, or those who had walked by them. But this day, as I went to pick up a crumpled paper, I experienced the action to be a part of the action of the person who had thrown the paper down!

It was one act, no right or wrong comparison to be made. Although it was not more correct to pick up the paper, it was the way. It was a natural expression. I felt nearly grateful to the people having thrown the paper on the grass.

As I write about it, my expression in words is less clear. But in that moment, the nature

of ourselves seemed clear and simple.

Sameday

"Pre-menstrual muddle"

Another month gone by, I mentioned to you how I (like many women) experience a great deal of tension and irritability and depression during the last couple or more days before the beginning of each menstrual cycle. I become heavy physically from increased water retention ~~in~~ throughout the body — and heavy in the mind and expression.

If I were off in the hills in a cave, I'd wait them out. But in the midst of family life and the immediate world, I blunder along, making a SHAMBLES of many relationships — particularly that expression of motherhood and being a wife.

I cannot even understand things intellectually as well as on other days, and OBVIOUSLY do not react well emotionally. It is like a dreadful regression and I lug around delusions which I can usually see through.

This emotional tone is

explained by science as having
the physical basis of imbalance
of hormones as well as perhaps
increased fluid in the brain
tissues causing pressure. So
I try to understand my state
of being in terms of my body
having an effect on my mind.

But NO! The mind and
body are one. And feeling
as "deluded" as I do today,
I am very confused about
what is happening here ~~is~~
within the body and mind.

Physical pain, yes, I
can understand better. But
this subtle encroachment of
the body's imbalance influencing
my understanding — that is
much harder for me to deal
with, to CONFRONT. If I can
learn to confront it,
but the problem is so elusive
yet so powerful.

Yes, on "balanced hormone"
days of the month, I still have
my mind in some style of
cage. But it is a large cage,
and only infrequently do I
run into a bar in my cage.
However, on these pressured

days it is as if the bars of
the cage are moved in to
a foot in front of my face -
and I am looking at them
cross-eyed!

March 7th

Your Sunday Lecture -
The Great Event

This morning Long has left to take you across the bridge, the children are sleeping, and I should be sitting on the black cushions. Perhaps that would do more justice to your monumental lecture of yesterday than this written expression. But here I am, talking to you instead of "keeping quiet with conviction!"

Now I have been sitting at this paper for several minutes, and cannot really find adequate words to tell you how deep and brave and clear and undeniable was your teaching. I am only saying "Yes, yes!" and "Thankyou" and "Ofcourse, and we must and we shall!" and such affirmative exclamations. Maybe some other time I might feel it important to be more specific, but now I go sit.

Oh, thankyou for confronting us - your big problem! And you become one with this big problem of yours.

March 12, 1966

"This Adolescent Country"

We are like an adolescent. We are big and do not know how to handle our limbs which have grown so fast. Awkward, without grace, we blunder along.

We have the rockiness of a teenager, an expression of our underlying insecurity. Just as an adolescent is apprehensive about his impending role of adult, we are worried about what our way, ~~as a nation~~, should be.

Young people, needing some way of their own, clutch at superficial expressions such as fads in dress, some particular jargon (speech), style of hair or song of the week. America as a whole, behaves this way.

We are faddists, and cling to any current fashion that might tie us together and be "American." But each fad leaves us as quickly as it came — even a style of car is outdated in less than one year!

In the pattern of adult + teen age volatile relationship, the teen age rebels, for a period, against his

adult model. This is considered normal (though difficult for all involved) and is usually resolved when the teenager matures and accepts the adult way as his own, with some modification. But where are the parents of our adolescent country? America was turned on its own, to raise itself, when still a child. We ~~are~~ won our independence from England when we were very young. And England was more like an ~~that~~ aunt to us than a mother — one of many many aunts and uncles, all the varying cultures that our people came from.

America was a strong and physically capable child — even clever, one might decide — from seeing how well we did in feeding and clothing and sheltering ourselves. But it took all our ingenuity to take care of the physical needs of this child. America, and we had no wish or thought to make time to continue the cultures of some favorite aunts or uncles. Now we are feeling the insecurity of having no way, now that we have the

power of a well-fed, strong adolescent. And we have no parent's model to rebel against and modify! We have only our own superficial way of a headstrong child to look at and challenge. A teenager can challenge his parents' way safely because ~~subconsciously~~ he knows his parents' way is secure enough to withstand his assault. His parents' way is surely imperfect, but it has some strength of time behind it — time and commitment. But our own outgrown childish way cannot stand assault. If we attack it, it will fall quickly, and we wonder: what shall we build on? Thus, we cling to a childish way.

Adolescents (especially young ones) want heroes. If they find no heroes of quality, they will substitute with inferior ones — and do we! We want to hear tales of ~~nobility~~ nobility and drama, and we settle for stories of sensationalism. We yearn for heroes of valour and honour and we settle for heroes of sex, money, force.

We have the energy and drive of an adolescent, ~~and~~ and a hope, the idealism. We are ripe — overripe, perhaps — to find our way. Where shall we look? The answer, of course, is inside of us, but we need some guidance, some uncle to give us encouragement. Or how shall we know to sit?

March 21

Ah. Time for an English lesson! Well, it's hardly that, but if I think of it in that way, I will not feel quite so much like a spoiled little girl who is taking so much of your time on this paper!

"Your Visit"

I do not think I really need to tell you how much it meant to us to have you come to our home. You know, and you came, and the atmosphere has become fuller and deeper with your ~~presence~~ presence.

There is a line from "The Cat Walked by Himself" by Rudyard Kipling which says, "I, Lord am the cat who walks by himself, and all places are alike to me."

That may be true, but we are especially happy here.

For us, this home ~~represents~~ represents a new way of living, rather than just another house. It is so true, as Clary so well said: we got here as quickly as we could!

We didn't even know that we were coming to you, remember?

"About that phone call...!"

Are you teasing? To phone, late in the evening, and ask a question we'd decided to give up asking one year now past - because of you? The timing - one year late - pushed me face to face with the problem which I had banished to the outer-limits of my mind last summer.

Do you remember in the week long session how you several times brought up the issue of L.S.D. - and mostly laughed at it? It was, for me, painful and bewildering. It had been my experience under L.S.D. ~~which~~ (two years prior) which had brought me to your teaching. To hear you brushing off the deepest experience of my life as if it were some "kick" or flight of fancy, was most unnerving, to say the least.

Let me explain that I had L.S.D. only one time, for one day, six months after Aaron was born. At that time I took it as a ^{for me} "medicine" (but it is difficult to think of it as medicine.) Before taking it as therapy, I was extremely

distressed emotionally - angry, horrified at this anger, and as a result, suicidal.

The experience with L.S.D. revealed to me my own undreamed of strength, the basic unity of life, and the possibility of a better expression of life through this particular body ~~and~~ - through Toni. It is extremely difficult to explain what occurred, for the deepest part of the experience is completely beyond words. And even in these most profound moments of that immeasurable day, I felt the existence of an even deeper truth, ~~of~~ a complete understanding which I could not quite grasp.

Coming back to my everyday self, I was full of reverence for living, for all life, and it seemed as though I could never "forget" all that I had just "remembered." But I could not seem to practice what I had learned as well as I'd hoped, and I was often ashamed of myself for not being an adequate expression of truth. Toni was aware of a deep change in me, moreover

than people who had not been so aware of my previous anxiety. He began to save and plan for his own experience under L.S.D. which became financially possible six months later. (This was not blackmarket material so we paid \$500 a piece!) Now you must know that there is no "L.S.D. experience." Each person will react in a different way, cling to a different moment, having his own fears, prides, past experiences. Yet I find people who have had L.S.D. acting as though we each had the same experience, and are complete.

There are many hallucinations during the day, but these are not present in the deepest moments. Hallucinations have to do with the senses, and it is possible to go deeper than these. But from listening to people tell about their L.S.D. (or related psychedelics) experiences, it seems to me that most persons cling-or fly-from these hallucinations, rather than letting them come in and go out.

One great problem about learning from your L.S.D. experience is that there are many delusions under the experience, and if you do not get under them, beyond that level of experience, you become confused. Many people are bombarded by their own delusions for eight hours and regain them every-day consciousness without having a glimpse at what is really going on.

Now after my experience, I at first felt no need to try again. The ~~peer~~ research associate who had been with me that L.S.D. day, told me that it is impossible to explain in words the kind of experience that I had been through, but that Buddhism tries. So several months later, when I began to feel deeply the need to deepen my understanding, I began to read about Buddhism. But it was not intellectual understanding that I really hungered for, so I started to go to the Buddhist Church of America in San Jose. I tried sincerely to embrace it, but

it offered no way to go on with the search, as far as I could tell. It seemed basically the same as Christianity, and though I received deep satisfaction in the expression of my religious feelings through ritual, it simply was not the thing I'd hoped

I'd no idea Zen was being practiced here or I'd have come immediately. It took another year and a half to find you. During that time I tried once more a psychedelic experience - the second time it was at home with morning glory seeds! That experience pointed up one good point: I had no training and no teacher. I realized that one could go on indefinitely, not quite "getting the point."

Do you know why I stopped?

Now please listen carefully. Not because I feel the drug is dangerous, evil or foolish. I'm frankly quite grateful to this so-called "medicine." But I did not want to become satisfied with half-truths and continue to be a half-hearted expression of the deepest

By "understanding" you mean "perfect understanding" which is conscious and unconscious, mental and physical in its deepest sense.

The reactions to your unconscious expression ~~of yourself~~ of your student, husband and children are your TEACHERS.

self. I saw that most people (~~about~~ actually all people) who'd taken the drug, continued to take it with no significant progress - no ~~is~~ real deepening of experience with each subsequent taking of the drug. And - MOST IMPORTANT - they did not appear to be deepening their expression of their understanding.

At first I thought we needed merely repeated experience with the drug. Then I thought that would be inadequate without some guidance. And I found no one who could guide me in the use of the drug, because frankly, there was no one I met who had deeper understanding of the drug than myself.

Thus, L.S.D. and such agents, looked like a dead-end road for us. I had grasped enough from L.S.D. to know that this small self is but a shallow inadequate expression of the true self. This small understanding went hand-in-hand with a deep, unexplainable religious feeling.

there is no whole-hearted expression in our conscious realm of our life, for 'the self' is beyond our conscious world. In conscious activity, the more you try to express yourself, the more you become disabled to do so.

Then, one Thursday morning,
I met you, and your way became
the direction. There was no question
but to follow you. All my
only part-formed understanding
and so much much more -
was expressed in you. There
were no reservations in my
mind: you were my Master.

I began to feel that L.S.D.
had been a means to an end -
that is, the opening up of my
understanding served to bring me
to Zen. And I was extremely
thankful to L.S.D. for that, because
I really don't see how we'd have
sought for Zen without this
beginning. However, L.S.D. or NO,
I know that meeting with you
would have been quite enough
to start us in our practice! It is
simply that I wonder how I would
have dreamed of such a thing
as going to meet a Zen Master.
You know I am not so intellectual.

And so, several months
after beginning to sit with you,
sesshin arrived, and you spoke
several times about L.S.D. It
really threw me into confusion

* "We" here (and most places)
means Chong and me.

and grief. I wanted to accept whatever truth you would bring me to face, but I asked myself how could I turn my back on that experience which had kindled my religious feeling, and given me enough of myself to begin this search? It was as if you were throwing Buddha in the dust and laughing at him, except I didn't think in those terms. I thought perhaps if I truly followed you, I would be denying you yourself — oh, I was hurting! Once, twice, three times you almost sneered at L.S.D. and I didn't know how to understand what was happening! Was I attached to an experience, I asked myself? But, oh, one has to be true to their truest nature, or it is all too ridiculous, I moaned.

During one unforgettable zazen that week, I almost walked out of the zendo. I was thrown into extreme contradiction. You were the master, no doubt of it, but you were making a big mistake, my emotions and reason and body cried! You didn't

understand. . . . And then I resolved it in that moment: You didn't understand. Why should you understand? If I understood that L.S.D. experience, as best as I could, that was all there was to it. Let go of it and go on. I'd remembered you saying to us all one Wednesday night at lecture "You always expect me to be teacher. Sometimes you should be teacher and I should be student." On this point, then, I mustn't expect you to be teacher, I decided. This experience had come and gone and needed no explanation, and it asked for no defense. It was a part of me, and even if I chose to laugh at it in order to be — ON THE SURFACE — following you completely, the reality of it could not, would not, be dispensed with.

From then on, I never thought as much about L.S.D., ~~except to notice~~. But I haven't forgotten its role in my understanding. That would be a delusion of my ego!

In this writing I haven't

attempted to describe or explain that day three years ago when I took L.S.D. If ever you ask, it would be meaningful to try. But remember, you tell us "do not be curious." You will not tease me? Well, actually, I am ready to be teased by now, I realize! So tease away — with deep sincerity.

Thank you; you gave me better understanding about L.S.D. and how you studied the way of taking L.S.D. is very interesting.

It was your way of study of L.S.T. that lead you to Zen as well as L.S.T. It will be the way you study Zen that will help you in its true sence, and not me. Some time I shall be your teacher and some time you two will be my teacher. If so after all we are all good friends. Thank you again your sincere advise.

Sunday morning

April 3

This last exchange of the notebook was one of those experiences which seems so bad at the time, and turns out to have been so good. How I worried about whether I had made a mistake by trying to write about it, or whether I'd said it so poorly that you'd misunderstood. (And that lecture you gave in which you told us about Dogen telling one follower "You are not my disciple!")

And after all it turned out to be a very meaningful and encouraging exchange — and maybe partly it feels so right now because it seemed quite not-right for several days, those days before you assured me.

Thursday, April 7

It seems the predominate theme written about in this book is you - our relationship. This is not how I expected it to turn out, did you? But I suppose these writings, as they develop, will be most meaningful if I do write about that which is most important to me at each time of writing. And perhaps after three or more of these notebooks have been filled, I will find some other topics as vital and basic and deep as this topic of you! But until then, we shall probably just have to be patient with me in this respect!

Friday, April 8

Thank goodness for being able to write in the notebook! Because sometimes I am rather overwhelmed by you yourself and cannot speak so well to you at the moment. Later I would be able to speak to you about it, but later is sometimes quite later because I don't always see you so

often. And with this book
I can speak as soon as
I get a moment, rather
than wait until purchase
the subject comes up when
we are together again.

This evening you
spoke of Loger's master
advising him to seclude
himself with a small
number of disciples, and
to keep Zen-pure for the
descendants. I was thinking
it must have been a
difficult thing to say to us,
yet I still apparently was
not aware of the implications
of what you were saying to
us.

The question I asked
for Bill Pew in Niagra
Falls* brought out the
fact that I have not
understood so well what
a very big problem we
are for you! We have
no tradition concerning
the master-pupil relationship,
and we each interpret
this relationship quite
arbitrarily, according to

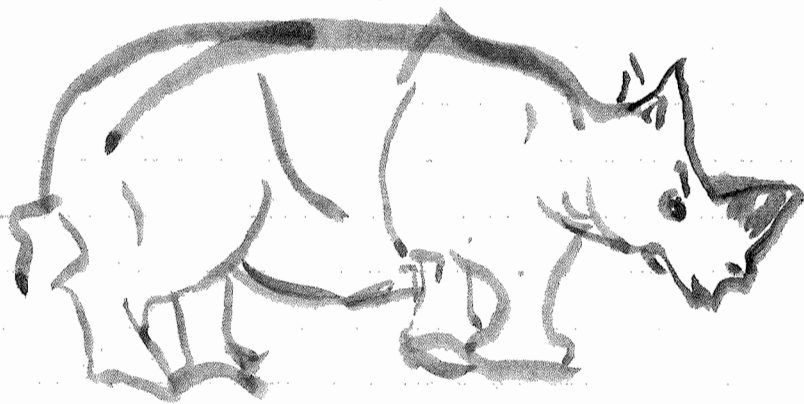
* about his wanting to consider you as his master

our limited understanding and our particular needs. I've never seen that quite so clearly before, and never thought what a problem that must be for you — and for us.

Please forgive us if we are sometimes insensitive on this important understanding. You know, we are used to simply paying a fee, signing a registration card at college, and making someone officially our teacher. Or we are used to signing a church's guest book and then being pestored by that church's minister for months after to become a member of his "flock of sheep." And so this delicate, vital, rich inter-changing relationship that exists ~~emerge~~ between master and disciple is of a deeper quality than ~~any~~ relationship that exists in our culture. We will be quite clumsy, I'm afraid, for some time to come.

May I ask a question, please, on this topic? In Japan, is there

some mutual choosing
by teacher and pupil alike?
In other words, does a
Master somehow acknowledge
that he accepts a pupil,
a disciple? Does he sometimes
reject pupils? If this
acceptance or rejection
occurs, is it quite obvious,
or is it very subtle?
(You once told me I
had a subtle mind, but
most usually I feel as
subtle as a rhinoceros!)



You are right.

Don't try to be a ^{smart} fox or monkey

April 12

"Good Problem"

Sony and I love to remember you saying that one person might look at a man who has a beautiful wife, and fine children as being very fortunate, when actually, in this very area, he has his problem. "Good problem," someone might say. Since that Wednesday night we have enjoyed looking at many things in our life, or the lives of others, as good problems. It is very amusing, but quite helpful!

One "good problem" I have is never being alone. I long to have time alone, but it seems almost continually there is some one - or more - with me, and usually they require no small amount of my attention, be they my children, other family members, friends. Sony and I hardly have much time together, without someone else with us. (However, he and I usually feel together and aware of each other very much even in the midst of others, and so we do not complain about this too much.)

It seems like a luxury if Sony and I are alone together or if I myself find a hour a day

of quiet undistracted time all alone! But always there are so many things that I should do in that ~~free~~ time alone that I can never quite feel I use it well enough.

Number one, I usually feel first that I wish to write to you, but often I recognize this wish as being deeper than the wish to write. It is a wish to express or be a part of myself that is still only a soft quiet urge. And so I usually try to leave the pen lying still, and try some other way — of which many are waiting.

You know I am not at all organized — well, not very. So my housework suffers it (though I notice some gradual improvement.) One of my "very good problems" is being elected secretary! It is ironical. I've always avoided that kind of responsibility, and I guess not enough people are aware of my inefficiency, and so I've been elected secretary. And

secretary of the most valuable entity in my life. Already it has proved to be very painful as I have made such mistakes, and it has added on to the pressure of "what should I do first in this precious hour alone?" Yet in this position I have opportunity for experiencing things I love - exchanging letters from sincere people, growing more aware of the past, present future of Zen Center, coming into contact more often with members, in some barely noticeable way, doing some small things for you. (The latter is the thing I would most want to do but of course, the most difficult because it is based on my deepest feelings, and yet there is little I can ever hope to do to be of service to you.)

..... I have just had the desire to tear out this page because of that last sentence. But if I were speaking with you I couldn't tear it out! Instead, I should explain it better if I can. I didn't mean that now I actually do anything for you. Only for a day or so I had hoped and

even supposed it was possible that I would be able to be of service to you. But all too soon I realized that the only way really to serve you in the meaningful way that you and I both know that I wish to, is simply to make my effort in anything I am doing. Make my effort doing the dishes, washing Aaron's face, folding the laundry. . . .

To return to the subject of my "good problem" of being secretary, it seems that it points up for me a truth applicable to all areas of my ~~life~~ life, but easier to see because it is ~~focused~~ simpler in this instance. That is, those things which we ~~also~~ receive pleasure from, give their share of pain. And we must make our attempt to do what is expected of us, even though it is far below the standard we would hope to live up to. I'm referring now to my poor typing & remember?! - amongst other inadequacies.

I have to start where I am, and work from there, rather than wait until I learn this, that and the other thing! If we took on no activity until we felt we were prepared adequately, it would be like saying "I refuse to live until I understand life completely and can live it perfectly."

Always I've dreaded most my lack of great intelligence being shown to anyone — especially to myself! My ego dreaded very much to show it was not particularly smart. I still find myself cringing when I do something rather stupid, but at least it seems I'm not trying to avoid situations that often illustrate my lack of brilliance, nor am I so apt to cover up my mistakes. For instance I make myself grit my teeth, straighten my back, and hand you this notebook, with awareness of the shallow understanding it attempts to express on these emotion-scrawled pages.

I hope this notebook is not too great a burden on your own time "alone." Please continue it!

April 16

"Sadness"

I cannot find the words to express this feeling, because it is quite beyond my own understanding. This great ~~sadness~~ sadness came after your departure, because it seems as if I have never quite done the right thing for you — and now you are gone. It seems as if I have actually neglected you, and unawareness has made it impossible for me to do "something" (P.) which I should have done for you. I've no idea what it is that I feel I've neglected! Yet this feeling is so deep, as if I should have known, as if I should know now. And the grief deepens as I am afraid that I shall never completely... completely what? What? Oh, I wish I knew! My thoughts cannot reach my feeling.

that evening.

Today the family went to the Art Institute to see the sculpture which Robert Gove

has been working on. We enjoyed walking around the many different works of art at the school. Rhondi and Aaron found one metal sculpture particularly "pretty," they agreed, and Aaron pointed at what he called "a fried egg" painted on it. As we turned away from it, and walked together down the steps, Rhondi said, "I'm glad I'm not steps: If I were steps, I couldn't know things."

April 17

"The Neighboring Skies"

Why the title on the cover? We needed another notebook as the other was filled and I found an old notebook I'd made for a "creative dramatics" class five years ago, and the title was written at that time. It is from a small poem I wrote.

Perhaps the word "desire" is not so good for our way, but I'll enclose the page from that book, because it seems to speak for my.

way-seeking mind at that time. I was so full of yearnings and ideals and unnameable hopes and I hadn't really any idea what was what, really.

And so I experienced that problem you have pointed out that we have: I flitted from one thing to the next, continuing no effort very long because no way seemed perfect. Miserable wretch that I was! (Oh, I'm still fairly miserable, but perhaps I understand my misery a bit more now!)

Things certainly got worse before better! There persisted an underlying urge to find (or make or be) quality, depth, value in something.

Friends, family, school-mates all seemed to find

some idea or dream to hold on to, yet each of these felt empty or one-sided to me, and I could not find some way to live.

↑ Always, however, remained the feeling that life itself was of great value and worth, that it was a great drama. I simply thought I was in a bad play, with a poor role, and I wished to be in a drama of quality, instead. Even if I had to write it myself!

I believe that this part of me that has caused me so much suffering through this anxious discontent, is the part of us which can really be our guide, if only we stop misinterpreting this request.

↓

April 18

"Good Feeling"

It seems always I'm writing about confused or sad feelings. Perhaps I should tell you of last night merely because it had such joy. In Kahlil Gibran's book The Prophet, in his selection concerning friendship, he expressed the thought:

And let your best be for your friend. If he must know the ebb of your tide, let him know its flood also."

Last night there was a flood of good feeling and I simply let it refresh me. I tried not to evaluate it or understand it intellectually, and this morning I felt deeply refreshed. But now I will think about it.

It was after writing the last couple of pages in this book. Tony sat across from me, writing letters and grading papers. The radio was playing popular music.

The sounds of the music, or of Tony turning pages, writing, tapping the table — these sounds I seemed to hear with my whole body. The vibrations registered on the entire surface of my body, and seemed to penetrate me. I really felt like a body, a receiving place for vibrations. It was very enjoyable to be a body.

I kept watching Tony and it felt as though I completely loved him, with no little barriers of needs and expectations invisibly coming between us. At first he was quite involved in his activities, and while it felt as though I was absorbing him almost in the way of absorbing sound, I could feel when he was looking at me, that his thoughts were in his eyes — that is, his was not completely seeing me, but was looking through ideas at me.

But gradually, the more he met my eyes, and felt the unabashed

joy which I was smiling, he began to enter into his looking; that is, it seems that a veil was lifting from his eyes, and we were seeing each other. Truly, the looking and seeing, from one pair of eyes back and forth to another pair of eyes, seemed to be one activity. It wasn't at all like the idea, "two individuals looking at each other." Instead, it seemed as though we were both involved in the activity of seeing.

And it was very wonderful to feel that even when he would look back to his work, and I would be seeing him without meeting eyes, still this same activity of seeing was going on and I was fortunate to be aware of it.

Now one thing missing in this experience was the fact that I simply sat and experienced it. The dishes needed to be finished, and a pile of clothes put away, yet I couldn't seem to

try to do these things because I thought this awareness would be pushed away if I stepped back into my "role." But I felt that I should not "indulge" myself in this good feeling if I couldn't continue my work. About this I have concern.

It was already late in the evening when this all occurred. Thus, it was soon time to go to bed if we were to meet the next day without undue drowsiness. At first I thought I'd sit up longer, as I was drinking so deeply of the good feelings, after having felt bad for some time. (days or weeks, it seemed I was feeling so low.) But I thought that if I sit up later than usual, that is surely attaching to the good feeling, and that is surely unwise. So happily I went to sleep, and happily awoke this morning.

You said a teacher can help a student by suggesting what is important and what is not so important. Will you try to tell me

if things like this are merely
sidelights, or are they mis-
leading, or should they be
encouraging, or should one
simply pass over them and
not be much interested?

Some time ago I wondered
about this, and I think I
need your suggestion.

that evening

Boldly Honda asks,

"What are you doing in there?"

Jazen answers, "Hai."

Well balanced life! Perfect happiness!

Well balanced life! Perfect happiness!

April 28th

"Irrational Me"

This afternoon I visited a friend who has an intellectual approach to things, quite noticeably, and the encounter was quite very revealing about myself. She questions her own self thoroughly, and is intent on knowing the reasons for each feeling she has, and takes great care in researching her thoughts and actions.

She had questions, of course, to direct to me, as well. For some time I found myself groping for answers. And then when she was out of the room for a moment, and I was alone, I suddenly felt a wave of insight into me: That is, I am an irrational person. For some reason this perception filled me with

such good feeling that I jumped to my feet & felt both relief and amusement, and some gratitude. At once it seemed to me, my irrationality may be the most troublesome thing about being me, but at the same time, it seemed to ~~be~~ be a very good thing — perhaps my greatest asset!

When I tried to tell her what I was feeling, and it did sound like nonsense. And I gave up trying to explain it, but I did not give up feeling very glad.

Your practice holds you and your happiness.

Your practice holds you and your happiness.

May 12
Tuesday eve

It seems I will never
be able to speak alone to
you again. How fortunate that
I can appeal to the pages
in this notebook for a day to
sputter out my feelings.

It is not below you to
say "never" again, will there
be that opportunity, but it is
true that I must face the
fact that I must share those
Wednesday drives — how
I am spoiled! The fun part
is that months ago I was
aware of what a privilege
it was to drive you, and
that it should be shared.
and I didn't want to give
to anyone else that drive.
as I tried very hard to
find other drivers to take
turns with: I did not want
to be unfair. But, very

(and for many of the rest) it
 turned out that the answers were
 available! So it simply goes to
 say something about the way
 you or the always and
 just drove you to the top.

But, of course, it did
 grow to some that were
 the only thing, and we
 didn't. (I think want to
 take care of the way, and
 speak of it in the way
 it should be, so that
 they can drive you.

Oh, and a special one?
 Oh, and can we do it and
 being to let you see that
 we don't... and it
 is not so good at these
 kinds of "needing up" should
 you speak at and let me
 with the stick?

Speak no word! Do no doing!

Speak no word! Do no doing!

I am writing

"Caring myself"

All over a difference between
for being so, because we don't
not finding much about this
in a, but it feel lately very
critique of a number of
people, not just as critics of
but as of myself. When we
to find out with another,
my own feelings, keep up
before only stepping in at
something, definitely way.
I do, I don't share whether
it will help me but to see
my friends so harshly, if
I do I find a basic
acceptance of myself from
others to act.

Just now I should
be in the streets, and
I am struck with the

if I ever had any doubts about
 what I was doing. I've lived in the
 most kinds of mistakes
 while deluding myself. By
 supposing I am understanding
 something more clearly.

The other night after
 my father left I cried from
 the grief of knowing someone
 whose life has been the
 perpetration of several "basic"
 delusions. It is he has no
 more understanding than I
 as a young man, it certainly
 appears. He is so miserable
 and so producing of misery
 around him. It felt old and
 peopleless. As if death came
 now, I would be ashamed —
 ashamed of never having
 truly been alive. I felt
 as though I have led a
 distracted, superficial life.

Sunday

"The Bows"

Today I sensed a very deep seriousness, a profound religious feeling in your manner, before lecture today. Though your words were priceless, as well, it was your attitude during the sutra especially that penetrated through my helter-skelter mind, and affected me deeply.

When we did the bows, I did feel as though the bows were being done, were really happening, as though they were life happening to itself.

And when it had passed (that activity) I felt as though I would not be so terribly ashamed to die. For it seemed that if never before or after the bowing was I aware

of my activity, that moment
had been enough to say,
"Yes, I lived it!"
Now, to practice
being alive...!

"Zazen"

Just the beginnings
of zazen are happening. Yes,
your understanding tells
us all zazen is zazen, but
it is hard to think of my
zazen as much more than
sitting in a fine posture while
continuing to distract my
mind with frivolous thoughts.
(That is, I know intellectually
the Big Mind is, not at all
perturbed or distracted by
my pettiness, yet I feel
distracted and silly, in my
small mind.)

Just very recently, however, I have calmed down, so to speak. That is, the rambling thoughts have stopped being so persistent and following the breathing has almost become — for dear moments, — of an actuality. Partly, I think I have been imagining I would find some state of "sameness" in gaze — yes, though I KNEW it was not quite right to expect that, I look back and see that maybe I was really expecting such a thing: an unchanging (excuse the thought) activity of breathing. But now, I can begin to experience that each breath is new, and yet have faith in the newness, and follow it.

July 6th

"Lasting sadness"

[Though we spoke of this together on Monday, I'll include it in the book for later days' remembrance.]

It has helped me to know that the deep underlying sadness which has become so basic to my life is not a misconception to be worked through, or a stage to be "waited through," but rather a truth to accept and work from. It is fortunate to have had your comments, because I certainly had been wondering why I was letting myself go down such a dark path.

Now the sadness is more gentle and less black, because I am accepting it and not being critical of myself for experiencing it. What seemed like an ending becomes the real beginning.

Though I mentioned

that I now know that I would continue forever making the effort even without your existence, how difficult it must be for someone to go without a teacher. Because you make some expression concerning our study, renewed courage and deeper faith in my changing realization of our true nature comes.

Without changing basically, the sadness becomes positive rather than depressing; it becomes a foundation for practice. Because you understand it, I can just begin to understand it; (and there is the study of Buddhism in our relationship, isn't it?)

Accepting the sadness has seemed to have a bearing on my behavior - on my reactions to things happening ~~to and~~

in my environment. I don't feel so critical of people, and the petty angeriness that I cannot accept in me, seems not to have flared up. Perhaps this new mildness and calmness in my feelings and behavior will only be temporary, and I will resume my bad-tempered "gritzy" ways. But I will know that it is not necessary to react so much in that manner. A great deal of anger seems now to me to ^{have} been a thrashing-out of non-acceptance of the sadness of life. There certainly may be instances when anger is very appropriate. But ordinarily my anger is small and selfish and comes from being blind to what is really occurring.

As long as I deny the sadness, or oppose it, there

is no chance to experience
it completely, and become one
with it. When I become (or
make a beginning to become)
one with the sadness, there
I find the calmness of my
mind.

December 9, 1966

"Big Ego!"

Oh, ho! What a big ego this girl has! I must work harder at believing in nothing. Yes, that is a great problem - I have too much "idea" and "feeling" about what is Buddhism and what is the way of true practice. It is time to go beyond all these ideas and confront Buddha directly. Ha! But I haven't an idea how, have I? Maybe I can begin by not clinging to my present notions.

I didn't realize how static my understanding has become recently. It is surely necessary for me to allow truth to grow and change. I have put an iron band around my understanding and it pinches! Thank goodness for the pinching feeling! Pain certainly does bring about our chance to grow.

Oh, I'm still confused - but much more gladly, and without resentment. You know, we emphasize one side of the teaching if

the person is ~~too~~ clinging too much to the other side of reality. Well, I have been too concentrated on my own way - seeking mind, "my" effort, "my" understanding, etc. Now I have a new attitude, based on the Buddha - or God - or ~~the Activity~~ Buddha-nature. Whatever we call it, it is more than me, and I can trust in it completely, and trust that my effort is Buddha's, without so much self-criticism or self-centeredness.

It is a religious feeling which makes things no easier, perhaps, but more sincere.

Partly this feeling came from your still smiling face, Thursday after Hazen, at the head of the stairs. I was glad to see you able to smile through my confusion, through my egotism, through all my theories and half-baked "ideas," past all the obstacles I've built for myself, into my true nature. Your very simple and

uncomplicated communication, be it in a smile, or a simple meeting of the eyes, has the effect of piercing through my small self. So it seems.

Oh, sometimes I've set up obstacles so awkward and cumbersome, you would have to dynamite them down, and I am impervious to your communication, it is true. Yet sometimes when I seem the most "deluded," it takes only the sound of you, clearing your throat, to break-through my home-grown confusions!

Helpful in re-directing my stumblings, too, has been the writing of Meister Eckhart, the Christian mystic. He was challenged and tried as a heretic because his teaching was so deep and profound. He speaks of God, but in a way that Christians usually do not. His understanding of God had him burned at the stake - almost - but his interpretation is rather close to the Buddhist concept of Buddha-nature, in a different cultural background. It has been

helpful to me, because of his unself-
centered idea described in a different
context than the way I've been thinking.
(Funny, but he was born in 1260 -
not too far from the birth of Dogen!)

~~Monday~~ ^{Saturday} after meeting

Please take these pages now
to know I am not banging my
head against the wall right now.

My apologies to you for letting
myself drag my feet in the mud.
It's just fine to walk in the mud,
but, really, I do play in it too long.

Thank you for your patience.

There is an abundance of
patience, and I shall be having
some, too* for this life and this
girl. There is a great abundance
of whatever is needed!

*for me to use, I mean, not merely receive
from others.

67 THE
January 17, 1966

About "Inside and Outside"

Monday night I wanted to
Z-o-o-o-o-o-r up and speak
with you, but Lynne would
have had to walk home from
our Japanese lesson — so
writing will do, perhaps.

On zazen that evening there
was some deeper understanding
about the self, and I am so
grateful! All at once it seemed
so clear and simple, but as
I try to speak of it, I confuse
it — I'm sorry. It is true
that I am no special person,
but am changing experiences,
experiences which involve all
those supposedly "outside"
things: people, places, happen-
ings. And these people I have
considered as "others," as "outside"
myself" are, likewise, experiences
and not some special SOLID
THING. And I am aware of them
through my experience — through
myself. Not through some artificial

memorial service, came
the extra part: that our effort
becomes greater. It hit very
hard when you explained that
now that he was gone, we
must make our own effort
stronger. He was very beautiful,
and his death gave us a feeling
of loss. And often a feeling of
loss makes one feel like stopping,
for a moment — for instance,
the death of one's husband or
child can make one feel (momentarily)
like giving up all together.
Yet that is exactly when we must
increase our effort because of
the loss.

Bad practice, when you
become aware of it, or failures,
or ^{big} mistakes, can seem like
big losses, and make one feel

like giving up. But our failures, our losses, ask for our renewed and re-doubled effort. They look like, and feel like discouragements, but they are more helpful, (if we can respond to them with some spirit) than any very obvious encouragement may be.

(I think?)

I hope.