

203 Jefferson  
Sandpoint, Idaho, 83864  
December 12, 1988

Dear Wendy and Bob,

We were happy to get your note and hear that all is well with you. Yes, we're still in Sandpoint, Idaho--still living in the same house. We dream about moving to the country (we'd love to live on lake-front property) but can't yet justify the added expense of higher rents, second truck, snowplow and/or snowblower. We are comfortable here, and have room in our fenced-in back yard to park our two boats, our travel trailer and our utility trailer.

We had a wonderful summer of boating and entertaining relatives. This fall we made it to California for a great reunion with all my kids and grandchildren. It was worth waiting for.

Jack has been keeping busy this winter (and last) making sculptures out of old brass he finds at the junk yard: plumbing fittings, auto parts and fragments of old engines. The snapshots will give you an idea of how Jack turns one man's junk into another man's treasure. He finished about 10 or 12 pieces a winter.

I bought a secondhand electronic typewriter and Love it. I made evn less progress than usual on my novel in 1988. I found that I was lacking only one quarter of earned income

to qualify for Social Security and Medicare (yes I'm 65). So I did some freelance writing to earn the credits. This took several of my best writing months. But I did qualify. Instead of getting exasperated at myself for making such slow progress on my novel, I've finally accepted that it will be a lifetime project. I remember Suzuki Roshi telling us that those who could sit physically usually took more time to reach the marrow of Zen, and that calligraphy students who weren't clever usually became the best calligraphers. I hope that my struggles (sometimes several days to finish one paragraph or several months to finish one chapter) will enable me to break the bones and suck the marrow out of my story.

What an excellent Zen practice in the meantime: Doing-it-for-the-sake-of-itself.

One of my favorite authors, Isak Dinesen who wrote OUT OF AFRICA, said something encouraging for people like us who struggle to express ourselves: "When you have a great and difficult task, something perhaps almost impossible, if you only work a little at a time, everyday a little, without faith and without hope...suddenly the work will find itself." Doesn't that sound like something Suzuki Roshi or Katagiri Roshi would say?

So here's to another Zen Year of Struggling!

love —  
Marian & Jack