

# ZEN NOTES



SNOW ON BAMBOO

Stanley Mulfeld, Photographer

OX (or BUFFALO) YEARS  
OF THE 20TH CENTURY:  
1901, 1913, 1925, 1937,  
1949, 1961, 1973, 1985,  
1997.

In 1973 our research characterized those born in an ox year as successful, patient, eccentric, bigoted, violent, intelligent, skillful with the hands. The ox is a leader, not a traveler, cool about relations with the opposite sex. The ox and the rooster make a great match; attracted to the monkey, they can't make a go of it. Ox, beware the tiger.

Some famous ones: Aristotle, the Marquise de Pompadour (reputed to be a typical buffalo or ox), Van Gogh, Jean Cocteau, Renoir, Bach, Napoleon and Hitler.

Margaret Stephenson sent an unusual cut-out card, here shown in smaller size. The original was 10" high, 7" wide.

#### FIRST OX MESSAGE

First Ox message to reach us was that of Centro Zen de Puerto Rico. We reproduce it here without its handpainted splash of two colors. Congratulations on your success and ingenuity.





"...seeing horns over the fence, one knows there is an ox." --*Hekigan roku, Case 1*

And now for our Ox message and predictions (taken from the NYT).

The year 4683 on the lunar calendar begins Feb. 20...The Year of the Ox is regarded as a period of productivity, a time to cultivate practical pursuits and to carry out projects to fruition, a time when life turns mild and benefits befall the industrious and the oppressed, a good time for an ox to start a family.

\* \* \*

In case you're in San Francisco, celebration begins with lion dancing on the streets at noon Feb. 23 and reaches a height March 2 with a parade. There are walking tours, plays, folk dancing, martial arts, cooking and calligraphy, and the Miss Chinatown pageant.

ALSO, among our messages: Dear Mrs. Farkas,

My firm is currently involved in putting together an informational program for computers on religion. I think that

it would be more informative if actual religious experiences were communicated rather than information about the experience.

I am writing to you for your opinion on the following proposal for the package on Zen that we have put together. It contains a visual representation of the video monitor of a view from a cushion in the zendo. Bells and clappers are represented audioloy. The user can either choose a ½-hour or 1-hour period. In addition, we are developing a Sesshin package which with a special hookup will produce a holographic image of a roshi. Koans will be asked, answered; the "roshi" will appropriately respond. We are having some difficulty in representing the slap of the keisaku but our research department is working on a bio-feedback approach.

I would appreciate any comments that you may have on this matter.

Sincerely,  
Name withheld.

A RATCATCHER'S REPORT By James Shapiro

Sometimes when guests come to the Institute Mary Farkas will introduce me as "chief ratcatcher." She means it literally. The first task I was set to as her do-all assistant was to clean out a closet full of mice.

I opened the door and switched on the light. A small fellow dressed in brown fur was staring at me from a sack full of sunflower hulls into which he had sunk up to his waist. His paws were touching and his whiskers were silver. I made a move and off he dashed.

The closet stank. Mice, who guide themselves by brushing alongside walls, had stained the baseboards with a particularly malodorous body grease. Temple parchments which date back to early in the century and chronicle various events in Sokei-an's life were in danger of being irretrievably damaged. Kitchen utensils were littered with droppings. As a human there was no question of the need to dominate the lower species, clean them out.

It's never simple. At the hardware store I bought sticky traps which promised a convenient way for the squeamish. Within moments of laying such a trap down one poor fellow was caught. His body was a heaving little blur of hyperventilating agony as his belly fur caught on the glue. He would, at best, die slowly.\*

Poison bait boxes were next. The mice consumed them voraciously. A week later sesshin began and 40 people calmly took their seats in the zendo and the library where the overflow goes. Tottering mice, in the terminal stages of poisoning, wobbled past horrified zazenkaï during daylight hours. And one nighttime sleeper found a dying mouse in the sleeve of his robe where it had crept for a last bit of warmth.

Meanwhile, I was working as tenzo, the cook, behind a closed door. Excited officers would report sightings of the enemy. The mice continued to haunt me.

At three-thirty in the morning when I returned to the kitchen to begin the day's work there would

usually be one mouse hovering in the drain of the kitchen sink. Remove it barehanded? Kill it outright? The stock pot needed to be filled with water to make oatmeal for hungry humans, Buddhist students. The piety on the other side of the door seemed easy. As a matter of course people expect vegetarian cooking during sesshins at the Institute. Chaos, filth, competition--others could feel snug at the thought of all that lapping no closer than the sill of the outermost door. Keeping the precepts is easy when other people break them for you.

Here in this city temple in this house of brick we clean out roaches and mice. We do not feed them the way some temples do. Without regret and, I hope, without false sentiment I carry out my function. It is just important to remember that out of mice and death emerge clean and brightly shining bowls. Perhaps we will not forget to be grateful.

\* *The sticky traps are a Japanese invention, if one can believe "Believe It or Not," which dramatically demonstrated their use, on TV recently. See also "The Foolish Monkey," a talk given by Sokeian 4/25/42, for a description of a similar device for capturing monkeys used in India in the time of the Buddha. The Buddha used this for an analogy of how the young monk is trapped by attachment. His five senses get him into trouble--"his eye sees color and attachment arises, etc." Just as the foolish monkey touches the sticky stuff and five places--hands, feet, and mouth--get stuck fast.*

MR. MONEY WRITES:

November 16, 1985  
Dear Friend in Zen,  
Thanks for the New Year's greeting. This is just a note--as my typewriter is being cleaned and repaired.

All is well--although

I am now 88 years old--and for me, 88 is age. (I am enclosing ten dollars.) I read the book and have sent it to my son George. I found it most interesting. Adieu for now--Yours in Zen,

Norman D. Money

BOOK NOTED

by John Storm

A new collection of the teachings of Taisen Deshimaru has been published (1985) under the title "Questions to a Zen Master" by E.F. Dutton, Inc.

Deshimaru, a master of the Soto line, made a deep impression in Europe before his death two years ago at the age of 68. With one temple in Paris and another near Blois in the Loire Valley, he built up a following of thousands, according to his students, and established over 100 dojos in North Africa and the Americas as well as Europe.

In "Questions," as in the two previous collections, "The Voice of the Valley," (Bobbs-Merrill Inc. 1979) and "The Zen Way to the Martial Arts," (Dutton 1982), Deshimaru presents a clear, down-to-earth Zen based firmly, in the Soto manner, on the practice of zazen. A distinctive, trenchant voice comes through in all three books despite what must have been difficult language problems.

Here are a few samples from "Questions":

On koans: True koans are not play-acting... You suffer, you are worried, you are not satisfied, you are full of questions. And the master answers, and the answer becomes a koan. The answer becomes a question that is a koan.

On the bodhisattva: In Mahayana Buddhism there is no fear of hell. In Christianity that is the supreme punishment. In Zen, if you have to go to hell you go... The Zen monk must leap into hell to save those who are suffering. The bodhisattva must leap into the impurities of the social world. Leap, not fall! Falling into the river and diving into the river are completely different things. If you fall into the river your only thought is to save your life. If you dive into the river you swim and then you can save people who are drowning. Bodhisattvas dive into the world to help.

On satori: Don't be afraid; that is satori. SOKEI-AN SAYS...the Zen student is not afraid, he will leap and jump into that infinite. You ...need not be afraid. Just jump...into that conclusion. ZN III/12

## SHOULD ROSHIS BE REGULATED? AN OPINION

by John Storm

The present debate over moral standards for Zen masters goes directly to the heart of what Zen training is all about, it seems to me.

How can followers of Bodhidharma, Rinzai and Ikkyu, among others, set up as an ideal some sort of holier-than-thou guru figure whose very efforts at purity are sure to bring on disillusionment? But on the other hand how can a beginning Zen student know which roshis can be trusted not to take advantage of any initial naivete or craving to please?

Doctrine is certainly no answer, nor are credentials, nationality, or life style. The one word that cuts through all the muddle is: non-dependency. How can you tell who is enlightened

and who isn't? An enlightened person is a nondependent person. And such a person, if he or she happens to be a roshi, will vigorously discourage dependency in others. Note all the head-knocking, face-slapping, back-turning and other kinds of abuse that characterized early Zen. One might say that impatience with the usual worshipful attitude of religious disciples toward religious leaders is what distinguishes Zen training from everything else.

Thus, while no roshi can be more than human, no authentic roshi will feed the dependency of a student or staff member by exploiting it sexually, financially or otherwise, especially when that dependency takes the form of an ardent wish to be exploited. Indeed, breaking that set of mind, throwing the student back upon the true self, is precisely what Zen training aims to do.

## A TREASURY NOTE

At this time, when we are evaluating our activities and resources before estimating our budget for the next year, we would like to thank all those who gave generously "even a little extra." They made the difference between red and black at the end. ZN came out \$68 in the red, but this was due to hi-tech error on the part of MF, not a fiscal failure.

SOKEI-AN SAYS

Public & Private Life

Now, I am here as your Osho. If I go to a nightclub (of course I have no money to go), but if I have the money to go there and sing and dance, I am not paying respect to you for your respect to me. So my life has a public nature as well as a private one. If I should flatter the many young ladies who come here, I would be mocking you; as your teacher, I am accepting your respect. This is the public aspect of my life.

So our public life is the highway, the public way. Of course there is a little road off the highway that is our private way. But if the private way comes to be public and you still behave as if it were private, your private way will be annihilated. If you say, "I will fight for my rights," it must be clear whether it is your own right or a public right. We do not censure the private way, but the public way we will punish with annihilation.

JOSHU SASAKI ROSHI SAYS  
in "Buddha is the Center  
of Gravity" (regrettably  
out of print)

ZEN PRACTICE

The first step of Zen practice...is to manifest yourself as nothingness. The second step is to throw yourself completely into life and death, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Shakyamuni said that if you want to be free, you must not prefer only good or evil. Well, now, what about you? You are educated all your life to venerate God and reject evil. Zen education is entirely different: it teaches you how to swallow God and the devil all at once. You are able to give yourself completely and make your home in a beautiful woman or in a louse or in a man with a twisted nose. That is Zen practice.

*NO 1985 EASTCOAST SES-  
SHINS WITH SASAKI ROSHI  
HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED AS  
OF 2/1. A TWODAY SESSHIN  
IS SCHEDULED FOR 3/2,3.*



## THE GREAT SIXTH PATRIARCH'S TEACHING

### Chapter VI, 1

*When the master saw the multitude, those who came from all over the country, Kuang-chou, Shao-chou and Beki-shu, to the temple to hear the sermon, he ascended the altar and preached to the multitude.*

*"Virtuous scholars, this faith must be born out of your own nature. At all times, in every moment of your mind, you must purify your mind by your own effort; you must see your own Dharmakaya by your own practice; you must see your own Buddha by your own exercise. You must reform yourselves by observing your own commandments. In truth, you do not need to come here. But you have already come to hold an assemblage of the Dharma. We all have previous affinities with one another.*

*Every one of you now kneel down. First, I will hand down to you the incense of the Dharmakaya which is constituted of the five elements of your own nature; and then I will teach you how to make confession according to the form of non-existence."*

### SOKEI-AN SAYS

In the last chapter, the Sixth Patriarch preached his sermon on zazen (meditation) which is the main practice of the Zen School. Now he is about to speak about confession. Confession in the Buddhist sense is different from that of Christianity. In Buddhism, the sanzen which you are exercising is confession. Today we call it sanzen, but in ancient days it was the confession of the monks. In the Buddha's time, the monks went one by one to see the Buddha, who was meditating in the deep woods. They went to him and confessed their thoughts as erroneous mind.

A little child once said to the Buddha: "My Master, when I was meditating last night in the dark woods, I saw smoke rising out of an ant-hill. I went to see the mound that produced the yellow smoke. On approaching, I realized that there was no smoke arising from the ant-hill. I couldn't understand what it might be, my Master. Maybe this was my own illusion. Please tell me what it could be." In such a way the child confessed his erroneous thoughts. Then the Buddha would give him his answer.

Mahakashyapa and Shariputra, all went thus and confessed. All these monks had nothing to confess about sin committed, but they were afraid of erroneous thoughts. They wanted to purify their mind from the foundation of their consciousness. This was the origin of confession in Buddhism.

And now our confession has changed its form to sanzen. We come to the master one by one. First, we join hands to the Bodhisattva; second, we join hands to the master who holds the wisdom of Buddha. Then we confess our conceptions and the master judges the right or wrong of it. Sanzen is a sort of confession.

Of course, when laymen went to see the Buddha, they confessed their erroneous deeds: "I killed six oxen; what will happen in my next incarnation?" The Buddha would say: "Go through six hells and do not kill again."

*When the Master saw the multitude, those who came from all over the country, Kuang-chou, Shao-chou and Beki-shu, to the temple to hear the sermon, he ascended the altar and preached to the multitude.* In the original this is "to the mountain to hear," but mountain means temple; Chinese temples were always on mountains. So the word "mountain" is synonymous with temple even if the temple is not on a mountain. This "mountain" is a hill on the southern prairie of China. It is not prepossessing today, but perhaps it was then a beautiful place. Now it has a nest of bandits.

*He ascended the altar--the platform made of earth--so this is called "the lecture of the earthen altar."*

*Virtuous scholars, this faith must be born out of your own nature.* It is clear, this faith. You do not wait for anyone to give it to you; it does not come from the hand of an angel or a god. You will conceive this faith in your own mind, out of your own soul, your intrinsic nature.

Now, as you try to meditate, your mind works: "Today I will go downtown, and tomorrow I'll have lunch with John." On a little higher shelf of consciousness, as you think this, are all the noises of the street--the horns and the elevated train. On a lower shelf, there are jealousies and angers;

and on a still lower shelf, nature is supporting your life; your heart is pumping blood, your stomach is digesting. Below all this, great universal consciousness spreads like the ocean and you are in mid-air meditating in this ocean.

*You must purify your mind by your own effort...* Stop the conscious shelves of existence; destroy those superstitions. Purify, wash off your erroneous notions and come to your own consciousness that is universal to every mortal being. Don't try to find that universal consciousness within yourself. That consciousness is everywhere; you are sitting in it. And don't think it is deep, deep. What do you mean by "deep?" Don't use the words "higher" or "deeper." It is better to use "boundless" or "limitless" when you speak of consciousness. When you sit upon your seat, you are permeating in manifold directions. IT has no limit, but is boundless size through endless time.

*You must see your own Dharmakaya by your own practice.* According to Buddhism, Dharmakaya is the body of omnipresence. It has no time and space; it is non-created and non-destroyed. It existed before time and space and it will continue to exist after time and space.

*You must see your own Buddha by your own exercise.* When you are washing dishes, scrubbing floors--you are a Buddha--but you think you are a human being. If you destroy this idea of individual being, you become universal self. Then you are a Buddha. Siddartha Buddha was a man who lived 2500 years ago, but this is your own Buddha; you yourself are a Buddha.

*You must reform yourself by observing your own commandments.* To "reform yourself" means to get into a new life. Commandments are given by the teacher: do not kill or steal; you must not please yourself; you must not blame others for offenses; you must not keep your treasure (withhold your knowledge) when others need it. But these are not the real commandments. These you will find by yourself in your own heart. Until then, we give no formal commandments. So you must reach to the very bottom of your heart and touch the real body of commandment. You will meet your own conscience and he, with his

green eyes, watches you day and night; you cannot escape him. Finally, when you accept yourself, I can pronounce, "I sanction you," and then you are free. You knew no ease before you came here--but now you will understand the last great commandment of Buddhism which is all that you do from morning to evening.

*In truth, you do not need to come here. You can find it in your own heart.*

*But you have already come to hold an assemblage of the Dharma. We all have previous affinities with one another. Though we take shelter under the same tree, or touch sleeves in passing, we have these affinities with each other. Because we are together, the previous relation is proved. This is the theory of reincarnation.*

*Every one of you kneel down. First, I will hand down to you the incense of the Dharmakaya which is constituted of the five elements of your own nature.*

The five elements are:

1. Element of commandment. It is innate within you that you do not wish to kill, steal, etc.

2. Element of tranquillity. You do not wish a bustling life or to make money.

3. Element of wisdom. You do not wish to live in delusion.

4. Element of emancipation. You do not wish to suffer the pangs of conscience and you wish to live a life of sanction.

5. You know how to teach this to others. You know how you were emancipated, so you will teach it. This is the hardest of all.

When you come near to one who is emancipated, you feel no pang of conscience; you feel at ease, you sense the fragrance of incense.

With others you feel strange. They do not emit the fragrance of the incense of the five elements of Dharmakaya.

*And then I will teach you how to make confession according to the form of non-existence. If your mind is not empty, you cannot understand this non-existence.*

*Journal*

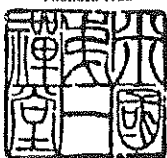
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