Zen Notes

IN THE YEAR 1963 no students were admitted to the Sangha at the First Zen Institute. In other groups, Roshi said, "It is very easy to become a Buddhist, but not here."

Looking backward through the thirty-three years of the Institute's history, we have to note that there have been admissions for reasons other than to become Zen students in the strict sense, that is, sanzen students. For instance, the mother of one of our members previously accepted, seeing that her span of life was nearing its end, asked to join her son's faith. Her admission was irregular in another sense, also, that as no priest of the Zen sect was available at the time, her vows were witnessed by the Council of the Institute.

As there is no separation of "church and state," so to speak, at the Institute, senior members, who make up its corporate body, have always played a double role. They are disciples of the Roshi, Zen students, and they are also members responsible for the continuance of the Institute. For this reason, acceptance of senior members has an importance rather different from that of the usual conversion ceremony, in which one is accepted into the church but does not necessarily become the church. This meaning of admittance at the Institute has not always been clear, but its significance is growing plainer as time goes by. Therefore the admittance rite is an important and permanent commitment. It is no mere ceremony, nor is it "magical" in the sense once ascribed to it by an inquiring writer who had the idea that the recitation of the Refuges, like an incantation, changed one into a Buddhist, whether or no.

In the annals of the Institute, therefore, though some persons have been accepted on a basis different from that just described, the actuality of a true member becomes obvious sooner or later, in the same way that the actuality of a true Zen student, or Koji, does. From my observation, five years is usually needed for this.

If one regards our thirty-three year period as one sowing, there has been a harvest, something has survived. How copiously petalled the lotus is, cannot yet be said.

To indicate what Sokei-an meant by the admittance of members to the Sangha, we reverse the last two figures of the year and go back to 1936, when he most clearly expressed it and one person noted his words. Our records show that of the four souls admitted on Sangha night that year, one has died, two are lost, one went away and has returned.

MARY FARKAS

SOKEI-AN SAYS

SANGHA NIGHT 1936 The Eighth of December was the Day of Enlightenment of the Buddha, and through twenty-five hundred years Buddhists have been celebrating this day.

The Enlightenment of the Buddha is the foundation of our religion. Without this enlightenment there would have been no Buddhism in the past nor would there be any Buddhism in the future.

We are learning what this enlightenment, attained by the Buddha under the tree of wisdom, is, and what to do with it when we understand what it is.

It is very easy to say the word enlightenment. It is very hard to understand what enlightenment is.

This year four souls have broken into Buddhism by their own efforts. These four students are my harvest for this year. I did not teach them anything. With their own wisdom and their own attainment they broke into my wisdom and my attainment. This was similar to the way I reached my teacher's attainment, and his attainment was similar to his teacher's. In such a way we reach back to the Buddha. In this way the Buddha's enlightenment has been handed down.

We do not express some logical conclusion in words, we " demonstrate" our real understanding. We show our attainment. This was the Buddha's method that he handed down to his disciples. Thus we hand down his understanding, from teacher to disciple, as one transmits a flame from candle to candle, or pours water from one utensil into another.

These four disciples of mine have attained some degree of understanding of Buddha so I have invited them into Buddha's Sangha. From now on they are not only my disciples, they are also the Buddha's disciples. For though you who are entering Buddhism cannot see him, he is there. Across this long period of twenty-five hundred years, though you cannot see him and his activities today, you feel his heart in your heart and you think everything with his words.

Now I admit you as Buddha's disciples; we perform the ritual of admission into the Sangha of Buddha.

All the evil karmas
That I have created
Were the results
Of my former ignorance,
Avarice and passion
Carried out by my body,
Mind and speech.
Now I confess them all.

Tathagata,
Shakyamuni Buddha,
You have truly attained
The highest wisdom.
You are the only teacher
In whose Dharma
I take refuge.

From now
Through the future
You are my teacher.
I take a vow
In the name of the Three Treasures
That I will observe
Your holy precepts.

As you are new disciples, I put rakusus on you and give you Buddhist names.

You are taking refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddhism--Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. This is your acceptance of the Commandments of Buddhism from Buddha. Now I shall explain the meaning of the Commandments you have accepted.

You take refuge in Buddha. Buddha is living in you and you have become his disciples. And you will observe the commandments that were made by the Buddha.

The Buddha's commandments are not based upon reason. These commandments are based upon pure love, the relation between you and Buddha.

This was explained by the Buddha to his disciples at a time when one of the commandments was made.

A monk was very ill, dying. "He is in agony," one of the Brotherhood said. "Let us kill him." Others disagreed. "He must die in agony."

The dying monk said: "Please, my brothers, let me go! I have accumulated enough merit to be born in the Devaloka. Please kill me. I cannot bear this pain."

Some agreed, others said "No." Finally they found a hunter who with his strength strangled the dying man. The monks looked at him, strangled. then said, "Why did we kill him, when he was struggling with pain?" And they went to the Buddha and asked him if their action had been right or wrong.

The Buddha said: "Actually you feel that you have committed an error and you did not enjoy seeing your brother dead. Hereafter no one shall kill anyone dying in agony."

Here is an example of one of the Buddha's commandments, based upon natural feeling, not upon talk based on reason. If you talk about the Buddha's commandments, reason about them, you are not disciples of the Buddha.

You take refuge in Dharma. Dharma is the teachings of the Buddha. It has been developed in three ways: in the sutras, which are commandments; in the teachings from the Buddha's experience,

ALL TOGETHER NOW

RK THE HERALD
ANGELS SING

the Vinaya--illustrations of the Buddhist life; and in the philosophy of Buddhism--the Abhidharma, which is reasoning about the Buddha's experience. You will study these.

You take refuge in Sangha. Sangha is the Buddha's community--monks and nuns, and young monks and nuns, and all the novices who are the Buddha's disciples living in lay houses--as you are now living in lay houses.

These are the meanings of the Three Refuges. Now you have entered into the Buddha's Sangha. From now on, you will be making an effort to understand the Buddha's Dharma, to get into the deeps of Buddhism, step by step, and to observe your daily life clearly with His Wisdom.

Now we recite the Four Vows. But before that I shall say one more thing. In the beginning you observe the Buddha's commandments, Hinayana Buddhism. Later you will observe the Bodhisattva's commandments, which are Mahayana Buddhism. Buddhism today has these two types of commandment, and you must understand this. Thus you can observe your daily life, first from the angle of emotion, and then from the angle of Wisdom.

Sentient beings are numberless;
I take a vow
To make them attain enlightenment.

Worldly desires are manifold;
I take a vow
To make them come to an end.

The laws of the universe are numberless;
I take a vow
To understand them.

The goal of Dharma
Is ever beyond our reach;
I take a vow
To attain it.

(Please turn to last page)

ALL TOGETHER NOW

HARK THE HERALD
ANGELS SING

Dear Everyone:

KURAMA (Saddle) is a village to the north of Kyoto. It lies in a deep and narrow valley between sharply rising heavily wooded mountains. So narrow is the valley that, except in a few places, the village is no more than a single line of houses bordering each side of a road that follows for about two miles the curves of a mountain stream. Most of the houses are old, but still substantial, even handsome. Obviously the timber on the mountainside has long provided a lucrative source of wealth for the village, since the valley is too narrow for rice fields.

In the centre of the village, at a sharp S curve in the stream, the road widens a little. A few small shops are here, and an old inn or two. At the north end of the curve, just before the road, narrowing again, turns east, is an open plaza approached by a broad, steep flight of stone steps. At the back of the plaza stands the two storied Sammon of Kurama Temple, a heavy thatched-roof gate of red lacquered woodwork and white plaster, on either side of the entrance of which stands a gigantic contorted figure of a " guardian of the gate." Behind the gate a pilgrim path leads up the steep side of Kurama Mountain through the deep forest to the Yuki (Quiver) Shrine, and beyond that to Kurama Temple, situated on a terrace near the top of the mountain. Today a cable car takes many of the faithful up the more difficult part of the route, though the more pious souls make the long arduous climb on their own weary feet.

For Kurama Mountain has for centuries been a place of pilgrimage and retreat for those who wish to gain spiritual powers through severe religious austerities. As early as the 9th century, hermits were carrying on their ascetic practices there in the cold and the heavy snows of winter. Legend recounts that the gorges and ravines of Kurama Mountain were the habitat of the Tengus, a race of winged demons with red faces and very long noses. The Tengus held their revels during violent storms, taking their pleasure by hurling boulders, unleashing torrents, and raining stones upon the houses of the villages in the valleys. By the 12th century, some eighteen monasteries had been established on the mountain. To one of these in that century Yoshitsune, the child of a chieftain of the Minamoto Clan, was exiled while still a baby by the tyrant Kiyomori, chief of the Heike Clan. As he grew up, the child of Yoshitsune was secretly instructed in all the martial arts by the leader of the Tengus. Thus he was prepared, when he had escaped from the temple and grown to manhood in hiding, to lead the armies of the Minamoto to victory over their enemies, the Heike, at Yashima and Dan-no-ura. Legend also says that, at the former of these battles, Yoshitsune sent his soldiers into a night attack carrying blazing pine trees in lieu of other weapons.

Now we, on a beautiful day in late October, were on our way to Kurama to see the *Hi-matsuri*, " Fire Festival," for which the village had become famed. The rice fields lay golden in the sun, and against the deep turquoise of the sky the persimmon trees, almost bare of leaves but heavy

with orange fruit, were silhouetted.

Just when the village first began to celebrate this festival is not clear, perhaps as late as the end of the 17th century. Several elements seem to have been combined in it; early local puberty or virility rites, the legends that had gathered about Yoshitsune and the Tengus--red tengu masks were for sale in the several souvenir stores--and the yearly festival for the gods of the Yuki Shrine, who protect the village from all evil. Since the 19th century, however, the festival has become famous for its prodigal and fantastic use of fire. Formerly it was held every year on the 22nd of October. But four years ago an autumn typhoon devastated the valley, and only this year was the matsuri again to be celebrated.

A week previously we had driven up to Kurama to arrange for a room on the second floor of an inn, from which to view the more frenzied part of the ceremonies. We had been warned that a large crowd would come by the mountain tram line, and that the road to the village would be closed to traffic in the afternoon. So, taking the advice of the police captain, we arrived by car about three in the afternoon.

We found the villagers already busily erecting before each house the great bonfires that would be lighted as soon as darkness fell. These were six or more feet high, and cleverly constructed out of seasoned roots and heavy logs so as to burn continuously throughout the night. The platform before the Sammon had been surrounded by a suspended straw rope hung with *gohei* (curiously cut white paper festoons with purificatory power), which marked it off as sacred ground. In the center of the sacred place reposed the two *mikoshi*, " shrine cars, " of the gods of the Yuki Shrine--five foot square lacquer palanquins, their open fronts hung with brocade curtains concealing the metal mirrors which symbolize the spiritual presence of the god, their three sides covered with elaborately worked gilt metal, and their phoenix-crowned massive metal roofs hung with valences of lacy metal work and bells. The two heavy timbers on which each car was mounted extended some fifteen feet to the back and the front. Forty or fifty young men bearing these extensions on their shoulders would be needed to lift and carry each car. On a temporary altar behind the *mikoshi* were piled innumerable straw-covered casks of sake, donations from nearby towns and villages.

Since it was still early, we took the cable up the mountain, then the winding path through the forest. Tiny shrines were set here and there along the way, lighted with a lantern or a candle, and fragrant with the incense offered by devotees. Finally a stone staircase of one hundred steep steps brought us onto the terrace before the temple. From it were magnificent views of the surrounding mountains. No human habitation was to be seen; just range after range of wooded peaks rising against the blue of the autumn sky. A service was going on in the main temple building--gongs and drums and chanting, lights and incense clouds. Kurama Temple is now the center of one of the new religious sects in Japan, and that day believers in throngs had come from all over the country to combine religious observance with enjoyment of the matsuri.

It was dusk when we returned to the village. Now we saw that each house had opened its main room to the road. In each was set up a simple Shinto altar, on and around which household treasures had been arranged, with old screens, medieval armor

and flower arrangements as added decoration. On each altar, also was placed a long white radish--a foot-long radish is common here--with two knobs of ginger root at its stem, an obvious phallic symbol. As we walked along to our inn, a Shinto priest in elaborate costume was going from house to house purifying each by sprinkling water from a branch of green leaves, and shaking a white paper *gohei*.

Now from the far west end of the village we saw a light approaching through the darkness. Suddenly the most distant bonfire burst into flames, then the next nearer, then the next. Another Shinto priest was rushing along the road, crying "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!" The matsuri had begun. With the flaming torch in his hand he lighted the bonfires before each house as he passed. "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!"

The village sprang into life. Little boys of five or six emerged from the houses, wearing happi coats girded up around their tiny bare loins. On their shoulders they carried long-handled cornucopia-shaped torches made of pine slats, in the center of which was a bundle of burning faggots. Down the road they trundled bearing their lighted burdens. "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!" their child-voices piped. When the boy was too small to hold the torch alone, his father or elder brother helped him carry it. Next came boys in their early teens, bearing on their shoulders larger versions of the same type of torch; then the young men in their twenties; carrying torches so long and so heavy that often several men were needed to lift one. The young men were dressed in a fantastic costume. Around their heads were tied cotton towels known as *hachimaki*. From olden times Japanese men have worn these when they had heavy labor to perform, or were taking part in any kind of demonstration, either of pleasure or of protest. Their left shoulders were free of their short gaily colored happi coats. These were held in place around the waist with a broad black satin band that ended with a great bow at the back. From their waists hung down an apron of short thick white cords, but in front only, for their buttocks were completely bare, but for the narrow black fundoshi between their loins. "Sairei, sairyo; Sairei, sairyo!"

For two or more hours the village was a riot of fire. The great bonfires blazed and the torches scattered flame and sparks as they were carried through the streets. Tubs of water stood in front of every house, and firemen with chemical apparatus patroled the street. But the gods have always guarded Kurama village from disaster by fire. Around the plaza on which stood the sacred palanquins, and now flooded with light, a great crowd had gathered. From all directions came the sound of drums being beat-

en, and increasingly loud and boisterous, the cries of "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!" as torch bearers and populace became more and more infused with the divine rice spirit which, after all, is the spirit of the gods.

Finally, from the east end of the village came nearer and nearer the throbbing of the drums. The dense crowd opened to let pass a procession, headed by Shrine officials and followed by several men in armor. Others carried great battle standards, twenty or more feet high. Then came more torches, these so enormous that twenty men were needed to bear them, then the smaller torches, then the village people carrying bunches of short flaming faggots. And always the cries "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!", the beat of the drums, and the swirling of flame and sparks.

The density of the crowd now frightened us a little and we returned to our second-story windows. Suddenly from the dark reaches of the western end of the valley a veritable river of flame came rushing. With a vanguard of drums, battle standards, and great torches larger than any we had yet seen, this river of fire poured into the village--hundreds of men in close rank, each waving a bundle of burning faggots and shouting "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!" Surely thus Yoshitsune's army must have appeared to the fleeing Heike at Yashima.

Somehow out of the bacchanalian confusion that ensued as the cohorts from east met the cohorts from the west in front of the sacred palanquins, suddenly came order. Ceremonies we could not see were performed on the sacred ground. Then some fifty-odd of the young men, having handed their torches over to others, took their places near the *mikoshi* and with great shouts lifted the heavy cars up onto their shoulders. In the front of each car stood a young man, naked but for his narrow black fundoshi, arms and legs outspread. So, in ancient times, it is said, the youths of the village announced their entrance into manhood, and their availability for marriage. Now great ropes were fastened to the front of the cars and the women surged forward to help pull them. Thus would they be assured of easy childbirth during the coming year.

In this manner the *mikoshi* were borne through the village street, to the far eastern end and back, then to the far western end. The cars were not only carried. They must be shaken, so that all their bells and metal lace jingled gaily, at every few houses they must stop and the householder rush out with brimming cups of sake to refresh the bearers, and the drums must beat more and more wildly, and the cries of "Sairei, sairyo! Sairei, sairyo!" must rise with more and more frenzy.

Just before twelve, we followed the swaying sacred cars and the swirling crowd, still brandishing flaming torches, to the rest-houses at the west end of the village, where the gods were to spend the night. There, after each car had been put in its respective shelter, and further ceremonies, gods and men would settle down to a great bout of drinking. When the first light of dawn slipped over the high mountains into the dark valley who would be able to distinguish gods from men!

Ryo sen-an, Dai toku-ji
November 15, 1963

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Eryu

SANGHA NIGHT 1937 In the life of the Buddha, his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree is one of the great occasions. In China and Japan, its celebration begins on the first of December and ends on the morning of the eighth. During this time all the monks of the Zen sect practice meditation day and night. Some cannot bear this hard practice of continuous meditation. Occasionally young monks faint because of the strain. But their hope is that they will attain enlightenment during these eight days of meditation. Of course they are always endeavoring to practice, but in memory of the Buddha's great enlightenment, they place especial emphasis on these eight days.

Our religion, so-called Buddhism--we call it Buddha-dharma--is based upon the Buddha's enlightenment. Without this, there would be no Buddhism to speak of.

On the first page of the Buddha's life story you will read of his previous incarnations. Of course these are nothing but metaphors. The monks invented these fictions to convey the significance of Buddhism.

On the second page you will come to the story of the Buddha's immaculate conception.

On the third page comes the story of the birth of the Buddha in Lumbini garden. Then there are the stories of the Buddha's childhood and adolescence.

On the next page is the Buddha's first great agony. He was a prince--the crown prince--of the Shakya tribe, who was kept concealed in the deeps of the palace, never coming close to poverty, pain, sickness, or death. On trips outside he saw these four great sadnesses of human life. After these experiences, he met an ascetic, and adopted the ascetic's way.

After long years of struggle, he attained enlightenment under the Bodhi tree. His struggle for this attainment the sutras describe very carefully. He met many teachers, in the woods, on the mountains. In India, in that day, there were no schools to which anyone could gather students to educate them. Students lived in the woods or mountain-caves, visiting each other and the teachers living there in solitude, from whom they received instruction. India is a very warm country so the students did not need any house in wintertime. Everlasting summer gave them freedom of life and makes that wonderful civilization of India.

The Buddha decided to meditate on his consciousness. When I say "consciousness," it is very difficult for you to grasp what consciousness is, but to the oriental mind consciousness is very simple. We think the first consciousness we can grasp is that of the eye, and the last is our inmost mind. The Buddha meditated upon his inmost mind. He wanted to find out where it came from. He thought it came from the unconscious state. He shifted the focus of his meditation to his present state of consciousness and then he traced back again from there to the unconscious. He meditated deeply for many years. Through his struggle in practicing the commandments, he became well versed in his own structure of surface and deepest consciousness. Then he traced all desires--for fame, food, beauty--back into his original mind. He found the root of desire, and he eradicated that root. He attained desireless moments when he wasn't entertaining anything in his mind.

When his mind was clear as pure water, he saw the morning star shining in the Eastern sky at dawn. And he real-

ized that he wasn't within his own physical body. In his physical body there was no room for his soul, his thoughts. The entire universe was in his mind and his physical body. At that moment everything on earth--trees, weeds, water, air, even his own breath, his own strength--were forgotten. He had forgotten himself and had attained everything altogether. He began his meditation in careful analysis. In the end, in a mindless moment, he achieved this synthetic view, so that everything could be seen at once. He was embodied in the universe and the universe was embodied in him. This part is very carefully stated by the monks who followed him, and his method is still practiced by the monks of China and Japan. Perhaps this is the only way to attain enlightenment.

This practice is still kept like a precious jewel in the Orient. We Zen students practice this method to attain enlightenment, for among all Buddhists it is our Zen sect that especially emphasizes the practice of meditation. We follow the Buddha's own method to attain final human knowledge, to grasp what the reality of all existence is.

There are many pictures of the Buddha in meditation and many stories of his struggle. In the sutras it is told that a dragon guarded him from the attacks of the fierce animals that lived in the woods where he meditated. It is described how, on a rainy day, a giant cobra, coiled about him, and opening its throat like a great umbrella, sheltered him from the falling rain.

It is told that he was eating only one grain of rice a day, following the ascetic's way, and then realized this was not the real way to attain enlightenment. For soul does not exist alone; soul is co-existent with the body.

The Buddha fainted while he was bathing and was being carried downstream when the two daughters of a cowherd who always helped the ascetics pulled him out of the water and offered him buttermilk to drink.

When the Buddha took the buttermilk, the five ascetics who had been meditating with him in the woods thought he had given up his practice and had returned to lay life, so they left him.

It was after the Buddha had been meditating alone under the Bodhi tree for seven days that he attained an enlightenment so profound that no one on earth could understand it. He thought to enter Nirvana at once and give up human life but the God Brahma (in the legend) urged him to stay on earth and promulgate his teaching. The Buddha taught for forty-nine years after his enlightenment and entered Nirvana when he was eighty.

The Buddha's teachings are very simple. To clean your mind, eradicate all previous conceptions, all the superstitions taught in human words.

For a while throw all this away and then attain your pure mind, mind-essence. And do not fall asleep, but remain awake. Do not close your eyes but keep your eyes open. Make complete unity with the outside so that the boundary between you and the outside will cease to exist. The moment this happens you will realize yourself as the whole of existence. This is the key with which to enter the gate of Buddhism. Through this gate the Buddha attained final wisdom. We follow him.

Reconstructed by MARY FARKAS

OBITUARY NOTICE

Audree Kepner--November 3, 1963
Rachel Barry--November 27, 1963

SANGHA NIGHT 1936 (*continued from p. 5*)

I take refuge in Buddha
I take refuge in Dharma
I take refuge in Sangha

I take refuge in the Supreme Buddha
I take refuge in the purest Dharma
I take refuge in the most peaceful Sangha

I take refuge in the field of Buddha
I take refuge in the field of Dharma
I take refuge in the field of Sangha

Because of your benevolence
Because of your benevolence
Because of your maitra, your benevolence.

路從平處嶮
人向靜中忙

ZOKUDENTŌ ROKU

Michi wa heisho yori kewashiku
Hito wa seichū ni mukatte isogawashi

From a level place the road rises sheer,
In the midst of repose men bustle about.

Translation by R.F. SASAKI

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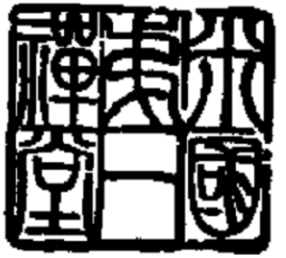

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