Zen Notes

MARY FINLEY FARKAS
(circa 1918)

From the Editor

First, I would like to say that in researching the material for a third installment of Rinzai I found that Mary had actually combined the best of Sokei-an's two translations in earlier Zen Notes. So until I can get hold of the later lectures which one of our members, Bob Lopez, has kindly been putting together, Rinzai will be put on temporary hold.

This issue commemorates the 10th anniversary of Mary's passage to other realms and the playful aspects of her that few got to see, while the cover is from her early days in this realm. When one is finished with one place, one naturally answers the calling of another and while part of her "spirit" is with us in the background, much of her, for all practical purposes, is elsewhere, hopefully in a place more to her liking. She had mixed feelings about how much awakening could occur in this world yet did her best to seed some genuine awakening within its rampant confusion. I appreciated her honesty there and have always had doubts about teachers who blissfully sugarcoat this rather toxic "human condition". She often compared herself with the character in "Woman in the Dunes" who was endlessly sweeping the sand falling from the walls of the deep sand pit she was living in.

Unfortunately, we have all forgotten, even seemingly the Buddhas, how to make this transition effortlessly without going through years of decay, more politely called old age, sickness and death. There is no change, in reality with this triad, especially death. Rather, they are the result of an unseen, creeping, inner rigor mortis, especially in the body and emotional level which traditional meditation does not and cannot address by itself, while the mind paints all sorts of pictures of this process to avoid experiencing the helplessness, heartbreak and continuous internal fragmentation that engenders it. Calling it "Natural" lets one resign to the indignities without ever having to look at what is really going on underneath. Momentary grumbling is allowed, but if it wants to go further is tabbed as foolish. Who are we to question Great Nature's process.? But is it Great Nature's process or just our deeply fixated communal image of its process empowered by our conditioning? Why not tackle the conditioning at its source, rather than its manifest symptoms that create this so-called life as suffering? This source is the same for all, so if one really heals this source for themselves they heal it for everyone, for real, not just in some spiritually symbolic way; i.e. no more Zen, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, any ism... just the vibrancy of a Life that has for its dancing partner, not death but that which makes Great Mind possible and manifests as an effortless flow of creative change appropriate to the moment without time. And again I mean for real, more so than anything that is before you right now.

The Dragon Mama Shuffle

Mary Farkas

Before I go any further I must confess that I generally hate to write unless driven by some manic desire to get a point across. Then I can breeze through countless pages as if they were just one word. Such is not the case now, but a sprinkling of guilt coupled with a desire to acknowledge my Dragon Mama of the last 25 years approaching her first 80, has prompted my somewhat reluctant right hand to pick up a short but sharp pencil to write a few kind and maybe bizarre words about this short but sharp lady.....while my left hand lazily looks on and keeps the frightened pages from running away.

.... so far so good....

As for that little lady (a giant in size 4 shoes) much can be said. First, she has this uncanny knack, while talking to you, of sometimes snatching the straw sandals you are standing on and running off with them. It's hard to describe what this means or how it feels unless you have had the misfortune of experiencing it in person; unnerving to say the least and I think she was born with it like people are born with arms, legs and a mouth. As a young Zen novice in the 60's, it took me a few years to catch on to her antics but by the early 1970's I was able to repay her in kind with the Dragon Mama Shuffle.

Every morning the Dragon Mama's shoes would wait patiently for her outside the Zendo like a pair of faithful donkeys ready to carry her to her next whim. (which in those days was breakfast,

though now breakfast is before sunrise to make sure the Sun has enough energy to rise.

Well...I hate to say this, but it took me over five years to realize that I should not resist the overwhelming temptation to shuffle her shoes around. And when I finally did ...it was such delight, on many mornings, to see the Dragon Mama leave her meditative perch and alight upon her waiting shoes only to find her left foot questioning the right shoe, and the left shoe questioning her right foot which was wrong of course. Upon discovering her predicament, and her feet always beat her to it, she would make this funny little sound that only Dragon Mamas can make, look askance at me with bemused, meditative suspicion and then go through a most remarkable criss-cross, twisting, dance-maneuver with her size 4 feet that would turn any mortal into a möbius pretzel. It was worth missing zazen for, this Dragon Mama Shuffle, and was an important lesson for me on how life could be fun outside the Zendo; you see, in those days I was quite a meditation nut, though you of the 1980's and 90's may find this hard to believe. The truth is, I now dare not come into the Zendo for fear that the dust on my robes will do you all in as you begin taking those deep breaths into emptiness.

If the Dragon Mama was serious about anything it was protecting the FZI against the ravages of formalism. Organizations tend to develop a mind of their own which then turns around, almost universally, to devour, subjugate or severely limit its members. Attempts occurred over the years to form this org-mind, but the Dragon Mama with our help would have none of it. She would guard the cave holding the jewel of Sokeian's dream with the determination worthy of any Dragon Papa, but instead of breathing fire she did the Dragon Mama Shuffle to deter those seeking to snatch the jewel. Her Dragon Mama Shuffle also helped sprout the modern "Cracked-Pot" school of Zen, as we liked to call ourselves; hard to recognize, unless you could peer through the hairline cracks of a much used, somewhat leaky teapot.

And when we all did get together we might as well been Ma Baker and her gang, especially if you saw the impish delight on the Dragon Mama's face when surrounded and dwarfed by all of us 6 foot "boys" as she called us; "Now boys....Now boys... " was a frequent incantation of hers in those days. She always liked to comment on how tall each of us was, and though I sort of take my 6'3 for granted, I guess if I were in the middle of a Redwood forest I too would exclaim, "isn't that tall?.. and that one...and look at that one!" Maybe we were her local Redwood forest; she didn't have her bamboo jungle in the back yard yet, so we had to do. But then again, besides being a Dragon Mama in general, a close relative of the chipmunk when eating, or rather, nibbling her food (she could

take ten times as long to eat one tenth as much food), she was also a bit of a Mother Hen.....and I bet somewhere in the back of her mind she felt she hatched us all, each one bigger than the one before; the miracle of evolving creation!

And what of the Dragon Mama now, as she strolls toward her 80th year?...Well, of late, I've been posing some serious questions to her, such as: "Do you really believe all this stuff about old age and death? Isn't leaving a corpse behind rather bad form for a school that espouses leaving no trace? After all, Bodhidharma left just one sandal, and Fu-kei, the ringing of a distant bell..."

She looks at me with her Dragon Mama eyes in piercing mode, to see the source of these bizarre queries. Quickly she realizes that this will not be a famous Zen mondo for the confusion of future generations, and....that I'm not joking. Now those piercing eyes turn introspective.

"Besides," I add, "form is not empty so much as extremely flexible,... when not in chains. It really reflects to us how we are creating, rather than being an empty shell to inhabit for a while and then discard. If you think the old Chinese practice of foot binding was rather bizarre and useless, how much more so this practice of old age, sickness and death?"

Her eyes light up, accompanied by a subtle nod of agreement. But the Dragon Mama is like a cat in new terrain, quietly sniffing out the environment.

"Well I think you should fool them all. When you get tired of this place, just disappear. Why put all this energy into decay?..."

"Not a bad idea."

Then the phone rings and Dragon Mama becomes Mother Hen tele-peking at a chick caught in its shell; she is the original tele-therapist. Meanwhile I seem to have disappeared.

"Ah, she tried to run off with my straw sandals again, but I am now wise to her ways and wear rubber flip flops. Nonetheless that little Dragon Mama is as short and sharp as ever..."

(PLamp, from Mary Farkas Appreciations & Conversations)

Li'l Ol Lady Zen

Tokusan and "pointing out soul"

Tokusan was a famous Zen master of that day (Rinzai's period). He was older than Rinzai. This Tokusan wasn't a Zen monk at the beginning. He studied meditation from the sutras. He made an interpretation of the Vajrachedika sutra--he was proud of that. His commentary of the sutra made him big-headed. Of course at that time there was no small type printing, so he wrote his commentaries, made scrolls and bore them on his back. He started from his country which was the western part of China, to the southern part.

"*They declare that one can attain Buddhahood immediately, while we believe through one million kalpas, as a result of hard practice, one can attain Buddhahood. I will go to the South and will crush them.*" This was Tokusan's idea in coming from Western China. On foot through many days and nights, he came down to the southern part of China and entered the territory where Zen was prevailing.

He saw a little hut on the roadside; an old woman was serving tea and lunch to travellers. Tokusan came boldly in, pointed his finger at a yu-ge--a fried cracker-- and said:

"*I will take my lunch* -- tien-hsin (dim sum in Cantonese-ed) means both to lunch and to point out soul.-- *Give this fried cracker to me.*"

The old woman said to Tokusan: "*Pray be seated. May I ask you a question, Sir?*"

Tokusan, feeling a bit strange, looked down at the old woman: "*Of course. You can ask me any question.*"

The old woman said: "*Well, answer me, what is all this you are bearing upon your shoulders?*"

The question was strange. Tokusan replied: "*Oh, these scrolls are my commentary on the Vajrachedika sutra.*"

The old woman said: "*Then it must be precious. I have heard there is a famous line in the Vajrachedika sutra:*

The past soul is impossible to point out
The present soul is impossible to point out
The future soul is impossible to point out."

Then she asked, "*What soul do you wish to point out* (to lunch upon)? *If you answer, I will give you my fried cracker. If you cannot answer, go away and lunch elsewhere.*"

In Chinese idiom, "lunch" and "to point out soul" are the same word and this woman used this word "lunch" to ask the question: "Which soul do you wish to point out?"

Tokusan looked at the old woman's face, dumbfounded! This is a great point for Tokusan. If he is a great monk he will speak something philosophical. But his greatness prevented a single word from slipping his lips. There is that line in the Vajrachedika sutra and, of course, he had made a commentary on it when he was making those volumes of commentaries. But at this moment he was dumbfounded and said: "*You are not the usual old woman. What are you, my great sister?*"

The old woman replied: "*I am Vasseka of the Zen school.*"

"*Oh! Then around here there must be some famous Zen masters living.*"

The old woman pointed out the roof of a temple and said: "*Better go and see Ryõtan.*"

Tokusan came down to southern China with the great hope of crushing the Zen school under his feet. But now he felt hopeless and went to the temple to see master Ryõtan.

Ryõtan received Tokusan in a cave near the temple. It was lit by a single candle which Ryõtan blew out after Tokusan had entered. The sudden darkness illuminated Tokusan who the morning after his great realization burned his commentaries and became a Zen student.

Hakuin mud Buddha

One day the monk Hakuin (later to become a famous Japanese Zen master - ed) was meditating and heard the temple gong five miles away. This gong sounded within, not outside and he felt in that moment that all the universe was in his garbha--the sacred word for womb, the womb of mind. And he thought:

"*It must be the entrance.*" But in the morning it had faded.

Later that morning he came to the door of a woman who had fed him every morning. She sees that he is different -- in a trance.

She was an old woman and also a Zen student. She had that Zen spirit. "*Oh! He is asleep!*" and she took the broom and smacked him and he fell down in the rice field. When he came to, muddy and wet, all of a sudden he realized Reality--not in a trance, or as that turtle that rolled over from under a floating log to see the sky just once. The sky was bright and he went back to his own temple, saw his teacher and expressed it.

(Both stories are from lectures given by Sokei-an in 1935 & 1937)

Teacher in a box

Mary ran the Institute from the back office on the ground floor of our building, often surrounded by her "boys" as she liked to call those of us males living on the upper floors. She would regularly chide us on our slovenliness and general irresponsibility-- her way of challenging us to determine if we were up to the job of taking over some of her duties.

One morning, when three of us happened to be present during one of these talks, we suddenly just looked at each other, nodded in spontaneous accord and seized her, lifted her up and forced her, protesting and laughing, into a large carton from a recently arrived air conditioner. We then sealed the box and pushed it rapidly back and forth around the room. After her giggling protestations subsided, we opened the box and she emerged, beaming happily in silence. It seemed her "young lions" had passed her test.

(The remaining episodes are from THE LIGHT HOUSE IN THE OCEAN OF CH'AN by Buddhist Yogi C.M. CHEN, an obscure but most interesting collection of Zen stories-ed)

Grandma Ling

Fu Pei was drinking tea with Grandma Ling. Ling asked, "*To whom is the expression 'cannot be spoken with all the effort' addressed?*"

Fu Pei replied. "F*u Pei has no superfluous words*."

Ling said, "*I wouldn't have put it this way*."

Fu Pei asked how she would have put it. Ling drew her hands up her sleeves and cried, "*Heavens! There is more sadness now*."

Fu Pei had nothing to say. Ling said, "*If a person cannot tell whether a word is proper or improper or whether an alleged truth is false, he will be in trouble*."

Nan Chuan (Nansen, Jap-ed) heard it and said, " *Fu Pei has been defeated by an old woman.*"

Grandma Ling laughed and said, "*Nan Chuan is still lacking in devices.*"

Cheng I asked, "*Why*?"

Ling folded her hands and cried, "*How miserable! How distressing!*" She then asked Cheng I whether he understood. Cheng I clapped his palms together in a salute and retreated. Ling said, "*The damaging fool of a Ch'an master! The likes of you are as numerous as flax seed or millet.*"

Cheng I told it to Chao Chou (Joshu,Jap-ed). Chao Chou said, "*If I see this stinking old woman, I will ask her until she shuts up.*"

Cheng I asked, "*How?*"

Chao Chou struck him and said, "*You damaging fool! How can I spare you the beating?*"

Ling heard it and said, "*Chao Chou deserves a good cudgeling from me.*"

Chao Chou heard it, also cried, "*How miserable! How distressing!*"

When Ling heard this, she exclaimed, "*Chao Chou has eyes that beam forth the light that shatters the four worlds.*"

Chao Chou sent someone to ask Grandma Ling about Chao Chou's eyes. Ling raised her fist. Upon being told of this, Chao Chou composed a gatha which read as follows:

"Right at the moment, face it directly and take it up.
Face it straight because the moment will soon be gone.
Let me ask you, Grandma Ling,
For what do you cry loss or gain"

Grandma Ling returned him a gatha:

"My cries the Master has understood,
Once understood who else would know?
In the country of Magadha of yore,
They almost missed the chance that was right before their eyes."

(Continued at end of Perfect Awakening)

Mary on Sokei-an

Zen got to me on the evening of March 23, 1938 in the first floor front apartment of 63 West 70th street, New York, between eight and nine when a man who had been enlightened raised his flywisk before an audience of seven persons, a gray cat named Chaka, and the invisible hordes of sentient beings of the future world to whom his succeeding words were addressed. This was, you might say, the signal to come to one point, in attentive silence, as his talk was about to begin.

He talked, that evening as on many others, about sudden enlightenment, and concluded this particular talk, which happened to concern the teaching of the sixth patriarch of Zen in China, from whom he got his Zen Master name, Sokei-an, with a reference to the enlightenment of that estimable Zen Master which occurred when he heard a monk reciting, from the Diamond Sutra;

Without depending upon anything, manifest Mind.

I listened to many other words of the fabulous being we were invited to address as Osho, teacher, and also came to know him in the intimacy of sanzen, the personal interviews given students in Rinzai Zen, but the truth of the matter is, that one moment would have been quite enough, for in it, I and the rest of the audience cleared our minds, entered silence and were one with him and the universe, just as it says in the sutra. I did not pay any particular attention to it at the time, but just smiled to myself. All manner of experiences have occurred between then and now, but the unqualified faith aroused at that moment has never wavered in me up to today. It glows steadily and without the slightest doubt.

I did not understand it at that moment and I do not now, but I can tell you this. Sokei-an walked in the line of the great masters of the past he introduced in his talks to his "members", as he called the dozen or so persons whose lives orbited his. Each talk he gave was addressed not only to them but to the universe, and welled up from his vast heart in sameness and variety, foamed into beauty, and subsided into the deeps. He used to write down the translations from the Chinese sutras over which he labored, but the comments, in English, from his own mind came without premeditation, and he made no effort to catch or hold on to them. Like the sign near the entrance door:

Those who come are received.
Those who go are not pursued.

He said, "I am like an artist who takes pleasure making beautiful pictures in the sand."

The particular wave that carried me out to sea was one of millions that pulsed out from his mind, and, like all waves, extended to infinity.

I knew him for his last seven years. They were terrible, wonderful years, full of rage, jealousy, war, sickness and death, laughter and tears, fun and games, like all years.

After Sokei-an died in 1945, it became my particular responsibility to rescue what remained of his spoken words from the oblivion of the notebooks in which his "members" had recorded them. I have been twenty-five years putting these into shape one by one as best I could, aided by a score of fellow-travelers.

Here is a sampling of the flotsam and jetsam, oyster shells, old shoes, bits and patches --treasures of the sea that accumulated on this shore. When you pick one up, hold it to your ear and the sound of the whole sea is there.

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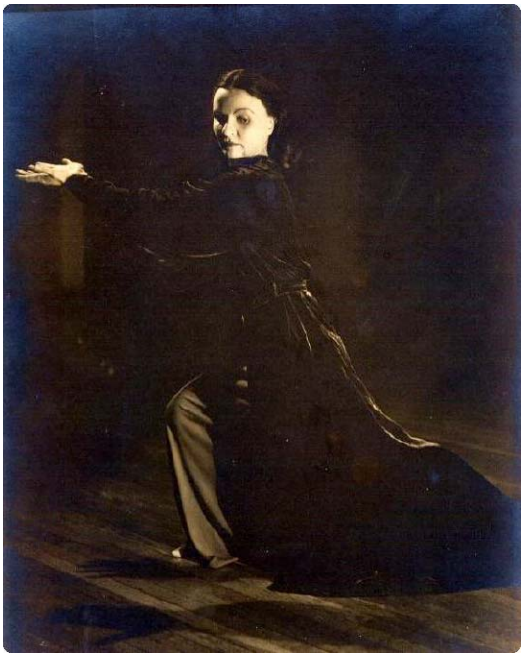

THE SUTRA OF PERFECT AWAKENING

TWENTY-SECOND LECTURE

Saturday, December 3rd, 1938

"O Obedient One! You must know that body and mind are likewise termed illusory filth. When this foul state vanishes once for all, all directions appear in their original state of purity.

O Obedient One! It is as a pure mani (mind-stone) which reflects the five shades of color, displaying this or that color according to the direction. When an idiot casts his eye on the jewel, he fancies that the mani really possesses the five shades of color.

O Obedient One! When the pure nature of Perfect Awakening manifests itself in body and mind, it manifests itself according to the nature of those sentient beings. Just so, fools imagine the Pure and Perfect Awakening really manifests itself in some particular state of body and mind. They are like the idiot who believes that the mind-stone really possesses color. For this reason they cannot disengage themselves from, illusory phantoms."

In the previous passage, there was a metaphor of a mirror, and here is the famous metaphor of a crystal ball which is called "Mani" -- sometimes Maniva. "Mani" is mind; "iva" is like -- "Mind-like." Because it reflects many figures from the outside.

In speaking of the metaphor of the mirror, the Buddha said; "When you wipe away the filth from the surface of the mirror, you will discover the pure and clear mirror!" In this metaphor are two important principles: the first is to wipe away the illusory filth. The second is to discover the real original mirror.

This term "filth" is translated from the Sanskrit "rajas" -- mind-stuff. There are six qualities of rajas, mind-stuffs, those conceptions which are the consequence of the outside, introduced into our mind by our sense organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, touch. Sentient beings believe that they really exist as objective entities! But when you investigate color, sound, etc., you discover that they are just the existence of phenomena -- and not really existing. The nature of objective existence by itself -- our mind, through these

five senses, cannot realize! Color is a vibration of ether; sound is a vibration of air; they appear on our sense organs; they do not exist outside -- but in your own mind. This existence within your mind, introduced by your sense organs, is called "rajas" by the Buddha. I have translated it as "filth" because it veils the true nature of mind. When this filth is wiped away -- the true nature appears! This indicates the nature of Buddhism. The Buddhist always tries to return to the original state instead of ascending higher and higher to attain some spiritual power. The Buddhist descends, going back to his original nature, and finds that his religion is the original nature.

This is rather Oriental. When I came to this county, I realized that all the new religions of this country talk about "ascending" -- transcending this filthy, worldly life for some higher world; and then in the height of "somewhere" he will find the highest religion! So the eyes are always turned upward. Here in America, all the teachers are looking up at the sky! But we retreat -- go down -- go back. It is the new religions that have invented the sky! It is a hypothetical heaven.

In this metaphor of the Maniva stone, the Buddha explains his religion more clearly.

"*O Obedient One! You must know that body and mind are likewise termed illusory filth.*" -- The body is composed of the four great elements and mind is composed of five mental elements. Appearance is really Mind -- we call it body, but it is mind. This mind-body speaks more than that which we call mind. It speaks from the unconscious, and the mind inside doesn't speak so much. In your inner mind you may deny, but the physical mind speaks loudly! This is called "rupa."

The next mind is "vedana," sense-perception. Your eye speaks more than your lips; your ear listens more than your mind.

Then "samjna," the so-called sub-conscious mind. This is not as in Western terms -- but the mind which we carry through generation, ingrained deep in our consciousness. It passes, not only from father to son, but from friend to friend, teacher to disciple. This transmission is performed in both ways: from body to body and from mind to mind.

I was not born in the family of Gautama, but I carry his teaching. My consciousness was perfumed with his teaching, and I was born into the world with that consciousness! It is called "reincarnation." Reincarnation means reincarnation of mind, not body! But mind makes body -- so if you sleep always in this life, perhaps you will be born in the body of a cow! Reincarnation

really means the reappearance of mind. This consciousness is called "samsara." I cannot explain what consciousness is, but I am conscious that I am here. If you lose your consciousness and gain it again -- even the interval of a few minutes -- you cannot know the time when you were unconscious. It was wiped out.

Consciousness appears between the subjective and the objective world. If you were born in the sky with a physical body, you could have no consciousness! It is like two mirrors reflecting one another; they are not conscious of this, but if something comes between them -- both reflect it.

While consciousness alone exists -- we cannot call it consciousness -- it is Reality. In Sanskrit this Reality, this original nature, is called "Svabhava."

So the Buddha said: "You must know that body and mind are likewise termed illusory filth."

"*When this foul state vanishes once for all, all directions appear in their original state of purity.*" -- (Of the consciousness) The state of Reality appears.

This performance of our consciousness is like the surface of the ocean -- all waves; at the bottom is eternal tranquillity; the ocean cannot brush away the waves. They are always there. This is the attitude of Buddhists. We step back from the first surface to the second, the second to the third -- and so on down to the sixth consciousness -- Reality. It is our mental attitude -- not the physical way -- which wipes away the foul state of mind. We retreat our consciousness into the realm of Reality. So we do not need to take away our eyes, cut off our ears, tear out our tongue, or burn our body! We retreat into the original state of mind by way of meditation.

We do not jump into the sky seeking for heaven! We just go back to original nature and find it there. The Buddha said this is the best almsgiving, the formless charity. So, we do not knock on the doors of Second Avenue, waking the tired people to offer them charity or to take their babies to institutions for charity's sake.

Sometimes Christians cannot understand the activities of Buddhists; all is quiet -- but we call it activity, and we call it purity. Purity does not mean good behavior; it means original nature unstained by the five senses.

"*O Obedient One! It is as a pure mani (mind-stone) ...*" -- We don't really know what this mani stone is, but in the Chinese commentary it is written that it is a crystal ball. Some say it is the

opal -- but it seems to be a generalized name for all those jewels, or ornaments made of jewels.

"*... which reflects the five shades of color, displaying this or that color according to the direction. When an idiot casts his eye on the jewel, he fancies that the mani really possesses the five shades of color.*" -- (This reminds me of the story of an American woman who went to Bermuda. She looked out from the window of her hotel one evening and saw the purple water reflecting the purple sky. She gathered up all the empty bottles she could find and started down to the sea. The hotel owner, seeing her, asked what she was going to do with all those empty bottles, "I am going to fill them with this beautiful purple ocean water!" she said.)

"*O Obedient One! When the pure nature of Perfect Awakening manifests itself in body and mind, it manifests according to the nature of those sentient beings.*" -- This "pure nature of Perfect Awakening" means when you awake to Reality through the gate of the last consciousness. In deep meditation you will awaken, through dhyana paramita.

There are six ways of awakening to Reality: Meditation is one; Prajna is another, through the highest wisdom you awake to original nature; Dana Paramita means by acts of self-sacrifice, charity, etc.; Sila Paramita is through observing commandments; Ksanti Paramita is to practice forbearance, patience, etc.; Virya Paramita is making an effort to practice the contrivances of Buddhism, such a chanting, calling the name of Amida, etc.

Meditation really includes the others -- but the highest is Prajna! By this wisdom you destroy the gate and enter! And when you attain this Perfect Awakening, its nature will pervade your whole being. It will manifest itself in your body and in your mind, according to the nature of all sentient beings. Just as the Mani changes its color Perfect Awakening, according to time, place, and condition, changes its appearance. If perfect Awakening were embodied in a cat, the cat would still say "Meow!" In a dog, "Bow-wow!" The cat and dog would not throw its eye toward heaven -- but "Meow!" "Bow-wow!" A real cat and a real dog.

"*Just so fools imagine the Pure and Perfect Awakening really manifests itself in some particular state of body and mind.*" -- As if someone who has Perfect Awakening must have a third eye, or the thirty-two signs of a saint on the body! They think all enlightened men must be very thin and have silvery whiskers; they must not be heavy like Sokei-an! Some trim their beards to look like Christ! This is like painting some particular color on the "crystal ball" -- a foolish idea!

"They are like the idiot who believes that the mind-stone really possesses color. For this reason, they cannot disengage themselves from illusory phantoms." -- For this reason they cannot attain the pure and transparent original nature. All those assumptions and affectations are poison to the man who pursues religion! He must find his original nature by himself -- go back to his own first state of mind.

If you just study Buddhism as a philosophy, remembering all the terms and think you can attain Buddhism, you are wrong! You can attain only by attitude of mind.

There is no need to read sutras. All is written in your own original nature!

*****

Lil Ol Lady Zen Continued

Turning the Wheel

An old lady sent some money to a Chan'master, requesting that he turn the wheel of the Tripitaka for her. The master took the money, got off his couch, made a complete turn and said,

"Tell the old lady that I have turned the wheel of the Tripitaka for her."

The person went back and told the old lady what had happened. The old lady said,

"I asked him to turn the wheel of the entire Tripitaka, how come he has turned the wheel of only half the Tripitaka?"

The Way to Tai Shan

A monk asked an old woman, "*Which way to Tai Shan?*"

The old woman said, "*Straight ahead.*" The monk went ahead and the old woman remarked, "*You are going that way again!*"

The monk related this to Chao Chou. Chao Chou then went to her and asked: "*Which way to Tai Shan?*" The old woman answered as before.

Chao Chou returned to the abbey and said to the monk, "*I have checked her attainment for you.*"

Lynne Marie Aston

January 8, 1941- July 14, 2002

We are saddened by the sudden loss of Lynne Aston, one of our long term members as well as guest resident at the Institute for the last few years. Lynne had developed some complications from her second round of chemotherapy to treat some residual breast cancer, was sent to St. Peter's Hospital in Albany for an operation, contracted an infection after the surgery and died from a massive stroke a few days later on Sunday July 14 of this year.

Lynne was on our board of directors and had her own sitting group up in Chatham New York. She had all the qualities of a good Zen student; was reliable, well focused with an easy disposition and was noted by her peers as an excellent therapist. She began coming to the Institute in the early 1980's to attend sesshins here with Joshu Sasaki Roshi.

Lynne would stay at the Institute Sunday evening through Wednesday, take part in our morning and evening zazen practice and go out to see her patients during the day. She had a wonderful laugh, even during her chemotherapy, that brightened up the space around her, loved flowers and her weekly arrival at the Institute the last few years was almost always accompanied by her beaming smile and a new flower arrangement in the Zendo.

So, dear lady, you will be missed by many and we hope you are getting a well deserved rest where ever you may be on that other shore...

Meowless....

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Zen notes

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PUBLISHED BY

FIRST ZEN INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, INC.

113 East 30th Street
New York City, New York 10016
(212) 686-2520

VOLUME XLIX, NUMBER 2 Spring 2002
Editor, usually anonymous artist, poet... Peeter Lamp

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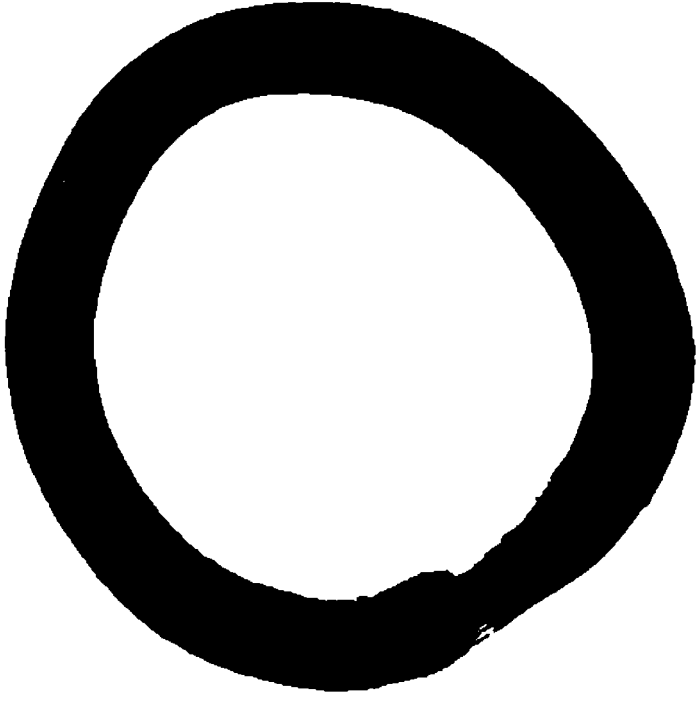

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Founded in 1930 by
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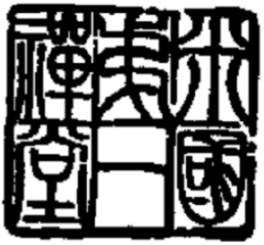

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