

A Report
on the
Peninsula Branch
of the
San Francisco Zen Center
by
Marian Derby

1964

Origin of the Group

Tim Burkett, who was then a senior at Stanford University, remembers the origin of the Peninsula Branch of the San Francisco Zen Center as a remark by Rev. Suzuki that if a meeting place could be found on the peninsula he would like to begin a weekly meditation group. Tim contacted a Stanford graduate student, John Ketchum, who agreed to let the group use his living room. Tim sent post cards to people on the Wind Bell mailing list who lived in the area and early in November, 1964 the first zazen and lecture was held at 1005 Bryant Street in Palo Alto. Tim remembers that there were only 3 or 4 who attended the first few meetings.

The Morning Group in Palo Alto

I first became aware of the zazen group on February 21, 1965 through a notice which Tim Burkett had submitted to the Palo Alto Times. Thursday, February 25, 1965 was the first meeting I attended. At that time there were about 12 in the group. Of those who attended that morning and who are still active members of the Peninsula Branch of the San Francisco Zen Center are Tim Burkett, Bob Randle, Dan Baty, Toni Johansen, Helen Donaghey and myself. (Dec. 1965)

At 5:30 every Thursday morning one or two students arrived early in order to move the furniture in the large old-fashioned living room, sweep and dust the room, and arrange the cushions and altar pieces. At that time our equipment consisted of a small drum, a bell, a kyosaku, about 7 cushions and 4 or 5 copies of the Prajna Paramita Sutra.

Zazen began at 5:45 A.M. At 6:25 Rev. Suzuki conducted the ceremony. We bowed 9 times to the floor, chanted the Prajna Paramita Sutra once, and bowed 3 times to the floor again. Then Rev. Suzuki lectured on Zen Buddhism for 20 or 30 minutes. I remember the lectures as intimate and informal. For several months he explained, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase, and sometimes word by word, the meaning of the Prajna Paramita Sutra. After the lecture we moved the furniture back in place and left the house, often before any of the occupants were awake.

The Evening Group in Redwood City

On April 21, 1965 the first meeting of the evening group was held at the home of Amy Simpson who lived at 849 Palm St. in Redwood City. Zazen began at 7:30 P.M. No ceremony was held. After zazen Rev. Suzuki lectured on the Platform Sutra. At about 9:15 tea and cookies were served, and questions were answered. Four students attended this meeting, Toni Johansen, Amy Simpson, myself, and a young man who drove Rev. Suzuki from San Francisco. This group grew to 17 people and then dropped to an average of 8 to 10. With two or three exceptions the evening group during 1965 and 1966 consisted of people who did not attend the morning group.

The Morning Group Moves to Los Altos

On July 8, 1965 the morning group moved to my home at 748 University Ave. in Los Altos. Rev. Suzuki felt that we could expand our activities by holding our meetings in the home of one of the members. My living room was large and my

home was centrally located. One of the first additions to our activities was an informal breakfast after the lecture. Coffee, fruit and rolls were served in the dining room, and the family-like discussions around the breakfast table became almost as popular as the lectures.

Another activity which began at this time was the tape recording of the morning lectures. We now have a large collection of transcribed lectures which the members can read, and which I hope eventually can be edited and published in a book. A few have already been published in the Wind Bell.

During the year that the group met in my living room there was an average of 12 to 15 attending each Thursday morning.

The Evening Group Moves to Los Altos

In February of 1966 the evening group moved from Redwood City to my home in Los Altos. Perhaps because of the move this group has had fewer steady members, even though it attracted more new members than the morning group. At the beginning of the year the group averaged about 8 to 10 in number and by the end of the year it had grown to an average of 15 to 18. The custom of serving tea and refreshments after the lectures was continued.

Origin of Haiku Zendo

On Jun 16, 1966 I mentioned an idea to the morning group which had come to me a few days earlier. I told them I was considering remodeling the garage into a zendo so we could hold daily meditation. Rev. Suzuki and the students were in favor of the idea. William Stocker, a carpenter who had attended some of our meetings was contacted. He had free time, and was interested in the project. He met with Rev. Suzuki and together they designed the zendo, patterning it within the physical limitations of the existing garage, after a traditional Japanese zendo.

Construction of Haiku Zendo

Work began on the zendo on Jun 24, 1966, and for the next six weeks William Stocker worked as many as 12 hours a day on the hall. During the week he was assisted by members living near Los Altos. On two week ends members of the San Francisco Zen Center drove to Los Altos and spent the day working on the project. William was a good foreman and the amateur laborers (even the women) did a professional job. The only outside professional help, beside William's was the electrical work and a small plumbing job.

Opening Ceremony of Haiku Zendo

On August 4, 1966 the opening ceremony was held. Rev. Suzuki, Rev. Katagiri, Dick Baker, President of Zen Center, and Mrs. Suzuki were among those attending. There were seven-~~ten~~ present at the dedication that morning. The room ideally seat 17 (16 students plus the priest), but by using futons and cushions on the floor 26 could be accommodated. The attendance during the last few months of 1966 generally averaged from 15 to 19. The largest number we had at one meeting was 22. . DAILY ZAZEN

Buddha's Enlightenment Day

On December 8, 1966, which fell on a Thursday, the first formal Japanese breakfast was served in the zendo. The menu and style of serving was patterned after those served at the San Francisco Zen Center. Because the kitchen is detached from the zendo the trays were set up on a table in the "car port" which adjoins the zendo. Members were so enthusiastic about this breakfast that it was decided to make it a once a month affair.

Meditation Schedule

By the end of the year a meditation schedule had evolved which seemed to fit the needs of our members. Meditation is held every week day morning (except Thursday) from 5:45 A.M. to 7:40 A.M. It consists of two 40 minute zazen periods divided by a 10 minute ceremony and a 15 minute kinhin period. On Thursday morning when the priest from San Francisco attends, there is one period of zazen, a ceremony, and a lecture of 20 to 30 minutes. The custom of the breakfast in the house has been continued except once a month when the formal breakfast is served in the zendo.

On Saturday morning (except when there is a sesshin in San Francisco Zen Center) meditation begins at 5:45 A.M. and ends at 9 A.M. There are three periods of zazen divided by a ceremony, kinhin, and a small breakfast consisting of bread and butter, hard boiled egg, fruit and tea. This is served formally as in San Francisco. There is no group meditation on Sunday. The zendo is always open and members are encouraged to come and practice at their convenience.

At the end of the year the on y group meditation held in the evening was on Thursday evening when the priest attended and lectured to the group. Even if a dilly late

afternoon or evening session is added later I feel that we will continue to keep the longer morning period. Several people who drive some distance to the zendo feel that having this longer period of meditation makes their trip worth while. Some, who must leave for work, or home to fix breakfast for their family, stay for only one period of zazen.

Many people have told me that even though their schedules do not permit them to use the zendo more than once or twice a week at this time, it gives them a great feeling of gratitude just to know that it is here.

1967

Plans for a Resident Priest

I had suggested to Rev. Suzuki before he went to Japan in 1963 that he try to find a young Japanese priest who would be interested in coming to the United States and acting as our resident priest. I felt I could offer him room and board and a small salary. When Rev. Suzuki returned from Japan in November of 1966 he told me that Philip Wilson and Graham Petchey had recommended a young priest who was then at Eihei-ji. Rev. Suzuki asked me to write and invite him (which I did). Rev. Suzuki also wrote to him to explain our situation. On January 21 we received a reply from Kobun Chino saying that he would like to accept our offer and would make plans to join us as soon as possible.

Beginner's Mind

For about a year and a half I had been recording, transcribing, and editing the weekly lectures of Rev. Suzuki. I had now collected enough material to begin organizing them into a book which I hoped could be published. In March I read the edited lectures to Rev. Suzuki and passed them on to Dick Baker for final editing. The tentative name for the book was "Beginner's Mind". *SEE ALSO MOUNT-BLINDNESS LINES*

Evening Zazen

In May I tried an experiment. I announced the beginning of a regular schedule of evening zazen from 7:15 to 9:10 P.M. I hoped that this would encourage members of the Thursday evening group to sit more often. It didn't. After 9 months I gave up the evening schedule. Of course it was not a complete failure because I benefited from the additional periods of zazen which I continued but not limiting myself to a rigid schedule.

Chino, Sensei Arrives

On June 19th Chino, Sensei arrived (via steamship) in San Francisco. As soon as I met him I recognized the same spirit that I had come to appreciate in Rev. Suzuki and Rev. Katagiri. Chino, Sensei spent a day or two at Sekoji and a few days at Haiku in before he went to Tassajara. The decision to have Chino, Sensei spend the summer at Tassajara was made because it was obvious that his talents could be put to best use there. It was the plan to have him return to Haiku in the fall after the monastery had closed for the winter.

Tassajara

Because of the work involved in the development of the new monastery at Tassajara, the group in Los Altos found itself having to manage more often without a priest. I tried various ways of handling the situation. I invited guest speakers from the older Zen Students in San Francisco and held discussions. Jean Ross came quite frequently and her talks were appreciated. I even "lectured" myself.

The presence of the new monastery (which I visited frequently during the spring and early summer) added impetus to a desire I found growing within me--to leave Haiku An (if I could find someone to replace me) and go to Tassajara myself. In July I asked Jean Ross if she would take over my job but she declined.

We Lose Our Priest

At the end of sesshin at Tassajara, which I had attended, Dick Baker and I realized that Chino Sensei was needed at Tassajara more than at Haiku An. It had been decided to keep the monastery open all year.

Zen Party

On October 7 an outdoor party was held at the home of Norman and Barbara Hiestand. Members from Los Altos, San Francisco and guests were invited. The purpose of the party was to get together for fun and to introduce more people to what was going on in Tassajara. About 100 people attended.

Oryoki

Chino, Sensei had suggested to me that our group begin to eat monastic style using Oryoki. I made up about 20 sets of eating bowls and on Oct. 19 we held our first oryoki breakfast. The reaction was mixed. Some members felt, and still do, very negative about eating in this formal way. Others liked the experience and found it good training. We tried eating once a month with oryoki and then, because we found the sequences of the ritual were forgotten we tried eating in this way 3 Thursdays out of four in the month.

The oryoki practice continues to be difficult to fit easily into the schedule, but it has been continued and extended to include Saturday morning breakfasts.

Stanford Esalon Seminar

On Nov. 26, Dick Baker and Mike Murphy brought a group of Stanford Students to practice in Haku Zendo. It was the last morning of a three day seminar on meditation. I was happy to have Mike Murphy lead a group at Haku since I had first sat in zazen at a seminar led by Gary Snyder three years before at Mike Murphy's home in Big Sur.

1968

Lay Director

The problem of defining my relationship or my position in the zen community had often left me unsatisfied. What was my position? I finally defined it to my own satisfaction as "Lay Director of Haiku An". My relationship to myself, to my fellow zen students, to the zen priests, and to the larger zen community had been becoming clearer, if not to myself, then to Suzuki Roshi. On Dogen's birthday, Jan 26th, Roshi told me he felt I should "join the order", (become officially a part of the sangha.) I did not feel I could abandon my responsibilities to my children then, so I declined, but I left the matter open for consideration at some future date.

Beginner's Mind

Dick Baker, who had not had time to work on the final edition of Beginner's Mind told me he had turned the manuscript over to Trudy Dixon.

Extended Thursday Program

On May 3 a new program was begun-an extended Thursday morning schedule as follows:

- 5:45 Zazen
- 6:30 Ceremony
- 6:40 Lecture
- 7:00 Kinhin
- 7:10 Breakfast in Zendo
- 8:00 Work meeting
- 8:05 Work Period
- 9:20 Clean up
- 9:30 Zazen
- 10:15 Discussion & Coffee in house
- 11:00 Zazen (without priest)

This program was followed on an average of 2 times a month, alternating with a short program ending at 8:30 following an informal breakfast in the house.

Dokusan

On May 16th, Roshi held Dokusan for members of Haiku Zendo. It had been hoped that this program would become a continuing part of our extended Thursday program so that members could avail themselves of Dokusan at least once a

month if they so desired. But because Roshi was unable to come to Haiku Zendo except infrequently now, because of his need to divide himself between the monastery and the temple in San Francisco this program was abandoned after a month.

Stanford Esalon Seminar

On the weekend of May 24 to May 27 a sesshin sponsored by the Stanford Esalon Group and led by Chino Sensei and Silar Hoadley was held at Haiku Zendo. About 20 people attended the first evening. By the time the sesshin ended there were 12 to 14 left. The schedule for the sesshin was as follows:

Friday, May 25

8:00 P.M. Zazen
8:30 P.M. Kinhin
8:40 P.M. Ouyoki instruction
9:20 P.M. Tea
Zazen

Sunday May 25

6:00 A.M. Zazen
6:30 A.M. Kinhin
6:40 A.M. Zazen
7:10 A.M. Service
7:30 A.M. Breakfast
Break
8:30 A.M. Zazen
9:00 A.M. Kinhin
9:10 A.M. Zazen
9:40 A.M. Kinhin
9:50 A.M. Discussion
11:00 A.M. End

May 21, Saturday

7:00 A.M. Zazen
7:30 A.M. Kinhin
7:40 A.M. Zazen
8:10 A.M. Service
8:20 A.M. Breakfast
Break
9:30 A.M. Work
10:30 A.M. Zazen
11:00 A.M. Kinhin
11:10 A.M. Lecture
12:20 P.M. Zazen
12:50 P.M. Service
1:00 P.M. Lunch
Break
2:00 P.M. Zazen
2:30 P.M. Kinhin
2:40 P.M. Tea
3:00 P.M. End

Wedding

On June 18 the marriage of my daughter, Kristin Dorby to Phillip Clarke was held in Haku Zendo. It was a Buddhist Ceremony conducted by Chino, Sensei.

Ren

On June 20, after having sat with Roshi's suggestion that I "join the order" I had dharma with him in Haku Zendo and told him I had decided to accept. I hoped that this would free me from my ties to Haku An and permit me to move on into a new area. I set about with renewed effort to find someone to take my position.

New Lay Director

On June 29 I asked Lester Kayo, a member who had been sitting regularly with our group for about a year, if he would be interested in moving into Haku An with his family to take over the zendo and two of my children. On July 5 Les and Mary Kayo accepted. They began looking for tenants to rent their home in San Jose and I began to reorganize the house (and my personal life) for the change. It was my original plan to go to Tassajara for about a year of training beginning in October.

Beginner's Mind

look up date when Trudy died re World Book

In August Trudy Dixon sent me the final draft of the book of lectures she had been recoding. She had written a fine introduction, organized the lectures and polished them. It made a fine collection. She intended to give the book to Dick Baker to take to "Tuttle" publishing co. in Japan. Tuttle's editor had read four of the lectures and had shown interest in the book. Since Dick was going to Japan in October Trudy thought it would be advantageous for him to take the book himself.

Change of Directors

Les and Mary Kayo and their two young children, Margie and David, moved into Haku An in September. I stayed on a month while they accustomed themselves to the new job and environment. They adapted quickly, not only to the job of managing the zen group, but of acting as foster parents to my two youngest teen age girls, Kathy and Anne.

Leaving Haku An

On September 30 I spent my last night at Haku An. There was some unfinished business such as the transfer

of the ownership of the house to the Zen group, but I left this business to be completed by Les Kaye.

I did not go directly to Tassajara as I originally planned, but instead spent four months living and practicing with another zen student, Bill Smith. I attended zazen only occasionally at Haiku Zendo.

As I finish this report on February 5, 1969, I expect to leave for Tassajara in three days for the spring training session. I have decided to postpone my ordination indefinitely.

Martin Berkeley