

May 9, 1997

David,

Frances writes that you asked her to relay a message to me about the 70-page transcript of Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind you found, and to ask me whether I would read it and see if it was an original transcript, the whole transcript, or if I knew where you might find other drafts. Frankly David, I'm not interested in this archival research. These transcripts are just fossil bones of beginner's mind. What I'm interested in is the living spirit of beginner's mind-- what's going on in it here and now, in myself and in you. I am interested in why, as Frances puts it, you are so "extremely tenacious and persistent" in finding the original source of Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind.

Here is a possibility that you might want to consider. It occurred to me when I read this clue in Frances' letter: "He says Dick Baker has boxes of old stuff that nobody's gone thru and 'one day' maybe 'someone' will get around to it. No one has time." This got me to wondering if your tenacity and persistence comes from some unfinished karma of Suzuki-roshi's. It could be a koan that is moving you to try and help Roshi fulfill his inmost request: to reconcile the differences between Zen Center and his chosen successor.

You know Roshi wants Baker-roshi to return to Zen Center some day. Not the Baker-roshi who left with his exceedingly expert mind, but Baker-roshi who has discovered his beginner's mind. It may take a few more years of self-imposed exile, plus the the help of old dharma brothers and sisters, but this must happen before Suzuki-roshi's American mission is completed. If it doesn't happen sometime in the early 21st century it will appear that Suzuki-roshi made a mistake in choosing Dick

as his successor. I don't believe this. I thnk it was Roshi's karma to leave his students a koan for all of us to solve.

Last night I searched through all the Wind Bells after April 8, 1983 when the Board of Directors at Zen Center first met to discuss the Crisis. The last note I found about it was in the 1989 spring issue of Wind Bell where it was reported Dick was trying to change the Articles of Incorporation of Zen Center so he would have unchallenged authority as Chief Priest of Zen Center. (Michief caused by his expert mind.) The last Wind Bell I received was in the fall of 1991. I don't know if any Wind Bells have been issued since then, or if my name was removed from the mailing list, but in any event I don't know what's been happening since that time.

But whatever has happened, it seems to me that it is important for Baker-roshi's dharma family to continue to make attempts to keep in touch with him. This search of yours for the missing transcripts gives you an excuse to visit Dick and ask his permission to look through the boxes of "old stuff" he has stored in his attic, or basement or vault. If you find any hidden treasures you can Xerox them and share copies with Zen Center.

The project would give you a chance to relate to Dick in a casual way, friend to friend, dharma brother to dharma brother--the way you related to Katagiri-roshi. I think you might be able to by-pass Dick's expert mind and crack the door of his beginner's mind. I can picture you as a kind of informal emissary between Dick Baker and Blanche Hartman. Blanche is the best thing that has happened to Zen Center since the sangha split over the Dick Baker problem.

I hope you will be able to direct more of your tenacity and persistence into bringing Dick and Blanche together. Dick

needs someone like Blanche who is deeply rooted in her beginner's mind. I think he could trust her as much as he trusted Trudy Dixon. Blanche could balance Dick's remarkable expert mind. And I think she has enough strength and self-assurance now so she won't be intimidated by him. Wouldn't they make a great team of co-abbots to start out Zen Center's 21st century?

It seems like a good project for someone with your particular talents. If you do get involved just remember you can't push things. I was listening to an interview of novelist Daniel Quinn about a month ago. He was talking about how long it took him to write Ishmael. He worked on it 12 years. He said, "I found out that I couldn't push things. Pushing wouldn't make them happen...I guarantee you if you give the universe a chance it will help you. But if you always say 'No. No. I'm going to be in control of my own life' how can the universe help you?"

I'm always amazed at how enlightened ordinary people are and how long it takes us Zen practitioners to give up our attachment to our expert minds.

This morning I reread the article Frances sent me years ago from the Winter 1983 issue of The CoEvolution Quarterly. The article is about working through the crisis at San Francisco Zen Center. In it Steward Brand says when he talked to Dick a couple of weeks after the crisis broke one thing Dick said about the situation got to him: "I'm proud of my students." When both Dick and his students are able to look at the situation with a beginner's mind, without clinging to what happened in the past, but appreciating what is happening in the present moment, Dick will be able to say, "I love my students," and they will be able to say, "We love him."

*Marian*