

SR

Tassajara
Valentine's Day 1970

Dear Roshi,

The winter sun, which has been returning each day a little higher in the sky, now passes just over the top-most branches of the trees that grow on the crest of the south canyon wall. Tassajara Creek sparkles once more; the damp moss turns bright green; the trees begin to leaf out; the earth warms; the mountain birds, which have avoided the bottom of our cold, dark canyon for weeks now, begin to return.

One year ago yesterday I arrived at Tassajara. One year ago today I began tangaryo. One cycle of seasons has been completed. How grateful I am to have been allowed to live and work and study in such an ideal environment. I feel like the man who wanted to make a walking stick and spent 30 years searching for the right piece of wood, and another 30 years carving it into a walking stick. It took me 46 years to arrive here at my true home. I feel I need another 46 years to do my small part of the great work that we all share in carving a Zen Monastery out of the natural beauty that already exists here in this canyon. When I remember that Eihei-ji has managed to preserve some of the original essence of Dogen's life and teaching for 700 years I wonder if we can build something which will last as long. It can't be done unless we can attract the best teachers. Then we will have no difficulty in attracting the best students.

The arrival of Tatsugami, Roshi is like the return of the winter sun to Tassajara. There is no doubt in my mind that he

is our second great teacher and master. All that remains now is for him to recognise (if he hasn't already) that we are his students and disciples. I think he knows how much we need the kind of training he can give us, and I think he knows he needs the kind of challenge that we can give him. There is great vitality and life in Tasugami, Roshi. He needs the kind of creative challenge which the development of our "baby monastery" can give him.

It was urgent that we not let Katagiri, Sensei leave us, and it is even more urgent that we do everything we can to convince Tatsugami, Roshi to return every year for at least one, and preferably two training sessions. Many students here feel as strongly as I do. Up until now Tassajara has been a Zen Community. Under Tasugami, Roshi's guidance Tassajara will become Zenshinji, a Zen Monastery.

You have been like a good mother to all of us (and will always continue to be). You nursed us through our first years, gave us lots of "tender-loving-care". But when a child reaches the age of 5 or 6 he needs the guidance and discipline of a father to complete his character. Tatsugami, Roshi has already shown us that he has the perfect qualities for a "Zen Father". He understands us and fits into our way of life so comfortably. He guides us with firmness and good humour. He weilds Manjusuri's Sword like a samuri.

When he was asked if he might return to Tassajara next year, Tatsugami, Roshi said he was moved by causation.

I too am moved by causation. It is causation that moves me to write you and ask you most sincerely to do whatever you can to encourage Tatsugami Roshi to come back.

Even if I become fully enlightened I cannot transmit that enlightenment to someone else unless I have completed my full training. And since causation keeps me from crossing to the opposite shore to seek for my teachers I must try to do the impossible and move the opposite shore to Tassajara.

I hope you will be able to spend the last few weeks of this training period with us so you can see for yourself the many fine changes that have been made by Tatsugami, Roshi. Until then, take care.

Sincerely
Manion