

Come Walk in the Rain with Me:

My Years with Suzuki Roshi



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PROLOGUE

As I sit here looking out my window in our apartment near the Zen Center at people playing with a dog in the park, I realize for these stories to be meaningful, you need to know a little about me.

As the context of much of my journey is about life and death, what first comes to me is the fact that at 2 years old I almost died of an intussusception where one part of the bowel telescopes into another in a young child. I don't remember this happening I just remember being told about it and I was told I had strong abdominal pain and was rushed to the hospital for emergency surgery. Without the surgery I would have died in two to three days.

At the age of six or seven I began to have chronic strep throats. In fourth grade, I missed three months of school. My parents worried a lot about me. I was told I had to stay in bed and I became a voracious reader.

At ten I went with my parents to Santa Monica where my father had been on business because he wanted to show it to us, with a possibility of moving there. We had been living in Vancouver.

We first stopped in San Francisco and I was most delighted with Chinatown. I bought a small ivory Buddha statue, an ivory Elephant statue and incense. I later burned the incense in my room surprising my mother who came in wondering what I was doing and cautioning me not to set the house on fire.

When I was eleven we did indeed move to Santa Monica. In the ensuing years, I became much more healthy. In fact, the doctors in Vancouver had said I would do much better in California.

One day soon after we settled in our home in Santa Monica my mother called me into the kitchen, "Jackie, come here and sit down in the dining nook. I want you to hear someone on the radio. It's going to take a little time, so settle down." She then turned on the radio and we listened together to Alan Watts. She had been listening before and she wanted to share his teachings with me.

My parents were from England and had English accents as did Alan Watts so he felt a little like a member of my family and we listened to his teachings together about Taoism, Buddhism and Japanese art. My mother made a point of doing this a number of times and I was transfixed by the eloquence of Alan Watts as well as the Asian and oriental world he opened to us.

The next year my mother and her friend took a class on world religions at the University of California Extension. When the class was over we were talking in the same dining nook and my mother paused, looked me in the eye and said, "If I had my life to live over again, I would want to be a Buddhist." This moment lives with

me still. It is an indelible memory. Years later, three months after my mother died I had a profound realization that I had lost not only my mother but my teacher.

My mother also taught me a lot about the arts. Both she and my father loved theater and plays and they often took my sister and I to performances. She also had a deep love of music and opera, as well as the visual arts and often took us to art exhibits.

Years later, her words about wanting to have been a Buddhist were still with me as I enrolled in classes at U.C. Santa Barbara where I spent the next two years in a dual major in philosophy and psychology.

I took classes from Alexander Sesonsky in Plato, Ethics and Aesthetics. From Herbert Fingarette, I took basic Western Philosophy and also a class on Confucius. Fingarette had taught himself to read Chinese and had translated Confucius.

Perhaps most important for me was the Buddhism class with Paul Weinpahl. I also took a class from him in Mysticism. Professor Weinpahl spent the next year on sabbatical in a Zen monastery in Japan. On returning, he wrote a book about his experiences that was the first in English to emphasize Zen meditation: "The Matter of Zen." While others had written of the poetry, the paintings, or the enlightenment experiences of Zen, no one had written about meditation as the core practice of Zen.

After two years at UC Santa Barbara, I transferred to UCLA and chose to major in psychology with a minor in philosophy. These two strong interests played out after graduation as I worked as an educational psychologist with children while continuing to take more philosophy classes at UCLA.

Philosophy finally won out as Professor Sesonsky invited me to come back to Santa Barbara to join the newly created PhD philosophy program as a graduate student and teaching assistant in philosophy.

The years as a doctoral student in the new philosophy program were very intense as we were the first students and the faculty had very high expectations of us. One of the professors said "In order to graduate you have got to prove to us that you are one of us—that you are at our level." Along with the intensity there were many positives in my two and a half years as a graduate student at U.C. Santa Barbara.

Because the school is part of the University of California system and is in a very beautiful place it draws a very outstanding and creative faculty. These were primarily faculty that I had known as an undergraduate in all the areas of philosophy that I was interested in: Plato, Ethics, Aesthetics, and Eastern Philosophy. I was also able to take classes from other visiting faculty such as Huston Smith, renowned scholar of world religions. I had a house in the mountains of Santa Barbara and I commuted to the school on my BMW

motorcycle. It was a beautiful place to live with its mountains and beaches. I enjoyed being a teaching assistant. I had special sections for large introduction to philosophy classes.

It was the 1960's. Kennedy was President; we were in the Vietnam War, and I was listening to the music of Bob Dylan. A group of us who were teaching assistants convinced our professor to use Bob Dylan's lyrics as an example of existentialism.

I took an elective class in Japanese literature from a wonderful professor who deepened my interest in Haiku and painting. I began writing Haiku and comparing different translations of Issa, my favorite poet.

As much of my studies were in Western cerebral philosophy, I often felt a conflict between my need to focus on difficult concepts and the pull of Santa Barbara's relaxed, laid-back beach environment, with its many retirees.

Nothing said this conflict clearer than when my students in my discussion session would open their books, hold them to the side of their desks, and sand would pour out.

On the more negative side of my time at U.C. Santa Barbara, there were many stressors. My house in the mountains burned down in a forest fire and I lost all of my books and a lot of my possessions at the end of the first semester.

Although, I found an even nicer house in the mountains, in the second year of graduate school I developed an uncommon form of arthritis. I developed heel spurs and chronic inflammation of my feet and later of my shoulders and back such that I had to walk on crutches for a couple of weeks. I was only twenty-five.

After completing all the required courses philosophy graduate students had three all-day exams. Most people failed the first one as did I. Some were allowed to take the first exam again on a Ph.D. level which was so in my case. I took it again and passed and then went on to pass the second exam. These exams were exceedingly stressful. They entailed hours of writing. I remember taking an exam when I was in a trailer while outside there was an intense rainstorm.

A moment of relief from the stress was when I decided I would do my Ph.D. thesis on the philosophy of art, examining Japanese aesthetic concepts. I studied Japanese and applied to a scholarship in an intensive summer program in Japanese at Harvard and was accepted. This excited and delighted me.

But all was not positive in the year to come.

While I moved on, others were not allowed to take the first exam again and one of those students committed suicide.

Another student passed the first exam and began teaching at the junior college but he had a stutter which made it difficult for him to teach and he shot himself,

thus committing suicide in the student union building. No one on the faculty had been sensitive enough to help him deal with the stuttering. They just gave him the job and left him on his own.

There was one more attempted suicide during this period. He was my roommate at the time. Although he survived that attempt, much later in his life, he finally did commit suicide. Yet a fourth student plagiarized substantial parts of his PhD dissertation and he was kicked out of the program. People said that what he did was commit "academic suicide."

These were all friends of mine.

During this time I began to have shortness of breath and was told by my doctor when he listened to my heart and did a few tests, that I needed to go right away to Los Angeles to have more advanced cardiac tests. A day or so later I was in the hospital and I was in the midst of tests. I was told my heart was enlarged, was leaking and that I needed surgery. I was asked to wait in the hospital until the surgeon would return from a trip to Japan.

I didn't want to stay, my cat had just had kittens and I wanted to go home, but when I told them this, the doctors told me, "If you leave we only give you four weeks to live." I stayed.

A week later I was in the midst of open-heart surgery. They replaced the aortic valve on the very day that was my mother's birthday. They replaced it with a plastic and stainless steel prosthesis and patched the aorta.

I went home to my parent's house in Santa Monica weighing a hundred and five pounds and gradually recovered from the heart surgery but the arthritis got worse. I just lived with that, sometimes using a cane.

After the surgery I felt that something was different in my life. I talked with my mother about it and she said she had also noticed a difference—it was like I was reborn into a new life.

Within three or four weeks after my surgery, I knew couldn't return to the graduate program and I had this very strong intuition I needed to go to a meditation retreat center although I didn't know where or what kind of center. I looked at Hindu and Christian ones and asked many friends.

One of my fellow graduate students was from New York and kept a subscription to the Village Voice. He sent me an article about a Zen meditation retreat center—Tassajara—that was run through the San Francisco Zen Center.

I called the San Francisco Zen Center and they told me I could not go to Tassajara until I practiced with them for six months and that it may or may not be the place for me. But I just knew it was the right direction. A few months later I arrived at the door of the Zen Center. And so began my journey.

INTRODUCTION

COMING TO ZEN CENTER

I fly from Los Angeles to San Francisco, check into a little hotel on Van Ness near Bush Street, and walk over to the Zen Center on Bush Street. The building used to be a Jewish synagogue and I see the Star of David on the outside wall. I see from a sign on the door that meditation or Zazen begins at 5:30am but no one is there for me to talk to.

I come back at 5:30am and go upstairs. There is an area with black cushions and Japanese tatami mats and double doors leading to another room. Someone is sitting on one of the cushions outside the door so I go and sit nearby. I hear other people sitting outside the door where I'm sitting and some are going inside the door.

I arrange myself sitting facing the wall in full lotus as I am used to doing. Other people come and I hear bells and then there is silence. I sit in the way I have learned to do meditation up until this point, paying attention to my breath, as in my readings and the teachings of Paul Wienpahl.

After what seems to me to be about fifteen minutes there are more bell sounds and the people sitting nearby me stand up and go through the double doors into the room. I'm very confused. The meditation period is supposed to be forty minutes and I am certain forty minutes has not passed.

I continue sitting there and then I hear chanting coming from the other room. I get up and go up to the double doors and peak in through the crack in the middle. People are standing chanting. I'm very confused.

I go back and sit on my cushion and then I hear people coming out the door. I think they must be coming back to do more meditation, but they are not; they are going down the steps and out the building.

I look around and see Suzuki Roshi for the first time, standing at the door, bowing to each student as they leave. I get up and go down the steps and ask one of the other students what is happening. He explains that people sat for forty minutes. And, I realize something happened to me that I can't understand.

I go back to my hotel and come back again the next day. I go early and somebody is in the office. I learn more about Zen Center and on this day I go through the double doors into the meditation room and sit in meditation with Suzuki Roshi and other students for forty minutes.

I never totally understand what happened that first day, and it never happens again.

CHAMPAGNE: AN INTRODUCTION TO SUZUKI ROSHI

It's June 21, 1970. I'm at Tassajara at the reception after Ed Brown and Meg Gawler's wedding.

It's a warm sunny day and the reception is outdoors on the path in front of the old zendo. There is a general feeling of happiness and joviality in the warm sun, a good feeling that Ed and Meg are now happily married.

Tables are set up with tablecloths; there are hors-d'oeuvre and champagne.

We are each given a glass flute of champagne if we want one, or other drinks, and toasts are made. I'm standing about ten feet from table of full champagne flutes. Other students are on my right and left and Suzuki Roshi and his wife Okusan are standing nearby. I'm holding a second, almost full glass of champagne in my right hand.

Suzuki Roshi has emptied his glass. He walks a few steps to the table and reaches for a second flute of champagne. Okusan moves towards him from the right and gently slaps his hand saying something like, "No, only one glass, no more." She means it but both of them are smiling.

Suzuki Roshi moves away from the table and Okusan begins talking to someone else. I'm standing about 8 feet away watching. Suzuki looks around, still smiling, and walks toward me. In one movement he looks at the apparently full champagne flute in my hand and reaches for it, now looking briefly at me in the eyes -- his eyes twinkling. He takes my champagne flute, he took a sip, I let go, and he moves away. No words! I may then have bowed, I don't remember.

I'm left with a warm, wonderful, slightly amazed feeling.

MY TIME AT BUSH STREET ZEN CENTER

MOVING TO ZEN CENTER

After a time of exploring Zen Center and Suzuki Roshi, I went home to Santa Monica to visit my parents. I shared my impressions of Zen Center and the teachers and the community and told them I wanted to move there and spend an unspecified amount of time practicing meditation. It was hard, particularly for my father, to understand but he and my mother supported my choice.

My heart doctors told me that now and for the rest of my life I would be on an anti-coagulant and the one change I should make would be to no longer ride a motorcycle.

I went back to Santa Barbara and sold my motorcycle, packed up my belongings, and explained my situation to the faculty at U.C. Santa Barbara and to my friends, and went on an official leave of absence. I then went back to my parents in Santa Monica. I have 33 first cousins and my favorite one, Monica was visiting them with her eighteen year old daughter.

I told them I was driving to move to San Francisco and they asked if they could come with me. On the way we stayed in Big Sur, and then arrived in San Francisco where they joined me for the night at my little hotel. They departed the next day for their home in Vancouver.

All told, the return to Santa Barbara, quitting graduate school, the goodbyes, the support of my parents and having my cousins come with me to San Francisco, felt like an epic journey, as I began a new stage of life at Zen Center.

Soon after they left, learned there was a room vacant in the flat across the street. It was on Bush Street and I moved into it.

That began my regular daily practice of Zen meditation with Suzuki Roshi, Katagiri Sensei, and the other students.

SIX MONTHS OF PRACTICE

In order to be able to attend Tassajara which I very much felt called to do, one has to do six months of practice at Zen Center.

During this six months I alternated between four different activities: I was doing some academic study in philosophy. I also needed to take care of my body after the heart surgery by working out in a gym.

And then I was entering into the totally non-academic, non-intellectual practice of zazen and learning how to engage with the tradition of the Zen Center and its community and with my fellow students and our teachers.

After a few months my mother comes to visit. She stays in the hotel I used to stay in and spends an evening with me in my flat. She meets my roommate, Reb Anderson, and they have a strong encounter. Reb is working on a project and my mother and I are eating dinner in the kitchen. Reb keeps coming into the kitchen to get snacks and talk to us and this continues for a number of hours. Somehow my mother always remembers this—even twenty years later.

She attended a dharma talk by Suzuki Roshi and they had a brief conversation afterwards. Later she expressed to me and my father that she felt I was doing the right thing—that she had a positive experience of Suzuki Roshi. About a year later Suzuki Roshi said Reb so wanted to be a Zen priest that he was ordaining him after an unusually short time. I've often wondered if my mother picked up on Reb's unique personality in that time in the apartment.

EARLY IMPRESSIONS

Soon after arriving to explore Zen Center, I met Katagiri Sensei who Suzuki Roshi has invited to come to Zen Center to assist him in teaching. Katagiri is a younger teacher. He is there with his wife and two young sons and I feel he is more approachable and available to talk to than Suzuki Roshi. He tells me that it is not so long since he graduated from a Buddhist University in Japan and he is interested in my academic studies.

One of my strong first impressions of Katagiri and Suzuki Roshi is how they engage in the cleaning of the meditation hall and the staircase. They are wearing robes and they roll up their sleeves and energetically clean the floors. It feels like this is an important activity to them and Suzuki Roshi talks a few times about how we have to clean the corners and do it very energetically and well. And both of them say that they learned this at Eihei-ji, their training monastery in Japan.

Suzuki Roshi also talks about how when he was a student in Japan, his teacher stressed not wasting food. In that context Suzuki Roshi said when he shops for food he gets vegetables and fruits that are bruised and not in perfect condition. He purposely chooses to purchase those vegetables and fruits. Somehow this resonates with me but I have a difficulty in doing the same thing—choosing the least presentable of these foods.

Zen Center is in the Japanese quarter of the city, where many Japanese live and shop. There is a hardware store there and I buy a little teapot and it says "Made in Occupied Japan" on the bottom. It was made in Japan right after World War II. Somehow this brings a context to Suzuki Roshi, the Zen Center, and this whole life I'm moving into.

What does it mean? It's something about the larger picture of the world, about people, about war, and I remember blackouts in Vancouver when we were afraid Japan might attack the city. I also remember a V-Day parade. This larger world context that I had grown up in is somehow part of this.

One afternoon I meet the secretary of Zen Center, Yvonne Rand. We have a good talk and I feel very welcomed by her.

One day she is in the office with her daughter who is four or five years old. While talking with Yvonne, I also play with her daughter. The next time I see Yvonne she tells me that she is in a process of divorce and her daughter enjoyed playing with me and told her that she could accept me as her father.

Another time when I go to talk to Yvonne she introduces me to Gary Snyder, the poet, and the three of us have a very engaged talk about Zen and poetry.

These initial times with Yvonne make me feel more at home, a part of, and included in the community.

ZAZEN, THE KYOSAKU AND SUZUKI ROSHI

I'm sitting on my cushion facing the wall during a forty-minute zazen period. I suddenly feel Suzuki Roshi's hands on my shoulders. He gently adjusts my posture, sometimes pulling my shoulders back, sometimes moving me a little to one side or the other, sometimes bringing my forward head more in line with my shoulders and my spine. He then moves on down the row of students, adjusting others. I hear only the faint rustle of his robes. I have a feeling of intimate appreciation.

Other times when I'm sitting in zazen I hear the sharp "crack" of the stick that Suzuki Roshi carries, called a *kyosaku*, as he ritually strikes a sleepy student on each shoulder. The sound brings me and all the other students sitting nearby to wakefulness. Suzuki Roshi is following the traditional Japanese Zen use of the *kyosaku* stick as he walks slowly down the aisle behind the students sitting in meditation, holding the *kyosaku* upright in front of him. If you are fighting sleepiness sitting on your cushion and would like help, you raise your two hands together in a bowing gesture and hold them there. Suzuki Roshi will stop in back of you, turn and face your back, and then rest the flat part of the stick on your right shoulder. You then tilt your head to the left, still holding your hands in the bowing gesture, and he will strike you sharply but not too hard, twice, right on the shoulder muscle that gets sore and tight. You then tilt your head to the right and he does the same thing to your left shoulder. Others who carry the *kyosaku* will strike you once on each shoulder, but Suzuki Roshi usually does it twice in rapid succession, "whap-whap". It doesn't hurt, and serves to wake me up, make my shoulders less stiff, and clear my mind. The sound also serves to wake up all those nearby.

A second use of the *kyosaku* is when I am sleepy in zazen and I'm nodding. Suddenly I notice that the stick is resting on my right shoulder and Suzuki Roshi is standing behind me. Immediately I mentally say: "I'm not sleeping, I'm awake, I'm awake..." And then, as I raise my hands to bow: "Oh, OK, I guess I was getting sleepy and nodding off."

I, of course, did not notice Suzuki Roshi as he walked down the aisle behind me and saw that I was sleepy and nodding. He has come to compassionately wake me up without my asking for it. After I feel the *kyosaku* on my shoulder and have composed myself, I then raise my hands in a bowing gesture, tilt my head to the left, and the process happens just as if I had requested it.

HARA

One day at Zen Center I remember Suzuki Roshi talking to a group of us.

For formal lectures he almost always sits on a cushion, but now he is standing up. He finishes a sentence, pauses briefly, and then says: "I want you to think about this; really think about it." As he speaks these words his right hand repeatedly pats his lower abdomen, a few inches below his waist. I notice with amazement the combination of words and hand gesture. Suzuki Roshi is telling us to "think" with our *hara*, the balance point and energy center stressed in many Asian systems of health, meditation and martial arts. In teaching us how to do zazen meditation he has already told us to press our diaphragm down towards our *hara*, as well as to hold our hands in a *mudra* position just at that place. Now he is telling us to "think" from that place. At least one and perhaps two other times I experience the same thing, Suzuki Roshi tells us to "think" about something as he pats his *hara*.

I'm sure Suzuki Roshi's use of the word "think" here is not what we in the West mean by "think". In the West people sometimes tap their forehead when they say, "I want you to think about this", to emphasize that we "think" with our head, with our brain-mind.

Suzuki Roshi, and much of Zen literature, often use words in different, unique ways. A related example is when they speak of "Big Mind" or "Buddha Mind". Clearly the capitalized word "Mind" here is not what we in the West mean by "mind".

By patting his *hara* when telling us to "think" about something, it feels like Suzuki Roshi is taking me away from my head and regular mind. He brings my focus back to my body, to the immediacy of my embodied experience. By patting his *hara* he is returning me to my embodied zazen practice, a practice centered in my *hara*. And this is a practice coming to life in a broad context: the context of the whole practice structure that Suzuki Roshi has created.

Yes,... to "think from that place.

REALIZING I HAVE THREE TEACHERS

After a short period at the Zen Center, I realized that I actually had three teachers. Suzuki Roshi was clearly my main teacher but he had brought two other young Zen priests from Japan to help him.

It was clear to me that Suzuki Roshi knew something I needed to learn. But I needed to learn it with my body and not my head and he embodied that something I was being drawn to. And yet despite being the senior teacher and the one in charge he did it in a very gentle ordinary way. And, he laughed more often than the others.

One of them was Katagiri Sensei who I have already mentioned. In one lecture I attended of his, he made a statement that stayed with me from then on. He said, "As Zen students you need to stand up straight and plant your feet firmly (pause) ...in emptiness."

The third teacher was Kobun Chino who was the youngest. He had a softer, gentler way about him and I could sense in him an artistic, sensitive nature. When he gave lectures they were poetic and they flowed in an intuitive way different from the other teachers.

Taken together, these three different ways of teaching brought a great richness to my life at Zen Center.

JAPANESE DIRT

Suzuki Roshi is asked the question: "In our practice why do we have to do so many things in such a formal, ritualistic Japanese way?"

Retelling it in my own words, this is how I remember Suzuki Roshi's reply:

"In Japan Zen Buddhism is 98% dead. Most of the practice that does occur is empty ritual; it doesn't have life, a living spirit in it. I'm trying to bring the 2%, the real living spirit of Zen to America.

It's like a small living plant that I am bringing from Japan. In order to stay alive the plant has to be in soil or dirt. So along with the living plant I am bringing Japanese dirt. The Japanese dirt is the rituals, the Japanese forms and ways of doing things. I have taken the living plant in its Japanese dirt and planted it in American soil and I'm watering it and taking care of it in hopes that it will stay alive and take root here in America. This is why our practice has such Japanese ritualistic ways.

After many years, maybe 100 years, hopefully the plant will be well rooted and have grown, and the Japanese dirt and the American dirt will have combined together. Then you will really have American Zen here in America."

Both parts of Suzuki Roshi's statement, the one about Zen being 98% dead in Japan and the one about Japanese dirt and the living plant of Zen, have stayed strongly in my mind over all these years. They seem to say a great deal about the living context through which his teachings are coming to us.

KATAGIRI'S WISDOM

Towards the end of my six month's practice at Zen Center, Yvonne Rand tells me that she is going to Tassajara for a few days and would I like to go with her and a few other students just for a quick visit. I agree and go with them and have a very positive experience as I visit for the first time. Ever since I heard of this place, I had felt this is where I need to go. This short visit confirms my feeling that this is the path for me.

As I realize I want to go to Tassajara, I have a meeting with Richard Baker, a very senior Zen student, and the one who was instrumental in purchasing Tassajara. He is the person one must see to be approved to go to Tassajara. We have a good meeting and he approves my going.

Later I talk out my plans to leave for Tassajara with Katagiri Sensei. We've previously talked about my studies and he has a strong suggestion. He tells me that he believes I should not go right to Tassajara but I should return to U.C. Santa Barbara and complete the one last Ph.D. exam that I have not yet taken. If I pass this exam it would give me a master's degree and I would be advanced to Ph.D. candidacy.

Katagiri tells me that he knows that I am afraid to go back to the place where I became so sick and where several friends committed suicide. However he also knows that I have learned how to do Zen meditation practice and he is confident that I will be able to maintain a daily practice while preparing for and taking the exam. And then, he says, you will have completed everything but your dissertation before you go on to Tassajara.

I take in his advice, but part of me really wants to go to Tassajara. But, I realize its wisdom, and prepare to return to Santa Barbara.

LAST PhD EXAM - BACK IN THE DRAGON'S MOUTH

Back in Santa Barbara, I had to find a place to live and re-register. One professor, Paul Wiedpahl, told me that I would do the exam under him, which I did. This is the professor who had introduced me to Zen Buddhism and with whom I studied the Christian mystics. He prepared the exam and oversaw my taking it and told me afterwards that I had passed it on a Ph.D. level.

I had planned to just take the exam and then go to Tassajara but I stayed six weeks longer because I was asked by the Department to be a teaching assistant for a visiting professor. It began to feel like there is yet another academic hurdle before going to Tassajara.

In the midst, something new happened for me. A new friend who had been addicted to heroin asked if he could stay with me and go off it. I had never taken care of a friend to that degree. I think it may have been that the teaching of compassion, and my presence from meditation helped me to go through it with him. I wanted to visit Zen Center again and he came with me to Berkeley where I dropped him off. Afterwards I missed him; I missed taking care of him. I was probably missing the state I had gone into, in helping him.

MY TIME AT TASSAJARA

ARRIVAL AT TASSAJARA

In late summer of 1968, I drive my International Harvester van from Santa Barbara north to Jamesburg and then along the dirt road into Tassajara. At last I have made it to the place that began drawing me over a year ago. My plan is to stay for a number of months; I'm not sure how long. I will just see how it goes. My arthritis has gotten a little worse, especially in my feet, and I walk in from the parking lot with a cane.

After some discussion, I'm given the job of taking the few shelves of books and expanding and organizing them into a helpful library for guests during the summer guest season, as well as a Buddhist studies library for resident Zen students. After each work period there is bath time in the hot sulfur springs. I'm allowed to stop work ten minutes early to have a little longer in the baths in hopes that it helps with my arthritis. I gradually adjust to the schedule, the early morning meditation periods, the macrobiotic food and the general environment of Zen practice combined with the students being hotel keepers during the summer guest season.

I'm strongly affected by an older student, Tim Buckley. I'm struck by how he uses the word "mindfulness". On the one hand there is the Buddhist use of the term emphasizing mindfulness meditation. And on the other hand there is what seems to be a very American use; I hear an American voice with a southern accent: "Now I want you-all to pay attention, be *mindful* of what you're doing there." Tim Buckley brings the term "mindful" home to me in a new way.

Each morning before the work period there is a "work meeting" of all the students at Tassajara led by the work leader. When there is a need, I am assigned a different temporary job, usually in the garden or the office. After a month or so I'm aware that the young man who is the work leader is irritating me. There is something about his attitude and way of dealing with people that makes me uncomfortable. One evening I laugh to myself, "Here I am in this wonderful Buddhist meditation retreat center doing what feels very right to me, and I'm thinking about and feeling irritated with a certain person. Can't I let go of this?" As the weeks continue I do let go, and develop a friendly relationship with the work leader.

E.L. HAZELWOOD

One of the first people I meet when I come to Tassajara in the late summer of 1968 is E.L. Hazelwood. He is in charge of the "shop" where all things mechanical were maintained, repaired and created. I get to know him first because when I arrive I have an acetylene torch in my van that I was just learning to use to make small metal sculptures, and I want to donate the torch to Tassajara. He gladly accepts the gift and shows me around the shop. I have always loved to work with my hands and I visit the shop and seek E.L.'s help and support many times during my stay. In the meditation hall, the *zendo*, we all have our regular places and E.L. sits on the same row as I do a few people away. On some level I know and appreciated E.L., although I never get to know him in a very personal way.

At the end of each three month practice period there is a one week *sesshin*, seven days of very concentrated meditation practice, including many 40 minute periods of *zazen* each day, short breaks and a short work period. At the beginning of the *sesshin* Suzuki Roshi uses the *kyosaku* in a different way. He goes down the two rows of students striking each student twice on each shoulder without the ritual bowing. There is a long sequence of "whap-whap" sounds. It seems to say to me: "All of you, wake up, we are starting the seven day *sesshin*, give it your best effort."

E.L. Hazelwood is very much fighting sleepiness during some of the meditation periods. I don't remember the details, but probably he had received the *kyosaku* hits on his shoulders a number of times, both requested and not. When Suzuki Roshi is not ritualistically walking the aisles with the *kyosaku*, he sits *zazen* with us, sitting on a raised platform facing us as we sit facing the wall. One time Suzuki Roshi suddenly leapt up from his cushion, strode up behind E.L. and hit him many times loudly on each shoulder. There was no ritual, just fast, intense action that very much startled me and burned into my memory.

I wondered how E.L. was doing, and I wondered if Suzuki Roshi was angry, but I never spoke to either one of them about it. Other students at Tassajara went through intense, prolong periods of sleepiness during *zazen*, although I never did. But I never experienced Suzuki Roshi's intense reaction to anyone in that way other than that one time with E.L.

Much later I learn that some years after he left Tassajara, E. L. committed suicide. I will always have memories and a special place in my heart for E. L.

TO STAY AT TASSAJARA IN THE WINTER

It's fall 1968; I've settled in and adjusted to life at Tassajara and am thinking about the fall/winter Practice Period that will soon begin. A Practice Period is a two or three month monastic meditation intensive with a strict schedule. I want to stay at Tassajara for the coming Practice Period and I'm discussing it in a meeting with Suzuki Roshi. He speaks:

"You shouldn't stay here at Tassajara in the fall and winter. You have arthritis and the winters here are rainy, cold and damp. People with arthritis shouldn't be here in the winter. It won't be good for you at all, you should go back and practice in San Francisco."

I have a very different feeling. I tell him that I have a strong feeling/intuition that I should stay at Tassajara through the fall/winter Practice Period. I tell him that I don't know why; I can't really articulate it, but I have this strong feeling that I should stay, it feels very right to me.

Suzuki Roshi looks at me very directly, listening as I talk, and then says something like: "OK, if you feel this so strongly you can stay for the Practice Period."

I'm amazed at what Suzuki Roshi has said, and that he said it so quickly. I feel he really listened to me, that he heard and connected to my deepest feelings. Also I sense that he isn't attached to his own ideas, that he very easily can let them go.

I leave his cabin with a positive feeling a contented happiness. I feel that I'm on the right path, and that I have the right teacher.

Before the Practice Period begins on October 12, I return to Santa Monica to visit my parents and I buy a wonderfully warm down underwear jacket to keep me warm in the winter. It works perfectly!

MY WAY

After a few weeks at Tassajara, I'm given a robe to wear while doing meditation. Someone has made these for the students at Tassajara. They are grey, light-weight material. I try wearing the robe and I don't like it, I'm not comfortable wearing it. I don't like the look of the robe aesthetically and I don't like how it feels on my body when I'm wearing it for zazen.

I find loose black pants and a Japanese style black jacket in the goodwill box near the laundry and I start wearing them and feel comfortable in them. Later I find another pair and this is what I wear my whole stay at Tassajara.

At first I feel a little guilty because almost all the other students are wearing robes. But the robes don't feel comfortable for me. It is not my way.

Gradually, as the summer guest winds down, I also become aware that most of the men who are staying on at Tassajara have shaved their heads. I'm told that Suzuki Roshi prefers men who are staying at Tassajara for a longer time to do this.

I had come for the summer session, not knowing how long I would stay, but as it moved into the more formal Fall practice session and I realized I wanted to continue, I also wanted to have a shaved head.

Dan Welch, a senior student who had been in a Zen monastery in Japan, offered to cut off the hair and shave the heads of anyone who wanted it and I requested that he do that for me. That is a strong memory that stayed with me. It felt like a momentous decision and action: that I was really making a commitment to Tassajara and to practice. Having a shaved head also made me more like Suzuki Roshi, the other Japanese teachers and senior students. Also I did feel a symbolic letting go of some of my unique personal identity in not having any hair.

Afterwards, I was really delighted by the feeling of the sun, the breezes, and later, the rain, on my head.

Perhaps the robes and the shaved head are examples of the Japanese dirt Suzuki Roshi had spoken of. I never could accept the robes, but having a shaved head felt just right.

TANGARYO

Before a student can participate in their first Zen practice period they must complete what is called *tangaryo* where they are required to sit *zazen* in the meditation hall, all day for five days. I believe this tradition goes back to the stories of the first Zen patriarch, Bodhidharma, who brought the Zen tradition from India to China. Bodhidharma sat *zazen* in China alone in a cave for many years. In the past in China and Japan if you wish to enter and practice in a Zen monastery you are not accepted inside until you have sat *zazen* alone at the entry gate for a number of days.

At Tassajara you sit *tangaryo* from morning until night and can only leave the *zendo* to use the bathroom. The other students join you in the meditation hall for periods of *zazen*, most meals and chanting, but the rest of each day you are alone with other *tangaryo* students. It is a rigorous experience and occasionally a student decides during *tangaryo* that this is not for them and leaves. I experienced the five days as difficult but not impossible. I was bothered by flies and mosquitoes, and would time my trips to the bathroom, walking very slowly. I certainly experienced it as a test of my commitment, my resolve to full-time Zen practice at Tassajara, to the Buddhist path, to this particular form of practice, and to Suzuki Roshi. I asked myself, "Why am I doing this?" I also experienced the many things that come up in *zazen*: the dreams, the fantasies... and occasionally a calm awareness.

Tangaryo is a kind of initiation, and I was greatly relieved when it was over. You only have to do the five days of *tangaryo* once; if you return to Tassajara years later for another practice period you do not have repeat it. Many months later during my year at Tassajara a friend of mine was sitting *tangaryo* and I had an urge to help her in some way. I knew I should let her be alone, but my memory is that I gave her some mosquito repellent.

BAMBOO TUBE

At an early point of my year at Tassajara Suzuki Roshi presents this teaching:

"In order for a snake to know its true nature – it has to spend some time in a bamboo tube."

I'm very stuck by this metaphor, thinking of and visualizing how a snake seems to love to coil and curve its body as it slithers along. How hard it must be for the snake to spend time in the straight and narrow tube. And then I think of life at Tassajara. I'm a natural "night-owl", staying up late at night and sleeping late into the morning. But at Tassajara the wake-up bell rings at close to 5:00 am and in order to function I have to get to sleep very early. Three or four periods of zazen, sitting straight on a cushion not moving for forty minutes can certainly be thought of as spending time in a bamboo tube. These are just two of the many aspects of the bamboo tube life at Tassajara.

Yet at the end of my year at Tassajara...I don't want to leave.

NO READING

During the Fall Practice Period at Tassajara during a Dokusan meeting Suzuki Roshi tells me that I should stop reading. "You are too much of a philosopher; you are too much in your head. While you are practicing here at Tassajara you should not reading anything." A little later he amended his admonition: "If I am lecturing on a sutra (a Buddhist scripture) you can read that sutra in its English translation, but nothing more."

I haven't been reading much at Tassajara, the schedule doesn't allow it, but now I'm not to read at all. I haven't heard from any other student that they have been told this, so again I'm struck with how Suzuki Roshi is treating me as a unique individual. His teachings are personal. Clearly Zen practice is not about reading, but no reading at all is a strong requirement. This feels to me like another aspect of my time at Tassajara as spending time in a bamboo tube.

A little later I hear that some of the more advanced students have asked Roshi to lecture on a basic Buddhist sutra. These scriptures are part of the historical stream out of which the Zen school emerged. Buddhist literature and commentaries in English are very limited in 1968, and it is very hard for students to understand these sutras translated from Sanskrit and Chinese.

At the end of the Fall Practice Period it is announced that in the Spring, Suzuki Roshi will lecture on the Lotus Sutra, a key scripture of Mahayana Buddhism. All students at Tassajara will receive a translation copy to read to go along with his lectures.

Suzuki Roshi must have known that this was going to happen when he told me that the only thing I could read would be a sutra that he was lecturing on. I am happy and look forward to having this "approved" reading and study focus. This provides some wiggle room in my bamboo tube.

LOTUS SUTRA

While I am in Santa Monica during the break, I go to the University library and find a second translation of the Lotus Sutra. I read some of it and some commentary on the sutra. I check out the second translation on a long-term loan and bring it back to Tassajara. I begin reading and comparing the two translations.

The Spring Practice Period begins and Suzuki Roshi is giving regular lectures on the Lotus Sutra. He has the book open in front of him on a wooden stand and after some preliminary remarks, his method is to read aloud some lines from the text and then explain and comment on them line by line, paragraph by paragraph, page by page.

Most of the students are listening to the Lotus Sutra lectures in more or less the same way as they listen to other lectures, letting it come in and letting it go. Some are sitting with half closed eyes, as in zazen. Some are nodding. I am sitting with my open copy of the Lotus Sutra in front of me, carefully following the text as he lectures on it, line by line.

During one lecture Suzuki Roshi turns the page of the text and begins reading the lines at the top of the next page. I'm confused, my text does not have these lines. I look ahead and see the lines he is reading are a page ahead. I believe I raised my hand as I spoke out: "Excuse me Roshi, I think you turned two pages at once, so you're two pages ahead." He looks at his book, turning back the pages. There is a moment's pause and then he speaks, a soft laugh in his voice: "You shouldn't have told me, we would have been two pages ahead!"

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Later I realize that if I hadn't spoken probably both Suzuki Roshi and no one else in the room would have noticed that we had skipped two pages. After the Practice Period the Lotus Sutra always is important to me, and forty years later, I study Thich Nhat Hanh's translation and commentary on the sutra.

SUZUKI ROSHI'S SON

During the break period after lunch sometimes Suzuki Roshi sits with students in the sun and has tea. One day he says: "I'm worried about my son, I got a report that he's missing in Vietnam."

I am moved and concerned by Suzuki Roshi's statement. I was not aware that he had a son here in America, let alone that he is part of the U.S. forces fighting in Vietnam. I suddenly see Suzuki Roshi in a new light, as a man with a family, a father, and right now a very worried father. He is worried about his son in the same way that my father worries about me. And I'm struck that he has chosen to share this very personal part of his life with us, with his students. Somehow this adds a closer personal element to my relationship with my Zen teacher.

A few days later Suzuki Roshi tells us that his son is no longer missing, that he is OK, and that he's very relieved. I and the whole Tassajara community share in his relief.

KOBUN CHINO

Two years after Suzuki Roshi arranged for Katagiri Sensei to come and assist him with the growing Zen Center community, he brought a second teacher from Japan, Kobun Chino Sensei. Kobun (the name he asked people to call him) came in 1967 and was at Tassajara much of the year I was there. During that year, and very much in the years that followed, he was both a significant Zen teacher for me, and a close friend.

Kobun Chino was very well versed in the forms of a Zen monastery, the chants, the rituals, the ways that monastery life and practice seamlessly worked. Suzuki Roshi knew this and that was the primary reason that he brought him to Zen Center. Kobun was instrumental in the setting up of Tassajara as a true Japanese Zen monastery, the first in America. But the side of Kobun that I connected to was his artistic side. I came to Tassajara with a basic love and appreciation all of the arts: painting, sculpture, poetry, literature, music, theatre, dance, etc. In the years before coming to Tassajara, I had taken a class in Japanese arts, literature and culture, practiced Japanese sumie painting with a teacher, read and wrote haiku poems, and began learning Japanese. My tentative dissertation topic was on Japanese theories of art and aesthetics.

Kobun Chino very much connected to my artistic side. He felt to me to be an artist-priest, and he affirmed my sense of the connection of Zen with artistic creativity. Kobun gave beautiful poetic lectures, different from Suzuki Roshi, more like an artwork, with freely following associations. Both Kobun and Suzuki Roshi would have pauses, moments of silence in their lectures, but Kobun's were longer, more full and poignant. There was a kind, subtle profundity in Kobun's teachings, and he embodied it in life and the way he interacted with students.

After discussing haiku poetry and my love of the poet Issa a number of times with Kobun, he said: "You should try and write one haiku poem everyday that you are at Tassajara." I tried, but was not successful in keeping it up.

Kobun surprised all of us at New Years by leading us in making the delicacy mochi, sweet pounded rice. I think we stayed up most of the night taking turns pounding the rice. Another time Kobun took over the kitchen for many hours and made tempura, deep fried battered vegetables, cooking enough for all of us to eat at Tassajara.

Kobun also had a soft, romantic side. A number of the women at Tassajara were romantically attracted to him and he eventually married one of them. I had a strong relationship with Kobun in my years after Tassajara and we taught a number of classes together.

THE ONE WAY

Suzuki Roshi emphasized in his early lectures that you could fully practice with him and still continue your connection with the religion you were brought up in. You can continue to be Christian, Jewish or Muslim and also do Zen practice with him.

Some of this teaching was in his early lectures printed in "Zen Mind: Beginner's Mind."

I liked this teaching but some deeper truth haunted me. I heard other teachers express the opposite teaching that the way that they were presenting was really the best, the true, the only way. I appreciated that Suzuki Roshi didn't do that.

I am participating in a sesshin at Tassajara. It is at the end of a practice period and now towards the end of the sesshin, to my amazement, I hear Suzuki Roshi say there is really only one way and that is the way we are practicing right now. The context isn't appropriate for asking questions so I just sit with this.

Gradually, it comes to me that it feels quite right to express that in the context of the sesshin. We are sitting intensively for seven days, every day, all day. And, in that intensity there really is only one way. What was being called for in the sesshin is to give one hundred percent of yourself to that practice and so it feels right to experience it as the only way.

WAR

While we are practicing at Tassajara the war in Vietnam and all the controversy around it is going on. Although we do not get a lot of daily news, we know what is happening. In the question-answer period after a lecture, a student asks Suzuki Roshi how should we relate or respond to the reality of war, especially the Vietnam war. This is my memory of Suzuki Roshi's reply:

"First we must accept that there will always be war. We must fully accept this with all of our being. We must fully accept that there have always been wars and there always will be wars.

Then, at the same time, we must do everything we can to stop war. At the same time we must do everything in our power to stop this war and all wars from happening."

In all the years since I first heard this, after all the other talks and readings about war that I have taken in, these insights from Suzuki Roshi still ring to me as the most profound.

DOKUSAN

I'm at Tassajara, probably at end of winter practice period, 1968. I'm having a dokusan meeting with Suzuki Roshi. This is the formal meeting of a Zen student with a Zen Master. The meeting takes place in Suzuki Roshi's little cabin where he lives when he is at Tassajara. First I wait outside in the garden near the entrance among the stones brought up from the stream that Roshi has positioned and arranged. I wait until the student before me has departed and Suzuki Roshi rings a little bell to indicate that I am to enter.

I begin with doing three full prostration bows to Suzuki, or the Buddha Nature that he represents.

I'm now sitting with my legs crossed in lotus posture about 2 feet in front of him. We're talking about the teachings of the Heart Sutra that we chant every morning. Suzuki Roshi may have been lecturing about these core Zen teachings. I'm not sure if I brought up the subject or he did, but I think it was him.

Suzuki Roshi speaks:

"Form is emptiness. Emptiness is form. Yes?" (Do you get it?)
I indicate that yes, I get it.

But this is important: Form is Form, and Emptiness is Emptiness. Yes? Do you get that too?"

I hesitate.

Suzuki Roshi repeats, with some intensity combined with a smile, his hand reaching forward and gently tapping my knee with the key words Form and Emptiness:

"Form [tap] is Emptiness [tap]. Emptiness [tap] is Form [tap].
And - Form [tap] is Form [tap], and Emptiness [tap] is Emptiness [tap].

"You're both a Zen student and a student of philosophy. You have that mind; you should be able to get this. Yes? Do you get it?"

I indicate that Yes, I think I get it.

I'm equally and simultaneously strongly struck with the power of this esoteric teaching, and with the power of the experience of being with Suzuki Roshi so closely, his focus on me as an individual, his presence, his kind intensity, his smile, and especially his taps on my knee...

TRUST

It's the end of the Fall-Winter practice period, we're doing a seven day sesshin and Suzuki Roshi is giving dharma talks. He says, "I don't feel I can really trust you," to all of us. "If I am too hard on you, I'll hear the cars going up the road as you all leave." And then he goes "vroom" like the sound of a car and laughs.

This statement stays with me and now, some days later, there is a ceremony at the end of the sesshin where each student asks Suzuki Roshi a question. When it's mine turn I say, "Roshi I'm troubled by your saying that you don't trust us." Suzuki Roshi laughs and says "I want to encourage you to stick to something, not in terms of good or bad...It's like water seeking a lower place. I want to see your practice like the water and then I can trust you."

I say to him "So we can trust you, but you cannot trust us." Suzuki Roshi replies "Yes, maybe I'm trying to stick to something. We stick to our practice just like water flowing to a lower place. I want to trust you to continue your practice, not because it's a good thing or a bad thing."

As I listen to him I feel a connection to the many times he has talked about non-dualism and I think this is another example. He is saying not to practice because it's a good thing to do for any benefits we may achieve, since that implies a (dualistic) separation between yourself and the practice. But rather, we need to practice automatically without thoughts or feelings; the way that water naturally flows downward.

At other times, in a similar way, Suzuki Roshi has talked about how he feels he has to give us candy so that we will continue our practice.

At the end of the ceremony, I am content with my question as it feels very right to me. This issue of trust and (non-dualistic) practice continues to be important to me in the coming years.

FATHER'S RESPONSE

Between the Fall and Spring Practice periods at Tassajara there is a break of a few weeks, and I go to visit my parents in Santa Monica.

I haven't seen them in 3 months; I have a shaved head, and I have a sense that I'm changing in some inexplicable way.

They are very curious and interested in what I've been doing. My mother is in tune with my experiences, even envious. Both of them express a difficulty in trying to share with their friends and family as to what their son Jack is doing.

Towards the end of my short stay my father, who was a very successful business man, takes me aside for a talk and says:

"I really don't understand what you are doing with this meditation practice and living at Tassajara. It's beyond me, I don't think I'll ever understand it. But, I can see that it's doing you good. I can see that it's right for you, and I support you in continuing to do it."

I'm profoundly moved by my father's statement and the support I feel from him. I believe I will always remember this experience.

And somehow, in some powerful way, I feel a connection between the unconditional support of my father - and that of Suzuki Roshi.

WINTER/SPRING PRACTICE PERIOD

The 1969 Winter/Spring practice period (my second practice period) went from January 10 to April 20. This was a momentous period not only for me, but for all the participants at Tassajara. There were record torrential rains that washed out the road in and out of Tassajara. Then there were mud and huge rock slides on the road and five feet of snow at the highest point. We were essentially cut off from the world for the three month practice period.

The closest neighbor to Tassajara is Church Creek Ranch and they were also isolated and in need of food supplies. There was an attempt to bring in supplies to them packed on horseback, but the surface of the deep frozen snow began cutting the horse's chests. The horses had to turn back. The picture in my mind of the horses and the snow has always stayed with me as a key image of that time.

At Tassajara it sometimes rained for many days and the Tassajara Creek ran fast and swollen. One time it rose to fifteen feet above creek level and swept away the bridge to the hot baths. Sitting zazen in the meditation hall right next to the creek we can hear and feel the thuds of boulders rolling under water down the creek. Our food supplies run low and we eat a diet of rice, beans, wheat berries, lentils, sprouted seeds and wild miner's lettuce. Ed Brown is the cook and he reports to us at work meetings the state of our food supplies. One day he reports that someone has gone into the kitchen at night and "stolen" food. He angrily announces that he will stay in the kitchen all night with a kitchen knife in his hand and attack anyone who enters.

Suzuki Roshi was not at Tassajara the whole practice period because of the washed out road and a lingering illness. I feel that the three months on our own was a still a strong positive experience for all, or at least most of us. I had been at Tassajara five or six months before the winter practice period began, a good deal of the time with Suzuki Roshi. Some other students had been at Tassajara for a much longer time. A special way of life and practice had been set in motion for us during that time with Suzuki Roshi; it felt to me that it deepened and matured during the isolated rainy in winter. Also I, and I know some others who were there, are people who like it when life gives us challenges, especially when we can overcome them both as an individual and as a community.

HIKING OUT IN WINTER

One of my life realities is that I have a prosthetic aortic heart valve and I must keep my blood thinned by taking anticoagulant medication every day. About every month I need to go to a laboratory to have the coagulation time of my blood checked to see if it is in the correct range and adjust the medication if necessary. In the years before this began in 1967, I used to occasionally have "desert island fantasies" where I would dream of escaping the world and living on a desert island. After my open heart surgery those fantasies stopped, as every four weeks I had to be at a medical laboratory.

At Tassajara there are regular "town trips" to Monterey to get groceries and supplies and about every month I would join them and go to the laboratory at the hospital and then help with the shopping. In those days it was unusual to have a shaved head as I did, and a doctor at the lab asked me about myself. After I told him that I was practicing at a Zen Buddhist monastery, he arranged to have my fee waived as a contribution to Tassajara.

Having the road closed throughout the severe winter isolated Tassajara from the outside world. It certainly was not my desert island, but it did present the problem of how I was going to have my blood tested. After six or seven weeks of isolation there was a break in the rain and a few hardy students successfully hiked out of Tassajara. They went on a trail in an easterly direction along Tassajara Creek to Arroyo Seco, instead of the more north-south route of the road. Fortunately my arthritis was improving, as it did throughout the fall and winter, so I was able to join another small group, I believe led by Dan Welsh, and hike out. We had to ford the rushing creek a number of times over fallen logs. I remember getting more secure and confident on my feet as the hike progressed. I believe we met Silas Hoadley at the end of the trail, who was waiting for us with a van. The whole experience was quite an adventure for me, I enjoyed the physical challenge of the hike, the beauty of the forest, and the affirmation that my health was improving.

Because of my medical needs, my experience of the whole year was a little different from most others at Tassajara. I kept entering the outside world briefly every month and then returning. I feel that in some way this affected how I held and valued my Tassajara experience. Because of the monthly perspective, I sensed more strongly the special reality of life and practice at Tassajara.

BATH GIRL

As my arthritis improves and the need arises, I am asked by the work leader to take a leave from my job as librarian and temporarily take on more physically demanding jobs at Tassajara. At beginning of spring the person who takes care of and cleans the natural hot mineral water baths has to leave for a month. I am asked if I can take on the job temporarily, and I agree. Up to this point a woman has always done this job so it is called being "bath girl". I am happy to take it on as I love the baths and feel good about the fact that I am now healthy enough to do it.

After a brief training, I find it satisfying to try to mindfully sweep and clean the bath area, sweep the paths and the bridge over Tassajara creek to the baths, and carefully arrange fresh flowers. I also monitor and adjust the hot sulfur water intakes to keep the water in the large plunges at just the right temperature.

A more challenging work is cleaning the women's and men's large rectangular communal plunges. I have to first empty one of them by opening the drain at the bottom, and then spend hours scrubbing the floor and four walls, working with both of my hands on a very large brush. This warm physical work, barefoot and wearing only shorts, is very satisfying to me, confirming my growing strength and recovery. I also feel that in caring for the hot baths I am giving something back to them - as I believe they are one important factor in my recovery from arthritis at Tassajara.

SHIBAYAMA ROSHI

At the end of my second practice period in spring 1969 I go for a few days back to Santa Barbara and visit the university where I am still a graduate student on a leave of absence. To my surprise I'm told that there is a Japanese Zen Master, Shibayama Roshi, in residence as a visiting teacher. Shibayama Roshi is from the Rinzai school of Zen, which differs in some respects from the Soto school of Suzuki Roshi, but I'm struck by the synchronicity that he is there just as I am visiting.

I sit in on his class and then am able to have a meeting with him. He speaks English quite well; my memory is that he speaks a little more flowingly than Suzuki Roshi. He knows about Zen Center and is particularly interested in my experiences - now for about eight months - at Tassajara. At the end of our talk - I don't know who initiated it - Shibayama Roshi makes it clear that he would very much like to visit Tassajara. I tell him I will ask Suzuki Roshi about this as soon as I can next speak to him. I leave with a copy of Shibayama Roshi's slim book in English on the Ox Herding pictures, a book I have treasured ever since.

I'm delighted by my good fortune in being able to carry a message from one Roshi to another. As soon as I have the opportunity, I meet with Suzuki Roshi and tell him of my experiences with Shibayama Roshi, concluding with his request that he would like to visit Tassajara. With a smile and twinkling eyes Suzuki Roshi immediately responds: "If Shibayama Roshi wants to come to Tassajara he will have to sit tangarior!" He then laughs and turns away; our meeting is over.

I have puzzled over this dynamic experience with Suzuki Roshi for many years. In July of the previous year two distinguished Japanese Zen Masters, Hakuun Yasutani Roshi and Soen Naragawa Roshi had visited Tassajara, along with a number of other Zen teachers. So I know that such visits do happen, and that visit was described as a very positive experience. [Wind Bell, Vol. VII, Nos. 3-4, Fall 1968]

I have come to the conclusion that if Shibayama Roshi really wanted to come to Tassajara, the correct form to make the request is not to send a message through a student. There is undoubtedly a formal Japanese protocol for one Roshi to request to visit the Zen monastery of another Roshi. I'm sure that protocol was followed and extensive preparations were made before Hakuun Yasutani Roshi and Soen Naragawa Roshi came to Tassajara the year before. But still my feelings of shock and surprise at Suzuki Roshi's abrupt response to my telling him of the message continue to echo over the years. Clearly there is a teaching here for me, as well as an insight into Suzuki Roshi's teaching nature.

TRUDY DIXON

A short time later, after the spring Practice Period is over, I noticed that something different is happening during zazen periods. At the first spot near the door of the zendo, the meditation hall, the cushion has been removed and a youngish woman is doing zazen lying down. She is lying on her back with her knees raised, her hands in her lap. She needs help to enter and leave the zendo and some of these times I notice Suzuki Roshi with her.

I later learned that the woman is Trudy Dixon, she's 30 years old and she is dying of cancer. Trudy has been a student of Suzuki Roshi for a number of years and she wants to spend some of her last days with him at Tassajara. It is strong for me to sit zazen with Trudy lying there on her back. Then she is gone and I learn that she died in a hospital two days after leaving Tassajara.

Trudy's presence in the zendo with me seems to deepen my practice, first in a way beyond words, and second by reconnecting me to the reality of death and dying, part of the theme that brought me to Tassajara. Her presence also reminds me of what I have already begun to sense. Suzuki Roshi's way with the ritual forms (the Japanese dirt), as sitting up straight on your cushion facing the wall during zazen, is not absolute. There are exceptions. Sometimes loving compassion and understanding take precedent over following the ritual form.

SENSORY AWARENESS

In May of 1969 at Tassajara all the students are divided into two groups and each group is encouraged to leave half the work period and instead participate in a special session of "Sensory Awareness" with Charlotte Selver and Charles Brooks.

Sensory Awareness is a subtle embodied practice of just being fully involved in the present. I am told that Suzuki Roshi believes that Charlotte Selver is teaching us a different form of zazen. When I participate in the process with them, this feels true. In the same way that we were taught to be acutely aware of each breath in zazen, so Charlotte Selver is teaching us how to be acutely aware of our body sensations, staying completely concentrated, moment by moment.

I see a brochure on Sensory Awareness where there is a quotation from Suzuki Roshi that the work they are doing "is the inner experience of entire being, the pure flow of sensory awareness when the mind through calmness ceases to work—deeper than mind-made awareness."^{*}

I remember standing very still, holding an oval, somewhat heavy stone about six inches across, and tuning into what I was sensing, breathing, feeling the weight of the stone in my hands, the breeze on my skin, taking a long time staying focused on my embodied sensations.

I am struck with how Suzuki Roshi equates Sensory Awareness with Zen meditation. Here is a living part of Zen, but without the "Japanese dirt"; in fact without reference to any tradition. I am moved again by how Suzuki Roshi holds to the Japanese Buddhist forms and rituals, yet he has such a strong openness and inclusiveness.

*Wind Bell, Vol. VII, Nos. 3 - 4. Fall 1968

SPRING INTO SUMMER

Tassajara, Zen Mountain Center, sits in a canyon with Tassajara Creek running through it. The hills are steep on one side and more gradual on the other. There is almost no sunlight in mid-winter but as spring approaches the sunlight gradually returns. After lunch there is a period of free time and I go and sit in the one patch of sunlight near the swimming pool, soaking up the warm sun. I love how the patch of sunlight is getting bigger and staying longer each week.

After winter/spring practice period is an interim period of a few months that is used to get everything ready for the summer guest season. I arrived at Tassajara for the last months of the guest season the previous year so I know what summer at Tassajara is like. I am starting to get a sense of the four seasons at Tassajara; I arrived in late summer, then experienced the fall, then the intense rainy winter, and now the spring.

During the interim period to my surprise, I am told that it has been decided that I will become the director of the guest season, a very responsible administrative job. It is the tradition of Zen monastic practice that you unquestioningly accept whatever job you are asked to do, and I accept that. I am given the previous years records of guest season reservations, finances, and communications to prepare myself. A few days later another fellow Zen practitioner, quite a bit older than I, tells me that he wanted the job of guest season director and is surprised that it is being given to me. I hoped that he would get over that, and I think he did. But again I noticed the baggage that we all bring to Zen practice.

In my previous years as a doctoral graduate student in philosophy, I would occasionally get migraine auras, a pattern of shimmering light in my field of vision. They would last for about half an hour. I almost never got migraine headaches, just the visual auras. I determined that they happened when I was under stress, when things were not flowing smoothly. Throughout my many months at Tassajara I have not had one migraine aura, I have even forgotten about them. As I am going through last summer's records to prepare for my new job, to my surprise, a migraine aura begins.

This is a "marking" for me. A period of more pure monastic Zen practice has ended. Can I handle this somewhat stressful new job for the summer, and to what extent can I do it in the spirit of Zen practice? My body is speaking to me; on the one hand the migraine aura is saying, "Watch out for stressful work!" On the other hand my arthritis is significantly improving, and this is saying, "Zen practice here at Tassajara is really good for you, keep at it." My challenge for the next months is how to really continue Zen practice and not get caught by the stresses of my new job.

GUEST SEASON SUMMER WORK

During the interim period after the winter/spring practice period the activity at Tassajara is focused on preparing for the 1969 summer guest season. New work-study students come to help; repairs are made after the winter storms, new jobs are assigned, cabins are cleaned and prepared; guest reservations are made and the kitchen prepares to serve gourmet vegetarian food for the guests.

I feel very much part of a team as I move into my new job as Guest Manager working in the office overseeing all the relations with the guests. Then the summer season actually begins and guests arrive. Some things work well and smoothly while others are difficult and require creative problem solving. I realize that there are things I can do my best to control and make work, and there are other things that I cannot control and must just "let go". I'm pleased when Suzuki Roshi returns to Tassajara and I can again feel his presence in the zendo and listen to his lectures. There are stresses in my job but they are balanced by my Zen practice held in the context of life at Tassajara; this is the real reason that I am here.

I have regular days off when other members of the team run the office taking care of the guests. But I gradually get troubled by the number of times that I am sought out on my off days to solve problems or make a decision. I start a practice of packing a lunch and hiking out of Tassajara every day off so I am totally unavailable. There are wonderful trails in many directions and I love being with the trees, grasses, birds, dragonflies, crayfish, sky, clouds and breezes. I particularly like to follow Tassajara Creek and sit in a remote spot by the water, especially as the summer progresses and the daytime temperature rises; it reaches 106 degrees in July. My arthritis has greatly improved and to my amazement I even begin to get somewhat proficient at stepping from one rock to another crossing the creek where the water is low.

BOWING, ARTHUR DEIKMAN

One day I am standing outside my office as Guest Manager at Tassajara in the summer of 1969 wearing my usual black Japanese hapi jacket and pants, after having recently shaved my head in the baths. I see a car arriving at the end of the eight-mile dirt road and parking in the guest parking lot. A Japanese man and his wife emerge and start slowly walking down the path towards me. I notice that the wife is walking several steps behind the man, and he is looking around, seeming to be taking in the environment for the first time. I think, "Aha, these new guests are a traditional Japanese couple." I have been absorbing Japanese culture now for many years, and particularly the last two years with Suzuki Roshi and other Japanese teachers, students, and friends. As the man and his wife behind reach just the "right" distance from me, and they see me, I bow. It is not a Zen bow with my hands together, but a traditional Japanese bow, with my hands at my sides. Both the man and woman bow back to me, and then the man walks up close to me, staring intensely, and says: "Are you Japanese?" I smilingly reply, "No", but I take this as a complement as to how much I have embodied Suzuki Roshi's Japanese way.

An important part of my summer job, one that I take to rather naturally, is to help the guests have a positive experience at Tassajara. As Guest Manager I am expected to eat some meals with the guests answering questions and helping them to appreciate life at Tassajara. Many very interesting people decide to have a retreat vacation at Tassajara and some of them participate in zazen periods and attend lectures. One guest that I get to know early in the summer is Arthur Deikman, a psychiatrist who is doing research on the psychological effects of meditation. We appreciate each other's company and I invite him to come with me on a hike to the "horse pasture" on my day off. We stop at a vista point and Arthur is very struck by the natural beauty around him; as he speaks to me about what he is experiencing - he begins to cry. I am very affected by what he is pointing out, and also by his strong emotional reaction. Arthur and I develop a friendship and continue to see each other for many years.

MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS

I'm asked to join those who give meditation instructions to summer guests. I feel good about this request and feel that I can do this. I meet with a small group of guests in the Zendo and carefully go over the very basic instructions that I have internalized over the years. I enjoy doing this and it leads to further conversations with the guests.

A number of times the question is raised by the guests: why do some of the students at Tassajara seem so different? They seem like they are in their own world. Some students like you are very friendly and communicative and helpful but some students are not communicative or helpful and some seem like perhaps they are unhappy.

In responding to this question I'm reminded of a teaching that I believe came from Suzuki Roshi. In the beginning of Zen practice things are as they are—mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers. But as the practice deepens and continues you may go through a period where things are different. Mountains are not mountains; rivers are not rivers. This is a stage of your practice. But if you continue, once again mountains will be mountains and rivers will be rivers.

I believe that the students that they are a little uncomfortable with are in that middle stage of mountains are not mountains and rivers are not rivers. And, it is necessary to just accept this and know that they will come out of it and once again mountains will be mountains and rivers will be rivers.

Somehow, I find myself smiling at the end.

JACOB NEEDLEMAN AND LEAVING TASSAJARA

During my time at Tassajara all students, no matter what job they were working at, are required to pay a fee each month. This changes in the next years when students with key responsible jobs like mine as guest manager are not required to pay fees. For now, I'm required to pay this fee, and I begin to feel more and more strongly that I should leave Tassajara and begin working. I'm not comfortable receiving any more money from my father as he has, to a large extent, supported me since my heart surgery.

At one of the meals, I meet a professor of philosophy from San Francisco State University: Jacob Needleman. We get along very well and have a number of deep conversations about Zen practice. Needleman also begins asking me about my philosophy background, the courses I took, the teachers that influenced me and my experience as a Teaching Assistant.

Before he leaves Tassajara, he explains to me that he has applied for a grant to finish writing a book called *The New Religions*. He will learn whether he gets the grant or not about two weeks before the Fall semester starts. He's been looking for someone to take over teaching his classes with only two weeks notice, if he gets the grant. Would I be interested? He says that my background is quite compatible with his and he would like me to do it.

We won't know if it's happening or not for another month. I sleep on it and tell him yes, I'll be available. I then inform the director of Tassajara that although I would love to stay longer I will soon be leaving to return to San Francisco.

I'm told that Zen Center is in the process of purchasing a new building and they would like me to move in there. I begin to prepare to leave Tassajara in a few weeks. As the date draws closer, I realize that part of me really doesn't want to leave Tassajara. It is such a positive place for me.

As my leaving date grows closer, I strongly feel my Gemini ambivalence. On my last day I pack all my possessions into my International Harvester truck but somehow don't leave till the very end of the day. I say goodbye to my close friends and to Tassajara and slowly drive my truck up the road. After about three miles up there is a flat area and I park my truck, write in my journal with a kerosene lamp, and sleep in it that night. It's September 2, 1969.

ARTHRITIS GOES AWAY

During the cool Fall 1968 practice period and the very cold rainy Winter 1969 practice period, my arthritis slowly improves, bit by bit. The major improvement happens during the winter, but it continues until early fall 1969 I when leave Tassajara. By that time I am almost completely free of arthritis. In the ensuing fifty years it never comes back. I feel like I have arthritis in remission, only to slightly reoccur when I am under stress.

I tell people that I had very severe arthritis for many years, but it went away at Tassajara, most significantly in the winter. They sometimes ask me what do I attribute this to, what aspect of my life at Tassajara at that time was most critical? My reply is that there were a number of factors:

- the intense meditation practice led by Suzuki Roshi
- the macrobiotic diet that we had at Tassajara at that time
- living in a natural setting in the mountains
- the very structured, regular life of a student in a Practice Period at Tassajara
- the hot sulfur springs bathes – because of my arthritis I was permitted to stop work 10 minutes early so I could soak longer in the baths
- the whole experience of Buddhist practice with Suzuki Roshi and the community together....

I've always felt that I could not name any of these as the one crucial factor in my returning to a far more healthy state; rather it was somehow the combination of all of them together as a whole.

I later learned of people who had gone to Tassajara and had developed arthritic conditions while there, and some had had to leave. This only added to my feeling that my experience at Tassajara was uniquely my own; it was the journey that I was supposed to be on. I had been on a life denying path and had come close to death, and now I was on a life affirming journey and had come back to health. Also I felt that my journey was connected to a larger movement, to all my fellow Zen students. And of course it is related to Suzuki Roshi, who supported my strong intuition as to what was right for me, rather than holding on to what is normally considered best.

MY TIME BACK AT 300 PAGE STREET

ZEN CENTER AT 300 PAGE STREET

On September 5, 1969 I move into the new Zen Center building at 300 Page Street. Zen Center has just completed the purchase of the building which had been for sale for quite a long time. Someone referred to it as a "white elephant," because it was a Jewish girls' residency designed by Julia Morgan with many individual dormitory rooms, a beautiful courtyard, living room and large recreational dance hall in the basement. It was perfect for Zen Center.

I am the first Zen student to move into the building where I join Mrs. Michaelson and two men who work in the building. Mrs. Michaelson is very cordial and friendly and I learn that she was the house mother for all the girls for many years. The next days she is there to show me around the building and teaches me about it in a very warm friendly way.

I'm told to choose a room and I pick one on the third floor overlooking the courtyard. It's strange being in a large building with about forty dormitory rooms, big communal bathrooms with only three other people. I've also been told to familiarize myself as much as I can with the building: learn where the fuse boxes, light switches, and things of that order are.

On the first night I light incense from Eihei-ji, the home monastery of Soto Zen Buddhism in Japan, and sit forty minutes of zazen. I think Kobun Chino gave me the incense and told me to burn it and do meditation my first night here. It feels to me like I'm making a powerful connection between Suzuki Roshi's Soto Zen tradition from India, China and Japan, and this new Zen Center building in the United States.

A few days later Bob Halprin and Neils Holm also move in. For the next few weeks we three are the only people living at the new Zen Center building as Mrs. Michaelson and the workers have moved out.

One day Suzuki Roshi comes over and I walk through the building with him. He goes into one of the rooms on the third floor looking out on Page Street. Suzuki Roshi is clearly very happy about the building. He's continually smiling and chatting in a way I haven't experienced before.

He seems thrilled and joyful about what is happening. He looks out the window at the building across the street on the other corner of Page and Laguna and says "We should buy that building too," and laughs.

My memory of this moment with Suzuki Roshi stays with me strongly over the years. I know he is not completely serious, but Zen Center had very recently completed the major purchase of Tassajara, Zen Mountain Center, and now they

are completing the purchase of a large elegant building - the City Center. The key person and fundraiser behind this significant expansion is Richard Baker, Suzuki Roshi's most senior disciple. But I feel there is some element of seriousness in Suzuki Roshi's statement at the window. After Suzuki Roshi's death when Richard Baker is Abbot, he leads Zen Center in purchasing a number of other buildings in the neighborhood.

SETTLING IN

As I continue to live at 300 Page, there is a meeting with other members of Zen Center. I remember someone saying that the building felt very safe at which point Bob Halprin stood up and said, "No, the building is easily broken into." Bob is working in building construction and has told us about his experiences walking on scaffolding, high in the air.

He says, "Wait a minute" and goes out the front door and in a few minutes appears at the window. He has climbed up the wall. The point he is making is appropriate because the neighborhood is fairly violent.

A little while later I hear that a man tried to rob the grocery store on diagonal corner and the owner shot and killed him. Someone was also killed on the corner of Laguna and Lily Street—just at the rear of the building. For many weeks I notice a blood stain on the sidewalk. There are also a number of prostitutes in the neighborhood and I hear cars beeping their horns to communicate with them.

As the weeks continue, the kids in the neighborhood are fascinated with their new neighbors. Sometimes they come into the front or side doors calling out, "Meditation, meditation." And so begins a process of years of Zen Center settling into the neighborhood and neighborhood getting used to Zen Center.

TEACHING & LIBRARY

I soon hear from Jacob Needleman that he has gotten the grant for his book and he wants me to teach his classes. I go through an intensive period of familiarizing myself with the books he has assigned and completing paperwork with San Francisco State University.

I am to teach one large class, an introduction to philosophy. A key reading is Plato's *Republic*—the work I first read in a philosophy class in high school and that started me on my philosophical path. My Plato professor in graduate school was one of my most favorite instructors and I loved Plato. I meet the class teaching assistant, a graduate student who will teach discussion sections just as I had done at U.C. Santa Barbara.

The other class is in Comparative Mysticism and it's a smaller class in the Adult Education Division of the School. Teaching this class is a wonderful challenge for me as it relates to my previous year at Tassajara. I feel that I have both the academic and the experiential background to teach this class.

Another challenge is the fact that all the students in both classes believe they are taking a course from Jacob Needleman and are quite surprised that I am the new teacher. Somehow it all gets resolved and both classes are relatively successful.

The smaller Comparative Mysticism class with adult non-degree students goes particularly well. The students are all there only because they want to be there while the other class fulfills a requirement for a degree. One of the students is Phil Dutton, a retired juvenile court judge who continues to take classes from me for years and becomes a close friend.

At Zen Center I'm asked to develop a library of Buddhist books that can grow into a significant resource for the community. Room and board is my payment for this position. The library is given two comfortable rooms near the Zendo. One is for the library itself, another for reading.

I begin a month long study of how to set up the numerical system for this specialized library and visit a number of libraries speaking to their librarians about how best to do this. I conclude that the older Dewey decimal system is the best choice and start organizing the books from the old Zen Center on Bush Street as well as beginning to get new books. A little later I begin a slide collection of Buddhist art that grows into a thousand slides.

I had always wondered what it would be like to be a librarian and now I have this chance to try it. It is deeply satisfying, but I learn that it is not my life's calling.

STUDY CENTER AND...

As well as teaching at S.F. State and beginning the library, I soon begin attending meetings about offering classes and developing a Buddhist Studies program at Zen Center. I meet with Reb Anderson, Ananda Dahlenberg and others and we explore what kind of classes would best combine with our practice at Zen Center.

We have meetings with Suzuki Roshi and two other teachers who have experienced the combination of study and practice in Japan and now seek to help us define it, here in America. This is an interesting creative process for me as I am teaching university classes at the same time that I am practicing at Zen Center.

Each person brings a different perspective or emphasis to these meetings. One particularly emphasizes Buddhist and Zen historical material, another the more practice teachings, another the more psychological. I'm interested in them all while I remind the others of the importance of the arts.

During this time I began to realize that the dissertation topic that I had been working on, "Questions in Japanese Aesthetics" was not drawing me in the same way. I became more interested in questions in Buddhist studies and eventually developed a whole new topic "The Not-Self Teaching of Early Indian Buddhism: Philosophical Questions."

There were real differences in early Indian Buddhism as to what the Buddha meant by the teaching of not-self. The different schools of Buddhism arose based on different understandings of this teaching. There was a whole school called the Personalists who emphasized the abiding reality of a person while other schools stressed the non reality of an individual soul or *atman*.

As the Fall semester progressed at S.F. State, I began looking for other teaching. I was invited to continue teaching in the Adult Education classes and I proposed classes to the University of California Extension and The California Institute of Asian Studies, and my proposals were accepted.

After a few months, Suzuki Roshi moved into the building at 300 Page Street. I was now living in the same building with my teacher. Although that was true at Tassajara, that was a retreat setting and here it was more intimate, it was sharing a home.

I would walk by Suzuki Roshi, or I would meet him in the hall and not quite know how to relate to him. Do I say something? Do I bow? It took months to get used to this new aspect of our relationship. And, I know other students were experiencing the same thing.

He would respond to whatever I did. If I stopped and bowed, so would he. If I smiled at him he would smile at me. In time it became more comfortable but for me there was always a special quality to meeting Suzuki Roshi in the hall.

EDWARD CONZE

I'm living at Zen Center. It's my first year of living at Zen Center. The Buddhist scholar and translator, originally from Germany has made contact with Suzuki Roshi at Zen Center and offered to teach in our new Buddhist Study Center. He is also a visiting professor of Buddhist Studies at U.C. Berkeley.

Conze begins to give lectures on Buddhism at Zen Center and many of the students, as well as Suzuki Roshi and Katagiri Roshi, are very interested in his work. He is a world expert in Mahayana Buddhism and has translated many important texts. He also has a larger than life personality. He has many stories to tell about his life and has a great sense of humor. He is here with his wife and he will be in the Bay Area for one year.

After attending a number of his lectures he informs me and some other academically inclined Zen Center students that he has some places open in his graduate seminar in Berkeley and he would consider letting some of us in that seminar. One of the requirements is that we give him our astrological information, date of birth and place, because he only allows people in his seminar that he believes are astrologically compatible with him.

After I submit that information to him, he tells me that we have a particularly good connection and he would like me to come into the seminar. As I am a Ph.D. candidate in the U.C. system, I'm welcome to enter the seminar.

I find Conze to be an inspiring and challenging teacher. His specialty is Prajna Paramita, the Indian wisdom school whose sutras are chanted in all Chinese and Japanese Zen monasteries. This is the teaching of Emptiness.

Conze was a Buddhist scholar in Germany before WWII, but he was also a communist and because of that left Germany and moved to England.

As the months progress, Conze and I become friends and a couple of times he asks me to help him personally. One time he is staying a few nights at the Sir Francis Drake Hotel on Union Square in San Francisco and is uncomfortable and wants to move to another hotel. He calls me to ask if I can come over and help him move, which I do.

Conze provides a deeper, more profound insight into the not-Self teachings that I'm working on in my dissertation. His wife shares with me that at home in England, he has a "tiger walk" in the backyard where he paces back and forth like a tiger. He's a very eccentric, wonderful person and as I get to know more about him, the connection deepens. And, he is very supportive and encouraging of my dissertation work.

This time with Conze is part of Suzuki Roshi's creativity in the developing of Zen Center and bringing the combination of deeper understanding and practice of Buddhism to the West.

TSEDE LEHMO

While I'm living at Zen Center every so often someone comes to see Suzuki Roshi and then they lecture to the community. This time a Tibetan couple comes: Sonam Kazi and Tsede Lehmo. Sonam gives a lecture to the whole community in the evening. He talks about the different schools of Buddhism, emphasizing that the "best" one is Vajrayana or Tibetan Buddhism.

They stay after and I talk with both of them and I'm introduced to their young daughter. They return the next day to meet again with Suzuki Roshi and they join the community for dinner. I sit with them and we talk. I'm particularly taken by the whole family, but especially Tsede Lehmo. I learn that she is not Tibetan but is Sikkhimese and she was in a monastery for women and her teacher was a very eminent woman teacher in Vajrayana Buddhism.

They tell me that they believe that their daughter is the reincarnation of Tsede Llammo's teacher. We enjoy talking with each other. I learn that Sonam Kazi was the first translator for the Dalai Lama from Tibetan to English and now he has another professional translator. They tell me they want to drive to Los Angeles, and ask if I could help them to do that. There are people they want to see on the way.

I tell them I'll think about it; I may be available to do it myself. It does come about that I have a van and I free myself from other things and agree to drive them to Los Angeles, through Big Sur, visiting three or four people they want to meet or have a connection with, along the way.

The trip turns out to be a rather remarkable experience for me. Often Sonam Kazi and Jetsun Pema, their daughter, like to sit in the back of the van, and Tsede Llammo likes to sit in the front seat and talk with me or chant in Tibetan. Often she is chanting. We talk about Buddhism. My memory is that there are times when we are talking, times when we are chanting, and other times when she is brushing her long black hair.

At one point she asks me questions about my practice and emphasizes to me that as I have been born in this lifetime as a human being, and not as an animal or a hungry ghost or other form of life, I have a great opportunity. A human life has the possibility of awakening or enlightenment and we humans need to take advantage of that. She repeats this a number of times, in different ways, as we drive. She also teaches me chants in Tibetan and a good deal of the time we are chanting together as I am driving.

It is taking us three days to get to Los Angeles. We stop in Big Sur and in Santa Barbara. After this trip I go back to San Francisco and a little later I hear back from the Kazis that they would like to meet with me. We meet many times. Tsede Lehmo tells me a lot of Tibetans are traders and she is one of those, she loves to trade things, especially things from Tibet. She has brought things with her and

she has contacts in Tibet and India and can get more things so she begins giving me presents.

She gives me a beautiful large turquoise pendant, a small painting of a Tibetan teacher, and other things. She also asks if I would help her sell things and shows me a very fine painting of the Wheel of Life which I buy from her. (It's on the cover of John Blofeld's book called *The Wheel of Life* published by Shambhala.)

Sonam Kazi tells me that they will eventually be moving to New York and invites me to come and be his student. I never could tell him that I really am much more drawn to his wife as a teacher than him. In later years, after Suzuki Roshi dies and I miss the loving compassion that he expressed, I realize that I feel that energy from Tsede Lehmo and she really is a teacher for me.

I try to re-contact her and learn she has gone back to India and I am never able to find her again. I'm actually still looking.

AMPLIFIED SOUND

It's early 1970 and I'm living at 340 Page. I'm teaching at San Francisco State University and other schools, I'm the librarian building a Buddhist library at Zen Center and I'm taking classes in Buddhist Studies at U.C. Berkeley. I'm finding it challenging to do all that I'm doing and also follow the Zen practice schedule at Zen Center.

Suzuki Roshi has a chronic cough and often needs to clear his throat. I notice that when he gives lectures – dharma talks – he seems to have trouble projecting his voice so that everyone can hear him. He is already used to wearing a microphone to record his speech. I ask Suzuki Roshi if he would like to also have a sound system, an amplifier and speakers that would project his voice. He replies that yes, he would like to try that.

Zen Center agrees to finance this and I purchase an amplifier, speakers, a high quality small lapel microphone, and a splitting mechanism and wires so that there can be both recording and amplification from the same microphone.

I set up the system in the Buddha Hall where lectures are given and do some preliminary testing; it seems to work. I then ask Suzuki Roshi if he would come to the Buddha Hall so that I can test the system with his voice. He says yes, he will come that afternoon at 3 pm.

Suzuki Roshi comes into the Buddha Hall and I attach the lavalier lapel microphone and turn on the system. I ask him to say something as he would in a lecture. I'm sitting on the tatami mat; one hand on the amplifier volume control, Suzuki Roshi is standing directly in front of me, looking directly at me. He speaks, at a volume coming through the speakers far too loudly. "You should sit zazen every day. You should not miss so many zazen periods."

CHOGYAM TRUNGPA

In 1970 the Tibetan Buddhist teacher Chogyam Trungpa moves to the United States from Scotland and comes to visit Suzuki Roshi at 300 Page Street. The two of them meet upstairs in Suzuki Roshi's room. After Trungpa left, a few of us student residents are sitting talking in the dining room after dinner when Roshi walks in and sits down with us. I, and I think the others, are still getting used to the situation of actually living in the same building with him. Our conversation stops - our teacher has joined us - there is a period of silence, then Suzuki Roshi speaks, and I remember these words:

"I could never accept Alan's drinking, but Trungpa is something else. (pause) Trungpa is practicing very hard."

I almost immediately realize that 'Alan' must be Alan Watts, the teacher who had introduced Zen Buddhism to my mother, myself and thousands of others in his brilliant lectures on public radio in the 1950's, as well as his many books. I also knew that he lived in the San Francisco Bay Area and in the later part of his life Alan Watts was alcoholic and died of sclerosis of the liver, and that he and Suzuki Roshi knew each other pretty well.

Suzuki Roshi's words are very strong to me, and on another visit to Zen Center I get to know Chogyam Trungpa and his new young wife Diana personally. I drive them to the horse rental stables in Golden Gate Park so Diana can go riding, and while waiting for her and talking to Trungpa, he reaches into his pocket and drinks from a silver flask. Trungpa and I are the same age, we develop a good relationship and I agree to take him to visit Haridas Choudry, the founder and director of the California Institute of Asian Studies.

I also join him and Diana at his request with my girlfriend when he lectures in San Diego. We spent time together as two couples, but my girl friend tells me not to leave her alone with Trungpa. She said she can feel his sexual energy drawing her in and felt that she wouldn't be able to resist.

Trungpa suggests that I become his student but it is very clear to me that I cannot do that. It makes me appreciate my teacher Suzuki Roshi more deeply. Suzuki Roshi is a much less dramatic and colorful than Trungpa, but to me he has a very particular authenticity and depth, and we have such a genuine "personal-but-not-personal", magical relationship.

I keep up with Trungpa to some extent over the next years, and some of my closest friends became his students. Trungpa says that he has a special relationship with people, like myself, that he met and who helped him when he first arrived in the United States. At our last brief meeting some years after Suzuki Roshi had passed away, Trungpa encourages me to continue my regular daily zazen practice, just as Suzuki Roshi always encouraged me. I have the feeling that Roshi is speaking to me through Trungpa. That still feels remarkable today.

TAKING A CLASS TO TASSAJARA

During the year I was living at SF Zen Center I taught at SF State, the Institute of Asian Studies and UC Extension. Within Zen Center I started a library and helped grow the study center.

At this time Suzuki Roshi is teaching on the "Sandokai" - the "Merging of Difference and Unity". The "Sandokai" talks about the lightness and the darkness - about the enlightened mind. I had been studying Christian mysticism with Paul Wienpahl at UC Santa Barbara and I feel a bringing together of my two worlds of philosophy. I am reminded about why I came to Zen Center. I'm having a good relationship with Suzuki Roshi and ask him if I could bring my class on Zen mysticism from UC Extension to Tassajara to hear him lecture.

I'm able to do this in the summer of 1970. Roshi lectures just to our class about the meaning of the Sandokai.

I have regained my health, and am successfully teaching. I feel this moment brings together my practice and my love of philosophy. I almost feel that Suzuki Roshi is talking directly to me at Tassajara. He addresses the topic of my PhD dissertation - self and not-self. This is a high point of my life.

SAYING NO TO SUZUKI ROSHI

It's my second year living at Zen Center at 300 Page with Suzuki Roshi; Silas Hoadley requests that I meet with him. Silas is the treasurer of Zen Center and in the past has been President of Zen Center. Silas tells me that he and the Board and Suzuki Roshi would like me to become treasurer. He says that Zen Center has gotten large enough so I will have helpers and by taking this job as treasurer I would be working with senior ordained disciples of Suzuki Roshi, will become one of the leaders of Zen Center, and would have a closer relationship to Suzuki Roshi.

I'm surprised by this offer. I had no idea it was coming, and I'm a little taken aback by the process. I tell Silas that I will have to think about this. My first reaction is I'm on a different path and really need to think about it. Silas replies that Suzuki Roshi would like to talk to me and I say "OK, but I need a little time." He arranges a meeting with Suzuki Roshi in about a week. During the week I get clear on my decision but I'm a little intimidated by the approaching meeting with Suzuki Roshi.

When I go into meet with Suzuki Roshi, he immediately begins speaking. He says that I will have two assistants, one at Tassajara and one in the City. He's speaking as though I've accepted the offer. He goes on in this vein for a few minutes and when he pauses, I speak. I tell him that I'm very sorry but I feel that I am on a life path that is unfolding for me right now, as a university teacher. I tell him that some of the classes I've taught this past year at SF State and University of California Extension have been very satisfying for me and I feel this is my calling and what I should be doing as well as practicing Zen.

Suzuki Roshi seems to me to be taken aback. He's silent and takes in what I'm saying. I can't remember exactly what happened next but somehow the meeting ended. Afterwards I felt that I had made the right decision but I felt it was difficult for Suzuki Roshi and I wondered if I am the only person who didn't accept an offer like this from him.

I thought about how strong the practice is for me, but the idea of working for Zen Center and making it my life path really didn't feel like my calling.

After this meeting I continued to feel that I had made the right decision. But over the years I've wondered what it would have been like to have taken this job and done it for a few years. I also noticed a feeling that my relationship with Suzuki Roshi had changed as the next year unfolded, and as Suzuki Roshi became less healthy I've felt that his attention turned more towards his senior disciples and my relationship with him was more peripheral.

I felt a sadness, but I understood.

THE LAST DHARMA TALK

I've left my job as a librarian and book store manager to my old friend, Karl Ray. Karl is a professional book store manager from Los Angeles and he wants to move to Zen Center. I'm delighted that Karl can take the book store to a new professional level.

It is just before what I feel was Suzuki Roshi's last Dharma Talk. I have moved out of Zen Center to a building two doors up the street into an apartment at 340 Page in order to be able to live with my girlfriend. It is a nice apartment at the front of the building on the third floor. I am the first Zen student to move into that building, and I continue my near daily practice at Zen Center two doors down the street.

Since saying "no" to Suzuki Roshi about being treasurer and as his health is deteriorating, I can see that he is focusing his last energy on his close ordained disciples and our relationship feels less strong. Also Richard Baker has returned from Japan and much of his energy is going towards preparing him to take over.

It is announced that on November 21, 1971 there will be a "mountain seat ceremony" installing Richard as the new abbot of the Zen Center. On that day, I arrive at the ceremony quite early, knowing there will be many people and wanting to be able to fully tune into the event, rather than be seated in the back.

It was an elaborate ceremony coordinated by Katagiri Roshi (as he is now called) and Kobun Chino Sensei. The time came for Suzuki Roshi to arrive and we began to hear the sound of a staff pounding on the floor. Suzuki Roshi appeared with his son from Japan on one side and his wife Okusan on the other side helping him to stand and walk. He walked very slowly. He looked terrible. His skin was jaundiced—a yellow-brown color—and a ferocious look was on his face.

Almost immediately, people began to cry. The sound of the continuing pound of his staff on the floor mixed with the sound of people crying and I was very moved—transfixed. Soon after I realized this was Suzuki Roshi's last Dharma talk to us—the pounding of the staff and the ring of its bell on the top. The sound itself was the formal talk—the Teisho and his last teaching.

SUZUKI ROSHI PRACTICING WITH US

Suzuki Roshi made it very clear to us in many ways that even though he is the teacher and we are his students, he is also practicing with us. His presence in the zendo sitting zazen made this very clear. The way he first established Zen Center from the early years was simply to invite people to sit with him early in the mornings. The rituals that he followed also emphasized his practice. I remember driving Suzuki Roshi into Tassajara and following him directly into the zendo, before speaking to anyone, and doing full prostration bows to the Buddha. He called this "bowing in" and I eventually followed his example each time after I had left and was now returned to Tassajara. This ritual feels to me like an honoring and respecting the practice.

At a number of other times in lectures and in question-answer periods Suzuki Roshi spoke specifically about his own zazen practice. One time I remember his saying how we, at the early stages of our practice, have difficulties like pain in our legs while sitting zazen. "I, on the other hand, have other difficulties. As I am getting older, my shoulders are tending to come forward, it's harder for me to sit straight with my shoulders back. I'm working on this problem of my posture in zazen, just as you are working on your problems."

I found this very inspiring and supportive, and it made me feel closer to Suzuki Roshi. It also brought home to me that the practice never ends as the years go by, and there are always problems to work on. As I write this, at age seventy-five, I notice that my shoulders are very much tending to come forward.

HOW TO LISTEN TO LECTURES

A number of times Suzuki Roshi speaks about how we should listen to his dharma talks or lectures. Sometimes students ask him about it during question/answer periods, and other times he speaks about it as part of his lecture.

My memory is that he said that we should listen with our regular minds, our intellectual minds. But we should not attach to what is being said or struggle to understand it. Like with the thoughts that come up in zazen, we should let the ideas of the lecture come in, and then let them go. If we don't understand what Suzuki Roshi has said, it's OK, it's still had an effect on us.

I mostly accepted this but I emphasized the part about listening with my intellectual mind. I try not to over-emphasize this, but I do allow my inquisitive philosophical mind some freedom. Sometimes I take notes during lectures, something almost all the other students shun. Many students sit in meditation posture during lecture, eyes half open. I mostly sit in a more relaxed posture, actively listening.

Now, decades later, I think in my own way I did what Suzuki Roshi suggested. I know his teachings had a profound effect on me, but I don't remember a lot of the specific teachings, the specific words. I am now re-discovering his teachings in a new way.

EPILOGUE: UNDERSTANDING HOW SUZUKI ROSHI TEACHES

On the one hand Suzuki Roshi very strongly emphasizes, teaches, and encourages us to do our zazen practice. That's at the core of his teaching. He talks about how that comes from Dogen Zenji who is the founder of Soto Zen Buddhism. He talks about it in terms of great effort and in this way he is emphasizing a non-intellectual practice with your body and breath and how crucially important that is. And, I get this feeling that this is the teaching I was missing, and this is the teaching I've got to hear.

But also, he balances this by encouraging us to study Buddhism intellectually. At one point in answer to a student's question he says: "We cannot practice without intellectual understanding. We have to go back and forth between study and practice. We have to polish our understanding so that we will not be intellectually mixed up—that is important."

I have felt this all the years but I have never seen it so explicitly. I realize he was a philosopher, doing it in his own way even though at times he seemed to deny this. He would say you can be in another tradition and just do the Zazen practice, but he really wanted us to understand Buddhism.

His teaching offered me a larger supportive context for my life, and helped me to fully experience and understand the journey of my life. Suzuki Roshi was a right teacher for me and continues to be.

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