

for a country meditation center, and Richard Baker, then the President of Zen Center, took him to see Tassajara Hot Springs, a 100-year-old resort deep in the California coastal mountains south of Monterey. Students and friends were asked to help, and the subsequent monastery was dedicated in 1967 as Zenshinji/Zen Mountain Center. Meanwhile other Zendos, led by older students from Zen Center, were being founded in the suburbs of San Francisco. By 1969 Zen Center had grown too large to continue sharing Sokoji with the patient Japanese laity, and moved with Suzuki-roshi into a 50-room, former residence club at 300 Page Street in San Francisco, where he and his students could practice more closely together.

In the winter of 1969/70 Suzuki-roshi's health was weakened by influenza. It remained poor, but he was still able to visit Japan late in the year. There he formally recognized as his Dharma heir, Richard Baker, who was then in Japan studying Buddhism and Japanese culture. In the autumn of 1971, when Suzuki-roshi became much weaker, Richard Baker returned to San Francisco and Suzuki-roshi installed him as the second Abbot of Zen Center.

In the early morning of December 4th, about 3 a.m., Suzuki-roshi asked to be given a bath. He didn't speak afterwards and during the first period of zazen of the Rohatsu Sesshin, the traditional week of intensive meditation which commemorates Buddha's Enlightenment, he died in the presence of Mitsu and Ohiro Suzuki, and Baker-roshi.



**THE MOUNTAIN SEAT CEREMONY** Richard Baker, now Baker-roshi or Zentatsu-roshi, and Shunryu Suzuki-roshi spent six weeks together during the Fall of 1970 at Rinso-in, Suzuki-roshi's former temple in Japan. Baker-roshi received formal Dharma transmission in a main ceremony in the middle of the night on December 4, 1970 and in a completing ceremony on December 8, 1970. A year later, on November 21, 1971, at the Mahabodhisattva Zendo in San Francisco, in the traditional Mountain Seat Ceremony, Suzuki-roshi installed Richard Baker as his successor and Chief Priest of Zen Center and afterwards acknowledged him as Roshi. The following impression of the ceremony is from a paper written by Denis Lahey, a student of the Berkeley Zendo, for Professor Robert Bellah's sociology class at the University of California, Berkeley. After the paper is an outline of the traditional ceremony including the poems and statements Baker-roshi made for each of the stations of the ceremony.

"I arrived at the Zen Center on Page Street well before the time of the ceremony, but found that there was already a sizeable crowd. Every bit of space in the upstairs halls was filled with chairs. I was seated upstairs for a while, and could see that they had built a large raised platform at the end of the Buddha Hall to serve as the Mountain Seat. Incense and candles were much in evidence. Cer-

tain dignitaries began to arrive: Lama Kunga, Tulku of Thartse, from the Evam Choden Center in Berkeley; Abbot Hsuan Hua and his retinue from the Gold Mountain Temple in San Francisco, and other figures of the spiritual life in the Bay Area. Sasaki-roshi from Los Angeles and Mt. Baldy Monastery was there with two disciples. Soon the word was passed around that the meditation students should go downstairs to the Zendo (Meditation Hall), and wait there for the fourth station of the ceremony, when Richard Baker would enter the Zendo to offer incense and a gatha (Buddhist poem). We all did so, and soon the Zendo was full and people were lined up out in the hall in front of the door. For a few moments we watched people arriving for the ceremony entering by the lower street door, and then all became silent. Suddenly, far off upstairs sounded a deep bass note on a huge drum, followed by a bell which began to toll in the lower hall. The drumbeats continued, quite slowly at first, but following one another in an ever more rapid succession, until the drummer was beating out a long, thundering roll which reverberated all through the building, punctuated by the slow, rather doleful strokes of the bell.

"Upstairs, the procession was arriving at the front door of the building, having come from Dainin Katagiri-roshi's house up the street. We could hear faintly the procession entering the Buddha Hall for the preliminary offerings. Every few moments came the jangling thud of the Master's staff on the ground. The staff is six feet long and of heavy wood, and the top end is hung with brass rings which rattle loudly when the staff is thumped on the ground. Presently, the procession left the Hall and drew near to the stairs to the lower levels. Through the noise of drum and bell, we could hear the eerie sound of the two small bells carried by the processioners. These are just a half-tone apart in pitch, and their effect, coupled with the steady drumbeats and the low, mellow gong in the hallway, was to make the hair on the back of my neck stand on end, as the procession descended the stairs and approached the Zendo. I believe the rest of the procession remained out of sight around a turn in the corridor, for finally, only



*Kobun Chino and Richard Baker*

Richard Baker himself appeared, walking slowly down the narrow hall in the semi-darkness, holding the fly-whisk of horsehair, and wearing a robe given to him by Suzuki-roshi of sky-blue and gold cloth, decorated with brightly colored phoenixes. All heads bowed as he passed and entered the Zendo, where he made an offering at the altar. He returned a moment later, and, looking neither right nor left, he walked steadily back to join the rest of the procession. We heard them going back upstairs, the solid bangings of the staff and the strange notes of the bells receding in the distance, until only the gong and the drum broke the stillness of the dimly-lit hallway.

"Then we were summoned upstairs to the Buddha Hall. We filed in through the Zendo and out through its rear door, then up the stairs and into the main corridor. Walking slowly, we entered the Hall, passing the great drum, and filled up the wide expanse of tatami mats left in front of the Mountain Seat Altar. Visitors were seated in chairs all around the perimeter of the mats, while we sat on our heels, Japanese style. Meanwhile, the procession had gone upstairs to the next floor, to the room of the Master, Suzuki Shunryu-daiosho, the founder of Zen Center, whom Richard Baker was succeeding. Everyone who knew this man loved him, and I myself, though I had only met him once, regarded him with the deepest respect. I knew that he was quite ill at that time, but when he, at the head of the procession, entered the Hall, I was shocked to see him as frail and shrunken as the man who appeared, a ghost of the person whose immense vigor and spiritual strength had guided the Center through the first uncertain years of its existence. He entered, practically being carried by his son, but holding his staff firmly, and thumping it on the matting as he approached the Mountain Seat. He bowed at the altar, and was helped to a place to the right of the platform. Richard Baker entered then with the retinue, and seated himself in a lacquered chair facing the Mountain Seat Altar. The great drum fell silent. We chanted in unison the Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra in English, and then, having offered prayers and incense in front of the Altar, Baker-roshi ascended the steps of the platform and stood, several feet above the onlookers, offering incense to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and the Patriarchs, to the benefactors of the Center, and, finally, to his own beloved teacher, Suzuki-roshi. He said:

This piece of incense  
Which I have had for a long long time  
I offer with no-hand  
To my Master, to my friend, Suzuki Shunryu-daiosho  
The founder of these temples.  
There is no measure of what you have done.

Walking with you in Buddha's gentle rain  
Our robes are soaked through,  
But on the lotus leaves  
Not a drop remains.'

"Then Katagiri-roshi, acting for Suzuki-roshi, recited the brief authentication verse with a full-bodied shout, in true Zen fashion. For his sermon, Baker-roshi stated simply, 'There is nothing to be said.'

"This was perfectly true. Then followed the so-called Dharma-questions, when the other priests seek to test the new Abbot's understanding. The following marvelous dialogue ensued between Baker-roshi and the priest from the Mill Valley Zendo:

(Bill Kwong) 'Chief Priest!' (shouting)

(Baker-roshi) 'Is it host or guest?'

(Bill Kwong) 'Iiii!' (shouting)

(Baker-roshi) 'Show me your True Nature without shouting!'

Bill then simply bowed, and returned to his seat.

"Following congratulatory telegrams and such, the ceremony was concluded. Suzuki-roshi was helped to his feet and moved to the front of the altar to make his bow. But when he turned to face the people, there was on his face an expression at once fierce and sad. His breath puffed mightily in his nostrils, and he looked as if he strove vigorously to speak, to say something, perhaps to exhort the disciples to be strong in their practice, or to follow Richard Baker with faith; no one can say. He faced the congregation directly as if to speak and instead rolled his staff between his hands sounding the rings twice, once looking to the left and once to the right side of the hall. It was as though some physical shock had passed through the hall; there was a collective intake of breath, and suddenly, everywhere people were weeping openly. All those who had been close to the Roshi now realized fully what it would mean to lose him, and were overcome with a thoroughly human sorrow. As their Master falteringly walked from the



*Reb Anderson,  
Baker-roshi,  
Angie Runyon*

Hall, still marking each step with his staff, everyone put his hands palm to palm before his face in the gesture known as gassho, and bowed deeply. And that was all. Very simple and direct, the ceremony had lasted little more than an hour.

"On December 4 in the early morning, a scant two weeks after the Mountain Seat Ceremony, Suzuki Shunryu-daiosho passed from this life. His work was finished. In the already-quoted words of his disciple and successor, Zentatsu Myoyu Richard Baker,

'There is nothing to be said.' "



#### MOUNTAIN SEAT CEREMONY (Shin San Shiki)

I. Beginning Rest (Angesho) at Katagiri Dainin-roshi's House

II. Front Gate (Sanmon)

Through all the worlds  
The cloud-path leads to this gate.  
The golden chain is gone.  
Although no one passes  
Everyone greets Buddha himself.

Offering of incense.

III. Buddha Hall (Butsuden) at Usual Altar

This incense is offered for the Buddha of no-marks  
For the Buddha who is all things

For Shakyamuni Buddha  
For all the Buddhas who do not know they are Buddha  
For the Protectors of Buddhism  
For the Patriarchs who with unceasing effort  
Crossed the ocean-of-one-point  
Bringing us this immense Dharma.  
For this fruit of many kalpas  
All the world pays homage.

Offering of incense three times followed by nine bows.

#### IV. Meditation Hall (Zendo)

Silent Gatha

Offering of incense for the teaching which shows us a Way.  
Three bows and passage through the Zendo.

#### V. The Roshi's Room

Although I don't know how I came,  
Through your heart-teaching  
I am always here.

Offering of incense for the Way which gives us teachers.

Three bows.

#### VI. Buddha Hall at the Mountain Seat Altar

A. Suzuki-roshi enters.

B. The presentation of the robe.

C. Chanting of the Heart Sutra.

D. Declaration of Official Appointment

by Silas Hoadley, President-Treasurer of Zen Center

E. Gatha facing Mountain Altar

This Mountain Seat, climbed many times before,  
Is the Everywhere Bodhimandala.  
With the help of my Master and everyone here  
In the ten directions and the three times  
I will climb this mind-seal altar.  
Do not wonder about it at all.

F. Climbing the Mountain Altar

As the new Chief Priest of Zen Center, Mahabodhisattva Zendo and Tassajara Zenshinji, I offer this incense from the very no-beginning to the immense compassion and wisdom of Buddha's teaching; to the Mahayana Vairocana Buddha; to Manjusri, Avalokitesvara, and all the Bodhisattvas; to the great historical Shakyamuni Buddha; to all the Patriarchs through Dogen Zenji to my own subtle and compassionate teacher, Suzuki Shunryu-daisho. May their immeasurable Bodhi-practice benefit and inspire in peace and harmony all beings in every world, life after life.

I offer this incense penetrating everywhere for all beings in the six worlds, for Trudy Dixon, for Mr. Chester Carlson, for all who have given in every way to make this sangha real. May their passage be free from hindrance.

I want to offer a special incense for my teacher, the Tozan Seido Roshi of Zen Center, Mahabodhisattva Zendo, and Tassajara Zenshinji, Katagiri Dainin-roshi. Every day he shows us Dogen's Way.

This piece of incense  
Which I have had for a long long time  
I offer with no-hand  
To my Master, to my friend, Suzuki Shunryu-daiosho  
The founder of these temples.  
There is no measure of what you have done.  
Walking with you in Buddha's gentle rain  
Our robes are soaked through,  
But on the lotus leaves  
Not a drop remains.

G. Attendant (Jisha) offers incense

H. Authentication (Byakutsui-shi)

1. Katagiri-roshi

Hoën Ryuzōshu Tōkan Dai Ichi Gi!  
Dragons and Elephants!  
Accept this holder of Buddha's First Seat!

2. Zentatsu Myoyu Richard Baker

a. Statement (Suigo)  
b. Dharma Questions (Mondo)  
c. Backbone (Teiko)

3. Katagiri-roshi

Taikan Hōōhō Hōōhō Nyoze!  
Complete Comprehension! Dharma King! Buddha's Teaching!  
Just this!

1. Greetings and Telegrams, Peter Schneider, Zen Center Officer;  
Representing the Visiting Priests, Chino Kobun-sensei, Head Priest of  
the Los Altos Zendo

J. Return to rest at Suzuki-roshi's room.