

A Memory of Suzuki Roshi

We were hippies in the early sixties. My husband and I lived on Bernal Hill in San Francisco. Our good friends, Bob and Ellen, lived nearby. One Sunday morning they called to say they had decided to tie the knot formally, would we accompany them on their quest to get married?

Yes! We piled into Bob's old car and went to two churches and a synagogue. What a surprise to find that no one would marry them. "You must be a member of the church." "You must have two weeks of counseling."

At the end of the afternoon we were discouraged, but someone had an idea: to go to the SF Zen Center. We had all been there for meditation and we revered Suzuki Roshi. Off we went. The receptionist sent us upstairs to wait outside his door. Wait we did, patiently. Finally he called us to come in. He was seated at a low table, cross-legged on a chair with some calligraphy before him. He greeted us and Ellen explained their mission and the disappointments. "We want someone to be spontaneous," she said. "I am spontaneous in my refusal," he replied. We all laughed and they continued talking. After a while Ellen said, "I want you to marry us whenever you wish." "Fine," said Suzuki Roshi, "come back at 8 o'clock." We were overjoyed.

He performed the elaborate ceremony in Japanese with chanting and scarves. It was beautiful. We loved him very much.

Jim Hare sent?

Sallie Hanna-Rhyne

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