

August 11, '99

Dear David -

You nailed it! Fabulously well-done. You got the forest and the trees. Anyone who tells you different is just jealous.

From the reviews: "HE'S NOT NEARLY AS DUMB AS HE LOOKS, NOT NEARLY!!..."

Years ago I visited the "Van Gogh at Arles" exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY. At the gallery entry I stood behind two elderly women who were looking at one of the large featured canvases. I over-heard them... "Look, whaddya gonna say? It's a great painting. I, personally, I'd have done the sky a little different but it's a great painting." In that spirit, without invitation, I'm going to tell you some of my thoughts while reading through the book.

¢ 1904 - Also the Birth year of E. Conze, Nancy Wilson Ross Lloyd Reynolds.

¢ How about a map so I can track "Japan" more closely

¢ P. 173 (re: Gary Snyder and Ruth Fuller Sasaki) - This comes from private correspondence from G.S. to Phil Whalen, now archived at Reed College (few people know this) and read by me with great interest around 1968:

"For private information - not to be gossip - I am most fed up with Ruth Sasaki (anti-semitic, anti-poetry, anti-openness, anti-sex)."  
 "Roshi, like I, is simply a victim, poor man, of Mrs. Sasaki's Satanish designs on Western Civilization for giving her a sad Protestant

childhood."

"I got Mrs. Sasaki to admit in so many words that Japanese organized sectarian Zen is 9/10ths fraud and always has been."

"Mrs. Sasaki is a rabidly orthodox follower of Rinzai transmission."

"Mrs. Sasaki is just a dab looney (sort of power crazy or something)."

"Two colleagues and I resigned from the Zen Institute, so I am out of work. But I feel great. Mrs. Sasaki is evil man."

♀ P. 194 "picked up teacup like baby bird"  
 Do you know the photo in which he's holding a teacup in zazen mudra?

♀ P. 229 "would jump off a cliff..."  
 There was a book in the office library (@ Tass.), to the left of the door as you walked in, called "A History of Secret Societies" — It had this image — a leader demonstrated a point to his companion by making a sweeping "down" gesture to a distant figure on a cliff. The remote figure plunged to his death.

♀ P. 273 - Grahame's comment to Kapleau is a good take-home message, much of the story "in a nutshell."

♀ P. 312 - Arthur Deikman is a pompous jerk.

♀ P. 324 - My old friend Sam was there that summer and told me T.D. asked a question — I don't

remember it all but it included the words  
 "I feel like a fish swimming in and out of  
 an ocean of death...."

♀ P. 324 - You say "prone" and maybe you really  
 mean it, but I picture her "supine"  
 (I've never seen anyone prone in the zendo).

♀ 12/60 - Lecture at Sokoji. A belligerent fellow  
 asks "isn't this world the mouth of hell?"  
 Roshi answers at some length to the effect  
 it ain't. Later, leaving the hall, roshi stops in  
 front of the guy, smiles, bows, says good night  
 to him.

♀ 8/69 Roshi's lecture @ tass.  
 "By 25 you should lay the foundation of yr  
 life. Before 40 you have the face your parents  
 give you. After 40 you have the face your  
 practice gives you. By 40 you are selfless  
 with great effort, and begin helping others;  
 after 60, very little effort."

Somebody: "Sometimes I get lethargic and  
 discouraged about life and practice..."

Roshi: "this is good... all practice has these  
 moments."

there is double difficulty for new students.  
 Older students should help new students, make  
 practice easier for beginners. There is also  
 double difficulty for old students.

Somebody at the back of the zendo: "I can't count my breaths well and I give up after five minutes. What should I do? May I consider my posture?"

Roshi: "this is not my problem."

From the rear: "Oh my God!"

Roshi laughs.

¢ P. 328 - It's fifteen blocks from Page to Bush on Laguna, not counting the alleys...

¢ P. 340 Ken Sawyer and I did tangaryo alone together for 5 days, early June '70. Some time in the middle Suzuki-roshi came in with some older students (Lew Richmond among them) to practice something on the altar with the Mokugyo. They talked for a few minutes. As they walked out Roshi leaned between us and whispered "Sorry to disturb you." That was the only non-disturbing thing that happened that day.

¢ 6/70 - Roshi brought a book to lecture, opened the book and the cloth covering at the beginning; never referred to it during lecture; closed and covered it at the end, then took questions

- "Roshi, why do you bring a book to lecture?"
- "My teacher told me to always study before giving a lecture even though it won't help."

¢ 7/70 I wore my mala around my neck, to zazen. Roshi put the kyosaku down beside me, took the beads off, laboriously folded them into 3 rings, put them on the empty zafu beside me, picked up the stick, hit me hard, twice on each side, put the stick down, lifted my beads and very carefully put them back on me. Several minutes later he came back and straightened my head. "Keep your chin in... Don't forget... okay?"

¢ P. 341 "... and now the fare was totally vegetarian" that didn't happen till '71 - I was the quest breakfast and dinner cook during Summer '70 (that was the last summer in the old kitchen). My memo notes include "Cassoulet de mouton" (sort of like pork and beans)

"Boeuf Bourguignon"

On 7/1 - "Red Simmered Pork on egg noodles"

7/11 - "Sweet and Sour dead corpse of cow"

Incidentally, on 7/11/70: David Chadwick speaking about my poached eggs to the ravenous dishwashers "you wouldn't want to eat that shit." And later, the kitchen, dishwashing and waiter crews sitting in the dining room eating. David, sitting alone in the opposite corner of the room, softly asks "please pass the gomasio."

On 8/29/70 @ 3PM - check cakes in oven  
4:30 - Cut broccoli into spears/measure brown

5<sup>00</sup> FISH - salt / flour / egg wash and corn meal  
 6<sup>15</sup> Boil the rice  
 6<sup>20</sup> Steam the broccoli  
 6<sup>30</sup> Deep fry the fish

♀ p. 344 ("Alan Marlowe and Roshi")

They were moving a rock - roshi made a comment about some aspect of it.

Alan, noting a rounded shapely contour, said "yes, and it has a nice bottom too..."

Roshi smiled and said, "I know what you're talking about..." (Alan told me).

♀ During July '70, as guest cook my schedule was off-kilter. I was alone in the bath not knowing it was Roshi's time to bathe. I leaned on the back wall of the plunge and realized I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I thought about disappearing or drowning, and felt guilty like Lemmy Bruce ("Okay, okay! we did it... we killed Jesus, it was my Uncle Morty, I found the note down in the cellar").

Roshi walked down the plunge steps, genitals covered by a cloth, leaving the water perfectly still. "It's very clean" he said. He glided over to an insect that was struggling on the surface. With two hands he lifted it out and splashed it to safety out of the tub.

(This is not a "he's so saintly that he saves insects" story).

This is in response to just now  
(3:50 AM, 8/11) discovering your web  
site....

(7) of 11

☞ Trungpa was at Tassajara during  
June 1970, prior to the 18th,

after the 13th (my journal  
doesn't lie). And he gave  
Zendo lectures

(Also the Korean  
guy -? Saenim - came  
and did zendo lecture  
that summer.  
There was an  
earthquake  
of which he seemed  
to take no notice)

☞ P. 364 (Portland)

On 7/16/70 I had dokusan with Roshi @ Tass.  
"ask the office... maybe we will send an  
experienced student there to help you.  
Ask the office..."

We had a great communal Zen house in  
Portland (Jim and Layla Jackie Warshall,  
Teresa Palmer, Pat McMahon, Barbara Young,  
Debby Green, others).

It was a 1 1/2 day sitting at an Arts Center  
after a Friday night lecture @ Reed.

I helped make alot of the organizational/  
logistic arrangements. Barbara Young's  
boyfriend "JC" the oldest among us at 30  
said "thank' you for all the work you're  
doing... some of us think you're running  
around a bit much." Yep.

☞ P. 365 "No, I am a Zen Master."

That's interesting. Rob and Roshi stayed  
at the home of Rowena Leary (Pattée).

She told me this: One evening, returning  
home after his pain began, Roshi was  
obviously feeling awful but maintained  
his bearing. Crossing the threshold his  
shoulders sunk and he all but collapsed.  
He said something quite like this: "Now

"I can be a little child, I don't have to be a Zen Master."

♀ Portland

Sasaki-roshi came to Reed and gave a very spirited lecture. Lloyd Reynolds came. I asked him what he thought. "It was wonderful! but I like our Suzuki-roshi." Some time in '69 Lloyd had a private visit with Suzuki-roshi in San Francisco.

"Is it growing fast enough?" asked Lloyd. Roshi laughed, threw up his hands, said "Too fast!"

Lloyd asked Roshi if he recalled Rowena who had studied brush painting in Portland practiced

and had studied Zen in SF. Roshi answered with the gesture of a single sumi brush stroke, pantomiming the brush, the ink, and the paper. Lloyd had a vibrant painting of Rowena above his living room fireplace. He often referred to it to illustrate one of the Canons of Chinese Art: "CHI YUN SHENG TUNG" (Heaven's Breath resonates in life rhythm)

♀ P. 372 (Yoshimura)

Tassajara sesshin lectures by Yoshimura 9/70:

"There were a lot of schools in those days and they laid their trips on each other. And Buddha, practicing with the ascetics, tried to get high and probably did get high"



" Like my robes for example. If I took them off you'd say "Hey, Jap!" even if you don't think so."

" I find tonight that my head doesn't work right, sitting sesshin. So tonight I'll sing a song. Mostly geisha girls sing it today though it's 200 years old. I don't play with geisha girls lots but a roshi at Eihei-ji who taught it to me I think does. On the 4th night of sesshin there, like tonight, he took me to his room and sang it saying it would make the pain go away."

" Good and Evil is preceded by a decision. If you decide to play tennis, play tennis, and believe in tennis. You will be far out, right on, no more goof-off."

☽ P. 389 Ryuko Yamada ("he loved the communal aspects...")

To me in conversation 10/19/71:

"Tassajara will become a commune but gradually. Suzuki-roshi says so."

☽ P. 390 The paragraph @ Stunkard, Suzuki, and jaundice ain't entirely accurate.

Jaundice is a lemon pie that can be sliced variously. The most important distinction maybe painful vs. painless jaundice. Another is obstructive vs. inflammatory. (Inflammatory includes

"infectious" hepatitis although the latter is an antiquated term - it would be more accurate to say "viral" hepatitis).

The most common cause of obstructive jaundice is gallstones, such as Roshi had during March '71. The most common cause of painless obstructive jaundice is cancer. Itching may occur in any of these conditions and in itself is not particularly useful in seeking a cause.

I don't doubt that Dr. Stunkard accurately suspected cancer. But with the information you've armed Dr. Stunkard and the reader with at this point it's a touch romantic to suggest that he "first realized Suzuki had cancer" (p. 393)

I suspect he had all the impressions of the sick room (profound weight loss, general frailty, awareness that this had all been going on for some time, and Roshi's general comfort) as well as subliminal impressions.

Q P. 394 - Shouldn't it be the Zen Studies Society?

Q P. 398 - I sat next to Yasuko at dinner. She kept one hand scrupulously covering her mouth as she ate with the other.

In those times you would know when Roshi was in the (now) Founders Hall because his cane would be carefully leaning into a corner of the door jam to the

right of the entry when he was in.

¢ P. 402 Kachin, you idiot! Kachin!!  
CHIN CHUN KACHIN

Thirty years I work on that piece  
and you fuck it up.

¢ 12/71 - After his death that morning everyone  
from the sesshin, and everyone living  
in the building, was invited to  
enter the room and bow to Roshi,  
one by one.

This is a work of great excellence which speaks  
to me very personally. You've written a superb  
biography and the best imaginable first chapter  
in a history of Zen Center. May it be read for  
10,000 years. (I would not be surprised.)  
From where I stand as an avid participant  
from '68 - '91, and still stand as failed faithful  
practitioner this is how I would like to be told  
the story. How about doing '71 - '83? - It has not  
been rendered yet despite several admittedly  
short attempts.

Well-done, David-san, Well-Done!

I hope you're doing okay,  
Rick

(First Benji of Zen in America -  
'72 © Feb)

P.S. Dr. Conze thought you were "a touch strange".