

-4-11-78

Chosan Ceremony

My question for the Docho Roshi, Richard Baker, is next, after the next.

- I heard some cracking sounds outside the door as I stood in the back of this famous Zenshin-ji Tassajara Zendo. Joel, standing behind me, stepped out the door to investigate - everyone is in the zendo.

Immediately he steps back in and says, "Excuse me, there's a fire out here." I turn and run right out the door with Joel. We hesitate a second and then Joel turns and goes towards a garden hose. I grab the front and run towards the flames which are roaring up out of the stairwell down to the basement - the food storage area. But I'm stopped for the hose is too short. We put an extension on, but by now the flames have spread to other parts of the building. Everyone ran out of the zendo - many without even a chance to get their shoes off the shoe rack - it was ablaze. Some even had to exit out the chiden door near the altar in the zendo.

Those who turned back - David Schneider, Tensho, and Chuck Vetter - to try and save the Buddha say it was too hot and smoky and that their eyebrows singed. All in a matter of two minutes. Had it not been for Joel discovering the fire we may have been in trouble. Very, very close. The Ino, Pam Churnoff, managed to save a few things from the zendo, including Roshi's horse hair whisk and his zagu. Other than that, we soon saw our zendo - Buddha drum, makugio (sp?), bells, Buddha, etc. and our library and food storage areas all burn up in tremendous flame. We could only spray the roof of the kitchen and save it - which we did with the help of the firewall on it.

So we have much work to do now as we rebuild Tassajara.