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September 22, 1964

(Mitchell)

Dear Elsie and John:

I'm very grateful for your letter. I hope you have a good talk with Suzuki Osho; from all I hear he is a fine man. Marlene Caspari, who was here as an East-West Center student in philosophy for two years, was a member in San Francisco before she came, and she has returned there. She likes him very much and trusts him as a teacher.

I have always held the lay leader role in our zazenkai, even while Martha Kent was chairman, mostly because it is in our house and is mostly our money and inspiration. Anne has been a strong co-worker and supporter. She is in charge of zendo and sesshin logistics and cooking, and always does a fine job of this. She also took over the coordination of the last sesshin tour, when I was so busy with the East-West Center, and this went very well also.

thing Anne came into Zen, not exactly biting and kicking, but with something less than whole-hearted enthusiasm. Her parents have been into everything from Christian Science to voices from outer space, and she and her brothers and sister reacted strongly and ensconced themselves in the 39 Articles. She came along to sesshin at Ryutakuji when we were on our honeymoon in 1957 and hated it.. I didn't know, as I was in the zendo paying no attention to anybody. Then we went to Raikoji in Tokorozawa for a sesshin with Yasutani Roshi, and she didn't have a room to put in and was obliged to sit, and sit she did, and thereafter her interest developed to its present diligent state..

But every marriage is its own situation, and some have been broken with Zen the excuse for breaking. I went through this myself with my first wife back in 1953 after seven years of misery. Zen was the goat, used by both of us as justification for our incompatibility, and so far as she is concerned it really was, as she will tell anyone to this day. But I believe that marriage is the thing that has to be worked out, and Zen can take the leavings. I hope your zazenkai can continue, but if it is really a question of saving something more important, then this should be explained to the Honzan and to Suzuki. They might learn something.

Anne doesn't see that Zen is inappropriate for women, nor do I. One of the cleverest Zen people I know is a ~~xxxxxxx~~ female, a very feminine one. I have known many other good women students. The Kannonji situation is a product of Japanese culture, not Zen, as much as the two can be separated. It is full of female samurai and is a hateful place. Pauline Offner ran away after 18 months, and she has lots of gamman, too much perhaps. A woman leader is perhaps something else again, but not impossible, I think. I have always thought you do a fine job.

By the way, did you know that Engakuji has built a women's dorm as part of its Kojirin? Now women have a place to go at last, and already

one American is there, Lois Engleman from Chicago, whom we got to know briefly here, -- a fine girl. She is working with Gyo San, né Gen San and likes him very much and appreciates his strictness.

██████████'s address is ██████████, Honolulu, Hawaii 96817. She used to do the teisho part of the Diamond Sangha, and one day she remarked that she had been typing Yasutani Roshi's lectures for more than a year, and she still couldn't understand a single word of them. She wasn't being zennish. I agree she is better off with Amida's infinite love, but even that isn't enough. She is an extremely unsettled person, as you know. We don't begrudge our ex-members, and they are scattered all over the place, from Christian existentialism to Maharishi.

Bernard wrote recently after I had written him about Margaret Conway's return, and said that Tai San was saying that his departure was the result of conflict with me. I don't mind absorbing some of the blame if that will keep the real story dark. It is true that there was plenty of tension between us; I am an utter anarchist in my social relations; ~~and~~ he finds close relationship impossible on anything but a dominance-submission basis. But we were working pretty well in spite of this. I knew this would be his story as he was spreading the same thing here, but I'd rather ~~see~~ Roshi does not learn that I have said there was any trouble. I am telling people here simply that he is transferring, and I have said the same to everyone by letter when there was occasion to mention it, except to you and recently (very briefly) to Bernard. Soen Roshi rather clings to the idea that all the difficulty is due to character difference between Tai San and me.

I do hope you can hang tough, as my construction-stiff friends used to say. We ourselves have had a good 500 percent turnover in five years, and, as you say, sesshin doesn't seem to encourage participation too much. Never mind, there is something constant in spite of all this movement. Even religion class visitations, where the student is exposed just once, is very worth while. We have not picked up a single member from a dozen such special meetings, but Dr. Aoki told me of one woman who is continuing her zazen alone after one such exposure. She was having difficulty getting along with ~~her~~ husband, so she began getting up after he went to sleep, and sitting for half an hour, then returning to bed. She told him it was saving her marriage. She is Christian, so doesn't come to meetings. Just one such case every couple of years is enough to keep me going. Now Tai San has gone; our attendance is almost completely changed. Student seem to be younger, with a better proportion of males to females. The intellectual level is higher. A very few, one or two per evening, are beginning to attend our family zazen on non-meeting nights; and mornings may also have attenders when school is well started and people are done unpacking.

The Harveys, arrived, bag and baggage, Dick, John, Janet, little Janet, and Susan the dog, whom Janet smuggled in pretending she was pregnant (to avoid four months impounding). A wild stunt, -- ah youth. Dick has found a fine room nearby, and we have put the young family in Tai San's cottage, which should make Mrs. Harvey Senior happy; she has been pretty worried about the exodus of her entire issue. We love them all; John and Janet obviously are quite stable, and the little girl is very sweet.

We feel very close to you in all this tribulation and are deeply grateful for your support. Anne joins me in sending lots of love.