

# University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library — Archives

## CITY ZENDO

New York Zendo • Shobo-ji  
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New York, NY 10021  
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THE ZEN STUDIES SOCIETY

October 21, 1982

George Zournas, Director  
Theatre Arts Books  
153 Waverly Place, New York, N.Y. 10014

Dear George:

Our friendship has been a long and productive one. Looking back at our long years of association, I feel much gratitude for the many gestures you made to help Aiho and myself personally, and to the Zen Studies Society. In particular, thank you for making possible the publication of Namu Dai Bosa. Indeed, you have immeasurably helped true Dharma continue.

In spite of this present situation you have helped to create, I hope you feel that because you have known Aiho and myself, we too have been helpful in your life, not only in "Dharma matters", but in some personal, tangible way. I am sensitive in being critical of you, George, because we were friends. During those fifteen years, we had our disagreements. Yet what I remember vividly is our good feelings towards each other. So I find it truly painful to write this letter because it is the end of this friendship.

You have chosen to write letters to the Sangha of Zen Studies Society that accuse me of the most serious allegations that anyone could make to someone in my position. Since you have questioned not only my integrity, but have also chosen to involve other members of the Sangha, I am posting copies of your letters at Shoboji with my answers to your allegations.

### 1. On Soen Roshi:

You describe my treatment of Soen Roshi, my teacher, as "abominable", and claim that he "publicly denounced" me. I cannot jump to the conclusion that for the past fifteen years you have been coming to sesshins and Dokusans, you ever considered yourself my student. Perhaps you never were, for no student would ever treat his teacher the "abominable" way you have treated me in your letters.

You claim also that "Soen Roshi.... had revelations.... about not receiving moneygifts" from The Zen Studies Society "on his previous visits". Let me remind you that The Zen Studies Society, over the past fifteen years, made substantial moneygifts to Soen Roshi, including \$ 4000.00 given to him

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for his recent visit here. In 1968, at Soen Roshi's request, Ryutakuji was loaned \$ 30,000.00 to acquire more land around the monastery. This money was later donated to them. In 1981, as you know, The Zen Studies Society contributed an additional \$ 5000.00 to Ryutakuji to help build their new Zendo. You were present when this gift was offered to them. It was given to Ryutakuji when we stopped over in Japan on our way back to the United States from our China trip.

Why do you think that you and I and Bugyo went to Japan in June of this year? Why do you think I flew out to Los Angeles to spend five days with Soen Roshi just before his final departure for Japan? Why do you think that on the evening of July 31st, you and I met to discuss the possibility of Soen Roshi residing at Dai Bosatsu for a period of time while I went on sabbatical? Do you think these events show an "abominable" way of treating my teacher?

I am deeply hurt that you have set yourself up as someone who can comment on my relationship with Soen Roshi, my teacher, in the most despicable way. This I find really abominable. Do you understand, George?

## 2. On the bookkeeping and accounting of Zen Studies Finances:

According to your letter,

"For many years various members of the Board have protested the fact that the minister's wife was also the Treasurer of the Society. They found this totally unacceptable, but Korin and I were able to quiet their complaints. We never had the slightest doubt of the integrity of the person in charge. However, the revelations of Soen Roshi about not receiving moneygifts on his previous visits to us, have called our whole bookkeeping system into question."

I trust that you will remember the following events:

On August 31, 1976, when Dai Bosatsu Zendo was completed, Aiho and Bill Johnstone resigned their positions as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer, respectively. It was at this point in time that you became the Treasurer of Zen Studies Society. On December 18, 1976, three and a half months later, Aiho accepted her appointment as Treasurer, because you had come to us and told us that you were incapable of continuing on as Treasurer. You in fact begged Aiho to assume the work you could not perform. It was the unanimous feeling of the Board at that time that Aiho was the most appropriate person for the Treasurer position.

Why imply that Aiho and myself are thieves without directly accusing us?

For years, Philip F. Seckler & Co., as you know, has been retained by The Zen Studies Society as our public accountants. We have never once attempted to conceal the financial records of The Zen Studies Society. All financial records of the Society are available immediately to any Board Member. You should have asked to examine them before making any

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hints that Aiho was stealing money from The Zen Studies Society. Every year, our Financial Report is filed with the Internal Revenue Service-- as a past President of The Zen Studies Society, you must be aware of this.

### 3. Dokusan and seduction:

The most serious and sensational accusation you make, also made by Frank LoCicero and Adam Fisher, is the allegation that I have used my position as Roshi, during Dokusan, to seduce women. This is a very serious charge, and because of its nature, one that has disrupted activities at Shobo-Ji and Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

For weeks now I have not answered your many letters, because I had to wrestle with the subtle question of how to talk about "what happened during this Dokusan". You have been a Zen student for many years. Perhaps during this time you never learned the nature of Dokusan. Dokusan is one of the most important things that we do in our Zen practice. For centuries, this meeting between teacher and student has remained confidential to both: the teacher does not talk about it, and neither should the student. The secret character of Dokusan is essential. Only thus can true Dharma continue, especially in the Rinzai tradition.

My training strictly forbids me to speak publicly about what happens during Dokusan, yet I do not want to use the confidential nature of Dokusan as an excuse to conceal alledged sexual pursuits. This has been truly my dilemma.

Because of the situation at Shobo-Ji you have created, I have now decided to break the tradition and speak publicly about this allegation you attribute to a freelance writer.

At Holy Days Sesshin, April, 1982, this woman attended Sesshin for the first time. On the fourth or fifth day of Sesshin, she came to Dokusan in a rather emotional state of mind. She said she had an "experience" which she proceeded to describe. I asked her if she had ever had this kind of "experience" before. "Yes," she replied. I told her that she had "some kind of experience". At this point, she took my hands and placed them palms together against her cheek. After a brief moment like this, she said "I would like to keep it this way forever". I replied, "that's enough".

In a subsequent Dokusan, she came in a calmer state of mind. Again we talked about her "experience". I asked her several traditional test questions about her "experience", like, for example, "what color is Mu?" She had great difficulty answering my questions, but eventually was able to give some "acceptable" responses. In assessing her responses to my questions, I was able to make a clearer judgement as to the depth and clarity of her "experience".

At no time did I tell her that her experience was Kensho.

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On the day of departure of Holy Days Sesshin, she asked to see me in New York City. In fact she made an appointment to meet at Shobo-Ji. I assumed that she wished to discuss her "experience", since it seemed so important to her. The first thing that she said was that after Sesshin, she was feeling depressed, and asked me if this was a common occurrence. My response was that some people feel this way. She also said that she had experienced strong sexual feelings after Sesshin. I said that sometimes people felt that way.

She never for the remainder of our conversation inquired about the "experience" that was so important to her during Sesshin. Instead, it seemed to me that she deliberately led the conversation towards things of a sexual nature.

We spoke for half an hour. I made and served tea. The atmosphere was very friendly. The doors to the meeting room were open. She expressed her gratitude that I had taken time to see her. We stood up, and as she left the meeting room, she hugged me, and I hugged her back. I accompanied her downstairs, where she bowed in Gassho formally. I too bowed in Gassho.

I was later to learn that this conversation, as well as conversations with her in the future, were recorded without my knowledge.


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I would like to answer, sentence by sentence, all your allegations. Many of them are clearly insane. Some of them involve persons who feel that you have used and implicated them maliciously for your own mysterious ends. As to the parts of your letter that show no restraints about private matters, they are meant to be cruel rather than truthful statements about me. You are petty and childish, and it is time you recognize that your outbursts of personal hatred do not help the Sangha. In your letters, you have revealed more of your character than I have known in our friendship.

You may not see that what I have written you is truthful. There is no way I can change your mind. However, you must admit to the Sangha at large that I have not responded to your many letters with any dramatic revelations about your private life. Fortunately, it is none of my business. I would never claim that one person knows the whole truth of any situation. Neither should you.

"This is a time to face unflinchingly the sordid facts as they are."

Sincerely,



Soen Nakagawa Roshi, Dokyū Nakagawa Roshi,  
Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Dr. Ogura, Dr. Donden,  
Jack Clareman, Mr. and Mrs. Ballard

CC: Category A students  
Category B students  
Dharma friends  
Provisional students