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Robert Baker Aitken, Rodaishi Final Interview - Excerpt of Comments on Eido Shimano, Admiration and Encouragement for Survivors.

Transcript of a twelve minute segment.

(This transcription was done by a volunteer survivor.)

An excerpt from the final interview given by Aitken, Rodaishi to Joel Whitney, a freelance reporter for Tricycle Magazine on August 2, 2010. Aitken, Rodaishi passed away three days later - on August 5.

Present, by invitation, were Lynn Davis and Kobutsu Malone. Recorded with permission of Aitken, Rodaishi by Kobutsu Malone and Lynn Davis.



Robert Baker Aitken, Rodaishi at the interview
August 2, 2010 – 10:34 to 10:46 AM HST

RA = Robert Baker Aitken, Rodaishi

JW = Joel Whitney (interviewer, Tricycle Magazine)

KM = Kobutsu Malone (present by invitation)

JW - So that disturbs you, the state of the world disturbs you more than your ah..

RA - I'm just sorry that' all uh I don't know if it disturbs me I just regret it

JW - Are there other things related to your teaching, related to Zen coming to the West that you feel regrets about?

RA - There are so many things that are marvelous about it coming to the West that I can overlook the disadvantages.

JW - And yet from what I understand you've been working on ...erm trying to right the wrongs of one of your ...ah .. you've written some stuff on your blog recently about Shimano, Eido.

RA - Oh, that's it.. That's like asking a question about a hippopotamus when we're really discussing a leaf frog.

JW - I'm just wondering if there's a regret in the fact that this has been going on, and if you've been....

RA - You're damn right it is.

JW - ...to clear something up.

RA - Your'e damn right it is.

JW - Is there anything you would like to say about that?

RA - (forcefully) HE'S A CROOK.

JW - He's a crook.

RA - (pause) We've got to find a way that he can say, "I'm a crook."

JW - Is there anything you would like to say to the people for instance in his circle, in his orbit who have maybe helped foster his behavior or enabled it?

RA - They are a part of the problem.

RA - How'm I doing Kobutsu?

KM - Good, Roshi

JW - I understand you guys have been working together. If I may bring in Kobutsu into the conversation for a moment...

RA - Sure.

JW - It must be very frustrating. This is more of a general question to get your reaction. It must be very frustrating to be aware of this for so long to be so interpersonally touched by it, and to be aware that it is one of the unfortunate by-products perhaps of Zen in the West, or this one instance of Zen in the West...

RA - (forcefully) It's NOT a byproduct of Zen in the West, it's a byproduct of a criminal mind.

JW - Posing in....

RA - Nothing to do with Zen.....nothing to do with Zen

JW - It's an aberration. (pause, then addressed to Kobutsu) Is there anything you would like to say?

KM - This is Roshi's interview.

JW - I thought since he brought you here...

JW- Is there anything else you would like to say about or to the woman who come forward?

RA - I'm awed by their courage. I want to give them all the possible encouragement I can.

JW - Some of the women, I understand, maybe two of them who were here who almost had some sort of nervous collapses after.....

RA - That was 60 years ago

KM - 46

RA - Pardon, 40 something

JW - Were you here then?

RA - I certainly was

JW - And were you aware of anything amiss?

RA - (said forcefully) I certainly was!

JW - It must have been difficult. (pause) I'm just looking through my notes for a moment. (sound of pages flipping)

JW - One of the things that seems to come through in much of your work is light-heartedness, Roshi. Erm When I ..

RA - For example:

JW - What's that?

RA - For example:

JW - Well, you (pause) in this one again, "Encouraging Words" (see reference), you talk about mu breathing mu and er... doing it in a light way. You quote someone saying that crispness and lightness should be the way that a Zen practitioner carries him or herself.

JW - And when I came in I, ya know we, recognized some of your health concerns and we have been talking about this issue that clearly agitates you and you've written about it on your blog, and it seems like it agitates you here.

RA - I really don't mind that I have health issues. These are natural developments of a person at my age. And they don't trouble me at all, Why should they trouble me? It happens naturally. But, Eido Roshi is a crook and his actions are not natural in any way. They're contrived.

JW - And they agitate you, is that er

RA - You...

JW - that a characterization.? (Chuckle) ???

RA - Bloody well right.!

JW - You used the word damn before.... (pause)... and the word regret. In this same book you were talking about transference. And, you seemed very careful to talk about how easy ...this was 1993 when this book was published ...how easy it would be for a teacher to abuse that transference. You talk about.... for instance, for sexual gain, and there's even a footnote in this book back in 1993, and we talked about how it's gone on for 46 years?..

RA - Kobutsu, can you explicate this word transference for me? I'm not used to using it anymore.

KM - Can I?

RA - (repeats) Can you explicate this word transference for me? I'm not used to using this word anymore.

KM - I don't understand really, what you.....

JW - Oh, if you like I can try to find the page, but I think you're, ahh... (turning pages)....just a moment... It's page 98... its from 1986 so it's awhile ago. But I think you were making a comparison between, uh.... transference. I know you are very careful to stipulate that psychotherapy and Zen

RA - Read the, read the passage

JW - Transference is the act of entrusting one's process of growth to another person to some degree.

RA - Ahhhh!

KM - (at same time) Ahhhh! OK

RA - I see.

JW - It could be the investment of a lover and a loved one,

RA - I see

JW - a student and a teacher,

RA - oh yes

JW - a client and a psychologist.

RA - yes

JW - It seems to me that with the structure of Zen in the West with the Roshi really having sort of, erm intimacy is one of the words you used with their students,unlike the American government....

RA - (interrupts) Transference, you see, is not like that. Transference is a very superficial kind of movement...what's happening in the dokusan room is the realizationof the burden.....

RA -

*And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher.*

RA - Wordsworth said this in 1798

JW - I'm sorry, who said that?

RA - Wordsworth. Wordsworth said this in 1798.

RA - That's very different, as I said, it's like an armadillo and a leaf frog. Two of them - two different things.

(Reference Note: "Encouraging Words", Pantheon Books, 1994 by Robert Aitken)