

Mu Shin Frank LoCicero said...

Jushin (apparently) asked:

"Who remembers the ceremony?"

Yes. I was in attendance. At that time I was a member for about a year and a half. I still have a souvenir of that event somewhere in storage. It is similar, if not identical to what Winston posted and includes a photograph showing the ceremonial passing of the staff from Nakagawa Soen to Shimano Eido, if I recall correctly. In any case it was clearly meant to be a formal transmission ceremony.

The only concern that is along the lines of what Jushin refers to is the following. Bear in mind as you read this that as the situation unfolded seemed a legitimate matter of concern and not a crass grab for title or power. It did leave in my mind a lasting concern that Shimano used political means to circumvent the concerns of his teacher.

During the transmission ceremony Soen made it very clear that he wanted the Zen Studies Society sangha to call Shimano "Eido-shi" not "Eido-roshi." Up to that time he was known as Tai-san. Soen Roshi seemed very concerned about the "shi" vs. "roshi" titles and repeated it more than once and gave an explanation as to why. Briefly, Soen explained that Eido was still young and that Roshi meant "old teacher."

My sense at the time, putting it into Western employment terms, was that Soen wanted to make it clear the "promotion" was "provisional."

Shortly after the ceremony, Shimano let it be known, informally, that he wanted the sangha to call him "roshi." He claimed this was because the large donors wanted to give to "roshis." From one perspective it was a reasonable concern that was material organizationally at that time because both Shunryu Suzuki's heir, Richard Baker was already being called roshi and Philip Kapleau was also being called roshi. I personally remember being part of two conversations with Shimano present with other sangha members addressing this issue one being at Shobo-ji and one at Kongo-ji. I also have some recollection of at least one conversation about this with board members present backing Eido up. Slowly, even reluctantly with some members, most of the sangha began calling him Eido-roshi at least to his face in public.

Hope this remembrance helps in some way.

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