

THE ZEN STUDIES SOCIETY

Eido T. Shimano Roshi, Abbot

FALL-WINTER 1983/84

WILLIAM H. JOHNSTONE

1899-1983



William H. Johnstone, a former member of The Zen Studies Society and Chairman of the Building Committee of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, passed away on August 22nd. Without Bill, Dai Bosatsu Zendo would not be the way it is now. At the request of his wife, Millie Johnstone, his ashes were buried in Sangha Meadow by Beecher Lake.

On Sunday, September 18, with the combined spirit of the Urasenke Tea School and the New York Zendo Sangha, a Tea Ceremony and Memorial Service were offered to Bill. Following are the words that were spoken in his honor on that day.

A FAREWELL TO BILL

by Eido Roshi

Born in Michigan in 1899 by Karmic coincidence. Formed a temporary body for 84 years. During that time you were fully alive and accomplished so much. The readiness of time came on August 22nd, and your temporary body was transformed.

Offering a bowl of Ceremonial Tea, incense, and sutra chanting, we, your friends, are aware that in truth you haven't gone at all.

As a Zen Phrase says,

The sun rises, but never stands still
The moon sets, but never leaves the universe
In the beauty of the chrysanthemums, we see
that you are with us
And in the fragrance of the incense, we sense
your presence.

Master Tosotsu asked his students, "When the four elements separate, where will you go?"

Where will "you" go?

Even prior to Heaven and Earth,
the great Way has opened for you.
There are no obstacles, no impediments.
In memory and in reality,
You are always with us.

Now, may I give you a traditional Zen verse:

On the coral pillow, two streams of tears;
One longing for you,
One cannot accept your body being gone.

KATSU!

A LETTER FROM A TEA MASTER

by Soshitsu Sen XV

To my friend of many years and devoted follower of Tea, Bill Johnstone. I wish to thank you again, as I have so often in the past, for all of your continued efforts to help establish Chanoyu in New York City.

Together with Millie, your tireless companion, you gave your valuable time and energy in this cause. Without your help, Urasenke would not exist in New York. Today the world has a fine place to experience the spirit of Tea, and the people who come through its doors to share their experiences pay homage to you for your contribution toward bringing it into existence.

In your devotion to share with others, you also helped in the creation of a center for Zen Study and practice. You have fully understood that Tea and Zen have but one flavor.

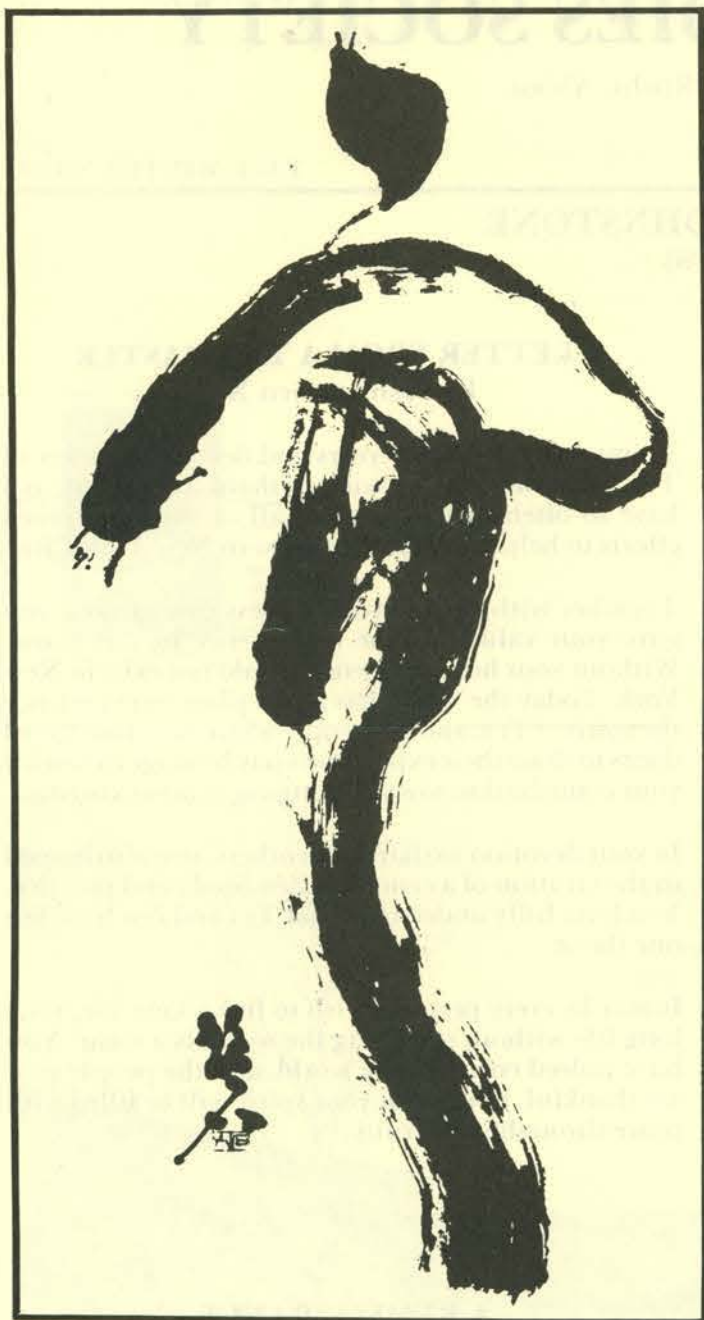
It may be every person's wish to live a long life, yet a long life without enriching the world is a waste. You have indeed enriched the world, and the people in it are thankful. I pray that your spirit will be filled with peace throughout eternity.

A REMEMBRANCE

by Korin Sylvan Busch

The dedication of The New York Zendo took place fifteen years ago on September 15, 1968. The changes in the building were not quite complete, and this room did not look the way it does today. For the occasion, a temporary wooden floor, a speaker's platform, and an altar were constructed. One of the speakers on that day was Bill Johnstone, and it marked the beginning of years of his indispensable help and advice to The Zen Studies Society. He became a member of the Board of Trustees and Chairman of the Building Committee created for the purpose of erecting a monastery and training center on our property in the Catskill Mountains. We were most fortunate that Bill was available to direct the project. He was so perfect for the job that it seemed in thinking of it later like a Karmic coincidence for Bill and the project to have happened at the same time. His experience and knowledge of finance, law, architecture, and building construction were irreplaceable talents that proved to be so necessary every step of the way. And all of us who have beheld the breathtaking scene when first coming upon Dai Bosatsu Zendo realize what a great achievement it has been.

Through all the contact and conversation that went on during those days, I had the opportunity to realize something more important about Bill's character - his integrity, his respect for the quality of life and concern for human values, and his humility. For anyone who shared his company for a while, there was so much to be learned. I know, it happened to me.



SUNYATA

Calligraphy by Dr. Shinichi Hisamatsu

Sunyata: "Voidness," "Emptiness," "As-it-is-ness." In the English language, "void" and "empty" have negative or even nihilistic implications, and "as-it-is-ness" may sound fatalistic. The original term "Sunyata" has no negative, nihilistic, or fatalistic implications, but, rather, it positively points to each fact as fact. All composite things appear according to the combination of various conditions, and these conditions change moment after moment. Consequently, appearances change. Thus, each composite thing has no specific entity of its own — hence, "voidness" or "emptiness." Yet, at each moment, all things are just as they are and cannot be otherwise — hence "as-it-is-ness." The word itself is correctly pronounced Shun-ya-ta. (Ku,J) (Eido Roshi)

A LETTER TO A FRIEND IN SORROW

I am sorry to learn of the death of your beloved daughter. I cannot find any suitable words to express my sympathy toward you and your family. I wanted to tell you how Zen Buddhists view fortune and misfortune, fairness and unfairness when you came to see me the other day. So I thought I should write a letter to you.

Because of your background, you may believe that this is the only life, there is no previous life and no future one. Also, I assume that you were taught that if you behave properly, ethically and morally, you will merit accordingly in this lifetime.

You may see many people around whose behavior is abominable, nonetheless, they enjoy their happy lives. On the other hand, you may see many people around who are faithful, honest, diligent, humble, and yet have financial problems, go to the doctor quite often, and suffer misfortune. When we see this we cannot help but to feel that it is not fair, and we may start to doubt what we are told, that good deeds bring good merit in this lifetime.

According to Zen Buddhist's way of looking at life, there is nothing which is unfair. We look at this present life as one of many lives. In other words, there were previous lives, there will be future lives and, as a matter of fact, what we believe to be real life — present life, is the outcome of the past lives. Perhaps it would be helpful if I give you the following metaphor:

Yesterday and the day before yesterday and so on are equivalent to previous lives. Today is present life, tomorrow and the day after tomorrow are equivalent to future lives. Suppose you drank a lot last night and got a hangover and headache today. Though today you didn't drink a drop of alcohol, you know the reason why you suffer. You have conscious memory of what you did yesterday, therefore, you don't consider it an unfair headache. You know that you deserve it, and you can accept it. But in the case of past lives, we don't have conscious memory of what we did, and where we lived in the past lives, and therefore deficiency of memory brings suspicion and complaint.

Zen Buddhist's believe we create Karma through our body, mind, and speech, at every single moment. Even if our conscious memory forgets what we did, what we thought, or what we spoke, the karmic energy will never disappear. This is equivalent to the theory of modern Physics, the "conservation of energy." So what we are now, our appearance, our condition of health, our family, our everything is created by our past deeds. Viewed in this way we can see the justice in life. Consequently, our future, whether in this life or future lives, will be determined by our present or past deeds (karma).

As a theory it is relatively easy to understand, but when it comes to our own personal suffering, it is not so easy to accept. But capability of acceptance is also a part of our karma. The past is gone. The only way to have impact on our future is by our present good deeds. By doing so, our present life will become contented and the foundation of an improved future is laid. But in reality even if someone understands this theory and wants to be contented and wants to lay a foundation for a happy future and is eager to erase past karma, he cannot live honestly, faithfully, ethically, and morally. Why is this so? Zen Buddhism says that too is his karma. Then is he hopeless or is there any way for him to be free from this? The answer is yes. What is it then? This is the point for which Zen Buddhism prepares three practices and asks patience. The three practices are: 1) zazen 2) prostrations 3) chanting (purification). This is prayer. What is the quintessence of prayer?

Prayer requires purification with a humble spirit. Prayer also requires an attitude of surrender, with sincere willingness to dedicate oneself for the realization of our True Nature. In prayer we ask for encouragement and protection for our practice, as well as for the peace and happiness of all beings. All of these are incorporated in zazen practice in Zen tradition. However, if you are unfamiliar with sitting on a cushion in crosslegged posture, you can still do prayer on the couch or some other place. All in all, prayer with patience is the only way to make us happy in present and future days and lives.

I hope I made myself clear on what Zen Buddhists say about "unfairness". I also hope the grief that you and your family have now will be healed soon. Please keep well. I hope I can see you again in the near future.

Sincerely,
Eido Shimano, Roshi

NEW YORK ZENDO NEWS



THE 1984 ZEN STUDIES SOCIETY CALENDAR KOANS OF THE ZEN MASTERS

The theme of The Zen Studies Society 1984 calendar is Koans of the Zen Masters. Koans are a highly distinctive element in the literature of Zen Buddhism. There is no obvious parallel to them in the literatures of other religions.

Koan study is a dynamic method of concentration; through intense unification with a koan, the student polishes his understanding, eventually seeing into his True Nature by breaking through all preconceptions.

The 1984 calendar will feature Sumi Paintings by Father Nyokyu Maxima based on koans from the Zen classic, *The Gateless Gate*. Each painting is accompanied by its relative koan. All translations are by Eido Shimano Roshi.

You may order calendars by filling out the coupon attached to this newsletter and sending it with your check to the New York Zendo.

THE 1983 ZEN ARTS SALE

The New York Zendo's annual Zen Arts Sale will take place on December 10th and 11th from noon to 6 p.m.

There will be a very special exhibition of Father Maxima's Sumi Paintings inspired by koans from the Zen classic, *The Gateless Gate*; also on exhibition will be priceless calligraphies from The Zen Studies Society's collection.

Calligraphies by Eido Roshi and other noted calligraphies, pottery, rare incense, temple objects, sitting cushions, silk-screens, maple syrup from the mountain monastery, and many other items will be on sale.

The admission is free, so please come and enjoy this offering. It will occur as usual at the New York Zendo at 223 East 67th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues.

DAI BOSATSU ZENDO NEWS

THE COMPUTER

This past July, a fund raising project was begun to purchase a computer/word processor for the Zen Studies Society. We had hoped that by the New Year we would have the funds to buy it, but the response to the project was so enthusiastic that by early September it was completed, and a very fine system is now in operation at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

The idea to computerize was born during a conversation on cost-cutting at New York Zendo; the annual expense of our mailing service was high, and the suggestion was made that with a word processor and printer, all the mailing list responsibility could be assumed by the students of the Society and that over a period of just a few years the system would pay for itself.

At this time all the membership and mailing list data is in the computer memory and mailing of this and future newsletters will be handled by students at Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

If you have changed your address or telephone number or anticipate doing so, please send the new information to Dai Bosatsu.

Genro Lee Milton, Issai Stephen Smith, and Shonen Hector Fuenmayor were ordained as novice monks at the end of the July 4th Sesshin. The ordination was the first step toward becoming Rinzai Zen monks.

Denko John Mortensen and Sango Barbara Bernstein were married in a wedding ceremony conducted by Eido Roshi. The couple returned to Denko's homeland, Denmark.

This past summer was a very active one at Dai Bosatsu. Activities included a Zen Training Seminar, a workshop with Allen Ginsberg, and a very successful Guest House season.

The largest activity was a gathering of over one hundred people for the traditional O-Bon ceremony. The perfect summer weather and chanting of the participants created a magnificent setting for the soft, gentle glow of lanterns floating on Beecher Lake. Once again, a wonderful meal was prepared by Aiho of traditional Japanese cuisine.

Guided by Eido Roshi, Kessei students this Fall are studying Dogen Zenji's "Fukanzazengi," a guideline of the principles and attitudes essential for zazen practice. There has been work in the garden, harvesting and preparation of food for Winter. Fire wood is being split, and the landscape projects are continuing. Preparations are already underway for Spring Kessei.

竹影掃階塵不動
月穿潭底水無痕

The bamboos' shadows
Sweep the stairs
— The dust does not move

The moonlight pierces
To the pool's bottom
— The water is unmarked.

Everything you do forgetting
your self is entirely spotless,
impeccable. Light and darkness
paired bespeak the marvelous
effect of non-doing.

— Zenrin Kushu:
Zen Grove Handbook,
tr. by Zenrin Bob Lewis

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**KOANS OF THE ZEN MASTERS
1984 CALENDAR**

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I have enclosed \$10.00 plus \$2.50 handling and
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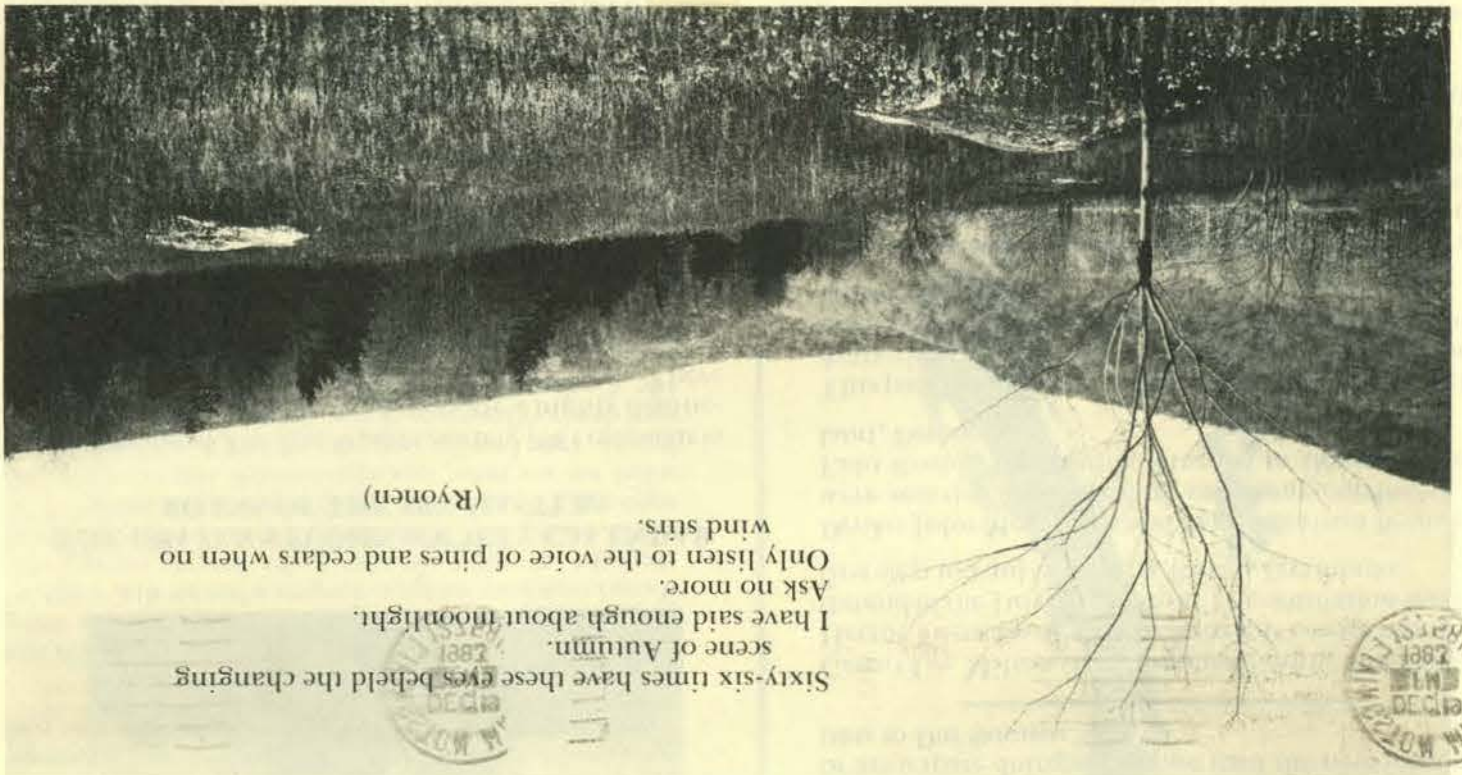
Quantity: _____ 8 oz. \$4.00 postage
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Sixty-six times have these eyes beheld the changing
scene of Autumn.
I have said enough about moonlight.
Ask no more.
Only listen to the voice of pines and cedars when no
wind stirs.
(Ryomen)



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