

March 11, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How strange it is to be writing to you, instead of just talking face-to-face. Oh well—this is something!

I've set a place for myself to sit, and put your smiling pictures there, too. *And* yesterday I met Samu Su Nim. He was very kind and generous with his time. We talked for about an hour and he told me some jokes. I was delighted—I was expecting a very stern guy from Linc's description. He wanted me to tell him all about our Yong Maeng Jong Jin and the Los Angeles center. He ask many times, with great affection I think, for Linc.

I sat at his house last night. He's not a no-hindrance monk, of course; e.g, he told me that there is no place for sloppy dishwasher people who don't place their mats correctly (like me). I don't mind though. It feels really good to be sitting with other people.

I don't think I can go to Korea with you in October. I wish I could, but I'd have to quit my job to go with you right now and I don't want to.

I enjoy reading the newsletters immensely, and I chant with the tapes in the mornings. In both ways, I feel that you're not so far away.

I'm sending a little bit of money to help out with the Los Angeles center. Love to Linc and many good wishes for the L.A. center.

Love and a big hug,

Sherry

March 30, 1976

Dear Jin Mi, Sherry,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I am pleased to hear from you. It is good that you visited with the Korean monk Samu Su Nim. He understands both Korean and Japanese Buddhism. Perhaps Samu Su Nim is a good teacher for you, but it is most important to believe in yourself. Good and bad are all you true teachers. But, if you check good and bad, they will become your demons. Not only good and bad, but Buddha, God, Zen masters, and teachers will all become demons if you check them. So, if you check your mind and feelings, you will have problems. Only go straight ahead; don't check anything.

Don't know. Don't know is not don't know. Don't know is before thinking. Before thinking is your substance and the universal substance; its name is primary point. So, don't know is the absolute, the correct way, and true life.

If you lose don't know mind, you lose your true way, and you will soon get suffering. Always keep don't-know mind; go straight ahead.

You said this monk told you there is no place for sloppy dishwasher people like you. What is correct and incorrect action? Before, I told you action is not good or bad. Why do you do something? How do you keep a just-now mind? Action is important, but most important is how do you keep a just-now mind?

Going to Korea, not going to Korea, keeping a job, not keeping a job: everything is O.K. I ask you, what is your original job? If you find it, you will get freedom from life and death.

Before, I gave you homework. Someone comes to the Zen Center, blows smoke and drops ashes on the Buddha. What can you do? He is is very attached to emptiness. You are a doctor, so you must fix his mind and correct his action.

I hope you always keep don't know mind, soon get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Thank you for your check; I am sending it to the Tal Mah Sah Zen Center. I am now staying at the Providence Zen Center. I will go to Los Angeles on May 1.

Buck Creek, Big Sur
Full Moon Close
March, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I hope you are in good health. Joan gave me the photos you sent for me of the ceremony when you named me Jin Uwal. Thank you.

I am going along in deep appreciation of all your gifts to me. The robe you put on me I wear for sitting, and I am learning about it. Thank you, Soen Sa Nim, for making me your student. I feel deeply grateful that my karma has brought you into my life. I am old—your guidance is giving me much peace and sometimes glimpses—very quick. Sitting is becoming deeper—beginning with Prajna Paramita Sutra—ending with the Vows.

I would like to try saying what comes to me about emptiness: Everything, also me, just simply *is*. When no meanings are attached then all is pure, free, empty, “just like this,” as you say. Sky is blue,—Sky is—Sky—is—empty—Katz! Of course, “pure—free—empty” are meanings. This is wordy.—) Standing on a threshold, and sometimes the door opens just a crack. I am looking forward to be in your presence, to study again under you and your “helping hands” like Jonnie, Linc, and all others. Please give them my love and wish that they are all strong and well again. When there is something you would like me to do, I am here for you whenever possible.

Soen Sa Nim, thank you!

Jin Uwal

Jo Evans

P.S. Joan gave me this paper from Nepal. I think Leo—Lyon—is your sun sign. It is also Joan’s. This is Garuda. On other page snow-lions.

Have “The Teachings of Zen Master Seung Sahn” been published?

Lyon Phelps of “The Phelps House” wants me to tell Soen Sa Nim that his parents are very sorry that they cannot let us use their home. Breakdown in the plumbing between septic tank and bathrooms. (just like ten years ago).

Joan tells me that you will have Yong Maeng Jon Jin for us in Sambosa Temple in May. Being your student makes me a member of your Zen Center. I would like to learn about all my membership dues. Will someone tell me please?

I have received the newsletter.

Thank you!

April 2, 1976

Dear Jin Uwal, Jo,

How are you? Thank you for your letter on the beautiful stationary. I like it very much. In Korea the word for “snow lion” is “Hae Tae.” Hae Tae is “fire guard,” so if you keep these fire guards, your house will not catch on fire, so these guards bring people happiness. So you gave me happiness; thank you very much.

I will tell you one story. In China, there was a famous Zen Master, Poep-an. Someone asked him, “What is Buddha?” He answered, “Fire god comes and wants fire.” This is a famous story. Jin Uwal, fire god comes and wants fire; what does this mean?

You like the photographs, you like the robe I gave to you, you like being my student, you like all my things. I also like you very much. I appreciate your help to me when I was staying in Big Sur. Thank you for showing me many good places, for taking me to the hospital, for taking me to the airport, and for showing me your beautiful house. Your body is a little old, but your mind and your practice are very strong and young. I like you very much.

You said, “When no meanings are attached, then all is pure, free, empty, just like this. Sky is blue—Sky is—Sky—is—empty—Katz!” That is wonderful, but I ask you; form is emptiness, emptiness is form, next part, no form, no emptiness; next, form is form, emptiness is emptiness. These three parts, are they the same or different? If you understand the true meaning of this, then you will understand true emptiness and Katz! and the sky is blue.

You say if there is something you can do, please tell you. Thank you very much. You can help by helping Joan find a good place, making it a good Zen center, and sitting together.

I am sending you the Diamond Sutra Pagoda picture and a photograph taken after the Five Precepts Ceremony.

I hope you will always keep a clear mind, soon get Enlightenment, and follow the great Bodhisattva Way.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. You and Joan together decide what the Big Sur Zen Center membership dues should be. If you pay money, you should pay to the Big Sur Zen Center.

Mu Bul's Speech at the Ceremony Celebrating Buddha's Birthday

April 3, 1976

(He raised the stick over his head and hit the table with it; he repeated this three times.)

An eminent teacher once said, "Before Buddha was born and came to the Kapila Empire, he had already saved all people."

When Buddha was born, he took seven steps, looked in the four directions, pointed with one hand to the sky and with the other to the ground, and said, "In the sky above and the sky below, only I am holy."

Somebody once mentioned these words of the baby Buddha to Zen Master Un-mun and asked what they meant. Un-mun said, "as soon as Buddha said this, I hit him and killed him and fed his body to a hungry dog. The whole world was at peace."

One of these three sentences is a freedom sentence. If you find this sentence, you will be free from life and death. If you cannot find it, you cannot escape from samsara.

But, if you say you have found it I will hit you, and if you say you cannot find it I will hit you. Why?

Katz!

April 8, 1976 is Buddha's 2520th birthday.

Thank you all for coming to this ceremony. What is Buddha's birthday? First, what is Buddha?

Someone once asked Dong-San Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Dong-San said, "Three pounds of flax."

Someone once asked Un-Mun Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Un-mun said "Dry shit on a stick."

Someone once asked Dok-San Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Dok-San hit him.

Someone once asked Lin-Chi Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Lin-Chi shouted KATZ!

Someone once Ku-Ji Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Ku-Ji raised his finger.

Someone once asked Mang-Gong Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Mang-Gong made a circle with his thumb and forefinger.

Some one once asked Jo-Ju Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Jo-Ju said "Go drink tea."

Someone once asked Gyong-Ho Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Gyong-Ho asked him, "Did you wash your bowl?"

Someone once asked Ma-Jo Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" On one occasion Ma-Jo said, "Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind," and on another occasion, "No mind, no Buddha."

Someone once asked Hae-Jo Zen Master, "What is Buddha?" Hae-Jo asked, "Did you eat before you came here?"

Which one of these answers is correct? If you asked me, "What is Buddha?" I would answer this way: (He raised the stick over his head and hit the table with it once.) But, is this correct? Is *this* Buddha?

Next, what is birthday?

An eminent teacher once said, "Life is like a floating cloud which appears on the horizon. Death is like the floating cloud disappearing over the horizon. The floating cloud itself originally does not exist. Life and death, coming and going, are also like that."

Once there was a young boy who went to a progressive elementary school. At school one day he learned all about conception, pregnancy, and birth. In his textbook there was a series of drawings and x-ray photos of the stages of the growth of a fertilized egg into a mature fetus. The boy found this fascinating, but he had a question: "When exactly did I become a human?" He looked at the pictures in his book. The first picture was obviously not a human; the last picture was clearly a human ready to be born. The boy wanted to know at exactly what point the fetus became a human? He asked his father "In which one of these stages did I become a human?" His father pointed to one picture and said, "This one. In this picture you can see a clear distinction between the head and torso. When the fetus gets this far, it's human." The next day at school the boy asked his teacher the same question (he just wanted to make sure). But his teacher pointed to a *different* picture! His teacher said, "This one. In this picture you can see that the fetus had developed arms and legs and the beginnings of facial features. At this point it becomes human." The boy was confused. Which one was correct?

In the 1950's an American artist named Jasper Johns had a show in New York City. But the pieces he exhibited were not what people expected to see at an art exhibit. One man was outraged and said, "This isn't art!" Jasper Johns said, "If I say it's art, it's art." So, if the boy's father says, "In this picture you become human," then this is correct; if the boy's teacher points to a different picture and says, "In *this* picture you become human," then *this* is correct. Why?

Birth is only a word. Life is only a word. When you were born you did not stand up and announce, "I have just been born; now I am a human." Someone said, "A baby has been born." Birth is only a word. People make words. If people did not make the word "birth" there would be no birth. If people did not make any words, then what? The sixth patriarch said, "Originally there is nothing at all." But many people don't understand this. They are attached to words, so they have life and death and suffering. And they have many questions.

What is life? What is art? And they get very serious and sometimes upset about these. So if you understand that originally there is nothing, then life is funny.

The Diamond Sutra says, "One cannot attain past mind, present mind, or future mind." But people say, "Before I met you, I was nothing. Now that you're here, I'm always happy. If you ever leave me, I'll be sad." This is funny. What is past? What is present? What is future? What is happiness? What is sadness?

The Heart Sutra says, "no attainment with nothing to attain." But many Zen students want Enlightenment. Long ago, in China, a great Zen master told his students, "You must always keep the great question, 'What am I?' If you practice this very hard, then this question will grow and grow until, finally, kghhh... you will get Enlightenment." So his students practiced very hard, but sometimes they wondered, "When kghh... ? I've been practicing *very* hard. Why no kghh... ?" Or, they thought, "I feel so good. I mean my mind is so, you know, clear, could this be... No, no way. But, maybe, I mean, could this be... ENLIGHTENMENT? But, if it is, why didn't I hear the kghh... ?" This is funny.

So this ceremony is also funny.

What is Buddha? What is birthday? What are past, present, and future? What are happiness and sadness? What is Enlightenment? What is kghh... ? They are all words. They are all made by people's thinking. If you make Buddha, there is Buddha. If you make birthday, there is birthday. If you make past, present, and future, and happiness and sadness, there are all of these. If you make kghh... , there is kghhh... Also if you make funny, there is funny.

"Originally there is nothing," but the stone cow holds her belly and laughs.

How can we celebrate Buddha's birthday? What is correct Buddha's birthday celebration?

Don't make anything. Don't check anything. Not making anything means throwing away your situation, condition, and opinion. If you do this your mind is like a clear mirror. Only reflection, only reflected action. When red comes, the mirror is red; when white comes, the mirror is white. When you see happy people, you are happy; when you see sad people, you are sad. This is the great bodhisattva way. Buddha's birthday comes and we have a ceremony. This is Bodhisattva action. This is "nothing at all." Put it all down.

So, now you all understand Buddha's birthday. So I will ask you a question. Gautama Shakyamuni died long ago, so he could not be here tonight. Instead we have this statue which we call Buddha. So I ask you: the historical Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni, and this Buddha on the altar, are they the same or different? If you understand this, then you can correctly celebrate Buddha's birthday. But, if you say you understand this, I will hit you. And if you say you don't understand this, I will hit you. Why?

KATZ!

In front of the Buddha, the candles are burning.

March 23, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Hello to you and all of the East Coast family. Hope you are well. All is well here at Tal Mah Sah. Almost every day people come to sit and chant with us. Two Korean ladies come every night for chanting and sitting.

The Korean people seem to be having problems nowadays; not very many people come on Sunday for the ceremonies. Hope they can solve their difficulties. We are taking good care of the house here; all of the plumbing leaks so I have plenty to do.

I have a job painting a house. I will be able to work outside in the sun and get lots of exercise. I will try to be finished by the time you come in May.

Tomorrow I must go up to Carmel to testify in court; they are having a trial for the man who hit us in the car accident. Someone was killed so they want him to go to jail. They are flying me up and back and I must go—I have no choice. I will go visit the “doctor” in the hospital. He is still in the hospital but getting better. He has had many problems, but he will be well soon, I think. I will say hello for you and let you know how he and his family are doing.

Also, I will call Joan and maybe visit with her while I am up there. Maybe I can encourage her to practice by visiting her.

Satam Su Nim is not staying here anymore—he is not a together-action monk; he is an acupuncture monk. He comes to visit me once in a while, and we are working again on translating the acupuncture book. I am studying oriental medicine on my own; don't think I'll get much help from others. I will take a course at U.C.L.A. on how to find medicinal plants that grow in California.

Thank you for sending the calligraphy, chanting books, newsletters, and kong-ans. Thank you for the Tal Mah Sah Zen Center. It is very interesting living with Korean people; American and Korean any time have opposite opinions so it is wonderful teaching.

Please give my best wishes to all the people in New York and to those who are taking the Five Precepts. I hope they soon get Enlightenment and finish the Great Work (and also learn how to clean their bowls). The West Coast family sends a hello to the East Coast family.

Linc

P.S. Enclosed you'll find a little English lesson, if you are interested. Lots of new words! Also, please send me Samu Su Nim's address in Toronto when you get a chance. Thank you.

April 6, 1976

Dear Dae Haeng, Linc

How are you and Carl and Susan and Steve? Thank you for your letter. I heard that your Tal Mah Sah family are very well and are doing fine. The Korean people are having problems—that's O.K. The East Coast family says hello to the West Coast family.

Your getting a job painting a house is very good. Did you go to Carmel? What happened in court? How is Marcy? Did you visit Joan? How is she and the Big Sur Zen Center?

Satam's karma is that together action always is very difficult for him. That's O.K. Maybe in the future he will find the great Bodhisattva Way.

Going to school to learn oriental medicine is a good idea—that is wonderful.

You say at Tal Mah Sah it is very interesting to live with Korean people; this is true. Korean people and American people always have opposite thinking, but together living, Korean people will understand American karma, and American people will understand Korean karma, so opposite thinking will close, close, close, until finally they will become one mind. This means in our original mind there is no Korean, no American; only if you are living in an American area, make American karma and have American opinions. Only this. If you make all opinions disappear, it's the same.

We had a Five Precepts ceremony in New York on the evening of March 27; only three people took the Five Precepts. Also, we had another big ceremony at the Providence Zen Center on April 3 in Providence. Eleven people became Dharma Teachers, five people took the Five Precepts, and one person became a monk. We began at two o'clock in the afternoon with the Precepts ceremony. Then in the evening we had a ceremony celebrating Buddha's birthday. A Dharma teacher from each of the East Coast Zen centers gave a speech. After, Mu Bul Su Nim gave a big Dharma speech. I will send you tapes of the Dharma speeches so the West Coast family can hear them.

You asked for Samu Su Nim's address:

Samu Kim Su Nim
378 Markham Street, Apt. B1
Toronto M6G 2K9 Canada

Also I am sending you Sherry's check and her letter. She likes you very much.

I hope you will always do great action, soon get Enlightenment, finish the Great Work, and become a great Bodhisattva. Dae Haeng keo sa.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Please write to Sherry and say thank you for the check.

April 1, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim

Thank you so much for your letter. I know how busy you are, and I really appreciate your writing to me.

It is so good to read what you say, even though I know it—keep don't know mind. With my head, I forget. When I read this in your letter, I remember. Feel sad—see that I have forgotten this.

I am sitting every day—almost, sometimes three times, sometimes once. This feels good for me. My body feels strange though, very achy! So I'm doing more exercise—especially T'ai Chi, yang style.

You say don't check mind. This is very good for right now. I see I check my mind all the time: don't be negative, don't think angry thoughts. I think don't check mind means just watch. Watch opinions. Watch and don't try to stop. Is this right?

Thank you so much for the pictures. I liked the one of me at Esalen with my friends and Richard when we were receiving Precepts. I especially *loved* the picture of you smiling and teaching on New Year's, with Linc in the foreground grinning. **HAPPY WONDERFUL** picture!

Are Jonny and Myla and Willow well? Did they move to California?

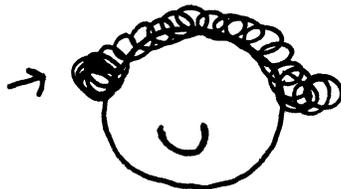
Stan Grof and Christina will be here tomorrow night. I go to hear Stan speak—but really to give him a hug. True rain.

It is good to write to you. I am very grateful for your kindness to me.

Love and a big hug,

Jin Mi

grass of ignorance →



April 13, 1976

Dear Jin Mi, Sherry,

How are you lately? Thank you for your wonderful letter. You have beautiful writing,

Every day everybody has desire, anger, and ignorance. Humans have five desires: first, desire for material wealth; next, desire for sex; then, desire for fame; desire for food; desire for sleep. People go their jobs and want to earn more and more money. Government people want to become more and more famous. Some people are only thinking of sex. Everybody is a little bit crazy. A little bit crazy means attached to something. Attached to something means to lose the true way. To lose the true way means not clear mind. I understand your mind, so I gave you already the name Jin Mi. Jin Mi means true purity. What is purity? A sutra said one must live in the world and keep a mind that is clear like space. Then his action is like the lotus, which grows only in dirty water, but the dirty water cannot taint the lotus. That is your mind; that is your name.

You are sitting and you are doing T'ai Chi—this is very wonderful. You say you are trying mantra—mantra is wonderful. This mantra is better than the Buddha, better than me, better than God. If you try mantra all the time, then you will get freedom from life and death. Don't worry about anything. Mantra is don't know mind; don't know mind is mantra mind, so don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. Watching is also checking. Only go straight—mantra, O.K.?

I will send you some pictures which are of the Precepts Ceremony and Buddha's Birthday Ceremony and of the Big Sur Zen Center.

Jonny and Myla and Willow are fine. They are still living in Cambridge,

I am glad you are seeing Stan Grof. He had a workshop at the New England Center, and Suzie went to hear him and met Christina.

I hope you will always go straight—don't know, soon get Enlightenment, finish the Great Work, and save all people.

Here is a poem for you:

Someone sent me an ignorance grass drawing.
Someone cut ignorance, became a monk.
Originally that ignorance comes from where?
Cut, not cut—which one is the correct way?
If you check your head, you have ignorance;
If you don't check your head, there is no ignorance.
Put it all down! Put it all down!
If you are thirsty, then go drink tea.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

March 28, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you so much for your letter. It has given me much joy. It is remarkable how we are “attached” to words! I’ve had a beautiful intuition tonight, and at least my subjective understanding of Zen and Christian love and the need to free ourselves from “desire” is clear. I can’t put it into words, but I like them, and I want to write a few to you. They are pleasing.

Many people, as I myself often do, view selflessness, nirvana, and Zen’s ridicule of thought as a kind of nihilism. I see that they are not. All is One. Zen is Christian love is no desire is being reborn, and on and on. Strangely! Eternity is qualitative and holds time within itself. As we live in the present moment freely without imposing ourselves upon it, as we exist in the beauty of life’s resources together without asking for this and that, without manipulating circumstance to serve the interest of our various “bundles of perceptions” called by various names, Steve and Seung Shan, etc., we exist in love, in Zen. A Christian calls this being “reborn” or “taking Christ into your heart.” At least once you have called it “don’t-know mind.” It is all these and none of them.

Everything is indeed truth! And yet I know that I do not have truth... I guess, too, it’s not something anyone ever “has”; it has itself. And I will continue to, as you said, “Put it all down. Only go straight—don’t know. Then you will get everything.” I am doing that right now with you.

To a number of my friends I shall talk of this perhaps as loving or as the Tao or as Buber’s I-Thou relationship. Or perhaps I won’t speak so much. I don’t know what “enlightenment” is. I feel very good. I don’t fear death. I love very much, and I am not afraid of losing myself. I will maybe tomorrow, I don’t know, but I am at peace, I think.

Anyway, after Princeton I think I shall go to the Naropa Institute to learn Buddhist meditation—not ostensibly as a “quest” that means life or death to me, though I guess it does, but rather, because that’s what this focal point of life called J. Steve Muse wants to do at this point.

It seems odd, but meditation is not just sitting with your hands folded and “not thinking”, but it is also a kind of “attached thinking.” Zen mind is the same mind I had when I wrote you that letter with six Aristotelian questions. I am no smarter and no dumber than before, nor more enlightened, but somehow I understand your remarks, or perhaps, I don’t understand, but I do.

Too many words. I wanted to write to you, just to let you know something is different. I feel sort of close to you for some reason. Maybe one day we will meet on this Earth; if not, this thing that I am thanks you and life.

“the morning glory—
another thing
that will never be my friend!”
—Basho

Steven

April 13, 1976

Dear Steven,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. You say “we are attached to words.” Those are very wonderful words. Not being attached to words is possible. If you are truly attached to words, then you could not say “we are attached to words.” All words come from where? You must understand this. Christ did not teach with words, Buddha did not teach with words. If you follow words, you don’t understand Christ’s mind: you don’t understand Buddha’s mind. What is before words? You must find it.

You say “all is one.” That’s correct. An eminent teacher said, “Ten thousand Dharmas return to one.” Your speech is the same. But, this one comes from where? I ask you. If you find it, you will get freedom from life and death.

You say you already are trying “only go straight—don’t know,” but you say also “I feel very good. I don’t fear death. I love very much and I am not afraid of losing myself.” If you keep don’t know, don’t check anything. If you check something, you have a problem; already you have lost the true way.

You want to learn Buddhist meditation; that is wonderful, but only studying Buddhism cannot help you. Only keep don’t know mind; this is better than the Sutras, better than Buddha’s teachings, better than me, better than all the Zen master’s teachings. You must understand the correct meaning of this.

I hope you will always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon get Enlightenment, and save all people.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am sending you a copy of Three Letters to a Beginner.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Things are O.K. Here. We are all getting along well with the Korean people. Linc is staying with me in my room since Un Dam Su Nim moved in. We can't do too much right now because Korean people come and go all the time during sitting, chanting etc. That's O.K., but new people to Zen wouldn't understand this form, so none of us are too wild to invite newcomers. We will wait until you return.

I am not so happy here in Los Angeles; I like fresh air and green trees. I realize Los Angeles, trees, and air are all in my mind, but my mind would like to move to San Diego.

When I first started to sit Zen about eight years ago, I had a good beginner's mind: just sit, just walk, birds singing at sunrise, crickets chirping at sunset. Since then I have read too many Zen books, seen too many Zen masters, etc. For a long time I was very caught in Zen form: I wanted robes, I wanted titles; I was full of shit. I forgot all about Enlightenment, about finding the true way.

Ever since I was a little boy, I wanted to know: what is the meaning of our life and our death? Language root is no problem, but I don't want words—I want understanding. I am afraid of hard training, afraid that I will only fail and become more disillusioned. At the same time, I know that there are only a very few people who have attained the Way. How can I, who is one of the most attached to words and thoughts, ever make it? Many people are suffering, and I will never be able to help them; this makes me sad.

I know that I should put it all down, but if I could, I wouldn't have to write this letter. What can I do to come to true understanding in this life? Layman form is no good; monk form is no good; no form is O.K. Part of my problem is I don't know what vocation to follow; business I have no heart for. I will just try and keep don't know mind and move ahead.

We all miss you.

Love,
Your student

Stephen

April 15, 1976

Dear Stephen,

How are you and all the Tal Mah Sah family? Thank you for your letter. Your letter is correct; now Tal Mah Sah is very difficult, with Korean people coming and going during

sitting. But, they already called me, and when I come to California, they will soon decide which house they will move to. After they move, there will be no problem.

You say you don't like Los Angeles. That's correct; Los Angeles air is not clear, so you like San Diego. But most important is that your mind is not clear. If your mind is clear, then it doesn't matter whether you are in Los Angeles or San Diego. If your mind is not clear and you go to San Diego, then you will also have a problem.

You said, "When I first started to sit Zen about eight years ago I had a good beginners mind"; why did you lose your beginner's mind? Beginner's mind is Zen mind; in Zen mind there is no beginning and no end, so you are already finished. After, you wanted to understand more and more. This is desire, so you lost your beginner's mind. That's no good. You read many books, visited many Zen masters, and so there was more and more dust in your mind, so your mind is not clear. So you don't like Los Angeles; you like San Diego.

If in your mind there is like and dislike, everywhere you will have problems. Don't check your mind. You must make like and dislike disappear. Only go straight—don't know. I think you are dependent on something; this is very dangerous, not Zen mind: dependent on words, dependent on Zen masters, dependent on where you live. You must be dependent on yourself. This means believe in yourself. Already you understand too much. Buddha is not necessary, the sutras are not necessary, Zen masters are not necessary; those are all your demons. Only don't-know mind will help you. Don't-know mind is better than them.

You say you are afraid of hard training, that you will never find the true way, but many people also have your style thinking. This is perverted view. Don't check you mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. Only go straight—don't know. Then no problem. You say, "Only a very few people have attained the Way." This is not correct. Many people understand this correct way, but they keep their opinions, so they understand the true way but have not attained the true way. You also understand the true way, but only have word understanding.

Now I ask you, what are you? Just this mind. Only go straight. An eminent teacher said, "Without thinking, just like this is truth." What am I? Don't know. Don't know is already cut-off-all thinking mind. If you keep don't know mind, you have already saved all people. Don't worry about other people's minds and everything. This is *very* important.

I hope you will always go straight—don't know, soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Here is a poem for you:

Spring has beautiful flowers.
Summer has cool breezes.
Fall has bright leaves.
Winter has pure snow.

Is the world throwing me away?
Am I throwing away the world?

I lie around in the Dharma room;
I don't care about anything.

White clouds floating in the sky,
Clear water coming down to the ocean,
The wind passing the Pagoda,
I surrender my whole life to them.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am sending you two pictures.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you so much for the photos and tape. I am just back from an exhausting lecture tour—and was happy to hear from you.

Will you do me a favor? I have called Sambosa Temple four or five times. Each time, they hang up. I think the problem is the English. I have gone there three times now. And no one has been there. I would like you to write them the dates of the Yong Maeng Jong Jin and how much it will cost. At present, we have only six people who will be sitting. I have sent out *many* invitations. I think we have two problems: Esalen is a more “popular” place for doing sitting (?) and (2) over half (16) of the January group was in my healing program—kind of a captive audience. So I am “hanging out” on the phone—wanting to get the human energy activated!

Marcy is back in the hospital. This time it’s pleurisy. God, this man’s karma is too much. It makes me weep to think of his suffering,

I am sitting a lot—

Yours,

J

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

You ask me what I want—

and I say to you

No thing!

J

April 20, 1976

Dear Jin Kwang, Joan,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? You say you gave many lectures, and you are tired—that is the great Bodhisattva Way.

I also just came back after going to many Yong Maeng Jong Jins, and I have just called Sambosa. They said you already called and that they already talked with you. Sambosa Won Jang Nim said they cannot speak English so his son Sok Ju spoke with you. They said everything is O.K. for the May Yong Maeng Jong Jin. To tell them how much money Yong Maeng Jong Jin costs is not necessary; you and I already decided to give Sambosa \$100 a day, so I already told them this. Don't worry about money to Sambosa. In your letter you say only six people are coming. If we have a money problem, I will talk to them; that is my job.

You said you sent out many invitations and made many calls—thank you very much. But, many people are not necessary; one person is O.K., two people are O.K., but most important is having keen-eyed students. You don't worry, O.K.? Oriental speech says one golden fish is better than ten thousand fish. A golden fish is one that soon will become a dragon. So, I don't care if there are six people or six hundred people; I only want golden fish.

You talk about Marcy. He has bad karma, but everything has a primary cause and result. Any primary cause has dependent origination; this means something happening together. Then you get the result. But that is all karma. If karma disappears, then the primary cause disappears, and the dependent origination and the result disappear. I already talked to Marcy; he must keep don't know, and then he will be very good. Also, Marcy and our other friends share the same karma, so we must sometimes do special mantra for him. This is the great Bodhisattva Way. If you visit him, say hello to him for me.

You say you are sitting a lot. Those are wonderful words, but I ask you, is this body sitting or mind sitting? What is *correct* sitting?

In Oriental speech, the tiger loves her children very much, so the tiger takes her children to high rocks and kicks them down. Then she checks to see if they come back up or not. Then when they come up, she loves them more. After, she tries this many times. She wants her children to become strong. This is how she loves them. So I hit you thirty times.

I sent to you white paper, and finally, I said "P.S. What do you want?" But you are attached to the P.S. words. That is, the dog runs after the bone. You don't understand the meaning of the white paper I sent to you.

The Heart Sutra says, "No eyes, no ears, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind, no color, no sound, no smell, no taste, no touch, no object of mind, no realm of eyes, and so forth..." You say, "No thing." Those are all words. What is the true meaning of this? Then I ask you, Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva has ten thousand eyes; which one is the correct eye? You already understand no eyes, no color. What answer is good?

When I met Werner Erhard, I asked him, "What is truth?" He said, "Nothing." I said, "What is nothing?" He said, "Emptiness." I said, "What is emptiness?" He said, "Just like this." So I said, "If there is true emptiness, how can you speak? You must show me true emptiness. True emptiness is no speech, no words." So he could not answer. So I told him to ask me. So he asked me, "What is true emptiness?" and I showed him true emptiness. That you understand. So I sent to you white paper. What do you do? What do you *want*? Words are not necessary.

If you cannot answer, you must go to the ocean; then, facing the ocean, you must shout with all your energy, “Gaaaaaaaaaaaaah!!!” Then better.

You must attain before thinking. Before thinking means before words, before speech. If you return to before-thinking, then you will understand your correct words. Your correct words are natural speech, the Universal Mother’s speech. You must find it. You say that you have given lectures around everywhere. What do you say? Whose speech? You must find your true speech. Don’t be a tape recorder. I want your true speech.

If you want to find your true way, then you must not be dependent on words, on Buddha, on God, or anything. You must be dependent on your true self. That means 100% belief in yourself. That is your true way.

An eminent teacher said, “Without thinking, just like this is truth.” You must go straight—don’t know. That is before thinking. Before thinking is just like this. So when you keep don’t know mind, then you see the mountain is blue, the tree is green—just like this. Don’t forget—don’t know. That’s all.

I hope you will always keep a mind that is clear like space, soon get Enlightenment, become the the Universal Mother, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Don’t forget your homework. I am sending you a Chinese Dharma picture and an Avatamsaka picture and pictures from our Precepts Ceremony and Buddha’s Birthday Ceremony. I am also sending the chanting Kong-an.

P.P.S. I arrive in Los Angeles maybe the end of this month.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Hope everything back East is just fine. It has been a while since you left and hope you are well.

Enclosed is a short Dharma speech for your review toward Dharma Teacher. Hope it is the type you are looking for. Please let me know.

I have been going to Tal Mah Sah about two times per week. It seems there are some problems there, but they do not affect me very much. The only problem that I have is the long drive there and back. *Some day!*

The word is that you will be here about the first, n'est-ce pas? What are the plans when you get here? How long will you be here this time?

Thank you very much.

Hapchang,

Jack Jones

April 20, 1976

Dear Ho Un, Jack,

How are you and all the Tal Mah Sah family? Thank you for your letter and your Dharma paper. Your Dharma paper is very wonderful. In your Dharma speech, your use of water and boiling water is a very good example. Scientists usually think they are correct and that they understand everything. So one time someone did not like this; he gave a scientist two kinds of water and asked him to check them. The scientist said, "They are the same, H₂O." This man shouted, "*You* don't understand. This is tears. This is tap water." So your speech about water and boiling water is like this.

But in your Dharma paper you lost one sentence. After "Katz!", one sentence is necessary before explaining, "Many people ask 'what is zen?'"

Tal Mah Sah has a little problem, but soon I will come, and the problem will disappear. I will go there at the end of this month, and I will stay one and a half months in California.

When I arrive at Tal Mah Sah, then we will talk about when we will have this Dharma Teacher ceremony. Nowadays Stephen has many thinking, so it is necessary for you to talk with him sometimes.

I hope you will always keep only go straight—don't know, soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

April 23, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you for your letter and for telling me about my name. A lotus in dirty water—only reflect, right?

Funny things are happening to me. With my time with you and sitting here, my ideas about my work changed. I now think my research is not important—doesn't matter. I have papers I promised to give, though, so I write them. But I don't feel attached—I do a careful job like I peel beets and clean yogurt bowl.

This is the first time I'm not attached. Now—people call me to write a book about this, and other things are happening like that. I give it up in my mind—and now it comes to me.

I think, I'd like to write a book. But, this will not save all people. This doesn't matter. What does matter? If I say everything, you hit me thirty times?

Yesterday I think—if the true path is inside me, then only sitting I find my true path right here. Maybe I can just do this work and sit and work on mantra. So I think of just being in the world and this could be O.K.—with don't know mind. And then you write to me about the sutra—living in the world with mind clear like space. Thank you very much!

This week-end I went on a sesshin with Samu Su Nim to a farm place that has been given to the Zen Center here. It is beautiful—with rivers and lots of birds. We worked very hard cleaning—I missed our Esalen baths! I liked this very much. Samu is very kind, as well as being stern, and we sometimes have fun together as well as sitting and sitting! I'm very surprised at how important it is to me—at liking it. I know—this doesn't matter. Like/dislike—all the same.

But you were right. Sitting with (sometimes) don't-know-mind—I save myself suffering. Truly—I can decide to let go of some attachments now. This is new for me.

I wish I could see you. I'm afraid I'll be away when you come here. If I am, I will come down to visit you this summer, O.K.?

Thank you again for writing to me and sending me wonderful pictures of you and Joan and Linc and other people. I send you a big hug and love,

Jin Mi

April 27, 1976

Dear Jin Mi,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. You say “only reflect”—right. And it has one more meaning. The lotus is not attached to anything. Not attached to anything means not to want anything. Not to want anything means not to make anything. If you don't make anything, then you already have everything.

You say, “I don't feel attached.” That is wonderful. This means already you begin to change your karma. An eminent teacher said that past karma disappears; new karma grows. New karma grows means that bad karma disappears. Then you will see your original face. So maybe soon I think you will get your original face. Always don't check your mind—only go straight. Writing a book is good. Save people, not save—if your mind is saved, you have already saved all people.

You like sitting, and then you say “Like/dislike—all the same.” So I hit you thirty times. Why check your mind? Body sitting is good, but most important is mind sitting. What is correct sitting? That is cut off all thinking, keeping not-moving mind. Then your mind will become clear. This is sitting Zen. So, only go straight—don't know. Don't know means cut off all thinking. Cut off all thinking means before thinking. Before thinking means just-like-this mind. Just-like-this mind means enough mind. Enough mind means don't-make-anything mind. Then, already you have everything. What more do you want?

The sky is blue; the trees are green—this is your original house. Many flowers are blooming; all the leaves are coming out—that is your original face. Birds sing songs—that is your original speech. Do you want more? I will hit you.

Maybe I will go to Los Angeles at the end of this week. I will come back to Providence the last week of June. During the last week of June, maybe I will visit there. If you want to come to Providence you must come in July or August, the two months I stay on the East Coast.

I hope you will always keep a mind that is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, become the Universal Doctor, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I send you a big family picture.

April 20, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I have arranged that you should get a small honorarium from the U.C.L.A. Extension when I bring the class to Tal Mah Sah in May. For the sake of bookkeeping, I indicated a May 20 date. But this means nothing. Also, the class will make individual donations as they did the last time.

However, for the honorarium, they need your social security number and the name you would have on any bank account. If you send this information, I'll do the rest.

Originally, there were forty-five students in my class. It is now down to about forty, and will probably drop more before the May date; of those, usually about half show up on any field trips. We'll see.

I have now been studying under Kozan Roshi for about a year. His style is very different from yours, especially the way of answering kong-ans. He says I am attached to your "attack-defense" style. It will take some time to once again get back into your style when you come.

I am looking forward to your return here.

Yours,

Ed

April 27, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter. Your idea to bring your class to Tal Mah Sah is good. Giving money to me is not necessary. Tal Mah Sah already has a tax exemption, so if you want to give money to me give it to Tal Mah Sah or to Linc, Tal Mah Sah's Dharma Teacher.

You say Kozan Roshi's style and my style are different. If you are thinking, different; if you cut off all thinking, is there Kozan or Seung Sahn? So, teaching style may be different; Zen mind is the same.

Long ago in China there were five schools. The five schools all had different teaching styles, but these all came from Bodhidharma. Original Bodhidharma teachings are the same. Attack, not attack—only style for checking students' minds. Use kong-an, not use kong-an—doesn't matter. How you keep just-now mind is very important.

You are correct: if you go to Kozan Roshi's, you must follow Kozan Roshi's style; if you come to my place, you must follow my style. But be very careful. Don't lose your clear mind. If you keep a clear mind, then your mind is clear like a mirror. When red comes, red; when white comes, white. Just like this. Then at Kozan Roshi's place, my place, no problem.

So, I ask you, before in China there was a great Zen Master, Yong Un. He understood many Zen masters; all Zen masters had given Inka to him except one. This number one Zen master's name was Song Sahn. One day, Yong Un visited Song Sahn Zen Master. "How are you, Zen Master?" The Zen Master said "Fine. Where are you coming from?" Yong Un said, "Sword Mountain." The great Zen Master said, "Then, did you bring your sword?" Yong Un only pointed his finger to the ground. If you were Song Sahn Zen Master, what could you do? If you understand this point, then you understand Kozan Roshi's style and my style.

I hope you are keeping a mind that is clear like space, will soon finish the Great Work and will save all people from suffering.

See you soon,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I received the newsletter today and read about all the new Dharma teachers and Becky's becoming a nun. I think this is wonderful. I have much school work these days; learning Chinese is very difficult, but I'm improving slowly.

Thank you for the good advice you gave me in your last letter. You said I should not worry about my roommate not wanting to practice Zen, but just to keep my own practice strong and eventually he would follow my example. You were right. These days my roommate and two of my other friends practice with me every day. Early every morning we do bowing, chanting and sit for a half an hour, and every night we do chanting and forty-five minutes of sitting. Next fall the four of us are going to get a house. We will build a Dharma room and continue our practice every day. None of us will have enough time next year to be able to open the house up for the public to practice in like a regular Zen center, but maybe we will have a public Dharma speech followed by sitting once a week, on Sunday nights or something. Do you think this is a good idea?

All my friends want very much to meet you and study Zen with you. At least one of them will be in the East this summer. He is from New York and would like very much to sit a Yong Maeng Jong Jin and have interviews with you either in New York or Providence. Please let me know if there will be any Yong Maeng Jong Jins in the East during July or August.

I spent a few days of my spring vacation from school in Los Angeles visiting Linc at the Zen Center. He is doing well although he is still very busy with the legal problems from the car accident. But he is in fine spirits and gave a wonderful Dharma talk Sunday night.

I have no Kong-an answers for you this letter. I still cannot figure out the fourth answer to the man who drops ashes on the Buddha, or what the mouse Kong-an means, but I will keep working on my homework.

I am hoping to get back to Providence by the beginning of July, and I will be staying until the middle of August. I hope very much to see you then.

Please keep well.

Hapchang,

David

April 28, 1976

Dear David,

Thank you very much for your letter. How are you? In your letter you said Becky became a nun. This is not Becky but Bekah; she is from Rochester, a different person.

You are learning Chinese—this is wonderful. It is a little difficult but you must try, then not difficult.

You say you sit, chant, and bow every morning and sit every evening with your roommmate and two other friends—this is wonderful. Your idea of getting a house, practicing every day, and maybe having a Dharma talk every week is also wonderful.

We will have Yong Maeng Jong Jins in July and August at the East coast Zen centers. I hope you and your friend will come here and sit with us.

You went to visit Linc and heard his Dharma speech—that is wonderful. In the future you must go there with your friends; that is a good idea.

You say you have not finished your kong-ans. Finish homework, not finish homework—don't worry. Most important is how do you keep just-now mind? Kong-ans means only teaching style. Another Zen school doesn't use kong-ans. So if you only go straight—don't know, then this don't know is already cut off all thinking; cut off all thinking means before thinking; before thinking means just like *this*. You must believe in yourself. Zen is not dependent on words and speech. This means not dependent on Buddha, God, or anything. So you must not be dependent on homework or kong-ans. Then what, I ask you? This means 100% complete belief in myself, only dependent on myself; this is true Zen; this is true Enlightenment. So, don't worry about homework. Only go straight—don't know. Then some day you will understand your homework.

I hope you always keep clear mind, soon finish the Great work and save all people from suffering.

See you soon,

S.S.

May 18, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I hope your body is strong, and you are feeling well. Everyone in Providence is fine. We are all working very hard. I think everyone is trying to understand their jobs. This is a big job.

This Sunday George and Mu Bul Su Nim gave very good Dharma talks, We only had three guests and the P.Z.C. family. Although Mu Bul and George talked very clearly and simply, I felt like our guests did not understand their speech. Sometimes this discourages me very much. People come here, listen to our teaching, and leave. Very few people come a second time. I often feel like the Center is making some mistakes, but I don't understand what they are.

So I will take your famous advice and only go straight—don't check myself, don't check other people, don't check the Providence Zen Center. Correct?

Katz!

Good things come in small packages.

Respectfully,

Bobby

May 25, 1976

Dear Bobby,

How are you? Thank you for your letter and for sending me my letters. Also, thank you for the big KATZ. Everybody understanding their jobs is very good, but I ask you, what is your big job? Big job is your original job , and original job is the great Bodhisattva Way.

On the week-end of May 14th, we had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Sambosa. There were about thirty people there, and it was very good . Eight of the people who came to the January Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Esalen were there. Then we visited Big Sur and took a hot bath.

When we returned to Los Angeles the next day, Werner Erhard came to see me (EST) . He likes my teaching and Linc and I are going to San Francisco in June to spend some time with him. He is bringing his trainers there from all over the country for interviews and to hear Dharma talks. This is very interesting.

We had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center this past week-end for about twenty people. Some of my old-time students from Los Angeles came.

Nowadays things are very busy, but it is wonderful that our family is growing. We had a high school class come here one day and next week a class from U.C.L.A. is coming. Also I will talk at the Center for Healing Arts in Los Angeles next week. In June we also will have a three-day Kido on a mountaintop near Big Sur for about fifteen people. I am a little tired these days, but I am resting now, and Mrs. Kanda is here from Japan. She is a wonderful oriental medicine doctor, and she is making me strong. Nowadays Linc is a very good Dharma teacher, and he also helps me.

Don't worry if people do not come back to the Zen Center. Many people like honey better than water. I think water is better than honey. Honey tastes good, but if you only eat honey, it is not good for you. It is possible to take much water, but only a little honey. Zen is very clear, simple, and necessary like water. Every day you need water, and every day you need Zen, but most people prefer honey. Zen is clear, but not interesting to them. Most people have many desires, and Zen is cutting off desire, so people don't like this. Their whole life is only desire. If you practice Zen, then your life is only clear like water, with no taste, like water. If you have no money, then water is very good. If people don't come back, this is not because of a Zen Center mistake; it is because they don't want to fix their minds. So don't worry; many people are not necessary. Only a few keen-eyed students are necessary.

You said, "don't check myself," and "KATZ!," and you said, "Good things come in small packages." Wonderful! But, how many pounds is this KATZ?

How is your cold? You must only rest.

Yours in the Dharma

S.S.

P.S. How is Mr. Bennett? Please say hello to him for me.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope you are fine, and I hope you are taking good care of your body.

I finally got the xeroxes from the people who were doing the work. One person was delayed several days. Not all the books on the list are there. Some articles did not exist, and some were out of the library. But most of them are there. I paid one woman \$23.40 and the man \$24.00. To mail the package cost \$4.20. That adds up to \$51.60. Since you gave me \$50 the difference is very small so let's forget about it.

How is Los Angeles, Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center, and Sambosa? You must be very busy. Will you be at Big Sur on June 12 for the Kido? I want to visit Big Sur and Sambosa. I want to visit Bo Sal Nim, Won Jang Nim, and their family if they are not busy. My last exam is June 4. I will come to California after that. Will you be at Tahl Mah Sah? Should I get my visa here or with you in Los Angeles? Which way is easiest?

After I talked to you I sent a telegram to Byung Kim. Then his brother called and said, "Please send him a long letter," so I sent him a letter. But when I talked to his brother, he wouldn't tell me where Kim was. Shall I send another letter? Will this be a problem when I go to Korea this summer? Do you know what is happening with him?

When you were in Cambridge you showed me an ad for an airplane ticket to Korea for \$565.00. I wrote the travel service, but they didn't answer. Do you know of another airline where I can get a ticket for \$850.00? Could you tell me the name of the airline?

Many questions, I'm sorry.

Nowadays the Cambridge Zen Center is fine. We had a four-Zen-Center meeting last week. Everyone came for lunch. It was a good meeting. Everyone said what they thought. But I don't know how Cambridge Zen Center will be next year, because Larry does not want to live here. I am very busy but I feel good. I gave the Dharma talk last night. There were many people here.

I am looking forward to being able to spend a few days with you on my way to Korea. Thank you for everything.

Love,

Becky

May 25, 1976

Dear Becky,

How are you? Thank you for your letter, and thank you for the xeroxed copies and all the work you had to do. Also thank you for the \$1.60.

On the week-end of May 15th we had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Sambosa. There were about thirty people, and it was very good. We took everything out of the big living room and made a small altar. It was a wonderful place for sitting and chanting. Then we visited Big Sur for one day and took a hot bath.

When we returned to Los Angeles the next day, Werner Erhard came to see me. He likes my teaching, and Linc and I are going to San Francisco to spend some time with him and his "Dharma teachers" in June. We had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center last week-end for about twenty people. Some of my old students from Los Angeles came. Nowadays things are very busy, but it is wonderful. Our family is growing bigger.

Bo Sal Nim and Wang Jang Nim miss you and say hello to you. They will be very happy to see you when you come. When they met Mu Ae Su Nim they thought about you.

Linc nowadays is a very good Dharma teacher with much work to do on the West Coast. We will go to Big Sur on June 10th, and we will have a Kido from the 11th to the 13th at a mountain-top place where you can see the ocean. There will only be about fifteen people, but you can come with us if you like. Also you can visit Sambosa at this time. If you finish school on June 4th, then you must come to Tahl Mah Sah soon after that. Los Angeles is a very good place to get your Korean visa, as I know the people at the consulate very well. You should get your passport and your smallpox shot before you come here.

Maybe the Korean government does not believe you are married, so you should send a letter to the Korean Embassy in New York together with a copy of your marriage papers. Also, when you get to Korea, bring this marriage certificate with you to show to the government so that they will believe you.

Before March it was possible to get the cheap airline tickets, but after March they stopped this policy. It is possible to get a round-trip ticket from Los Angeles for \$650 on Korean Airlines. This is good for up to three months. If you stay past three months, you must pay a little more. Mrs. Chai in New York has a son who owns a travel service. Before, I gave some calendars to the Zen Center from his company. His name is Mr. Lee, and he will help you with your tickets. Tell him you are my student, and maybe you will get a good discount. The name of his company is Royson Travel Service. Jerry understands how to contact Mrs. Chai if you need to.

Your letter had many questions, but that is O.K. I heard about the four Zen Centers meeting, and this was very good. I think that the Cambridge Zen Center doesn't want a live-in Zen Center. Already I talked to Larry about this. In the future it can be like the Sim Gum Do school, where people only come for practicing (like church) and for Dharma talks. This is O.K. Then if people want to come, that is good, and if they do not want to come, that is also good. I think this is Cambridge style, so that people can have other time free. Maybe Larry likes this and maybe he will try this style; maybe all of the Cambridge family will like

this—only a few days practicing each week. Living in the Zen Center is good; not living is also good if this is what people want. If each Dharma teacher takes care of the place for one week, then there would be no problems and not too much work for any one person.

It is wonderful that Dae Ja is doing hard training nowadays. Maybe she understands the correct way now. Maybe.

I told you that you must find the meaning of “busy is not busy; not busy is busy.” The meaning of this is that if you are very busy but your mind is empty, then you are not busy; if you are not busy and your mind is not empty, then you are busy. Then you have thinking, desires, anger, and ignorance. So you must attain “busy is not busy” and make likes and dislikes disappear. Then the true way is clear. Then when you go to Korea, or to the university, or to the Zen Center, there is no problem. If you check your mind, your feelings, or anything else, then you will have problems.

I hope you don't make anything, only go straight ahead—DON'T KNOW—and soon save all people.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

May 18, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? It was really nice to talk to you last night—thank you for returning my call. How is Mu Ae Su Nim? Please give my love to her and to the Tahl Mah Sah family.

Nowadays mostly I am well, though sometimes I feel very sad—but not crazy like before when I was first at Cambridge Zen Center—just very sad and lonely. I'm afraid it is a very small sadness mostly. I am sad about my life. I sometimes want to get married, but I always fall in love with the wrong man—this style sadness, not Bodhisattva sadness for all people's suffering. Don't worry about me—it's not a big problem. I guess it's O.K. to feel sad as long as I still practice. Now I count Kwan Seum Bosal during sitting periods, maybe 2,000 or 3,000 each day. Still I have not done 10,000 as you told me. I am no good—I understand many words, but I do not cut off my desire for good feeling and small happiness.

I miss you very much—

Lynn

May 26, 1976

Dear Lynn,

Thank you for your letter and your telephone call. Nowadays you have no problems, so I am very happy that you have returned to this no-problem mind. Congratulations to you!

But you already understand your problems. I checked your letter, and it was very clear. So if you have a correct understanding of your problems, then there is no problem. An oriental medicine book said that if you understand a sickness, then it is already fixed. All that is necessary is to take the correct medicine. If you don't understand the correct medicine, then the sickness cannot be fixed. You described your problem very clearly; you also already understand your medicine, so only go straight, O.K.?

You said on the telephone to me that you are doing 10,000 Kwan Seum Bosals every day. You must do this. It is very important. Then any kind of sickness will go away. Then if you want to get married, this is possible; if you want a good boyfriend, this is possible. True happiness is possible; being able to do everything is possible. So, only try this.

What color is the sky?
What color is the tree?

I hope you go straight ahead, soon become a great Dharma teacher, save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Beloved Soen Sa Nim,

Please help me to understand something more clearly—Is it all right to hold a positive image of peace, love, and harmony in your mind and heart? Is there anything wrong with having a grateful heart?

I am confused as to the effects of imaging. Does imaging interfere with clear mind? I am not able to have clear mind constantly, so is it all right to hold the thought of Christ, harmony, or gratitude?

I can hear you say, “Don’t check on yourself! Only go ahead!” Does only go ahead include the “just-like-thisness” of a loving feeling of gratitude for the beauty of an apple blossom? Yes!! Thank you.

Thank you so very much for all you have done for me, Thank you for being who you are, —thank you for being.

May eternal truth resound in every atom of your being.

Beverly

Thank you and Mu Bul for coming to Fitchburg. You were well received. All of Friday class was spent on discussing your visit and what is Zen.

May 26, 1976

Dear Beverly,

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry that this letter is so late, but I have been traveling a lot. Now I am staying in Los Angeles at the Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center, and we had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin this past week-end. Also, we had a three-day meditation retreat at Sambosa, a temple in Carmel, California. About thirty people came from the Big Sur and San Francisco area.

You asked me a question in your letter about imaging. First, you must attain your true way, attain your correct self. Then keeping any kind of mind is O.K. If you do not attain your true self, then keeping this kind of mind cannot get your correct direction for you, cannot get your true self, Enlightenment. So you must be careful. Only go straight ahead, DON’T KNOW. Don’t check your mind. This kind of thinking is checking your mind.

Beautiful flowers are very good. But if you are attached to the flowers, then this is not good. This is feeling. Feeling happy is good, but being attached to this feeling is not good. Being

attached to good feelings or love or beautiful things means “I want this. I desire this.” This desire makes a separate mind, a mind that is not one with everything. So in your letter you said, “just like this.” What is just like this? You must attain don’t-know mind. This is very necessary. Then there is no problem. Then when you see a beautiful flower, the good feeling is not from desire for yourself. Saying that this good feeling is no desire for myself means that the flower and I become one.

Before, Buddha said that if you have a lot of gold and give this to others, then this is compassion. But the most important thing to do is introduce correct Dharma to someone, to help them to hear a correct Dharma speech. This is better than the compassionate act of giving someone money. You invited us to Fitchburg; if you were not there, we could not have come. This action was great Bodhisattva action, true compassion, true love. So I thank you very much. I hope you are able to do this kind of action more and more.

I hope you keep a mind which is clear like space, and that you will get Enlightenment soon, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? We are in Honolulu now and will be leaving for Tokyo tomorrow. It turned out to be impossible for the two Su Nims to get two-month visas for Japan, so we will be there only fifteen days. Then on June 10th we fly to Seoul. The Japanese embassy was pretty rude to us, but no one seemed to mind. Afterwards everyone only laughed.

Traveling with these two Su Nims is very hard practice for me. The places we go and the things we do, I can hardly believe. Many times their actions are not correct for monks. But out of necessity, once again I've discovered that by always keeping "don't know" in my mind, and not thinking about what we do, that everything is O.K. With this "don't know" mind any action is possible, and I only follow their wishes. If a lot of thinking and judgements appear, "don't know" pushes it away. So traveling with them is proving to be a powerful training, and my mind is not as filled with thoughts as it usually is. When sightsee—only sightsee. Hawaii is beautiful. But all this is thinking also—Don't know—Don't know—Don't know.

Just before I left, Linc said that all these "little-no-good" monks are good teachers, and he is correct. My only concern is that they suffer a lot. The smaller Su Nim always seems sad, and the bigger one—Kwang Woo Su Nim—is troubled by the pain and suffering of her body. Also, their plans always seem to go a little wrong. It's hard for me to understand Buddhists like they are who aren't really practicing. But that is their karma, and I only try to follow their wishes. But at the same time I try to keep my actions correct without attracting their attention and only "don't know." But here I go thinking again.

I forgot to get the name of your student in Seoul who is an herbal and acupuncture doctor. My body needs fixing, but don't worry. This is not a problem. It doesn't bother me that my body hurts. Your example of non-attachment to your body which suffers all the time is a wonderful teaching, and I am grateful for it. Thank you very much. Now I also understand that when one's body needs fixing, go to a doctor—and this is non-attachment. To completely ignore the suffering of one's body is really being attached to it. Can you send me her address at your temple in Tokyo or Seoul?

The temple here in Honolulu is very small and unfinished. The monk here, Tae Won Su Nim, is the only monk and only came last June. But already they have 300-400 members and have plans to buy a piece of property and build a Korean-style temple. There is a lot of energy, and I'm sure they'll really do it.

I have to go. Say hello to everyone there, and please take care of yourself.

In the Dharma,

Mu Ae Su Nim

P.S. *Please* don't tell the monks in Seoul about going to this doctor. I will arrange to go with an American who isn't connected with the Temple. I don't want to cause the monks a lot of thoughts or worrying about my body. They may not understand that it is *no* problem. So *please* don't tell them. Only send me her name and address.

June 1, 1976

Dear Mu Ae Su Nim,

How are you and your two traveling companions? Thank you for your letter. I think that you are already having a good time in Japan, maybe. Only staying in Japan for a short time is wonderful.

I recently heard that Se Dung Su Nim was sick and was in the hospital. There are your Dharma brothers (sisters) named Myo Gwan Su Nim and Hae Myong Su Nim who will take good care of you. Don't worry about anything—only go straight.

I think you are practicing correctly now, and that before you were practicing the easy way—that is, only sitting practicing. This new style of practicing is not so easy, this traveling practicing, this action Zen.

You said in your letter that Hawaii is beautiful and that when you are sightseeing, then you are only sightseeing. This morning we had interviews in Los Angeles, and I asked someone, "What is Zen?" His first answer was a primary point answer; then, "The sky is blue; the tree is green." He tried many like-this answers. To all of them I said, "No." I said the following: "Here is a child, and you and this child are very close. The child asks you, 'What are you doing now?' You say, 'I am sitting.' The child asks, 'Are you only sitting?' You would answer, 'No, I am also talking.' The child asks, 'What kind of talking?' You would answer that this is an interview." This is correct! This is interview mind; when you drive, only driving mind; when sightsee, then only sightseeing mind. Don't know is sightseeing, and sightseeing is don't know. So don't make anything. Only go straight.

Originally there is no good and no bad, but if you make good and bad, then you have good and bad. So, you can already see that good and bad are your teachers. In Korea, there are many kinds of Buddhism and many kinds of monks. Each thinks that their way is correct, and they are strongly attached to their own way. Because many nuns have been in the temple since their childhood, their thinking at times can be very narrow. Some are very attached to being monks, some are very attached to their opinions, and some are very attached to their seniority as monks. (There are monks who began early in life and those who began later; often these "early" monks have a lot of pride and are attached to this.

There are many kinds of Buddhism besides Zen; there is Sutra, Nembutz, Mantra, etc. All these monks have different kinds of practicing. They have different jobs. Some are teachers and their practice is "professor-style," while others are office monks, or business monks, or many other styles. Once they cut their hair and become monks, they feel they have already saved all people, so then they just do their job: business monks do only business, professors

only professor style, Zen monks, only Zen. This is enough. Also chanting monks only chanting, art monks only art, bookkeeping monks only do bookkeeping.

So sometimes they do not do together action. Sometimes they have differences of opinion and fighting; sometimes they are attached to their jobs. All of this together is what is called Korean Buddhism. When you go to Korea you will understand more. Is this office worker a monk? He doesn't bow to Buddha; he only works in the office. If you only understand Zen Buddhism and Zen practicing, then it may be difficult to understand this, but they think they are correct monks and that they are practicing correctly.

In Buddhism there are 84,000 sutras because many people have different karma and different ways. If you understand any one, you will understand them all. Here is an example. There are many ways to enter the Dharma room: the big front door (the correct door), or the kitchen door, or the door to the porch, or even through the window. Many people use different doors. So, what is correct Buddhism? How do you keep just-now-mind? Office workers, professors, ceremony monks—it is the same for all of them. Buddha said, "If you always keep the Bodhi mind, you will get happiness everywhere.

I am sending the name of someone who will help your body. I don't have the name and address of the woman doctor I told you about with me. It is back in Providence, and I will send it to you when I return. Now I am sending the address of Dr. Lee, the President of the Buddhist Association at Hwa Gae Sah. I am good friends with him and already told him to help you. So if you visit him, he will take care of you.

I already talked to Myo Gwang Su Nim and Hae Myong Su Nim. If you have any problem, you must talk to them; don't make a wall between yourself and these nuns. If you want to go to the doctor with Americans, that is O.K., but talk to these nuns first. If you only try action by yourself you will have problems; you must always make your opinion, your condition, and your situation disappear.

I heard about this Hawaii temple before; it is very good. Someday I will visit over there. You are lucky you have already attained this place.

I worry a lot about your body, so please take care of it.

I hope you don't make good action, don't make strong practicing, don't make correct way, don't make any thing, and only go straight. Only keep a mind that is clear like space. Then you will soon get enlightenment, soon finish the Great Work, and save all people.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

May 28, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? How is everyone in Los Angeles?

I hear that nowadays you are famous on the West Coast. Congratulations.

Everything is fine here in Providence. Some people are worried that in the fall there won't be enough money to run the house, but I say, "Don't worry." After all, aren't we Zen students?

Today I went to my brother's graduation at M.I.T. This morning I had a lot of fighting in my mind. In Korea monks never see their families, so I was torn—go or not go? Finally I went anyway, and we had a good time. My family doesn't care about monk or not monk. When they see me, they are happy. So I don't care either. But I ask you: what is the correct way?

My retreat is broken again. I am actually happy about that. I don't like acting differently from other people, and now I can devote all my attention to working on the house. Hard training will have to wait until I get to Korea.

I like Providence. I like Zen. I like working. I like being a monk. So every day I am happy. Who cares about Enlightenment? If you give me one word of advice I will kill you, and spread your broken body to the four corners of the earth. What can you do? KATZ!

I hope my teacher is enjoying good health, and I look forward to your return to the East.

Sincerely,

Mu Bul

June 6, 1976

Dear Mu Bul,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. How is all our Eastern family? Everyone here in Los Angeles is O.K.

Your letter congratulated me for being famous here on the West Coast. I am not famous and I don't want to be famous. Being famous is a very hard job. Also, it is difficult to help people when you are famous. Before, when I stayed in Korea, I was too famous and was busy all the time, so I had no time for correct teaching to very many people. So, famous is not so good.

You are correct when you say not to worry about money. Also, don't worry about space, don't worry about time, don't worry about everything. Only go straight.

Congratulations for your brother's graduation from M.I.T. You said that you had some fighting in your mind, trying to decide about seeing your family or not. A little thinking about this subject, ya? Going to see them is O.K.; not going to see them is also O.K. Don't check your mind, and don't check other people's minds. Only go straight. Going straight means the Great Way, and the Great Way means the Bodhisattva way. If you check your mind, you will always have problems. If you don't check your mind, then there will be no problems. Monk, or not monk, it doesn't matter. Don't check your mind.

Your retreat being broken or not broken—how are they different? If you don't make anything, then broken or not broken is no hindrance.

In your letter you said that nowadays you like everything and you say, "Who cares about Enlightenment?" I say that you must care about Enlightenment. Also, you said that you would kill me if I gave you one word of advice. I say that you must already be dead. So your KATZ is a dead KATZ, and it is already thrown into the garbage. What can you do?

KATZ!

The wild cow has horns on its ass.
The squirrel runs up the tree.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, and save all beings from suffering,

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

June 2, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Thank you both for your letter and our talk on the phone this morning—it was wonderful to hear your voice and the wonderful teaching that you gave me. I will take this “mantra medicine” and do 10,000 Kwan Seum Bosals every day, as you have told me to do. I think sometimes it must be very tiring for you to be a Zen Master and to say the same thing (“Only keep Kwan Seum Bosal”) so many times to a slow student, but I am very grateful for your patience and love.

Yesterday (June 1st) was my two-year anniversary of living at a Zen Center—thank you very much. Without your teaching, I would have never begun to find my way, and without your great compassion, I don’t think I could have stuck with it this long.

I will close now. I hope this letter finds you in good health. Please give my love to Mu Ae Su Nim and the Tahl Mah Sah family. I look forward to seeing you again in July.

Love,

Lynn

P.S. I’ve enclosed two extra napkins for the formal meal sets at Tahl Mah Sah. We had some extra material, and I thought they might be of use. Could you give them to Susan for me? Thank you.

Lynn

June 11, 1976

Dear Lynn,

Thank you for your letter. How are you and all the Providence Zen Center family? Your letter was very good, but when you telephoned, I saw your face when I heard your voice, and this face was sometimes a Bodhisattva face and sometimes a demon face. But don’t worry. Bodhisattva is O.K. and demon is O.K. Don’t make Bodhisattva, and don’t make demon; only go straight—Kwan Seum Bosal 10,000 times each day. If you don’t make anything, then you will get everything, and you will find happiness everywhere.

You have been living in the Zen Center for two years now and have become a great Dharma teacher. For two years you have helped the Zen Center, helped other people, and helped

yourself. That is the Great Way; that is also is the wonderful way. Congratulations to you on your two-year anniversary,

Mu Ae Su Nim left Los Angeles on May 22, and now she is in Korea. I will forward your letter to her. All of the Tahl Mah Sah family says hello to you and thanks you for the napkins.

I hope you will always keep a mind which is clear like space and that you will not make anything, only go straight—Kwan Seum Bosal—and follow the great Bodhisattva Way , and save all people.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

June 6, 1979
Providence Zen Center

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Hello. How are you? I hope you are well. And also I hope you will accept this poem. It's not so much in answer to the homework you gave me, but as a gift from me to you.

I finally feel as if I'm part of the house here now, and my outside job is going well. They, the people I work for, have given me a more interesting machine to run; it's called generically a screw machine, which means simply a turret lathe in a metal box frame that runs automatically after all the settings have been made.

Hope to see you soon.

Here is the poem,

John

“GO STRAIGHT, NOT KNOWING
KEEPING CLEAR MIND”
—Seung Sahn Soen Sa Nim

Just So, Like This!
Sky is Blue
Trees are Green
Going straight keeping
Don't-know mind,
Much or nothing depends on this/

One cat Black scrambles up tall
Bare pole of weathered—
wood in hazy

Moonlight,
Supreme Delight. and an old man
Named O'Brian
Stands talking with
George and L.K.W.

June 11, 1976

Dear John,

How are you? Thank you for your letter and your poem. They were both very wonderful. The poem is important, but your homework is most important; only go straight, DON'T KNOW. It is very good that you feel at home at the Providence Zen Center and that your job is more interesting now. That is also very wonderful.

You said that this new machine was interesting. This machine is better than a human because this machine always has correct action. But this machine doesn't care about correct or not-correct action. It only goes straight; it only works. If you keep a machine mind, you will have no problem—there are no opposites.

Only go, and only stop! Only just like this! But if you are attached to the machine, then you have no direction, and you have no mind. But if the person using the machine and the machine become one mind, then this is machine mind. When you push the letter *A* on the typewriter, you get *A*; when you push *B*, you get *B*. You must learn from your machine and understand that this machine mind is clear mind; this is Zen mind.

Here is a poem for you:

“GO STRAIGHT, NOT KNOWING
KEEPING CLEAR MIND”

Much or nothing depends on this/
Supreme Delight
Old man and George and LKW

All these things come from where?
Do they exist, or are they emptiness?
If you open your mouth, I will hit you thirty times.
If you do not open your mouth, I will still hit you thirty times.
What can you do?

Don't hold the stone cow's tail
When the stone cow is running.
Then you will understand
The sky is blue, the tree is green.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

June 7, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Kwang Woo Su Nim and I just arrived back in Tokyo tonight, and I was very happy to find a letter from you. Your letters help me very much. "Don't make good action; don't make strong practicing; don't make correct way." I had to laugh at how well you understand my mind. If I repeat this to myself over and over again, maybe it will stick in this rock's head.

I stayed for four days with Kimura Bo Sal Nim and her daughter. They were very wonderful to me and feel like my family now. Hidomi and I very quickly became good friends. We talked a lot about Buddhism, and I went with her to visit her tea ceremony teacher. I was very impressed with the beauty of the tea ceremony. She is also learning calligraphy and flower arranging. It was wonderful to have a rest from sightseeing. Their house is very comfortable and peaceful, and the food was delicious. I left them a present of a small Buddha, but felt I couldn't thank them enough. If you write them, would you also thank them for their kindness.

The Korean temples in Tokyo and Osaka have taken us sightseeing a lot. We've been to all the large and famous temples in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, and Nara, and they are all breathtakingly beautiful. Su Yong Su Nim came here a few days ago. He and Dae Yun Su Nim (who you probably know is head of Po Hyon Sah in Osaka) and a couple of other monks and I went to their brand-new temple located deep in the mountains at the end of a very long winding road which goes through many small beautiful villages. We stayed overnight and were awakened at 4:00 by Dae Yun Su Nim chanting with the moktak and walking around the buildings.

I liked Su Yong Su Nim and Dae Yun Su Nim very much, and being with them in the mountain temple and hearing their chanting almost moved me to tears of joy.

The next day we all went to Myoshin-ji in Kyoto which the Koreans tell me is the head Rinzai temple. We were shown around by a senior monk and then taken into a beautiful little house where we met Itsukai Kajjura Roshi. I liked him very much. Do you know him? Just as we were about to leave, he said something to me, and I was very sorry not to be able to understand it. (He speaks no English.)

This temple seemed very strong and the air there seemed to sparkle. I was very glad to see this and no longer believe Zen has deteriorated in Japan as much as I had before. During this visit it became clear to me how strong my karma still is with Japanese Zen.

There are some troublesome thoughts that arise in my mind, but I just can't bring myself to write you about them. Already I've written and torn up two letters to you. It was a real shock to me last winter when I got to Providence and discovered that my letters to you had been put in the kong-an book. The style I was used to had a very strict rule about not discussing

interviews or any other communication with the teacher with other people, because it might hurt their practice or cause a lot of doubts or thoughts to arise in their minds. I know this is not your style, but I can't overcome this previous training. I see the merit in making everything public, but the merit in keeping interviews private seems greater to me.

But there are no real problems. "Don't know" melts any problems that arise. My body is much stronger now than it was in Hawaii. Why do you worry so much about it? Even when my body is sick, it is not a problem anymore. Take care of your body,

In the Dharma,

Mu Ae

June 13, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I'm writing again so soon because I'm sure you're wondering how things are going here. Everything is just fine. It's taking a while to change my visa because I had to apply both here in Seoul and in Inchon which is in charge of aliens in the Province Dae Jeon is in.

I like being here a lot, and I immediately felt at home. The monks here are wonderful, and I'm friends with them already. Bomen Sa is beautiful!

The only thing that worries me is how much they worry about me. I don't know what you told them about my health, but it must have been terrible. They treat me like an 82-year-old woman with a bad heart. They really seem to worry constantly about me and ask me daily if I've caught a cold. One of the things they worry about is that I won't eat as much as they want me to. It's just not possible—I'd soon be fat and sick both. So I gently refuse, always smiling. Still they worry, and I'm sure they'll write you about it. So don't worry because I'm fine.

My body is better than it's been in months. I discovered in Hawaii that it's the red hot foods like kimchee that were constantly irritating my intestines and now that I'm not eating it, my stomach is slowly returning to normal. If the stomach problems return, I'll talk to someone about it.

So please, if they write you, would you reassure them that I'm O.K.?

I still don't feel like I know Korea yet, having been in Seoul only. I must admit to looking forward to seeing the countryside and to living in the country. The summer Kyol Che ends July 15th they tell me.

Take care of yourself.

Mu Ae

I may be going to Dae Jeon on the 15th of June.

P.S. Also we went to the temple you used to be abbot at (Hwa Gae Sah?). The head monk there is really nice. I really liked him. Also he gave me 10,000 won.

We also went to Jung Hae Sa—the headquarters of the Chogye Order and met all the head monks. Also saw Su Ong Su Nim again. I really liked all the monks I met there.

June 30, 1976

Dear Mu Ae,

How are you. Thank you for your two letters. I heard that you already got your visa to allow you to stay in Korea for one year, and you will return to Dae Jeon on July 16. When I heard that, I was very happy.

And did you see Becky? Becky went to Korea on June 22. Maybe she will visit you.

When you went to Japan, you had a good time. Kimura Bo Sal Nim and Hidomi are good people. Also you met Su Yong Su Nim, who is our highest monk of the Chogye Order in Korea. This is like being Pope of the Chogye Order. Tae Yun Su Nim is the abbot of Osaka Temple. You are lucky. Next you went to Myoshin-ji Temple; that is a famous Zen Temple in Japan. In Japan there are nine schools of Rinzaï. I know Itsukai Kajiura Roshi. He is a famous Zen Master, and he has a Buddhist college at his head temple in the country.

Next I talk about your letter. Don't worry. If you don't want your letters in the kong-an book, I won't put them into the kong-an book. If you have thinking questions, talk to me. You don't worry. Before, Matthew's teacher, Richard Clarke, wrote me many letters interview-style and asked me not to make them public. These letters are still secret, not in the kong-an book, so nobody understands them.

In your second letter you said you visited Inchon, and you said Bomen Sa is very beautiful. But you check this Bomen Sa. The monks do not do much practicing; it is only a chanting temple—chanting practicing, not Zen practicing. They think chanting practicing is correct, chanting practicing is helping other people, chanting is the correct way. If you have no desire for yourself, then any action is the correct way, but if you have desire for yourself, and you do Buddha's action, it is not the correct way.

At Bomen Sa all people like you. Already many people have sent me letters. You stayed at Bomen Sa and Dae Jeon Temple; they are very happy, so they want to help you. They want to know how to help you. They worry about you. They think all cultures are different—eating style, talking style, living style, so many worries. Also Korean style is to urge you to more eat, more eat—this is manners. So you say, "Thank you very much, thank you very much"—this is also manners. Not eating is O.K. You must learn this Oriental karma—then no problem.

You said your body is better than it has been in months—I am very happy. But if you have body problems, I already sent to you this doctor's address—Mr. Lee—and you must visit

over there. Or you must ask Sae Dung Su Nim—or Myo Kwan Su Nim or Mae Myung Su Nim; then they will help you any time—no problem.

After Kyol Che in July you must sightsee in Korea. This is necessary. You visited Jung Hae Sa and Hwa Gae Sa—that is very good.

I returned to Providence the day before yesterday. You went to Hawaii, and after, we went to the three-day Kido at Big Sur. That was wonderful. We only tried Kwan Seum Bosal each day for twelve hours—many drums, many hitting, many moraccas. Everybody was very happy. There were twenty-five people there.

Then we visited Werner Erhard. He wanted to see me, so we went to San Francisco. We went to his main training center. In the morning I gave interviews to fifteen of his highest trainers for three hours. In the afternoon, Werner and I held a seminar for almost three and a half hours. Many talking. They like our teaching style.

Then the next day we visited the San Francisco Zen Center, and Koben Chino Sensei was there with Baker Roshi—they're friends. We talked about Zen: how Soto and Rinzai and Chogye are different. I said, "Keeping a mind which is clear like space—it's the same. Only teaching style is different, outside form is different; how to keep just-now mind is the same. If you understand how to keep just-now mind, then this technique, any kind of technique, doesn't matter. Use kong-ans, not use kong-ans—don't care. So, in original Zen, don't make anything. Only go straight; then no problem. If you make something, or if you check something, you have a problem. So, put it all down. Only go straight. That's very important." I said this, and everybody was happy.

I hope you also don't make anything, and that you are keeping a mind that is clear like space. Only go straight, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am sending to you some pictures and a newsletter. I was very glad to see your face in the Korean newspapers.

June 17, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I am writing to thank you for the beautiful Kido and also for the beads you gave me Tuesday evening in San Francisco. When I wear these beads I feel very good, and more able to be patient and to love.

Although I have only known you a few short months, my whole direction has changed, as well as Ezra's and the children's. I am very grateful. I have the beginnings of a practice for the first time—that is right for me—and although it is new and unsure, there is something authentic in it that will grow with proper nourishment and plenty of hard work!

Whatever I am and have is yours. At some point I pray there will come a way to make that real.

Love,

Diana Clark

June 30, 1976

Dear Diana,

How are you and Ezra and your family? Thank you for your letter. I returned to Providence just now, so this answer is a little late. I am sorry.

I also think we had a wonderful Kido. This Kido was very necessary. That time I told you, Kido is like having very dirty water: if you boil it one time, it becomes steam; then make it cold again, and it is clear water. Kido's meaning is—my mind is boiled. Before-Kido mind was very dirty. After-kido mind is very clear. Before, dark water means bad karma, dark mind. We tried this Kido, and everybody got this special energy. Special energy means to become steam. You know, like this steam engine has energy. Water has no energy; if you boil water, you get steam energy. So this steam energy makes the train go. So, when we try Kwan Seum Bosal, Kwan Seum Bosal, then our mind is correct nothing. True nothing means the universe and I become one—that is special energy. Then slow, slow Kwan Seum Bosal means clear water, quiet mind, just-like-this mind. So, previous karma disappears; our mind becomes clear.

To make your karma disappear means to find the correct way. If you don't make your karma disappear, many desires, many ignorance, many anger appear, so you lose the correct way. So you must try Kwan Seum Bosal more than 3,000 times each day. This is very important.

I gave you these beads; this name is Yum Joo. Yum Joo means keeping Bodhi mind; Bodhi mind is Bodhisattva mind. An eminent teacher said, “If you always keep Bodhi mind, you get happiness everywhere.” If you don’t lose Yum Joo, you will get happiness everywhere, so always keep these beads in your mind—only decoration is no good. Don’t keep Yum Joo on your body; you must keep Yum Joo in your mind.

You said your life has changed direction, and Ezra’s and the children’s. I am very happy to hear this. You said you have a practice for the first time that is right for you. An eminent teacher said, “First mind is Enlightenment mind.” First mind is nothing mind, only-go-straight mind, so first mind is very important. If you want something, you will lose your first mind. To lose first mind means no direction. First mind’s direction is very clear.

So I hope you are keeping a first mind which is clear like space, only go straight, soon get Enlightenment, finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

17 June 1976

Dearest Soen Sa Nim,

I cannot answer the kong-an because there is no man dropping ashes on the Buddha. The grass is green, the sky is night, and I love you,

Marge

July 14, 1976

Dear Marge,

Thank you for your letter. How are you lately?

You say "I cannot answer the kong-an because there is no man dropping ashes on the buddha." I say, *if* somebody came to the Zen Center, smokes a cigarette, and blows smoke and drops ashes on the Buddha, what can you do? So *if*, O.K.? If you understand O.K.; if you don't understand, only go straight; don't know. Don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. Only go straight.

I ask you, why is the grass green? Why is the sky night? Tell me, tell me, quickly, quickly.

Here is a poem for you:

The stone girl,
Walking around everywhere,
Wants to find her baby.
Sun shining but no shadow.

The wooden dog barking
Mu, mu, mu.
The blue mountain
Puts on a white cloud hat.

I hope you will soon get enlightenment.

Yours in the Dharma,

S..S.

May 22, 1976; 10:30 A.M.

Dear Master Sahn:

Recently I returned from Korea, and, prior to my departure, I was given your address by my very close friend who is also a relative of yours. She is the parent of So Nam Joo, and she owns a dress shop in Ok-ku-gun, Gunsan, Chollapuk-to, Korea. Her name is Yi Hae Soo.

As I've already mentioned, Mrs. Yi and I became the best of friends, and the reason she gave me your address is because she had noticed that I had a strong interest in learning the way, or gaining awareness through the mystical path of Buddhism. Strangely enough, I've always felt close to Buddhism as a way of life, and when I read one of the first sutras that I have read in this life—entitled “The Twin Verses”—I felt at home and quite familiar with it. While in Korea I wanted very much to learn the precepts under a Korean Zen Master, but for one reason or the other, I could not manage to receive instructions from a master. Nonetheless, through my pursuit and constant endeavor of Buddhism, I managed to read some important or valuable doctrines, and to meet several people who were also Buddhist Disciples. Through these experiences I was able to make some attempt at developing a technique for myself for the benefit of mankind. I started out by sitting in Zazen or meditation and performing breathing exercises. From that stage I began to concentrate on my solar plexus, or rather fix my attention there as I sat. Of course this was always preceded by the various breathing exercises. Since that time I have spent considerable time fixing my attention on the Pineal Gland and Heart Center. In any event, because of my ignorance I have not proceeded any further. I sometimes think that I may have made a mistake by sitting in Zazen without receiving instruction from one master. Yet I've always wanted to become enlightened to this great mystery of the Universe.

Therefore in great humility I reverently come to you for guidance. I do not wish to take any more of your time. May you have peace.

Harold

July 14, 1976

Dear Harold,

Thank you for your letter and your wife's letter. I was glad to hear that you visited Korea and met Mrs. Yi and that you like Zen.

I will send you a copy of Three Letters to a Beginner. These are to a beginning student who wanted to learn about practicing Zen. Maybe, if you read them, they will also help you to practice. Also I am sending you our newsletter.

You ask about practicing. Your practicing style is not good, not bad. Zen is understanding myself. So, I ask you, what are you? If you don't understand, only keep don't-know mind.

When you are sitting, breathe in for three seconds and only keep a clear mind. Breathe out for seven seconds; then when all the air is out, at that time only *don't know*. Then again and again and again. Zen is how to keep just-now mind. If you keep your mind in your body, this is wrong. Keeping a mind that is clear like space—this name is *don't know*. If you don't understand, only keep don't know. Then your mind will become clear, clear, and then finally you will get enlightenment.

So, there are three kinds of Zen: first, sitting Zen; next, action Zen; next, lying-down Zen. Any kind of Zen is O.K. How you keep just-now mind is very important. Body position is not important.

Therefore, when you're sitting, when you're talking, when you're walking, when you're working, when you're eating, when you're lying down, only keep don't know mind. Don't check anything. Only go straight—don't know. Then you will soon get enlightenment.

I hope that you are keeping a mind which is clear like space, and that you will soon find the correct way, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am sending you a picture of the Providence Zen Center family.

June 25, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I wasn't able to say good-bye on Wednesday, so I wish to say now that your teaching is very valuable.

Also, *I think* that you are heading in the right direction of getting on radio and television, publishing many books, building many centers.

The old ways have been tried for centuries, yet no one understands. The new ways of teaching and communication must be tried, so that many are introduced to Zen in a short time. There is no time for the old ways.

Of course the difficulty with this way is that there tends to be a great number of weak students, in that there is no master around to beat them into true hard practice. But it is better to have many new people make a start, then to attract a few very strong students and pass on the teachings to two or three people. At least, this is my way, my way of thinking, of teaching.

Please do not falter or lose strength.

Ed

June 30, 1976

Soen Sa Nim,

You asked me what is the last word of Zen? I answered, "The last word of Zen." If you do not believe this, then you do not understand the last word. If you want another answer that is the same as, "You tell me" or, "Last word, first word, why do you bother with these things?"

I think it is important that you get on television. Offhand, do you think it would be productive to approach the Japanese-Korean T.V. stations here, in L.A., with a program proposal for a half-hour T.V. show? If you do, please supply me with a program proposal, and I will contact them and attempt to set up a meeting when you come in September.

If this does not work out, perhaps Tahl Mah Sah Center could get this together with other Centers (Zen and other Buddhist) in L.A., and buy time for a show on one of the commercial stations.

There is also the possibility of Public Broadcast Television, which programs shows on the basis of community interest. Perhaps we could approach them with a program proposal, although last time I tried, a year ago, they were not overly excited.

Ed

July 14, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your two letters. I just returned from the International Zen Center of New York to the Providence Zen Center, so my answer is late, and I am sorry.

Somebody said to me, "I don't like you. Why do you make many Zen centers around, around, so we cannot see you, so our minds are moving? We like you very much, but we don't like you." So I said, "I don't want many Zen centers; I don't want radio, television, many books, but they appear by themselves, so only reflect action." So again he asks me, "Do you want to be famous?" So I said, "I don't want to be famous. Famous job—many suffering. Also have no time, cannot teach correctly."

So, your idea in your two letters is not bad, but my mind doesn't make anything. If it happens by itself, that's O.K.

You must understand, why did Bodhidharma sit in Sorim for nine years? This is very important. He had energy; his teachings were correct; he already understood everything is the future. But, why did he sit for nine years?

So, time and space—this is very important. Time and space make chance.

Before, somebody said, "Does a great man make society, or does society make a great man?" Which one is correct?

I hope, first, that you finish your homework, then next, correctly understand the last word. Thinking is no good. If you don't understand, don't check anything. Only go straight. Then keep a clear mind and find your original job, soon get enlightenment, and save all people.

Yours in the Dharma

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you?

Thank you for writing many introductions for me to great Korean temples. In Sun Kim and I went around Korea last week. First we went to Hwa Gae Sah in Seoul. They said I cannot stay there because I am a woman. It looks like a very nice temple. Then we went to Pop Mun Sah because Yun Hwa Sah abbot was sick in the hospital and could not meet us. At Bo Mun Sah we met Sae Dung Su Nim and saw Mu Ae Su Nim. She is fine. The next day we saw Sae Dung Su Nim again at Dae Cheon. Then we went to Pop Ju Sah. The monks were very nice to us, but the abbot was not there. Then we went to Hae In Sah. Going there I got a very strong feeling. By being there and seeing the monks practicing I think I understood a little more about Korean Buddhism. I was very happy to go to such a wonderful place. Then after one night we went to Bul Gok Sah. Thirty monks there were doing Kyol Che. The Bul Guk Sah abbot was very kind to us and took us by taxi to see Sokkuram Buddha and explained how the Buddha looked to him. He gave us money for our trip and was very kind. I think he is a very strict but kind Chu Ji Su Nim. The Hae In Sah Zen master was not there, but the monks showed us the sutra blocks, gave us some prints from them, took pictures with us and showed us Hae In Sah's old treasures. They told us to come back the last day of Kyol Che for a big ceremony and also to meet Il Tah Su Nim. But I'm afraid to meet Il Tah Su Nim—not afraid, but I don't want to go to him as your student because I have not finished Zen study. Is it O.K. to meet him anyway?

After Pul Kuk Sah went to Tong Do Sah. Weol Ha Su Nim was not there so we stayed three days. Then we met him and he gave us a Dharma talk in Korea. We also met Peok An Su Nim, a very old monk who asked how you are and said to tell you he is fine. Then a monk took us up the mountain to meet a great Zen Master, Kyong Bong Su Nim, who is 85 years old. Though I had no translator (In Sun got nervous and could not say a word), we could communicate a little, and he said he could understand me without words. He hit my mind very hard, and I felt very grateful to meet him. I think his power is very great. He said also that outside doesn't matter, whether I become a monk or not doesn't matter, only how keep just-now mind is important. These are the same as your words that you are always telling me, but sometimes I cannot hear.

At Tong Do Sah there were also two monks who were very lonely and not strong. They had been monks since they were children, and I think they did not want to be monks. They wanted to have friends and family. They were not strong like Hae In Sah monks. I felt a little sad for them. I thought if they did a 100-day retreat it would fix their minds. Otherwise they should stop being monks. It is no good to be a sad monk who wants love.

After we met Kyong Bong Su Nim we came back to Seoul, and they bought me many presents (family). In Sun wants to stay at Yun Hwa Sah to learn Buddhism. I think she is a very good young woman. I taught her Zen sitting posture and gave her beads and taught her

Banya Shim Gyong and Jung Go Op Jin On. On our trip she heard many Dharma talks, and now she is very interested in Buddhism. Maybe we will meet Ku Sahn Su Nim here in Seoul, and maybe she will ask him about Zen.

In a couple of days I will go to Yun Hwa Sah. I want to stay there because I want to be in Seoul. I want to be in Soul so I can study Korean at Yon Sei University. Sae Dung Su Nim said I must stay at Hwa Un Sah, but it is very inconvenient. Do you think you could send a letter permitting me to stay at Yun Hwa Sah, please? Is it O.K. to stay at Yun Hwa Sah and every day leave the temple to go to the University of Yon Sei? Some people say the monks (nuns) don't like it if I come and go every day. What can I do?

So, this letter is very long—I am sorry. Please send a letter as soon as you can about Yun Hwa Sah. Thank you very much for arranging for me to be able to see Korean Buddhism (temples and masters). I cannot say thank you too many times. Thank you.

Is there anything you need from Korea?

Best to everyone,

Love,

Becky

P.S. In Sun also wants to stay at Yun Hwa Sah with me, but she thinks the nuns won't like it if she goes every day to her English lesson and tennis lesson. What can she do?

July 15, 1976

Dear Becky,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I read about all your travels around Korea and your strong feeling for Korean Buddhism. That's not bad, but most important is the Buddhism which you cannot see, hear, taste, touch, or feel. You must find this Buddhism.

In your letter you said you were afraid to meet somebody because you do not yet understand Zen. That is not good. Don't check your mind; don't check your feelings. If you don't understand, then only go straight—don't know. If a Zen Master hits you, then only say, "Thank you very much." Then there's no problem. How to keep just-now mind—this is very important. You already understand, O.K.?

Don't know is don't know. Understand is understand. Attain is attain. Just like this. Put it all down.

You want to stay at Yun Hwa Sah. I have sent a letter to Myong Soon Su Nim, the Abbot. If you talk to her, she will help you. If In Sun wants to stay there also, then you must pay the temple money. Ask Myong Soon Su Nim how much to pay. I explained to the Abbot that you are going to school, and there's no problem. If you stay there alone you do not need to pay, but if two of you stay, you should help support the temple.

I hope you always keep a clear mind, learn Korean, soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

July 1, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope your trip East was a good one and that things in the East Coast centers are going well.

In this letter, I want to tell you about something I have learned in the last few days. Maybe it is interesting.

I had a visit from a lady with whom, some years ago, I had a very close and intimate relationship that lasted for several months. We had lunch and talked, she told me about her life now. For a lot of reasons, mainly having to do with financial pressures in raising her children alone and putting herself through school, she has recently become a professional hooker. I think she came to see me because she wanted some social reassurance and emotional support.

I understood this person's karma, so I knew there was nothing I could do for her except to give her the reassurance she wanted. So I just listened to her and was friendly and wished her well.

Afterwards, however, I had a very bad feeling in my stomach. It was a very tense, heavy and depressed sort of feeling. I knew well enough what caused it—it was my own attachment and old woman karma from the past that was causing the feeling. But knowing that didn't make the feeling go away.

After that, I told myself, "Put it all down. Only go straight ahead." So I didn't think about the situation anymore, but the feeling was still there in my stomach as strong as ever.

That night, I went to Tahl Mah Sah, sat Zen, and chanted, but the bad feeling remained in my stomach.

The next day, the feeling was still there, and my mind kept drifting into fantasies about the woman. I imagined her sitting in the hotel bar trying to be obvious enough to attract customers without being so obvious as to attract the police or to get thrown out of the place. Her life seemed full of troubles and sad. When I caught myself indulging in these imaginings, I would make them stop, but the sad feeling remained.

Finally, to get away from the feeling, I just concentrated on feeling how the feeling felt. That didn't do anything either. The knot in my stomach stayed. I wondered why I was having this sad and unpleasant feeling and why all the little tricks of understanding and explaining the emotion to myself did not dissolve it.

Then suddenly, as I was driving alone in my car thinking about it and feeling the knot in my stomach, I asked myself, "Who makes this feeling a sad feeling? Why not make this feeling a happy, good feeling?" So as soon as I made the feeling a happy feeling in my mind, that is what it was! The knot felt good. I liked it. I was happy.

A few minutes later. I had forgotten all about it. Now and again, it comes back a little. I just think, "Oh, there's that good feeling again," and it soon disappears.

270° works like a charm!!!

Why does Bodhidharma have no beard?

Thank you again for all of your teaching.

Sincerely,

An Hahn

July 20, 1976

Dear An Hahn,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I have just returned from the Cambridge Zen Center, so this answer is late. I am sorry.

Your letter was very interesting. I already told you, if you make something, you are hindered by something. If you are hindered by something, you are suffering from something. So don't make anything. Only go straight—don't know. Then you will get everything. That is our way, and also the great Bodhisattva Way. You already understand.

Here is a poem for you:

Mind around around around around everywhere
This everywhere place,
Completely just like this,
Lets go without checking inside and outside.
Ten thousand miles of cloudless sky,
Ten thousand miles of blue sky.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space. soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

July 28, 1976

Dear Mu Ae,

How are you? I received your letter to the Providence Zen Center. You said you haven't received my letters. I sent one to you on June 30. I don't understand why you haven't received it. I'm sending you a copy with this letter.

You said in your letter you would telephone me at the end of Kyol Che. You must have something important to tell me. What's the matter?

I have received many letters from Korea. These letters talked about, first, the Kun Bang. You began Kyol Che in the middle. Ordinarily, you would not be allowed to sit in the Kun Bang, but I talked to the abbot, and they gave you special permission.

Next, many people helped you to get your visa and clothes and gave you special food. You have been given special treatment. I asked the nuns to take you sightseeing, and they have already made plans to take you all around after Kyol Che. I told them you wanted to do winter training, and they have already made plans for you, so you must not worry about anything. You must follow your situation. You must understand Korean Buddhism karma. If you don't, you will have a problem in Korea.

Don't make anything; then you will get everything. If you make something, it will hinder you, and you will get suffering. If you want correct sitting, if you want correct Zen, if you want your correct way, then you are already mistaken; then your small I has already appeared. Don't check your mind; don't check your feelings, and *very important*, don't check other people's minds and actions. If you check other people, then you cannot act together with them. Also, you cannot find the Great Way. Also, you cannot find truth. If you have likes and dislikes in your mind, you have already lost your true self., You must make likes and dislikes disappear.

Some letters have come from Korea. These letters say you like somebody, and that she has been a nun for only a short time. Maybe her English is good, but young monks and nuns don't understand their direction. Maybe if you follow her, there will be a big problem. Korean Buddhism is like the army. Everyone must follow the abbot and the head office. You are an American nun. Everyone has a rank. New monks must follow old monks. Everyone is watching you very carefully. So, you must be very careful to act correctly at all times. It is very dangerous for you to follow your likes and dislikes.

If your mind is empty, the whole universe is empty. If your mind is not enough, the whole universe will not be enough. If your mind is complete and strong, any place you stay will be complete and strong. You must understand this. How you keep just-now mind from moment to moment is very important.

Again I tell you: don't check your mind; don't check your feelings; also don't check other people's actions; only go straight—don't know.

Many speech and many words are not necessary. Zen is not dependent on words and speech. You must keep a closed mouth. This is the best way. If you open it, you will soon fly to America.

I sent you to Korea to Sae Dung Soen Won, and I told Sae Dung Su Nim to take care of you. So, if you have any problems or questions, you must ask her. This is correct Korean style. If you don't like Sae Dung Zen Center, then you must tell me what is wrong, and I will show you another temple.

But, in Korea, if you make a good reputation at one temple, then all the other temples in Korea will hear of it and will support you. If you make a bad reputation at one temple, all the other temples will understand your bad reputation and will not help you. So, you must be careful. You must make a good reputation for yourself.

You are a very new nun. Your nun age is only one-half year. A one-half-year old nun must do no-eyes, no-nose, no-tongue, no-body action. After you have been a nun for ten years, then you can open your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, etc. If you get enlightenment, then you can open everything.

So, I ask you: long ago in China, Hyang Om Zen Master said, "It is like a man up a tree, hanging from a branch by his teeth. His hands and feet are tied. Some one comes under the tree and asks, 'Why did Bodhidharma come to China?' If he does not answer, he evades his duty; if he does answer, he loses his life." If you are in the tree, what can you do?

If you understand, quickly send me an answer. If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, find the correct way, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

July 28, 1976
Cape Neddick, Maine

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Larry explained that it would be better to hold the August Yong Maeng Jong Jin in Cambridge as planned. Fine. Perhaps we could have one here later in the year.

In the meantime, there is deep interest in *you* and *Zen* among my students here on the Southern Maine coast. Would it be possible for you to come and give a Dharma talk? Any week-day evening during the first three weeks of August would be fine (and might result in some of the local people attending the August YMJJ in Cambridge).

As you suggested, I am giving the “What am I?” question to interested students. Usually, after Hatha Yoga, I read a chapter from your book—especially Letters to a Beginner—in which you ask, “The mountain and you—are they the same or different?” About twelve people are now working with this question. Shall I wait for you to show them the answer? (I have already demonstrated single point question/answers using a bell and a book.)

I hope it is the good karma of this area to have you visit soon!

Yours in the Dharma,

Patricia

P.S. If you decide to come, please send the date at your earliest convenience, so that I can place notices in the newspapers, etc. for I feel sure there are many interested people in the area, and you would be the *first* enlightened master to visit here!

August 9, 1976

Dear Patricia,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? I am very sorry that this letter is very late, because we just finished Yong Maeng Jong Jin in Providence.

You say your students like Zen. It gives me great joy to hear this. You would like me to give a Dharma talk. But, I must go to Toronto and Rochester this week, and then to New Haven this week-end for Yong Maeng Jong Jin. I will go to Cambridge on Thursday, August 19, and Yong Maeng Jong Jin will begin there Friday night. On Saturday night I will have the Sim Gum Do test. On Sunday, the twenty-second, is the bell ceremony. Then, many visitors

will come to Providence, so I must stay there until Yong Maeng Jong Jin in New York begins on Thursday, August 26. So, I am very busy; the first three weeks of August are filled.

If you want me to give a speech on the night of the twentieth, you must tell me how to get to your place after lunch on Friday, and I will return to Cambridge after the speech in order to give Saturday morning interviews. So, an early speech is good, maybe beginning at 7:00 P.M. and lasting until 9:00. Then I can be back in Cambridge by 10:30. If you like this plan, please call Larry at the Cambridge Zen Center. Then I will be happy to give a Dharma talk for you.

Your “what am I?” and kong-an reading teachings are very good. But, most important is how do you keep just-now mind? Reading the kong-an book and practicing Dharma combat are important, but if you practice only in this way, only dry cognition will result. Dry cognition is thinking. This cannot help them. Correct cognition comes from correct meditation. Correct meditation means don't check my mind, don't check my feelings, don't check everything. Only go straight. Then, my mind is clear like space. Clear like space is like a clear mirror: red comes, red; white comes, white. Only just like this is truth. That is correct cognition. So, correct cognition means there is no subject, no object, no inside, no outside. Inside and outside become one—only reflect mind, not thinking mind.

You already understand this. You must teach this. That is very important.

How is your homework? Did you finish it? Here is a new kong-an for you:

Long ago in China, there was a famous Zen Master named Hyang Om. He always asked his students. “It is like a man up a tree, hanging from a branch by his teeth. His hands and his feet are tied, so he cannot grasp a branch. Another man comes under the tree and asks him, ‘Why did Bodhidharma come to China?’ If he doesn't answer, he evades his duty; if he does answer, he loses his life. He cannot use his mouth, cannot use his hands, cannot use his feet. If you are in the tree, what can you do? Just at that time, how do you stay alive?”

If you understand this, understand! If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

July 29, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I have tried many letters to you over the past weeks, since receiving yours to me, which was so full of learning! All have ended in the waste basket. Too much thinking, checking my mind—I can hear you saying, “Put it all down—only go straight!”

What I want to say is actually quite simple! Number one, thank you so very much for your letter—it was a real surprise as I had not expected a response to my note. Especially thank you for explaining the true meaning of the Yum Joo. I am trying very hard to keep them in my mind, since more than anything I would like to do whatever it takes to walk the Bodhisattva way. *Not* wearing the beads helps me to remember... I am also “trying” Kwan Seum Bosal as much as I can, sometimes even the 3,000... my waste basket letters were mainly explaining my problems and obstacles with that. Yet, since the problems and obstacles keep changing, it must be that this is an important part of the process for me—to *face* my restlessness, boredom, anger, judgementalness, and not get attached to them. I am *sure* you are aware that people experience such things when they sit or do Kwan Seum Bosal or whatever! Especially some of us spoiled Americans!

Second, we will be coming to Los Angeles, September 9-12, and we are both looking forward to being with you there. We are bringing two friends who have not yet experienced Zen, but who are fascinated at what has happened to us and therefore are interested! A number of my clients (I have a small private practice as a psychotherapist) are also beginning to meditate—see how your influence spreads?!

Ezra is finer than I’ve ever known him—he is working hard (in the emergency room) and yet very centered. He sits when he needs to sit, is not as attached to “doing hard practice” as I, and I think it is because he really cleaned his karma when he did the Precepts and at the Kido.

I hope you are well and happy; your schedule (in the newsletter) seems very busy... Do Zen Masters ever get time off for themselves?

I found your book in the store yesterday, and from the quick leafing through I’ve had time for, it looks great! Almost (but not quite) as good as being with you. One question: I read the chapter on your life—why does it seem necessary to do such harsh things to our bodies to become enlightened? I can see accepting the suffering that comes so often of itself in life, but why inflict it on ourselves? Don’t, please, feel you have to write me the answers—you are very busy. I’ll be seeing you soon!

Kwan Seum Bosal. And much love.

Diana

July 28, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

There is little I can add to Diana's letter except to tell you that you are frequently with me as the days pass. Diana knows me well and is correct in saying that the experiences I've shared at our various meetings have been very rich and full.

As with Dharma talks, the content of this letter has little meaning. It is just a way of expressing love and gratitude.

As you can see, we are both looking forward to another time of sharing with you in Los Angeles in September. Plus—we are bringing two new recruits.

I have been busy in my practice(s) both at home and at work. I find much less attachment and peace in knowing that.

You were right—our children, and others around us, change just because we are but being who we are and thus they can be who they are.

Have a happy birthday! Love to Linc, etc. See you soon,

Ezra

August 10, 1976

Dear Diana and Ezra,

How are you? Thank you for your two letters.

Diana, your letter said you wrote many letters and threw them away. That is very good, but not throwing away is best. Only send them to me. Instead of writing and throwing away, writing and throwing away, don't write them at all—this is Zen mind. Moment to moment, how do you keep just-now mind? I already said to you, don't check your mind, don't check your feelings—only go straight. Throwing away means checking your mind. If you're writing, go straight and send to me. Don't check good and bad. If you don't check good and bad, any thinking is the truth. So, an eminent teacher said, "Every day mind is Zen mind."

You say doing Kwan Seum Bosal 3,000 times every day is very difficult, but you are chanting very slowly. You must chant very quickly KwanSeumBosalKwanSeumBosal. Then 3,000 in fifteen minutes is possible. If you chant slowly, thinking appears; if you chant quickly, thinking is not possible. Then you make new karma. Then any place—sitting, talking, watching television, playing golf, any action—in your head is KwanSeumBosalKwanSeumBosal. This is Yum Joo meaning and correct practicing.

So if karma appears, then your previous bad karma disappears. Already you said you face your restlessness, boredom, anger and judgmentalness. Then this means it is possible to change your life. Then you finally realize that this life is a dream. What is correct life? Correct life is beyond time and space. Then there is no life, no death. Also you will get freedom from life and death—complete freedom.

You say you will come to Los Angeles September 9–12. I am very happy that you will come and bring your friends. It is wonderful that some of your clients are also beginning to sit Zen. That is the great Bodhisattva Way—only help other people.

I am very happy to hear that you are both practicing and that you are so well, Ezra.

You found my book; that is very good. You ask me why the body must suffer. When I went on retreat, I was very young and very strong, so I had many desires. So sometimes I was very angry—very angry at other people and at the whole world. Also, sometimes ignorance appeared. So I checked these three things—desire, anger, and ignorance—they come from where? They come from this body. So, if you can completely control this body, then complete control of desire, anger, and ignorance is possible. I thought about this, so I tried this.

All the Buddhas have tried difficult practicing. When these three things—desire, anger, and ignorance—appear, our minds are not clear and become dark. After hard practicing, these three things go away. After my retreat, my mind was bright and clear like space. You must try this one time; then you will understand why it is important.

How is your homework? Did you finish it? When you come to Los Angeles, you must bring good answers. I will be waiting for you.

Here is a new kong-an. In China, there was a great Zen Master Wol Am. One day he asked a monk, “Kei Jung made a cart, the wheels of which had a hundred spokes. He then took off the wheels and removed the axle. What is made clear by this action?”

Do you understand this?

Here is a poem for you:

Where the wheel of mind turns,
Even the master falls into ignorance.
The four directions, up and down,
South, north, east, west.

I hope you will always keep a mind that is clear like space, soon finish your homework, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am sending you this Kido tape and pictures.

July 19, 1976

Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you for your interesting letter.

Bodhidharma sat in Sorim for nine years because the time was not right. Action before the time is correct is almost useless action. But, action before the time is right also helps produce a change that makes time right. Still I study, because it is still time for me to study, and not time for me to open a center.

If you truly did not want many centers, you would not have many centers. If a student said, "Please come to Rat's Ass, Montana, and I will give you a house for a center, and there are already many interested in Zen," you could turn him down. But *you* would go, and you would look to see if it was right: then you would probably open a center. That is your style. People offer centers to you and people ask you to come, so you come. No one asks Kosan to come. Time is not yet right for him, and he doesn't really want a center, or so he says.

A great man does not make society, nor does society make a great man. It takes both, and it takes the right time.

You say you do not want many centers, but no one has a gun to your head forcing you to go. You say you do not want to be famous, but no one will sue you if you do not make videotapes of yourself. You can refuse to allow these things, just as you refuse to allow drinking at Tahl Mah Sah. So you may not want them, but at least you do not oppose them. Besides, you like activity; you like having many people around. Your Dharma talks are more energetic and active when there are many people, and sometimes you cancel them where there are few people. Do not deceive yourself; you like many centers, you like traveling, you like many people. It is the same with me. When I have fifty people in my class, I am much more energetic, alive, than when I have twenty. Yet, I do not look forward to a large class because it takes so much energy, and I have a difficult time sleeping that night. Yet, If I did not like it, did not think that it was right, I would not do it.

It was all right in the old times to wait for the right time. The right time meant that effort would not be wasted, and would be productive. But there is no time anymore for waiting for effectiveness. We must act now, and by those actions make the right time come.

Already there is world-wide famine, but it is not reaching the newspapers. In five years it will be much, much worse. Already wars are being fought over food, oil, and other resources, and soon it will be much much worse. The only way to change this, so that it does not become as bad as it is becoming, is to change people's minds, all over, everywhere, so that they grow up. Otherwise, within a very few years, there will be continuous war and famine and disease and death everywhere, even Providence.

Thus, there is no time to wait for the right time; the issue must be forced so that the right time is created. I am essentially lazy, and it is hard for me to act unless the time is right. But I also see that if we wait for the time to be right, then we will have waited too long.

Ed

August 3, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Flicking ashes on the Buddha...

Wonderful!! You understand the absolute; you will be a great teacher. But this is only one-half. You must also understand bowing to the Buddha. One foot in the absolute, one foot in the world of men. When in Rome, do as the Romans.

Mouse Kong-an:

A thief robs the king's treasure, but the money is already gone.

A man searches for truth in the Dharma, but it is empty.

Sincerely,

Ed

August 9, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your two letters. How are you lately?

In your first letter you made good Bodhisattva speech. You understand my mind, but, I ask you, do you understand your mind? Your thinking made me, but you only understand one; you do not understand two. Some of your speech is correct; some is only your idea, so not correct.

Your thinking and your ideas are wonderful, but the fruits are not ripe. When fruit is not ripe, it is very beautiful, has very good color, and is strong, but the taste is very bad. With true ripe fruit, the form is not so good, the color is not so good, they are not so strong, but the taste is very good. Which one do you like?

You say correct time, correct time. If you want correct time, you have already lost your correct time. Time is not waiting for you. Also, Zen is not dependent on time. Not being dependent on time is the correct time. So, you must understand this: Zen is not dependent on time and space, is not dependent on words and speech, is not dependent on your body, is

not dependent on life and death, is not dependent on Buddha and God, is not dependent on anything. Also, you must not be dependent on me; you must be dependent on yourself. This means depend on your true self—this is correct Zen.

If you completely believe, 100%, in your true self, you also can do everything. So, I talk to you: if you *want* to try anything, you don't make anything, then you will get everything.

Next, in your second letter, your first answer to dropping ashes on the Buddha is not good, not bad. If usual people hear your speech, they will understand, but this man is very attached to emptiness. Before I told you, if you went to the store with a child, and the child took candy without paying, you must say, "You are a good boy. You want this candy, but if you take this and do not pay, you are a thief." This style teaching form is very necessary.

Next, the mouse kong-an answer: your answer is like scratching your right foot when your left foot itches. I already told you, a quarter is twenty-five cents, twenty-five cents is ice cream, the ice cream is already gone, so very good feeling—wonderful! You must understand this story. Quarter, twenty-five cents, ice cream, ice cream already gone—these four things are just like this. Understand is understand; don't know is only don't know. Very clear. Don't think about anything. If you don't understand, then only go straight, don't check anything. *Only* go straight.

I hope you are always keeping a mind which is clear like space, will soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I will come back to Los Angeles the first week of September. It will be wonderful to see you.

July 28, 1976

Dear Venerable Seung Sahn,

I have been pondering the kong-an you gave me of the man who was hanging by his teeth from a tree, over a precipice, and under the tree another person asks him, "Why did Bodhidharma come from the West?"

I think the reply could be: Who is hanging from the tree? Bodhidharma did not come from the West. No one is hanging from the tree.

Or, a story I thought of: A river is approaching a desert. It wishes to cross the desert, but every time it gets near, the water is absorbed by the sand. What can it do? A cloud approaches, and lifts the water from the river into its folds, carries it safely across the desert and drops it as rain on the other side.

The man hanging from the tree is the conceptual mind. There is no way he can reply to a question which comes from the mind. The only answer is in transcending, in letting go of the conceptual and entering No/Mind. That is why the question was never asked. That is why the river became a cloud.

Yours in the Dharma,

Jean

August 10, 1976

Dear Jean,

Thank you for your letter. How are you?

Your answer is not good, not bad. You already understand this kong-an. You are correct, but your speech is understanding; understanding is thinking. You must *attain* this kong-an.

In your answer you already opened your mouth, so you are already dead. What can you do? This kong-an already said, "If he doesn't answer, he evades his duty. If he does answer, he loses his life." He cannot use his hands, cannot use his feet, cannot use his mouth. If you are in the tree, what can you do? If you correctly understand this situation, then you understand.

You explained this story about the river. You understand, but understanding is thinking. Thinking cannot help you. You say transcend. What is transcend? What is no mind? You must show me.

Someone asked Ma Jo Zen Master, “What is Buddha?”

He said, “Mind is Buddha, Buddha is mind.”

The next day, another person asked him, “What is Buddha?”

He said, “No mind, no Buddha.”

Which one is correct? If you understand correct, then no problem. Many words are not necessary. You must correctly understand just-now mind. This is very important. Just-now mind is not dependent on words, not dependent on Buddha and God, not dependent on anything. Only depend on your true self. If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. Don't check anything.

I hope you will only go straight—don't know, soon finish your homework, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 10, 1976

Dear Jin Kwang, Joan,

How are you? I hope you are very well. Are you busy? Busy is good. You must keep clear mind. Then your busy mind all is truth.

Long ago, in China, there was a famous Zen Master, Jo Ju. Before he became a Zen Master, one day he visited his teacher Nam Cheon. Jo Ju asked Nam Cheon Zen Master, "What is the true way?"

Nam Cheon answered, "Every day mind is the true way."

"Then should I try to keep it or not?"

Nam Cheon Zen Master said, "If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken."

"If I do not try, how can I understand the true way?"

Then Zen Master Nam Cheon said, "The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion. Not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the true way of not thinking, it is like space, void and clear. So, why do you make right and wrong?" At that time, Jo Ju suddenly got Enlightenment.

Jin Kwang, did you get it?

Here is a poem for you:

Flowers in springtime;
Moon in autumn;
Cool wind in summer;
Snow in winter.

If you don't make anything,
For you it is a good season.

Here I am sending you the Kido tape and some pictures. I hope you are always keeping a clear mind, soon finish the Great Work, become the Universal Mother, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 9, 1976

Soen Sa Nim,

I just bought and read a copy of your's and Stephen's book, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. It is perhaps the most important book on Zen written in ten years. I hope the sales go well, and there will be a second book, and a third. This book could have been ten times longer.

My old letters embarrass me.

Your last letter, and the book, made me return to my "homework."

One point, on page 153: one of your students heard a lecture by Sasaki (Sex Mind, Zen Mind). What Sasaki says about sex and marriage is that just as the mind is thrown away during sex, that is how we must have our minds all the time. Also, he urges all of his "holy" monks to get married, because, he says, marriage is great Zen training. The process of living with another person, and not doing what one wants to do all of the time, but trying to "perfect" oneself through a relationship with another. Constantly, the small I causes an imperfect relationship, causes arguments, etc. And through living together, the small I is constantly eroded, destroyed. Sex itself is nothing: it merely points to the state of the disappearance of the small I. Nothing more. The important thing is living together, and thereby, the process of losing the small I through relating to each other. This is just like Zen training in a center, where everybody lives together, works together, sits together, bows and chants together.

I thank you and Stephen for the book.

Enclosed, on a separate sheet of paper, are two more answers for the ashes kong-an. They are the same as the last one, but clearer.

Ed

August 4, 1976

Soen Sa Nim,

Flicking ashes on the Buddha:

Wonderful. You understand that Buddha is not holy; you understand the absolute. But Buddha is not an ashtray either. Each has its own function. You would not use a camera as a hammer, or a hammer to take pictures. Please use the ashtray.

Or,

Why did you flick ashes on the Buddha?

Because Buddha is not holy, all things are equal.

Buddha is equal to the walls and the sky and a tea cup?

Yes.

Then Buddha must be equal to an ashtray?

Yes.

Then why not use the ashtray for your ashes, and the Buddha for bowing.

I wanted to show you that Buddha was not holy.

I already know this. Now we both know this, and you should use the ashtray.

August 18, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter. How are you lately? You say that my book is the most important one written in ten years. I am so happy. Thank you very much. We are now preparing the second book; maybe it will be out by next year.

Your next speech about page 153: You are correct, so I always tell you, if you make something, you have a hindrance; if you attach to something, you suffer. If you don't make anything, you get everything.

Next, your homework: This cigarette man is very attached to primary point. Also, he thinks that he has gotten Enlightenment. Your teaching is very smooth, but he does not listen to smooth teaching. It is like a game of chess. If you put your opponent's king in check with only one piece, he will soon attack you. You must surround and checkmate his king. Then, he cannot escape.

I hope that you only go straight—don't know, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 18, 1976

Dear Hae Gak,

Thank you for your beautiful card. How are you lately?

Jim and Paul came to live at the Providence Zen Center. They are doing hard training, sitting every day, so I am very happy.

Here is a poem for you:

Flowers in springtime, moon in autumn;
Cool wind in summer, snow in winter.
If you don't make anything in your mind,
For you it is a good season.

I hope you always keep a clear mind, soon get enlightenment, and become a great man.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I will be in Los Angeles on September 3.

August 5, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Today I received a letter from Kozan Roshi with a check for legal services I did for him and his translator with the Immigration Service. It also talked about kong-ans. If you remember the conversation I had with him, the meaning is clear.

I wanted to smooth over that situation as I noticed you seemed somewhat concerned that I might have caused bad feelings, so I made a letter for Kozan Roshi that I hope is tactful. I am your student and not really interested in studying kong-ans with him, so I did not reply to what he said to me in his letter.

Anyhow, I am sending you photocopies of the two letters.

I look forward to seeing you again in Los Angeles. They say you are coming here in late September. Is that correct? So far, it has been a very busy summer for me. My oldest daughter got married last month. I am teaching a class in Zen history at the College of Oriental Studies, and the law business is about like usual. Also I am learning to play shakuhachi, and the dog we found in the mountains takes me for walks sometimes in the evening. Lots of busyness. I am doing nothing.

Yours in the Dharma,

An Hahn

August 18, 1976

Dear An Hahn,

Thank you for your letter. How are you lately? First, my congratulations on your daughter's marriage. I am happy to hear that you are learning to play the shakuhachi. Shakuhachi mind is Zen mind. When you and the shakuhachi become one, then you will get wonderful music. That sound is better than sutras, better than Buddha, better than God. I hope you will get correct shakuhachi sound.

You say busy—that's not bad. This world needs you, so you are busy. Only go straight—don't know. Then busy is not busy; busy is the great Bodhisattva Way.

Next, you sent me Kozan Roshi's kong-ans and letter. That is wonderful. You must always keep your correct situation. That is Zen. Kozan Roshi's kong-ans are all basic-form kong-ans—you already understand, not complicated, very simple. But last interview I asked you

the Duk Sahn Carrying Bowls kong-an. Did you understand the last word? Did you understand the whispered secret? Did you understand how Duk Sahn's Dharma speech differed from before?

This kong-an has three big questions, so it is not so simple. We will meet in Los Angeles and again check it together. Also, we will go over Kozan Roshi's kong-ans.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Maybe I will arrive in Los Angeles on September 3.

August 18, 1976

Dear Jin Mi and Lawler,

How are you lately? I just now finished Yong Maeng Jong Jin at New Haven and have returned to the Providence Zen Center. When we stayed at Toronto, you were very kind and hospitable. Chanting together at your house and dining together, Koreans and Canadians, was wonderful. You made many people happy. Thank you very much.

All things are in a chain of dependent origination, so the primary cause equals the result. Each result is itself a primary cause, and so forth. This good Bodisattva action is a very good primary cause, so you will get the Great Bodhisattva Way—that is result.

Here is a poem for you:

True self clearly appears,
Not dependent on six roots, dusts, and consciousnesses.
Original body always remains clear;
Speech and words cannot hinder it.
True Nature has no smudge,
Originally complete itself—
Only without thinking,
Just-like-this is Buddha.

I hope you don't check anything. Only go straight, always keeping a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Also thank you very much for your donation. I am sending you two Zen robes. These robes may help and teach you, I hope.

Sunday

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Today I took special medicine (mescaline) with my friend. He read from Rinzai for about an hour and everything seemed so clear and so funny, a great big beautiful joke. And then we had sex and there were no eyes no ears no nose no tongue no body. But afterwards for many hours I felt great complete impossible terror, and I know that some part of this is always there. You have said that to be a Zen Buddhist, one must have great faith, great courage, and great strength. I think this terror means that I have no faith and no courage. Is it possible to attain courage?

Carole

August 24, 1976

Dear Carole,

Carole, what do you do now? How do you keep just-now mind?

Don't check your mind, don't check you feelings, also don't check anything. If you check something, you lose everything. Also, if you *want* something, you cannot get it. Don't make anything; then you will get everything.

Just now I got your letter. You say you took medicine. I think before you took medicine, you wanted something. So, after you took medicine, you lost everything. But don't worry. You say no faith, no courage, no question. You sent to me a letter, so you already have faith, and you already have courage. You say, "Is it possible to attain courage?" So you already have question. These three things are not so big, not so strong, but you have them. You say you don't have them; this means you are checking your mind. But you have them, so don't worry.

I ask you, what are you? If you understand, answer me; if you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. Why do you check your mind? In don't-know mind, there is no faith, no courage, no question, no Buddha, no anything. But don't-know mind's name *is* great faith, great courage, and great question.

You asked me if it is possible to attain courage. Put down this mind—this is thinking. Only go straight—don't know. Then already you have attained everything. So don't check your mind, don't check your feelings; only go straight—don't know—O.K.?

Medicine mind is strong feeling mind. Many people like this feeling. But after, this feeling disappears and the opposite, very bad feeling appears. This is medicine mind. If you understand correct medicine mind, no problem. If you don't understand medicine mind, this feeling controls you. You must control your feelings—this is very important. Sitting on the floor, you must breathe in for three seconds—clear mind, clear mind, clear mind, and then for seven seconds breathe out strong, slow DON'T KNOW. Then controlling your feelings is possible.

I hope you are always keeping don't-know mind, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffer.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 12, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I teach a class at U.C.L.A on Zen, and this means that the people that come are those who are only a little interested, usually. Otherwise, they would already be practicing at some Zen center. Many stay just a few weeks, and about half stay for all ten weeks. Of forty-five students that start, maybe five, each quarter, continue to practice sitting at some center, and maybe another five sit alone.

But there is a large group of people that come to my classes, finish the course, and do not go on, or do not sit. These people, mostly women, mostly over twenty-five years old, constantly fight what I have to say, do not practice, and do not go on. Yet, they come, time after time. After me, they go to a new teacher: Rajneesh, Krishnamurti, etc.

When I question them, I find out they all say, "I follow my own heart." This means that they do not like sitting, they don't see the value in sitting, discipline, group living, i.e. "practice" at all. Still, they go on, from teacher to teacher, trying to find "their heart, or mind". They say that they understand what I say, but are "not ready" to do it. They say that they are not clear, not enlightened, and that they must seek the "right" practice, the right discipline.

Basically, they do not like practice, they do not like discipline, and although they "see" that practice is important, they do not "feel," in their "hearts," that the time is right for them to practice. Like I said, this is mostly women, but a few younger men, also.

I try to reach them by binding them up with words, or by binding them with the importance of understanding kong-ans. You understand this, don't you? To give them a big delusion, so that by practicing to "destroy" the delusion, they just continue to practice. Many of these people understand all that I say, understand Huang Po, understand everything; yet still they seek words.

How do I get to these people? How do you get to these people? This is my question.

My objections to Zen have always been intellectual, not what I feel. Thus, I can answer and set to rest intellectual objections to practice. But not the people that have feeling-emotional objections, those who see the necessity of practice, but do not feel ready yet, those who claim, "This is not where I am at," or those who say, "I am at the place where I want to smoke dope and have a good time, practice should be entertaining and a good feeling sort of thing." These people are not yet serious enough. How can they be helped? Or, must I just wait? I tell them that doing what they want to do is what they have done for many years, it got them nowhere, but this does not convince them.

Kong-ans:

You asked, "Avalokitesvara has a thousand eyes; which is the true eye?"

"The wall is yellow, the carpet is red."

You asked, "What is the last word of Zen?"

I answered, "The last word of Zen." This is still the best answer, but also good is, "The last word cannot be said aloud."

Or, "Supper is ready."

Be seeing you soon,

Ed

This situation reminds me of the poem:

Not wanting to discard greed and anger,
In vain you trouble to read Buddha's teachings.
You see the prescription, but you don't take the medicine—
How then can you do away with your illness?

I have a kong-an for you:

If indeed the world is one, is true, how is it that:
You see me, and I see you.
Yet I don't see me, and you don't see you?

August 16, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Did you actually read my letter?

I told you that there was no time to wait for things to come to you. Then you wrote back that one must not depend on time. I said no time, you said no time. Go drink some tea.

To believe in oneself is not believe in oneself. If one acts without believing in oneself, then one believes in oneself. Forget self, then one can accomplish.

Ripe fruit is best, but one does not have to wait for nature to ripen fruit. By protecting the tree from the wind, it ripens more quickly on the branch; or, after it drops from the tree, it ripens more quickly in a warm place. This is what I said. You raised the question of great man or society. Any answer is thinking, blockage.

Mouse kong-an:

Mouse eats cat-food; cat eats mouse.

Catfood, mouse, new catfood, new catfood already gone.

Ashes on the Buddha:

Wonderful, you understand that Buddha is not holy, but if you flick anymore ashes on the Buddha, I'll punch the shit out of you, and call the police.

See you soon,

Ed

P.S. You asked if I understand my own mind. No, I don't. I used to, but it accomplished nothing.

Also, you said that if you *want* to make something, you can't make anything. That if you don't want anything, then you can make everything. This is not true. Jimmy Carter, and all of the other presidential candidates throughout history, have wanted to be president. They lie, cheat, steal, etc., and some do become president. Many have been murdered for a throne. Also, people that have bad hearts, that *want* to live longer, they lose weight, eat a special diet, and exercise. Then, they may live twenty years longer.

Not doing applies to Zen people. All the rest of the world wants, then goes out to get what they want. If they don't get it, it causes great suffering. But, who is it that fears suffering and failure? Wanting to save people and working to do it, being attached to it, is okay, if you are willing to suffer the consequences. Suffering is not suffering unless it is regarded as suffering.

Ed

August 25, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letters of August 12 and August 16. Now I will go to New York, so answering your letters is not possible right now. I have no time, so I am very sorry. I know you are waiting for my letter, so I am sending a short answer. We will talk about your letters and I will answer your questions in Los Angeles. I will go to Los Angeles on the third of next month, and I look forward to seeing you.

I hope you always keep a clear mind, soon get Great Wisdom, and then you will follow the Bodhisattva Way.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 18, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I returned last Friday from twelve days of “hard sitting”—a Vipassana Meditation Retreat led by Jack Kornfield, whom you know. There was your letter and Kido tape and pictures to welcome me home! Thank you so much! Although all that sitting (my first such intensive, continuous sitting) was “good” for me, what a gift to hear your chanting! I missed the bowing, chanting, eating ceremony, and your bell. It was also the first time in years (many, many) I have been away, alone, from my family and my usual life. Very strange. We lived very simply—a place far off in the country—no electricity—everything slowed way down—no talking—a mother Banty hen and eleven baby chicks—a full moon—hot mineral springs for our sore muscles—good teaching from Jack—the hardest thing I’ve ever done, nevertheless, to face my many, many attachments.

While there, I answered for myself the question I asked you, why is it necessary to make our bodies suffer. *It just is*, that’s all! The axle, the wheels need breaking for the mind to be still. I feel discouraged that this will ever happen to me: yet I think (pardon that word!) that I scare myself when I look at the huge mountain of my ego, my habits, the way my small I is. I am trying to take each minute as a chance to let go to Big I. Bowing is still the easiest way for me to do that. Better than Kwan Seun Bosal—I can now do 3,000 in 30-40 minutes, fast like you said, but all I end up with is a headache! To each his own! When I run in the mornings, for exercise, I like to keep rhythm with Kwan Seun Bosal—it keeps me in the here and now, not thinking. Also, listening to my clients, the Kwan Seun Bosal often pops into my mind, helps me pay attention to the person and not just their words.

I appreciate what you teach about writing letters, throwing them away, etc. It is very hard for me to *not* check my mind. I am not sure of myself. I feel when I reread a letter, sometimes, that what I say is not important, maybe no longer even true since the writing of it changed it somehow—that I should not be wasting your time, etc. Words are a terrible way of communicating, and yet, how can people know each other without them? Especially at a distance? Also—another thing about checking my mind—I have tended all my life to be overly impulsive, to say what I feel *too quick*—and later be sorry, since had I been able to wait, I would have perhaps been able to respond from a deeper level, not just from small I. So—I don’t trust myself at that point. Zen actions as opposed to impulsive, small-I actions: that is hard for me to learn!

It will be good to see you again, in Los Angeles. Enclosed is some money for your plane fare (or whatever is needed). We are both very eager to be part of what you are doing—“to save the whole world from suffering.” What else is important?

Love, Diana

Thank you for the poem—it certainly fits right where I am. Whew!

August 25, 1976

Dear Diana,

Thank you very much for your letter and your check.

You said you sat for twelve days—hard training. That is wonderful. I sometimes say hard training is like dry cleaning the mind. All people use their minds every day, but they do not dry clean their minds, so dirty, dirty, and bad karma appears, and more bad karma, so their minds cannot become clear. So hard training is sometimes very important; then not dirty.

Sometimes I check my mind, so my mind is sometimes clear, sometimes dirty, so hard training is necessary. If I don't check my mind, then my mind is clear like space, so hard training is not necessary. Descartes said, "I think; therefore I am." I am not thinking; therefore what? Cleaning is not necessary. If I think, then cleaning is necessary.

You were practicing with Jack. Jack is a very good teacher. Finally you understand about making our bodies suffer: "It just is." That is wonderful. Clear mind means intuition mind. Intuition means no subject, no object, inside and outside become one mind. If you keep this mind always, moment to moment, you can understand your correct opinion, your condition, your situation.

Most people separate their opinion, their condition, and their situation, but if you have a clear mind, your opinion, condition, and situation become one action—cannot separate them. At teaching time, only teaching; when you return to your house, only mother's mind; when talking to your husband, only wife's mind; when you're driving, only drive; when you're walking, only walk; when you're eating, only eat. Correct moment to moment is your correct opinion, correct condition, correct situation. So don't check anything. Only go straight—Kwan Seum Bosal; then you will get everything.

You want small I to disappear and to become big I—that is also your thinking. Also I think only sitting, Kwan Seum Bosal, you are attached to this Kwan Seum Bosal chanting, so you get a headache. When you are outside, walking around, you try Kwan Seum Bosal; then no headache. Don't be attached to Kwan Seum Bosal—only like singing a song. Then no problem.

You say "words are a terrible way of communicating." But words are very important. But if you are attached to words, words control you. You must control words. This means words and speech do not hinder your true self. So if you're thinking, you are hindered by words and speech; if you're not thinking, you have freedom from words and speech—no problem.

You say that you say what you feel too quickly. If you are attached to something, then you're quick; if you are not attached to something, then you're not quick—like a clear mirror. If something is reflected, then reflect; if something is not reflected, then nothing. Why quick? So, how do you keep just-now mind? This is very important.

Don't check anything. Then you will get everything. Only go straight—Kwan Seum Bosal.

You did not say your homework. Did you finish your homework?

I look forward to seeing you in Los Angeles.

I hope you always keep Kwan Seum Bosal mind, then soon finish the Great Work and get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering,

Yours in the Dharna,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you so much for visiting us in Toronto. You made me so happy being there, and I really enjoyed meeting Mu Bul Su Nim and all the Korean people.

When you were here, I realized that for a while I had been sitting without consciousness—like, as you say, chickens sit. I don't know about this—it's different—Oh, I know—there's no great questioning—no don't know mind. You said I do mantra this way too. That's true. But I don't know how to get out. Is this the way? Just don't know?

I am so happy Lawlor could be with you. He is a very good husband, and has long had—long been searching. He felt a great bond for your teaching.

Everyday I sit and do bowing and try to make more of my moments conscious—Zen bicycle riding, Zen walking. Sometimes, this is very difficult—I wish I didn't have to live here. I wish I could be in a community of people who are all sharing. I know what I do doesn't matter—so why can't I be doing it in a community of people?

As I write, I think—right now, I am supposed to be here. And I could make more of a community happen with Samu Su Nim, as you said. More students have come since you spoke, and more of them are staying. But I feel helpless to affect what happens. I asked if we could do bowing on mats. Samu Su Nim says in Korea no one uses mats. I say etc.

But he is doing a little bit of chanting, and we all say how we like this. And we are moving to a big house in September, so maybe more students will come together.

It's very good for me to be with you. I feel moving-moving through my old patterns. Thank you so much for coming, and for all your presents and tapes. (Samu is finding a person to mount the Diamond Sutra, thank you.) I'll come to Providence in November.

Love,

Jin Mi

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you very much for the two Zen robes. Lawlor and I like them a lot, and it feels good to wear them. Things are going well at Samu Su Nim's—the students who came for the first time when you spoke have stayed, and there are enough people now to rent a house. I am not the house manager—I have too many responsibilities organizing our house and Margot and Daphne, Lawlor's two daughters who are 16 and 17. But this is OK—there are people to do the house organizing.

I will come to sit with you in November—and Lawlor too, I think. I feel very good these days—going straight ahead.

Please take care of your body. I love you—

Jin Mi

September 21, 1976

Dear Sherry,

How are you and your family? Thank you for your letter. The robes were a present to you, so your check wasn't necessary. We thank you very much for your donation.

I am staying in Los Angeles now with Linc. He sends his hello to you. Nowadays we are a little busy here on the West Coast. Last week we visited Berkely for a Dharma talk at Diana and Ezra Clark's house. Many people came, including Marcy and Ming Goldstein. Marcy is almost well now, and everyone sends their hello to you. Marcy said that you will come to the Yong Maeng Jong Jin in November—that is wonderful. I'll see you then.

Long ago in China, there was a famous Zen Master named Layman Pang. His wife and children were all Zen students, and they all got Enlightenment. Layman Pang's daughter was very clever, and one day she asked her father, "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?"

He answered her, "Already it is apparent in the tips of 1000 blades of grass."

His daughter only smiled and said, "That answer is very bad."

Her father asked her why it was a bad answer, and she told him to ask her the same question.

When he asked her, she answered, "Already it is apparent in the tips of 1000 blades of grass."

He said, "That is my answer!"

She only said to him, "You are an old man, and your teeth are yellow."

This is a famous story. Don't make anything; then you will get everything. Only go straight ahead—don't know. I hope you always keep a mind that is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Enclosed is a picture from our visit.

September 13, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

You gave me a present of an interview about September 7th at the Providence Center. That day I found, also, a physical home for my small family, and we will be moving to Providence about October 15th. (This will be the 15th move for my oldest daughter and myself).

After 14 years of carrying heavy words and thoughts around, i.e., Suzuki, Gurdjieff, et. al., I still know I don't know anything, but even more, I know, after all this time, I came to you to get my Self back. I have traveled as far as I can on my own, and, as a matter of fact, I have gone many miles of energy in the wrong direction.

Therefore, with all respect to your answer that I can learn the Dharma from Louise and Bobby, which is true, I still have two questions for you:

- 1) Will you please allow me to be your student?
- 2) How can I do hard practice as a "busy, busy" householder?

At 6:00 a.m. I can accomplish a mighty and peaceful sitting at the Center, but at home it is not easy to do 108 bows alone!

I have come to the end of a desperate road. While I may receive a slap in the head for my attachment to needing a teacher, nevertheless, it is still the one constant in my life.

Thank you for giving me the energy to start again.

Hoping to see you upon your return.

Respectfully with peace and love.
a beginner in Zen,

Leslie

September 21, 1976

Dear Leslie,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. In your letter, you said that you understand that you came to the Zen Center to get your true self back. That is wonderful. But if you want something, it is already a mistake, and you lose your true self.

Long ago, an eminent teacher said, “Everyday mind is Zen mind.” In the morning you wake up, wash your face, have breakfast, then work, have lunch, have supper, and then at night you go to sleep. Moment after moment, all this action is Zen mind. If you are thinking, then you lose this Zen mind, and if you are not thinking, then everything is Zen mind. So, don’t make anything; then you will get everything. Only go straight—don’t know.

You asked two questions in your letter. Concerning being my student, please talk to George Bowman at the Providence Zen Center. He is the head Dharma Teacher there, and he will explain everything to you about membership at our Zen Centers.

In regards to your second question, I do not understand what kind of busy life you are referring to. Maybe your body is busy, but your mind need not be busy. Moment to moment, you must understand your correct situation. When you do your mother job, then only be a complete mother. If you have an office job, then become a complete office worker. When you drive, then only drive. Moment to moment, only just like this! This is Zen mind.

If you want to keep a clear mind, then you already have made a mistake. Don’t make anything; then you will get everything. Only go straight—don’t know.

Thank you again for your letter. I hope to see you when I return to the Providence Zen Center at the end of October.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

August 22, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I am sorry that I have delayed so long in writing to you. I took part in the Yong Maeng Jong Jin last March in Providence. I found it inspiring, and I hope to spend another Yong Maeng Jong Jin with you sometime next winter.

Before I left you gave me a kong-an.

A Zen student comes into the meditation room with a cigarette, flicks ashes on the statue of the Buddha saying, "The statue is nothing, the Buddha is nothing," etc. What is the Zen Master's response?

I would think the Zen Master would tell him to leave, or else he will call the police to have him removed.

The statue of the Buddha exists as a symbol of wisdom. Wisdom exists apart from and independent of any forms or symbols. The statue is "as a finger pointing to the moon." The finger should not be mistaken for the moon, but the finger nevertheless serves an important purpose.

Please ask Suzanne if she would send me the Newsletter from the Providence Zen Center.

Best regards to everyone at the Center.

Sincerely,

Tairyu Reigaku

Jay

September 21, 1976

Dear Jay,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I have been in Los Angeles for a while now, so your letter took some time to get to me. Also, I have been busy, so I am late in answering you. You said you will come next winter to the Zen Center for Yong Maeng Jong Jin. That is wonderful! I am waiting for you. I will return to the Providence Zen Center at the end of October, and there will be Yong Maeng Jong Jin for the first week of November and December.

Next, the answers to your homework: not good, not bad. Calling the police is not Zen style; it is bad style in this case. What is necessary is correct teaching to him. This man understands that form is emptiness; emptiness is form, and also that there is no form and no emptiness. So he thinks that there is no Buddha, no ashes. Buddha is Buddha, God, the Dharma; he thinks he already has Enlightenment. His mind is attached to true emptiness. You must teach him the next course—form is form and emptiness is emptiness—just like this. The sky is blue the tree is green—just like this.

But this man will hit you with any speech you give him. How can you fix his mind? How can you correct him? This is the point. Again I will remind you that 1) form is emptiness; emptiness is form 2) no form, no emptiness, 3) form is form; emptiness is emptiness. He only understands #2; you must teach him #3.

I hope, if you don't understand, you will only go straight-don't know, keep this mind which is clear like space, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 5, 1976

Dear Seung Sahn Soen Sa Nim,

I read the book that was compiled by Stephen Mitchell, in which your talks and lectures are printed. *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* was a real joy for me. I got very excited while reading it. I rushed through the book very fast, as I kept getting the feeling of your essence and personality. Now, I am reading it again slowly. I feel sure you will be able to help me and give some guidance to meditation.

Please have someone let me know when you will be in Chicago. Stephen wrote to me and said it would be about October 24th. He gave me the address of Bul Tah Sah, and I called there and gave them my name and address. I work in Chicago; this town I live in is like a suburb of Chicago. I want very much to see you when you are in Chicago, and perhaps come to the center in New York in November or December if you are there.

I have been sitting for about two years, without any real guidance. All that led up to my beginning to sit, I can tell you sometime when we meet. Anyway, I go to the Chicago Buddhist Temple about once a month, and Rev. Kubose is very nice, but he is a Shinto priest and not a Zen teacher. I can sit fairly well, but my mind is a mess. I try counting or saying the Nembutsu, but it doesn't help much. To say things like "Keep a clear mind" or "Keep don't know mind" are beyond me. (I don't want to give you the impression that I understand your book—I love it, but I don't really understand it.) However, all my little frustrations are unimportant, and I am sure you will be able to clear up much of the muddy water.

As I wrote to Stephen, when I read the book I feel like giving you a big hug. I'm so happy to have discovered you. Please let me know the exact date, when it is known, that you will arrive in Chicago. I'll be there without fail.

With Love and many bows,

Harrington

September 21, 1976

Dear Harrington,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? You said that you read my book, and that is wonderful. You and I have a connection through this book, and that is wonderful. But you only read these words, and you don't understand this book. That is because Zen is not dependent on words and speech; also it is not dependent on Buddha or Buddhism, God or

anything. Zen is being only dependent on yourself. So I ask you, what are you? If you understand, you must give me an answer. If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. If you keep this don't-know mind and read this book, then you can understand its meaning. Always keep this don't-know mind; don't lose it!

Our Zen school uses many kong-ans, almost 1,700 in all. If you don't understand them, an eminent teacher once said, "10,000 questions return to 1 question." If you understand this, and return to your don't know mind, then you will understand everything. So you must go straight-don't know. Don't make anything; then you will get everything.

I will go to Chicago on October 29th, so if you call Bul Tah Sah on that evening, we can arrange to meet.

I hope you are keeping a mind which is clear like space, that you will soon get Enlightenment and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 1, 1976

Dear Venerable Seung Sahn,

Really have enjoyed *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*; nice meeting you on the pages of the book. The book is clear, and wonderful—the Zen comes to me directly.

I hope to see you when you are in Los Angeles. Do you know the time of your next visit?

Please send me information on the Providence Zen Center and put me on your mailing list. Thank you.

I would like your comments now on a Zen thought that came to me while I was doing Zazen three or four days ago. The thought is: The sky walks on two feet.

Yours truly,

Stephen

September 22, 1976

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? It is wonderful that you liked my book. Now I am staying in Los Angeles at the Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center. We have chanting and sitting every morning and evening. If you like, you are welcome to come to join us any time. I will be here until the end of October.

You asked for my comments on your Zen thought: The sky walks on two feet. Yes, any words or thoughts are possible. But what is Zen? Zen is understanding myself. So I ask you, what are you? If you open your mouth, I will hit you. If you close your mouth, I will also hit you. What can you do? Please give me a good answer. If you don't understand, then only go straight—don't know. This thought that you asked about is thinking, and thinking comes from where? Is it understanding? This understanding cannot help you. If you read many books, hear many Dharma talks, and experience many things, you may understand many things, but this understanding is still in the realm of opposites. You must attain what is called "before thinking." Before thinking, there is no speech and no words. Open your mouth and you are wrong. If you keep before thinking, then your mind is clear like space. It is like a mirror: when red comes, then only red; when white comes, then only white. When you see the sky, then only blue. When you see the tree, then only green. This is a just-like-this mind.

The thought you sent to me is a freedom thought. But I think you are attached to freedom—not just like this. Put it all down and only go straight ahead—don't know. Don't make anything; then you will get everything. I hope you always keep a don't-know mind, then soon find your true self and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 9, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Here are some opinions, checking, and subject-object thinking for you.

First, about Shim Gum Do, may I suggest the following: that sword classes be held regularly at times which do not conflict with sitting practice. It is very difficult to integrate sword practice with sitting and chanting unless this is possible (maybe a small school with a teacher to help Jacob in Providence.) I must chant and sit twice daily to control my strong bad karma. Now Bobby cannot practice sword, Louise sometimes, usually only me, and I must miss classes each week. This is no good. For new Zen students, it would be better if this were properly organized. I hope you can help this situation, so action and sitting become one.

Secondly, about your next book: no one here understands business. (Yah, they understand some accounting-paper form.) It is very important that you have a lawyer draw up a fair contract, including all provisional specifics; it is equally important that your lawyer handle all negotiations to preclude any more costly errors. Any other approach is essentially stupid.

Thirdly, silence practice... not bad. Most frustrating aspect is having people project their perceptions or opinions on me and then give me credit for things they are making. I would soon begin shouting if I did not put it all down. Usually am glad to be without speech and words—less and less attachment, maybe. Anyway, no more notes or hand signals. Alone is good; lonely, a little difficult sometimes.

Becoming stronger inside—have almost completely learned that others will help me to be weak anytime; must help myself to be strong every time.

The great Dharani and Heart Sutra very necessary and wonderful. Most of my life has been lived in an imbalance of the five skandhas:

The form of boy, then man
The feelings of a child
The perceptions of a genius;
The impulses of a gorilla;
The consciousness of... ?

Now, practicing Zen, some real integration is apparent, so thank you very much for your teaching. I know that you often don't understand my mind, but you always understand the truth and correct mind medicine. So what is important?

Going to New York tomorrow to hear a wonderful lady sing. Do you remember I sang a song for you in Big Sur on Route#1? Her name is Joan Baez; the song was "Amazing Grace". I will take her flowers and give her a copy of your book, if possible.

Hope that your body is strong and that the California family is happy. Love to Mrs. Kim, No Su Nim, Mu Chak Su Nim, Linc, Ed, Steve, Carl, Susan, Alicia, and so forth.

Take care of yourself, please.

Sincerely,

Jim

P.S. Gate Gate Paragate Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha

Jin Gong

September 22, 1976

Dear Jim,

How are you ? Thank you for your letter.

What is clear mind? Clear mind means correctly understanding your karma. If you correctly understand your correct karma, then fixing it is very easy. If you don't understand your karma, then it cannot be fixed. It is very simple. Oriental medical books say that it is most important to understand the correct nature of the sickness; then giving medicine is very easy. Then the sickness will disappear. So now I understand you, and you understand your karma, so I say to you—PUT IT ALL DOWN!

The first problem you mentioned was with the Sim Gum Do School. Don't check everything. Sitting and Sim Dum Do are not separate. If you are having a problem, then have a housemeeting with Jacob and everyone, then changing the schedule may be possible. Whatever happens, it should not be a problem. You can practice yourself during the day sometimes if you cannot make it to class.

The third thing you mentioned was about silence practicing. This is the action that will make your opinion, your condition, and your situation completely disappear. In the past, you did much checking of other people's minds, actions, and speech. This is no good, so you understand that you must make your opinion, your condition, and your situation completely disappear. Then your mind will be clear, and, moment to moment, you will get a just-now situation, a just-now condition, and a just-now opinion. Now your job is keeping a silence opinion, a silence condition, and a silence situation. This means only go straight; don't check your mind, your feelings, and other people's minds or feelings. Only go straight—Gate Gate Paragate, Parasamgate Bodhi Svaha.

This is silence practicing. Then all your past bad karma will soon disappear. This is the great bright mantra, the utmost mantra, the transcendent mantra, the supreme mantra. And it is able to do everything. You mustly completely believe this. This is most important.

I hope you only go straight with this mantra, keep a mind that is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 8, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

(Perhaps you don't remember me—I'm Murray. Short, red hair, came to 3 or 4 Yong Maeng Jong Jins this spring and summer.)

Good Morning!!!!!!!!!!!!!! I hope that your health is good and that you are getting enough rest in your travels. I am ever thankful to you for your kind instructions which are alive in me now as these words are written. Now I give myself 30 blows for such an impudent statement.

The moon that barged in this afternoon
so full of itself, and drunk
with the power to appear at all
rests calmly tonite with nothing to prove.
The fields are bathed in its weightless light.

I would like to ask you a business question: I am planning to make a 16mm film on the personal teaching styles of two or three Zen Masters in the United States. In addition to showing how Zen can be manifested in totally different ways, depending on the personality and circumstances of the teacher, I am also interested in exploring through interview and observation what ways, if any, the teachers have adapted their Dharma treasure to American culture, and to discover what movement there is, if any towards an "American" Zen form. As far as I am concerned, Zazen is Zazen, regardless of culture, and the human body is the human body throughout time and space, and No-mind is No-mind. And yet, I am also sure there will be changes—maybe less walking meditation and more tennis, etc. I have made one short documentary film several years ago that was well-received by critics, and I have a friend who is an anthropologist-filmmaker who would also like to help me on the project. If you are interested in this idea, I will begin the lengthy process of applying for financial grants from several artistic and philanthropic foundations around the country. It would take at least 6 or 7 months to receive an answer, and, if we are lucky enough to receive a grant for the project, it would probably not be before summer before we could begin "shooting".

I have not yet asked any other Zen Master about this, but after I receive your reply, I will ask my first teacher, Go-Sang, who was very patient and loving to me when I first began practice, and Rev. Joshu Sasaki (the old lion), whom I was fortunate enough to encounter briefly in a one-week sesshin last Spring. With all my heart I bow to them, and to you, dear teacher. I wish everyone could see your bright clarity: 3 flowers blazing in a transparent life.

Sincerely,

Murray

P.S. I will understand if you are too busy to answer, but please, great poet, don't forget the poem.

September 22, 1976

Dear Murray,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. And thank you for your wonderful poem. You said in your letter that you would hit yourself 30 times for an impudent remark. Then I will ask you about this:

Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form. So when you hit yourself, do you hit your body, or do you hit your mind? Since form is emptiness and emptiness is form, then how do you hit your body? If you hit your mind, then how do you hit your true self? What do you hit? Quickly, tell me, tell me!

Here is a poem for you:

Flowers in springtime,
Cool wind in summer,
Moon in autumn,
Snow in winter.

If you don't make anything
For you it is a good season.

In your letter you talked a lot about business matters. I do not understand the movie business, so you must contact the Providence Zen Center. The directors of this organization take care of these business matters, so you must contact Louise Stanton.

I hope you only go straight—don't know, and, keeping a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope you are in good health and that you are not too tired.

Everyone at Cambridge Zen Center says hello. We moved into our new house September 1st. What a big job! Everyone is working very hard to fix the place up. Already we have painted the zendo (it used to be pink and yellow) and refinished the floors. Soon we will build an altar. We want to make a traditional one, so we will ask someone from Providence to help us.

Mark is a very good house-director. He is very organized and everybody follows him. He has many working-style projects planned for the house. Next weekend we will paint the front porch and clean up the yard. Doing work together has made our center feel very strong and like a family already.

We are planning to hold Yong Maeng Jong Jin this month but to end it early Sunday afternoon. Then we will have a big housewarming party and invite all the other Zen centers. Is this correct to do before the opening ceremony? Should we plan to have an opening ceremony when you return from the West Coast? (Then we can have two parties).

This is all of the news to date. We miss you very much. Please take good care of your body.

Love,

Dyan and the rest of the Cambridge Zen Center Family

P.S. It is wonderful to be back at the Zen Center and practicing again.

September 22, 1976

Dear Dyan and the Cambridge Zen Center family,

Thank you for your letter. How are you and all the rest of the Zen center family? When I came to Los Angeles, I was worried about how the Cambridge Center was doing, but when I received your letter it made me very happy. You and Mark and everyone are doing hard training—fixing the floors, painting, and making an altar. This is wonderful! Thank you very much.

This Buddha from New York is a very good one. Originally it was from China, and it is very old. A Chinese man kept this Buddha for a very long time, and then it was bought in New

York City and painted with paint made of pure gold. In the past, this Buddha helped to make a very strong New York Zen Center, so now it will do the same for the Cambridge Zen Center. So you are lucky.

Now you have a new house, with new paint and floors, and a new Buddha. Next, what is most important is new minds for all students. Before, the Cambridge Zen Center students' minds were a little smudged. So now there is a new Center and a new Buddha—this means that there are also new minds. This house, this Buddha, and all of you become like one mind. This mind is clear-like-space mind, and its name is “Don't Know Mind.” That mind is a just-like-this mind. The wall is white; the floor is brown; the Buddha is gold—just like this.

So only go straight—don't know, and don't make anything, don't check anything—only go straight.

Having a party for all the Zen Centers after Yong Maeng Jong Jin is O.K. and an opening ceremony when I return is also a good idea. Whatever you like, I also like. I hope that, day by day, the Cambridge Zen Center will grow and become stronger and stronger, and also clearer and clearer, and that many people will get Enlightenment and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. You said in your letter that it was wonderful to return to the Zen Center and to be practicing again. Welcome back!

September 22, 1976

Dear Bobby,

How are you, Great Housemaster? How is all our family? Thank you for your letter. Everyone in Los Angeles at Tahl Mah Sah says hello to the East Coast family. You worried a lot about my health, so now I am strong. Now it is not necessary to worry anymore as I am O.K. Thank you very much.

Enclosed is a check from Sherry in Canada. We sent her two robes as a present, but she sent this donation. Please send her a thank-you note. Also, she will come to the November Yong Maeng Jong Jin with her husband.

Did you fix my room yet? Before the next Yong Maeng Jong Jin, I hope you will be able to fix my room completely. Thank you.

Also, did you take the Chinese medicine? I hope this medicine will help your body so that you won't have any problems.

Here is a poem for you:

Sitting in silence in a mountain temple in the quiet night—
Extreme quiet and stillness are original naturalness.
Why then does the western wind shake the forest?
A single cry of the cold-weather geese fills the sky.

I hope you only go straight—don't know, soon finish the Great Work, become a great housemaster, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? How is Linc, No Su Nim, Mu Chak Su Nim, Alicia and everyone at Tahl Mah Sah Zen Center?

We arrived in Seoul on the evening of the 10th. Many people were at the airport to meet us, including So Bosal Nim, all the Hwa Gae Sa monks, and a newspaper reporter who interviewed me and took a lot of pictures. We were all surprised and pleased.

The ceremony for Ko Bong Su Nim was the morning of the 12th. Many monks and nuns came, including Hae Am Su Nim, Chung Song Su Nim, Su Dok Sa Abbot, Wha Yon Ko Su Nim, and Mrs. So and her friend Mrs. Shin, who visited us in Providence.

The ceremony went well. Hae Am Su Nim gave the Dharma speech. He had only spoken for about ten minutes when one of the nuns got up and started ringing a bell and shouting "Katz!" Hae Am Su Nim got mad, and she sat down and then got up and repeated the performance. Hae Am Su Nim got even madder, and Wha Yon Ko Su Nim stood up and went up to Hae Am Su Nim and shouted in his ear. Hae Am Su Nim got down off the high stand and went back to his seat.

Then we all did some chanting and everyone offered incense and bowed to Ko Bong's picture. Then we did the Heart Sutra in English and were introduced to everyone. Then we all did the Heart Sutra in Korean, and then we all had lunch. Mrs. So and Mrs. Shin ate lunch with us, and Mrs. So said she wanted to take us sightseeing. She and Man Hyu Su Nim made up a schedule. We are to leave on the 19th.

I could not meet Sae Dung Su Nim, but a nun from Bo Mun Sa in Seoul will deliver your letter to her and to Mu Ae. Hae Myong Su Nim telephoned her about the hearing aid, and she will try to buy one in Seoul.

Hwa Gye Sah Abbot said that the nun who was to send us a bell has already sent it. Hae Myong Su Nim said we would go to Dae Jon to see Mu Ae Su Nim, and also go sightseeing around Seoul in a few days.

Ken, Jan and Paul all like it here. Today we all washed our clothes together, and we are all learning Korean.

I hope this finds you well.

Sincerely,

Mu Bul

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

One word gives rise to ten thousand words. One question gives rise to ten thousand questions. There are purple flowers growing by the bell house and seven ducks in the pond below the waterfall.

I hope your throat is much better and your body is getting the food it needs.

Sincerely,

Jin Poep

September 14, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope you've recovered from the sore throat you had when we left you in Los Angeles. Please say hello to everyone at Tahl Mah Sah.

I already want to thank you very much for making this trip possible. Everyone here has been extremely kind and generous, and they all give us good words. We met the abbot of Su Dok Sa, and he spoke to us, with Miss Shin translating (this was on Sunday, after the ceremony for Ko Bong Su Nim.) His speech was very encouraging. He had high praise for Mu Bul Su Nim and he apologized for being too busy last year to have enough time to help Mu Gak with his difficulties.

Ip Soen Sa Nim (vice-abbot here) has been taking good care of us. He sits with us every morning and evening and does bows with us in the morning. He and Sa Won Su Nim (he was night watchman here last year) took us for a six-hour, mostly walking, tour of the area around Hwa Gae Sa.

Hwa Ryun Go Sa Nim offered to give us any help we might need. So did Mrs. So, who has been particularly generous to us. Yesterday, we met a Dharma brother of yours (Hyo Song Sa Nim) who was also very courteous. The children and monks here all help us. Today, Jan, Mu Bul, and I all got long Korean lessons from them.

I tell you all this because this situation is such a strong encouragement to my practice.

September 15

The four of us do everything together. We get up together, chant, sit, and bow together, do yoga together, sweep together, eat together, brush our teeth together, study together, travel together, go to sleep together, get up together... So we all help each other. Anytime I feel uncomfortable or unhappy, I see it is because I am checking myself or others. Then I remember you said, "Only go straight; don't check anything," so I try this. Outside, the sun casts early morning shadows; the birds are singing. You said you hope I finish the Great Work here. I hope so, too.

Sincerely,

Ken

September 28, 1976

Dear Mu Bul, Ken, Jan and Paul,

How are you? The East Coast and West Coast families send their hello to you. Thank you for your letters.

Paul: Your poem is very wonderful, but when I see this poem, I can understand the head, and I can understand the tail, but there is no body. The head and the tail are wonderful, but without a body it is crippled and cannot move. First word, second word and last word! You already understand, so if you make a poem, you must understand these three realms. I hope that next time you will send me a very good poem. And I also hope that you will only go straight—don't know, soon get enlightenment, and save all people.

Ken: Your letter is also wonderful. It sounds like you like Korea very much. All Korean people are interesting to American people. Korean people like Americans. Also, you are an American Buddhist, and this means that you are a special person to Korean people. So everybody will help you and give you good speech. Sometimes, however, you meet some people who have narrow minds. In the future, you will understand that their speech and their actions are not together. At that time, if you don't keep a clear mind, you will feel badly. That is why I have said to you that good and bad are all your teachers. Don't check your mind and your feelings, and don't check others. Only going straight is most important.

In your letter you said that you are learning the Korean language. That is wonderful. Understanding Korean may help you in your practice. Maybe. If you follow the situation, moment to moment, then there is no problem, whether you understand Korean or not.

I hope you always keep a mind that is clear like space, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Mu Bul: You are a lucky man. Everybody likes you, so many people came to the airport to welcome you.

In your letter you talked about the Dharma speech at the memorial ceremony for Ko Bong Su Nim. Someone wrote to me, so I will explain to you what happened.

Hae Am Su Nim, while sitting on the high stand, explained Ko Bong's kong-an about the mouse. "The mouse eats cat food and the cat's bowl is broken. What does it mean? If you understand, you must come here and give me your answer. This is Ko Bong's Dharma."

At that time, the nun who is abbot of the nuns' school (her name is Gi Myung Su Nim) came up and rang the bell, and then said, "Everybody, don't be deceived," and then she shouted "KATZI!" She repeated these actions three times.

Then Hae Am Su Nim replied, “You are crazy. This is not a good answer.” He was very angry and told her what bad action she had done. Then again Hae Am spoke, “Can’t anyone else answer?”

At this, Hwa Yun Ko Sa went in front of the high stand, bowed, and then said, “Have eyes and cannot see; have ears and cannot hear.” He bowed again and went back to his seat.

Then Hae Am Su Nim said, “Have mouth and cannot speak,” and he came down and left. The Dharma talk was all finished.

This is the story of what happened from a letter sent to me from Korea. If we check this kong-an, this nun’s action shows she understands only one; she does not understand two. It is not just-like-this action. But, Hae Am Su Nim’s saying that she is crazy, that her action is no good, and getting angry is also not correct teaching from a great Zen Master. This anger is not good, as there are many teaching words for this situation: for example, “Your answer is like holding a stick and hitting the moon,” or “It is like scratching your left foot when your right foot itches,” or “You only understand one; you do not understand two.” Then, “You must do more hard training; you are attached to the primary point.” That style of teaching is O.K. for her.

Next, Hwa Yun Ko Sa is very smart, he had already finished this mouse kong-an. He understands just like this. So Ko Bong Su Nim already gave him Inka. But at this time, his answer was only one half of the answer. This means that he is attacking the Zen Master with this answer. But Hae Am Su Nim is attached to this answer, so he just follows it—this is not correct.

If you are a great Zen Master, then checking one more time is necessary. For example, “You say, ‘Have eyes and cannot see; have ears and cannot hear,’ then have mouth and cannot speak, so how can you speak to give this answer?” Then maybe the other half of the answer will appear from Hwa Yun Ko Sa.

If he gives the correct answer now, maybe the Zen Master will say, “Before I thought you were a blind dog, but now I understand that you are a keen-eyed lion.” Then he could continue with the Dharma speech about Ko Bong’s teaching.

A very short Dharma speech is not bad, but at a special ceremony like this one, a special Dharma speech is also necessary. These are my ideas about the Dharma speech.

In your letter you said that you were sightseeing and learning Korean. This is wonderful. Did you visit Mu Ae? When you see her, please tell her that during the next Kyol Che, she must stay at Sae Dung Soen Won and tell her, “Don’t check anything—only go straight.” This is very important. I hope you are also only going straight, that you soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 5, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope that your health is good and that you rest sometimes even though you are very busy.

Thank you for our telephone conversations. Now I am keeping a “don’t think about next year mind”—I don’t even have to begin writing my application to U.R.I. for four months, so all my thinking now is quite unnecessary.

Nowadays, I sleep in the Dharma room. I like it very much and I don’t miss bows, so Bobby is very happy too. 😊

Many new people live here now—Fred, Greg, a girl named Nancy (who is my roommate). Louise has gone on a retreat in Maine for three weeks, and Suzie is doing a partial retreat—sitting from 9:30 to 12:00 each morning.

Last Sunday I chanted “Chi Jung Bosal” for my grandfather and grandmother and a friend who was killed in Philadelphia. I am going to learn the Kwanseum Bosal chanting and the Morning Bell Chant now that more tapes have been made.

I think Mr. Bennett is dying—he is now in the hospital again and is having intravenous feeding, stomach pumpings, and will require surgery to remove an obstruction in his stomach. He doesn’t want to die so he will try anything now, but I think it must be like a nightmare to him to have so much medicine, surgery and to be in the hospital. He doesn’t want to try “om mani padme hum,” so I only talk to him about gardening or about how he feels physically.

I am looking forward to your return to the East coast in October. I think of you often. See you soon.

Love,

Lynn

October 15, 1976

Dear Lynn,

Thank you for your letter. I read your letter and all the news you sent, and it makes me happy—except that Mr. Bennett is very sick and will soon die. This is very sad. But, this is

the human condition. All old cars eventually go to the junk pile. But the true Mr. Bennett has no life or death; only his body has life and death. So you must teach him this; this is correct. The sky is blue, the tree is green.

Here is a good kong-an for you. A monk once asked Jo Ju, "I have entered the monastery. Please teach me, Master."

Jo Ju said, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, I have," replied the monk.

"Then," said Jo Ju, "wash your bowls."

The monk was enlightened.

So I ask you, what did he attain? If you don't make anything, then you will get everything.

I hope you are always keeping a clear mind, that you will soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 4, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

It has been over a year since I last saw you. Since then, I have been keeping don't-know mind as much as I can.

Last week I was sitting asking who am I? Who was I before I was born and who will I be after I die? Then for a flash, I died. When I finished sitting, I was very calm and quiet. I have never had such an experience before.

Monday, I was sitting at my desk where I work asking, Who Am I? I began to feel light and numb. When I finished meditating I wrote this: I still feel lightheaded. My body is numb. I watched my desk talking and various things were laughing, etc. Right now my mind is blank except for what I'm writing. Everything is just like this. The mouse is eating cat food but the cat's bowl is broken means only the mouse is eating cat food but the cat's bowl is broken. To the student who dropped ashes on the Buddha I would say: The Buddha is full of ashes and smells of smoke. To you, Soen Sa Nim, I would say, Don't be attached to my words. I don't know what I'm saying.

I wrote this poem:

Yesterday I locked myself out.
I beat on the door, "Let me in!"
The house only smiled.
Today I awoke in my own bed.

Today I am as I was before. I have likes and dislike, etc. If I close my eyes—nothing. I think about things to be done, etc., but it all comes back to nothing when I am finished. If you ask me now—the mouse is eating cat food but the cat's bowl is broken, I will still say: the mouse is eating cat food but the cat's bowl is broken—only this. If I saw you right now, I would have no questions for you. It doesn't matter! I'm really feeling everything equally. I have calmed down since Monday. I'm not numb or light-headed, but I am quiet. I'm not trying to hold on to this quiet or let it go. I really can't explain how I feel.

The reason I'm writing is to try to make sense of how I feel now, but I can't. I feel like I have just let go of the tree I was hanging from and I'm still in the air. I haven't hit the ground yet, but I'm not hanging onto the tree or anything else. If I hit the ground, I hit the ground. Who cares! I only know I wanted to have a funeral for a dead fly this morning.

Sincerely,

Albert

P.S. I know you are away at this time. I hope that when you read this, you will have returned from a nice trip.

October 15, 1976

Dear Albert,

Thank you for your letter. Your letter was wonderful but in your letter you said "I... , I..., I, I, I," too many times. So I must ask you, what are you?

You said that you understand this mouse kong-an, but your answer is attached to words, and attached to "I don't care" and attached to "just like this." An eminent teacher once said that this style of thinking is a cognition demon. There are two kinds of demons: form demons and cognition demons. Form demons are seeing things or colors, having your body disappear, leaving your body, etc. Cognition demons take the form of "I already understand everything. I understand all kong-ans. The desk is laughing, this is, etc." This is being attached to freedom thinking. This is just your understanding, and not true attainment.

Here is a bell. If you say it is a bell, you have attachment to name and form. If you say it is not a bell, then you are attached to emptiness. Is this a bell or not? What should you do? Speech is no good, so if you say a bell is a bell, it's no good. Hitting the floor, or saying the bell is yellow, is also no good. Only ring the bell. Only this one point is just like this.

Your style is saying that the bell is a bell. Saying that the mouse kong-an is only the mouse kong-an is no good. I ask you, what does it mean?

Here is a poem for you:

Flowers in Springtime, moon in the Autumn,
Cool wind in Summer, snow in the Winter,
If you don't make anything in your mind,
For you it is a good season.

I hope you always keep a clear mind, soon get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

September 28, 1976

Dear Linc and Soen Sa Nim,

I will be at the Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Diana's house in October. At present my trailer is parked on a very busy, noise street in Palo Alto. The transition from mountain living to city dwelling has put me through some difficult spaces. During the last month I have had two two-day periods of throwing up, fever, dizziness to the point of almost passing out, and general exhaustion. Some very direct messages in all this, but I'm not sure what they are yet.

A dream: choking or being strangled, every attempt I make to call for help is frustrated, manipulated into frustration. I would try to whistle or call out, and my face would become disfigured so no whistle or call was possible. I had my bamboo flute in my right hand, tried to pound it on the cement, and my arm became paralyzed. I became even more terrified, beckoning to some people in front of me. Finally, as they approached me, I became aware of a figure sitting next to me; he ran into a house on my left as the people got near. All this happened while I was on my back on the ground.

Another dream two nights later: mountains, snow, tents, many unrelated friends. Shalom, my dog companion, is blotted with biscuits and mice; there are other dogs around, maybe wolves.

The first dream seems to be telling me that the more I seek help when frustrated, the worse things get. This in itself is very paradoxical, as I am feeling the desire to be with others. I don't seem to have a community of friends. My community is spread out all over the country, and the friends which are near don't run in the same circles, blah, blah, blah, this isn't doing anything...

I'm curious about Soen Sa Nim's insight into any of this. Look forward to hearing from you.

Larkin

P.S. The person in my first dream who was on my left was similar to a ghost—like a visitor I had a few months ago—similar in that it felt the same.

October 15, 1976

Dear Larkin,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. My answer is late and I am sorry, but I have been very busy.

I understand your problem. A great Zen Master once said the following:

Everything appears through karma and disappears through karma.
Mind appears; then Dharma appears.
Dharma appears; then form appears.
Form appears; then suffering appears.

Mind disappears; then Dharma disappears.
Dharma disappears; then form disappears.
Form disappears; then suffering disappears.
All things are created by the mind.

So you have bad karma, and it is necessary to make this disappear. So, I will teach you how to do this. The mantra for making karma disappear is OM MA-RO RU-KE SA-BA-HA. You must do this mantra 10,000 times a day for one week. If it doesn't disappear, then do it for another week. If it still doesn't disappear, then do it for a third week. This three-week retreat is very strong medicine and will make this bad karma disappear.

I hope you only go straight—OM MA-RO RU-KE SA-BA-HA, soon get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I will see you soon in Berkeley.

October 18, 1976

Dear Housemaster Bobby,

How are you and all of the Providence family? I heard that there are many new people staying at the house now, and I am happy to hear this.

I am sending you a newspaper article from a famous daily newspaper in Korea concerning the Providence Zen Center. It is a very good story about our Zen Center.

Here is a poem for you:

Where is my head? Where is my head? Somebody loses his head.
What am I? Don't know. They also lose their mind.
Want to find head, want to find mind—they are fools.
Put it all down; then, just like this.

I hope you will teach the way this poem teaches to the new people at the Zen Center, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma

S.S.

October 11, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? How is everyone in California? Please give my best to Linc, Carl, Susan, and everyone at Tahl Mah Sah. I hope you are not working too hard and that you are getting some rest.

Nowadays Cambridge Zen Center is very strong. I think Mark is a good Dharma Teacher. He puts a lot of energy into the Zen Center and is very strong about the daily practice, so everyone is very happy. The house is beautiful, too.

These days I'm very busy in school. I'm learning Korean, Chinese, the history of Buddhism, a science course on population control, and a tutorial in my department. Next year I must do a translation. Maybe you can help me decide which modern Korean Buddhist novel, biography, or autobiography would be best to translate into English. What should I translate?

Now I'm living in an apartment in Boston with another person who used to live in the Zen Center. We have a separate room with an altar and usually we bow, chant, and sit every day. I find that, not living at the Zen Center, I have more time to sit and do other things, but still I'm very tired.

About one or two weeks ago I talked to Mr. Kim. I said, "Thank you very much for your family's help in Korea. They were very kind to me. How are you?" and so on. Then after a while I said, "If you like, I would like to get divorced now." But he said he does not want to get divorced yet. But in Massachusetts it takes about two years to finally get completely divorced, so I want to start now. So I think if you talk to him, he will do what you say. Do you think you could talk to him about it, please?

So you know when Mrs. So is coming to Boston? When she comes to Boston, I want to take her to the museum and other interesting places. But when I am in school that is very difficult, because every day I must do many hours of Chinese and Korean for the lesson the next day in class. But if I know in advance when she is coming, then maybe I can take an afternoon or so off.

Thank you for everything. I hope you have a good stay in California. See you soon. I miss you.

Love,

Becky

P.S. I met someone today who has an old history of Korean Buddhism. Can you look at it and tell us if it is a good one?

October 18, 1976

Dear Becky,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? A few days ago Mrs. So called from Korea and said to say hello to you. She may come to the United States next month.

You said in your letter that the Cambridge Zen Center is good nowadays. That is very wonderful. I also think that Mark is a very good Dharma Teacher. Also, you said that you are studying very hard, and that is also very wonderful.

You said in your letter that next year you must translate a modern Buddhist book into English. That is a very good idea. Just translating is not too difficult, but a truly correct translation is very difficult. In oriental countries, the name for people who translate is Sam Jang Peop Sa. *Sam Jang* means Sutra, eminent teachers' speech, and the Precepts. So, this means that if you truly understand these three things, then a correct translation is possible. If you have to translate a book for school next year, I have a very good idea, so don't worry about it. Next year is next year! Only go straight—don't make anything; then you will get everything.

You said that Mr. Kim does not want a divorce. Before, he told me to tell you that he wanted a divorce, and I told him to talk to you. I will go to Boston soon (November) and talk to him, so there is no need to worry.

Also, you said that you are sitting and bowing in your apartment. That is wonderful. I hope you never lose the correct way, and keep a mind that is clear like space, soon get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 10, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? How is everyone at Tahl Mah Sa? Mu Bul, Ken, Paul and I are in Chung Ju taking classes in Korean at the Peace Corps Training Center. All the teachers say that Mu Bul's Korean is very good. Ken and Paul are making very good progress also. We have been in Korean for one month now. All the bikkhus and bikkhunis have been very helpful and friendly to us. Our health is mostly good—sometimes we get sick, but never for more than one day. We all like the food very much, and the weather and the mountains have been beautiful.

Now that I am in Korea, there is no more University, no more car, no more politics, no more girlfriends, no more duty to my parents to face every day. Still, much thinking goes on in my mind. My mind is like a car which has finished its journey but still has its engine running at high speed. This troubled me for awhile. One day I remembered what you said in the Temple Rules: "Unless you open your mind, you cannot digest even one drop of water." Because my mind is not open yet, I have never really seen or done anything. Therefore, there never has been University, job, politics, girlfriends, parents, Providence, the U.S.A. There is nothing to think about, and my situation and condition disappears. This "don't-know mind" is all I'm trying to keep now; even the kong-ans seem to cause too much activity in my mind.

My deepest thanks to you for helping my practice and for helping me to come here. I know you're busy; please don't feel that you have to answer this. Keeping a "don't-know mind" from minute to minute is answer enough.

Only for all people, hapchang

Gak Sim

October 6, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? How is Tahl Mah Sa Zen Center? We are now staying at a temple in Chung Ju studying Korean at the Peace Corps Training Center here. We got here about 3 days ago. The abbot at Pung Ju Sah is very nice to us. Ken and Jan and Paul seem to be happy to be learning some Korean. We will stay here for two weeks and then go back to Hwa Gae Sa. Kwang Uo Su Nim wants to take us sightseeing, and So Bosal Nim wants us to meet Wol Pah Ko Sa Nim.

We took a very good sightseeing trip with Chok Kwang Su Nim, and many people in Seoul have been very kind to us. After we get our visas maybe around the middle of November, I'd like to go up to Jung Hae Sah to stay until Kyol Che starts on December 11th. I hope you and everyone at Tahl Mah Sah are well.

See you later,

Mu Bul

October 19, 1976

Dear Mu Bul, Jan, Ken, and Paul,

Thank you for the letters, and hello to you. It is wonderful that you are staying at Pung Ju Sah and learning Korean. Also, it is wonderful that you have been sightseeing and that everyone has been kind to you. This makes me happy. You said in your letter that you will meet Wol Pah Ko Sa Nim; this is very necessary. He is president of the Korean Buddhist Association, so meeting him will help make Korean and American Buddhism into one Buddhism. Also, he helped to send us the bell and the Buddha, so you must thank him very much.

Jan, you said that your mind was like a car that had finished its journey but still had its engine running at high speed. This is your karma. But don't worry. Your mind goes around and around everywhere. This is also just like this, and just like this is the truth. If you don't check all these places where your mind goes, then you will get everything.

Mu Bul, Jan, Ken and Paul: I have a kong-an to show you. A monk once asked Jo Ju, "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me, Master."

Jo Ju said, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, I have," replied the monk.

"Then," said Jo Ju, "wash your bowls." The monk was enlightened.

So I ask you, what did this monk attain? It is very simple, but if you are thinking, you won't understand. Just like this! If you completely understand this kong-an, if you believe in your answer 100%, then please send it to me. I will check it for you. If you don't completely understand, if there is any "maybe," then only go straight—don't know.

I already sent a letter to Whal Ryun Ko Sa Nim and to Sae Dung Su Nim. If you ever have any kind of problems (sick, money, any kind), then see them, and they will help you. I hope that during Kyol Che you don't check anything, keep a mind that is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

While doing work Zen at my desk, the following answer came:

Me: "You, stop that."

Cigarette Man: Hit

Me: "If that is true, the ash and the smoke, are they the same or different?"

Cigarette Man: Hit

Me: "You understand only ash, no smoke."

Cigarette Man: Hit

Me: "Ashes fall down, smoke goes up, the truth is just like this."

My little daughter is practicing the mantra. Yesterday, I asked her why she still sleeps with a stuffed (toy) dog. She said, "I like the dog. It has a very clear mind. It understands it is just a stuffed dog."

I need some strong word medicine. Could you please send me some?

With hand palm to palm,

Bob

October 29, 1976

Dear Bob,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I am very sorry, but I could not find your letter, so I could not write earlier. Today, as I was preparing to go to the East Coast I found it.

My answer is late, but you said you wanted strong medicine, so this late is strong medicine. Your answer to the cigarette kong-an is OK, but even if you give him your last answer ("ashes fall down...") he will hit you, even harder than before. So what can you do? More hard training.

Your style answer is like a mute getting a dream. He understands the dream himself, but he cannot teach other people.

I hope you only go straight—don't know, keep a mind that is clear like space, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I am leaving Los Angeles for Chicago today and will arrive on the East Coast by November 1st. See you soon!

October 26, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

The following is an attempt to explain an understanding based on a few experiences and doing Zazen:

All is illusion. I am illusion; thinking I am is illusion. Only Nothing is also illusion. Attachment and not-attachment is a dream. Being in illusion is also thinking illusion, but Being, through illusion, exists as illusion. Only illusion!

To Be in illusion means being non-attached, even to non-attachment. Everything comes and goes according to the illusion of Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is reality; everything has Buddha-nature. But do not be attached to the concept of Buddha-nature because that is illusion.

So why not just die and be rid of illusion? Because death is also illusion. Besides, running away from illusion is also an illusion and, therefore, increases illusion.

What then is to be done? Just Be the illusion and know you and the world are one in illusion but also separate illusions. Everything in the world is a separate illusion of Reality. I am part of your illusion, and you are part of my illusion. To seek individual Enlightenment is impossible because only part of illusion is in each individual. So, with the knowledge of illusion we must remain in illusion to teach all individuals that all is illusion. Only then will Enlightenment come to all. Then all will be the Buddha-nature and with a mind free from attachment to anything, charge directly into illusion and Be!

These words have come from thinking and Zazen and a few experiences that brought both together.

If you ask me the mouse kong-an, my answer is—this pen writes with blue ink! Ask me again, answer—the mouse is eating cat food but the cat's bowl is broken.

The rain is falling heavily,
The wind is blowing strongly,
The leaves are falling quickly
For ever and ever.
Let it Be.

Yours in the Dharma,

Albert

P.S. Do not be attached to words—what else could I write in a letter? Would you understand—

?

November 5, 1976

Dear Seung Sahn Soen Sa Nim,

I am sorry that it is not possible for me to attend Yong Maeng Jong Jin at this time. I would really enjoy speaking with you.

As of this letter I have not yet received your reply to my last letter. I'm sorry that I am writing so often; please excuse me.

I have been sitting more often, and I would like to tell you how I feel.

I have seen emptiness many times, and it is much easier to obtain a clear mind now. It's also much easier to keep a clear mind throughout the day.

In sitting I have *seen* that emptiness and form are the two sides of the same coin. Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form! Only since seeing this have I given up attachment to both.

I understand that I must sit as often as possible. There is no more thinking about enlightenment or emptiness, etc. All there is is whatever I'm doing at the time. If I sleep, only sleep; if I walk, only walk. There is no great joy any longer, only quiet.

I'm not saying that all kong-ans are understood. Some I understand, some not. What's the difference?

I will speak about Dharma to any who listen. If someone asks—good, if not—good. I would like to speak to you, though, because all I could tell anyone about is my experience. Some would understand, some not.

There are many things to talk about but no room in a letter. Hope to see you soon.

Here is a new ending to my last poem:

The wind is blowing strongly,
The rain is falling heavily,
The leaves are dying quickly,
The chill reaches the bones.

Yours in the Dharma,

Albert

November 9, 1976

Dear Albert,

How are you? Thank you for your two letters. I am sorry that I just returned from the West Coast, and just finished a Yong Maeng Jong Jin, so I am answering your letters very late.

Your first letter is wonderful. It's just an illusion letter. Your speech is also an illusion. Also, you are an illusion man. But who made illusion? Where does illusion come from? If you said cut off all thinking, is there illusion? An eminent teacher said, "Don't make anything. If you make something you are hindered by something."

Your speech is correct. Before, an eminent teacher said, "The whole world is like a mirage." But many people do not understand mirage. Why? Because they have mirage sickness. Mirage sickness means that you are attached to opposites thinking. If you want to fix this mirage sickness, you must have mirage medicine. Then you can fix this mirage sickness. But if you continue to keep this medicine, you fall into emptiness. So after you fix this mirage sickness, you must throw away the medicine. Then you will return to original man. Then you can see, then you can hear. Just like this is the truth.

In your letter you said, "With a mind free from attachments to anything, charge directly into illusion and Be!" If you are free from attachments, why are you charging into illusion? Watch your step.

Your mouse kong-an answer is not good, not bad. You only understand *like* this; you do not understand *just* like this. So I hit you thirty times.

Your second letter is O.K., but don't check your mind, don't check your feelings. Only go straight—don't know. Don't make emptiness, don't make form, don't make understand, don't make don't-understand, don't make Enlightenment, don't make Buddha. Don't make anything; then you will get everything.

Here is a question for you:

A monk once asked Jo Ju, "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me, Master."

Jo Ju said, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, I have," replied the monk.

"Then," said Jo Ju, "wash your bowls."

The monk was enlightened.

What did this monk attain? Quickly, quickly, answer!

The poem was wonderful. Here is a poem for you:

Sitting in silence in a mountain shack in the quiet night—
Extreme quiet and stillness are original naturalness.

Why then does the Western wind shake the forest?
A single cry of the cold-weather geese fills the sky.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, and
save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 4, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you, and how is it to be back East again? We miss you here! I hope the seven-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin is going well. I am so glad Ruth could go—I hope sometime to be able to visit the Centers in the East. If I could, I would live for six months or longer! at a Zen Center—the “together action” we had here while you were here felt very good. Then perhaps I would learn how to start something here!

It is very good to have Katie here—she has not tried the hot tub yet, but she has come and led us chanting on Wednesday night! I like her—we are getting to be friends.

I have talked to the people who run Wilbur Hot Springs, the place I told you about where we could have the Kido. At first they wanted \$1250.00 for forty of us for three days. However, I talked again to them just today on the phone and I think they may come down to \$1000.00. That is a lot of money—but I figured it all out and we *could* do it—charging people \$45.00 each, including food (which we could buy and prepare), etc.—with at least some left over. I know you would like it there. It is on 340 acres, very beautiful hilly country. (I enclosed a picture post card.) It is an *old* “spa”—or hotel—with hot springs, a pool (also hot mineral water). The main building has beds for 65 people, ten private rooms, large dormitory rooms, long sleeping porches on all the sides—plus a 30' x 40' group room, kitchen, etc. It is old and “funky” and I feel we could have a wonderful Kido there—and have anywhere from forty to sixty-five people! (Of course we would pay them a bit more for more people, but on a sliding scale.) There are deer, rabbits, geese, and goats to listen to us!

The only “problem” I see, except for the money, of course, is the distance. It is about 2 1/2 hours *north* of Berkeley, rather near Sacramento. (You could fly to Sacramento and come from there—or to Oakland and then drive up with us.) Please let me know what you think.

Sambosa would be cheaper (but no hot springs like you said you wanted!). Fort Sufi might be hard to drive into at that time of year because the rains can make the road impassable. I'll “only go straight” with whatever you say. I do need to give them a deposit of several hundred dollars *soon*—I can take it out of my savings account. The dates would be February 13th (Friday) through February 16th (Monday and Lincoln's Birthday so a holiday). Let me know!

It is strange how things happen, sometimes backwards. I felt very clear after the week-end you were here (even though *during* the week-end I thought all the dry cleaning in the world would not get my mind clear!). But two days ago I suddenly found myself *screaming* angry at Eric (the son I told you I was worried about) to the point I even tried to slap him. (I say “tried” because he is bigger than I am and just deflected me in a very humiliating way; funny, actually, though not at the moment!) I felt just terrible that after going to three Yong Maeng

Jong Jins in five weeks time, sitting every day, etc.—that I could revert to such total anger mind. And over such a small thing! I went to my room and laid on my bed and started to cry in despair at myself—and then an odd thing happened. I realized that something very important just happened and crying was not the answer. I realized that it was time to stop worrying and feeling guilt about Eric and *DO* something to change his environment and therefore his karma. Right now he is in a very *poor* environment: school is not challenging, this home is not making him grow, his friends are getting into trouble and not interested in much except excitement—all in all he is not happy and is going on a steady course toward—very little, except possibly getting into trouble himself, even if just from being with the wrong people at the wrong time. He has always resisted every effort to change schools or to move or whatever—and I always have given in, perhaps feeling I didn't really know the “right” answer anyway or perhaps afraid he would reject me.

This time I saw what had to be done, clear as clear—that Eric needs to go away to a good school for at least a while—whether he liked it or not, whether he hated me for it or not. I saw that I was willing to be “100%” finally—even if I turned out to be “wrong.” I think I really surprised him—because I got off my bed and walked into the kitchen where he was and *told* him all that—and also that I was no longer willing to let him push my anger button like that. And, interestingly, I even knew exactly the right school for him, not very far away (40 minutes), but an excellent school and one that gives the students much responsibility for themselves.

That very morning I called and made an appointment for us to go visit it—yesterday. Eric, of course, swore he would *never* go to it—but he did come with us and saw what it is like. The woman in charge told him, however, that they would not consider taking him unless *he really wanted* to go to it—and that if he changed his mind and wanted to visit, he should call her himself and arrange to come out (alone) for a whole day and make his own investigations. Well—at first (after we go home) he continued to say “no” loud and clear. But for once I did not waver but told him that I felt very strongly he should give it a try—what had he to lose?—that unless he could begin to challenge himself to something new, he would never experience much in life. I also said he was being offered a gift that most kids could never have, since my dad had left us some money—and that he was *foolish* not to accept it. I can't remember when I have been so “100% believing in myself.” I told him I cared about him greatly and I wanted him to have this chance to experience more in his life than the depressing scene he has gotten used to. He (of course) stomped out.

However—later on, just before we sat Zen last night, he came back in and told me he had *changed his mind* and would go out there for a day and see what he thought...

I feel *so good*, Soen Sa Nim. I am sorry to make this such a long letter, but I just wanted to share this with you very much. It has so much to do with the “ashes on the Buddha” kong-an—I feel as if I am making some progress toward attaining an “answer” to it... which seems to be (for me anyway) to do with the thing you keep telling us—that “Zen is believing 100% in yourself”—which is something I have just *never* been able to do. I've discovered that I believe 100% in my love for Eric, to the point that I am willing for him to reject me or *even for my idea to fail*. He's just not old enough to make total decisions for his life in every way. This is one I have to make for him. And evidently he went inside himself and knew I was right in his heart—and decided to go along with it.

All this sounds as if Ezra was left out of the process, and in a way he was. That was another hard one. Ezra has felt estranged from Eric for some time and so it really was up to me, his mother (Ezra is a step-father and Eric has never really accepted him as my other son has) to “only go straight.”

Anyway—Eric is a different kid today, and whatever happens, yesterday was perhaps a turning point for us both.

Your teaching is beginning to get through to me, Soen Sa Nim—thank you very much, that you very much *indeed*.

Love,

Diana

November 10, 1976

Dear Diana,

Thank you for your letter. How are you and Ezra and all your family? We have just finished the seven-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin. About thirty-one people were sitting together. Ruth sat very well; she is very happy and likes the Providence Zen Center very much. She is still staying here. Tomorrow she will go to the New Haven Zen Center for Yong Maeng Jong Jin again! That is very good.

You want to come to the East Coast and do together action. That is a wonderful idea. You must try this.

Katie is a very good Dharma Teacher, but she is not yet open. I think maybe she will soon change her karma; soon it will be possible for her to be open.

Linc said Wilbur Hot Springs was not possible, but your idea is wonderful. With each person paying \$45, if this is possible, then we should try this. Nowadays many people understand the Kido, and they like the Kido very much.

Somebody said it is possible for you to charge more money; then there would be no problem, but I don't know. You like, I like. Before, Joan had a three-day Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Sambosa, and the Kido, and each person paid \$60, even though there were no hot springs and it was not at a hotel. So, this Wilbur Hot Springs idea is better than the other programs. First you must make good advertising. More than forty people is O.K.; 60 people, 100 people is O.K. If it is a big place, more people are O.K.

I agree that Sambosa is not so good, and Fort Sufi is also a small place. If you think there will be over 40 people there, then Wilbur Springs is possible, but if less than 40 people, then we will have a problem, won't we?

You checked the 1976 calendar. In 1977, Friday is February 11, the 12th is Saturday, Lincoln's Birthday, so this time is O.K.—you decide. Also you must call Linc at Tahl Mah Sah in Los Angeles and decide together. It doesn't matter to me—you like, I like.

After Yong Maeng Jong Jin your mind was clear. A clear mind is a clear mirror, so when anger appears, angry action appears. You love your son, so you were angry. Is this correct? Don't check your mind—angry time angry. Afterwards, checking is no good.

But, your previous anger and your present anger are different. Before Yong Maeng Jong Jin, it was attached anger; after Yong Maeng Jong Jin your anger was only reflected anger. If you do more hard training, the reflected anger will change to perceived anger. After more hard training, perceived anger will disappear. Then you will have only love anger—inside you will not be angry, only angry on the outside. So attached anger, reflected anger, perceived anger, love anger—all are changing, changing, changing. Anger is anger; anger is the truth. Don't worry, don't check yourself—it has already passed downtown. How you keep just-now mind is very important.

When you were crying, you had reflected anger; it did not last long. Soon you returned to your mind that loves your son, and you knew what to do to help him. You believed in yourself 100%. Attached anger sometimes last for three hours, sometimes three days, and does not quickly return to love mind. After more hard training, you will be able to control your mind. Then afterwards, you will have only love anger, anger only on the outside for other people—"You must do this!" but no anger on the inside. This is true love mind.

You had already done three days of hard training during Yong Maeng Jong Jin, so your mind light was shining to your son's mind. Everything is from the primary cause; primary cause means karma. If your karma disappears, then the result will disappear. Your son's bad karma and your karma are together, so if your karma disappears, then your son's karma will also disappear. This is your mind's light shining into your son's mind.

Buddha said, "If one mind is pure, then the universe becomes pure." So, if your mind is pure, your world will be pure. Your world means your family, your friends, your country—all of them. So your changing his school is a very good idea. Sometimes, when the situation is bad, everything is bad; when the situation changes, then it is possible to change everything.

So, your mind light is already shining to your son's mind. First, what is great love? Great love means believing in yourself 100%. Then everything is no problem. I read you letter and I also felt very good. All this is from your strong practicing.

I have always said to you—don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. Only go straight. You say you talked with your son and maybe left Ezra out—don't check anything; only go straight. In going straight, all people become one, not two. Becoming one is big love—no problem.

But you must finish your homework. Somebody comes to the Zen Center, smokes a cigarette, blows smoke and drops ashes on the Buddha. How do you fix his mind? How do you correct him? Quickly, quickly, answer me!

I hope you are always keeping a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work,
and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Attached to Anger

On the first morning of Yong Maeng Jong Jin at the New Haven Zen Center a student came into the interview room and Soen-sa asked him how he was.

“I’m feeling terrible,” the student said. “Together-action is very difficult for me. Nobody does anything right, and so I am always angry.”

“Yah, together action is sometimes difficult,” replied Soen-sa, “but it is very important. What you think other people should do, that is just your opinion. You must let go of it. There are four kinds of anger. The first is attached to anger: ‘My opinion is right, your opinion is no good.’ Always angry at other people. The second kind is reflected anger. Someone has bad action for me, someone has bad speech for me, so I immediately get angry back at them. The third kind is perceived anger. This time I see myself start to get angry, my anger comes up, up, and I push it down, down. This is very important. Finally, there is love anger. This is my anger, anger for all people. Sometimes I get angry at one of my students: ‘You’re no good. You must do more hard training.’ But my anger is only for him. I don’t care! This is high-class anger. Right now you have low-class anger. You must do hard training and then you will have high-class anger.”

The next day the student came to interview feeling much better.

November 1, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you?

I feel a deep need to communicate with you. Unfortunately it did not come about to be with you during Yong Maeng Jong Jin in Berkeley. There was a major car engine fault, and then, after telephoning with Linc to Sambosa, I badly hurt my back when slipping in the dark on the downhill way to my house. It is still painful. Next time you come I hope to be there.

Soen Sa Nim, would you, please, tell me what has made you change your way with me. If I have done anything to bring this about, then I am not aware of it, of what it could be. This means so much to me that I dare ask you. I felt the beginning of this change last February at Sambosa during Yong Maeng Jong Jin. And later, more so, last June during Kido at Fort Sufi. (Thank you for your photo. I like it.)

My guess is that this was caused by Joan. I don't know how, but I know she has done much "cutting me off" from others. I felt that she was resentful of my becoming your student and of your way with me. And more so when I read the following lines of your letter to me (April 2, 1976):

"You can help by helping Joan find a good place, making it a good Zen Center, and sitting together." . . . "You and Joan together decide what the Big Sur Zen Center membership dues should be. If you pay money, you should pay to the Big Sur Zen Center."

Several times I have asked Joan, and also you, for the three of us to talk about this, mostly to put Joan's mind at ease by letting her know, in your presence, that I want to help quietly—in the background. As yet she needs the foreground. This, for some reason, has never come about. This temple was not for sitting except when you were there.

At present Stan is living in the house, and Joan has left Big Sur, possibly for a very long time. She told me that Esalen will rent this house to other people on January 1, and I wonder what will happen to Dakini? Can I help?

I have not coped well with the many changes and difficulties which have come into the last year of my life.

I bow to you, Soen Sa Nim.

Jo

November 10, 1976

Dear Jo, Jin Uwal,

How are you, Jin Uwal? Thank you for your letter. I was waiting for you at the Berkeley Yong Maeng Jong Jin but you did not come, so I was sad. Now that I received your letter, I am very happy.

At that time I wanted to visit you, but Linc told me we had no time, and he said we had no space in our car, so we could not take you, so I was very sad. But you said maybe you would come, so many of the Jin family was waiting for you.

But now I understand that you hurt your back and could not come—I am sorry. How is your back now? I hope it will soon be very well.

I have not changed with you—don't worry. I only worry about the Big Sur Zen Center now. I heard about Joan's not being there and Stan staying there. Also, in your letter, you gave me the same news, so I am very sad. Before, Joan and you and I together became a strong Big Sur Zen Center, but Joan's action now is not clear.

I told her many times, "You must correctly practice every day. Only this will help you. I understand your life. Freedom action will not help you." I told her many times, but she did not listen to me. She likes freedom action. Liking freedom means that one day she will get much suffering. If she *attains* freedom, she will always get happiness. Don't *like* something. She doesn't like practicing; she likes freedom action.

After the Kido, I gave her strong teaching. "Before, you wanted a Zen Center, so I helped you to make a Zen Center. But you are not practicing every day; Big Sur Zen Center is only a *name* Zen Center. Then it cannot help other people; it is not a correct Zen Center. So sometime you must go to Los Angeles to learn how to run a Zen Center and how to practice every day. Learn from Linc."

At that time she said, "Yes, I will try." But she never tried, and she never tried hard training, sitting Zen.

So I said to her, "If you do not try, you are not my student. I will cut you."

She said, "Don't cut me. My body is no good. Every day I am busy, busy, busy, so I cannot practice. In the future I will practice."

So I said, "If you practice, O.K. If not, I will cut you." So we separated.

Now we will check her action. She has never run a Zen Center, never done hard training, practicing in a Zen Center, so we must decide what to do with the Zen Center things. Also, where will we move the Big Sur Zen Center?

I am very happy that you sent me a letter and that you are concerned about the Big Sur Zen Center. Where shall we move the Zen Center things? I think moving them to your house would be good. Linc is the Los Angeles Dharma Teacher; you and he must talk and decide.

But, before moving, we must find Joan, and Linc must talk with her. If it is O.K. with Joan, then moving things to your house will be good.

I will go to the West Coast in January, and when I am there, I will visit you. Also, we will have Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Tahl Mah Sal in Los Angeles, and in Berkeley we will have a Kido. I hope it will be possible for you to come to one of them.

In Providence, some of the Jin family are here to sit with us—Ruth, Sherry, and Jim—and Paul went to Korea. Everybody misses you and says hello to you.

How is your homework? Did you finish your homework?

I hope that you are keeping a mind which is clear like space, will soon finish your homework, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 6, 1976

Dear Seung Sahn Soen Sa Nim,

What a great opportunity—I may write to you directly.

Now it is several months that have passed since I met you and your students for the first time. That meeting was very helpful for the next unveiling of my practice. Although I never asked any important question at that time, it is true for me now that I got a lot from you. I understand your teaching not only as a sitting practice, but merely as a life teaching. Your students I met in New York were very helpful in my understanding (if I may say so) of it. I realize that what I am talking about isn't an answer for the question: what is Zen?

During my stay in the States I found already an influence of your method on my personality and this type of practice I started to move on in.

My practice is dated from about two years ago. It had begun with a Katowice-town Zen group and Philip Kapleau's book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*—my first Zen guide. I am still under a great impression of it and of Kapleau's personality, whom I had a chance to meet in Rochester, New York.

As you can see, my practice (when I came to the States) wasn't independent enough, and I had a spiritual guidance coming from known sources. Sometimes it bothered my new practice that I began with a Korean Zen group. But those seeds—if I may say so—started to flourish. It is also the truth that much of my Zen practice in New York I've done in Won Gak Sah.

I've been in Rochester, too, but only for a short time, as long as I was able to and my work allowed me. Although I got a deep impression there, I don't think that now I am combining two methods of practice. (Your teaching seems to me all-embracing so it isn't against any other.)

My sitting practice is based upon counting breath. I count every minute of Zazen period. It is 30 minutes every day. This is easier for me to concentrate just on counting, not on confusing thoughts, which I have many of when doing Zazen without counting. In other cases when I sat and counted breath to ten, round and round, it seemed routine and happened often that I missed the number.

From the beginning of my practice I have taken care of that “small five” in the Hara (three inches under the navel).

It meant to me Zen sitting, chanting, worshipping images of Buddha and masters, and still less living Zen.

The first step toward living Zen I made in the States.

It was what you and other masters maintain: that sitting Zen is only a small part of living in Zen. Indeed it is true but so difficult sometimes.

I am not quite finished with my studies yet. My sociology especially gives me a lot of confusion, and from time to time I have trouble with what to do with it. Except that I've studied fine art. And that side of my life looks much better because it leads to inner life.

Sometimes I know there isn't any better way, but I feel that I don't really understand it yet. I believe it comes as a merit of doing good on the Way and in the life with others.

Seung Sahn Zen Master, I have some good news for you from Poland. How wonderful is Dharma energy here! A few weeks ago we had the Tibetan Dharma Teacher from Denmark, where there is the largest Tibetan Center in Europe. We spent a great time with that teacher. He showed us slides picturing thankas, eminent lamas; we heard mantras; and some of us, for the first time, received the Three Refuges from a Tibetan Buddhist. It was really a karmic event. There was also a beautiful Dharma talk about Buddha, his life, and his doctrine.

One day maybe you or one of your students can come and visit us here?

There are many eminent teachers in Europe and America now. What do you think about having more than one?

My karmic ability caused me to get in contact with you and with Philip Kapleau. The one I met first in words, and you I met first in a concrete life situation.

Sincerely Yours,

Anthony

P.S. How is Jacob Perl? I started to translate your letters to Patricia.

November 10, 1976

Dear Anthony,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I am so glad you returned to your country and are continuing to practice sitting Zen.

You said now you understand that Zen is everyday mind, not only sitting. These are very important words. Most people think Zen is only sitting. Also, they think that if they have a strong practice, then they will get enlightenment. This is wrong. Only body sitting helps meditation but cannot help cognition. If you want to correctly understand meditation, then you must understand cognition.

Meditation means not-moving mind. Cognition means clear mind. Not-moving mind means nothing mind. Clear mind means using your mind.

So, you must keep a mind which is clear like space. Then you can see, you can hear; then everything is clear. An eminent teacher said, “Just seeing is Buddha-nature. Just hearing is the true Dharma.” This means, when you see the sky, only blue. When you hear a dog barking, only WOOF! WOOF!

You first studied the Rochester Zen style, and then after, Korean Zen style. Now you are counting your breath. Any action, any position—it doesn’t matter. How you keep just-now-mind—this is very important. Moment to moment, *what are you doing now?* When you drive, do you not try Zen? When you’re eating, only eat. When you’re talking, only talk. When you’re watching television, what are you doing? How are you practicing Zen? *Not practicing Zen?* This is very important.

You think Zen is special. You must throw away this mind. You want concentration, so you have already made a mistake. When you’re thinking, just think. When you’re eating, just eat. When you’re talking, just talk. When you’re walking, just walk. When you’re driving, just drive.

Don’t make anything. Only go straight—don’t know. Then you will get everything. This is very important.

Here is a very famous kong-an for you:

Jo Ju asked Nam Cheon Zen Master, “What is the true way?”

Nam Cheon answered, “Everyday mind is the true way.”

“Then should I try to keep it or not?”

Nam Cheon said, “If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken.”

“If I do not try, how can I understand the true way?”

Nam Cheon said, “The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion; not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the way of no thinking, it is like space, clear and void. So, why do you make right and wrong?”

Jo Ju suddenly got enlightened.

I ask you, what did Jo Ju attain?

Here is a poem for you:

Flowers in springtime,
Cool wind in summer,
Moon in autumn,
Snow in winter.

If you don't make anything in your mind,
For you it is a good season.

It is nice to hear that you met this Tibetan Dharma Teacher from Denmark. Also, thank you very much for inviting me to Poland. Maybe some day I will visit your country.

Jacob Perl is very fine. He says hello to you.

You are translating my letters to Patricia—that is wonderful.

I hope you always go straight—don't know—and that you are keeping a mind that is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work, get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 28, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I wish to thank you for coming to the West Coast. Your teaching is always appreciated by many, although not many new students came this time.

When you come, I am always returned to the fundamental teachings: Drop it, just straight ahead, like this, and just like this. At the end of two months, I am back again to this point. When you leave, I return to Kozan and maybe visit other teachers and do lots of reading, since each of these people emphasize a complete familiarity of all Zen kong-ans and scriptures. Temporarily, confusion arises and a losing of the fundamental point. But even before you return, the confusion begins to disappear, and when you come, it disappears even more. After which, I have had a new teaching that has been penetrated and dropped. This allows me to become a better teacher in terms of the type of people that come to my classes at U.C.L.A., since they are academic types and are attracted by people that “know.”

Yet, I only teach about not knowing, and use the knowing to end knowing.

When you come, it is like a hand opening, relaxing. When you leave, returning to traditional Zen practice is like a hand closing, becoming tight. This closing, then opening, tensing and relaxing is good.

I hope you are fine in Providence, and that all the centers grow. It is very important that your understanding be transmitted to as many people as possible.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Ed

November 11, 1976

Dear Ed,

How are you, Ed? Thank you for your letter. Your letter is not bad, not good, but you do not listen to me.

I always said, “Don’t make anything; then you will get everything.” But you make something all the time. Why make me? Why make Kozan Roshi? Why make other teachers? Why make

reading books? If you don't make anything, then you will not be hindered by me, by Kozan Roshi, by other teachers, or by books. Also you will not lose the fundamental point.

So I always worry about you. You are too clever. You say, "Yet, I only teach about not knowing, and use the knowing to end knowing." What does this mean? So I hit you thirty times.

Don't use dead words. You are a Zen student. You must use live words. Dead words are always opposite-thinking words. Live words are just-like-this words. In just-like-this words there is no subject, no object; inside and outside only become one. So you must use live words, like "three pounds of flax," or "spring comes and the grass grows by itself," or "three times three equals nine."

Next, you say, "hand opening, relaxing," then "hand closing, becoming tight," but I always tell you, don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. But you are always checking, checking, checking. This is your bad karma. Put it all down! Only go straight—don't know.

Did you finish your homework? You must finish your homework, O.K.?

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish your Great Job, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you doing? I, myself, am fine and happy. My name is David. Maybe you don't remember me. I am the Shim Gum Do student who is always late, and must bow to you alone when everyone else is done.

I am writing to you because you have recently become more familiar to me, through your book, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. This is a very good Zen book. I remember when you would talk to all the Shim Gum Do students, and teach us of the clear mind—very important. I understood then, but now, after listening to more of what you say, I can feel it. Clear mind is very good (unattached to these words).

I have not read the sutras, but I would like to. I do not know the five or ten precepts, but I would like to. I have only heard you speak, in person and in your written words, and your words fit into my mind well, like pieces in a puzzle. I have understood you in my own way, as any student will, at first. I have made my own clear-mind conclusions, and I hope you will give them good criticizing, so that I may learn.

If a man comes into the temple and blows smoke in the Buddha's face, and drops ashes in its face, I must deal with him with the don't-know mind. Not being a Zen Master, I can only say to him, "There is no smoking in the temple. Take your cigarette out and put it out." If he shows not even simple rule courtesy, then I must take him out personally.

You tell me of one kong-an, "The mouse eats cat food, but the cat bowl is broken." I understand it this way. The cat is gone; the mouse is free. "But the cat bowl is broken." The cat did not leave easily, but fought and was difficult (unattached). If I had to give an interpretation (though I would not think it necessary), I would say to you, "the mouse is the clear mind and the cat is our early conditioning. To let ourselves have the clear mind is sometimes a fight, and we must break through the conditioning. Only when the cat is gone can we have the tasty cat food."

I have a poem for you. I prefer to snap fingers rather than hit the floor (unattached preference).

This pencil is big.
This book is the same as everything,
and yet it is only what it is.
When the rains fall up, the trees cry.
You are the same as me. Snap!
You are different from me. Snap!
I am me. Snap!
Snap!

I have one more poem for you:

The children of summer see much playing and happiness.
In autumn they see much learning.
In winter they see the snow sleeping and the trees shivering.
In spring they see spring,
and wait for summer.

I have learned these thoughts from you, and from thinking-Zen. Thinking-Zen is like driving-Zen, walking-Zen, etc. Thinking-Zen is just-like-this, and it is good (unattached).

If you don't answer me immediately, it is O.K. I will do waiting-Zen.

I am like a diver diving into the water. My head is in the water, but not my body. But soon my body will be in the water. Snap!

I feel big inside, but without the words. Thank you.

Your sincere friend,

David

September 11, 1976

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? First, I hit you thirty times. In your letter, you are very attached to words, and to "snap," and to "attached." You understand too much. Too much understanding cannot help you.

Understanding is opposite thinking. Attaining means before thinking. You must *attain* your true self. What are you? If you snap, you only understand one; you do not understand two.

So, I give you a kong-an.

A monk once asked Jo Ju Zen Master, "I have just entered the monastery. Please teach me, Master."

Jo Ju said, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, I have," replied the monk.

"Then," said Jo Ju, "Wash your bowls."

The monk was enlightened.

What did he attain? If you correctly understand this kong-an, then you try the cigarette kong-an. When you understand the cigarette kong-an, then try the mouse kong-an. Now you don't understand—only thinking! So I hit you thirty times.

You live near the Zen Center, and also you are a Shim Gum Do student. Why do you only send a letter? This is not the correct style. You must come to the Providence Zen Center, and you must sit—this is very important. Also sometime you must try Yong Maeng Jong Jin.

If you don't want to understand your true self, then it doesn't matter. Coming is good, not coming is good. But if you write me a letter about understanding yourself, then also coming is necessary.

I hope you always keep a clear mind, become a good Shim Gum Do student and a good Zen student, then get enlightenment, and soon finish your Great Job.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 15, 1976

Dear Mu Bul,

How are you? These days am wearing your blue denim jacket to keep out the wind, and jogging in your sneakers—will try not to wear anything out. Thank you very much.

Mu Bul, what is hard training? What is not hard training?

See you whenever,

Jim

Dear Jim,

Thank you for your letter.

I am glad to hear that you are putting my clothes to good use.

I am doing a lot of Shim Gum Do these days so I think of you quite often.

You asked me, “What is hard training? What is not hard training?”

Do you know?

KATZ!

Today the first snow of winter is falling at Hwa Gae Sa.

See you later,

Mu Bul

October 31, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim.

Thank you for your letter. How was your stay on the West Coast?

Jan and I are taking Korean lessons every week-day from a private teacher, Chei Myung Hi, at the Peace Corps offices in Seoul. She has been teaching Korean for four years and is a very good teacher. Jok Kwang Su Nim also helps us, especially with pronunciation. Also, starting tomorrow, the Bosal Nims are going to make us kim pop to take with us for lunch. So, I spend most of my time studying now.

I do not have a 100% answer to the kong-an.

Recently, we have seen many people. Mrs. So took us to a Walker Hill show after we had dinner at Byon Kim's mother's house. The next day, we went with her to the air force school Pop Dang for the dedication of their new Buddha. A week or so before that, we went with her to an art opening of pottery that was printed by Weol Pa Go Sa Nim. One vase had a pagoda that was made by the Chinese character for Mu placed in 21 levels, with the *Heart Sutra* next to the pagoda. Another pot had a painting of a fishing fish, with the calligraphy, "Who is fishing?" We met Weol Pa Go Sa Nim and Bo Hyong Haeng Bosal Nim there. Last week Mr. Lee's brother had us to dinner at his house, and he invited us to visit the DMZ with him sometime. On Thursday and Friday, we had dinner with Mr. Chong (Master Kim's cousin) at his house and at Master Kim's mother's house, respectively. He is teaching Mu Bul and Paul Sim Gum Do, and he gave us a present of two practice swords and two short sticks. Kwang Ou Su Nim, who visited us in Providence, took us to the National Palace once, before we went to Chong Ju. She is just getting over a cold now, and wants to take us to see the Korean Folk Village when she gets better.

I am just getting over a short illness, too. Someone gave me a giant fruit-filled cookie, which I ate for lunch, and it made my stomach very sick. Korean food, though, hasn't been bothering me.

The weather is now getting very cold—the ground was frozen this morning. I think we will go to Su Dok Sa near the end of November.

Please stay well.

Sincerely,

Ken

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you?

Question—"What did the monk attain?"

Answer—"I must brush my teeth."

Question—The cigarette man kong-an homework.

Answer—He is stuck on emptiness; he believes school is out. I would play him a tune on a flute with no holes so he would see there is more to learn,

Question—Poor monk up a tree hanging by teeth kong-an

Answer—Blue ink on blue paper.

I hope you are feeling well and that the cooks at P.Z.C. have not forgotten how to fix Linc's soybean soup.

Sincerely,

Paul

P.S. It's like the Chinese finger trap—a cylinder of woven paper. The first finger of each hand is put into the ends. Now if you try to pull your fingers out, the paper tightens and holds them in. The harder you pull, the tighter your fingers are held, but if you do nothing, your fingers also remain in the trap. What can you (I) do? Outside the moon is half and the shit house is cold.

November 4, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you for your letter. Everything is fine here at Hwa Gae Sa. Ken and Jan are studying Korean very hard with a teacher in Seoul. Paul and I stay here at the temple.

Recently we met Master Kim's mother and sister and had dinner at their apartment. They were very kind to us. Also Master Kim's friend, Master Jong, has been teaching us special breathing and Shim Gum Do. So I am busy now practicing Shim Gum Do and trying to learn Korean. I am also starting to learn Chinese characters. There is so much to learn, the only thing is to go step by step, but I am lazy so I have a hard time.

To your question about the monk and Zen Master Jo Ju, I can only answer, "I don't know."

Now you are in Providence, so you must be very busy. Take care of yourself though.

See you later,

Mu Bul

Dear Mu Bul, Ken, Paul, and Jan,

How are you? Thank you for your letters. You said you were learning Korean and Shim Gum Do and that you went to Master Kim's mother's house—that is wonderful.

I think you will have already arrived at Jung Hae Sa when this arrives in Korea.

Ken, your letter was very interesting, and everybody liked it. Now we understand your Korean experiences.

Paul, in your first answer you say, "I must brush my teeth." This is only *like* this. What is a *just-like-this* answer? In your next answer, this cigarette man would not listen to you and would hit you again. Next, with your answer to the man hanging by his teeth, you are already dead because you opened your mouth.

Your P.S. is a very good kong-an. You understand like this. But what is *just* like this? Just like this is *just now your correct situation*.

Mu Bul, you said you are learning Chinese characters—that is wonderful. You answer only "I don't know." This don't know is better than any answer. Only go straight—don't know; then no problem. Also, finally, you will get everything.

When you're hungry, what?

When you're tired, what?

A monk once asked JoJu, "I have just entered the monastery; please teach me, Master."

JoJu said, "Have you had breakfast?"

"Yes, I have," replied the monk.

"Then," said JoJu, "wash your bowls."

The monk was enlightened. So, I ask you, what did the monk attain?

And you must finish your homework.

I hope during this Kyol Che you will always keep a clear mind, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 6, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I have just finished reading your book and have found it very interesting as well as being full of mystery.

I enjoyed meeting you when you were in Toronto and spending some time with you, as well as having you stay in our house. Also thank you and Mu Bul Su Nim for sending Sherry and me the two sitting robes.

You said, quite frequently, when you were in Toronto,

- (1) Only go straight ahead,
- (2) Put it all down,
- (3) Only keep don't-know mind,

and all that seems very good to me, but I have a question for you—How did Ko Bong know he would see you in 500 years?

Lawlor

November 17, 1976

Dear Lawlor,

Thank you for your letter. How are you and Sherry?

You say you just finished my book—that is wonderful. But you say it is full of mystery. If you want to understand it, then it is full of mystery. Only go straight—don't know. Then you will get everything. So put it all down!

I heard that you will come to the next Yong Maeng Jong Jin here—that is wonderful. At that time, we will talk more.

You ask me, “How did Ko Bong know he would see you in 500 years?” I ask you, do you understand Ko Bong? You don't know. If you understand Ko Bong, already you are dead. You must make understand and not understand disappear in your mind. Then you will understand.

Here is honey and here is sugar. How do you explain to me the difference between the sweetness of honey and the sweetness of sugar? Speech and words cannot help you, only

action. So, I say to you, only go straight ahead—don't know. Don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check anything. Then you will get everything, O.K.?

I hope you are keeping don't know mind, always remain clear, soon finish the Great Work of life and death and then save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

October 17, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you very much for your book *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*. Peter sent it to me, and I have been reading it. Sometimes just reading a little bit and putting it down helps me to stop thinking.

Peter came here to visit me. He stayed for not even one day, and left, because it was clear once he was here that there is no need for us to be together right now. Sometimes the best two people can do to help each other can be to set each other free. Now there is neither thinking nor action that keeps us together. Peter is Peter and I am me. Peter said he told you we were “all cut,” and you seemed disappointed. Ever since I left him at Providence Zen Center one year ago I have been cutting the threads that tied us to each other, one after another. When he came I cut perhaps the last one. I said, “Thank you for everything we have given each other, and now may we each go our own way, completely free.” Now there is love and understanding between us, but no threads. Maybe some day we will need to work together, but neither of us can think about it now without hindrance. I hope you understand. All the years I was tied to Peter I tried to help him, but now it seems that the only way I could help him is to untie myself from him altogether. I only did what I had to do.

For a long time I tried to make my parents change into people I would like, and they tried to make me change into a daughter whom they would like. All this trying prevented us from liking each other, or loving each other. While I was away from them, at Findhorn, I realized that I love them whether or not they are what I want them to be. I went home to see them again, and found myself loving the parts of them I disliked as well as the parts of them I liked. And, in turn, I found them loving me that way too! We had stopped trying to change each other, and just loved each other.

There is a person here whom I find myself wanting to change. I love him, but I want him to love me back, and this attachment keeps me from just being myself. I can't just tell him anything because I am afraid he will make judgements on me. See? I am already judging him. I understand that I am calling him a banana, and me an apple, but I am finding it difficult to put down my thinking about him. I want to love him in a Big Way, but this want is getting in the way. With my parents, as I described, there was no want, and Big Love just happened, as a gift. Do you have any suggestions to help me put down my small love for this person? I want to practice Soft Teaching, but how?

I am still working on the cigarette kong-an. I still don't know. All I can do is tell him, “How do you do? My name is Jane,” or “The sky is blue, the grass is green.”

This paper is blue. This ink is green.

Here is the latest Open letter. Maybe you will enjoy reading some of the articles, particularly the one I wrote called "Going Straight." I mentioned you in it; your teaching illustrated a point I wanted to make. There is also a drawing in the Open Letter which Peter did for me, and for everyone who reads the Open Letter. It is with the article called "Positively Negative," which, by the way, is written by the person I described as a banana. Maybe it will help you understand why we find ourselves loving each other but not liking each other.

I can already imagine what you might tell me. You might say, just ask "What am I? Don't know!" I will practice this until I hear from you.

Sincerely,

Jane

November 17, 1976

Dear Jane,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. You say you have been reading my book—that is good. If you're thinking, this book contains demon speech; if you're not thinking, maybe this book will help you.

In your letter you said Peter and you cut all threads. Most young people soon like each other and then soon separate from each other. That action is not good and not bad, but most important is what is true love?

Everybody doesn't understand true love, so people soon love, and then soon separate. This is only desire love. Desire love means that you are attached to something; desire love means for me, only-me mind. So when two people meet, they think each other *very* good. But when they separate, they think, "I don't like you." This *like* mind has changed other things, so now it is a like-dislike mind. So in their minds they have like and dislike. If you have dislike in your mind, then you don't understand Big Love. You must make like and dislike disappear; then you will attain Big Love.

Peter's and your action doesn't show Big Love action. Also you say you like somebody. This mind doesn't understand Big Love or Big Love action. If you want Big Love, first you must understand that the five skandhas—form, feelings, perceptions, impulses, consciousness—are empty. Then all your suffering and distress will disappear, and you will get bliss. That is Big Love and the Bodhisattva Way.

Sad mind and love mind together become Big Love. An example is a mother, who likes her child very much, but this child sometimes does bad action and sometimes does good action. When he does good action, then she gives him more love, but when he does bad action, then she is very sad. So sad mind and love mind together become Big Love like a mother's mind.

If you keep this mind, then Peter is O.K. and the other person is O.K. Don't be attached to something; then you will get everything. If you have a hindrance with something, you will also suffer over something.

You say you don't yet understand the cigarette kong-an. You must only go straight. You say, "How do you do? My name is Jane," or "The sky is blue; the grass is green." Those are all like-this answers. You must understand just-like-this. Just like this is just clear mind; just clear mind means just-now correct situation. When you keep moment-to-moment just-now correct situation, then you will understand the cigarette kong-an. Then everything will be no problem.

You say, "What am I? Don't know"—that is wonderful. Only go straight. Don't check your mind; don't check your feelings; also don't make anything. Then you will get everything.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you for your “Late Medicine” and your “Word Medicine.” Since neither answer was correct, I’m where I have always been.

This mute has lost all desire to teach anyone his dream. As for the Cigarette Man, I cut off his head and saved all of mankind. If you don’t believe me just feel your head; see! no more ashes.

I look forward to seeing your body at Yong Maeng Jong Jin, but I will only be there Saturday night and Sunday morning because of family obligations during the Thanksgiving week-end.

With hands palm to palm,

Bob

November 18, 1976

Dear Bob,

How are you ? Thank you for your letter.

An eminent teacher said that a mute has a dream and understands it himself, but he cannot speak, so other people don’t understand his mind. So, the mute is happy and has good feeling, but other people do not understand. We say this is the First Enlightenment.

Next, he can speak, and it is possible for him to transmit his mind to other people, but not *just like this*—very wide, only *like* this. This is Original Enlightenment.

Next, everything is just like this, and I can transmit 100% from me to somebody else. The name for this is Final Enlightenment.

Here is an example. Somebody is shooting an arrow at a target. On the target, there are many circles, with the bull’s eye in the middle. If you shoot the bull’s eye, it is *just* like this, 100%. Next, the outside circles are *like* this. If you hit the target just outside the rings, this is First Enlightenment. So you must shoot the bull’s eye.

Your answer is not good and not bad. This cigarette man is *very* strong. Any action is not possible with him. You must teach him first softly, and then show him where his mistake is with strong teaching. Then maybe he will listen to you. I think your arrow has shot within the circles, but not on the bull’s eye. You must shoot the bull’s eye.

We will talk more at the next Yong Mong Jong Jin.

I hope you will always keep a clear mind, soon finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 15, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Your answer to my letter is making me very happy, and I thank you and bow to you.

I have just finished my letter to Linc, as I hear that Joan can be reached in Big Sur by about the 22nd of November. At present she is staying with Joseph Campbell in New York. I have quoted to Linc what you told me about the Big Sur Zen Center—contacting Joan and that you want Linc and me to talk.

As long as Stan and Christina are living in the Esalen house, no harm will come to Dakini Vajrayogini, and if Joan decides to leave you, then I hope she will want the Zen Center things to come to my house.

I am happy to know that you think this will be good. I know that Mark, my husband, will understand. As yet he spends little time here, but wants to make this house larger by building on. As you know, it is very little and not entirely my place to make a complete Zen Center, but, I think, in time, this can be. There are fine possibilities.

I look forward to a visit from you in January.

I like Paul very much. So! He went to Korea! Hello to Jim, Ruth, and Sherry. Am happy that they have chosen to be near you.

I hope to find someone reliable to take care of creatures and house, so I can be with you in Los Angeles during Yong Maeng Jong Jin. To sit and have interviews with you I like more than Kido, but, if possible, I will be at both.

It is now about a year ago when we met, and the Jin family came into being soon after. To me it feels as if I know you always.

No, Soen Sa Nim, I have not finished my homework. Also, there are days when I do not sit, although I know that all goes well when I do.

During these past five months I have been caused much distress by people around me and made much suffering for myself through this. It was the strict sitting which restored and maintained my balance. More and more do I see that to live alone is not the way.

Bowing, I feel deeply grateful to you.

In the Dharma yours,

Jo

November 28, 1976

Dear Jin Uwal,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? When I received your letter I was very happy. I already talked to Linc about moving the Big Sur Zen Center.

I think that if the Big Sur Zen Center is moving to your house, then some day it will be possible to have a Yong Maeng Jong Jin there. Also, you say your house may become a little bigger—that is wonderful. If you want it to be bigger, then maybe Linc and other people will come and help you.

But only one thing—what does Joan think about this? I think this will be no problem. Before, Joan said she wanted to have the Big Sur Zen Center become a big Zen Center. Nowadays she does not do hard training, and your house is near Big Sur, so Joan could come and go; visiting your Zen Center would be possible. So I think there will be no problem. We must first talk with Joan. If Joan thinks this is O.K., then we can move everything over there.

Then maybe people will like this Zen Center. Many people will practice there, and also many people can come and go, visiting your house. Then afterwards, this Zen Center will grow and grow and become the most beautiful Zen Center.

When I visit the West Coast in January, then I will visit your house. You say you will come to the Yong Maeng Jong Jin at Tahl Mah Sah, and maybe to the Kido—that is wonderful. I also miss you.

All the Jin family likes Big Sur, and they also like you. If you make a Zen Center there, then many of the Jin family will visit you and help you, and sitting together will be possible. I also want this.

You said you have not finished your homework. Finishing or not finishing your homework doesn't matter. What is important is how you keep just-now mind. You must keep your correct situation. This is Zen.

When you're hungry, what?

When you're tired, what?

You already understand. Long ago, the great Zen Master Nam Cheon said, "Everyday mind is Zen mind." So don't worry about anything. Only go straight ahead—don't know. If you don't make anything, then you will get everything.

I hope your mind always remains clear, and that you will soon finish the Great Work of Life and Death. Then True Moon will save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 4, 1976
(Feast of Great Catholic Saint Charles Bowmeo)

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Almost two weeks have passed since you rushed out the door to catch your plane to Los Angeles. I miss you, and already the space ship has crashed.

Now I am living north of San Francisco in the mountains with two friends. They are very nice to share with me. I work hard to fix up the place where we all live. The country is very beautiful; all the trees are turning colors with red berries all over them. I see your Zen stick all over the ground. Today I gave water to the cabin we live in. Soon this cabin will forget about the water. Soon another cabin will be built. It too will forget.

I hope to be able to buy some land and build a meditation hall high in the hills. Maybe in the spring.

I have a job in a restaurant and have to work with meat. I try not to think about it and just do my work.

If you want me to go back and live in Los Angeles I will. But right now the extra money and country atmosphere is good for me. My practice is a little shaky, but every day I try to do some part of it, if not all. This morning I bowed but did not chant or sit. In one hour I'll do the evening practice. I want to learn the bell chants, and so I would like to have a cassette tape of those chants. I will send money for them in a few days.

My tongue is still very sharp and cuts too close, so I must say many mantras to curb this habit. It is hard not to be attached, especially to you. I see the Bodhisattva everywhere and too often wish he would stay in my heart. Oh yes, I forgot. Someone stole my heart a few months ago. I guess what I feel is the hole where my heart used to be.

Love, Obedience, and Service in the Dharma,

Hae Gak

November 9, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I am no longer living in the hills at Greenfield Ranch. Yesterday I came here to Talmage, which used to be a state mental hospital but has been turned over to the Buddhists of Golden Mountain Monastery in San Francisco. There are many buildings here and much

work. So I can stay here for free if I help to do work. And you know that is right up my Zen alley.

I found a big house close to town in Ukiah which is not being used and is for sale. The owner wants \$65,000 for it. It has eight big bedrooms on the second floor and four or five baths and a good-sized kitchen, which has been burned out and needs complete remodeling. There is also a large dining room and three other larger rooms on the first floor that could be easily made into a Dharma room. The house is on a piece of ground about 3/4 of an acre and, as I said, is really close to the center of town. Ukiah has about 60,000 people in the area, and there are many young people who are interested in Buddhism.

In a very short time there will be many students living at the university here at Talmage.

Where do we go from here? It is much easier for me to practice here with other monks and precept-holders around. The Dharma company is very good, and the grounds are very monastic. I hope you will come to visit Talmage and perhaps open a center here. The members of the monastery say that their master has some psychics who predict that this will be the greatest center for Buddhism in the West. Perhaps you should consider this as a place where our style of Buddhism can also flourish.

I didn't know why I was coming up here until now. Please let me know if this is where I should stay for a while, and also about that house in Ukiah. If you want, I may be able to send some pictures.

Yours in the Dharma,

Hae Gak

November 18, 1976

Dear Hae Gak,

Thank you for your two letters. How are you?

I read your two letters, and you took my mind, my whole energy, so I became crazy. This is yours and my same karma. Why did you make me crazy? I don't want it. You must help me.

In your first letter you said you like the mountains, so I thought you were very happy, so I also was very happy. In your next letter, you were visiting the Golden Mountain Monastery. Then next you said you want to buy a house. Then next you said that if I say to you to stay there, you will stay there.

What do you want? To buy the house? After buying the house, what would you do? What is your direction? If I buy the house and afterwards you disappear, then this house would be empty. Then the Zen Center Buddha would cry, and also I would cry.

Louise is sending you a chanting tape. When you receive the chanting tape, only chanting. Then your eyes, your ears, your mouth become one with chanting. Don't use your eyes,

don't use your ears, don't use your mouth. If you use your eyes, your ears, your mouth, then your mind is always moving, then your mind is always moving, moving, moving. Your body has had much suffering, come, go, come, go, come, go.

I already told you—together action is necessary, so you must stay at Tahl Mah Sah. Why? You do not talk to Linc, you do not talk to me, you yourself went around to the mountains, want to buy a house—I will hit you thirty times.

Put it all down. What is the correct way? You must listen to me. Don't make anything. You want something, so you already have lost your life, already lost your way.

So, if you continue to go around, around, around, many people will say you are crazy! I don't like this, so you must soon return to Tahl Mah Sah. Then maybe they will help you. Why? Together action is necessary. You yourself cannot control your eyes, cannot control your ears, cannot control your mouth, cannot control your body. So, if you go to Tahl Mah Sah, you must close your eyes, close your ears, close your mouth. Then your body will find together action very easy. Then no problem.

In Los Angeles, all people—Korean people, American people—all like you, so you will get a job. Then you will get money. Stay at Tahl Mah Sah for one year; then maybe you will become a Dharma Teacher. I think you will like this Dharma Teacher job. That is the great Bodhisattva Way—Big Love and your true way.

I hope you will put it all down, soon keep a clear mind, return to Tahl Mah Sah, and soon get Enlightenment, and finish the Great Work of life and death.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Thank you for your guidance and encouragement during Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Though, I am still the frustrated frog—if I could leap out of the well, I would believe in myself 100 per cent. I have a high fever, but I am drinking *hot* tea and covering myself with a heavy blanket. I understand this medicine is necessary!

Here are answers to the kong-ans on which I am working. First, “Duk Sahn Carried His Bowls”:

What is the last word of Zen?
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

What did Am Du whisper to the Master?
“Master, I hope you are feeling well this morning.”

Second, “Three Men Walking”:

I say, “Next to the great warrior’s body
an old woman is weeping.”

As you advise, I am just going straight ahead... only what am I (a frog with fever.) See you soon.

Respectfully

Steve

December 3, 1976

Dear Steve,

How are you now? Thank you for your letter. I just got back from Washington D.C. and then began the Providence Yong Maeng Jong Jin, so I am a little late in answering your letter. I am sorry.

You say you are still the frustrated frog, you want to leap out of the well, and then you would believe in yourself 100 per cent. I say to you, don’t make anything; then you will get everything. If you want something, then you already have made a mistake. What is believing in yourself 100 per cent? I ask you, what are you?

You already understand. Nothing at all. Just like this. Just-like-this mind is clear mind. Clear mind means, moment to moment, you must keep your correct situation. Then everything is O.K. What more do you want? Put it all down. A good answer or a bad answer to kong-ans doesn't matter. Only keep just-now mind. If your mind is not moving, no problem. Good answers and bad answers are not important. Most important is how do you keep just-now mind?

Now for your kong-an answers. Your "last word" answer is wonderful. But in "What did Am Du whisper in the Master's ear?" you don't understand the correct situation at that time. Zen Master Duk Sahn shouted at Am Du, "Do you not approve of me?" He was *very* angry! Also, the Zen master doesn't understand the last word. If you correctly understand this situation, then you will understand the correct answer.

Next, you said, "Next to the great warrior's body, an old woman is weeping." Your answer is like scratching your left foot when your right foot itches. You must correctly understand the situation at that time. This is necessary.

I hope you always keep your correct situation moment to moment, then soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 5, 1976

Dear Linc,

Thank you for your letter. I'm glad that you are getting up to San Francisco to see the rest of our West Coast family occasionally.

Last week, on Monday and Tuesday, Soen Sa Nim and Jerry and I went to Washington D.C. to do a two-day workshop called "Zen Awareness for Westerners." We were invited by the Metropolitan Ecumenical Training Center, which is funded by all different churches in Washington. Our friend Henry is on the Board of Directors. He has come to two Yong Maeng Jong Jins here, originally from Rochester, where he was a student at the Rochester Zen Center.

Henry and his wife Treadwell moved to Washington because Henry was asked by the diocese in Washington to come to start a congregation that is interested in and practices meditation. In fact, one of the requirements to be in his congregation is that you have to sit every day. So far they have twenty people, but his wife said they started from scratch, and when they came to Washington there were just the two of them sitting together in their basement.

After Henry and Treadwell picked us up at the airport, they drove us past the Washington Cathedral, where Soen Sa Nim was to speak that night. It is *huge* with a big tower—very impressive. Henry said it is the fourth largest cathedral in the world.

We had lunch at their house with the Director of M.E.T.C., who had invited us down. He and a colleague had come to Providence last spring to interview Soen Sa Nim (many questions!), so I had met him before too.

The workshop ran from 2 p.m. on Monday to 3 p.m. on Tuesday and was held in one of the buildings on the Washington Cathedral grounds. It was basically a baby Yong Maeng Jong Jin, with Jerry and I giving a Dharma talk at the beginning of each day. Most of the people who attended were in some kind of meditation group or had done some sitting before, and, despite the pain in their legs, they seemed to enjoy the whole thing very much.

On Monday evening, Soen Sa Nim answered questions after Jerry gave a short talk about how he became interested in Zen. This talk was open to the public, and it was held in a chapel in the Washington Cathedral, right in the space between the two sets of columns that hold up the tower of the Cathedral. There were many gentle questions, and most people seemed to like what Soen Sa Nim had to say, 100%. But I saw one woman on the right, with high boots and a scarf on her head, only frowning, and a black man on the left with a beard, only frowning, even when everyone else was laughing. Later I said something to Soen Sa Nim about these two people, and he said, "No good—not together action."

One participant in the workshop who was also at the talk that night sat right in the center of the chapel, looking at Soen Sa Nim and grinning from ear to ear. He was an Episcopal priest who had been sitting before and seemed hungry to hear what Soen Sa Nim had to say. Every time Soen Sa Nim would make a point, this man would nod and keep smiling, a big, wide grin that seemed to fill the center of the chapel. Then Soen Sa Nim said, "You must attain no attainment," and the grin disappeared, and he was finally stuck. What, no attainment?

Soen Sa Nim answered one question about psychiatric treatment and how it changes bad feeling to good feeling, but how then this good feeling can always change back to bad feeling again when the outside situation changes. Later we learned that the man asking the question was a psychiatrist who uses meditation as an integral part of his treatment; he has his patients sit Zen for twenty minutes before talking for the rest of their hour!

Soen Sa Nim and I stayed with Henry and Treadwell and their three children, who are about the ages of Kim and Drew. Hannah, who is eight had heard the story of Soen Sa Nim's retreat and thought a green man was coming to stay at her house because of his having eaten pine needles. She was asking all sorts of questions, so Soen Sa Nim asked her, "Where do you come from?" She soon learned to hit the table any time he asked her anything, and everyone would laugh except Nathan, who is nine. He only asked, "But what does it *mean*?"

The next morning Nathan was the first one downstairs, and he was still asking, "What does it *mean*?" So I read him the first story in *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* about the cookie factory and about the blind man with the elephant. Then Nathan asked why the Buddha in their basement has nuts in a circle around him. So Soen Sa Nim said, "You have two holes for your eyes, two holes for your nose, but only one hole for your mouth. Why only one hole, not two?" So Nathan hit the table and Soen Sa Nim laughed, so Nathan was very happy.

All in all we had a wonderful time. It means a lot to me to see people with children, who live in a nuclear family, sitting every day. Most of the people I know who sit live at Zen Centers, and most of the people I know who have families don't sit or have a practice.

I had the feeling that some people involved in Christianity are searching for the answers to some questions like why are we alive? and where do we go when we die? and that they are very interested in Soen Sa Nim's teachings. Henry said that people go to seminary with earnest intent and interest in spiritual life only to find that they must learn Greek and scriptures, and that the emphasis is on dry cognition, and not particularly on spiritual life.

Henry and Tilden had known each other in seminary and then not seen each other for years, with only a card at Christmas time, and then each found himself involved in Zen practice, so they were brought together again with this bond.

We all send our love. Georgie had taken two weeks off from work and is doing hard training at the Zen Center this week during Yong Maeng Jong Jin. He moved over there for the week and isn't talking and has been staying up late into the night sitting. I can only sit during the daytime hours when Kim and Drew are in school, but this week-end they were gone, so I stayed at the Zen Center all week-end and sat up late with George. I couldn't believe how tired I was when I sat during the day and took care of the children mornings and evenings, but when I was only at the Zen Center, I wasn't tired at all!

Love, Suzie

Drew says Hi.

473A

Poem delivered by Soen Sa Nim at the celebration of the anniversary of
Buddha's Enlightenment on December 11, 1976

Buddha saw the star
Attained enlightenment

Seung Sahn saw the star,
Lost enlightenment.

The wind of KATZ
Blew away enlightenment and unenlightenment.

The Buddha is bright in the Dharma room.
The star is clear in the sky.

A Dharma Speech

Given by Mu Gak Su Nim at the Providence Zen Center on Enlightenment Day, December 11, 1976

(Lifting up the Zen stick and hitting the table three times)

Once up a time, a man sat down under a tree and decided never to get up until he had found Perfect Enlightenment. After many days, he looked up early one morning and saw a star in the sky; he understood, and cried out, “How wondrous! How wondrous! All things are already perfect!”

What did he see?
Just a star.
What did he understand?
Nothing at all.

The star ablaze in the slowly brightening sky, the forest air crisp, a few leaves falling to the ground, and high overhead, out of the silence, a bird’s song. That was all. It was enough. When we compare what is to what might be, then we have problems. But if we let all phenomena, outside and inside, come and go as they will, like clouds across the empty sky, then there is no problem. It is always enough.

Our original mind is like the vast, empty sky. Just as in the sky a star can appear, or the moon or sun, clouds, lightning, snow—so in our mind good and evil appear, anger and compassion, mountains, rivers, God, Buddha, past, present, and future. Because originally our mind is empty, it is able to entertain all things. Anything can happen.

There is no attainment, with nothing to attain. We arrive naked and leave naked. By not-doing, all things get done. All things are no things; “things” is just a name. No attachment, with nothing to be attached to. Prajna Paramita: the mind with no attachments at all. The mind of total compassion. He is like a vessel, always ready to be filled or to be poured out. He is at ease in any situation, having recognized that he is no different from the situation.

So no Enlightenment is great Enlightenment. Everything is just the way it is. Everything just as it is, is enough.

The Buddha became enlightened upon seeing a star in the eastern sky. But there are many stars in the sky. Which one is *your* star?

KATZ!!!!

When the sun is shining, there is not a star anywhere.

December 7, 1976

Dear Master Seung Sahn,

The moon has no name.

Thank you,

Stewart

December 13, 1976

Dear Stewart,

You said, "The moon has no name."

Then what?

S.S.

December 1, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the workshop presented by you and your Dharma teachers in Washington, D. C. It has been a long time since I have been in such company.

Since the Providence Yong Maeng Jong Jin was too soon, I have sent reservations for the one in New York and look forward to coming to Providence in March.

Being unaware of the rituals of practice (except for what was presented in the workshop), I have sent for a tape and robe and plan on doing a little homework before New York. I wrote Dharma Teacher Suzanne Bowman for these. Hopefully they will come with instructions for use.

A child in a gloriously strange land;
Sniffing the flowers and
Eating the trees.

Thank you for accepting me as your student.

Merrie

December 15, 1976

Dear Merrie,

Thank you for your letter. How are you doing now? You liked the Washington D. C. workshop—that is wonderful. You want to come to our New York Center—that is also wonderful.

Your poem is very interesting, but I don't understand the meaning. The last words, "Eating the trees"—what does this mean? Who is eating the trees? How eating the trees?

Here is a poem for you:

Two mud cows together sumo wrestling
Pull each other around, around, around,
And into the ocean.

Which is the winner? Which is the loser?
No news.

Seagulls are flying over the water.
The ocean is blue.

I hope you always keep don't-know mind, only go straight, then become clear, and soon get enlightenment.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 24, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you so much for coming to our meditation center. It was an honor to have you, and we are all very thankful for your teaching. It was an inspiration to everybody. You and your family are always welcome here. I believe you will get some of the students to attend Yong Maeng Jong Jin after they leave here. We hope you all enjoyed your visit here.

Because of all the excitement I forgot to ask you a question about mantra practice. During sitting time, while repeating the mantra, do I focus on the hara or the breath, or even question “who” is repeating the mantra. Or should I just recite the mantra and let the energy move freely without trying to focus it?

Also, I was wondering if you had any extra beads. I have a small one, but it would be nice to have a large one with 108 beads on it. If you have it, great—if not, no big deal.

Please take care of your health—try to get some rest. I hope you, me and everybody complete the 4 vows. See you soon.

Your devoted student,

Richard

December 15, 1976

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? This letter is *very* late—I am sorry that I am so busy at Christmas time. I sent three hundred Christmas cards to Japan, China, Korea, Europe, so I am *late*.

You ask about this mantra. Don't check your mind. You say should you focus on the hara or the breath or even on the question “who” is repeating the mantra—all this is checking your mind. Put it all down. Only go straight—mantra. You are attached to sitting, so you have this style question. Only mantra. When walking, when eating, how do you keep this mantra? You cannot focus on the hara then, can you?

Your words are an attached-to-sitting question. Don't be attached to sitting; don't be attached to quiet. Always keep the mantra, when sitting, when eating, when talking, when playing tennis, when driving, *always*. Then you are the mantra; the mantra is you. The

mantra is talking; the mantra is eating; the mantra is sitting; the mantra is driving. Mantra action is everything—then no problem. The mantra cannot check the mantra.

I am sending you 108 beads. If you keep these beads, only go straight. Don't check your mind, don't check your feelings, don't check your beads, don't check anything. Only go straight—mantra. Then you can see, you can hear all *just like this*—the snow is white, the pine tree is blue.

I hope you always keep the mantra, only go straight, soon get complete freedom from life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 7, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Here is a small gift for the Providence Zen Center to help with the hard work you are all doing. Since I do not see you very often anymore, I have decided to write you a letter.

Perhaps sometimes you wonder why I do not come work and teach at the Cambridge Zen Center this year, especially now that I am a Dharma Teacher. I know you understand that my life is busy, and this fall I have chosen not to do too many extra things. My mind gets too scattered, and I cannot be clear and careful at my job or in my home. But this does not mean that I have stopped practicing—practice is no longer anything apart from my life; it will continue as long as I do! When I became a Dharma Teacher, I wondered if I was making a promise to the Zen Center that I could not keep. You told me then that teaching the Dharma means always, to family, to friends, to everyone. This helped me so much, and I try to do this in many ways, all the time and with all my heart. I do not need my long robe to share the strength and truth of your teaching, of Buddha's teaching, the teaching of all beings.

Although I come to the Cambridge Zen Center very rarely these days, I am trying to keep a clear mind and only go straight (even though I bump into my own ignorance around every corner!). You know, Soen Sa Nim, I continue to be a part of the Zen Center family. When I can help teach, I will be happy to do it, to express our deep thanks and respect to you for your teaching us all.

I hope this letter finds you in good health and that you will rest for a few days after all the workshops and Providence Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Take good care of yourself, and hello to everyone there.

Love,

Trudy

P.S. I thought I would see you this Saturday, but as it turns out, Mark will give the talk. I called him, and he has asked me to talk when you come to Cambridge next Thursday. This is better because I am a little sick this week and busy as usual. So I look forward to seeing you in Cambridge this week!

December 15, 1976

Dear Trudy,

Thank you for your letter, and also thank you very much for your check. How are you? I hope you are a good Dharma Teacher.

In your letter you said your whole life is practicing, practicing is your whole life—that is wonderful. An eminent teacher said, “Everyday mind is Zen mind.” You are a Dharma Teacher. What is most important? Money? Fame? Food? Family? Everyday life? All are important, but which one is most important? If you die tomorrow, what can you do? Is money necessary? If fame necessary? Is food necessary? Is family necessary? Is everyday life necessary?

I understand you are very busy. But once a week you must visit the Zen Center. This means that you cannot lose the most important action. Buddha said that together action means teaching and already learning everything from others.

So, practicing by yourself is not good and not bad, but being very attached to yourself means that your opinion, your condition, and your situation grow, grow, and grow, and cannot disappear. But you yourself don't understand this growing. If you go to a Zen Center and do together action, then you will understand your karma. If you understand your karma, then you can make it disappear. But, if you don't understand, you cannot make your karma disappear. Always inside you will feel, “My way is correct. I am not bad.” Thinking “My way is correct, I am not bad” is *very bad karma*. So together action is necessary.

I think you are a great Dharma Teacher. Also I think it is possible for you to help many people. Your style, your speech, and your relationships with other people are all great Bodhisattva style. This is a Dharma treasure. Many people want this Dharma treasure, so you must not hide your Dharma treasure. Open your Dharma treasure. Then your Dharma treasure will shine through the whole universe and will save all people from suffering.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, only go straight, and don't check anything. Then you will get everything, including freedom from life and death, and will follow the great Bodhisattva Way.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 28, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you very much for your letter. It came like the sun at dawn.

Tonight I saw the Buddha in the lid of an ice cream tub.

Between my first sentence and the second I looked up. The face in the mirror looked just like me. Who's that?

Here is an autumn poem for you:

Summer cools
but golden flames
blaze in autumn sky.

The bees gather
in the hive,
honey combs dripping
with work well done.

Summer's flowers,
they have turned to nectar.

Before, sweet,
Now the Earth wears
musky perfume.
Ah! she goes
beneath the trees
and thanks the leaves.

BEST WISHES FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE NEW YEAR
to you and everyone at P.Z.C.

Love,

Jane

The wind blows; the walls creak.
What make the air in my room hum late at night?
I love.

December 15, 1976

Dear Jane,

Thank you for your letter and your Christmas card and the handkerchief—it is wonderful. I like it very much. Also, you wrote this poem—it is wonderful!

You say you looked in the mirror and said, “Who’s that?” In the middle there was the reflection of your face, and also there was the real face. I ask you, of the mirror face and your face, which one is the correct face? Are they the same or different?

If you say “Same,” I would hit your face. You would say “Ouch!,” but the mirror face would not say “Ouch!” If you said, “Different,” I would tell you that, before you were born, your face was empty; after you die, your face will be empty, so your face is empty. The reflected face is also empty, so the mirror face and your face are the same.

So I ask you one more time, are they the same or different? If you say “Same,” you do not understand your original face. Also, if you say “Different,” you do not understand your original face. What is your original face?

Long ago, an eminent teacher said, “Don’t think good and bad. At that time, what is your original face?” This is a famous kong-an. So, don’t make anything. Then you will get your original face, and everything. If you don’t understand your face, only go straight—don’t know.

We had a Buddha’s Enlightenment Day Ceremony last Saturday. I gave the audience a poem, so I will also show it to you:

Buddha saw the star,
Attained enlightenment.

Seung Sahn saw the star,
Lost enlightenment.

The wind of KATZ
Blew away enlightenment and unenlightenment.

The Buddha is bright in the Dharma room.
The star is clear in the sky.

I hope you are always keeping a mind pure and clear, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 10, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I have posted a notice of your possible visit to Chicago on the bulletin board in the Zendo of the Chicago Buddhist Temple.

There are six people who expressed the wish to attend a Yong Maeng Jong Jin. I have told them it would probably be at the end of February.

I do not have access to other Zen groups in Chicago, but there are some, and I know that that book *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha* will certainly attract Zen practitioners, when they know you are coming. In fact, it could be that there will be too many, as the Korean Temple on Western Avenue is not very large.

I wanted to come to New York or New Haven, but I cannot get a vacation from work at this time. But I hope you can come and hold the Yong Maeng Jong Jin; I will certainly be there.

In one of the newsletters, a young man mentioned “breathing in the manner you taught, when one is under stress.” This would be very helpful to me, as my work is often very hectic, and I find myself holding my breath and hardly breathing for long periods of time. Could you describe this exercise to me?

Thank you for giving me your time and wisdom when you were here. I really enjoyed being with you and am looking forward to seeing you in the spring.

With 108 bows,

Harrington

P.S. Some have asked me what the charges for the Yong Maeng Jong Jin will be?

December 15, 1976

Dear Harrington,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? You say that already six people want to come to the Chicago Yong Maeng Jong Jin—that is very good.

You said maybe more people will come, and the Korean temple is very small. But the Korean temple is bigger than the Cambridge Zen Center or the New Haven Zen Center. At the

Cambridge and New Haven Zen Centers, it is possible to have twenty people. I think it is possible to have twenty-five people at this Korean temple.

At the first Yong Maeng Jong Jin, more than twenty people would be very difficult, so I think twenty people is enough. Next time, more will be possible. Why? We will use the Korean temple this time. If we stay at the Korean temple, we can use their things, the Dharma teachers can stay there, and they will help us, so no problem. If we have many people next time, then we can change the place. If we have it another place the first time, it would be very complicated.

You cannot come to New York or New Haven. You're a busy man—that's OK. No problem. Don't make anything—only go straight.

If you are under stress and have energy up, breathe in for three seconds—clear mind, clear mind, clear mind—and then seven seconds out—*don't know*. But at that time keep your energy in your *dan jeon*, three inches below the belly button; keep all your energy in your lower stomach. Only go straight—don't make anything.

At the end of February, the last week, we will try this Yong Maeng Jong Jin. Our director will send all our Yong Maeng Jong Jin information to you, including prices.

I am happy that we will be seeing each other at the Yong Maeng Jong Jin in February.

I hope you are always keeping a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 24, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

A few days ago, I had my last Zen class of the quarter. Two strangers came, one a Hindu Swami that had trained for over twenty years in the Hindi tradition, and a Tibetan Buddhist monk. They disagreed with everything I said. Especially, they disagreed that anyone could “just put it down.” They both maintained that many years of preparatory training were necessary for a beginner, before he could understand the formless. They knew all about concentration, meditation, samadhi, etc., and were “expert” debaters. I could not debate successfully with them. At one time, I knew all the words and techniques they talked about, but have long forgotten them.

Then, I *fully* understood how they are blocking themselves, with ideas about meditation, practice, questioning, interpretation, and both talked of holiness. I also fully saw how, in my interest to teach people, I had been looking at reasons, practices, etc. Your method often does not reach many people unless they are ready to hear you, or they believe in you. What about all of the other people in the world that are not ready to hear of Zen? These people must be reached also; they too suffer and find pain. How do I help them??? THIS IS HOW I HAD BEEN THINKING; I HAD BEEN HANGING ONTO THIS STILL. And I understood this by hearing and seeing how the two strangers were tied up by their minds. I could not listen to you, and what you had been saying, until I found it for myself. Even this is too much thinking.

NOW, THE REAL REASON FOR THIS LETTER:

You said that there was a group in Detroit of about 75 people that wanted a Dharma teacher, but that none from Providence wanted to come. I asked Linc for a name, and he referred me to someone named Michael. I wrote to Michael, and he said he didn't know anything about a group of Zen people, didn't care to know anything about any other Zen people in Detroit, and never even thought of having a Dharma teacher come to Detroit, because he was happy as he was. He said he had about a hundred students in his classes each semester, but he was not interested in having them learn Zen, nor had he contacted or told anyone that anyone or a group was interested in having a Dharma teacher come to Detroit. Are all of your students so unconcerned with helping people?

Anyway, is this Michael the person you thought was interested in having a Dharma teacher come to Detroit, or is there another name? I want to go to Detroit, if there is a group there that is interested in a Dharma teacher.

Thank you very much,

Ed (Hae Bong)

December 15, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? This letter is very late, so I am very sorry. Nowadays the East Coast Zen Centers have had two workshops, Yong Maeng Jong Jins, and an Enlightenment Day ceremony, so I have been very busy.

In the first part of your letter: If you're talking with other people, you must understand other people's minds—then you will have no problem. If you don't understand other people's minds, then there is always an argument. When you're talking with others, if your mind is clear like space then you give only reflected answers when other people are talking. If you make opposites thinking and keep your opinion, your condition, and your situation, you cannot save other people.

Here is an example: If other people say, "You are not correct," then you say, "Yes, you are correct; I am not correct." If they say, "You are good," you also say, "No, no, *you* are good."

You must have no hindrance with good and bad, and right and wrong. So I say, "Don't make anything," which means that your mind is clear like space—only reflected action. Then no hindrance. Then you will get everything. When good comes, you get good; when bad comes, you get bad; when wrong comes, you get wrong; when right comes, you get right. Already you have everything. You must understand this; then no problem.

Next, you said you want to go to Detroit. Also Michael from Detroit sent me a letter. Your asking Michael first is not-so-good style, not the correct way. If you want to go to Detroit, you must first send me a letter, and I ask Michael. Then, if it is O.K. with Michael, then I introduce you to Michael. Then your sending a letter to Michael is O.K.

Michael understands much about Zen and has been sitting for a long time, and also he understands the correct way. But, if you only want to go to Detroit and send many letters to him, which is not the correct way, then he already understands your mind. Also, you don't correctly understand our Zen style. You must learn more; this is necessary.

Michael sent me a letter saying that Ed has sent him many letters and Michael said, who is this? So I ask you, who are you? He wants a correct Dharma teacher. If you want to go to Detroit, you must correctly understand Dharma teacher. *Name* Dharma teacher is no good; only speech Dharma teacher is no good; only writing Dharma teacher is no good. Dharma teacher means understanding Dharma. What is Dharma? Dharma is the true way.

What is the true way? No desire for yourself, only for all people, only the Great Bodhisattva Way. Your action is only your desire. You must find the correct way. Then Detroit, and everywhere, is possible.

Put it all down. First save your true self. That is very important. Next, we will talk about Detroit and everywhere.

I hope you always go straight—don't know. That means close your mouth, shut your ears, and also close your eyes. Then your mind will be clear like space. Then I hope you will soon get enlightenment, finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 11, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Today I was going to New Haven to impress you with my Zen. After I found out you left for Providence, I realized that you weren't worth impressing anyways. KATZ. The golden tree grows upside down. The sky is overcast, and the day is all right.

Tomorrow I hope to visit the New Haven Center. It will be my first time. If you would, I would like to carry on a correspondence with you while you are in Providence.

Do you know any Zen Centers in the Montpelier area of Vermont? My wife, my three-month-old son, and I may be moving there next year.

My Zen is well. How is yours? Nothing else to say.

With the best and worst of nothing,

Martin

P.S. My son, Paul, is the best at Zen, but now that he approaches his third month, he slowly begins to lose his mind.

December 15, 1976

Dear Martin,

First, I hit you thirty times. What can you do?

Second, what do you want?

Third, your KATZ comes from where?

Understanding cannot help you. You must *attain* your true self.

Your baby is now three months old. He does not understand mind, so he doesn't lose his mind. You say, "he slowly begins to lose his mind." This is not correct. Before he is three years old, everything is *just like this* for him—good teaching for you. You must learn from him.

I hope you put it all down, including the best and worst of nothing, and don't check me, don't check you, only go straight—don't know, and get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

(Om!—Mani—Padme!—Hum!)

—Om—The Jewel in the Lotus!—hum! (Holy Mantra of Lord Buddha Avatar!)

Salutations, to Zen Buddhist Teachers and Masters, Seung Sahn Soen Sa and Kwang Jang Nim, in city of Boston, American Continent:

This letter is in behalf of my sister Maria who is suffering due to samsaric conditions and who is being helped by your *HOLY COMPANY* in Boston along with company of other devotees.

Sister has written she prays for me to visit West. But at this time, this move is very uncertain and *possibly* will not take place. I would think it best that she should visit me here in *India*, along with her *parents*, in *February*. We will visit holy places of pilgrimage in southern India, northern India, and Nepal. Please inform her of this letter which I am addressing to you in all love and respect. My name is *Mario*. I am devotee of Lord *Shiva*, Lord Buddha and Christ, but in essence my religion is the Salguru Kerpal Singh Si Maharaji and Avatar Sri Sathya Sri Baba. I wrote to you with picture, last spring. Now I am renunciate and I wear *saffron* robe, color of renunciation in India. I am sending *another* letter to sister, today, along with this one.

I pray her close association with holy company in Boston will help her, and save her. Therefore, I am writing you this communication.

I may visit West in one year or 14 months. When this occurs, I will have a good pilgrimage at the *temple*. Sister has informed me of the disciples.

Love, Mario
yogi and friend

December 15, 1976

Dear Mario,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? Your sister is very happy and is now very strong. She is a good Shim Gum Do student and Zen student.

Your letter is also wonderful. But I cannot find your true way. What are you doing now? What are *you*? Magic is important, special energy is also important, transcendence is also important, but what is most important? You must understand your true self. If you don't understand your true self, you don't understand your true way. If you don't understand your true way, you don't understand your direction.

When you have a body, it is possible to get many special things, but when your body disappears, where are you going? Your body has life and death, but your true self has no life and death. If you find your true self, you will get freedom from life and death and be able to do everything.

So, most important, you must find your true self. Then afterwards, anything is possible. But if you cannot find your true self and you are doing something, you will understand only something, but not the whole. If you attain your true self, then you will get the whole, and everything.

Everything is from the primary point, and also everything returns to the primary point. That is your true self.

Don't try to hold onto a cloud. Also, don't try to pull a stone tiger's whiskers.

I hope you are always keeping a mind which is clear like space, that you attain red is red, white is white, then find your true way, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

November 29, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you very much for your long letter—your teaching about the different kinds of anger was very useful just now. I also read that part of the letter to the group after our Wednesday night sitting, and everyone felt good, almost as if you were there. Not many people are coming lately, so the letter you wrote to Bobby, which was printed in the Newsletter, was good for me to hear, too. It is wonderful that Katie keeps coming, however, even though there is such a small number of people to chant (sometimes only three of us!). She has just found a loft for her painting in San Francisco, and this is very fine for her, and yet I do hope she will be able to come across the bridge on Wednesdays. We are such beginners here that it is awfully good to have at least one person who has had more experience. I guess all this will just have to evolve.

About the Kido. I have been thinking and thinking (bad business!) about it. At first it seemed to be a grand idea, especially at Wilbur Hot Springs. However, they did not lower their price as much as I had hoped, for one thing. (They had wanted us to pay \$1,250 for 40 people and were then hopefully going to come down to my counter offer of \$1,000—but they only would split the difference at \$1,125.) So, the cost is one big factor, since if we could not get 40 paying people we would still have to pay all that money, etc. The other factor is that I keep feeling that maybe the time is wrong, that as yet we do not have enough “together action” for such a big event. Maybe later in the year would be better... Also, is a Kido a good way to introduce people to Zen? Undoubtedly many new people would be coming. What do you think? Maybe we do another Yong Maeng Jong Jin here in February instead and a Kido maybe in August or September? (Also, Wilbur Hot Springs would be warmer then—it can get very COLD in February there.)

Linc was here for a few days over Thanksgiving, and it was very good to be with him. I think he had a good rest. I talked with him about the Kido, and he just seems to feel I should “make up my mind” what I want. That is a little hard to do since I’m not sure what would be best, not just for me but for everyone. What I know I want most is for there to be more “together action” right here. I am also interested to know more about the “Meditation and Everyday Living: An Introduction to Zen” workshops that are now being done in the East, which I saw in the Newsletter. What would you think if we did one of those on, say, Saturday, February 12th and then follow it up with a Yong Maeng Jong Jin the next weekend, which is a long weekend, Washington’s Birthday (February 18 to 21)? Or any days, for that matter, that you could most easily do.

I also wonder if part of the problem is that my own practice is so new that planning all these kinds of programs, which I love to do (and I can’t tell if it is just my ego that loves to do them or what), is premature—that maybe I should just sit a *lot* longer first! It would not be good if Zen just turned into yet another activity, another way to make my small I stronger. I

know you will say, “Don’t check your mind”—yet I am not sure all the time what “just going straight” means. Sometimes I do know—right now I don’t. I realize this has to do a lot with my son. Only going straight is what I’ve been trying to do with him, and the result is that he is at this time, anyway, seemingly getting worse (that means getting into even more trouble and showing even less caring toward anyone but himself). If he keeps up like this, the new school may not even accept him. I also know I am learning much from him these days—kids are very good Dharma teachers! I also know that at this point I *can’t* “fix his mind”—or the person’s mind who drops ashes on the Buddha. I can only try to come from my heart with him; the rest is evidently not up to me.

I hope you are well and not too cold in the East. I look forward much to when you come back to the West Coast, and to our nice Hot Tub!! It feels very good on cool nights! How do you like the pictures of the Yong Maeng Jong Jin here? I just got them back ... I will send copies of the group picture to the others who were here. I like the big one of you which I took in Los Angeles ... I have one near the Buddha, and every time I sit, I bow also to you.

Much love,

Diana

P.S. The pumpkin picture is of Katie’s work of art!

P.P.S. Tell Ruth and Jim “hello” for us!

December 16, 1976

Dear Diana,

Thank you for the letter and the pictures and also for the large picture—it is wonderful. All the Providence family likes it very much. Again thank you. You say this letter about four different kinds of anger helped you—that is very good. If you understand your karma, making your karma disappear is possible; if you don’t understand your karma, you cannot make it disappear. But you already understand your karma, so only practicing is necessary.

The Lotus Sutra said,

All phenomena, from their very origin
Always have the aspect of stillness and extinction.

When you are only practicing, going straight on this path,
Then you become Buddha just now.

So, don’t make anything. Only go straight. Just-now mind is true Buddha nature. True Buddha nature is clear like space. Clear-like-space mind is your correct situation just now. Your correct situation means only reflected action. Reflected action means great Bodhisattva action. Great Bodhisattva action is Great Love.

If you don't keep this mind, then whether many people come to sit Zen with you or not doesn't matter. Also, with the Kido—trying it is O.K., or sitting in your home is O.K. Don't worry. Thinking comes and thinking comes—put it all down. Most important is, how do you keep just-now mind? How do you help other people? If many people want a Kido, then Sambosa is O.K., another place is O.K., no hot baths is O.K. But if many people want sitting, then sitting in your home is O.K. Don't worry. *Put it all down.*

Also, your son has a problem. But this problem is his job. Problem children in the future become great men. Don't worry. You must learn everything from your son. Only don't think about him as “my son”. If you keep the idea of “my son” in your mind, then you have a problem. If you don't think in terms of “my son,” then no problem. Only go straight with just-now mind. Then you will have only Great Love for your son.

If you cannot decide about a workshop and a Yong Maeng Jong Jin and a Kido, then you ask Linc. Anything is O.K. You think about what will help other people; then we will try it. Only make a date and a place and tell me. You decide, we go; I help you. Don't make *choice*, O.K.? Also don't make good and bad; only go straight. You must believe in yourself 100%—this is *very important*.

An eminent teacher said, “One minute of practicing is better than 10,000 thoughts.” That practicing means when you're hungry, only eat; when you're tired, only sleep. If you keep this mind, everything is no problem. Everything is just like this. Everything is the Great Way. Everything is Great Love.

So I ask you: In China, a great Zen Master, Soeng Am Eon, stood every day in front of the Zendo facing a big mountain and shouted to himself, “Master!”

“Yes!”

“Keep clear mind!”

“Yes!”

“Never be deceived by others, any day, any time!”

“Yes! Yes!”

Soeng Am Eon called himself and answered himself, two masters—call master and answer master. Which one is the correct master? If you understand this correct master, everything will be no problem. I hope you don't make two masters, always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and then save all people from suffering.

See you soon.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. I will arrive in Los Angeles about January 5th.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you?

We got the newsletter a while ago and read about all your workshops. Thank you.

It's been very cold here for the past few weeks. We're having a warm spell now though, and the grounds of Hwa Gae Sah are all muddy.

A few days ago we went to the opening of Yun Mu Sah, which is a temple on an army base near Dejon. It is a big temple and about 2,000 people came to the opening. The head of the Chogye Order gave a Dharma speech and ended with a big "Katz!"

Su Dok Sa Ju Ji Su Nim is in Seoul now, and we will go to Su Dok Sa with him tomorrow. Many people have been very kind to us here in Seoul, but especially Kwang Woo Su Nim and our Shim Gum Do teacher Mr. Jang.

I am sending a picture I hope you will like.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Sincerely,

Mu Bul

December 18, 1976

Dear Mu Bul,

Soen Sa Nim received your letter and says thank you very much. You know how he likes to answer his letters as soon as possible, so he asked me to write to you since he is *very* busy nowadays. In the last month, we have had two of our own workshops, one in Cambridge and one in New York, and we were invited down to Washington D.C. for a two-day workshop sponsored by the Ecumenical Training Center, where Henry is on the Board of Directors. Then Soen Sa Nim has also held the weekly Yong Maeng Jong Jins and has been writing hundreds of Christmas cards to send all over the world.

So, Soen Sa Nim asked me to write to you and tell you about our celebration of the anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment. We had the ceremony a week ago, on Saturday, December 11, so that it would be convenient for all of our East Coast family to come. It was a busy day, with first a meeting at our house to talk about the white house in Woodstock

that we are going to buy (someone is giving all the money for it), then a Precepts Ceremony at four o'clock, and the Enlightenment Ceremony at seven.

We had the same kind of ceremony that we have had before, with a Dharma teacher from each of the four Zen Centers giving a short speech before the big Dharma speech. Lynn was the announcer, and George gave the opening remarks. He said that four years ago, we used to have our intensive training periods during a 24-hour period of sitting, with no sleep, instead of the seven-day periods we have now. Four years ago, he sat up all night before the celebration of Buddha's Enlightenment and, being very sleepy, fell off his cushion. This year he took a week off from work before our celebration and sat for the week, sitting up late into the night, and again being very sleepy, fell off his cushion.

The first Dharma talk was given by Jerry. He said first that he had gone to his parents' house on his way to Providence, and after visiting friends at night, he had walked home in the cold and looked up at the trees and the stars, and sure enough, they didn't say, "I am a tree," and "I am a star." Then he talked about all of the family being together and how each Center was different and each person has his own way. He said it is important to remember that each one of us has to find his own way, each being different from the others.

Next, Steve Cohen from New Haven gave a talk. He told about the Buddha who sat under the Bodhi tree until he saw a star and attained Enlightenment, and that he said, "Wonderful, wonderful. Everything is already complete." Then he told many stories about famous Zen Masters attaining Enlightenment, some by cutting off an arm or having the nose tweaked ferociously, and some by only hearing a common sound or seeing something quite ordinary.

Next, Mark Houghton gave a short talk. He opened by saying, "This is my first out-of-state Dharma talk," and everyone laughed and laughed. Then he said he didn't know very much about the historical Buddha, but he does know something about the gold Buddha on their altar. He said that Cambridge had gotten the New York Buddha (he guessed they got a new one or something... again much laughter), and that he went in to see the Buddha from time to time to check things out. At the end of his talk he turned to the Buddha and said, "What do you think about Enlightenment, Buddha?" and then said, "I'll stand aside so he won't hit me," and bowed to us.

I gave the Providence talk, and by the time I got up, everyone was ready to laugh at anything. I talked about how easy everything is, except for our thinking, and told the story of the man and his son in a car accident. The man was killed, and his son was rushed to the hospital and into the operating room. When the doctor came in and said, "I cannot operate; that is my son," how could this be? Then I showed a book that George and I had found that day about *The Man Who Lost His Head*, a children's story very much like what Soen Sa Nim is always saying. Then I told about our workshop in Washington, and how one man always sat directly in front of Soen Sa Nim whenever he spoke, grinning from ear to ear. At each word, the man would smile and nod, hungry for what Soen Sa Nim had to say, and he continued grinning until Soen Sa Nim said, "You must attain no attainment." Then the grin disappeared and the man was stuck. So I said, "I hope we all soon give up trying to understand, and then we will understand."

Mu Gak gave the big Dharma speech, and he had copies made, so I enclose a copy of it.

Then Soen Sa Nim surprised us all with a special poem, which he also sends to you:

Buddha saw the star,
Attained enlightenment.

Seung Sahn saw the star,
Lost enlightenment.

The wind of KATZ
Blew away enlightenment and unenlightenment.

The Buddha is bright in the Dharma room.
The star is clear in the sky.

Bobby gave the closing remarks, which were, “Now we will have a party,” and everyone laughed and clapped. We had a wonderful party with good food upstairs, and then afterwards, we had another party at our house. Everyone was very happy to get together. At our house, everyone was dancing all over the house, including up on the balcony, and the children were also up dancing until eleven o’clock.

We have all enjoyed the picture that you sent to Soen Sa Nim, so we all send you a big THANK YOU.

Love,

Suzie

485A

December 15, 1976

Dear George and Suzie,

That was a really great party you had Saturday night. I, for one, really enjoyed myself. It was good to see all the PZC and other Zen Center faces. I'm glad Kwan Jang Nim showed up, too.

Having been here and there a lot over the past six months, I've really come to appreciate people getting together for one purpose or another. The Precepts and Enlightenment ceremonies seemed to me especially significant and good—not because of *what* we were celebrating—but *how* it was being celebrated. As we chanted and as we all listened to each person give their talk, I felt a great thing happening. As I looked and saw all the faces, smiling, laughing, being embarrassed or uncomfortable, being joyous, confused—all this happening all together in one room—I became very happy. I don't think I have ever appreciated a Zen Center ceremony quite as well as on Saturday. I was really moved.

And, it's no joke when I say that I felt the same sort of thing at the get-together at your place afterwards.

I think my awareness of this has really come out ever since I moved *out* of the Zen Center and started traveling by myself. Now, believe it or not, one of my dreams is to move into a Zen Center again!

See you guys soon.

Love, Peter

November 29, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

It was so good seeing you again last night at your Sunday night talk. I find it a little hard to believe that you are a mirror held before everyone ... that when they are sad, you are sad, and that when they laugh, you laugh. You *always* seem to *laugh*... and that laugh usually laughs me a little, too... Thank you!

When I saw you, I asked you to describe shikantaza. You told me to ask the question during the question and answer period. When that time came, however, the question seemed out of place (to me). It didn't seem general enough for public consumption. By the time I'd decided that that might just be my impression and that, after all, you'd told me to ask it... time was up.

So, if you can spare the time, could you tell me, now, what the practice of shikantaza consists of?

... with gassho

Sam

P.S. and could you please illustrate how the image of allowing dirty water to settle and grow clear is translated into method? I refer to the advice that is given... that any attempt to do anything... even to do nothing... stirs the water (the mind) and causes it to get cloudy.

December 23, 1976

Dear Sam,

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry that my answer is very late; I received your letter very late.

In your first question, you are very attached to my face. First you must understand your clear mind; then you will understand clear mirror. Don't attach to my words; don't attach to my face. Then you will understand your original face and clear-like-space mind. Clear-like-space mind is like a clear mirror. If you don't understand, put it all down; only go straight—don't know.

In your next question, you ask about shikantaza. Shikantaza means cutting off all thinking, keeping a not-moving mind. Many people think that shikantaza concerns only the body, but

that is not the correct way. If you cut off all thinking, keeping a not-moving mind, that mind is clear like space.

But shikantaza is only half of the name. It is two phrases which come together: *shikantaza ta sung il pyon*. That means hit and become one. Hit and become one means to hit the world of opposites, and then make the world of opposites disappear. Becoming one means becoming the absolute. Then both together they mean cutting off all thinking, keeping a not-moving mind, hit, and become one. In other words, keep a mind which is clear like space. Then in your mind there is no inside, no outside, no subject, no object. Inside and outside become one. Then when red comes, red; when white comes, white; if somebody is sad, you are sad; if somebody is happy, you are happy. That is the great Bodhisattva Way, Great Love. That is the meaning of *shikantaza ta sung il pyon*.

So, Soto Zen and Rinzai Zen are not different; they are the same. Only the teaching words are different. If you are attached to Soto words, and if you are attached to Rinzai words, you don't understand Soto, and you don't understand Rinzai. You must find the meaning beyond.

The meaning beyond is: don't make anything—only go straight. Then just like this, moment to moment, correctly keep your situation. When you see the sky, only blue; when you see the tree, only green. Just like this is the truth.

Next, you asked me in your P.S. about how to allow dirty water to settle and grow clear. Again you are attached to my words; you don't understand this meaning. In your mind there are many desires, much anger, and much ignorance. When you keep only don't-know mind, then your desires, your anger, and your ignorance become rest, become rest, become rest, become clear, and then finally all desires, anger, and ignorance disappear. Then you can see; everything is possible. But you still have your bad karma and sometimes cannot control yourself, so you cannot have everything. Don't be attached to teaching words.

Somebody said that sugar is light sweet and honey is heavy sweet. How do you explain the difference between sugar sweet and honey sweet to someone who doesn't understand the difference? You must practice. Don't be attached to words. Then you will get it. Only go straight—don't know. Don't check your mind; don't check your feelings. Also don't check *words*. If you make something, you will have a problem with something. So I say, don't make anything; then you will get everything.

I hope you always keep don't know, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 27, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

First lessons in any new language are always slow and much practice is needed to become proficient. So here are my practicings for you.

To learn to swim,
Get in the water!

Beneath the trash heap lies the True Master
Do not cart away the trash!
Find the True Master,
And the trash heap disappears.

How joyfully disappointing!
It was always under my nose!
But I, looking for something else,
Missed it! ...

Nothing special!
Nothing different!

At first there are Rules
And... . Rules
And now... .

Nothing!!!

But...

Rules.

I asked the True Master, "Why am I here?"
"To teach," came the reply.
"To teach what?"
"You already know!"
"But I don't know *how*!!"
"That's all right, Seung Sahn Soen Sa Nim
will teach you how."

The fish is in the pond,

Merrie

December 30, 1976

Dear Merrie,

Thank you for your letter and the wonderful poem. Your poem is very smooth and beautiful, but you touch only the head and only the foot. So, I ask you, where is your body? Where are your arms?

Long ago, great Zen Master Ko Bong asked this to his students every day:

“Here is a poem for you. In the poem, if you find one sentence, then you will get freedom from life and death. Which one is it?

Under the sea the running mud cow eats the moon.
In front of the rock, the stone tiger sleeps, holding a baby in his arms.
The steel snake drills into the eye of a diamond.
Mount Kun-Lun rides on the back of an elephant pulled by a little bird.”

Can you find it? Then you will find your body, your arms, and your legs.

I hope you will only go straight—don't know, then 100% believe in yourself, then get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Well, I hope. Thank you for your reply to my letter.

First, you said, "I hit you 30 times. What can you do?"

I can hurt, but fortunately you missed.

You asked me what I want. I would like to say that I don't know and then have you tell me to keep this "don't-know mind," but I guess what I really want is to keep my "don't-know mind" without checking myself or intellectualizing about it. When I read a kong-an, I realize that it is supposed to put my mind into a dead-end and this "don't-know mind" is the actual answer. Should I still ponder these questions?

Third, you asked me where my KATZ comes from.

It comes from my pen.

How did you enjoy your visit to the aquarium? I enjoyed visiting the New Haven Zen Center last Sunday.

Sincerely,

Marty

December 30, 1976

Dear Martin,

How are you? Thank you for your letter.

First, you said, "I can hurt, but fortunately you missed." You are like somebody who drank three cups of wine but said, "My tongue did not get wet." So I hit you thirty times. What can you do? This is very important. Zen is just-like-this mind. Thinking is no good. When you're hungry, what? When you're tired, what? When you touch a hot place, what? When somebody hits you, what?

Your answers are all thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking. Thinking is no good. Thinking cannot help you. You must attain your true self. Don't check your mind. Don't check your feelings. Only go straight—don't know.

I am giving you one kong-an:

Before, in China, famous Zen Master Hyang Eom said, “It is like a man up a tree who is hanging from a branch by his teeth. His hands cannot grasp a bough; his feet cannot touch the tree (they are tied and bound). Another man under the tree asks him, ‘Why did Bodhidharma come to China?’ If he does not answer, he evades his duty (will be killed). If he answers, he will lose his life. If you are in the tree, how would you stay alive?”

If you understand, understand. If you don’t understand, only go straight—don’t know. Don’t check anything, O.K.?

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 2, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope that you are all well. Thank you for your generosity in time and explanations during my week stay with you. Please also thank everyone at the Zen Center for me, as it was a most unique experience for me, and without their sharing and doing most of the cooking, cleaning, etc., the week would not have been possible.

When I left you and headed for Boston, we ran into heavy traffic and didn't get into the airport until seven o'clock. However, I did manage to have a good talk to Howard's wife Carol and to her son.

I have been sitting and bowing regularly with Sherry. Jim mentioned (silently, of course) that he both bows and runs in the mornings, so I have also been continuing to run, as I enjoy the fresh air and taking my dog Brandy for the exercise.

Since the week with you at the Zen Center, I have found that I am more aware of other people. I seem to have opened up somehow and manage to make contact with others more easily. Also at the end of sitting, being with you and everyone else for only fifteen minutes before going to the bus, it seemed that we were all integrated, one with the other, and so it was very pleasant and beautiful.

How did your Precepts ceremony go on Saturday evening? I am sorry I could not be there with you. I was wondering why you consider this ceremony so important. If, as the Heart Sutra says, there are no ears, no eyes, no consciousness, no attainment, why is this ceremony of so much importance? Please tell me, as I felt I *should* be there but that I couldn't afford to fly down again in three days for it.

When I said this to you, you said, "Put it all down." Well, that certainly hit home, as I have always worried about money. Raising my family, paying my bills, paying my tuition at law school, it seems I have always barely had enough money, and then only because I worried a lot about it and thought that I must be conscientious and eventually I would be free of this worry. Well, now I am earning a good wage, but I am still attached to "not enough" or to "wanting much more." When I got back to Toronto, in the parking lot walking into work Wednesday morning I found a wallet with \$37 in it and had another equally startling experience with a client in the office all last week concerning money.

I am having some difficulty "only going straight ahead" in my work. Many lawyers are very conservative and protecting or trying to maintain an inflated image of themselves —this too involves money of course. How do I maintain your "put it all down," your "don't check yourself," and your "only go straight" when most of my business associates are *only* interested in money or in being successful, etc.? Is "clear mind—don't know" enough or are there other ways to keep from getting sucked into the illusions of making it? You say, when hungry, eat;

when tired, sleep, but it is impossible (?) to take a 15-minute meditation break if I am tired at 3 or 4 in the afternoon at work. Now that I write this to you, of course everything is possible.

During our last interview, you asked me what I would do if a man came in and dropped ashes on the Buddha. I said I would hit him, and you said he would hit me back. You told me to work on it.—I would pick up the ashes and send him back to you!

Would you please tell Jim that I have phoned his mother and told her he was well. They are a busy family at Christmas time, and Jim asked me to arrange an evening when Sherry and I and Margot and Daphne would spend an evening with Jim and his family. We would be glad to, but maybe Jim can arrange it when he gets home and give us a call. Alternatively, Jim could come over to the house any time during the season.

I hope to hear from you soon. If the Precepts are very important, I will try to make it to the next ceremony. Please give my love to everyone at the Zen Center.

Love,

Lawlor

December 30, 1976

Dear Lawlor,

How are you and Sherry? Thank you for your letter. Did you have a good time in Mexico?

You said Yong Maeng Jong Jin was a unique experience for you, and now you have opened up and can make contact with others more easily. This is all very good. That means your clear mind grows and grows, and your karma disappears more and more, so your belief in yourself is stronger. So, together action is *very necessary*. You said at your home every day you are bowing and sitting with Sherry—that is wonderful.

You asked me why Precepts are necessary. You are a lawyer. Why is a lawyer necessary in this world, I ask you? If we had no rules, then what would happen to this world? Everyone would be fighting each other; a bad man would become president; a strong man would take as much money as he wanted. So laws are necessary. At a time when everyone is fighting each other over what is good and what is bad, it is necessary to separate good and bad. So your profession is needed.

Precepts are like this. If our Buddhism had no laws or rules, we could not get true peace. If you want true peace and true freedom and true equality, then you must keep Buddhism's rules. These Buddhist rules are the Precepts. When you control yourself and already have true peace, then these Precepts are not necessary. But you still have your bad karma. Sometimes you cannot control your mind, cannot control your feelings, cannot control yourself, so you must take the Precepts—this is very necessary.

Many people say, "I am not bad. I am O.K." But already they have made a mistake. If you ask, "What are you?" they don't know. How can they say, "I am not bad. I am O.K."? This means their *feeling* is good, but they are not *truly* not bad, not *truly* O.K. When they are feeling bad, then they have much anger, energy up, and cannot control themselves, so they lose their direction, lose the true way. So the Precepts mean the correct human life way. If you keep these Precepts, everything is no problem. Also, helping yourself and helping other people is no problem. So the Precepts are the true way; the Precepts are world peace.

Next, you said you worry about money. This is very bad karma. You talk about money. If you die tomorrow, then what? Would money be necessary? If you think the correct way, then you must try this. Don't think about money. You have a family, and also you have your situation. So money is necessary. But, don't be attached to money. When it is time to use money, then use it; when it is not time to use money, then don't use it. This is money. So, *very important*, what is the true way? If you understand the true way, you will understand how to use money.

Don't check other lawyers. But also don't cut other lawyers. What is a correct lawyer? This is very important. Outside and inside, being a correct lawyer is very important. I know many lawyers only want money, money, money; some lawyers do not do correct action—they only want to make money. This is not a lawyer; this is a businessman. I think a lawyer who has become a businessman is no good. A lawyer is a lawyer; a businessman is a businessman. So, you must find the correct, true way. Then you will understand the meaning of true lawyer, and then you will understand your relationship with other lawyers. Then your mind light will be shining to other lawyers' minds.

Next, your homework: this cigarette man only understands primary point. Any action, any question, he will only hit you. How do you fix his mind? How do you correct him? This is the question. Again, you must check the kong-an book and have a good answer for me.

I am sorry that Jim had already left when I got your letter, so I could not give him your message.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, soon finish the Great Work of life and death, understand the true way, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 9, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

Thank you for your letter. I am sorry to be late in answering, but your letter took three weeks to get here.

We have been here four days. Kyol Che starts on Saturday. This year we will be sitting at Su Dok Sa. Jong Hae Sa doesn't have enough wood.

It has been snowing here for three days.

Ken, Paul, and Jan all seem pretty well and happy.

To your kong-an about the monk I must once again answer, "I don't know."

Dress warmly and give my best to Bobby and everyone at P.Z.C.

Sincerely,

Mu Bul

December 30, 1976

Dear Mu Bul,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. I think you're doing hard training—Kyol Che.

Your letter is very clear. Only don't know. This don't-know mind is better than the sutras, better than Buddha, better than God, better than a Zen Master. Only go straight. Don't know is don't know. So, don't know is you; you are don't know. Therefore, don't know is eating, don't know is sitting, don't know is working, don't know is Kyol Che.

Here is a new kong-an for you. If you understand, understand. If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know, O.K.?

In China, there was a famous Zen Master, Soeng Am Eon. Master Soeng Am Eon used to call to himself every day, "Master!"

And would answer, "Yes?"

"You must keep clear!"

“Yes! “

“Never be deceived by others, any day, any time!”

“Yes! Yes!”

He called himself and answered himself—two Masters. Which one is the correct Master?

I hope you will soon find the correct Master, then finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

P.S. Before, when I was at Su Dok Sa, I did not stay at Jung Hae Sa—only Su Dok Sa, like you, so I am happy to hear that you are staying at Su Dok Sa.

December 10, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? We got your letter the other day, and Mu Bul read it out loud. We were all happy to hear from you.

We arrived at Su Dok Sa last Saturday, and will be staying here for Kyol Che, because there won't be one at Jung Hae Sa. However, we often take walks up the mountain and say hello to Byok Cho No Su Nim, who is looking very strong and healthy. Also, Paul and I saw Ko Bong Su Nim's old house, where a monk is now doing Yong Maeng Jong Jin. The view from up on the mountain is beautiful. These days, Mu Bul Su Nim sleeps in the Kun Bang and we sleep in a separate room, because we're laymen.

Here is my answer to the monk kong-an. You asked what the monk attained: A full stomach and clean bowls.

I understand you are very busy these days. I hope you are well and teach many people. I'll write you in the spring. Please have a good winter.

Sincerely,

Ken

December 30, 1976

Dear Ken,

How are you, Ken? Thank you for your letter.

I heard that you are staying at Su Dok Sa. Before, when I was at Su Dok Sa, I did not stay at Jung Hae Sa—only Su Dok Sa. Su Dok Sa is better than Jung Hae Sa. I like Su Dok Sa very much. Also I like Byok Cho No Su Nim very much. Hello to Byok Cho No Su Nim and Won Dam Ju Ji Su Nim.

You say you are a layman so you cannot stay in the Kun Bang (the Dharma room). The Kun Bang and the other room are not different, but the other room is more high-class. High-class means freedom and no hindrance. So, they gave you freedom and no hindrance.

Next, your answer is not good, not bad. You say, "A full stomach and clean bowls." This answer is like a mermaid. When you're hungry, what? When you're tired, what? Why clean bowls? JoJu Zen Master taught him two times. You must understand this, O.K.?

Next, I am giving you a new kong-an:

In China, there was a famous Zen Master Soeng Am Eon. Master Soeng Am Eon used to call to himself every day, “Master!”

And would answer, “Yes?”

“You must keep clear!”

“Never be deceived by others, any day, any time!”

“Yes! Yes!”

He called himself and answered himself—two Masters. Which one is the correct Master?

I hope you will soon find the correct Master, then finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma

S.S.

P.S. You cut your beard—that is wonderful. Everybody at P.Z.C. says hello to you.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hear that the P.Z.C. family is growing and that the workshops are going well—that's wonderful.

Today Kyol Che begins. We will sit for about 8 hours every day. This is less time for sitting than I expected, but I am not worried. If "don't-know" mind is kept twenty-four hours a day, then sitting is not more important than anything else.

It is beautiful and calm here at Su Dok Sa; the monks are kind and helpful, and we all have an excellent opportunity to practice. We hope to do some Shim Gum Do every day, but so far the ground has been very wet and muddy—it has snowed a great deal this week.

I have asked everyone I know not to write to me, and I have no magazines or books (except two Zen books), so that I can come to understand my attachment to reading and writing. Since I had found no answer to your kong-an, I thought that I would not even write to you, only keep "don't-know" mind. But you said in your last letter, "You must finish your homework," so I will try.

Homework—JoJu's "Wash your bowls." What did this monk attain?

Wash your bowls.

Only go straight.

Hapchang,

Gak Sim

P.S. For Kyol Che my job is to ring the great bell. What a beautiful sound it makes! While striking the bell, I chant so that the time between strikes will be even. The chant I use is OM SALBA MOCHA MOJI SADAYA SABAHA, which I remember from the Precepts Ceremony. Is there a better chant to use; rather, is it incorrect to use this chant in this situation?

December 19, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I know that I wrote you a letter just a few days ago, but a new question has come up. I am not sure if I am keeping the question "What am I?" correctly. In *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, I read your letter to Byon Jo. You said that in order to keep a "don't-

know” mind correctly, you must avoid “opposites questions,” such as, “Who is thinking?,” when thinking occurs. You said that even the question “What am I?” does not appear when it is asked completely, for all thinking is cut off. I try to avoid opposites questions by simply watching thinking come and go, nor pulling it in or pushing it out. But, in order to concentrate on the question “What am I?,” I try to keep Zen Master Na Han’s statement in mind:

“This not-understanding is the earth, the sun, the stars, and the whole universe.”

So the color of the floor, the sounds of birds, monks, and wind outside, the smell of incense are all asking the question “What am I?” just by their being there. They are not saying “What am I?”; they simply are there, so the question is there without being said. So simply sitting without thinking is asking the great question, for all things are asking this question even without saying it or realizing they are asking it.

Please, tell me, am I entangling myself in opposites questions? One other thing. I think I understand what you mean when you say that hair is “ignorance grass” now that I have shaved my head. When you have no hair, the sun comes and you are immediately hot; the wind comes and you are immediately cold. So you learn that by putting down your opinion about appearance, you can learn directly about what is happening. Further, if you shave off all your opinions, then when red comes, only red appears. So ignorance is clinging to things which keep you from seeing clearly. I hope I have understood you correctly, and that you and everyone else at P.Z.C. are well.

Hapchang,

Gak Sim

December 30, 1976

Dear Gak Sim, Jan,

How are you? Thank you for your two letters.

You are lucky. Su Dok Sa, Dok Seung Sahn Mountain is the Diamond Mountain Temple. So, in Korea, it is very famous. Also, many great Zen Masters have appeared there: Kyung Ho Zen Master, Mang Gong Zen Master, Kum Bong Zen Master, Jung Kang Zen Master, Ko Bong Zen Master (my teacher), and Bo Wol Zen Master. All these Zen Masters have appeared at Su Dok Sa.

You are sitting eight hours every day—not bad. But Zen is no time, no space, always, everywhere. Only go straight—this is correct Zen.

Next, your answer, “Wash your bowls,” is not good and not bad. Why wash your bowls? When you’re hungry, what? When you’re tired, what? JoJu taught him two times. You must understand this. Then you will understand correctly what this monk attained.

You asked me about OM SALBA MOCHA MOJI SADAYA SABAHA when you are ringing the bell—that is wonderful, not incorrect.

In your second letter, you asked me about opposites questions. Opposites questions is any time I am here, something is there. Whose watch is that? Already this question has a subject and has an object. This is an opposites question.

What am I? I don't know. This means there are no opposites. I ask myself, so I say, "I don't know." This means I am don't know. I am don't know means "I" *is* don't know. So I equals don't know. Then don't know is I, so when you can see something, don't know sees something. Don't know eats, don't know is working, don't know is sitting, don't know is doing everything. So, your name is don't know. So this don't know is the *big question*. Big question means 100% question. 100% question means absolute question. Absolute question means *no* question—just like this.

A famous Zen Master, JoJu, one day asked Nam Cheon Zen Master, "What is the true way?"

Nam Cheon answered, "Everyday mind is the true way."

"Then should I try to keep it or not?"

Nam Cheon said, "If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken."

"If I do not try, how can I understand the true way?"

Nam Cheon said, "The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion; not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the true way of not thinking, it is like space, clear and void. So, why do you make right and wrong?"

JoJu suddenly got enlightenment.

So, I ask you, what did JoJu attain? Don't make anything. Only go straight. Then you will get everything.

I hope you only keep don't know, then soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? I hope your body is well and you will be warm during the winter. Lee said he did much work so P.Z.C. will be comfortable when it gets cold.

All of us are working hard to help one another. Ken and Mu Bul have been especially helpful in showing me how to put down my opinion, situation, etc.—not so much by their words, but by their example. Ken even shaved his beard, and you can be very proud of your representative, Mu Bul Su Nim. He is always helping us understand Korean customs and showing us correct action.

I cannot tell what is just like this, and I can. Just like this is before thinking, so there are no words, just perception. If you listen to my words, my answer is “just like this.” If you hear the words, the answer is “just like this.” So I ask you, is this letter like this or just like this? Just like this is I don’t know. But you already understand. Why ask a fish what it’s like to be a bird? Kyol Che will start in two days, and the stopper goes tightly in the bottle, strongly keeping I don’t know and only going straight.

Sincerely,

Paul

P.S. I told Jim that the food was excellent at Hwa Gae Sa, and he might feel bad because food was a problem for him. Please tell him the food at Su Dok Sa during Kyol Che is not the same as at Hwa Gae Sa, and I hope his body and mind soon get healthy enough so food is no problem. Thank you.

December 30, 1976

Dear Paul,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. You said Ken cut his beard—that is wonderful. Also I heard that you cut your hair—this is very wonderful. Also, Mu Bul teaches you all Korean customs and correct action—that is also wonderful.

Next, you said, thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking, thinking—just like this. “Just like this” are teaching words. What is “just like this,” I ask you? What is “put it all down”? What is “go straight”? What is “don’t make anything”? What is “before thinking”? If you are attached to these words, you don’t understand anything. Put it all down. Don’t make anything. Only go straight. That is before thinking. Before thinking is just like this. All those words are teaching words. Just now, I ask you, what do you see now? What do you hear

now? This is just like this. This is before thinking. Don't check words. Don't check your mind. Don't check your feelings. Only go straight, O.K.?

I gave you homework. What did the monk attain? Here is a new kong-an for you:

In China, there was a famous Zen Master, Soeng Am Eon. Master Soeng Am Eon used to call to himself every day, "Master!"

And would answer, "Yes?"

"You must keep clear!"

"Yes!"

"Never be deceived by others, any day, any time!"

"Yes! Yes!"

He called himself and answered himself—two Masters. Which one is the correct Master? I hope you will soon find the correct Master, then finish the Great Work of life and death, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

How are you? Thank you for the holiday season card. Yesterday I saw that by keeping my opinions, I was the cigarette man. So my final answer to the homework is "I don't know."

Since we met in Big Sur, many strange things have happened to me. I have wanted to talk to you about these things, but my "put it all down" mind appears. It's a problem because my confusion reappears. There are many things to do and be. In the past, my action has been mostly for myself. Your "for all people" job is Buddhist monk Zen Master. I don't know what my "for all people" job is, so my mind shouts, "What will I do?" Also, maybe I am supposed to just travel like the wind and help those I can along the way. Or I could settle in a town and work with the local community. I don't know, but this "I don't know" freezes my feet, my action, while my eyes see the suffering in the world.

But a great teacher once said that trying to help other people without understanding yourself is like giving someone a check for \$100 when you only have \$10 in the bank. So I only know my job now. We sit in twenty minutes. An answer is not necessary; I am trying to clean the dust. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,

Paul

[Soen Sa Nim's answer follows:]

P.S. I just received your second letter. This letter is like your mind mirror. But don't check your mind mirror. If you check your mind mirror many times, your mind mirror becomes a demon. So, I already told you, don't check your mind; don't check your feelings.

When you're sitting, your memories of when you were a child will all appear. What is good and not good for the future will also appear. So you can check this, but don't—this is very important. It is only like seeing a movie. When you go to the theatre, you see a movie, and then it's over. When you have a dream, it's the same—then it's over. Don't be attached to last night's dream.

Your past life and future are all like a dream. So you must wake up. Then there is no dream. Becoming a monk or not becoming a monk doesn't matter. First, you must understand, what are you doing now? Then either becoming a monk or not becoming a monk is O.K., no problem, no hindrance, O.K.? It is very important to attain your true way.

What did the pine tree say to you? What did the rocks teach you? You must learn the truth from the tree and the rocks. Then you will have no problem.

I hope that soon you will put it all down and wake up from the big dream.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Seasons Greetings to Soen Sa Nim! Where are you teaching now, dear Zen Master? I was in New England this summer and was told you are frequently in California. I am not teaching right now. I was laid off last summer. I use this free time to practice aikido, meditate, and create a job for myself for next September. I have enjoyed reading *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*—sometimes I get confused, sometimes I just laugh, and sometimes I think I had better meditate more!

My little house is warm today.

Much love to you from—

Wendy

December 31, 1976

Dear Wendy,

How are you, Wendy? Thank you for your letter and Christmas card. I also have missed you but could not find you last summer. Now I understand your address, so I am happy.

Also you say you read my book, *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*—that is wonderful. But, what do you want? This is very important, If you want money, your life is a money life. If you want peace, your life is a peace life. If you want truth, your life is a true life. If you want freedom, your life is a freedom life. Which one do you want?

But your true self already has everything. An eminent teacher said, “Don’t make anything. Then you will get everything.” In other words, don’t check your mind; don’t check your feelings. Then you will get freedom from life and death. Already you are complete.

Long ago in China, there was a famous Zen Master, Jo Ju. One day, before he was a Zen Master, he asked Nam Cheon Zen Master, “What is the true way?”

Nam Cheon answered, “Everyday mind is the true way.”

“Then should I try to keep it or not?”

Nam Cheon said, “If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken.”

“If I do not try, how can I understand the true way?”

Nam Cheon said, “The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion; not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the true way of not thinking, it is like space, clear and void. So, why do you make right and wrong?”

Jo Ju suddenly got enlightenment.

What did he attain? You must understand this. If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. Don't make anything; then you will get everything.

I hope you always keep a mind which is clear like space, then soon get Enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma.

S.S.

P.S. My student named Diana is living in Berkeley. Every Wednesday people gather at her house for sitting, so I am giving you her address and telephone number. Sometime you visit there—this will help you.

Also, I will go to California on January 5. I will stay at Tal Mah Sah Zen Center.

December 22, 1976

Soen Sa Nim,

I hope you are strong and well, and are taking good care of yourself.

I have what is called hyperlipidemia, which means much fat in the blood, so I've read all the medical literature associated with this and diabetes, which is closely related. In diabetes, and in hyperlipidemia, the single most important factor is losing weight until one is *THIN*, not just not fat. This itself will often make the taking of insulin unnecessary.

Also, to exercise a lot helps also, in addition to being thin. Exercise helps you get thin, but besides helping you get thin, it has other beneficial effects on the cardio-vascular system (heart—blood vessels), lungs, and adrenal-gland functioning. Improved adrenal function results also in normalizing blood sugar and fat levels.

Also, diet is important. You already know that you should not have sugar, but also you should not eat things that have fat. Also, sugar-like things are no good: honey, syrup, brown sugar, malt—they are still simple carbohydrates. But if you are overweight, then no matter what you eat, it is converted to blood fats, and diabetics are prone to blood fat disorders and heart attacks, more than a normal person.

So, now I run for seven miles, three times a week, and exercise otherwise on the other days. It gives great energy and makes the mind clear, so it is good practice, though rather hard training. If you exercise, it should be for more than 30 minutes each time, because the first 15 minutes do not do that much good so far as improving adrenal function. Adrenal malfunction produces high blood pressure, and abnormal sugar and fat levels in the blood. So, when you come to California, and there is no snow here, maybe you will want to practice running. This way you will remain healthy and strong, and can teach others Zen for many, many more years. Do not do it for yourself, but so that you can continue to teach for a long, long time.

Thank you for your letter. It was the first letter that you sent in a long time where you did not yell and scream that I do not have any understanding, and don't know my ass from a hole in the ground, etc.

When the two visitors came to my class, the Tibetan monk and the Swami, I did nothing at all, just let them talk, and then they argued with each other about who had the correct techniques, breathing exercises, and teachings. Later, the class said that they understood that those two did not understand the highest teachings, that they were still bound by notions of systems, practices, breathing exercises. I neither reflected like a mirror nor absorbed like an ink blotter; I just ignored, and let them talk.

Also, Michael has sent me many letters, as many as I sent him. You said sending many letters to him was no good, that it was incorrect style. But I just followed your teachings, and went straight ahead, without checking anything or checking with you—just straight ahead. I also did this when I decided not to come to Providence, and had that course at the Extension of the University of Rhode Island. I just asked Linc who would be a good teacher for this, and then wrote to these two people and to the Dean of the Extension, recommending them. I didn't check with anyone, or take time with introductions, etc. All that is too slow, and an opportunity would have been missed. Just direct action.

Already, I received a letter from the Assistant Director of the College of Continuing Study at Michigan State saying he likes my course proposals very much, and Michael has said in three letters that he will help. Also, several friends from Cleveland said that they would help establish a center there also. Detroit and Cleveland are only 140 miles apart, and there then would be two centers.

There is also the possibility that I will be offered a teaching job in Washington D.C., at either of two large universities. These people, too, I wrote to directly, without introduction.

Also, I do not understand how you can have known me for so long, and still do not understand my mind. You say I want to go to Detroit for myself, that it is my desire, and if I do not desire, then I will get all things. Why do you think that I want to go to Detroit for myself? I want to go so that some people will begin to sit there, to begin practice. There is no center in the mid-west at all, to speak of, and these people would be introduced to Zen also. Here, in Los Angeles, and So. California, I am now teaching at four colleges, and maybe soon in San Diego also. If I desired only for myself, then I'd stay here where already I am well-known. But in Detroit, and in Washington D.C., there is a vacuum, and I have an intuition that these places would be much stronger for Zen than is So. California. People here are too relaxed, too complacent, and don't want to truly understand themselves and the world; mostly they are just curious, or have a temporary sickness they want to get over, and when they get over it, they stop practicing. But I understand the people in Michigan and Washington better than I do the people here. The people in the East seem less concerned with themselves, and more concerned with others and that something should be done to help all people.

I was angry with Michael, not because he was so unhelpful to me—that I didn't care about—but that he had done nothing to build a center in Detroit by now. I was angry that he was satisfied himself, and hadn't made the effort in the past to build a center, and to get people to practice. The anger was brief, and left immediately, but it was there for one moment.

I teach my students that it is not important what you understand in Zen, what wisdom you gain or what happiness you gain. I tell them that when they understand themselves, the self disappears, and only others are left. When self-concern disappears, only concern for others remains; the others are I, I am others. But I tell them that they cannot know this unless they practice, and that this becomes their understanding.

I have studied Zen for a long time, but now I don't know anything about Zen, anything about my mind. Now I only try to help others to begin practice, and show them many teachers; then they can pick the teacher that best fits them, and begin to practice. It is not

important that they pick the best teachers (and I'm usually disappointed, because they all like Thien-An so much with his Hinayana teachings), but it is important that they begin to practice. After a while, then they will understand more, and then they can pick the best teacher. But they must start somewhere, sometime. That is my function, getting people to start practicing; then everything else happens by itself. They grow up, mature, and gradually the practices disappear, their minds disappear, and only helping others remains. It is very easy.

Take good care of yourself.

Ed

December 31, 1976

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your letter. How are you? You talked about how to fix diabetes—that is wonderful. Thank you very much.

Next, you talked about a Detroit Zen Center. If you want this Zen Center in Detroit, you must correctly try it. You are correct—don't ask me, don't ask Michael, don't be dependent on anything. Your mind is correct. You only help other people. You must go there, open a Zen Center, and help other people. That's O.K.

Why were you angry with Michael? Why do you tell me? Not depending on anyone or anything is the correct way. Zen is not dependent on anything—not dependent on God, not dependent on Buddha, not dependent on me, not dependent on anything. Depend on yourself—this is correct Zen. You like this style, so only go straight—don't worry.

Here is a poem for you:

Two mud cows together sumo wrestling
Pull each other around, around, around
And into the ocean.

Which is the winner? Which is the loser?
No news.

Seagulls are flying over the water.
The ocean is blue.

I hope you will only go straight and not be dependent on anything. Then you will get freedom from life and death, finish the Great Work, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

The New Year Comes and Finds Its Seat

The New Year comes to the West a little late,
Because coming past the East,
So very hungry and thirsty.
“I want food.”

Quickly eats something.
“Oh, very salty—this is salt.
Ah, here is honey. Oh, very sweet.
Where is the bread?”

The bread says, “Don’t touch me.
Who are you?”

“I am the New Year.”

“Are you? I don’t believe you.”

“Why not believe me?”

“How can I believe you?
I don’t know the New Year.
Where are you coming from?”

“I don’t know.”

“So I cannot believe you.
If you want food, you must find your seat.”

“What am I?
Where is my seat?
I don’t know.”

The New Year asks the dog,
“Do you know the New Year?”

“Woof! Woof! Woof!”
The dog only understands woof New Year.

Next, the New Year asks the cat,
“Do you understand the New Year?”

“Meow, meow, meow.”
The cat only understands meow New Year.

But, the New Year is thinking about woof and meow—
Not new, not old.
Every day woof, woof.
Every day meow, meow.
No new, no old.

The New Year cannot find itself and its seat.
At that time, two people are fighting:

“The New Year is not necessary.”

“The New Year is necessary.
If there is no New Year,
How can we understand age?”

“In our true self,
There is no life, no death.
If you’re attached to age,
Then you have life and death.”

“But, the New Year came in today.
Who made the New Year? God?”

“No, no.”

“Consciousness?”

“No, no, no.”

“Time?”

“No, no, no.”

“Then what?”

“Time is empty.
So the New Year is not the New Year.
The New Year is also empty,
Only made by your thinking.
So, the New Year is not necessary.”

Hearing this,
The New Year loses itself.

So, the New Year asks Zen Master Duk Sahn,
“Do you understand the New Year?”

“Where are you coming from?”

“I’m from time.”

“Time? Time comes from where?”

Silence.

The Zen Master only HITS.

At that time, the New Year completely understands
NOTHING, nothing at all.
No time, no New Year, no name, no form,
Complete emptiness.

Then, what am I?
Everybody says, “Happy New Year! Happy New Year!”

The New Year is confused.
Complete nothing,
But everybody says, “Happy New Year!”
“What shall I do?”

So, he asks another Zen Master, Lin Chi,
“I am the New Year. Where is my seat?”

Lin-chi Zen Master shouts,
“KATZ!!! Keep clear mind!”

“Aha! Now I understand!
Keep clear mind.
Everything is just like this.
Keep clear mind.”

Nice day today. Happy New Year.
The sky is blue. The snow is white.
Just like this.”
He understands.

“Everywhere.
My seat is everywhere.
The whole universe is my seat.
The New Year is everywhere.”

The New Year is dancing around.
But a little child is laughing,
“Ha, ha, ha! You’re still a fool.
You still don’t know your seat.”

The New Year is surprised.
“My seat is everywhere!”

“No, no, no!”

“Oh? Then where is my seat?”

“One more step. Come in here.”
She points to a calendar.
“January 1, 1977.
That is your seat.”

At that time, popcorn, ice cream,
Bread, cookies, cake, bananas,
Apples, oranges, tea, drinks,
Music—la, la, la, la, la, la.

December 31, 1976

Dear Seung Sahn Soen Sa,

I have just finished *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*, which I read with great interest.

My answer to “The mouse eats cat food, but the cat bowl is broken”: Cat food is mouse food, so the mouse bowl is intact.

Sincerely,

Joyce

January 4, 1977

Dear Joyce,

How are you? Thank you for your letter. You say you read *Dropping Ashes on the Buddha*—that is wonderful.

But, you sent an answer to the mouse kong-an. If you’re thinking, you won’t understand this. This is a very high-class kong-an. It’s like calculus in mathematics—very difficult. So, this means that first you must go to elementary school, then middle school, then high school, then college. The cat-food kong-an is like college work

First you must understand the primary point, then *like this*, then *just like this*. If you don’t understand *just like this*, you cannot understand the mouse kong-an. So I ask you the primary point course:

3 times 3 = 9

3 times 3 = 0

Which one is correct? If you pass this, then next I will ask you the next course, O.K.?

I hope you will send a good answer to me. If you don’t understand, only go straight—don’t know. Don’t check anything. If you’re thinking, you won’t understand. Thinking answers cannot help you.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

December 30, 1976

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I received your answer to my letter yesterday—thank you... but please be so kind as to explain your answer. You seem to use another language that I am not familiar with. I don't know what you mean by "hit the world of opposites... and then make the world of opposites disappear." How would you propose I hit the world of opposites? Can you give me a practical example of what you mean? Again you say, "hit and become one," or "Become one means become the absolute." This last one is understandable, but again please explain how to go about it. There's a Tibetan method, which consists of watching for thoughts. As soon as one comes up, it is dispelled by this watching process and then is no longer stray thought. I wonder if this is what you mean.

Mostly, I'd like to know how to keep "don't-know mind." You say near the end of your letter, "When you keep only don't-know mind, then your desires, your anger, your ignorance become rest, become rest, become rest, become clear..." You once asked me a string of questions consisting of "What am I?," over and over. "What are you?" is the way they were put. I'd say, "a man." "What else are you?" I'd say, "An American." This continued until I ran out of answers and said, "I don't know." Then you said, "Good! Just keep this don't-know mind." Later, when I explained that in preparation for "don't know mind" practice I'd recreate the situation or the experience of having no answer, I was told not to make "don't-know mind." So now I really don't know how to practice "don't know." Please give me an example... a practical example of what you mean... of how to practice... step by step.

Someone said he simply repeats "don't know" over and over ... is this the way? This would seem to be a sort of a don't-know mind, wouldn't it? It seems a little like meditating on "Coke Bottle," but then someone said that you'd said that was all right too.

So far as that goes, would it be all right to use the T.M. method? Anything would be all right, as long as it worked, wouldn't it?

I'm puzzled by what you mean by "only go straight." I think it means to simply continue with one's practice ... in which case I'd like that practice made clear ... because the next thing you say is "don't know." I'm not too sure of what you mean by "Don't check words; don't check feelings," and so on. Please, if you can, give me an example.

Thank you for your kind attention. I'm sorry I've asked too many questions ... but they're a must if I'm to profit by what you've said.

Sincerely,

Sam

January 4, 1977

Dear Sam,

Thank you for your letter? How are you? You have many questions, but these questions are only one question. You don't understand your true self, so you have many questions. If you understand your true self, then there are no questions.

So, I ask you, what are you? Maybe you will say, "Don't know." Maybe you will say no words. Just keep this mind. If you keep don't know mind, there are no words, no speech. Don't-know is don't-know. The big question is no question; no question is big question.

The big questions is the mind that has already cut off all thinking. In this mind, the opposites world has already disappeared. The opposites world has already disappeared means the absolute. The absolute means just like this. Just like this means that everything is already complete. You must attain this mind. If you don't know, only keep this mind, O.K.?

You want to understand something. This is a big mistake. Put it all down.

You want examples, so here is an example for you:

Jo Ju asked Nam Cheon Zen Master, "What is the true way?"

Nam Cheon answered, "Everyday mind is the true way."

"Then should I try to keep it or not?"

Nam Cheon said, "If you try to keep it, already you are mistaken."

"If I do not try, how can I understand the true way?"

Nam Cheon said, "The true way is not dependent on understanding or not understanding. Understanding is illusion; not understanding is blankness. If you completely attain the true way of not thinking, it is like space, clear and void. So why do you make right and wrong?"

Jo Ju suddenly got enlightenment.

What did he attain? If you don't understand, only go straight—don't know. Don't make anything; then you will get everything.

I hope you always keep don't know mind, soon get enlightenment, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S.S.

Dear Soen Sa Nim,

I don't know what to say really; I'm a little nervous about writing this letter. That is my karma though.

When I was in college ('66-'70) I experienced many drug experiences and sexual relationships. I believed in my life style, and many young Americans still live with beliefs for drugs and sex. I had a mental breakdown in '69 as a result of these illicit activities and by way of more conservative ideology. Now I am paying for my sins as though it were a past life. I am living at a lower level of existence and have been unable to hold a job. I am progressing every year and every month from my breakdown date, when I was almost completely withdrawn and entirely unable to carry on conversation or hold my own with other people. Lately I have seen that it is important to be involved, whereas several years ago I was tormented by gazing into nothingness, and demons tormented me because I didn't realize that "nothing" would fill up with hell. I have read that samsara and nirvana are as yin and yang, they go hand in hand, so I feel now that I can welcome more involvement, or as some would say, beginning-involvement.

As in ignorance, I say I have shed all that is non-essential, leaving only the "one thing." It is a mistake explaining this. But with meditation I have been able to see that all that causes me pain or suffering is my karma and not me, whereas once I felt the pain as my own failing, an erroneous view if one has achieved true self. True essence. "I don't know" and "stuck" I treat as refuges when I become afraid of my karmic encounters. I know this is wrong because it leads to nothingness. The three refuges are the Tathagata, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

During my craziness I turned to Zen Buddhism in an attempt to salvage my ego and to keep from falling into what felt like death. Now I see that I should not have clung so; I should have gone through this "dying" experience. I know by writing this letter I am still trying to salvage some of my ego-entity. I have encountered in my struggles the cravings of self-annihilation, sensual pleasure, and eternal life. Very confused. Yet I have experienced emptiness and I want this developed, so I rely on my intellect, which brings me to nothingness and hence bad karma. This letter is like demon's words to you, and I have mixed feelings writing it. Katz! I have undone my Dharma by writing this bad letter. Katz!

Sincerely,

Ralph

P.S. My karma is the vulgar and the good—I do not know my karma as it craves to be known by me.

Since a "cup" is a cup I see that your mind is more clear than mine—I can only write you this letter as though to say more words to you.

you—me—or whom!

not so ...

don't know

January 4, 1977

Dear Ralph,

Thank you for your letter. Your letter is very clear and wonderful and will help other people very much. You sent me a letter, so already you are a Bodhisattva. Many people live your style, but they don't understand what they do. But you sent me a letter. You already understand your karma, so it's very easy to fix your karma.

If somebody is sick, the doctor checks this sickness and then understands what kind of sickness it is. Then fixing it is very easy. Before he understood what kind of sickness it was, he could not fix it, could not understand what kind of medicine to use.

You have taken many drugs and had much sex, and at that time you didn't understand your karma. But, now you understand your drug karma; now you understand your sex karma, so drugs and sex are helping you. Taking many drugs is bad, and having much sex is bad, so you already understand.

Before, when you took many drugs and had much sex, your mind became weak, so you could not control your mind. This is your karma. Before, Buddha said, "I am a good doctor. I have many medicines you can take for your mind sickness, and I teach them to you. Then if you don't take them, this is your mistake." If you understand your karma, you know how to make your karma disappear, understand your correct way, and finally find your true self.

We have four things to do: first, reading the Sutras—this is called the Sutra Gate. Next, repeating Buddha's name—this practice is called Yom Bul Gate. Next, mantra—this is the Mantra Gate, and then next, Zen Meditation Gate.

So, I already gave you a mantra, so you must try this mantra; this is very important. And I said to you that you must try bowing. Also I said that you must try to come to the Zen Center and sit Zen with us. All this will help your mind and your body. It is also the correct way. But your mind and your body don't like this. This is your karma, but if you follow your karma, you cannot fix your karma. You must try this. Don't check your mind; don't check your feelings. Only go straight—try, try. Then fixing your body and fixing your mind is possible—no problem.

I think you have read many books, and also you do much thinking. This is very bad. So you understand a great deal, but this understanding cannot help you. One moment of action is better than 10,000 thoughts.

Your house is near the Zen Center, so sending a letter is not necessary. You must come and ask me. If I am not here, our Dharma Teacher, Housemaster, and other house members will help you. Together action is very necessary and will help you very much.

So, I hope you will come to the Zen Center and sit with us, chant with us, bow with us, and then slowly, slowly make your karma disappear, become clear, soon get enlightenment, become a great man, and save all people from suffering.

Yours in the Dharma,

S. S.

P.S. In your letter you say, "Katz! Katz!" This is monkey style. Don't try monkey style, O.K.?

E.S.T. and Everyday Practice

A Dharma Talk by Seung Sahn Soen-sa, September 4, 1976

I recently heard about Werner Erhart's E.S.T. teaching. In only four days they all finish the great work! Four days, already finish! [*laughs*] You try it, then you can change your whole life, maybe. Many people have attachments, so they cannot get liberation. If you hear one word, then cutting these attachments is possible. Someone has many attachments, but he takes special medicine. Bang! The whole universe is empty! So this medicine helps him, sometimes. But if he takes it again and again, all this is broken, his consciousness is broken, so no good. Some people are very attached to E.S.T. teaching style. For four days you cannot go out, must sleep there, only lesson, lesson, lesson. This mind is like Dharma play—only one way, only into, into. You try it once, twice, three times, then your mind is only this way. This means, our mind is like water. If you put it into a round bowl, it becomes round; into a square bowl, it becomes square. So E.S.T. mind is only four days of not thinking about anything, not keeping to mind space. If you have this mind space, are thinking about something but cannot—for four days you cannot think about it, only talking, talking, only go, go, go—then what happens? Ahhh, very good feeling! Correct mind. You only have good talk, good thinking. “You are wonderful, wonderful.” “Ahh, this mind is wonderful!” So finally they say, “Your whole mind is empty, you will soon die, all things are transient, so there is nothing. Your desire is no good. So you must only have good thinking. Bad thinking is no good, cannot help you. If you have good thinking, your life is good.” This style, O.K.? So you say, “Yah, correct. Bad thinking—I am bad. Good thinking—I am good. So only good thinking.” The whole world is already empty, already nothing, so if you have good thinking, just like this is the truth. This is E.S.T. teaching. Afterwards they ask, “Did you get it?”

But I don't completely understand this teaching organization. After you finish this it is necessary to continue practicing, but I don't know what kind of practicing they are doing. Many people finish and then for one week, for two weeks, have very good feeling. But afterwards, they are the same as before. Why? In our mind we already have bad karma. It cannot disappear from just once hearing a good speech. I may understand what good action is, but I cannot do it. I understand that anger is no good, but if someone has bad speech for me, bad feeling for me, I cannot control my anger. I know my body needs exercise, I should do karate, but I cannot get myself to go. Why? This is your karma. So it's important that your bad karma disappear. If your bad karma disappears, you can do correct action. If not, you can understand everything but not be able to do it. But if someone tells you, “This is what you must do!” then maybe you'll try it even if you don't like it, so your bad karma will disappear. So living together and practicing like this is necessary. Every day bowing, every day chanting, every day sitting means—“You do this.” This is the temple rule, you must do it. If you don't, you are a bad student.

Before I try this maybe I don't like many things, I'm very angry, once I'm angry for a whole week. After a lot of chanting, sitting and bowing I'm angry for only three days, my bad karma is reduced. After more practicing, for just one day. "Kh hh. No good! Put it down!" More practicing, my teacher says, "You're no good!" I answer, "Ah, you're right, I *am* no good!" After more practicing the anger doesn't come out at all, only comes down. So practice is very necessary. But if you don't practice, it is like with E.S.T. After a while the good feeling disappears, my bad karma again appears, and I cannot control my mind. So every day practicing is necessary. If you are not practicing, continuing this teaching longer won't fix your mind. It is only like philosophy, like professor style teaching, cannot change your life. With Dharma play, too, you can keep this mind for an hour, two hours, a day, a week, but not longer. You can use Dharma play to stop smoking, say, to change your karma. But to really make your bad karma disappear everyday practice is very necessary.

Once in Cambridge someone told me that practicing every day is very difficult. "We go out and work every day, so Sunday it is good not to practice, we'll practice all day Saturday. Every morning and evening we practice, so we are very tired. We have no vacation." So I said, "Wanting not to practice is O.K., but this temple means every day practice. If we practice every day our bad karma will disappear very easily, very smoothly. If you practice for six days and break for one day, then your bad karma will all appear, and your six days of practice will all disappear. This is no good. It's like working for five days in a restaurant, making \$150, and going to a Las Vegas style casino—it all disappears. Your freedom style means your bad karma appears, maybe you drink special tea, hit somebody, talk a lot, kill someone. So your six days of practice all disappears. If you practice together every day, every day, then changing your karma is possible, then afterwards you are able to *do* everything. If you want to get enlightenment you must practice every day, nonstop. Then, finally everyday mind will be Zen mind. Not difficult. At first it is difficult, but if you continue, then everyday mind is Zen mind and it is not difficult. So in our centers, practicing some days and not others is very bad. If you can't come to the center, if you're very busy, if your home is far away, then practice every day at home, nonstop. But coming here is very good, together-action is better than only practicing by yourself. So only go straight don't know, O.K.?"