

**Shunryū Suzuki-rōshi**  
**INTERVIEW WITH PETER SCHNEIDER**  
**Sunday, November 9, 1969**

*[Tape starts with background group chatter. Then the mike is set up, and more group chatter follows. Then Peter Schneider asks Suzuki-rōshi a question.]*

**Peter Schneider:** I would like to ask Rōshi a question for the *Wind Bell* that I was going to type—tape just with him, but I think it's a—would interest you, so—. It will appear in the next *Wind Bell*.<sup>1</sup> And the question is to have Rōshi talk about Mrs. [Miss] Ransom.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No. [Laughter.] I must tell you she was my old, old girlfriend [loud laughter].

**Peter Schneider:** I'll have some water. [Loud laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Almost, but not quite [laughter]. When I was young, even from a boy, I couldn't [wasn't] satisfied with Buddhist life, you know, because of many reasons. So I wanted to—to be a good teacher when I was very young, and I wanted to [1-2 words unclear] people who—who did not respect—did not respect priests so much. But I—at that time, my ambition may be directed to wrong direction [?].

But anyway, I made up my mind to leave my home and to study to practice under strict teacher. So I went to my master's temple. And my master [Gyokujun So-on] was a disciple of my father.<sup>2</sup> And my father, when he was young, [was] very strict with his disciples. And my master was one of the—his—my father's disciple who [was] raised up in very, very strict way. And he was—my master was always talking about my father's strictness with him. And I—that was very, you know—that was hardest situation for me to accept, you know. My master almost blaming of my father. "Your father," [tapping repeatedly] you know, "raised me in this way." [Laughs.] That was very hard to—to listen to. Anyway, this is not what I want to talk [about]. But—

So naturally, this kind of spirit I have all the way maybe I became—until maybe thirty or more. After my master's death, I have not much feeling. That kind of feeling changed into the—into opposite way, and I became very much—I missed my master very much.

So when I was—when I was at school—college, I studied English pretty hard to go to abroad [laughs]. I have no idea of America or Hawai'i or—anyway, if I am going to some country, I thought I have to speak

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<sup>1</sup> It did not.

<sup>2</sup> Suzuki Butsumon Sogaku (c. 1858–1933).

English. And I studied English pretty hard when I was a student. And when I was at Komazawa University, Miss Ransom was teacher of conversation.

Once a week, we—Miss Ransom taught us conversation. And after I finished her class I attended English course lecture. And meantime, Miss Ransom found me and asked me to be—to help her in shopping, or when some Japanese come, or when she had student—her private students. Of course, I couldn't help her so well, but I tried pretty hard. And at last she asked me to stay [at] her home with two more students who were helping her in shopping and conversation with Japanese people.

But the other students, Kundo and—and I don't know the—I forgot one more student's name—Kundo was student of Komazawa.<sup>3</sup> And one more student is from Bundikadaima before that school was normal school—normal high school. And that school changed their system and became a university. And the other students were studying English—English course students. And both Kundo and that student left Miss Ransom's home. I was only one student who helped her. And meantime I—there were many interesting stories between Mrs. [Miss] Ransom and I. Don't be so inquisitive [laughs, laughter].

No, no, no.

**Student:** Is it alcoholic? [S.R. may have picked up a cup of water.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

She was—before she come to Japan, she was a tutor of last emperor of China, Sentō—Emperor Sentō,<sup>4</sup> Emperor of Manchuria. And at that time, Japan became more and more ambitious, and trying to [for] some chance to fight with that northern part of China. Emperor Sentō's capitol is in—I don't know what is the name of the city right now. At that time it was Choshun.<sup>5</sup> And when he—the Emperor was there, he—she was a tutor of the Emperor. And she is a daughter of very—I don't know who he is, but [he was] very famous naval general [admiral].

She was a [had a] very strict character, and at the same time she complained always about Japanese people: at school what kind of things happened, and at the car what kinds of things happened. She was always complained about Japan. I was only person who listened to her complain [laughter]. But I have also many complaint with her. For an instance, she had a beautiful Buddha—sitting Buddha as big as this

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<sup>3</sup> Komazawa University, Tōkyō.

<sup>4</sup> Sentō (Jap.): name pertaining to a former emperor—in this case Henry Pu Yi (Manchu Aisin Gioro, 1906–67, last emperor [1908–12] of China).

<sup>5</sup> In Chinese, Changchun, later renamed Xijing.

which was given to her by the Emperor. But she put—it was all right for her to put it in *tokonoma*—on *tokonoma*, but she put her shoes besides the Buddha [laughs, laughter]. That was *tokonoma*, you see.

*Tokonoma* is a place where we put some antique, or scroll, or some valuable things: object of worship, or something like that. But she used to put her shoes as soon as she come back from school, you know. That was very, you know, embarrassing to me. But I didn't say anything, you know, but I offered, you know, tea every morning with small cup like this, you know, putting it on—in front of Buddha, and offered tea every morning [laughs]. She started to [be] amused about me, and—but she didn't ask anything. And I didn't say anything about it or about her shoes [laughs, laughter]. Maybe this kind of, you know, silent cold war [laughs, laughter] last maybe for two–three weeks, and I was waiting for a chance to start hot war [laughs, laughter], as my English was not so good, you know.

**Dan Welch:** How about the matches, Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm?

**Dan Welch:** The matches.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** So I have to study pretty hard, you know, preparing for the polishing the weapon, you know, to speak. And I, you know, studied some important word to speak about it [laughs, laughter]. And when one of her friend visited her, she—they were talking about my funny, you know—things, you know, about me. "She is—he is very strange Buddhist, offering tea [laughs] for the wooden figure, sometime offering," you know, "incense." They were talking about it. I could understand what they were talking about. And he started, you know—his friend started to put matches, you know, in Buddha's *mudrā* [loud laughter]. And he left, you know, sometime matches [and] sometime, you know, in—cigarette [laughter] in incense holder.

**Student:** Oh, no.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Still, hot war didn't start. And at last, you know, I don't know how the hot war started, but she asked me about, you know, about the figure— Buddha's figure. [S]he thought Buddhism is a kind of idol worship. So I explained it, you know. It was very difficult, but I could manage to explain why we worship wooden image or Buddha or what is the real Buddha—maybe about Dharmakāya, Samboghakāya, or Nirmānakāya Buddha.

She was rather amazed, you know [laughs]. She didn't know Buddhism is so profound. And she started to become interested in Buddhism. And soon she converted to Buddhism. And she start to study

Buddhism, because if she want to study Buddhism, there were many professors, and some professors could speak some English.

So [1-2 words] she had—in one year, I think, she had a pretty good understanding of Buddhism. And one day she took me to the downtown to buy some incense and some incense bowl, and she started to offer it. I felt very good. At the same time, I could have some confidence in our teaching, in Buddhism. And in that way, I thought I had a kind of confidence in—not "propagate," but—in making them—making Caucasian people to understand Buddhism. Or I thought for Caucasian, Buddhism—Buddha's teaching may be more suitable than [for] Japanese, you know. You know, when—for Japanese to study Buddhism in its true sense is pretty difficult because of the wrong tradition or misunderstanding of Buddhism. It is difficult to change their misunderstanding once they have that kind of wrong idea of Buddhism. But for Caucasian who doesn't know anything about Buddhism, like we paint in [on] white paper, it is much easier to give right understanding of true Buddhism. I think that is the, you know, that kind of experience I had with Miss Ransom resulted in my coming to America, I think.

And as soon as I finished my schooling, I asked my teacher—my master,<sup>6</sup> to go to America or Hawai'i or some—to go to anywhere abroad. But he became furious [laughs], and she [he] wouldn't allow me to go. So I couldn't come to America. And I gave up my notion of coming to America for a long, long time until I forget all about it. But ten years ago, at last I came to America.

And five years—fifteen years ago,<sup>7</sup> actually, I had chance to come to America. But because I didn't finish fixing our main building [at Rinso-in], which was my duty left by my master, so I thought I have to finish his order first, so I didn't come to America at that time. And maybe five or six years later I had second chance to come to America, and I decided to come to America.<sup>8</sup> It was pretty hard to come, but anyway I managed to come to America.

After I finished my schooling, I went to Eihei-ji. And Miss Ransom came to Eihei-ji and stayed for one month at Eihei-ji, and sitting there, and practicing pretty well. And when I went to—two years after, I went to Kasuisai monastery.<sup>9</sup> At that time, she came to Kasuisai and stayed for one month also. And she—and then she went to China again: Tientsin—Tensin—Ten?—Tientsin, yeah, near Peking. And she went to England. Once in a while I wrote to her, and she wrote to me, but since I came to America I haven't written so often. She wanted to write something

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<sup>6</sup> Gyokujun So-on.

<sup>7</sup> 1956 [see *Crooked Cucumber*, p. 153].

<sup>8</sup> Suzuki-rōshi left for San Francisco, via Honolulu, on May 21, 1959, at the age of 55. He arrived in San Francisco on May 23.

<sup>9</sup> Near Zoun-in temple, in the city Fukuroi, western Shizuoka prefecture.

about me, you know: various experience we had between us, you know. And she asked me to give some date or event. But that is too much, you know, so since then I didn't write to her, you know, because it was too much. Whenever I write to her she asked me many things, you know, which is almost impossible to write her back. So I didn't. And, you know, she may be very angry.

At that time [Grahame] Petchey was in England, and he started—he started Zen group at her home, you know.

**Peter Schneider:** Her home! I didn't know that.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs.] So whenever Petchey went to her home, she [he] was the one who listened to her complaint [laughs, laughter]. So I—I know her very well, you know. Even though she complains, it doesn't mean so bad. So, you know, I thought it may be all right. But that was my mistake, you know. She passed away last year, before I write to her.

I trusted her very much, and he—she trusted me so much. So whether I write to her or I don't doesn't make much difference, I thought, but I don't know. As long as she is alive it is all right. But now, I think, I regret a little bit about my not writing to her.

Anyway, I think she was a good Buddhist. After she went to Tientsin, she sent me a picture of same Buddha, you know, who get into trouble between us, you know. And she made—she enshrined the Buddha in the wall where there is some—something like big hole in the wall like this [gestures], you know, and she said she is offering incense every day [laughs].

**Dan Welch:** What happened to the shoes, Rōshi? Did she ever take them off?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes, of course [laughter]. And I taught her how to clean up *tokonoma*.

One day she told me to buy—to get some daffodil bulb, you know. I bought pretty big one for her, but she didn't [wasn't] satisfied with them. "Oh, this is too small. Get me some big ones," you know. I tried, you know, to find best daffodils in Tōkyō, at least in Shibuya district. I visited several florists, and I got the largest bulb we can get—I can get. But she didn't [wasn't] satisfied with it. So she makes me very angry [laughs]. So I bought some onion [laughing, ongoing loud laughter]—buy. "Here, I got very big one. Here they are." And I left, you know, her room. But I was careful, you know, watching her—what did happen. She opened it and saw the big bulbs, you know. "Oh, this is very good!" she said. I felt very good, [but] at the same time scared

of him [her], so I ran away from the room, you know—from outside of the room.

And at last—she didn't like onion, you know, at all. Of course, that is onion so it smells [laughter]. "Oh! This is onion!" she shouted, and looking around for me. But I wasn't there [laughter]. But I couldn't help burst into laughter—a big laughter, so she found out—she found me out. With onion in her hand, she started to chase after me. She was a big, tall, girl [?], you know. So I went to upstairs, the second floor, and from the second floor to the roof. Something—that kind of thing happens pretty many times.

I had to come back [to] her home before ten o'clock. But it was rather difficult, you know, to come back before ten always. So when I was late, you know, I—I know how to open the doors. You know, Japanese door is sliding doors. The lock is between two door, you know. Lock is go this way, you know, to—like a nail driving down, a nail for two doors. So it is not possible to, you know, open this way, but you—if you lift two doors [laughter], it is quite easy to take out two doors [laughter]. And I sneaked into the—my bedroom and slept.

And at last she found me, you know, what I was doing. And she, you know, didn't trust me any more [laughs], and she didn't trust the safety of the Japanese building any more. And she determined to move out from that—from that house, you know. And I was told to find out some good safe building, which was almost impossible, you know. Almost all the buildings are Japanese buildings. If it is Western building, we have to pay a lot of money. So I gave up to find out that kind of safe building.

But it was good for me to go out with some reason to find—finding out some good apartment. And sometime I went to barber shop, or sometime I visited my friends, you know, instead of finding out some good apartment. And at last I decided to ask some good, old carpenter to explain, you know, how safe Japanese building are from thieves and how to fix the lock you know, so that no one can get in. And I—we could convince her not to move out.

As she was a English woman, she is—she doesn't—even though rotten old knife, she wouldn't throw them away. And she—sometime she asked me to get [them] polished. But in Japan no one can polish any knife for anyone, you know. If she has carpenters or gardeners, she may—he may do it, but she wanted me to get [it] polished immediately. That was a big problem for me. And—and she said, "In England," you know, "if you go to a department store we can get them polished up immediately. So go to Mitsukoshi and ask to get [it] polished." Her idea was ridiculous for Japanese people, you know, to polish. It was pretty beautiful, good knife. But even so, no one can polish it. "Oh,

this is old," Japanese store may say. "This is very old. Why don't you get new one?" You know, that is what they may say.

When—do you know Japanese *ofuro*? When the, you know, cover of the *ofuro* will easily be get rotten, so she asked me to get lid only. But that was also difficult, you know. If I—unless we buy whole thing, they wouldn't sell the wooden *ofuro*—bathtub—wooden bathtub. I think English way may be something quite different from American way.

That's all [laughter]. Nothing more than this.

**Student A:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** *Hai.*

**Student A:** She was the first—Miss Ransom was your first Westerner you helped to convert to Buddhism?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes.

**Student A:** Who was the second person—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Second?

**Student A:** —after her?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** —after her. Maybe Jean Ross or some old students of Zen Center. Since then I had—until I come to America, I had no chance to see any Caucasian or any foreigners—*gaijin*.

**Student B:** Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes.

**Student B:** How did you get an idea to teach Caucasian people long time before you'd met any Caucasian students?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** How? Just, you know, I visited her home when it is very hot, just because I want to have a—some cold drink, I visited her [laughs]. It was so hot, you know. [*Sentence finished. Tape turned over.*]

... without she will give us something, you know, some drink or watermelon or something like that. She gave me a big, you know, watermelon, cutting in two, and putting some sugar in it, and with big spoon she offered half [the] melon, big one.

**Peter Schneider:** And you determined to come to America [loud laughter]?

**Student C:** Hey, it's the watermelon, man. That's what it is.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Oh, maybe so because of watermelon.

**Student D:** "Watermelon Zen."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Watermelon Zen."

**Dan Welch:** If I remember right, Rōshi, there was another Zen master in Kyoto who got caught by a watermelon [laughter].

**Student E:** What's that story, Dan?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Dan, don't you—it may be good idea to send a picture of watermelon, you know—picture of Zen Center student eating watermelon [laughs, laughter]. Some Zen teacher like me may come [laughs, laughter].

**Dan:** Publish it in the *Dai-hōrin*.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** She was very tall, maybe as tall as [Grahame] Petchey, you know. Very tall girl.

**Student E:** Petchey's about 6'-2", I think.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs, laughter throughout paragraph.] She used to put white, big hat like this, and she was very tall, and I was very small. When we go to shopping, I have to almost run. Because she had no one to talk, you know, to talk with, and as soon as she come back from school, she start to talk with me in fireplace. So I was always studying in fireplace—in the corner of fireplace. I couldn't study anything, you know. I couldn't have any study—any homework, so I decided to buy big, big screen. I told her for Japanese it is necessary to use, you know, big screen. So she bought it for me, and so I was very pleased—just to prevent, you know, her talk. But she was so tall! Taller than screen—watching down. Didn't work at all. I gave up. Very big.

Another professor, Sugioka,<sup>10</sup> would visited our home many times—maybe twice a week or weekend. She was—she—he is—according to her, he is a big scholar in English, you know. He knows more vocabulary—he has more vocabulary than Miss Ransom herself, she said. And he was—she was very much proud of him. But he was also very short—as short as me, you know. I don't know why she liked so

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<sup>10</sup> Professor Kido Sugioka of Komazawa University.

short people [laughter]. The man who translated Uchiyama-rōshi's<sup>11</sup> book, you know, small book.<sup>12</sup> Someone said it was not so good translation.

**Student E:** Which book is that, Rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Small.

**Student E:** Uchiyama-rōshi?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm. Palms.

**Student E:** With the hands?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes. With hands.

**Student E:** Oh. Why did you leave her?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student E:** Why did you leave her—did you leave her?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Because I, you know, because I have to finish my thesis. So five—six months before I finish my schooling, I left her. And she went to Tientsin—went back to China again. She was a good friend of Premiere Yoshida.<sup>13</sup> She is—he is a famous premiere who signed the treaty after the war—

**Student E:** Russian war [of 1905] or—?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** —treaty of—at San Francisco, you know, treaty of complete surrender. He is the premiere who signed.

**Dan:** Rōshi, what did you write your thesis in?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Dan:** Rōshi, what did you write your thesis about?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** About *Shōbōgenzō*. Study of *Shōbōgenzō*, focusing on "Raihai-tokuzui"—the chapter of the meaning of bow.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Uchiyama Kōshō-rōshi (c. 1912–1998).

<sup>12</sup> Kōshō Uchiyama [English order of names], *Modern Civilization and Zen*. Administrative Office of Sōtō Sect, June 1967, 36 pp.

<sup>13</sup> Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967): Prime Minister of Japan for most of the period between 1946 and 1954. Negotiated and signed, in 1951 in San Francisco, the Treaty of Peace between the Allied Powers and Japan.

**Student C:** What?

**Student F:** "Vow" or "bow"?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student C:** Bow?

**Student E:** Bow.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Bow.

**Student E:** Is that because your master bowed so much?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Maybe so. I didn't notice it. Maybe so. I was the last one who submit my thesis to the office [laughter], because I was too busy, you know. Most student finish his d- [partial word]—unit, you know. Maybe most students leave three or four units for last year, but I had twelve—I had twelve units more to go. So I was very busy in writing thesis and finishing twelve units. That was why I bought screen, but it didn't work [laughter].

**Student F:** Rōshi, could you tell us something of what you wrote your thesis on?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student F:** Could you tell us something about your thesis?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Study of *Shōbōgenzō*, focusing on the fascicle of bow.

**Student F:** Could you tell us what you wrote?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Too long.

**Student F:** In—in a capsule? In [laughter]—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Essence? You have to bow anyway [laughter]. That is why you have to bow nine times, you know, maybe. My thesis was very good, you know, but my oral question was not so good, you know, because I didn't study so much. Some other questions?

**Student G:** Rōshi?

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<sup>14</sup> Suzuki-rōshi's graduation thesis for Komazawa University was entitled "Raihai-tokuzui" *no maki o chushin to seru Dōgen-zenji no shukyo (Dōgen-zenji's Religion as Seen Especially in the "Raihai-tokuzui" Chapter of Shōbōgenzō)*. His thesis advisor was Professor Nukariya Kaiten.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes.

**Student G:** A few years ago, at a lecture at that—in the basement of that big church—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student G:** —that big church downtown on [2-3 words unclear], you were giving a lecture—no, Dick was talking, and you were just listening.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh.

**Student G:** And you had your hands—your *mudrā* upside down. The right—the right hand on top of the left hand.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Uh-huh.

**Student G:** And then sometimes—and then I was sitting right in the front row, and I was staring at your hands. And you weren't looking at me, I don't think, but you fixed them, and you put the left back on top of the right. But then you'd be listening to Dick, and your right would go back on top [laughter]. And I—and I thought that something was strange was going on. And I looked real hard, and you put your sleeves over your hands [laughter]. My question is, what were you up to [laughter]?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** That was your study [story?], then.

**Student G:** What?

**Student E:** "That was your study, then."

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Usually this is—I have not much feeling on this, so—.

**Student E:** Why not?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Because I cut my finger from here to here. Sometime I don't feel so good, you know, and I do like this [laughter].

**Student E:** Oh. He—he—he—he's doing this. See? Like this, though.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** You know, this finger. So if I don't feel so good, I do like this and go back to the *mudrā* like [gesture]. Sometime I am doing like this one.

**Student H:** Rōshi, do you still hear from some of your master's disciples, or other Zen masters?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Excuse me?

**Student H:** Some of—some of your master's disciples—

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Mm-hmm.

**Student H:** Who were studying with you. Do you still hear from them?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes.

**Student H:** Uh-huh.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** My younger, you know, brother in dharma<sup>15</sup> was taking care of—once in a while after I left Rinso-in came to my temple and helped my boy [Hoitsu-rōshi] or a priest who was there always.

**Student H:** There was a fire in your temple?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Excuse me?

**Student H:** I didn't quite understand. There was a fire there?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** No, no. When you know, after I left my temple, you know, there must be some qualified, you know, teacher in my temple [laughs, laughter]. Someone like me must be there. So my brother in dharma was formerly or officially responsible for my temple, but actually someone else was always there. But another—my elder brother in dharma<sup>16</sup> is now in the temple which I enter for the first—after I finish my schooling—Zoun-in.<sup>17</sup> And then as soon as my master passed away, I took over my master's temple and my elder brother, you know, took over my place.

So still we have three dharma—brother in dharma. And one is now—I don't know what he is doing. He is not priest anymore. And we—I was actually the youngest one. At that time there were four more disciples, and I—I was the youngest one. And four disciples run away from my master because he was too strict.

**Student H:** Could—could you give us some example of his strictness—of what he did that was so strict?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** [Laughs.] You know, he is very, you know, unique character. And he would sit in the corner of dark room, and when someone enter his room he stares at him like this and without stopping

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<sup>15</sup> That is, a fellow student or peer, not a brother by birth. This was probably Kojun Noiri-rōshi.

<sup>16</sup> Probably Kendo Okamoto (*Crooked Cucumber*, p. 90).

<sup>17</sup> Zoun-in temple, Mori-machi, Shizuoka Prefecture, central Japan.

eating [laughter]. Most people [were] scared of him very much. Just to look at him is good enough. Before he say something he would strike me—strike us—*bam!* [Laughter.] A little like Tatsugami-rōshi also does. For Tatsugami-rōshi, there is no need to speak English. His hand will speak fluently [laughter].

**Student I:** They'll laugh now—[laughter].

**Suzuki-rōshi:** And he's pretty humorous, you know, sometime—very much humorous. And he was very good friend of us in some way. For an instance, when we came back from village after finishing memorial service for our members, three of our—three or four [of] our disciples—his disciples were with him, and we are coming back to my temple. When we came to dark, you know, dark slope, you know, he told us to take off—oh—told us to go ahead, you know. "As you boys [are] wearing *tabi*,<sup>18</sup> so may be better for you to go first. I will—because I have no *tabi*, I will follow you," he said. So we, you know, went back ahead of him. As soon as we arrive at our temple, he told us to sit in front of him. "You boys sit here and listen to me. When I don't wear *tabi*, why did you wear *tabi*?" That was his, you know, question. "Why did you wear *tabi*? When I don't wear—"

**Student H:** What—what is *turby*?

**Students:** *Tabi*.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Socks.

**Student H:** Oh.

**Student J:** White socks.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** "Moreover," you know, "when I told you," you know, "to go ahead, you four boys went ahead of me without noticing that I have no *tabi*. How about that? [Thumps several times.] You goose!" you know. "You foolish boys!" He was very mad at us. You know, at that time I took him very seriously, but I think—now I think—I think apparently he was teasing us, you know. He was playing game with us. He was enjoying, you know, our innocence [laughter]. "Sit here," and we four boys sit [laughter]. We didn't know what will go on, you know. No one could figure out what is—what was wrong with us [laughter].

[One day] when he was not at temple, one chicken died [laughs, laughter throughout]. So we decided to eat it, taking off all the feathers. But it was very difficult to cut, you know, with blunt temple knife. Very difficult. So we ate only one leg. And rest of the chicken we buried. [We recited?] small, you know, *sūtra*. Unfortunately, next

<sup>18</sup> *tabi* (Jap.): Thin white socks traditionally worn with sandals.

morning my master found it, you know, when he was weeding. But he didn't tell anything, you know. That was the day before Obon festival. And after we, you know, prepared altar for the various soul, we had dinner [?]. Tomorrow is, you know—oh, that was August 13<sup>th</sup> when we have Obon festival. And [at] breakfast time he told us, "I had a funny—very funny dream last night. One-legged hen came to me—"

**Student E:** "One-legged hen said to me—"

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. "One-legged hen came to me and said, 'It—the altar is too high for me. So please move it lower.' And the hen asked me, 'Do you have some good idea?' he asked us. All of us. All of us." We couldn't see [look at?] him either. What he meant by that?

**Student E:** Obon festival is the festival for all spirits.

**Dan Welch:** The dead spirits.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** The dead spirits. The one—one-legged hen—hen came to the altar, but he couldn't climb up.

**Student K:** The spirit of one dead hen, or—?

**Student E:** One-legged hen.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** One-legged hen, because we ate, you know, one leg and buried, you know, the hen around the tree. And my master found out, unfortunately. And he—he didn't say anything at that time. It was the day we have Obon festival. And after—when we have breakfast, "I had a very funny dream last night." [Laughter.] We were listening to him. One day [the hen] came [to him], he said, so—[laughs, laughter].

**Student E:** Where did the chickens come from? [Laughter.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** We were raising them. We were [4-8 words unclear], and unfortunately one of them died.

**Student E:** They were at the temple?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah. So we ate [laughter] one only. Because it is too difficult to cook it—cut it, so we gave up and buried it, you know, in the garden.

**Student E:** So what did he say when you were like this, Rōshi? [Probably gesturing.]

**Suzuki-rōshi:** I don't know. I don't remember, anyway, you know. We have no words.

**Student L:** Was that all he ever said about it?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Hmm?

**Student L:** Was that all he ever said about it?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yeah.

**Dan Welch:** Isn't that enough?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** That's enough, you know. [Laughter.] "Do you have some idea to help him?"—that was what he said. We are not so alert students anyway—disciple, you know, because we have no words for him. *Hai*.

**Student M:** Is he the one that kept some *yokan* [?]<sup>19</sup> up on a very high shelf?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Yes. He is the—

**Student M:** Will you tell us about that?

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Ohh. Whenever he had something—some special thing, you know, for guest, he would keep it in high place where we cannot reach, you know. But, you know [laughs and laughter throughout paragraph], we know how to take it, you know. So almost all the time, I—we took it down and cut a little bit corner of it—slice by slice we cut. And—and then, looking at it, when we feel—anyway he will find out, so we took [?] all of them. That is what we would do, you know.

One day, you know, it was too high for us to reach [laughter throughout paragraph]. So my—our eldest disciple asked me, who is the smallest one, to reach it. And he said, "I will carry you on my shoulders. Then you can reach for that." So I, you know—he carried me on his shoulder. And it was still—we were not still high enough. So I told him, "A little bit more." So he stood on his toe, you know, like this, and he lost balance. He throw me out on the kettle—boiling kettle.

**Student:** Oh God.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** I got big, you know, burned here. Still I have some, you know, mark here. But I couldn't say anything about it [laughter].

So when mealtime come, so I, you know, enduring my pain, I sit in my seat. And we start—I started to eat, but this was pretty terrible injury.

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<sup>19</sup> Phonetic guess only. According to Chadwick, this was a cake (*Crooked Cucumber*, p. 24).

Someone told me to use some oil on it. So by oil I hardly, you know, recovered. I have still, you know, some mark here. Alm- [partial word] —we did almost all the mischievous thing, almost. But when we do it with all of us, he didn't scold us so badly.

But one day, we ate some big persimmon—four or five persimmons, which he kept it until it is—until they are good enough to eat in rice—in rice. And when someone ate it, you know—I don't know who did it—but when he found out someone ate several persimmons already, he asked me who ate it. So i—actually I didn't know, you know. "No, I don't know," I said. And he started to find out who did it. Finally he found out two of them—two of us had eaten. At that time he was very angry, you know, not because we ate it, but because he—they didn't share the persimmons with all of us. He was very angry. I think he was very—pretty kind to all of us, I think. Maybe with skillful mean.

**Student:** What time is it?

**Student:** It's 9:30.

**Suzuki-rōshi:** Just right [laughter] [1-2 words unclear].

Thank you very much.

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Sources: Partial transcript by David Chadwick and City Center original tape. Transcript checked against tape and made verbatim by Adam Tinkham and Bill Redican (2/12/01).



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