



*lunamoth*

February 23, 2014 at 2:45 am

For what it is worth, which is probably nothing: I was a student of Roshi from 1983 to 1996. I trained at Mount Baldy, Bodhi Mandala, and Rinzai-ji, but even before I met the Roshi, I had talked to him in whatever place of non-being we all travel to when our bodies are sleeping, and therefore on meeting him for the first time in the sanzen room at Mount Baldy, there was a sense that I was embracing a part of myself, someone I already knew and wanted to know more of. That first time, he seemed like a giant, someone very ancient, dressed in shining brocade robes and giving off light. He banged his stick on the floor and asked me a question and I forget what happened, but it was like seeing stars. The second time I saw him in sanzen, however, he struck me as much more ordinary and considerably smaller, while his robes looked frayed and faded. I never recaptured that initial impression of magnificence, or that feeling of entering the koan and answering it all in the same instant. But who cares? I had a great time. I learned many lessons great and small. I put my life into some kind of order, thank to him. I told everybody back home about the Roshi, thinking his teaching was for everyone, when it obviously wasn't. I went to sesshin, and each one seemed more profound than the last. I reached places in myself I hadn't know were there. I don't remember the first time he groped in my robes, or the second or third. I barely even noticed. I certainly didn't feel threatened or traumatized. The zendo could also be a pretty sexy place and I had begun to feel sorry for this old man who had to sit there day after day dealing with one student after another, many of them as wildly confused as I was. Maybe by "sorry" I mean I felt empathy or compassion. I wanted to change and grow — that's why I was there. It seemed to me there was something to learn even from his fumbling attempts to get "sexual" in sanzen. I used to laugh about it, then and there. He had to be joking. Maybe he was lonely. Maybe he was afraid of getting old. It seemed like his problem, not mine, and it made absolutely no difference to my practice during those years. What mattered was my effort and commitment, and the teaching I was getting. Eventually, my effort decreased and I decided I'd had enough of walking in circles, interacting with monks and nuns, some of whom were unfathomable in their attachment to their robes. Sometimes I thought I should have left long before I had learned all those sutras by heart. I kept it up because it felt good to sit in that sound. The Roshi's "sexual problem" never caused me even a second of distress. We are all sexual. We need to affirm our sexuality, and then we need to drop it. Apparently the Roshi struggles with that. He's the one who decided to be a monk, not me, but I sympathize. He's 107. I don't understand all the agonizing that goes on. I wish certain monks would stop posing as saviors of women. What arrogance. Men are not my saviors. I "got" the Roshi in the first few minutes. In 1994, he asked me if I would come to his funeral. Certainly I never felt like his victim. At any time, I could have slammed the sanzen door, walked down the mountain, caught a cab out of there and still be his student. I chose to stay, out of respect for someone rare who I considered a great teacher. Rinzai-ji is just an empty space we choose to occupy. I don't need it to "reform." There is no such thing as American Zen. I'm stating the obvious. Let Roshi come and go in the peace he deserves.

Reply