APPENDIX:

Willy-Nilly Zen*

It began when an acquaintance remarked that my writings reminded him of Oriental poetry. I borrowed translations of Japanese and Chinese literature from the library, and met Basho and Po Chu-i.

Then World War II came along and I found myself caught as a civilian on the island of Guam, taken to Japan, and interned in Kobe. The guards of our camp discovered my interest in haiku, and when R. H. Blyth's *Zen in English Literature* was published late in 1942, one of them loaned me a copy.

I was fascinated by the point of view expressed in this book. I read it over and over, perhaps ten times, and underwent many strange experiences that enabled me to read Shakespeare, Basho, and other profound writers as though for the first time. The world seemed transparent, and I was absurdly happy despite our miserable circumstances.

Dr. Blyth was also interned in Kobe, and when all the camps in the city were combined in May, 1944, we were confined together with 175 other enemy nationals above the city. For the next fourteen months, until the war was over, I learned much about Zen from this creative teacher and I deter-

*I prepared this record at Yamada Roshi's request in November, 1971. It is presented here with very little editing, with footnotes and an afterword added to explain a bit and bring things up to date. Terms not defined earlier may be found in the Glossary.*
determined that I would do zazen under the guidance of a roshi when I could find the opportunity.

After being returned to the United States, I reentered the University of Hawaii and was graduated in 1947 with a degree in English literature. I got married that year and with my wife traveled to Berkeley for study in Japanese literature and language.

One of my friends was interested in Krishnamurti, an Indian teacher whose point of view can be compared to Zen. He persuaded me to go with him during the Christmas vacation of 1947 to Southern California to try to find this teacher. We visited Ojai, a town north of Los Angeles where Krishnamurti lived when he was in the United States, but Krishnamurti was then in India.

We traveled further south and I stopped in at the Oriental bookshop of P. D. and Ione Perkins in South Pasadena. There I met Richard A. Gard, now a well-known scholar of Buddhism. He was then head clerk of the shop and was earning his doctorate from Claremont College. We had known each other as fellow students at the University of Hawaii before the war.

I was interested to see the large collection of Zen books, mostly by Dr. D. T. Suzuki, that the bookshop had for sale and I asked Mr. Gard if he knew of any Zen teacher in Southern California. He told me that I should meet the monk Nyogen Senzaki and gave me his address at the Miyako Hotel in the Japanese section of Los Angeles.

I went immediately to see Senzaki Sensei and was struck by his wonderful personality. I determined to study with him and returned to Northern California for my wife. We both began to do zazen under his guidance.

Senzaki Sensei never called himself a roshi. He had made efforts to bring a true roshi from Japan to meet with his students. However, these efforts had not succeeded, so he kept the Dharma alive as best he could by himself.
We sat in chairs and had very little instruction, except what we could gain from his teisho. Mostly we learned from his wonderful manner, his kindness, and his modesty. He gave us Buddhist names—mine was “Chōtan,” meaning “Deep Pool.”

Senzaki Sensei was widely read in Western literature and he especially appreciated Meister Eckhart, the thirteenth and fourteenth century German mystic. He quoted Eckhart to me:

>The eye with which I see God is the very same eye with which God sees me.

“Show me that eye!” said Senzaki Sensei. I worked on this koan very hard and one day I went to see him with an answer. Seated before him, I simply closed my eyes.

“Oh, ho!” he cried. “Well then, were does it go when you sleep?” I could not answer. I worked very hard on this second koan too, and years later, when I was doing Mu under other teachers, that old question would pop into my head.

I was studying for a master's degree in Japanese literature at the University of California at Los Angeles at this time, but my wife was unhappy in Southern California and we decided to discontinue our zazen with Senzaki Sensei and return to Hawaii where she could be near her family. Back in Honolulu, I took up the master's degree program in Japanese literature at the University of Hawaii, which I completed in 1950, writing my thesis on “Basho's Haiku and Zen.” At this time our son, Thomas, was born.

I was anxious to return to Japan to do zazen, and I earned a fellowship for a year's study there with the help of Dr. D. T. Suzuki, who taught at the University of Hawaii during the summer of 1949. Once in Japan, I lived for five months at Zenkyō An in Kenchōji, Kitakamakura and attended classes as an auditor at Tokyo University. This was in the fall of 1950.
Dr. Shōkin Furuta and Dr. Blyth helped me to find residence at Zenkyō An and also to enter Engakuji for sesshin. This was my first experience at true zazen. I was already thirty-three years old, and quite stiff. The zazen hurt my knees so badly that I could only walk a few steps. Three weeks after this sesshin ended, I returned to Engakuji for rōhatsu sesshin, my knees still swollen from my November experience. It was true agony. I was in complete despair.

Asahina Sōgen Roshi and his monks were very kind, but foreigners were rare beasts at a Zen monastery in those days, and Zen teachers had little experience in dealing with them. I knew that Senzaki Sensei had a close relationship with the monk Soen Nakagawa at Ryutakuji in Mishima, so I wrote to Nakagawa Oshō and he invited me to visit his monastery.* With my interest in haiku, we immediately became friends and I attended the January sesshin at Ryutakuji, still in great pain, but was permitted to take agura and Nihonza positions, which enabled me to survive.

Asahina Roshi had tried to translate my “Eye of God” koan into Hui-neng’s “Original Face and Eye,” but the old master of Ryutakuji, Yamamoto Gempo Roshi, found this was too complicated for me, so he set me to work on Mu. In the doku-san room, I felt a little resistance to this change, but on returning to my cushions, I discovered what zazen really is. No longer was I aware that the cracks in the tile floor formed a weird pattern. I could sink at last beneath the surface of my mind.

I moved to Ryutakuji after the January sesshin and lived there until I returned to Hawaii the following August. It was a mixed experience. I took joy in studying with Nakagawa Osho—he encouraged me to write haiku and we had a memo-

*Nakagawa Soen (Roshi) is a poet who writes in both modern and classical styles.
rable trip to Kyoto, Nara, and Iga-Ueno in conjunction with his forthcoming installation as Roshi of Ryutakuji.

However, I was also unhappy at being separated from my wife and baby son Tom, and ultimately I became exhausted from the strain of keeping the schedule of the monastery. On a takuhatsu (begging trip) to Namazu City, I caught dysentery and I sat through the June, 1951, sesshin with this dreadful affliction, very ill indeed. As I look now at photographs of myself at this period, I can hardly recognize my features in what seems almost a death mask.

Nakagawa Osho, now Roshi, took me to a physician in Mishima who didn’t help at all, so I sought aid from Dr. Blyth at his home in the compound of the Peers’ School in Tokyo. He took me to his own physician who gave me antibiotics and cured the dysentery. However, I was still very weak and at Nakagawa Roshi’s suggestion, I took time off and rested in a hotel on the Izu Peninsula. It wasn’t all that restful. As the end of my year in Japan approached, I felt more and more oppressed with a sense of failure, despite the kindnesses of all my teachers and friends.

Just before my departure for the United States Nakagawa Roshi and I were walking on the Hongo near Tokyo University and happened to see a figure of Bodhidharma in the window of Morie Shoten, the well-known Buddhist bookstore. The Roshi insisted that I buy this figure and I was quite willing, as it was a most unusual and artistic piece. He embarrassed me by telling our friends this Bodhidharma would be the central figure in the temple I would establish in the United States. Such a thing was beyond my dreams. However, Bodhidharma accompanied me back to Honolulu, and later to Los Angeles, and then to Honolulu again.

Reunited with my wife and son, I found that my funds from the government, which were granted to me as compensation for my war experience, had expired, and to support my family
I went to work as a community organization executive in a town near Honolulu. My relationship with my wife had deteriorated during my absence in Japan and after two more years together, we agreed to separate. Fortunately, she and I have been able to become good friends in the passage of time, and I am blessed with a deeply rewarding relationship with our son Tom, now twenty-one and a senior in college.*

I left for the Mainland again in 1953 and resumed my study with Senzaki Sensei, but a combination of the strain of the past two years and the poor health I had brought back from Japan brought on a physical collapse. I was hospitalized for a time, then spent long months in convalescence.

Afterwards, I spent a year or so working for P. D. and Lone Perkins, the Asian booksellers where I had first learned of Senzaki Sensei, and then one of Sensei's students helped me to find a position at the Happy Valley School in Ojai, where I had searched in vain for Krishnamurti several years before.

During this period, I continued my zazen with Senzaki Sensei, but I found my relationships with people were quite frozen. I felt isolated and unable to communicate. Nakagawa Roshi visited the Los Angeles Sangha for a few months in 1954 and we had a fine reunion. But generally this was a sterile period.

I consulted with a psychologist for a year and then, upon moving to Ojai, with a psychiatrist. With the aid of the latter doctor in particular, I was able to loosen up a little, and to express my feelings. In February, 1957, Anne Hopkins, Assistant Director of the Happy Valley School, and I were married and we went to live in a beautiful adobe house with huge windows overlooking the walnut orchards of the Ojai Valley.

Anne and I took a trip to Hawaii and Japan that summer. In

*Thomas Aitken is today a school counselor employed by the Department of Education of the State of Hawaii.
Honolulu we found Tom, then seven years old, rather lonely for his father, and I too felt the desire to be closer to him, so we decided to move to Hawaii the following year.

Arriving in Japan, we spent two weeks at Ryutakuji, where we met the monk, EidoShimano(Tai San). He impressed us as an earnest and dignified young man who spoke good English, and it was evident that he was a favorite of Nakagawa Roshi. He expressed a strong desire to go to the United States and we agreed to help him.

I participated in a sesshin at Ryutakuji and Anne and I climbed Mt. Fuji with Nakagawa Roshi. The Roshi then took us to Tokorozawa where we sat for seven days in the historic August, 1957, sesshin with Yasutani Hakuun Roshi, where Akira Kubota and Tatsuö Hiyama had their kensho.*

This was Anne's first sesshin and she marks it as the first step in her Zen practice. For me, Yasutani Roshi was a revelation, for he seemed to be a distillation of pure energy. When the sesshin ended with the excitement of the two kenshos, I found myself in tears for having missed the experience myself, despite such a favorable opportunity.

We returned for our final year at the Happy Valley School, laying plans for our move to Hawaii. In May, 1958, Senzaki Sensei passed away at an advanced age and Nakagawa Roshi came to California and conducted two memorial sesshins with Sensei's followers. I served as jisha for the first of these sesshins, while the Roshi doubled as jikijitsu. I believe it was the first full seven-day sesshin conducted in a regular manner in the United States.

Emanuel Sherman, later to go to Japan as a Zen student, was jisha at the second sesshin, as Anne and I departed for our move to Honolulu before it began. Pauline Offner, who also

*Messrs. Hiyama and Kubota are today senior members of the Sanun Zendo in Kamakura, which is led by Yamada Koun Roshi.
went later to Japan as a Zen student, attended both of these early sesshins.*

During this visit of Nakagawa Roshi to Los Angeles, Anne and I consulted with him about helping Tai San come to the United States. The Roshi agreed to allow him to come the following year. We were delighted, partly because we would be able to keep our promise to Tai San and partly because we thought having him with us might encourage Nakagawa Roshi to come to the United States on a regular basis.

Anne and I arrived in Honolulu and looked around for something to do for a living. Finally we established a second-hand bookstore with specialties in Asian religion and Hawaiiana. I kept a record of all customers in Asian religion so that when Tai San could come we would have a list of people who might be interested in establishing a group.

However, Tai San became ill and his trip was postponed. I decided to try to start the zazenkai anyway and wrote to Nakagawa Roshi for permission. Pauline Offner, who by then was in Japan, came back through Honolulu on an emergency family visit and brought with her the Roshi’s consent to our plans. Accordingly, we held our first meeting in October, 1959, in the living room of our home, with four people present, including ourselves. Bodhidharma was installed at last.

We met weekly until Nakagawa Roshi came to lead sesshin early the next year, 1960, and thereafter we met twice weekly, a schedule never broken and still maintained at the Honolulu zendo.

Nakagawa Roshi went on to California during his visit in the spring of 1960 and was instrumental in reviving Senzaki Sensei’s old group, which had been dormant since his death. He conducted another sesshin on his return through Hawaii.

*These two Western Zen pioneers pursued separate careers as Zen students in Japan, and then went on separately to Southeast Asia where they became ordained as Buddhist religious. Both have since died.
and we felt our group was well established. In August of that year, Tai San was at last able to come and be leader of our zazen.

We were meeting at this time at our home near Koko Head, a crater whose Hawaiian name was partly the reason for the name Nakagawa Roshi gave to our zendo, "Koko An."* It was an inadequate place for meetings, however, and we sold out and acquired a larger place near the University of Hawaii, the present Koko An. It had a view of Diamond Head, another crater, a landmark of Waikiki Beach, and this partly influenced the choice of our organizational name, the "Diamond Sangha."†

Nakagawa Roshi returned in 1961 and held two sesshins with us again, the first at the old Koko An, and the second at the new place. At that first spring sesshin, I felt particularly determined. I sat up for a portion of several nights and found myself in rather a deep condition. I experienced a makyo in which I was seated on the floor of a huge old stone temple, with enormous pillars extending to a lofty ceiling. Very tall monks dressed in black walked slowly around me in a circle reciting sutras in deep voices. The total experience had the flavor of something from the ancient past.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, Nakagawa Roshi gave a great "Katsu!" in the zendo, and I found my voice uniting with his, "Aaaah!" In the next dokusan, he asked me what I now know was a checking question. I could not answer, and he simply terminated the interview. In a later dokusan, he said that I had experienced a little bit of light and that I should be very careful.

In his closing talk after sesshin, the Roshi said, "Someone got a little bit of light." I knew that he was referring to my experience, but I did not treat it very seriously. However, I

*"Koko An" means "The Small Temple Right Here" in Japanese.
†The name "Diamond Sangha" refers also to the Diamond Sutra.
found the ceiling of my mind to be infinitely spacious. Everything was bright and new. I felt that I had had a good sesshin.

Between the two sesshins in Hawaii in 1961, Nakagawa Roshi visited Los Angeles and New York, and at New York conducted his first sesshin on the East Coast, with the help of Dr. and Mrs. Paul Weisz and others of his followers. This laid the groundwork for future East Coast sesshins, and for some of the Zen organizations that flourish there today.

Following the second 1961 sesshin, we established the *Diamond Sangha* newsletter, now in its eleventh year. This publication has carried important articles on Zen over the years and was particularly useful in coordinating the early trips of the two Roshis, Soen Nakagawa and Hakuun Yasutani, and later in publishing papers on Zen practice by our advisor, Katsuki Sekida.*

Anne and I decided in the summer of 1961 that we would like more training in Japan, so we sold our bookshop, left the zendo in Tai San's care, and came first to Ryutakuji, and then, at Nakagawa Roshi's suggestion, to Taihei An in Sekimachi to work with Yasutani Roshi. Yasutani Roshi received us very kindly and he and his students quickly found us a nearby cottage and made us feel very much at home. We enjoyed our early morning visits to the zendo for dokusan and the periodic sesshin. We learned to appreciate life in the Japanese dimension, including daily visits to the public bath. We both gained much from our intensive practice and made treasured friendships with members at Sekimachi and at the Kamakura Zazenkai. Unfortunately, at this time I was quite sensitive to the tatami on which we slept, and I had frequent attacks of asthma, but I tried to ignore them and, as I recall, missed only a part of one sesshin.

*The newsletter came to an end and my talks and other pieces are now carried in our quarterly journal, *Blind Donkey*. The Diamond Sangha also publishes *Kahawai, Journal of Women in Zen*. 
Toward the end of our stay, Philip Kapleau talked with me about Yasutani Roshi’s willingness to go to the United States to lead sesshin. I discussed this with Yasutani Roshi. He confirmed this wish and expressed the desire to retire in Hawaii. We were delighted by this prospect and assured him we would do all we could to assist him.

Nakagawa Roshi was due to come to the United States again in 1962, but his mother passed away and he cancelled the trip, requesting that Yasutani Roshi go in his place. I believe he also entrusted Tai San’s training to Yasutani Roshi at this time.

This began a long series of annual trips by Yasutani Roshi to the United States, ending only in 1969. When I think back on the sacrifice of time and energy that our old teacher made for us, I feel profoundly unworthy of all that dedicated and concentrated work on his part.

Before each sesshin, I would feel great anticipation, hoping that I could achieve the same level of spirit I reached in the first 1961 sesshin, but I never did. The Roshi was kind and encouraging, but in dokusan I would have nothing to say, and, secretly, I felt deeply discouraged. I seemed to be stuck in one place in my practice.

With the prospect of Yasutani Roshi retiring in Hawaii, we bought property at Pupukea on the rural side of Oahu and our members spent every weekend for a year repairing the little house and painting it for the comfort and pleasure of the Roshi and Satomi San.* We also cleared the grounds, started a garden, and planted fruit trees.

In 1964, Tai San accepted an invitation to move to New York, where he has since been successful in setting up the New York Zendo of the Zen Studies Society, and more recently has been instrumental in establishing a mountain center in up-

*Satomi Myōdō Ni, an elderly nun who was Yasutani Roshi’s attendant.
state New York. Yasutani Roshi was faced with the prospect of retiring in a foreign country without the services of a good interpreter. Meanwhile, he was urged by his students in Japan to postpone his retirement, so he decided to withdraw from the Pupukea plan. We understood this situation and sold the property.

Yasutani Roshi continued to come for annual sesshin in conjunction with his visits to Los Angeles and New York. We maintained our zazenkai without a resource member from Japan until June, 1965, when Mr. Katsuki Sekida, a lay student from Ryutakuji, came to Koko An at Nakagawa Roshi's suggestion. Mr. Sekida has been with us ever since, though he is at this writing temporarily in London with the Ryutakuji branch there. *

From 1962 until 1969, I worked for the University of Hawaii in administrative positions, mostly with the East-West Center. This work took me to Asia on one occasion, but I had only a few days in Japan. I did gain a broader perspective of Buddhism, however, through visits to Buddhist countries in South and Southeast Asia.

It must have been about 1966 or 1967 when I began to notice that I could make sense of some koans. In particular, I remember the case of "Yen-kuan and the Rhinoceros Fan."

Yen-kuan: "Bring me the rhinoceros fan."
Attendant: "It is broken."
Yen-kuan: "In that case, bring me the rhinoceros." The attendant could not answer. †

It seemed to me an intelligent five-year-old child could have brought that ugly old beast to Yen-kuan. At that time,

* Mr. Sekida retired to his home in Japan soon afterwards.
† This is part of Case ninety-one of The Blue Cliff Record. See Bibliography.
however, I did not appreciate the attendant's initial response, "It is broken."

Mr. Sekida's talks and writings and personal counseling were especially helpful to me during this period. My zazen deepened as I came to value the samadhi aspect of Zen training.

In 1967, Anne and I discussed our own future retirement and investigated several possible properties on Oahu. One of our members moved to the island of Maui and on visiting her, we happened to find what seemed to be a very good parcel of two acres, with a little cottage, in a remote section of the island. We purchased this property and soon learned that the cottage had a history of being rented to young people who had dropped out of the main stream of conventional society. We continued this rental practice and on periodic visits came to know these young people, to appreciate their values, and to feel concern for their problems.

I am not sure just when we decided to establish a Zen center on our Maui property. The decision came gradually over the next year, I think, as it became more evident that the large number of disaffected young people who had migrated to Maui from Mainland United States might form a sufficiently large pool of potential members and, further, that their sincere interests might readily be turned to Zen.

In June, 1968, one of our Koko An members was graduated from the University of Hawaii and he offered to stay at the Maui house, to repair it, and to set up a zazen schedule. We agreed to this plan. For the next year, the atmosphere of the Maui house had a Zen flavor. It became known among the young people as the "Haiku Zendo." "Haiku," in this case, is the Hawaiian name for the district. I did not care for this name, partly because there already was a "Haiku Zendo" in Los Altos, California, so-called because it has places for seven-
teen people. * When we moved to Maui, we changed the name to "Maui Zendo," the name it still retains.

Finally, on July 1, 1969, I was able to retire from the University of Hawaii and move to Maui. Brian Baron, one of our old-timers at Koko An, moved over with me as work foreman, and two other Koko An people came with us on a temporary basis. Anne and Mr. Sekida joined us from Koko An in September. The program set up at that time has been slightly modified over two and one-half years to the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5:00</td>
<td>Rise and wash</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:10</td>
<td>Zazen</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:50</td>
<td>Study period</td>
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<tr>
<td>6:30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00</td>
<td>Work meeting, cleanup, work period</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30</td>
<td>Refreshment break</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:50</td>
<td>Work period ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:10</td>
<td>Zazen</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:50</td>
<td>Zazen ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noon</td>
<td>Dinner, short rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Work period</td>
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<tr>
<td>3:00</td>
<td>Work period ends, refreshment, rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>4:30</td>
<td>Zazen</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:10</td>
<td>Zazen ends</td>
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<tr>
<td>5:20</td>
<td>Supper, silent rest</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:10</td>
<td>Zazen (talks twice a week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Lights out †</td>
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Meantime, back at Koko An, we rented the house to three people who agreed to keep it open for twice-weekly meetings. After a year, the Koko An members became independently strong enough so that some of them could take over as tenants.

*The classical Japanese haiku poem contains seventeen syllables.
†The Maui Zendo has its own building and grounds now, a mile away from the old place, where Anne and I continue to live. The schedule has changed in a number of ways.
and the original renters moved out. So Koko An, too, is a residential Zen center, with members keeping a daily zazen schedule, while going out during the day to work or to college.*

My health, never very robust, became quite poor after the move to Maui. I found it very difficult to establish a regular monastic schedule with people who knew little of such matters and who were used to a more hedonistic way of life. My own lack of strength in matters of leadership was painfully evident to me. Also, I probably worked too hard in assisting with essential repairs and enlargements to the cottage. In any case, I was quite ill, off and on, for a period of about eighteen months. Nevertheless, with the help of Anne, Mr. Sekida, and Mr. Baron, the Maui Zendo kept its Dharma light burning steadily.

Mr. Sekida was very encouraging to me. It was his opinion that I had had kensho and he expressed this opinion to Yasutani Roshi at the Roshi's last visit to Hawaii, October, 1969, during our first Maui Zendo sesshin. The Roshi agreed to try me on koan work, but I had little confidence, and did only two miscellaneous koans during that sesshin. I was unclear about how to handle dokusan in this new dimension, and especially about what was meant by "showing" my opinion.

Nakagawa Roshi came for a brief sesshin in October, 1970, but this was an especially difficult time and I do not recall that I had any serious dokusan with him. He was scheduled to come twice for sesshin in October, 1971, but his own illness delayed the trip and he was not able to come to Hawaii at all. However, I attended a sesshin he conducted with Tai San in California in August, 1971. At that sesshin, Nakagawa Roshi took me through several checking questions and confirmed

*The program at the Koko An Zendo has never wavered. It now has a larger membership than the Maui Zendo. I visit there monthly for zazenkai or sesshin.
the opinion of Sekida Sensei and Yasutani Roshi regarding my kensho. We also went through a couple of koans from the Wu Men Kuan and I began to understand the dokusan procedure beyond Mu.

After sesshin, Nakagawa Roshi and I agreed that I should invite Yamada Koun Roshi, Dharma successor of Yasutani Roshi, to come to Hawaii on a regular basis. Anne and I had known Yamada Roshi in connection with our participation in the Kamakura Zazenkai ten years before, so we were highly pleased at this new plan.

Now, at this writing, we have completed two sesshins with Yamada Roshi in October, 1971, one at Koko An, and one at Maui. A member of the Maui group attained kensho and others in both groups made excellent progress. I feel a solid confirmation of my own kensho and am pursuing my study of koans as diligently as I can.

We find Yamada Roshi to be our true teacher, personally interested in each student, calling each by name, encouraging confidence in each, yet strictly requiring clear evidence of attainment. His teishos are a revelation to all. We can scarcely believe our good fortune that he has accepted us as his students and that he may be able to visit us for sesshin henceforth on a regular basis.*

As I look back over this willy-nilly Zen path, I realize that teachers, friends, and family have demanded from me the strength and direction which I thought I lacked in pursuing it. First there was Blyth Sensei and Senzaki Sensei, then Nakagawa Roshi, Yasutani Roshi, and Sekida Sensei, and now at last, Yamada Roshi, who has inspired me with a totally new life.

The Koko An members, and more recently the Maui Zen-

*Now aged seventy-five, Yamada Roshi continues to visit the Diamond Sangha periodically to check with our senior students and give teishos.
members, with whom Anne and I live as elder sister and brother, have demanded a quality of leadership that we have at last begun to establish. The response of our ten resident members here on Maui has become warm and responsible over the months and years and today the Maui Zendo almost runs itself, with everyone taking his turn at the many household, garden, and zendo tasks. We are a true Zen family, taking deep pleasure in one another, and in our vital work of realizing essential nature together.

Throughout these twelve years since the Diamond Sangha was established in 1959, Anne has been a constant source of support and comfort to me. Nothing would have been possible without her encouragement. She bore the brunt of responsibility during my illnesses and never indicated even in the most difficult periods that all this effort might not be worthwhile.

I believe that my own ill health is behind me for a while. Perhaps it was partly a sort of Zen sickness, the festering of some potential that was not being fulfilled. With Yamada Roshi’s trust in my capacity to progress in Zen, I feel confidence and happiness I never supposed I could attain. I am profoundly grateful to him, and seek only to justify his trust.

Maui Zendo, Thanksgiving Day, 1971

Afterword
Now almost eleven years have passed, and I reread this memoir with mixed feelings. I would not write it in this way now (I certainly would not use that word “kensho” so much), but it had relevance then and I am persuaded that it may be useful to new students now.

Looking back, I understand my “dark night” from 1961 to 1971 much better than I did a decade ago. My experience with Nakagawa Roshi in the first 1961 sesshin was not deep enough to give me significant insight and it took several more years of
zazen to prepare me to really begin Zen practice. This kind of chronology is not usual but I do occasionally meet others with similar histories.

In the years following the end of this record I moved fairly rapidly through koan study. Yamada Roshi led sesshins in Hawaii frequently, and I visited him at the Sanun Zendo in Kamakura with Anne for lengthy periods during the years 1972–1975. The Roshi gave generously of his time, and I saw him at least once a day for dokusan, and of course more frequently during sesshin. Anne too made fine progress in her practice during this period.

In December, 1974, Yamada Roshi found me ready to teach independently. This has been my sole occupation ever since at the Maui Zendo and the Koko An Zendo, with periodic trips to the Sydney Zendo, the Ring of Bone Zendo, and to Tacoma, Washington, for occasional sesshins with Catholic friends. As I wrote eleven years ago, I feel profoundly grateful to Yamada Roshi, and my motive is simply to justify his trust.