

Bodhi Stand

Upasaka Kuo Cheng Ha

-by Kuo Ren Ha

Kuo Cheng Ha was born in the Central part of Vietnam in 1921. He got married in December of 1946, a few months before the war against the French colonialists broke out in his country. As a high school teacher, he was granted a scholarship under the Marshall Plan in 1953 to come to the United States and attend Dunwoody Industrial Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. When he was still living in Vietnam, he was in charge of the Translation Bureau at the Center for Vietnamese Studies in Saigon. In 1964 he served for a time, as Special Assistant to the Minister at the Ministry of Information. In late April of 1975 he with his whole family of five persons left Saigon and came to the San Francisco Bay Area to start a new life in America. He left behind brothers, sisters, relatives and all his property. At this point in his life he was forced to look squarely at the truth of impermanence of one's existence. More than any words his wife Kuo Ren Ha could say to him about impermanence, this experience of uprooting and separation spoke the Dharma to Kuo Cheng. But his wife, a devout Buddhist, urged him to use the method to transcend the sufferings and ultimately to end birth and death, and to attain true peace of mind. She told him that the method is to cultivate the Way patiently and vigorously.

In April 1976 Kuo Cheng's whole family took refuge with the Triple Jewel on the special occasion of the Venerable Abbot Hsuan Hua's birthday at Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco. From that day on, Kuo Cheng vowed to be his wife's companion-in-the-Way after having been her companion-in-life for over thirty years. He resolved to provide her with assistance she needed to help carry out her own vows. At the same time he has been trying his very best to follow the Proper Dharma rules and precepts in his own life.

His total faith in Kuan Yin Bodhisattva has brought about inconceivable responses again and again. Once in 1980 he went to see a doctor for ear treatment, and because of an error made, his eardrum was perforated. Subsequent to that accident, he was unable to hear with his left ear. He was desperately worried about the possibility of permanent deafness. His wife Kuo Ren kept comforting him and encouraged him to sincerely pray for Kuan Yin Bodhisattva's compassionate aid. She recommended that he perform in one session the 500 bows to the *FIVE HUNDRED NAME SUTRA*. With great sincerity in body and mind, Kuo Cheng performed this act. A week later he went back to see the doctor who previously recommended him to undergo a surgical operation on the ear, a costly one he could not afford. Needless to say, the doctor was extremely surprised to find out that the hole in Kuo Cheng's left ear had completely healed. Miraculously, the supposedly damaged eardrum was functioning normally!

Every year, a week before Kuan Yin Bodhisattva's birthday, the Bodhisattva's leaving the home-life anniversary day, and the Bodhisattva's anniversary of opening of Enlightenment, Kuo Ren Ha performs the ceremony of the *FIVE HUNDRED NAME SUTRA*. Bowing is a way to display one's faith in the great compassion of, as Kuo Ren puts it, "our compassionate mother Kuan Yin Bodhisattva." She also says, "Bowing to the Buddhas is also a Dharma-door which destroys bad

karma very effectively." In recent years, a group of young Buddhists have come to the Ha's house to participate in the periodic bowing sessions.



Kuo Cheng Ha

Kuo Cheng also strongly believes that the unity, safety and happiness which his family enjoys is undoubtedly a blessing bestowed upon them by the compassionate Kuan Yin Bodhisattva, and the Triple Jewel.

Kuo Cheng is presently employed with the State Department of Employment Development in Oakland, California where he helps give assistance to Asians newly arrived in this country who need training and jobs to help them become self-sufficient. Since 1975, he has devoted his off-work hours to accompanying his wife as often as possible to bow to the Triple Jewel and the now-abiding Sangha at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. Kuo Cheng always experiences peace of mind and the joy of complete tranquility and solitude through prayer and meditation whenever he comes to the Way-place. He and Kuo Ren insist that there is no other place as pure, in the world, that they know of.