

一個老兵的故事

The Story of an Old Veteran

比丘近巖 講於二〇〇九年三月十五日觀音聖誕法會
A talk given by Bhikshu Jin Yan on Guanyin Bodhisattva's Birthday, March 15, 2009 at CTTB

歡迎諸佛友來參加觀音菩薩聖誕慶祝法會。目前經濟很不好，大家還能遠道而來，可見具有相當的誠心。有人來是因觀世音菩薩往昔幫過不少忙，故來還願進香；有人來是因為想來擁護道場；也有人是因為朋友相勸隨喜而來。不管如何，我們都是跟菩薩有很深的因緣，蒙菩薩教化過，累生累世受菩薩種種恩惠。在大士慈悲拔苦的悲願背後，不斷演繹著救度芸芸眾生的一段段傳奇故事。

在此想跟大家分享一個故事，是從我父親那邊聽來的。兩三年前，我父母親都還在聖城，住在龍樹精舍。父親在男校教書，母親在君康餐館幫忙；父親在教課之餘有時也會去幫母親一兩下，如收收盤子、擦擦桌子之類的輕活。一次偶然的機會使他認識了一個顧客，並與之攀談起來；話越談越投機，父親索性請他到龍樹精舍坐一坐、喝喝茶。談話之中才知道，他原來是來自路州新奧爾良的一位美國海軍退役老兵。剛剛經歷完「卡崔那颶風」，這一趟來萬佛聖城是來還願的。

說來有點話長：新奧爾良是他的出生及成長之地；他年輕服役時，有機會接觸與體驗到東方文化。並看看佛教寺廟，聽聽僧人唱誦；所謂「見聞為種」，他略知僧人的早晚唱誦，《法華經》(普門品)、觀音菩薩聖號等等。由此他對佛教產生了興趣。退役後回新奧爾良，經歷兩次婚姻，但都以離婚告終。此時他有些心灰意冷，再加上孩子也大了，離開他而去。他就自己一人購置一條小艇，當成是自己的家，

Welcome to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas (CTTB) and Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva's Birthday. Since there's a downturn in the economy, it is especially wonderful to see so many who have come from a distance for this special celebration. It takes a really sincere heart to be able to be here at this time. So some are here because they have received blessings from Guanyin Bodhisattva. Some are here for the purpose of supporting and protecting the Bodhimanda. Still others are here because their friends encouraged them to make this kind of merit, and they listened and came to celebrate with everybody. No matter what the reason, we can know that we all have great affinities with Guanyin Bodhisattva, and that we have been aided by this Bodhisattva in life after life, either through his teachings or through his rescue. The Bodhisattva's great vows are the driving force behind numerous miracles and miracle stories that detail the Bodhisattva's deliverance of those who suffer endless difficulties.

Now I'd like to share a story with you that I heard from my father. Two or three years ago both my parents were still living in Dragon Tree House. My father taught in the Boys School and my mom helped out in Jyun Kang Restaurant. In his spare time, my father would sometimes go to the restaurant to help my mom out a little with her job. He would pick up the bowls and plates for dishwashing, for example, or wipe the tables. Once he happened to meet a customer there, a retired U. S. Navy veteran. They chatted a little, and as time went on, my father felt that the conversation was really pleasant and congenial. He was also quite intrigued by this old fellow, so much so that he invited him to Dragon Tree House to have a longer chat.

As the story of the old retiree unfolded, it turned out to be a very long

過著孤零零的半隱居生活。後來他有機會能親近「法總」剛在新奧爾良成立不久的「金法寺」，知道在北加州還有一個萬佛聖城。

2005年的八月三十一日，起源於墨西哥灣的「卡崔那颶風」橫掃密西西比州、阿拉巴馬州、與路易斯安那州等南部諸州，造成百年罕見的破壞。受重創最甚者則是：新奧爾良市。原本雙向的「十號州際高速公路」(Highway 10)都封閉一向，改成臨時逃生公路。許多人能跑的，一口氣跑得遠遠的；一些跑不動的或者戀家不想跑的，都留下來聽天由命、坐以待斃。這位老兵沒跑，有太多的情懷難以割捨，使這位老兵沒有離開他居住多年的新奧爾良。

那幾天晚上他夜夜都難以入睡，猶如驚弓之鳥。一天晚上，到半夜時，海面上波濤洶湧；老兵心想不好，倉皇之中想奪路上岸，然而卻為時已晚；小艇已經被翻了一個「底朝天」；沉沉的艇身將他蓋在底下，這下完了！此時他一生中所做所為都像一部幻燈片一樣迅速地在他腦海裏回放。想到當年在日本與越南的歲月，及所聽到的菩薩聖號，他不知不覺地在心中提起來，虔誠默唸——此時的默唸真的是誠心之至。突然之間，又一陣大浪打來，拍擊艇身，他幾乎暈過去；等再度睜開眼睛，奇怪的是，艇身又翻正過來了，而他也已經又在小艇上了——安然無恙，有驚無險！

經過這一次事件，老兵雖然還是一個非佛教徒；但是在他生命中已經多



and moving one: Actually, he was from New Orleans and a survivor of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. He had come to CTTB, my father learned, for the sole purpose of offering incense as a token of gratitude to Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva for saving his life in the hurricane.

Born and raised in New Orleans, the man had joined the Navy when young. In time, he frequented both old Buddhist temples and new monasteries. He listened to and appreciated the chanting of the Buddhist monks. He learned the name of Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva, along with some of the chants and invocations, including Guanyin Bodhisattva's Universal Door Chapter from the *Lotus Sutra*. He also became familiar with the Morning Recitation and Evening Recitation Ceremonies, etc. Because of such experiences he developed a genuine interest in Buddhism in general, and of chanting in particular, which planted Dharma-seeds in his mind.

Upon his return to New Orleans, the old vet got married twice and had children from both marriages. So after going through two unhappy marriages and two divorces, he was so disheartened that he decided to change his lifestyle altogether. With two children gone off to college elsewhere, there was no impediment to his living by himself on a boat, so that's what he did, dropping anchor at the mouth of the Mississippi River. In time, he gave up many of the things he used to do, and began to live the life of a semi-recluse. Eventually, he happened upon the then newly-established Gold Dharma Monastery in New Orleans, where he quickly learned about Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and CTTB in Northern California.

Then, on August 31, 2005, the deadly, now famous Hurricane Katrina formed over the Gulf of Mexico, and quickly swept through the southern states of Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana, especially devastating the city of New Orleans in Louisiana. The storm promised to wreak such havoc that the city government of New Orleans quickly shut down the incoming lanes of the two-way Interstate Expressway 10 and made all lanes outgoing. That is to say, all lanes became one-way out, towards Houston, Texas to the West. So those who could do so jumped into their cars and drove away as fast as they could. Some people, however, chose to stay rather than to run, being either too old, or too attached (whether to homes, or businesses, to others, or to livelihoods). For whatever reasons, some refused to leave, including the old veteran, while others just left their lives to fate, hoping to be spared.

During the long days and nights of waiting out the hurricane, the old vet became so worried that he couldn't sleep. One midnight, the turbulence became so great that he determined to find his way to the riverbank, but it was too late. His boat capsized, trapping him under the heavy bulk of the hull, and he couldn't make his way free. "This," he thought, "is it. The end. It's all over now." No matter how he struggled to free himself, he couldn't do it. Finally, he closed his eyes in despair to await his fate. His whole life flashed like a slideshow before his eyes, including the years of military service in Asia. Suddenly, he heard the familiar chanting sounds of Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva's name and of the Universal Door Chapter echo clearly in his mind. Unconsciously, with utter sincerity, he let his mind follow the chanting sounds, forgetting that he was a dying man in a storm. Then, he felt a huge wave approach, and it hit the boat, and he got knocked unconscious. When

了一份對觀世音菩薩的信心。感激之餘，產生一種到聖城去看看的念頭。以此因緣及金法寺之提供指導，他來到了萬佛聖城。

以上便是這位老兵的故事。觀世音菩薩在娑婆世界尋聲救苦，悲心切切；而沉苦海的我們卻是鮮有能從沉迷之中醒悟者；生命之中種種不如意事是一波接一波，而能知念菩薩的人其實也很少。菩薩濟世，都以平等心看待眾生，不會有施恩圖報的心。但是從眾生的角度來講，菩薩幫我們一次，我們就欠他的一份「人情(或菩薩情)」；雖然菩薩不會像債主一樣向我們要，但我們久了從良心上都會覺得過不去。這就是為什麼往普陀山去朝拜還願的信眾絡繹不絕。

如何回報答菩薩的恩德？我們可再深入一層，如果我們真能拔除自己的生死根本，那就省了菩薩很多麻煩，也是報了菩薩的恩，也真是於世界和平，國泰民安上幫上一份忙。上人曾講過，一人真發心，那他對整個世界都是一個大幫助。希望各位都能好好用功，誠心念菩薩聖號，並求生阿彌陀佛極樂世界，哪天再重返娑婆，做觀世音菩薩的左右手，幫菩薩化導眾生。

最後有一事想鼓勵大家，菩薩感應事跡很多；所出的感應錄也有一些，但其實少得很。我們所讀的觀音菩薩靈感錄較為通行的是煮雲老法師匯編整理的〈南海普陀山傳奇異聞錄〉，許多故事的都是民國早年的事，所謂「物換星移幾度秋」，在北美大地上，我們應該也有一部較為詳實的《觀音菩薩感應錄》或是北美版的《普陀山誌》，這樣我們對後代子孫會有一個比較好的交待。希望那些親身受菩薩度化的人能現身說法，那些文學素養好的人能當仁不讓地挑起此重任。這需要大家來共襄此舉。

he came to, he discovered that the boat had righted itself and that he was back on deck again, and safe. Strange as it was, he was only more frightened than hurt, and he was safe, and alive.

Even though the old vet doesn't consider himself a Buddhist, he nevertheless decided to come to CTTB to offer incense in gratitude to Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva, whom he figures saved his life during Hurricane Katrina.

So you have just heard a rough version of the story of the old veteran who visited CTTB and my father. With his deep compassion and kindness, Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva rescues beings in this Saha World, while we ourselves rarely even know enough to wake up from our dreams. Rather, we suffer one difficulty after another. In fact, very few of us know to recite the name of Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva during times of trouble or difficulty.

The Bodhisattva regards all beings equally and impartially, seeking nothing in return; he is ever-ready to extend his helping hand. As for us, though, don't we owe the Bodhisattva a debt of gratitude every time we receive his help? Although we know that the Bodhisattva isn't a "Bean Counter" and doesn't think in terms of keeping accounts, still, over time, will our conscience be clear if we're always on the receiving end only? From this we can understand why there are so many devotees who go on pilgrimage to Mount Potola in Zhejiang Province in China.

How can we repay the kindness of the Bodhisattva? We can discuss this further. For one thing, we can know and understand that if we can really end birth and death, then we are truly repaying the kindness of the Bodhisattva. How? By saving him a lot of time and trouble. Not only that, but also we are helping the cause of world peace, helping to make a more peaceful nation, and improving the lot of our fellow citizens. Venerable Master Hua once said that a single person can help the entire world when he brings forth a solid and true resolve to cultivate the Way. So I hope that all of you will work hard on your cultivation, sincerely recite the name of Guan Shi Yin Bodhisattva, and seek rebirth in the Land of Ultimate Bliss of Amitabha Buddha. Then, one day you can return to this Saha World and be a T.A.(teaching assistant) for Guanyin Bodhisattva and help him teach and transform living beings.

Finally, I have one more thing to say, to encourage people. Over the years, there have been numerous stories generated as a result of responses people have had from worshipping Guanyin Bodhisattva, and some of these stories have been published. For example, one of the most popular and detailed books on the Bodhisattva's response stories is called *Nanhai Putuoshan Chuanqi Yiwenlu (Legendary Stories from Mount Potola of the South Sea)*, compiled by Great Master Zhu Yun. Many of the stories occurred during the 1920's and '30's in the early days of the Republic of China. Decades have passed and now we are in the Americas, so we should have an American book that details the salvific stories of Guanyin Bodhisattva in America. The book can be called *Records of Mount Potola (American Version)*. With such a book we will be able to encourage our own offspring and future generations by passing down an important document and account in the annals of Buddhism. So, we hope that those who have received the aid of Guanyin Bodhisattva can manifest and reveal their stories – can speak their Dharma – so that these true stories can be kept, recorded and compiled. Those with good literary skills can help, as well as others who may wish to contribute their talents and support.