

【點點滴滴憶上人】

【Memories of the Venerable Master】

Start with Eight Students

從八個學生開始

A talk given by Terri Nicholson at CTTB on May 18, 2018

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I took refuge with the Venerable Master in March of 1973. I was 19 years old, and had just completed a seven-day Om Mani Padme Hum Session at Gold Mountain Monastery in San Francisco. As far as I know, it was the only such session ever held by Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, which was then called the Sino-American Buddhist Association. It was a bit different from the sessions we hold now. First, the session did not end until midnight each day. Second, we recited “Om Mani Padme Hum” continuously. While one side of the hall recited for 30 minutes, the other side was silent. Then we switched.

For several months before the session I had been trying to decide whether or not I wanted to be a Buddhist and whether I wanted to become the Master’s disciple. Participating in the session was part of that process, but I had not totally made up my mind. On the final day, the Master announced at evening lecture that anyone who wanted to take refuge better do it the following day, because he was going to be leaving for South America and didn’t know when he would return. It could be a long time before there was another opportunity.

我是1973年三月皈依上人，當時我十九歲，才剛在金山寺打完為期七天的六字大明咒法會。據我所知，六字大明咒七在法界佛教總會，當時叫做中美佛教總會，至今只打過一次。它和現在的打七有幾個地方不同：第一，法會到午夜才結束；第二，中間都沒有間斷地念六字大明咒。大殿分成兩邊，一邊持咒三十分鐘，另一邊就默念，兩邊交互輪替。

早在法會開始的前幾個月，我就一直猶豫要不要成為一名佛教徒，要不要成為上人的弟子。參加這個法會的目的之一，是想讓自己想清楚，但還是無法拿定主意。法會的最後一天，師父晚上講法的時候宣布，想皈依的人最好明天就皈依，因為他準備去南美弘法，不知道什麼時候才會回來，如果錯過這次機會，可能要等很久。他說：「有興趣的趕快來。」上人這一番話適時推了我一把，於是我聽完馬上就去報名，而且從來沒有後悔過。我覺得皈依上人，是我這一生中做過最重要的事情。

幾年之後我從大學畢業，決定回到三藩市與師父



“Call everyone who might be interested,” he said. That gave me the little nudge I needed and I signed up. And I have never regretted it. It is the single most important thing I’ve ever done in my life.

A couple of years later, after graduating from college, I returned to San Francisco, determined to study the Dharma with Shifu. I found an apartment and was hired as an Assistant Preschool Director. In March of 1976, almost exactly three years after I took refuge. Instilling Goodness Elementary School opened its door in the basement of The International Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts and home of the Bhikshuni Sangha in San Francisco. In the beginning, we had eight students ranging in age from four and half to eleven. Among those first students were Dharma Master Heng Ch’ih’s son, Aaron (Guo Tong), Shari Epstein, and Carol Ruth Silver’s son, Steven.

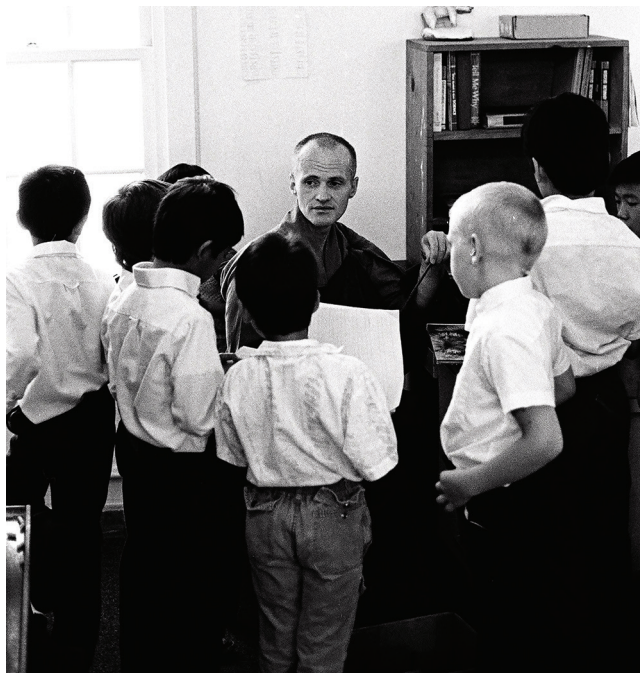
The Master was not a micromanager. He explained the general principles the school should follow: teach the children to repay their parents’ kindness, be respectful of their elders and to be good citizens. Teach them the classics like *The 24 Stories of Filial Devotion*. But he left most of the decision about curriculum and the running of school to us. When problems arose we did go to him for advice, but mostly we learned from our mistakes – I made many – and kept trying. At the time, none of us had any formal teacher training.

In the beginning, I was still teaching preschool in the mornings and coming back to teach at Instilling Goodness School in the afternoons, so many of the bhikshunis helped out, if reluctantly. When they had left the home life I think most of them felt they had left child rearing behind. On top of that, some of the students were quite unruly. One day I came back to find that one young nun from Taiwan had taken the children to the park and when it was time to come back they refused to come. They said they were on strike. So

一起學習佛法。我找到了一間公寓，並且得到一份幼兒園行政助理的工作。1976年三月，大概是皈依後的三年，育良小學成立了，校址就在國際譯經院的地下室，當時比丘尼也住在譯經院那裡。一開始，我們有八名學生，年齡從四歲到一歲不等，當中有恒持法師的兒子艾倫（果童）、易果容教授的女兒易瑞華，和卡洛露絲·思爾薇的兒子史蒂文。

上人不是那種控制型的管理者，他只告訴我們學校應該遵循的準則，那就是教導孩子孝順父母、尊敬長輩、做一個好公民，還要教學生讀《二十四孝》這一類的中國古典文學。至於課程的設計和學校的管理，上人都留給我們自己做決定。每當出現問題，我們就會去請教上人，但更多時候我們是從自己的錯誤中學習，特別是我，然後不斷去修正努力。當時學校裡，沒有一名老師是受過正式的教師訓練。

學校剛開始招生，我早上還要到幼兒園上班，下午才回到育良小學上課，因此學校得靠好幾位比丘尼幫忙，不管她們願不願意。這些比丘尼出家的時候，我想大多數可能都覺得從此不用再操心小孩的問題。而更糟糕的是，我們有幾個學生很不守規矩。有一天我回到學校的時候，發現一位來自台灣的年輕比丘尼帶孩子們去公園，到了該回來的時候，這些孩子都不願意回來，還說他們在罷工。於是這位比丘尼把學生留在那兒，自己就回來了。回來之後



she left them there. She also said she quit. American children were too naughty.

I raced down to the park, gathered the children together, and brought them back to school. After school, I went up to the Buddha Hall and sat down and cried. What was I going to do? No one wanted to teach and they didn't like the children. I felt like I was a terrible teacher. It was only the first of many challenges.

That night at lecture, Shifu called me up to the front. He said, "You can't just cry. You have to think of a method to get the children to behave. He handed me a paper bag. "When the students behave well you can give them a treat. That will be a start." In the bag were all kinds of sweets he had collected for me.

From the very beginning students of all religions were welcome and the school had not been running long when Cardinal Yu-bin came to visit from Taiwan. The students went with the assembly to the airport to greet him with banners of welcome and a song Shifu wrote in his honor called *Firm Foundation*. I believe it is the essence of what he hoped our schools would embody.

Hello! Hello!

Please pay attention.

*While you're young is the time to build a firm foundation
for being a humane person.*

*Kindness to our parents, honoring the president, doing the very
best we can to benefit our country.*

First, we must build that deep foundation.

*Then, when we grow up we can truly help our land and everybody
in it.*

說她要辭職，美國小孩實在太調皮了。

我趕緊跑到公園把孩子們集合好，然後把他們帶回來。放學後，我坐在佛殿裡哭，我該怎麼辦？沒人願意教書，她們都不喜歡小孩。我覺得自己是個差勁的老師，而這只是眾多挑戰的第一個。

那天晚上講法，上人把我叫到前面，他說：「妳光哭是不行的，要想辦法讓這些孩子們聽話才可以。」上人遞給我一個紙袋，「學生聽話的時候，妳就獎勵他們。先這樣試試看。」紙袋裡，裝滿了上人特地為我收集的各種糖果。

從學校招生至今，所有宗教信仰的學生都歡迎。學校成立沒多久，于斌主教就從台灣來參訪，學生們帶著歡迎布條跟著大人一起去機場迎接他。上人還為此特地寫了一首歌《堅實的基礎》，我相信這首歌正是上人希望我們學校實踐的宗旨。

哈囉！哈囉！大家請注意，

建立做人的堅實基礎要趁早。

要孝順父母，要尊重總統，

要盡力為我們國家謀福祉。

首先，把基礎打好打深。

長大之後，才能真正幫助我們的國家和人民。

最後，等我們都開悟了，

就可以真正幫助世界上所有的眾生。

後來學校在1978年的秋天搬到萬佛聖城，上人有時會過來看看。學校早期有一對雙胞胎學生，一個

Until finally, when we're all awake again, then we can really benefit, truly, truly benefit, every single being in the world.

Later, when the school moved to The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas in the fall of 1978, Shifu would sometimes come to visit. In those early days there were twins, a boy and girl whose parents were fire-worshipping Brahmins. They lived up in the mountains near Potter Valley in some tents. One time, when Shifu came to visit the school he taught a lesson. He wrote on the board:

*Animals have four legs,
People have two.
If you want to be a person
Act in Accord with the teachings.*

He explained that meant you needed to be filial to your parents and repay their kindness.

Sarah, one of the twins asked, "What if you're just a little bit unfilial?"

Shifu smiled and said, "Well that's probably okay. Maybe you'll just be a little bit (and he imitated her) off as a person."

She smiled in relief.

But then Shifu laughed and said, "No big deal. Maybe one of your eyes will be just a little bit in the wrong place." He laughed again and none of us were sure if he was kidding or not. But I still follow Sarah, and to this day she is an extremely attentive and devoted daughter.

Another time I was feeling very discouraged. We had moved to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, and the people in the area didn't really know us yet, so we didn't have very many students. Most of the students we had came with us from San Francisco and went home on the weekends. That meant I was cooking, teaching and staying with the students at night as well. It didn't feel like a real school. So, I made an appointment to talk to Shifu, hoping for some encouragement.

I told, him, "I'm feeling really discouraged. I'm not sure I want to be a teacher any more. I'm not very good at it. Sometimes I don't even want to get up in the morning."

I was expecting sympathy, but all he said was, "If you don't want to teach, then don't do it."

My jaw dropped in surprise. But it also made it clear to me that if I did want to teach I had to do it because I wanted to, not because Shifu wanted me to. He wouldn't play that game. And look at us today with almost 200 students and more who want to come. ❀

男孩和一個女孩，他們的父母是信仰拜火婆羅門教，住在波特谷附近山上的帳篷裡。有一次上人來學校教一堂課，他在黑板上寫道：

動物有四條腿，
人有兩條腿。
如果你想要作人，
就要依教奉行。

然後上人就解釋什麼叫依教奉行，就是要孝順父母，要懂得報答父母恩。

莎拉是這對雙胞胎的那個女孩，就問：「那如果有一點點不孝順會怎麼樣？」

上人微笑回答她：「應該沒關係吧？可能就一點點不像人。」上人一邊說一邊模仿莎拉。

聽完，莎拉就很放心地笑了。

但是上人接著笑說：「其實也沒什麼大不了，也許就是一隻眼睛長錯地方。」說完上人自己就笑了起來，當時我們都不知道他到底是不是在開玩笑。直到今天我仍然跟莎拉保持聯繫，她到現在都是一個非常貼心孝順的女兒。

還有一次，也令我感到非常沮喪。我們搬到萬佛聖城之後，附近居民因為不認識我們，所以當地來就讀的學生不多，大部分是從三藩市來的，平常住在學校，週末的時候回家。這也就是說，平時我得煮飯、教書，還要一直陪伴學生到晚上，感覺起來實在不像真正的學校。於是我打電話跟上人約時間，希望能跟他談談，得到一些鼓勵。

我告訴上人：「我真的很灰心，我不確定自己是否還要當老師。我不是很會教，有時候甚至不想起床到學校。」

我期待得到上人的同情，但是上人只說：「如果妳不想教，那就不要教。」

我驚訝得簡直下巴要掉下來，但是這也讓我明白，教書必須因為我自己想教而教，而不是上人想要我教才教。上人一向是非常直心的。看看今日的學校，已經有將近兩百位的學生，還有更多人想來這所學校就讀。❀