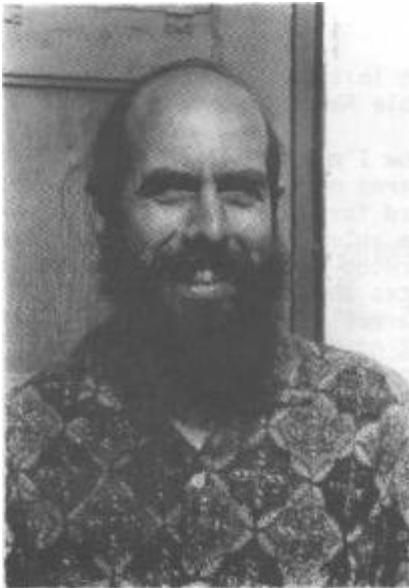


The Bodhi Stand Presents

Upasaka Kuo Jieh Cole

"Early on in life I was interested in spiritual matters. Aided by my parents, I conducted a search of American Protestantism. Christened an Episcopalian, I joined the Presbyterian church. Later, I was married in the Methodist church and attended Baptist and Lutheran services. During college in Tucson, Arizona, I examined Catholic, Jewish, Mormon, and Greek Orthodox beliefs. Wherever I looked it seemed that the church was primarily a social function. The magic that comes from presently relating to the primary questions of life was



either missing or embodied in a single individual."

"After graduating from college, I went travelling in Europe where I discovered other avenues to explore. I returned to teach art in elementary school for two years while I furthered my search into the deeper meaning of my existence."

During this time Kuo Jieh delved into the writings of many religious and existentialist philosophers. Intrigued by what William James points out in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*--that life-changing spiritual experiences happen in altered states of awareness, "altered," that is, from what we come to think of as our "normal" state of mind, Kuo Jieh was intent upon finding a means to witness the truth of this statement. Not having met the Proper Dharma yet, most of his explorations involved externally imposed stimulus so the recreation of any experience was dependent upon recreating a certain set of external conditions. Moving to Eugene, Oregon, he involved himself in a community living situation and continued to search for a method of practice. Summing up this period he says:

"After several years of this kind of searching, I finally realized how difficult it is to purposely change oneself."

Out of those years some important propensities emerged, however. Kuo Jieh began learning about the uses of Chinese herbs, a field he has investigated ever since. He also began to meditate regularly.

"Conditions ripened and I helped sponsor the Venerable Abbot's stay in Eugene when he came to speak at the University. This was my first meeting with the orthodox Buddha-dharma and I soon saw that it was very profound."

In that initial Dharma message he heard the Venerable Abbot say:

"Now I'm going to talk about what Dharma means. Dharma is a method used for cultivating. It supplies the rules for cultivation. It indicates the path which one who cultivates the Way should take. All Dharmas spoken by the Buddha do not go beyond the minds of all living beings. If living beings' minds all vanished, then of what use would the Dharma be? So it doesn't matter whether you've become a Buddha yet or not. You may think, 'I'm going to become a Buddha; I'm going to cultivate.' That's your mind deciding that you will do it. And once you cultivate, you can become a Buddha. So everything is made from the mind alone."

At last came news of a method of practice which did not rely on outside conditions. Kuo Jieh was interested. Later came the Buddha Root Farm session and Kuo Jieh was among those who took refuge at the end of that special week.

Kuo Jieh relates:

"From that session onward, my growing family and I began to come to Gold Mountain Monastery and later to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas to attend sessions. When we came last April for the Medicine Master Buddha session, we encountered an opportunity to move to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas.

"Someone told me that asking the right question is half the answer. The important consideration of my life right now is that it isn't the whole answer to ask the right question. The point seems to lie in merely asking or really wanting to find out. Of all the people who ask themselves the fundamental questions of life (Who am I? Why am I here? Why are the conditions of my life such as they are?) who really wants to know the answers? I am putting that question to myself.

"I feel very blessed to be able to live in this close proximity to practicing Dharma pilots and to be involved in the spreading of the proper Buddhadharma. I will do what I can."