

Ceaseless Effort

The Life of Dainin Katagiri

Andrea Martin



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

Dainin Katagiri was one of the prominent teachers who brought Soto Zen Buddhism from Japan to America in the twentieth century. He was known as Katagiri Roshi—the honorific title *roshi* denoting a highly respected Zen teacher. Katagiri Roshi assisted Shunryu Suzuki Roshi at the newly forming San Francisco Zen Center and Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. After Suzuki's death, he founded the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis and Hokyoji Zen Practice Community in rural Eitzen, Minnesota.

Katagiri Roshi was a beloved figure during his lifetime. The profound yet human way in which he presented Buddhism touched people's hearts and inspired many to study, practice, and teach Zen as a lifelong path. He supported equality for women in all aspects of Zen practice, including equal opportunity to practice in Japan. After he died, however, troubling stories about his sexual behavior, including affairs with women who were Zen students, began to emerge. So now he is regarded in a more nuanced way.

This essay is the result of my personal quest to learn about my teacher's life and record his story. I first wrote it for the twentieth anniversary of his death and now occasionally revise it as new information appears. This is not an official biography. Katagiri Roshi's story is told here to the extent that I know it, but even now, so many years after his death, the story feels unfinished. I hope my essay contributes to your understanding of the human being behind his books and audio recordings, the teaching lineage before and after him, and the history of Zen in the West.

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EARLY YEARS AND ORDINATION

Dainin is not the name that Katagiri Roshi was born with, nor one that he initially embraced. It is his dharma name, given to him by his Zen master at ordination. In the beginning, he wanted to keep his childhood name—Yoshiyuki—because it meant Good Luck. He liked it very much, so he kept using it. But one day, when his master reminded him that he should use his new name, which means Great Patience, he finally accepted it and became Dainin Katagiri. Still, as a young Buddhist priest he didn't like his name because he understood patience in the usual way and that kind of patience was not something he valued. Later, as his life unfolded, he grew to understand the deeper meaning of the name and came to appreciate it.

Katagiri Roshi was born in Osaka, Japan, on January 19, 1928, the youngest child in a large family. His grandparents on both sides were farmers, but his parents did not carry on that tradition. His father, Kahichi, and mother, Tane, had ten children: seven boys and three girls. Unfortunately, two sons and one daughter had died. Their daughter died at the age of eighteen while she was doing laundry in the river in Osaka. When Yoshiyuki was born, his parents believed that this daughter had been reborn as their new baby.

When Katagiri was five years old, his father moved the family to Tsuruga and opened a restaurant near the train station. Tsuruga is a city on the Sea of Japan in Fukui Prefecture. It is the city nearest to the Pacific Ocean on the coast northeast of Kyoto and is known for fresh seafood. His father had previously failed in other lines of work: operating public baths, producing rice cakes, selling medicine and cosmetics, but his restaurant was successful. "So finally, he was very happy, and I grew up there," said Katagiri. The whole family helped in the restaurant, and as a little boy Katagiri worked as a waiter after school.

His father may have been happy, but Katagiri didn't remember having a warm relationship with his parents. As he told it: "When I was growing up, my family ran a restaurant. My parents were very busy taking care of business every day. I was the youngest, and there were lots of other kids to take care of me, so my parents didn't pay attention to me. There wasn't a comfortable feeling between my parents and me. My brothers and sisters took care of me pretty well, but I always felt pressured by them, so I didn't feel comfortable. Even though I was living with my family, it was nothing but the analytical world of business."

Katagiri's parents were devoted followers of the Shin (Pure Land) school of Buddhism. He said, "My parents were very serious Buddhists. They chanted every day. Every morning before school and work we sat before the shrine and performed morning prayers together." He also recalled, "One priest came to my home to perform the family service every month. I didn't know who he was because I was very small, but I had a certain dream, a sense that he was a wonderful guy, and I wished I could be such a person." Filled with admiration for this priest, he began collecting and eating the stubs of burned incense sticks.

Remembering his childhood, Katagiri said "My parents didn't force me to memorize scriptures—we just practiced together. Finally, when I was ten, I could perform morning service and evening service in my father's place. They didn't teach me anything according to a catechism, but my parents put me right in the middle of a religious mood, so I accepted my vocation with my whole body—through my pores. I didn't understand it then but now I really appreciate it. That was a big help." But when he was ten, his mother began suffering with complications of arthritis and tuberculosis and was often bedridden. Then on February 28, 1942, when he was fourteen years old, she died, and he grieved deeply.

The Katagiri family name is written with two characters that mean Paulownia tree leaf. The famous Samurai daimyo Katagiri Katsumoto said "Autumn has come in heaven and earth, and the leaves are falling in the garden. But a paulownia leaf, the symbol of my family name, never falls and my spirit of loyalty never changes."

The Paulownia appears in the *mon* (crest) of Soji-ji (below left), one of two temples that together serve as the head temples of Soto Zen Buddhism. Because of the five–seven–five patterns of its flowers, Paulownia sometimes represents haiku poetry. Eihei-ji, the other head temple, is represented by a gentian and bamboo *mon* (below right).



War Years

During World War II the Japanese government ordered all boys aged thirteen and older to leave school and either serve in the armed forces or work in a weapons factory. So, when he was fifteen years old and with no way to escape, Katagiri entered the army air force. His high school had already been preparing boys to become pilots by teaching them to fly simple gliders. Stories about crashing one of those gliders would work their way into his talks many years later.

Katagiri expected to become a pilot, but he experienced dizziness and failed the qualifying exam. Instead, he served as an aircraft engine mechanic for eighteen months until the war ended. He once spoke of crying as he bid farewell to kamikaze pilots leaving on their suicide missions in planes he had serviced. Because he mentioned serving in the southern part of Japan, it could be that he was stationed at the famous Kanoya Air Base, a major kamikaze launching site. This location would have placed him just 110 miles southeast of Nagasaki when the United States exploded a plutonium bomb 1,650 feet over that city on August 9, 1945.

Returning home to Tsuruga after the war, he found the family home and restaurant burned out and went looking for his father. As he remembered, “I found him and then I had to take care of my father, who was almost blind, and my brother [Kyoshi]’s wife and boys. So, I went to work as an engineer to produce a diesel engine. It was the very first kind—not magnetic, not using gasoline—using heavy oil. Every day I had to go to the company and try to support my family, but I didn’t have enough food, so I was hungry.”

“The situation in Japan was very confused—not much food and lots of problems over housing. And transportation was not good. Jumping on trains, people screamed and pushed into windows, sometimes fighting and killing each other. So, I felt how transient and fragile human life was. I started to have some doubt about always working in the company, carrying a pencil and a lunchbox, and building diesel engines. Should I spend my whole life like this?”

“One day I went to my high school friend’s Shin Buddhist temple. I felt very peaceful there, as I had when visiting a Zen monastery before and after the war. I was very impressed by monastic life because it was not changed by the war. Everyday routines, zazen, chanting sutras, morning services, afternoon services—everything was exactly the same and the atmosphere was tranquil, peaceful. I was very impressed, so I decided I should become a monk.”

Ordination

Katagiri first requested ordination from his high school friend’s mother and teacher, who was a Pure Land (Shin Buddhist) priest. Unfortunately, she did not have the resources to accept another novice at that time. However, she knew of a nearby Soto Zen priest who needed a trainee. So, she took Katagiri to meet Daicho Hayashi Roshi at his small temple in the fishing and rice farming village of Kitada outside the city of Tsuruga.

Daicho Hayashi (1887-1966) was a famous Buddhist teacher. He had traveled all over Japan to preach, and many people had wanted to study with him. But he was very unlucky with disciples. Of his ten original disciples, some ran away, some died or committed suicide, and some became mentally ill. One attacked him and was put in jail. So, when Katagiri arrived in 1946, Daicho Roshi was glad to accept him, and he would become very attached to him as his only remaining disciple.

Katagiri was eighteen years old when he officially took his place at Taizoin temple on September 4, 1946, having been ordained by Hayashi on August 31, receiving the way name Jikai (Compassionate Ocean) and the dharma name Dainin (Great Patience). He did not have his family's support. Katagiri later said, "At that time I had responsibility for my family, so my father was really mad at me. But my father had a friend who was a priest, and he helped to reconcile my father and me. After a year I went back to see my father and he was very happy to see me." Less than two years later, on April 7, 1949, Katagiri's father died.

FIRST TEACHER

Katagiri Roshi's *honshi* (root teacher), Kaigai Daicho (Beyond the Ocean, Great Tide) Hayashi Roshi (January 2, 1887–May 30, 1966), was the 26th abbot of Taizoin and had a colorful personal history. His father was wealthy and served as both a prefecture governor and as the first education minister of Japan during the Meiji Restoration. However, when Daicho was very young, his father chose a geisha as a "second wife" and told his first wife to leave. There was no official divorce, she just disappeared. Daicho thought the second wife was his mother until one day, when he was six years old, he did something wrong. The second wife tied him to a persimmon tree and left him there. His nanny found him sobbing and told him, "She wouldn't have done this if she was your real mother."



The next morning Daicho said he was going to school but instead went to the Zen temple and asked to become a monk. The abbot, master Yozan Genki Hayashi, a famous teacher at that time, said the boy must have permission from his father. His father did meet with the master, but with a hard heart he said, "This boy lied and went to the temple when he said he was going to school. Therefore, he is not my son and not my business." Daicho never saw his father again. He received the family name Hayashi when he was adopted by his master, and when he was ten years old, he received ordination as a monk.

Growing up at the temple under the guidance of Yozan, Daicho practiced and studied hard, developing broad and deep learning. Also, once a week he assisted the doctor who treated people at the temple. From him, Daicho developed life-long interest in medicine and healing. After practicing at Eiheiji monastery for many years, Daicho became a famous preacher, traveling all over Japan. He was also abbot of a large temple in Nara City, near Kyoto. But devotion to his master, and to his mother, was to change the direction of Daicho's life.

Yozan Hayashi, Daicho Hayashi's master, was abbot of Taizoin, a large temple in Fukui City north of Kyoto. It had been built by Sanemori Saito, a famous samurai general who placed there an important tomb marker for soldiers who died in battle. Unfortunately, while Yozan was abbot, Taizoin burned down. Donations were made for its rebuilding, but Yozan spent the money drinking and the congregation asked him to leave.

Greatly concerned for his now disgraced master, Daicho searched for another temple where Yozan could live. He found Tokoji, a small, unregistered temple nestled between the mountains and sea in the rural fishing and farming village of Kitada. To honor Yozan, Daicho arranged for the old temple name "Taizoin" to be transferred to this small temple, and then invited him to live there. Daicho also sought government permission to move the samurai tomb marker, still standing outside the old, burned-out temple in Fukui City. That was difficult, but eventually it arrived by train and was installed at the new Taizoin.

Around this time, Daicho found his mother working in Tsuruga. They had been separated since his early childhood. Now she was very old, and he wanted to take care of her. So, he settled her at Taizoin, where Yozan was also living. At that time, Daicho lived at his large temple in Nara City and traveled widely as a preacher. But when Yozan died, leaving his mother alone at the small temple, he had a decision to make: Should he move his mother to his temple in Nara City, or should he move to Taizoin? Finally, he decided to live at Taizoin. That was very fortunate—because soon after he left, the temple in Nara City burned down. He was still living there in 1946 when young Dainin Katagiri arrived.

TEMPLE LIFE

As he took his place at Taizoin, young Katagiri was not confident in his decision to ordain in Zen instead of the Shin (Pure Land) school, or perhaps even to become a Buddhist monk at all. He later said, “I didn’t have any idea of Buddhism before going to Taizoin. Until I became a monk, I didn’t know anything about the practical aspects of Buddhism, or about life at the temple, or about life as a Buddhist. After becoming a monk, I memorized scripture—the sutras. Even sleeping I was chanting the sutras. In eight months, I think I memorized ten scriptures. I can’t do it now.”

“When I began practicing Buddhism, I was really happy because the world was blooming every day. It was wonderful! I didn’t have time to make up questions. Then, the more deeply I entered practice, the more questions I had, because trying to understand Buddhism is just like grasping at clouds. Finally, I had one big question: What is Buddhism? I thought, ‘Why did I become a monk? That was a big mistake. Should I go back to what I was? Is there any other occupation for me?’ There were lots of things that I was interested in, but actually there was no other occupation that fit me. There was no other way to go. So, I stayed with the old priest who was my teacher, but lots of unanswered questions always came up.”

“I had a big hope as a monk. I wanted to study Buddhism. But my teacher didn’t teach me anything—he was just present. We walked together and did some of the same things together. He told me, ‘You have to absorb it.’ But I felt bored. I wanted to have excitement. So, I asked, ‘Why don’t you give me something? Why don’t you teach me?’ And he said, ‘Why haven’t you asked me?’ That was a shock!”

“Still, day-by-day I suffered and finally I told my teacher that I would like to give up being a Zen monk. I wanted to convert to the Pure Land School. I was very familiar with Pure Land because of my parents. I would not have to get up early in the morning and do zazen. My teacher said, ‘Oh, yes, if you want, but wherever you may go, everything is the same.’ Big shock! I was trying to do something with my excitement, my hope, but all this hope was snuffed out like pouring water over a fire.”

Years later, Katagiri often mentioned Daicho Hayashi in his talks, looking back on their relationship and his own youth from a more mature perspective. He recalled, “My teacher didn’t have an exciting, dramatic life. The main characteristic of his life was very quiet. He lived in celibacy and didn’t say much. His life was always going along, just like a stream of water. Whatever happened, he never changed his attitude. No matter what I did, whatever mistake I made, even when I grumbled and was mad at him, his way was just to go along as always. That is a very nice, but I hated it because I was always looking for something exciting. I was always greedy. But my teacher didn’t care. He just lived. He just let me be alive every day.”

“Once I made a big mistake and got into a fight with the boys in the village. The village people criticized me, but my teacher didn’t try to protect me. What he did was simply let me be present there, in the usual way. That’s it! When my room was messy and dirty, he would say, ‘Clean your room. A messy room is your messy mind.’ Very simple! Once, after a trip to the village, I was having a very difficult time; I was really nervous and had lost my appetite. He told me, ‘If you are sick, stay in bed; if you aren’t sick, get up!’”

“But the most important thing I appreciate now is that he always let me be present first. Just like a mother holding a baby. I didn’t notice it at the time, but when I went back to the temple, I always felt some relief. When I went to the village, people looked at me in a certain way, but when I went back to the temple, I could just be there and be myself. That was really helpful.”

Katagiri and his teacher didn’t see eye to eye on where the young monk should go for his formal training. “Hayashi Roshi told me I should go to a Rinzai Zen monastery after becoming a monk. He recommended that I go to Hosshinji. In those days Sogaku Harada Roshi (1871-1961) was head of that temple. But I said no. Well, because I didn’t know what Rinzai was. I didn’t have any idea of Buddhism, but my feeling was I really wanted to go to Eiheiiji. That’s it! No discriminations. I just really wanted to go Eiheiiji. Finally, my teacher accepted it.” So, when he was nineteen, after practicing with Hayashi Roshi at Taizoin for eight months, Katagiri left for formal training at Eiheiiji monastery.

MONASTIC AND ACADEMIC TRAINING

Katagiri Roshi's life changed in a big way on April 1, 1947, when he arrived for *ango* at Eihei-ji, the leading Soto Zen training monastery, founded in the 13th century by Eihei Dogen. In his book *Crooked Cucumber*, David Chadwick tells that Katagiri had an awakening experience during *tangaryo*, the rigorous petitionary or initiation period, at Eihei-ji, and this whetted his appetite for zazen.

Katagiri recalled his early days at Eihei-ji: "Everything was completely different—chanting sutras, morning service and standing, walking, eating. I was really impressed and every day I saw myself changing and fitting into everything. I had never experienced such a very calm, very scheduled, rhythmical existence. Before I was always thinking of myself, but at Eihei-ji I didn't have any way to think of me. I had to follow the schedule, think about what to do next, and pay attention to other people's behavior. So very naturally, my life was really changing every day. That was pretty good for me."



During eight weeks of intensive study of the writings of Dogen, Katagiri met (Rendo) Eko Hashimoto Roshi (1890–1965). Hashimoto was a famous Zen master and a student of Oka Sotan Roshi. Both were known for their deep study of Eihei Dogen's *Shobogenzo* and strong zazen practice. When Katagiri was at Eihei-ji, Hashimoto was *godo* (monk in charge of training). He emphasized discipline and monastic rules.

As a very serious young monk, Katagiri did his utmost to exactly follow the practice ways of Dogen as taught by Hashimoto. This even extended to following Dogen's prescribed toilet rituals, such as snapping his fingers three times upon entering the toilet and using earthen balls as a form of toilet paper. The other monks thought those practices were quite peculiar.

Katagiri had the honor of serving Hashimoto as *anja* (housekeeper or daily life attendant) for a year: "I was the attendant. I helped in cleaning his clothes, making tea for him, and when guests came, I served tea. So, I was very close to him every day—just like a mother and her child. I was very lucky."

It's possible that Daicho Hayashi influenced the appointment of his disciple to this honored position. Hayashi had trained at Eihei-ji and served as the *jisha* (ceremonial attendant) for Taizen Kumazawa Roshi (1874–1968) when he held an important position there. Now Kumazawa was abbot of Eihei-ji, and the old connection may have been a factor in Katagiri's selection.

Hashimoto Roshi became Katagiri's second teacher or *onshi* (practice teacher) and the key person inspiring his religious life: someone "from whom I learned how great zazen was, and from whom I understood what the practice of Dogen's Buddhism was." He said that Hashimoto "saw deeply into Dogen's practice and wanted to follow Dogen's principle of life. He was a great teacher. He really embodied the spirit of the monk's life every day, through the actions of everyday life."

At Eihei-ji, Katagiri became confident and glad of his decision to become a monk. But one way that monastery life may have disappointed him was the scarcity of food. He once thought that monks always had something to eat. But at Eihei-ji, there were times when there was no food. Later he told how kitchen crews would go into the countryside to pick grass and weeds and use them to make soup. It was all they had to feed the monks.

In 1948 Katagiri completed the duties of *shuso* (leader of the monks-in-training) at Eihei-ji with the *hossen shiki* (dharma "combat") ceremony, an important stage in Soto Zen priest certification. Then, on November 24, 1949, at the age of twenty-one, he received dharma transmission from Daicho Hayashi in the *denpo* ceremony. He performed *zuisse* (ceremony of respect for the two founders of Soto Zen) at Eihei-ji on March 13, 1950. On May 5, having completed his three years of formal monastic training, he departed Eihei-ji.

Katagiri wanted to continue training with Hashimoto Roshi at his temple, Hokyoji, a branch of Eihei-ji. But to do that he needed the permission of his master. Hayashi Roshi said, "You can go, but a teacher will not

change you. You must change you." Katagiri was deeply impressed by this, so he decided to return to Taizoin. But he was not happy with the life of taking care of his master, maintaining the temple, and serving the villagers.

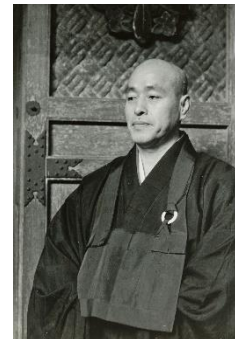
Recalling this time, he said, "Then a new suffering started in my life: I left the monastery to help at my teacher's temple. It was quite different—a new life. In the monastery every day is completely set up. But when I went back to my temple, there were only two guys, my teacher and me, and I had to do many things—cleaning, washing the clothes, making the meals, performing the service, helping the village people. I had to do everything, and I really hated it." He said, "I didn't want to always carry this kind of suffering, so I decided to go to college and study Buddhism. My teacher didn't advise me to go. He was not happy. My teacher once had ten disciples, but all ten left him. So, he wanted me to stay with him."

Because Katagiri's high school had been destroyed in the war, there were no records of his previous education. So, to qualify for college admission, he successfully passed an exam. Then, two years after returning to Taizoin from Eiheiji, and despite Hayashi's objections, he left for college. Shortly before departing Taizoin, Katagiri performed the *zuise* ceremony at Sojiji temple on January 12, 1952, thus completing the final requirement for full priest ordination.

University and Tokyo Years

Katagiri was twenty-four years old when he became a student at Komazawa University in Tokyo, a Soto Zen institution. The Sotoshu organization and the Japanese government provided funds to cover his tuition. His brother Kiyoshi, with some assistance from other brothers, also helped with money to cover his living expenses. Katagiri entered Komazawa on April 1, 1952, and he graduated on March 1, 1956. He majored in Buddhist Studies and wrote his thesis on *manas* (ego consciousness).

While at Komazawa, he lived in the home of (Bokusho) Kakudo Yokoi (d. 1975), an associate professor of Buddhist Studies. Katagiri once said that when Yokoi Roshi came into a room, everyone suddenly became happy. Yokoi was a disciple of Ian Kishizawa (1865-1955), an important Zen master who taught that Zen is best understood through the practice of *zuishin*, master and disciple sharing daily life together. Yokoi Roshi was Katagiri's third teacher—one who scolded him frequently, but who also became his closest friend.



Katagiri later said of him, "For five years I lived with my friend Yokoi Roshi while I attended Komazawa University. Yokoi Roshi was a wonderful person, a beautiful person. He was not always kindly. Sometimes he was bitter and used rough words, but the basis of his life was compassion. There was continuous compassion there, so he always had many visitors. Every day he was discussing some aspect of Buddhism, talking about human life, and counseling human problems." It seems that this practice made a deep impression on Katagiri, who later adopted a similar listening and counseling role with his own students in America.

In his book *Returning to Silence*, Katagiri tells a story about Yokoi: "When I was in college, I studied hard, and one day I really attained a sort of enlightenment while reading a book. I felt very pleased and went to see a friend of mine, Yokoi Roshi, and told him about my enlightenment. Immediately he said, 'How stupid you are!' My friend accepted that happiness of enlightenment, but he had to say how stupid I was. That was wonderful."

Yokoi's frequent scolding was often mentioned by Katagiri when he spoke about him. Why was Yokoi so contrary? In his book *Branching Streams Flow in the Darkness*, Shunryu Suzuki explains: "Students who are pessimistic, who see things very negatively, should be encouraged. But if they are too good or too bright, then the teacher will scold them. That is our way."

It seems that Yokoi Roshi's chiding words about enlightenment stayed with Katagiri. Katagiri heir Dosho Port recalls a time when Katagiri Roshi was teaching in Minneapolis and a student asked him if he was enlightened. Katagiri responded this way: "Oh, enlightenment. You know, one day I was at a monastery

(Tassajara). So hot. So hot. Almost nobody came to zazen. Anyway, I went. Sweating. Thinking, 'How stupid you are.' Suddenly, just like Dogen Zenji says, body and mind dropped off completely. Then after a while, 'I' came back. Ahhh! Then I feel as if I am floating up into the sky, thinking, 'Now you are a saint.'" With that, Katagiri flung back his head and laughed at himself, as if to say, "How stupid I am!"

After college graduation, Katagiri stayed on at Komazawa for three years to do graduate work at Sotoshu Kyoka Kenshujo, the Soto Zen Propagation and Research Institute (April 1, 1956, to March 1, 1959). In that program he studied how to teach English-speaking people. He said, "I learned how to teach Buddhism to many kinds of people: children, young and middle-aged people, and old-aged people."

While at the Institute, Katagiri spent a month serving as aide to Elsie and John Mitchell during their visit to Eihei-ji, where they recorded the monks chanting, and the sounds of bells, drums, and other ceremonial instruments for a Smithsonian Institution project. David Chadwick interviewed Elsie Mitchell in 2002 and wrote a wonderful article about her for his cuke.com project. Here is an excerpt from that article:

The Mitchells were accompanied to Eihei-ji by Dainin Katagiri as guide and translator. He was thin, friendly, energetic, and smoked continuously, always having a cigarette hanging from his mouth. The Mitchells called him "Mr. Katagiri" because he wasn't wearing monk's garb. He'd been ordained and had spent three years at Eihei-ji, but he was doing various jobs for Komazawa, the Soto University, in regular civilian clothes. Katagiri did zazen, not with the monks in the zendo, but in the outside sitting area called *gaitan*. He did zazen in western clothes and his pants were baggy which was convenient because he sat on the floor most of the time.

Katagiri went everywhere with the Mitchells and usually kept his portable typewriter with him. The Mitchells' bedroom was turned into a sort of general sitting room during the daytime and Katagiri was always there typing away. It was a Western typewriter, a little Olivetti. "He typed some things for us including various translations and he made out daily schedules for us. He was so busy," Elsie said, "and though he was our translator, his English was lousy. He was enormously helpful, however. I have a picture of him on the roof of the *hondo* holding a microphone."

She remembers taking Katagiri to dine at the Miyako Hotel in Kyoto. It seemed he had never used a knife and fork, couldn't really manage them. It didn't embarrass him at all. He told them, "I want to go to America." He was avid about it, Elsie remembers. Tetsuya Inoue, their original contact at Eihei-ji, wanted to go too, but being from a traditional temple family, he was too bound by responsibilities. Katagiri wasn't from a temple family; his own temple was a tiny one by the sea not far from Eihei-ji and he wasn't there much. Seven years later, Dainin Katagiri went to San Francisco where he took on the role of Shunryu Suzuki's loyal and loved assistant teacher.

After completing his master's program and graduating on March 1, 1959, Katagiri was obligated to work for Sotoshu Shumucho (Soto headquarters) in exchange for the tuition money he had received. So, for three years he was in Tokyo, working in the International Division, staying there for a year beyond the two that were required.

At the International Division, Katagiri had the job of taking care of all Soto temples in the United States. That is how he first encountered Shunryu Suzuki. On May 21, 1959, as an official duty, he went to the airport to see off Shunryu Suzuki (1904–1971) as he departed for Soko-ji temple in San Francisco. Katagiri remembered, "That is when I first met Suzuki Roshi. I met him just to say good-bye." They would meet again in San Francisco about five years later, when Katagiri became Suzuki's assistant priest and teacher at Soko-ji and the San Francisco Zen Center.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Tomoe Kanazawa met Dainin Katagiri in 1960. They met through Miss Tanaka, Tomoe's former English teacher who had become her good friend. Tomoe was born February 16, 1932, in Tokyo and was

raised there. Near the end of World War II, she missed a year of school because she was ill with tuberculosis. When she returned, it was to a different school and, unlike her old school, this new one taught English. Tomoe found herself far behind the other students. So, to catch up, she took private English lessons at a small *juku* (after-school school) taught by Miss Tanaka. Later, after she graduated university, Tomoe became a teacher herself and held a *juku* in her parents' home.

Tomoe remained friends with Miss Tanaka and visited her home often. It was there that she was introduced to Dainin Katagiri at an informal *nakado* gathering arranged by Miss Tanaka and Tomoe's mother, and attended also by Yokoi Roshi, Katagiri's closest friend. Such a meeting implies there is potential for a good marriage; if the two are interested, they can meet again to consider it. It was a fortuitous meeting, as Tomoe and Dainin did agree to marry. In an interview with David Chadwick, Tomoe recalled:

Before we married, I went to a one-week sesshin with Kojun Noiri Roshi (1914-2007) at Daito-in temple near Fukuroi. Hojo-san (as Katagiri was later known as abbot in Minnesota) and his friend Yokoi Roshi suggested that I go. My English teacher was a lay disciple of Noiri Roshi, and Noiri Roshi and Yokoi Roshi were dharma brothers through Ian Kishizawa Roshi (1865-1955). Hojo-san respected Noiri Roshi and Kishizawa Roshi very much. And so, I went. There were many people at the sesshin: all were monks who came from outside or lay people. Kosen Nishiyama (1939–), who later translated the *Shobogenzo* with John Stevens, was there. He was very young, a freshman at the university. Hoitsu Suzuki, who was a sophomore at Komazawa University, was also there. That was the first time I met Suzuki Roshi's oldest son and dharma heir.

Dainin and Tomoe were married in October 1960 by Shosai Hatori, one of Katagiri's graduate school professors. Tomoe was twenty-eight and Dainin was four years older. During their almost thirty-year marriage, they were blessed with two sons, Yasuhiko, born in Japan, and Ejyo, born in California, and now there are also three grandsons and a great-grandson. Throughout her long life, Tomoe has been a treasure to the sangha.

LEAVING JAPAN

Reirin Yamada (1889-1979), former abbot of Eihei-ji, in 1960 became abbot of Zenshuji Soto Mission in Los Angeles and Bishop of Soto Zen in America. Yamada wanted to research how to promote and teach Zen Buddhism in the United States. So, Soto Zen headquarters selected Katagiri to assist him. Katagiri recalled, "I was invited by him to be the first member of the Institute for Propagating Zen Buddhism in North America. I was appointed to go to Los Angeles for two years—just to be there and study Buddhism in the United States."

Previously, Soto headquarters had wanted to send Katagiri to Brazil to serve the expatriate Japanese community there. But when Katagiri asked his master for permission, Hayashi Roshi would not give it. Hayashi felt that he had been very unlucky when it came to disciples, and with Katagiri finally back from meeting his obligation to Sotoshu in Tokyo, he really wanted his one last disciple to stay with him. But now, with headquarters wanting to send Katagiri to Los Angeles, Hayashi capitulated.

When Katagiri departed for California in October 1963, Tomoe and two-year-old Yasuhiko had to stay behind. Tomoe did not receive government clearance to leave Japan because of the tuberculosis she had suffered in junior high school. It would take two years to get things sorted out. For most of that time, Tomoe and little Yasuhiko lived in their own place in Tokyo. But for the first four months they remained at Taizoin. Hayashi Roshi had rebuilt the *hondo* (ceremonial hall) but he had not yet rebuilt the *keisando* (living area) so, when Tomoe stayed there, the ceiling was almost nonexistent. Snow fell in and you could lie on your futon and look at the stars.

Tomoe recalls that Hayashi lived very straightly: he didn't drink, always wore robes, ate all his meals with *oryoki* (formal eating ritual), and kept the practice schedule, even when no one was there. He was allergic to many things and was often sick. He didn't go into the village to spend time with people or talk much at all. Mostly he quietly followed the schedule and then sat by the hibachi, where he loved to smoke a pipe

with a long bamboo stem and metal bowl. He was very interested in the I Ching and kept a set of throwing sticks in a special box in the altar. Sometimes he listened to the radio, although the reception was poor because of the mountains. Tomoe had a small TV and they put the antenna on the *hondo* roof. Even though the reception was awful, Hayashi loved to watch sumo wrestling.

In the end, as he had long feared, Hayashi Roshi died alone at Taizoin, less than three years after Katagiri's departure from Japan. At that time, even though he was living in California, Dainin Katagiri became the abbot of Taizoin. Later, when he began ordaining priests in Minnesota, Katagiri registered them with Sotoshu headquarters as *deshi* (disciples) of the abbot of Taizoin, allowing them to complete the first stage in the Japanese system of priest qualification.

Katagiri heard that Hayashi called for him before he died. Katagiri once remarked, "My teacher was really attached to me because I was his only disciple; he took care of me very much. I really appreciate it, but unfortunately, I left. Personally, in my mind, I really apologize to my teacher, but I cannot stay feeling guilty. The more I feel guilty, the more I have to devote myself, offering my life to Buddha dharma. That is the best way of apologizing. Nobody has that temple now. I am the abbot, but Taizoin is empty."

CALIFORNIA YEARS

When he arrived at Zenshuji Soto Mission in Los Angeles on October 10, 1963, Dainin Katagiri was thirty-five years old. Appointed as a minister abroad, he was there for a two-year assignment as a trainee at Bishop Yamada's new Institute for Propagating Zen Buddhism in North America. He was also to help with the Japanese monk training program and with Zenshuji's English-speaking members and guests.

But the work of the institute did not go well, and Katagiri was dissatisfied with life at the temple. So, after five months he left and headed for San Francisco. There he stayed with Iru Price at his Home of the Dharma center, a branch of Arya Maitreya Mandala, the Tibetan Buddhist order founded by Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898–1985). He arranged to attend San Francisco State University, intending to work and live on his own. However, things did not go as he had planned.



Although Katagiri did not yet know it, Shunryu Suzuki was interested in him. At that time Suzuki Roshi had about fifteen American students. He was also abbot of Sokoji Soto Zen Mission, founded in 1934 to serve the San Francisco Japanese-American community. Arriving there in 1959, Suzuki had landed in the Beat Zen era, and Americans were drawn to him from the beginning. San Francisco Zen Center had been incorporated with the state of California in August 1962 but was still renting space in the Sokoji building.

Suzuki had heard about Katagiri from his early disciple Jean Ross. She had met Katagiri in March 1962 when he worked at the Sotoshu International Division in Tokyo. Katagiri was responsible for taking care of foreigners coming to Japan for Zen practice, so he met Ross at the airport and escorted her to Eihei-ji, where she practiced for seven months. Later she visited him and Tomoe at Taizoin.

As Katagiri recalled, "I wanted to go to college in San Francisco—making money by myself and studying English. I already had a schoolboy's place. But I was caught by Jean Ross, one of Suzuki Roshi's American students. I had helped her when she visited Japan. Now she recommended me to help Zen Center. She said: 'Please don't live separately from Zen Center; please help us.' I was not agreed, but she constantly recommended to me: just see Suzuki Roshi.

So, I went to Sokoji Temple to see him, and he immediately said, 'That's a good opportunity—please help us.' Even though I had decided I wanted to go one way, here was a completely different way. So, I was completely caught by Suzuki Roshi. Then I met the students of Zen Center and they said: 'Please come, please help us.' I was completely caught by everybody and finally I couldn't say no, so I decided to come to Sokoji anyway." Suzuki arranged with Bishop Yamada for Katagiri to be officially transferred to Sokoji,

where he could finish out his two-year assignment as a trainee of Yamada's Institute while serving as Suzuki's assistant.

In San Francisco, Katagiri quickly became very busy serving the Japanese congregation at Sokoji. He also studied English at a little school in Pacific Heights and sat zazen with Zen Center members. Around the corner from Sokoji was a Shinshu (Pure Land) Buddhist temple where Katagiri studied *shodo* (calligraphy) with Mrs. Hanayama, wife of their bishop. Also at that temple was Koshin Ogui, a Shin priest who became a lifelong friend, and later gave a eulogy at Katagiri's funeral.

Soon after Katagiri's arrival in San Francisco, he, together with Suzuki, Yamada, three other Japanese priests, 90 Japanese members, and 20 American meditators from Monterey and San Francisco, attended the First Annual Conference of Soto Zen Buddhists in America, held June 6 and 7, 1964, at the Asilomar Conference Center in Pacific Grove. At this important conference, Soto Zen Buddhism was identified as a very forward-looking religion that hoped to propagate its beliefs in America. Guidelines for its expansion were put forward. As it turned out, Suzuki and Katagiri would become major participants in this expansion.

In 1964 he began to lecture regularly at Zen Center, alternating weekly with Suzuki in San Francisco, and later at the affiliate zendos in Los Altos and Berkeley. In the beginning most people could not understand his English, but they came to listen anyway. By 1966, Katagiri was fully responsible for the growing Los Altos group. He had learned to drive so, unlike Suzuki, he drove himself to the meetings, leaving San Francisco very early in the morning to sit zazen, give a talk, and have breakfast with the group—Thursdays in Los Altos and Mondays in Berkeley

As the end of Katagiri's two-year Sotoshu appointment approached, Zen Center had a decision to make: could they make a commitment to support Katagiri and his family financially? Suzuki was in favor and the decision was made. Katagiri would stay. On October 10, 1965, he was officially appointed as a priest for both Sokoji and Zen Center. Around the same time, Tomoe was finally cleared to leave Japan. A special fund-raising campaign helped with her travel expenses, and she arrived on November 13, having traveled by cargo ship with four-year-old Yasuhiko.

In November and December 1966, Katagiri was among the subjects in a study conducted by Dr. Joe Kamiya of the Langlely Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute in San Francisco. Kamiya, known as "the father of neurofeedback," was interested in discovering how, and to what extent, it is possible for human beings to control their own alpha brain waves. Using electroencephalograph sensors, he discovered that meditators could learn to control their brain waves in about four hours instead of the usual forty hours.

Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in Carmel Valley opened in 1967. Katagiri had helped with its establishment and then, during Suzuki's frequent stays there, he took over all of the duties at Sokoji and led the rapidly growing city center community as well. Attendance at his talks grew, and students began approaching him to be their personal teacher.



Katagiri Roshi became a beloved teacher in San Francisco, but he did not find the job easy. Pema Chodron, in her 2001 book, *The Wisdom of No Escape and the Path of Lovingkindness*, told of hearing him recount the challenges he faced in the beginning: "He had been a monk in Japan—where everything was so precise, so clean and so neat—for a long time. In the U.S., his students were hippies with long, unwashed hair and ragged clothes and no shoes. He didn't like them. He couldn't help it—he just couldn't stand those hippies. Their style offended everything in him. He said, 'So all day I would give talks about compassion, and at night I would go home and weep and cry because I realized I had no compassion at all. Because I didn't like my students, therefore I had to work much harder to develop my heart.'"

Despite these early struggles, Katagiri was glad to be in America. As he later said: "Contacting Americans, I felt a home for my heart in the peaceful, harmonious, and open world beyond races and cultures." Katagiri was a great inspiration and example to American students. In *Wind Bell* magazine (Fall/Winter, 1970-71,

p.38), a San Francisco student reflecting on the difficulty of committing to Zen practice was asked: So, why are we here? His answer speaks for many. He said, “I think we couldn’t say why. Maybe just [Suzuki] Roshi and Katagiri Sensei. When I came here, I was really inspired by them. I can’t express how much . . . I’ve never felt like that about anyone before.”

In the summer of 1969, tensions between Zen Center and Sokoji reached a critical point. The congregation of Sokoji demanded that Suzuki Roshi make a choice: serve either them or the young Americans, not both. Suzuki retired from Sokoji in July. Katagiri was soon given the same choice. With Zen Center purchasing its city center building at 300 Page Street, he decided to accept the students’ invitation to work full-time for the new center. He also made plans to teach a class at San Francisco State College.

That fall, Suzuki gave the name Hoshinji (Beginner’s Mind Temple) to the new city center. He also qualified Katagiri as *sanzen dojo shike* (supervisory training master). The *shike* designation is quite significant because it indicates someone is certified to lead a training monastery—in other words, a Zen master. (It seems the official certificate arrived from Soto Zen Headquarters a couple of years later.) Katagiri received the honorific title *roshi* (venerable old one) at Tassajara in the summer of 1971, when students asked Suzuki for permission to address Katagiri-sensei as Katagiri-roshi and Suzuki approved it.

Decision to Leave California

He had served Suzuki Roshi as assistant teacher since 1964, but now Katagiri was thinking of leaving. For a long time, Suzuki had been talking about giving dharma transmission to Richard Baker, and in August he left for Japan, where he performed the final ceremony on December 8, 1970. Suzuki hinted that he might retire as abbot and work closely with just a few people. Baker would then become abbot and Katagiri the senior dharma teacher. But this was not what Katagiri had in mind; he wanted to have his own group. So, in April 1971, he wrote to Suzuki expressing his intention to resign soon.

At the time, Suzuki Roshi was recovering from emergency gallbladder surgery. He and his wife Mitsu knew that a biopsy had revealed that the gallbladder was cancerous, but they had decided to keep this a secret. Receiving Katagiri’s letter was a shock and a huge disappointment. After learning that Katagiri had not yet made any commitment to another group, Suzuki asked him to please stay, but Katagiri did not agree until Suzuki made a formal request, which he could not refuse. He agreed to stay a while longer, and to lead the fall practice period at Tassajara. Later, when he learned that Suzuki had cancer, Katagiri wondered if knowing that he wanted to leave may have contributed to Suzuki becoming weaker.

Katagiri officially resigned from the San Francisco Zen Center on September 30, 1971, although he did lead the fall practice period at Tassajara as he had promised. He had not decided where he would go after leaving San Francisco but was interested in Minnesota. He and Tomoe had recently been to Minneapolis for a visit and meditation retreat. A group in Portland, Oregon, also hoped that Katagiri would move there.

Then Suzuki Roshi’s health began to fail, and on October 10, everyone finally learned that he had cancer. Suddenly he was dying and making final plans for the installation of his successor. Many hoped he would choose Katagiri to be the new head of Zen Center. But Katagiri was in a different dharma lineage and Suzuki felt that his successor must be one of his own disciples. So, his choice was Richard Baker, the only American student to whom he had given dharma transmission. In a Mountain Seat ceremony held on November 21, 1971, Suzuki installed Baker as his successor and chief priest of the San Francisco Zen Center. Katagiri Roshi gave the authentication verse on Suzuki’s behalf.

After Suzuki’s death on December 4, 1971, there were difficulties in the sangha, so Zen Center asked Katagiri to please stay and help during the transition to Baker’s leadership. Katagiri agreed to postpone the decision on where he would teach in the future. He promised to stay in California for one year to help students, but he and his family would move away from Zen Center itself.

Monterey and Departure from California

Jean Ross was living in Carmel, on the coast south of San Francisco, where she had opened her own zendo in 1968. She urged Katagiri to move to nearby Monterey and teach from there. In that location he could help all the sanghas: San Francisco, Carmel, and Tassajara. Her group found a house in the Monterey/Pacific Grove area that could serve as both a zendo and home for the Katagiri family.

The family moved to Monterey after the fall practice period at Tassajara, and on December 27, 1971, Katagiri Roshi opened the new Sona Zendo. To Tomoe he presented the *rakusu* he had sewn for her in San Francisco in 1970 as he was thinking of starting his own group.

Katagiri continued to serve the San Francisco Zen Center sangha, leading the 1972 winter-spring practice period at Tassajara and the fall practice period at City Center, where he gave lectures and *dokusan* for all students. And he continued to develop relationships with Zen students from Minnesota.

Meanwhile, practice at the Sona Zendo did not develop as well as Katagiri had hoped. It seemed to be a way station between Tassajara and San Francisco: people dropped in all the time, but there weren't very many committed students. So, during a late-summer 1972 visit to Minneapolis, Katagiri made a big decision: when he completed his promised year in California, he would move to Minnesota and take up teaching there.

When it became known that Katagiri was moving, many students in San Francisco asked if they could come with him, but he told them they must stay in San Francisco. Still, some did make the move to Minneapolis to continue studying with him.

The Katagiri family left for Minnesota in December 1972. San Francisco students loaded the family's belongings into a U-Haul and drove it to Minneapolis. Dainin Katagiri arrived on December 15, ready to become the founding abbot of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center.

The move to Minnesota did not end Katagiri's warm relationship with the San Francisco sangha. He frequently returned to lead practice events at City Center, Tassajara Zen Monastery, and Green Gulch Farm. On March 14, 1984, he was temporarily installed as *jushoku* (abbot) for one year to help settle turmoil that arose following the ouster of Abbot Richard Baker. Some in Minnesota nervously wondered if he would be invited to stay permanently (and perhaps he would have accepted), but it was Reb Anderson, a dharma heir of Baker, who was named abbot. In September 1986, Katagiri offered this poem for San Francisco Zen Center's twenty-fifth anniversary:

I Have Taught Nothing to You

You are nearly as old as the number of years it has been since I came to America.

I have taught nothing to you at all.
I have done nothing for you at all.

But,
You have done a lot for me.

I can tell you one thing you have taught me;
"Peel off your cultural skins,
One by one,
One after another,
Again and again,
And go on with your story."

How thick are the layers of cultural clothes I have already put on?
How would it possible to tell a story without them?

How would it be possible to peel off the thick wallpaper in my old house?
How would it be possible to ease my pain whenever the paper is torn off?

If I were not to agree with your teaching,
Believe it or not,
My life would be drifting in space,
Like an astronaut separate from his ship, without any connections.

Now I'm aware that I alone am in the vast openness of the sea,
And cause the sea to be the sea.

Just swim.
Just swim.
Go on with your story.

Today, a portion of Katagiri Roshi's ashes are interred at Tassajara, next to those of Suzuki Roshi. And a stained-glass window depicting Katagiri's hands in *gassho* (bowing), made by renowned glass artist Narcissus (Robert) Quagliata, is installed in the doorway to the dining room at the San Francisco Zen Center.



MINNESOTA'S ZEN PIONEERS

In Minnesota, people interested in practicing *zazen* (Zen meditation) had been finding each other since the late 1960s and several small *zazen* sitting groups had formed. The first was initially made up primarily of Macalester College students. In 1967 they began meeting weekly at the Saint Paul home of Beverly and David White. Beverly White (1919–1999), a Quaker who taught music and yoga and lectured on comparative religion at Macalester, had practiced Zen under Harada Sogaku (1871–1961) at Hosshin-ji temple in Obama, Japan, from 1954 to 1956. Now she practiced with Shunryu Suzuki (1904–1971) in San Francisco. Beverly gladly shared what she had learned, and the group soon grew to include local people such as Erik Storlie and Sally McCauley (Brown Breckenridge), who also practiced with Suzuki in San Francisco. The group began studying koans and holding weekend *sesshin* (meditation retreats) without a teacher.

Karen (Sunna) and Jeffrey Thorkelson began sitting *zazen* at their Minneapolis home in 1968, following instructions they found in Phillip Kapleau's book, *The Three Pillars of Zen*. The book had been recommended to them by Karen's graduate school friend Reb Anderson. After practicing by themselves for a while, they began to feel the need for a teacher. So they went to Rochester, New York, to meet Kapleau Roshi. After that they went on to San Francisco to meet Suzuki Roshi, and it was there that they felt they had "come home." Coincidentally, Beverly White happened to be practicing at the San Francisco Zen Center and they met her there. Returning home, Karen and Jeff joined Beverly's group in Saint Paul.

Ken Barklind started a small weekly *zazen* meditation group around 1969. Originally it met at a Unitarian church in Minneapolis, then later moved to the basement of the Barklind home in Edina. Robert Pirsig (1928–2017), who had almost finished writing his now famous book, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, joined the group in 1970 at the invitation of member Sylvia Sutherland. A year later his wife Nancy James joined. Like Pirsig, Sutherland was a friend of Beverly White and occasionally sat *zazen* with her group in Saint Paul. That group also occasionally sat with the Edina group.

Individuals in these informal Zen groups hoped to bring a teacher to Minnesota someday. Unbeknownst to them, Katagiri Roshi was developing an interest in the Midwest. As he later recounted to Karen Thorkelson (Sunna): One time he was flying home to California from New York with Suzuki Roshi. As they were passing over the Midwest, Suzuki pointed and said, "That's where the real America is." A seed was planted in Katagiri's mind. He began to consider that in the Midwest students might be more average Americans, not the drug-using hippies that gravitated to San Francisco.

Karen's graduate school friend Reb Anderson, who grew up in Minnesota, had moved to California and become a close student of Suzuki. He also knew Katagiri very well. When he realized that Katagiri wanted to leave San Francisco, he encouraged him to consider moving to Minnesota. He told him that dharma teachers always go to New York or California—they forget the Midwest. Acting as a kind of matchmaker, Anderson told Katagiri that there are people in Minnesota who want to practice, but don't have a teacher, so they must come to California. And even though it is beautiful in Minnesota, teachers are not interested because of the cold climate. Tomoe Katagiri remembers her husband saying: "If I can go, I want to go the place where nobody wants to go. That is why I want to go to Minnesota."

Alice and Richard Haspray were Macalester students who sat with Beverly White's group. In 1971 they moved to the San Francisco Zen Center, where they lived in the same apartment building as the Katagiri family. From San Francisco, Alice wrote to Beverly with the news that Katagiri was interested in relocating to Minnesota. Hearing this, Karen Thorkelson (Sunna), after attending a one-week sesshin in San Francisco, visited with the Katagiris to find out if he was serious about Minnesota, and to open a conversation about the future.

To learn more about Minnesota, Katagiri and Tomoe traveled to Minneapolis for a visit in late August 1971. They stayed first at the home of Sally McCauley (Brown Breckenridge) and then with the Thorkelsons. After going to the State Fair and enjoying other local sightseeing, Katagiri led a one-day sesshin at Beverly White's house on a very hot and humid day. Lynne Warkov (Lockie), Karen Thorkelson (Sunna), Robert Pirsig, and several others participated, as did Tomoe. Back in California, with Suzuki now gravely ill, Katagiri reported that he could not make a move to Minnesota under such circumstances.

It was during Katagiri Roshi's August 1971 visit that Karen and Jeff Thorkelson got to know Lynne (Lockie) and Saul Warkov. The Warkovs had recently arrived in Minneapolis after studying with Suzuki Roshi in San Francisco since 1960. They knew the Katagiri family well and their children had played together. The Warkovs sat weekly with Beverly White's group and had daily practice at their own home.

Soon the Thorkelsons, Warkovs, and Sally McCauley (Brown Breckenridge), who all lived near each other in southeast Minneapolis, formed a meditation group. They met for zazen every morning at the Warkov home and on Saturdays they went out for breakfast. Then the three families decided to rent the large house at 419 5th Street SE, near the University of Minnesota campus and the Dinkytown area and to live there communally. The living room was turned into a *zendo*, and their home became the *de facto* headquarters for the group. They hoped this would be a further enticement for Katagiri Roshi to move to Minnesota.

Katagiri visited Minnesota again to participate in a January 9, 1972, program on Buddhism and Christianity at the invitation of Rev. William Hunt, director of the Newman Center at the University of Minnesota, and arranged by Lynne Warkov (Lockie). He was able to spend time with the Zen students, but there was disappointment when he announced that he had moved to Monterey and opened a *zendo* there. He explained that things were unsettled in San Francisco after Suzuki Roshi's death in December 1971, and he had agreed to stay in California for one year to help. The group would have to wait to hear his decision about Minnesota.

In the spring of 1972, Erik Storlie and Sally McCauley (Brown Breckenridge) practiced at Katagiri Roshi's Sona Zendo in Monterey and declared themselves his students. In San Francisco, Erik had often encouraged Katagiri to think of moving to Minnesota. Now he and Sally made the case again. Lynne Warkov (Lockie) and Karen Thorkelson (Sunna) also practiced with Katagiri that summer and invited him to come to Minnesota over Labor Day and lead a five-day sesshin.

This time the whole Katagiri family traveled to Minneapolis to see if they would like to live there. Yasuhiko was ten and Ejyo was five years old. The kids had a good time: Sally McCauley (Brown Breckenridge) had two children and her daughter was the same age as Yasuhiko; The Warkovs had two children and their son was a year younger than Yasuhiko. Jeff Thorkelson took the three families camping at Taylor's Falls. Then, while the group was painting the *zendo*, Katagiri made his decision: Yes! At an potluck dinner before the sesshin at Erik Storlie's parents' house, Lynne Warkov (Lockie) made the announcement. Everyone gasped! Katagiri smiled and said he expected that he would be here life after life.

Now members of the various Zen groups coalesced around Katagiri Roshi. On October 10, 1972, they held the Zen center incorporation meeting. There were about a dozen people in the core group. All were asked to be on the founding board of directors and nine accepted. They created an organizational structure and on December 4, 1972, the articles of incorporation of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center (MZMC), its name chosen by Katagiri Roshi, were signed. At the board of directors meeting held on January 27, 1973, Lynne Warkov (Lockie) was named president, Robert Pirsig vice-president, Jeffrey Thorkelson treasurer, Karen Thorkelson (Sunna) corresponding secretary, and Erik Storlie recording secretary.

The group had quickly begun planning for the Katagiri family's arrival. Karen Thorkelson (Sunna) arranged for their accommodations. An acquaintance of hers owned the four-plex apartment building at 425 5th Street SE, next door to the communal house in Minneapolis, and she was able to reserve the next available unit. It was waiting for the family when they arrived on December 15, 1972. Later, the group also rented the unit above the Katagiri apartment, which opened as the new zendo in July 1973. The other two units were taken by Norm and Barb Randolph and Buddy and Pat Van Cleave. So, the entire apartment building was occupied by Zen practitioners, and gradually a Zen community grew up around the two buildings.

Old-timers recall that in the beginning, some members of the founding group, optimistic and perhaps somewhat naïve, didn't fully grasp the costs that would be associated with their invitation to Katagiri. Some with a more commonsense point of view argued against taking on responsibility for a married man with children. Some assumed that Katagiri would have an outside job, perhaps at a Japanese restaurant. Katagiri quickly clarified that the group would be supporting him, and it did! By 1975, Katagiri Roshi was receiving a salary of \$6,360 a year plus health insurance and use of the family's apartment. Tomoe supplemented this modest income by working as a Japanese instructor with the Berlitz language school.

CITY CENTER IN MINNEAPOLIS

At the age of forty-four, Dainin Katagiri had become the first Zen master to ever take up residence in the region between New York and California. He established the traditional Zen practice schedule of morning and evening zazen, lectures on Saturday mornings and Wednesday evenings, and regular *sesshin* retreats. Norm Randolph remembers that lots of people came and that from the beginning, Tomoe Katagiri's presence helped people feel good about the Zen center.

As Katagiri drew more students, the group outgrew its apartment-sized zendo. Meanwhile, Robert Pirsig's 1974 book *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* had become a best seller. Pirsig and his wife Nancy James generously offered Zen Center a gift of \$20,000 from the book's royalties, to go toward purchase of a building. Tim and Linda Burkett offered a \$10,000 no-interest loan, and the group began their search for a new home.

What they found was "Vista del Lago," a Spanish colonial-style white stucco house located on a large lot at 3343 East Calhoun Parkway (now Bde Maka Ska Parkway), overlooking picturesque Lake Calhoun (Bde Maka Ska) in south Minneapolis. The house was built in 1905 by Dr. M. Russell Wilcox after his wife fell in love with Spanish-style architecture on a trip to Spain. The third family to live in the house was Saul and Louise Rusoff, owners of The American Bindery and Supply in Minneapolis, and their four children. It was a happy home, and a gathering place for friends and family. But during Saul's long battle with cancer, its sale became necessary.

The Rusoffs listed their home with a real estate agent who, it appears, had a hidden agenda. It seems he had a buyer lined up—a group of developers who wanted to get the property at a below-market price. The house was on a triple lot, with a curb cut on the street that would have allowed construction of an underground parking garage, and they saw the potential for constructing a high-rise apartment building on it. To pressure the Rusoffs, their agent stalled the selling process by falsely telling potential buyers that the house could not be shown because of an illness in the family. That tactic did finally allow the developers to buy at the price they wanted. Sadly, Saul Rusoff died in February 1968, six months after the sale.

The developers began working on their plans for the high-rise apartment building but ran into a problem. Their bid to have the property rezoned for multifamily housing was protested by the neighbors and the plan was not approved. In 1973, perhaps thinking that after living with a much worse situation in their neighborhood, the protesting neighbors would acquiesce to the high-rise plan, the developers rented the property to House of Icarus, a halfway house program serving people in recovery from drug abuse. Neighbors later told of the many troubles that followed, including guns-drawn police raids. When House of Icarus left, the house was in terrible condition. The developers attempted to have it declared blighted so they could tear it down. But failing that, they decided to put the property up for sale.

Cal Appleby, a Zen Center member who had taught yoga at House of Icarus and was involved with the recovery movement, heard about the house becoming available and alerted the group. Interest took root and started to grow. Then, in late 1974, Ron Boyer, a Zen student working as a real estate agent, found it listed on MLS at an attractive price because of its condition. Ron recalls the day that Nancy James and he took Katagiri Roshi to see it for the first time. Katagiri ran up to the house, smiling and bounding in the air, robes flying. After additional fundraising, including a public lecture by Bob Pirsig (“After the Motorcycle is Fixed, Then What? April 5, 1975) that raised \$3,000, and securing a mortgage for the rest of the final \$60,000 selling price, MZMC was ready to buy.

Erik Storlie recalls sitting on the sun porch of the house that Spring, looking out at the lake with Robert Pirsig, Nancy James, and several other founding members. With them was Maynard Pirsig, Robert’s father, and a distinguished lawyer, who had agreed to handle the legalities. The developers made demands that Maynard laughed at, saying “just bring the deed and we’ll bring the money.” The developers folded and a few days later, on May 30, 1975, ownership papers were signed. Neighbors on the parkway had given their support, or at least made minimal resistance, to MZMC’s ownership.

The failure of the developers’ plans and the sale to MZMC brought relief and happiness to Louise Rusoff and her daughter Marly. Both women were serious meditators. Louise rose every day to meditate before the day began, and her practice helped her through some very difficult years. Marly owned Rusoff & Co. Bookdealers, a bookstore in the Dinkytown neighborhood of Minneapolis. Notably, it was among the first trade bookstores to carry books on meditation and spirituality. The Loft Literary Center was born there in 1974 when Marly made an area above the shop available as a gathering space for poets, writers, and readers. In the end, for Louise and Marly, knowing their beloved home would become a meditation center helped to heal the terrible grief they felt over the loss of their beloved home.

Coincidentally, the house already held a special place in Robert Pirsig’s heart. When Bob was a young teen, he became somewhat serious and withdrawn. The train that he took to school traveled on the old streetcar track that ran behind the house. Each day he passed the arched gate that read “Vista del Lago.” When the lake vista opened up and he caught a glimpse of sky and water, it was the only moment of the day when he felt something like peace and happiness. Years later, he shared that story with Marly Rusoff when she expressed her gratitude for his role in making it possible for MZMC to buy the house.



On February 1, 1976, after eight months of extensive renovations accomplished by skilled Zen Center carpenters and a great deal of other volunteer labor, Katagiri Roshi happily performed an opening ceremony for the new zendo. Zen practice got underway on the main floor and the Katagiri family moved into their new living quarters on the two upper floors.

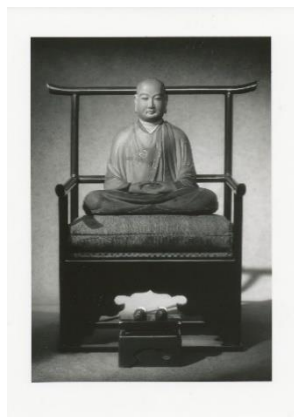
Many founders remember the pioneering years with fondness. Erik Storlie expressed their collective spirit well when he wrote, “I can’t think of a more exciting and satisfying time in my life than the early years setting up the Dinkytown zendo, and then the Calhoun house—all of us filled with idealism, convinced that what we were doing would change the world. And then having to think about how to meet the bills! The core group did it because we were all around thirty or older and worked, and we were willing to sacrifice time, energy, and money to do this thing. So, we did a good thing; we floated the ark called Minnesota Zen Meditation Center.”

Over time, many illustrious guests visited Minneapolis to meet with Katagiri Roshi and offer teachings and fund-raising events for the Zen Center. There were poets and writers such as Gary Snyder, Robert Bly, Philip Whalen, Alan Ginsberg, and Fritjof Capra. Shakuhachi flute master Masayuki Koga was in residence for a time. Teachers, scholars, and translators of various Buddhist traditions offered lectures and workshops, among them Thich Nhat Hanh, Eido Shimano Roshi, Lama Tara Tulku, Lama Kunga Rinpoche, Robert Thurman, Francis Dojun Cook, Huston Smith, and John Stevens. These visitors contributed much to the Zen Center, as did well-known sangha members Robert Pirsig and Natalie Goldberg, whose popular talks and workshops raised money and goodwill.

Arrival of Altar Statue and Ceremonial Objects

Tradition calls for a statue of Manjusri Bodhisattva to be enshrined in a Soto Zen temple's zendo. Eshun Yoshida Roshi (d. December 26, 1982), abbot of Kaizenji temple in the city of Tsushima, Aichi Prefecture, Japan, stepped in to help, generously offering a Manjusri statue to the new zendo. Yoshida Roshi was a dharma heir of Eko Hashimoto, Katagiri Roshi's second teacher. She was also Tomoe Katagiri's *nyoho-e* sewing teacher.

The statue that Yoshida gave was an eleven-inch-tall Shoso Manjusri. It was the original model, made before the much larger version now enshrined at her temple. Hashimoto Roshi had designed that temple, which Yoshida then built. He also guided the making of its Manjusri statue. The sculptor had been a soldier during the second world war. He vowed not to harm anyone, so in battle he always shot his weapon into the air. Eventually he was wounded by a bullet to his thigh. Yoshida intended to commission him to make another, larger statue for Minneapolis, which she would finance in the traditional way by performing *takuhatsu* (begging practice). However, she became seriously ill and died before she could accomplish it.



Hashimoto Roshi said this about the Shoso Manjusri statue:

“These days it is common to see Manjusri sitting on a lion and holding a sword, but this is not traditionally accurate. The traditional Zen way, or *nyoho*, is for Manjusri to appear as a priest sitting on a chair. According to the authentic Buddha way, the chair is the lion or diamond seat. Holding a sword symbolizes Buddha's wisdom, but in the Shoso Manjusri image, his *kekka-fuza* (full lotus) position is Buddha's wisdom. This diamond seat, which emanates Buddha's wisdom, is not for Manjusri alone, but for all of the *jos* (seats) of the practitioners. We regard all of the practitioners who come to the *sodo* (meditation hall) as bodhisattvas. As a representative of these bodhisattvas, Shoso Manjusri Bodhisattva is enshrined in the center of the *sodo*.”

Before reaching Minnesota, the statue went to several temples in Japan to help “settle” their zendos. Then, on December 7, 1975, Katagiri Roshi left for Japan where he would receive the statue and carry it home to Minneapolis. “The Buddha is coming here so I should get him,” he said. Sadly, this precious statue, along with a beautiful Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva statue given in 1978 by Doitsu Harada Roshi's temple, Shosoji, was stolen during a 1998 break-in and never recovered.

Jean Ross also sent a gift for the new zendo—a Japanese *mokugyo*, the wooden fish-shaped percussion instrument used to set the pace of chanting. She had received it as a gift in Japan and used it at her center in Carmel. When she disbanded her group soon after Katagiri left California, she took it with her to Michigan. Now she felt that it should be with Katagiri Roshi in Minneapolis.

A huge Japanese bronze bowl bell was the next arrival at the zendo. Although it may well be a reproduction, its engravings say it was made in 917 A.D. (Engi 17) for the Genpukuji temple. Katagiri Roshi first saw the bell in 1975 at the Mann Ranch conference center in Ukiah, California, known for hosting big events conducted by Joseph Campbell and Carlos Castaneda. The ranch's owner explained that

the bell had belonged to his grandfather, who brought it from Japan seventy years ago. Katagiri asked him: If that bell is ever for sale, please let me know. Eleven years later, when it did become available, a special fund-raising campaign raised \$500 to realize Katagiri's dream of bringing it to Minnesota. Tomoe flew to California, where David Chadwick arranged packing so she could fly home with the bell.

At the bell's eye-opening ceremony at Hokyoji on September 20, 1986, Katagiri Roshi proclaimed, "The dragon roars in the mature quality of the bell, 'pervasive joy.' Its harmonious melody matches well with the moon of Hokyoji." Then he spoke directly to the bell: "I wonder how you have gone through the vicissitudes of life with silence? The Buddha's roaring knows inexhaustibly." After dedicating the ceremony to the Buddha spirit of the bell, he continued: "We met each other at Mann Ranch in California several years ago. I was told you came to America seventy years ago with the Thomas family. You served them sometimes as a container of firewood, sometimes as a plant pot, sometimes as a rainwater container under the eave. I wonder how much you missed your own home! I struck gently."

RURAL MONASTERY IN EITZEN

With things well-established in Minneapolis, the sangha looked to the future with a new goal: to realize their teacher's dream of building a monastery. Katagiri Roshi had said:

"This is my dream, to establish a Zen monastery in the United States. A monastery is not only the building, not only the people, but also the molding of an environment. You have to think carefully how to use space: how to put the *tatami* (woven rush grass) mats, where Manjusri should be placed, where the toilet is, lots of things.

And then when you are there your life is completely inside a bamboo stick. Usually, your life is just like a snake, always going zigzag. But when you are right in the middle of a monastery, even though your life is like a snake, that snake is in the bamboo stick and very naturally you straighten out. Your life is straight and that straight is really wonderful. Then, when you leave this bamboo stick, your life is really alive. This is what I have learned in a monastery. I like it very much. That's why I want to have a Zen monastery. That is my dream.

My dream is beautiful, a huge job in my life, but even if my dream doesn't come true in my lifetime, it is going on life after life. I can still have a chance in my next life. If I believe in that way it's not necessary to rush into it, it's not necessary to go slowly. When we have to hurry, we have to hurry; when we have to be slow, we have to be slow. But if I really want to build a monastery in my lifetime, I have to really rush."

The search for a location led to a lovely 260-acre parcel of undeveloped pasture, creek, and woodland near the small town of Eitzen, Minnesota, very close to the border with Iowa. The land, formerly used for grazing cattle, was located on Winnebago Creek, two miles west of the Mississippi River, amid the rolling hills of the Driftless Area of southeastern Minnesota. A manageable three-hour drive from Minneapolis, it was well located to serve students in neighboring states. Katagiri Roshi loved the site, choosing it over others that were closer and came with fewer access and building challenges. To buy the land, Zen Center refinanced the mortgage on its Minneapolis property, taking on more debt to both improve the city center and make a down payment on the land. It was purchased for \$109,000 in a signing event held on July 7, 1978, at Nancy James' Blue Heron Cafe.

Katagiri Roshi's vision was to recreate Dogen's thirteenth-century monastic training practices in a quiet, natural setting. He believed in the importance of leaving behind the distractions of modern life and spending some time in more primitive conditions. He wanted two large buildings: a Buddha hall for chanting and services, and a zendo for zazen. With future construction needs in mind, 2000 Norway and white pines were planted in April and May 1979. Before planting began, a ceremony was held, and Katagiri gave this invocation:

Six years have passed since we sowed the seeds of the Buddha Way in Midwest. No one knows as to how much the sowed seeds have grown. No answer is found in the only accurate real process we have done so. Just like a scarecrow he continually catches the moon and cultivates clouds. On the 28th of April 1979, we all, with a reverential heart, dedicate our chanting of Prajnaparamita-Heart Sutra to Deities of Eitzen land, asking them our declaration. On behalf of all the Sangha, I and all attendants here ask your forgiveness for our destruction of all macro and micro creatures and the nature of the Eitzen land. We ask your permission to plant about 2,000 pine trees on this site for the good of the mutual growth of the mountains, the rivers, and all creatures in past, present, future. May your compassion protect the growth of the pine trees from earth, water, fire, wind, and any other possible damage, generation after generation, for all People who come to practice the Buddha Way. At this very moment when we dig out the ground and plant a tree, what is it?

RŌ

Water of the ocean is swallowed up at one gulp
Flowers of 2,000 trees bloom in the triple world.

Thirty years later, some of those pines were harvested and used to construct the *sodo* building at Ryumonji, the monastery in Iowa founded by Katagiri heir Shoken Winecoff.

The first sesshin on the land was held in October 1980 under a large Army surplus tent. People slept in tents and water was carried from a spring. Over the next two summers, a zendo, teacher's cabin, and kitchen/bath house were built. Shoken Winecoff recalls that the buildings, intended to be temporary, were built with green oak that had been cut by a local power company. Of those early days, Winecoff says "We learned to be content with what we had, and live and work together in harmony with each other."

A workshop/dormitory was built in 1989, and other development continued over the years. The property was reduced to 105 acres in 2002 with the sale of 155 acres to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources for addition to the Richard J. Dorer Memorial Hardwood State Forest. In 2007, the city center and rural practice center amicably separated into two independent organizations. The rural center is now incorporated as Hokyoji Zen Practice Community and is guided by Katagiri Roshi heir Dokai Georgesen.

TEMPLE NAMES

The Minnesota Zen Meditation Center's city and rural practice centers received their official temple names in 1983, Katagiri Roshi giving each place a two-fold name: a mountain name and a temple name. In ancient times, practice centers were situated in places far from worldly affairs, usually in the mountains. Temples came to be identified not only by their proper name, but also by their location.

Katagiri explained that "the mountain is an important symbol. It reminds us that our practice must be centered in this world, strong and firm as a mountain, yet reaching out to penetrate the heavens above. The mountain represents a place where we can create harmonious lives and show a good example for living in peace to our world and our friends." His inspiration for the mountain names he chose is in the fourth line of this poem by Eihei Dogen Zenji:

Yearning for the Ancient Ways

The Way of the Patriarchs coming from the West
I transmit to the East
Yearning for the ancient ways,
Catching the moon, cultivating the clouds
Untouched by worldly dust fluttering about
A thatched hut, snowy evening, deep mountain

The city center in Minneapolis received the name Kounzan Ganshoji (Cultivating Clouds Mountain, Living in Vow Temple). About that name, Katagiri said:

“The name Kounzan Ganshoji is a good teacher for us. When a monk goes out to train, traditionally he is called *unsui* (clouds and water). He must be like clouds and water with no attachment to any place or thing, flowing with the current of the Buddha Dharma and blown by the winds of Buddha’s practice.

When we think of cultivating a cloud, we think it is impossible because a cloud is not something you can grab hold of. How could you cultivate it? Likewise, can we grab hold of the Buddha Dharma? No, if there is something to grab hold of, then it is not the true Buddha Dharma but only our idea about it. Yet we have to cultivate the real Buddha Dharma moment to moment in our lives. We have to consider how we can cultivate that which we cannot grasp. What does this mean?

To do this we have to make a vow. And making a vow means living a vow. How can we cultivate the clouds of the Buddha Dharma? We can vow to live the teaching each day, to make our lives a full expression of that teaching, to become a cloud itself. This is what we mean by cultivating clouds. You think it is impossible, but still you can vow to do it and make that vow penetrate each moment of your life. Expressing the sincere desire to manifest our Buddha Nature right here and now, we cultivate clouds; we become a cloud flowing in the wind of the Buddha Way.”

For the rural center, Katagiri chose the name Chogetsuzan Hokyoji (Catching the Moon Mountain, Jewel Mirror Temple). About that name, Katagiri said,

“In the name Chogetsuzan Hokyoji (Catching the Moon Mountain, Jewel Mirror Temple) we have the image of the moon, symbol of our highest aspirations for life and the perfect ideal illuminating life. We can strive to touch or catch it, yet practically speaking there is no way to truly catch the moon.

However, this does not mean that we don’t try or that we don’t care about the perfect ideal in our lives. On the contrary, we have to be a constant reflection of that perfection. We have to be a jewel mirror, reflecting the moon so exquisitely that it is possible to think that the moon that is reflected is exactly the moon. Of course, it is not, but still our lives must become this clear reflection of highest reality, a Jewel Mirror untouched by worldly dust. This is our practice for each moment.”

TEACHING THE DHARMA

When Katagiri Roshi began teaching Zen in San Francisco in the 1960s, he was greatly challenged to find a way to present Buddhist thought to young Americans. He was nervous about public speaking and frustrated by his limited English language ability. None of that deterred students from coming to hear to his talks, but he worried that he could not succeed in America because of his poor English. In Minnesota, he worked hard to increase his vocabulary and improve his grammar so that he could express his meaning ever more clearly.

Katagiri’s dharma talks reflected his deep interest in classic Buddhist texts. He was particularly drawn to the writings of Eihei Dogen, the historically and religiously important monk who brought Soto Zen to Japan from China in the thirteenth century. Katagiri spent many hours examining and translating texts that he wanted to comment on, sometimes inviting students to help him fine-tune his translations. Visitors to his study would often find him engrossed in poring over some text. His study was also his refuge. He said, “Sometimes I am alone in my study, just thinking, contemplating Buddha’s teaching, without doing anything, just sitting there. That is the thing that makes me relax and feel joyful.”

He was a prolific lecturer, tailoring his talks to a broader audience on Saturday mornings, and giving more in-depth commentary on Wednesday evenings and during sesshins, workshops, and other practice events. He also planned a comprehensive Buddhist Studies Program with a five-year curriculum covering Buddhist history and philosophy. That program, taught by his senior students, got underway in 1988.

Late in life Katagiri Roshi said that he had never had a comfortable feeling from giving a talk. Yet his ease with public speaking seemed to grow, so that by the 1980s he could shine in any situation. Although many continued to feel that it was difficult to follow and understand the content of his talks, he was beloved for his spontaneity, humor, humility, and wise verbal expression. His warm heart, quiet dignity, and depth of understanding drew seekers who intuited the truth not only in his words, but also in his way of life and manner of just being present with people. In his talks he delighted in referring to television shows that he liked to watch, such as “Bewitched” and “Casper the Friendly Ghost.” And he often told revealing stories from his own life to show that the Buddhist path is not always smooth.

Katagiri’s talks in Minnesota were tape recorded. Some were edited and published in Zen Center’s newsletter and its literary magazine *Udumbara*. The first book drawn from his talks was *Returning to Silence*, edited by Yuko Conniff and Willa Hathaway, and published in 1988. Since his death, three more books have been published: *You Have to Say Something*, edited by Steve Hagen and published in 1997; *Each Moment Is the Universe*, edited by Andrea Martin and published in 2007; and *The Light That Shines through Infinity*, also edited by Andrea Martin and published in 2017. In an ongoing project, over 1,100 recordings of Katagiri’s talks have been digitized and some are now available on the internet.

As his teacher Hayashi Roshi had once been, Katagiri Roshi was a prominent Buddhist circuit rider. He was in great demand and traveled often. Although he did not relish frequent travel and was a nervous flyer, he readily agreed to teach when asked. He regularly visited and nurtured fledgling Zen groups in Anchorage, Alaska; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Omaha and Kearney, Nebraska; St. Louis, Missouri; Manhattan, Kansas; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Iowa City, Iowa; and Thunder Bay, Ontario. Many of these groups have since developed into established Zen Centers with resident teachers.

Katagiri accepted invitations to participate in events and lead retreats across the country from Vermont to California, and once in Mexico. He served as guest teacher at Zenshujii, Soto Zen’s North American headquarters in Los Angeles, and at San Francisco Zen Center locations. He took part in two major Buddhist-Christian conferences at the Naropa Institute in Boulder, Colorado. He also spoke to college classes, including those of Dr. Bardwell Smith at Carleton College, and to religious, arts, and culture groups. Through his travels, Katagiri became widely known and served as something of an ambassador for Buddhism at a time when American interest was beginning to take root.

SEWING PRACTICE

The practice of Zen students sewing and wearing dharma robes was introduced to American Zen at Katagiri Roshi’s suggestion. A spiritual practice going back to Shakyamuni Buddha’s instructions to his disciples, it is known as *nyoho-e*, meaning “the Buddha’s teaching represented as it really is by means of one’s clothes or robe.” *Nyoho-e* sewing was brought to San Francisco Zen Center in 1970 by visiting Zen master Eshun Yoshida (1907–1982), abbot of Kaizenji Temple in Tsushima, near Nagoya, Japan.

Yoshida Roshi was a dharma heir of Eko Hashimoto (1890–1965), Katagiri’s second teacher. Hashimoto Roshi was in the lineage of Oka Sotan (1860-1921), an important teacher and Dogen scholar. Shunryu Suzuki’s master, So-on Gyukujun, was also in the Sotan lineage, as was Ian Kishizawa, another of Suzuki’s teachers. Shohaku Okumura, who would later serve as interim abbot of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center after Katagiri’s death, is also in the Sotan lineage through his teacher Kosho Uchiyama and grandmaster Kodo Sawaki.



Unlike the usual Japanese practice of wearing purchased robes, Hashimoto Roshi, and others in the Sotan lineage, favored the practice of sewing one's own *okesa* (the large robe or ceremonial cloth that is worn across the shoulder). In fostering sewing as a spiritual practice, Hashimoto was following the teachings of Eihei Dogen, who wrote about *okesa* practice in the *Shobogenzo* after encountering it in China. Hashimoto had encouraged *okesa* sewing at Eiheiiji, and it was usual for monks to sew when they had time. Katagiri made an *okesa* while training there and had worn hand-sewn robes since then.

When Yoshida visited San Francisco in 1970 she was puzzled: why were students not wearing *rakusu*? A *rakusu* is a small version of the *okesa*, with straps attached so it can be worn around the neck, somewhat like a bib. But few people had them because Suzuki Roshi had not offered *jukai* (the ceremony of receiving Buddha's precepts as a lay student) for several years. He was, however, planning to resume doing this soon.

Since the *jukai* ceremony includes the bestowal of a *rakusu*, Yoshida and Suzuki discussed the possibility of the nuns at Kaizenji sewing them for the students. But with so many wishing to receive the precepts, there was not enough time for that. Katagiri suggested that students could sew their own *rakusu*. He argued that the skill should be learned in America to carry the practice into the future. Suzuki agreed and asked Yoshida: please teach us. Yoshida agreed to lead a sewing sesshin and lecture on the practice of sewing and wearing Buddha's robe. But once the decision that students would sew their own *rakusu* was made, only one week remained before Yoshida would return to Japan. So, Katagiri asked Tomoe to begin studying with her immediately. He said, "Go to Yoshida Roshi with some fabric. You don't need to worry about our babies. I will stay here. Go!"

In the beginning, Tomoe was not eager to take up sewing practice. As a child, she had watched her mother sew but felt no interest in doing it herself. Early in their marriage, Katagiri had encouraged Tomoe to learn *okesa* sewing. He arranged for her to study with an old school friend of his, which would mean living away from home for a while. Tomoe was secretly relieved when her pregnancy preventing her from going.

In San Francisco, Katagiri had asked Tomoe to learn how to make *zafus* (meditation cushions) and *zabutons* (floor mats). Zen Center was using cushions from Japan, but Americans needed bigger and sturdier cushions. Learning to make *zabutons* was not a big problem—they were like the futons her mother made; as a girl, she had helped with the stuffing. The *zafus* were more of a challenge. Tomoe figured it out using instructions written by Kosho Uchiyama for an early version of his book *Opening the Hand of Thought*. She then taught another person, who taught others, and ultimately the San Francisco Zen Center started a stitchery business.

But now, in 1970, in the moment when her husband sent her to Yoshida Roshi, Tomoe's heart sank. She knew that this time she would not escape from sewing Buddha's robes. She quickly grabbed some cloth and headed off. Tomoe remembers thinking, "I have bad karma because I have to sew." But as soon as she started studying, Yoshida's words penetrated her heart and Tomoe realized, "I have good karma because I met this teacher." Tomoe learned quickly, and by August thirty-six students had sewed *rakusu* and received them from Suzuki Roshi in a *jukai* ceremony. The next year, Yoshida Roshi returned and taught *okesa* sewing in preparation for the ordination of four monks.



Ten years after meeting Yoshida Roshi, Tomoe Katagiri sewed her own seven-row *okesa* and *zagu* (bowing cloth) as a lay practitioner. She and son Ejyo traveled to Yoshida Roshi's temple in Japan, where Tomoe received the *okesa*, *zagu*, and a set of *oryoki* (ceremonial eating bowls) from her teacher in a 1980 ceremony that recognized her as a sewing master. Tomoe recalls that she was able to accomplish all that sewing in the extraordinarily short time of one week because her husband took over domestic duties in support of her efforts.

As Tomoe studied with Yoshida, she kept careful notes. Later, from these notes and her own research and experience, she wrote *Study of the Okesa, Nyoho-e: Buddha's Robe*. Her book was published by Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in 1986 and quickly became a widely used guide to the history, meaning, and technique of Buddhist sewing practice. She also translated a book by Tsugen Narasaki Roshi,

Sodo No Gyoji, which describes traditional monastic practice and includes a chapter on Buddhist robes, also published by Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in 1986. That book helps English-speaking practitioners understand the often-complex rituals and religious forms they encounter in Japan. A revised edition was published in 2011 by Zuioji monastery as *Practices at a Zen Monastery*.

As a master of *nyoho-e*, Tomoe taught well-honed skills and deep reverence for Buddha's robes to countless students across the country. When she retired from teaching in 2013, Tomoe named three successors: Rosemary Taylor, a priest at Minnesota Zen Meditation Center, Tracey Walen, a priest at Clouds in Water Zen Center, and Kaaren Wiken, a traveling lay teacher based in Wisconsin who leads sewing retreats at various Zen centers.

ORDINATIONS AND TRANSMISSION

An important duty of Katagiri Roshi's life was training priests who would carry Buddha's teaching into the future. He ordained fourteen men and women for this. Zentetsu Tim Burkett and Daitetsu Norm Randolph were the first, ordained on April 15, 1978. They were followed by Tokan Steve Hagen on October 7, 1979, and Joen Janet Snyder (O'Neal) and Sekijun Karen Thorkelson (Sunna) on December 20, 1980. Teijo Roberta Munnich was ordained on June 27, 1981, Yuko Pamela Conniff and Rosan Osamu Yoshida on October 2, 1982, Emyo Jennifer Dielman (Nakayama) on June 4, 1983, and Myo-on Yvonne Rand on April 8, 1984. Nonin Donald Chowaney, Dosho Mike Port, and Dokai Ronald Georgesen were ordained on August 18, 1984. The final ordination was Shoken Floyd Winecoff on May 4, 1985.

Life as a Zen priest in America was quite different from a priest's life in Japan. American priests had to support themselves financially and take care of their families. Many experienced problems in their personal lives, and some married priests ended up divorced. A concerned Katagiri decided to pause the ordinations. Although he later did agree to ordain a few people, his final illness prevented this from happening.

Fortunately, he was able to complete the traditional process of dharma transmission with twelve of his disciples: Daitetsu Randolph, Dokai Georgesen, Dosho Port, Emyo Dielman (Nakayama), Joen Snyder (O'Neal), Myo-on Rand, Nonin Chowaney, Rosan Yoshida, Sekijun Thorkelson (Sunna), Shoken Winecoff, Teijo Munnich, and Tokan Hagen. On October 5, 1989, Katagiri Roshi put on his *okesa*, sat cross-legged, and completed the *menju* ceremony twelve times, meeting each disciple face-to-face as the first step in *shiho* (dharma transmission). After each disciple did three full bows, Katagiri said, "The dharma gate of buddhas and ancestors is realized," thus confirming that student and teacher had met. It was an auspicious date, for on that day it was announced that the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Tenzin Gyatso, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama.



Two months later, on December 8, 1989, despite severe weakness and pain from cancer, Katagiri officiated at the final transmission ceremony, giving each disciple permission to teach independently. He transmitted the precepts to them with the help of his long-time friend Tsugen Narasaki Roshi (1925–2022), who served as preceptor. Narasaki, assisted by Hokan Saito and Ekai Korematsu, also represented Katagiri Roshi as his proxy during some ceremonial elements of the lengthy ritual. With the ritual completed, Katagiri was happy and relieved to fulfill the responsibility received from his own teacher—the duty to qualify the next generation of teachers.

In giving dharma transmission to what might seem an unusually large group of disciples, Katagiri said he did not want to discriminate among them, or to name someone as his primary successor. Each one had the same opportunity. He hoped to have two more years with his students, time for them to develop a more

mature dimension of practice. But if not, it could not be helped. Since Katagiri's death on March 1, 1990, this group of teachers has distinguished itself in service to the dharma, and his lineage is thriving.

In addition to ordaining priests, Katagiri Roshi gave lay Buddhist initiation to six large groups of students in *jukai* ceremonies held in Minneapolis: April 9, 1977, March 1, 1980, February 27, 1982, March 3, 1984, March 29, 1986, and December 10, 1988. He also performed the ceremony for groups in St. Louis and Milwaukee, and for individuals in various locations. Six months after Katagiri's death, a large group of his students received lay ordination from preceptor Tsugen Narasaki on September 9, 1991, in Minneapolis.

Many of Katagiri's lay initiates have gone on to take priest vows and become dharma teachers. For example, Jisho Cary Warner received transmission from Tozen Akiyama and founded Stone Creek Zen Center in Sebastopol, California. Zuiko Julie Redding (1943-2024) received transmission from Tsugen Narasaki and was the resident teacher at Cedar Rapids Zen Center in Iowa. Byakuren Judith Ragir received transmission from Joen Snyder O'Neal and is guiding teacher emerita at Clouds in Water Zen Center in Saint Paul. Jodo Cliff Clusin received transmission from Shoken Winecoff and founded Prairie Mountain Zen Center in Longmont, Colorado. Genpo Michael O'Neal received transmission from Shoken Winecoff and is co-founder of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center in Minneapolis.

CONNECTIONS WITH JAPAN

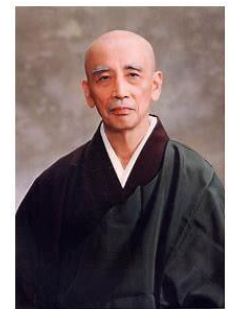
Katagiri Roshi wanted priests to undergo longer periods of monastic training, ideally in Japan. So, in the Summer of 1983, Katagiri, Tomoe, Steve Hagen, Yuko Conniff, and Mike Port traveled in Japan. They hoped to start a connection with a traditional monastery where American men and women could engage in formal training. The group visited eight monasteries and four temples with zazen groups. Most importantly, they practiced for two weeks at Zuioji, one of the most respected Soto Zen training centers for men in Japan, located in Ehime Prefecture on Shikoku, a smaller island south of the main island of Japan. While at Zuioji, Katagiri visited with Tsugen Narasaki Roshi (1926–2022), re-establishing their friendship and dharma connection.



Tsugen and Dainin were dharma brothers. They met as novices at Eihei-ji when Eko Hashimoto, who had such a profound effect on young Dainin's life, was the *godo* (head training teacher). Tsugen had subsequently practiced with Hashimoto for many years, and now was vice-abbot of Zuioji. Tsugen visited Katagiri in Minnesota the following year, further strengthening their connection. He led *rohatsu* sesshin in Minneapolis, visited Hokyōji, then went on to visit San Francisco, Tassajara, and Green Gulch Farm in California.

Tsugen Narasaki's older brother was Ikko Narasaki Roshi (1921–1996), the illustrious abbot of Zuioji. Ikko Roshi was one of the most highly respected Zen masters of his time. In the aftermath of World War II, Ikko played a leading role in restoration of the traditional system of monastic training in Japan. He rebuilt Zuioji according to Dogen's thirteenth century specifications and then convinced Eko Hashimoto to take up the training of monks there. Katagiri and Ikko Roshi shared a deep respect for both Hashimoto and Dogen. At Katagiri's invitation, Ikko Roshi came to Minnesota in August 1985, and led a *bendo-e* (intense ten-day training period) for forty students at Hokyōji. He also led a seven-day practice period there and lectured in Minneapolis.

Student accounts of practicing with Ikko Roshi at Hokyōji, collected in the Summer 1986 issue of *Udumbara: Journal of Zen Practice*, reveal how difficult it was for American Zen students to wholeheartedly accept the strict forms of practice taught by Dogen. One wrote: "During this time we walked a fine line between absurdity and profundity called *bendo-ho*." Still, by the end of their time together, the students recognized the depth of life that Ikko manifested and felt deep affection for him. They would agree with the *Wind Bell* report on his subsequent visit to California which said: "Narasaki-roshi's personal dignity, sincerity, and simplicity served as a reminder of the strength of the Japanese Soto tradition and were an encouragement to us to try to carry on the practice of Dogen Zenji here in America."



The warm relationship between Ikko Narasaki and Dainin Katagiri turned out to be of significant consequence for Zen students in America and elsewhere. Ikko Roshi was extremely impressed by the serious Zen practice that he saw in Minnesota, and he wanted to do something to help it develop. What Katagiri wanted was a training center: a place where dedicated Americans and Japanese could live and train together according to Dogen's way of practice. They agreed that what was needed was a monastery in Japan specifically prepared to receive trainees from Western countries.

As it happened, in addition to being abbot of Zuioji, Ikko Roshi was abbot of Shogoji, a small, unused temple near the village of Ryumon in the mountains of central Kyushu, southernmost of the main Japanese islands. Now Ikko Roshi made the decision to restore this rundown temple and repurpose it as an international training center—a fully equipped monastery that could readily accommodate Western monks.

Then Ikko Roshi made a breakthrough decision. Based on seeing men and women practice together in Minnesota, and honoring Katagiri's commitment to gender equality, he decided that Shogoji would accept both men and women for training. Thanks to the great effort of many people, this vision of Shogoji was realized and in 1992 Tomoe Katagiri along with several of Katagiri Roshi's dharma heirs, participated in its first practice period. After Ikko Narasaki's death in 1996, his brother Tsugen Narasaki became abbot of both Zuioji and Shogoji.

It turns out that Katagiri Roshi had long been a supporter of gender equality in Soto Zen. Lineage holder Ben Connelly tells of a very special opportunity he had in 2024 to meet with Shundo Aoyama Roshi in Japan. A revered nun, illustrious training abbess, and author of *Zen Seeds*, Aoyama Roshi was the first woman to be appointed to the rank of Daikyoshi (Great Teacher) in the Soto Zen school and is now considered a living treasure. Meeting with Ben, she was eager to reminisce about her close friendship with Katagiri Roshi. They had gone to college together at Komazawa University, where she was one of the first nuns to receive a Master of Arts degree. Katagiri Roshi was one of her early and strongest supporters. Throughout her career, he supported her moving up and pushing through barriers to her authority.

As Katagiri Roshi hoped, many of his priests did train in Japan for substantial periods of time. Nonin Chowaney and Shoken Winecoff trained at Zuioji and Shogoji. Teijo Munnich and Yuko Conniff practiced at Hosshinji, a training monastery and temple in Obama, north of Kyoto. Dokai Georgeson and many other priests have also spent significant amounts of time practicing at temples and monasteries in Japan. Life in Japanese monasteries is not easy for Americans. But despite language and culture issues and inevitable health challenges, Katagiri's students have persisted.

Katagiri Roshi was somewhat unusual among the Japanese monks teaching in the United States in the degree to which he valued and maintained a relationship with Sotoshu, the Soto Zen organization, and its North American headquarters in Los Angeles. This surprised some, who had observed that his early tendency was to not think it particularly important. Katagiri knew that an American Zen would inevitably evolve, but he worried that Americans were impatient and would make changes too soon. He warned that there should not be a rush to change centuries-old traditions until practice in America had matured enough to understand very deeply why those traditions had endured. Then the development of American Zen would be very natural.

When, near the end of his life, Katagiri was asked about the importance of registering American temples with Sotoshu, he indicated that it was all right to either do so, or not. Likewise, it was an open question whether American priests should be registered in Japan. Katagiri did register the priests he ordained, but for American priests in general, he did not feel strongly that it was necessary, or that Americans must follow all Sotoshu requirements such as performing rituals in Japan to attain certain credentials. He was satisfied that American Zen would develop its own standards and organization.

Over the years, while American monks were traveling to Japan, many Japanese monks were coming to practice with the sangha in Minneapolis and at Hokyoji. Both Americans and Japanese realized that through this exchange they were learning how to carry Soto Zen into the future. As the relationship between Japanese and American Zen was developing, Katagiri Roshi was an important figure. He was

universally admired for his solid practice, deep insight into Buddhist sutras, and ability to present Dogen's teachings and Soto Zen to Western students, as well as for his kindness, warmth, and humility. Later, after attending his funeral, his disciple Yvonne Rand wrote,

“For the first time I came to realize that Katagiri Roshi was a bridge for the priests of Sotoshu in Japan to the United States and to their understanding of those of us here who are striving to practice Zen in the Soto tradition, just as he was a bridge for us to Japan, and to Sotoshu and to Dogen Zenji, the great philosopher, practitioner and founder of Soto Zen in Japan. More than ever, I understand what a light has gone out with his passing.”

SABBATICAL YEAR

Katagiri Roshi led an exhausting lifestyle. He was constantly in demand in his own sangha and traveled widely in response to the many requests for his teaching and practice leadership. Many people recall that in the last few years of his life, Katagiri sometimes seemed to carry heaviness or sadness with him. There was much he hoped to do in his lifetime, but he was getting older, and his health was not strong. Teaching in America had been harder than he ever imagined, and he seemed to feel the weight of understanding that he might not be able to accomplish all that he wanted to do.

In 1987 he was feeling very tired and had a persistent cough. In recognition of Katagiri and Tomoe's many years of hard work, and aware that his health and energy needed to be better supported, the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center Board of Directors offered them a sabbatical year. They happily accepted and left for Japan on December 26. Living in a small house in Shizuoka Prefecture on Honshu Island, largest of the Japanese islands, they enjoyed relaxing, sightseeing, and taking long walks together in the countryside.

Then, after making a visit to Eihei-ji, Katagiri went to Shogoji, the international training center in Kyushu, where he led the spring training period. His disciple Nonin Chowaney was in residence, along with Ekai Korematsu, who had practiced in California, and several disciples of Ikko Narasaki. David Chadwick arrived from San Francisco to practice with Katagiri. The temple was rustic, with no electricity, central heating, or propane gas. To make a telephone call meant traveling down to the village an hour away, where there was a house with a phone. Yet Katagiri found the scenery around the temple to be quite beautiful and exquisite and he experienced a peaceful and calm mind there. He also enjoyed the opportunity to engage in *takuhatsu* (ritual begging practice).

While her husband was away, Tomoe enjoyed the chance to travel with friends and spend time with relatives. Back in Minnesota, some feared that the Katagiris would want to stay in Japan after their sabbatical. But Tomoe wrote: “Hearing everything in Japanese I wonder if it is my real life; do I have another world in the U.S.A? I feel more reality to my life in the U.S.A. I miss all of you.”

Interrupting their year in Japan, the Katagiris returned to Minnesota in July 1988. They brought a visitor with them: Kyoshi Katagiri, the older brother who had been so supportive of his youngest brother's university education. Katagiri Roshi soon jumped into a demanding schedule. He officiated at the dedication of the Nebraska Zen Center, attended a Buddhist Christian Conference at the Naropa Institute in Colorado, and led the fall practice period and sesshin at Hokyoji. In September, Tsugen Narasaki arrived to lead a second *Bendo-e* at Hokyoji. After that, Katagiri and Tomoe enjoyed sightseeing with Narasaki, including trips to Northern Minnesota and Niagara Falls.

For the rest of the year, Katagiri continued to work hard. After leading weekend retreats in Minneapolis and North Carolina, he returned to Japan in late October as Chief Lecturer of the second Tokubetsu sesshin, a month-long retreat bringing together Western and Japanese teachers to build harmony and understanding and support the growth of Soto Zen in the West. One Westerner was Taiten Guareschi, abbot of Fudenji in Italy, who spoke of finding practice with Katagiri Roshi to be a transformative experience. Another was Rev. Dokusho Villalba, abbot of Luz Serena Temple in Spain. In a statement about his experience, which appeared in the sesshin Proceedings, Villalba said: “I was disarmed in front of Katagiri Roshi's modesty

and simplicity. However, I perceived this modesty like the soft layer of green moss, which covers a rock of a great energy, self-control obtained by the firm, continuous practice of zazen.”

All had hoped that a sabbatical would allow Katagiri to recover his health. But there were signs of continuing problems during his spring residence at Shogoji. Back in Minnesota that summer, Tomoe and others urged him to stay home and rest. But he said, “I want to live this way,” and pushed himself with coffee. He returned to Japan for the Tokubetsu sesshin but was ill throughout the month. Later, many wondered if he sensed that time was running out and wanted to do all he could in the time he had left.

HEALTH TROUBLES AND FINAL ILLNESS

Ending his sabbatical year and returning to Minnesota in December 1988, Katagiri Roshi kept up his busy pace. He led a seven-day sesshin, taught at Zenshuji in Los Angeles, and gave lay initiation to a group in Minneapolis. In January, he traveled to Massachusetts to give lay initiation to Yutaka Ishii, a long-time student who was dying of cancer. Delivered just before leaving on that trip, his January 7, 1989, talk titled “Dying Together,” offered guidance on being with someone who is dying. This talk, the last he ever gave, was widely published, and cherished as a teaching that his students could turn to when seeking a way to deal with the health crisis their teacher was about to face.

He had faced health problems before. In a June 1982 crisis, while teaching in Vermont, he underwent surgery for an intestinal blockage that developed after he carried some heavy dirt at Hokyoji. It was a recurrence of a difficulty that had required major surgery when he was seventeen years old. While serving in the army, he carried a heavy pail of food and his intestines twisted, requiring a re-section. Although he followed a low-fiber diet, and cooks knew not to serve beans or corn during retreats, his intestines continued to be troublesome.

Then, one evening in late January 1989, Katagiri was suddenly rushed to the hospital with high fever and extreme weakness. Doctors struggled to determine the cause, thinking for a while that it might be tuberculosis. But after a needle biopsy of his left kidney the diagnosis was certain: cancer. It was fast-growing nonendemic Burkitt’s lymphoma. A large tumor, which had taken over his right adrenal gland, was removed at the end of February, followed by chemotherapy treatments. Tomoe lived in his room at St. Mary’s Hospital. Sangha members brought food and helped in many ways. From the hospital on March 12, Katagiri wrote a message of gratitude for the groundswell of support he was receiving:

Dear All Dharma Friends,

I’m here/now.
I’m here/now.
This being complete effort;
I only achieve the continuity of this
 a day at a time with all beings.
Because you do the
 same thing every day
I have to respond to your achievement.
I’m here/now with your heart;
I hold your hands in here/now.

I don’t know the appropriate words to express my appreciation to all my dharma friends. Thinking of you all keeps my heart warm and courageous. I’m having helping chemotherapy for 12 weeks.

In deep gassho, Hojo

Returning home from the hospital, Katagiri was hopeful that he could fight off the cancer. There were more rounds of chemotherapy, along with radiation, acupuncture, massage, and herbal medicine. Lee Love recalls being one of seven men who assisted Katagiri: six students and one of his sons, one for each day of

the week. “We would help [him] up to the 3rd floor where he slept, when he couldn’t get about on his own. Helped him get dressed. Whatever was required, including carrying him to the car for his doctors’ appointments.”

Despite the hope offered by a remission, cancer eventually spread into his spine and head. Finally, after a year of aggressive treatment, Katagiri decided that it was time to stop. He said, “The body has suffered enough.” Over the next few days, friends and students called and came to his bedside to say goodbye. Then, on March 1, 1990, at 2:45 in the morning, Katagiri Roshi passed away peacefully, at home in Minneapolis, surrounded by devoted family members and students. He was sixty-two years old.

Yvonne Rand, who was skilled in natural forms of death care, directed the preparation of Katagiri’s body. She, Tomoe, sons Yasuhiko and Ejyo, and disciples who had received dharma transmission washed his body. They wrapped him in his finest robes and laid his body out in a plain wooden coffin in the zendo.

At MZMC’s 40th anniversary celebration in 2013, Karen Sunna told this story. Years ago, for her wedding to Jeff Thorkelson, she ordered from India a sari of white silk with silver threads running through it. The people in India were puzzled by this, because white is the color of death there. But the sari didn’t arrive in time, and Karen didn’t know what to do with it, once even wearing it to a Halloween party. So, she gave it to Tomoe Katagiri, who dyed and sewed it into an *okesa*. That is the robe Katagiri Roshi wore in his coffin.

Lee Love recalls the coffin: “Yvonne was able to find a traditional nailless casket made by a Hasidic casket maker. Usually in America what people do is put the body in a disposable cardboard liner that is then put in a rental casket. For cremation, only the body and the cardboard box are put into the oven. But with a traditional pine box like what the Hasidic craftsmen make, you can just put the whole casket in the crematory oven.”

Dry ice could not be found quickly, so at first the body was placed on a bed of frozen peas. After three days of a round-the-clock sitting vigil in the zendo, the invocation for the great night ceremony was held on the evening of March 3. Family and students attended the burning of his body on March 4 at the Cremation Society of Minnesota, and the ashes ceremony was held at the Society’s First Memorial Waterston Chapel.

Hundreds of mourners gathered for the funeral on April 16, 1990, at the First Universalist Church of Minneapolis. Distinguished priests from Japan and America attended, with Tsugen Narasaki serving as officiant. Eulogies were given by: Kenko Yamashita, bishop of the North American Headquarters of Soto Zen Buddhism; Zendo Matsunaga, representative of Eihei-ji monastery; Tenshin Anderson, abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center; Michael O’Neal, president of the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center; Koshin Ogui, Shin Buddhist priest and friend; Bardwell Smith, Carleton College professor and friend; and Nancy Ann James, one of the founders of Minnesota Zen Meditation Center. There was also a telegram sent by Hakudo Yamagami representing the Taizoin congregation in Japan.

Dainin Katagiri’s ashes were divided and placed in five urns. Tomoe and one or the other of her sons escorted the ashes to interment ceremonies at each of four temples. On September 5, 1990, they were placed in a memorial stupa in the cemetery at Taizoin, Katagiri’s temple in Kitada, Japan. Two days earlier, Ikko Narasaki had dedicated six tablets in memory of Jikai Dainin Daiosho at Zuijōji monastery. This event marked the first time that an important ceremony was held in Japan for memorial tablets written in both English and Japanese, a tribute to Katagiri’s importance in both countries.

An urn was placed inside the top shelf of the altar in the Buddha Hall at the Minnesota Zen Meditation Center on March 1, 1991. At Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, the ashes were interred near those of Shunryu Suzuki on March 15. Finally, on July 7, an urn was placed under a memorial stupa built on a hill overlooking the grounds of Hōkyōji in Eitzen, Minnesota. The fifth urn is with the Katagiri family.



POSTHUMOUS REVELATIONS

Katagiri Roshi had a remarkable way of being present to others with an open mind and a warm heart. Many sensed in him something deep that they believed might also be in them, and seeking it, they eagerly took up the practices he taught. As he was dying, students deluged him with expressions of love and appreciation for his life and teaching. Although Katagiri discouraged it, many idolized him. So, in dharma talks, he often told stories about his own foibles, sometimes describing himself as stubborn, stinky, or pigheaded. He cautioned that Zen is not a way to avoid facing the challenges of human nature.

About six years after his death, a hidden story began to emerge when a student in Minneapolis inadvertently mentioned an affair that she once had with him. Her revelation shocked everyone and triggered a crisis. Mediators skilled in helping religious organizations respond to ethical violations led gatherings where sangha members expressed their pain, struggling to reconcile their love and respect for Katagiri with feelings of loss and betrayal. Some members left the center. MZMC quickly adopted a strong policy of ethical conduct for all teachers, and it has been adhered to ever since.

Over time, more rumors and stories of inappropriate sexual behavior have emerged. In social situations when he was drinking alcohol Katagiri made suggestive remarks to some women, and a more direct approach to one. Reports of an affair with a student outside Minnesota surfaced, and another in Minneapolis seems likely. Beyond the initial revelation, women involved in affairs have not spoken publicly about their experiences and we may never know the whole story.

Author Natalie Goldberg, in her 1993 book *Long Quiet Highway: Waking up in America*, had described Katagiri Roshi as her ideal Zen teacher. Then, ten years later, she realized that this new information meant she owed it to her readers to tell them the whole story. And she wanted to show them how, by working through her shock and grief, she found deeper love and compassion for her teacher.

One direction of research for her frank 2004 book *The Great Failure: A Bartender, a Monk, and My Unlikely Path to Truth* led Goldberg to psychologist and Zen priest Diane Martin. As Martin tells it, Katagiri turned to her for help when problems arose in his sexual relationship with a troubled student who was a member of the extended sangha. Martin shared her story with Goldberg, who included it in her book (with names changed), and with Caryl Gopfert, who used it in her 1999 PhD dissertation (with identities concealed). Martin also posted a factual statement on a public Internet forum (See Bibliography).

How have people responded to knowing that Katagiri Roshi had a sexual problem? Some denounced him, saying his actions prove that he was not qualified to teach Buddhism. Others recognize the depth of his teaching and continue to study his books and recordings with deep appreciation. Some are inspired to examine their own behavior as imperfect human beings and keep trying to become more mature people. Some look with compassion at the psychological life of a man who suffered maternal absence as a boy, endured the trauma of war as a teen, and carried the burden of leadership without a trusted peer or advisor to turn to for support or guidance. So, there are various responses, but no excuses are made for his harmful mistakes. With compassion for all, many express love and gratitude for the impact he had on their lives.

LEGACY

Broadly learned in Buddhist history and philosophy, Katagiri Roshi had a lifelong interest in studying classic Buddhist texts, especially the writings of Eihei Dogen. And he taught about them in such a way that they became vividly alive. Audio recordings of his talks preserve his deep understanding of Buddhist thought and practice. Often bursting with humor, they reveal the sincerity and joy he brought to sharing the dharma and interacting with students. Four books compiled from his talks have been published by Shambhala Books. With these legacy recordings and books, we can go beyond his words to encounter the still living essence of his teaching. In the Fall 1986 issue of *MZMC News*, for an upcoming event on Zen and Writing which he gave with Natalie Goldberg, he offered this poem:

Word and Its Spirit

A word is a picture—one's warm heart and body
lie behind it. One's actual body temperature and
personal scent are enclosed

One sentence discloses the strength of one's whole life.
The whole body is one sentence;
The whole body is radiant light;
The whole body is the whole body.

Before his death, Katagiri Roshi wrote a poem known as *yui*ge or bequeathed verse:

Living in vow, silently sitting
Sixty-three years
Plum blossoms begin to bloom
The jeweled mirror reflects truth as it is.

Tsugen Narasaki Roshi made a commentary on this *yui*ge, saying,

“Having been blessed with unsurpassed causes and conditions for the authentic transmission of the Buddha Dharma, Katagiri Roshi planted the seeds of the Buddha in Minnesota, the center of America. Yearning to follow the ancestral wind in the meditation hall of Ganshoji, there were sixty-three years in which he came to negotiate the Way through earnestly sitting in silence. He expanded the circles of Way-Friends of one and the same practice and, as the seeds of the Buddha prospered, and the plum blossoms began to bloom with increasing fragrance, he carefully transmitted the family wind of the True Dharma; acquiring the fruit of fifteen petals. The jeweled mirror of Buddhas and Ancestors shining all the more prosperously, he is thinking that in the nature of this place, Truth as-it-is will be protected and maintained.”

A poem that Katagiri Roshi wrote in August 1988 during his final practice period at Hokyoji was published in *MZMC News* on the first anniversary of his death. This poem expresses the endlessly arising energy of his effort to practice zazen, and his lifelong vow to live and share the dharma. Now the energy of this vow is his legacy as an ancestor.

Peaceful Life

Being told that it is impossible,
One believes, in despair, “Is that so?”
Being told that it is possible,
One believes, in excitement, “That’s right.”
But, whichever is chosen,
It does not fit one’s heart neatly.
Being asked, “What is unfitting?”
I don’t know what it is.
But my heart knows somehow.
I feel an irresistible desire to know.
What a mystery “human” is!
As to this mystery:
Clarifying,
Knowing how to live,
Knowing how to walk with people,
Demonstrating and teaching,
This is the Buddha.
From my human eyes,
I feel it’s really impossible to become a Buddha.

But this “I”, regarding what the Buddha does,
Vows to practice,
To aspire,
To be resolute,
And tells myself, “Yes, I will.”
Just practice right here now,
And achieve continuity,
Endlessly,
Forever.
This is living in vow.
Herein is one’s peaceful life found.

Finally, what about the name, Great Patience, which Katagiri Roshi was so reluctant to adopt when he was eighteen? Patience in the usual sense may imply waiting or simply enduring something. In Buddhism patience is better understood as forbearance, not succumbing to reactivity but remaining calm and clear in the face of change, adversity, or provocation. A person of great patience is one who accepts the dynamic nature of reality and fits their life to it in a positive way. This patience is one of the *paramitas*, spiritual practices that nurture and manifest enlightenment.

Here is what Katagiri Roshi said when he was nearing sixty:

“Great patience means patience in peace, with no subject or object to grab onto. If you want to understand peaceful patience, you have to practice patience in everyday life [because] the place where you practice patience, and the place where patience is great or boundless, exist together. So, any time you experience patience which you cannot bear, you can be free from that experience. You have to be free from it; otherwise, you will not be ready for another experience. Every day is different. Having an experience and letting it go allows us to grow. We grow very naturally in the domain of great patience. All you have to do is accept the whole universe and throw yourself into the place where all beings coexist in peace and harmony. Just be present there. This is our practice. Then you can see real patience. At that time, you become very peaceful—your life really blooms.”

Katagiri Roshi was not always patient in either the everyday or spiritual sense. He had big hopes and plans for Zen in America. But things weren’t so easy, and he made mistakes. Still, through the ups and downs of life he kept trust in Buddhist practice and made his best effort toward the future.

In an interview with *Desert Call* magazine, Katagiri Roshi was asked what Buddhist teaching meant the most to him. He said, “I think the most meaningful of Buddhist practices is to do small things every day with great hope—putting the seed in the desert, regardless of whether it will grow or not.” From Katagiri Roshi’s hope and effort, much has since grown and blossomed.



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