

EULOGY FOR JW HARRINGTON

Zen Master Soeng Hyang

When I first met JW, around twenty years ago, he had come to interview for the position to be the director of the Providence Zen Center.

The Zen Center was not your average corporate headquarters. When he arrived, I brought him to a room that had two mats and a couple of cushions on the floor. In JW's usual calm and uncomplaining manner, he sat down and was completely there for our interview. He gave me no indication that he thought that I, or the unusual décor, was lacking in any way.

He was attentive, kind, patient, and obviously, very intelligent.

JW was the first employee we ever had that was not a Zen practitioner. Up until that time, we all had mostly just been "playing" office. Oh, we were doing pretty well, but, when JW came, we all felt that our ship had come in. He gave us not only his wonderful organizational skills, he brought with him his kind wit, absolute steadiness, and faithful determination to do things right. JW worked very hard. I know he loved his work very much.

In the past week there has been a huge amount of sadness about JW's death. I'm still having a hard time believing that I will never see him again. If there is a bright side to losing JW, it has been being able to be with and speak with all the people who loved JW so much. It's been so good to be able to spend some time with his family. We all need each other right now. It's by telling stories about him that we are able to be with him and begin to heal.

JW loved his family. He loved his wife Jayne and his mother Barbara. He loved it when his sister and brother would come. He loved to talk about his nieces and nephews. Loved to be with them at the "shack." We all know that he was not one to do much vacationing, but the time he did spend with his family was very important to him.

He also enjoyed seeing all of the Kwan Um School members; when we would gather for our ceremonies, he'd always be right at the Zen Center entrance, greeting and registering.

He was the perfect host. He always knew everyone's name and where they were from.

He also loved photography. Through the years he took beautiful pictures.

JW and I worked together for twenty years, and in all of that time I never felt judged by him. The two of us couldn't have been more different. Unlike JW, I am not an office person. Computers and writing and organizing are not what I do best. We complemented each other. When things felt complicated or really difficult I could always, always depend on him to be available to help me sort things out.

We did our best work in restaurants. The computer would come out, even before the eggs and toast were eaten. To me it always felt like a party. I felt comfortable



and cared for. We liked to eat and work at the same time. We liked to be with each other. I just loved and appreciated him so much.

I woke up this morning at 3 o'clock. I have a sky light over my bed and the moon was shining brightly. I lay there, thinking about JW and what to say in his eulogy. I came downstairs, and because JW taught me how to use my computer, I was able to write this down. And as I was writing, I heard an email come in. It came from one of his admirers in Germany. This is what it said:

Dear Bobby,

I woke up this morning remembering J.W.

*It was his tenderness and his ever-giving way
—his great heart— that most appeared.*

Love, Jo

As Jayne will tell you, JW was loved all over the world. I know our prayers and love for him are reaching him. As we continue to pray, he will continue to heal.

As I looked up at the moon this morning, I remembered that it was nearly full on the day that he left us. Now it is waning. That is what the moon does. Each phase is complete in itself. JW's life and JW's death are also like that.

What he has given us will not wane. I thank him for everything. He will always be in my heart.

Grief has many faces: sadness, anger, numbness, confusion, depression, denial. But the most important thing is that we do not judge our own grief or the grief of others. Be gentle with yourself and with one another. Love one another. Support one another. Forgive one another. This life is precious and often seems too short. Cherish our time on this earth and live life fully. ☸