

My First Earth-Shaking Experience at the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

我在萬佛城經歷的第一次「地震」

A Talk by Marion Roberson at the Buddha Hall of the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas on February 8, 2025

Chinese Translated by Janet Lee

果摩居士2025年2月8日講於萬佛聖城佛殿

芬陀利 中譯

My name is Marion Robertson and my Dharma name is Gwo Mo. I would like to talk about how I came to learn Buddhism and how I met the Master, so that's my topic. First, I'd like to talk about my childhood experiences with religion and what I believed as a child, and then I want to talk about my first day at the City of 10,000 Buddhas, which was an "earth-shaking" experience.

I grew up in a small town on the East Coast. I had played in woods and wetlands across the street from my house, so nature was my playground. One time, when I was about four years old, my mother brought me to a post office which was a large white building with marble steps.

Inside, against a white background, I saw a woman dressed in an all-black robe from her head down to her feet. It was very dramatic contrast between this woman in black and the white background. So, I asked my mother, "What's that?" She said, "Well, that's a nun. She's someone who devotes her life to serving God and helping people." And I thought, "Well, if somebody can do that, why would they want to do anything else?" These nuns were Catholic nuns, and my family was Protestant, so I was not going to become a nun, but I pursued my interest in religion through childhood and high school.

我的名字是瑪麗安·羅伯遜，法名果摩。我想分享我的學佛因緣以及遇到上人的經歷。我先講講自己兒時的宗教經歷和當時的信仰；接著想談我第一天到萬佛城所遇到的「地震」洗禮。

我生長在美國東岸的一個小鎮。我家房子對面是樹林和濕地，因此大自然就是我的遊樂場。大約四歲的時候，有次媽媽帶我去郵局，那是一棟有大理石台階的大型白色建築物。

在郵局裏，我看到一位從頭到腳裹在黑色長袍裏的女子。長袍的黑和建築的白，形成非常鮮明的對比。我問母親：「那是誰？」她說：「那是修女，畢生致力於侍奉上帝和幫助別人。」我心想：「能終其一生做這些事，哪有什麼工作比這個更好的？」她們是天主教修女，而我的家人是基督新教徒，所以我並不打算成為修女。但這份對宗教的好奇，自幼一直伴隨著我直到高中時期。

In elementary and middle school, I was a member of a Christian Girls club, and we had a lot of the activities that Girl Scouts had, but we also studied the Bible. Then in high school, I was a member of Youths for Christ, which had talks and activities for Christian youths. So, I was very involved in Christianity.

When I went to college, I joined a Christian discussion club. There were four other members, five students in the group and a leader. When it came to the election of officers for this club, there were five of us, but only four positions.

The requirements to be an officer of this club were things that I wasn't sure I completely agreed with, so I did not run for office, and I was the one non-officer of the whole group. I went to college at John F. Kennedy University, but as I'm a slow reader and writer, I had trouble in college, so I left college before graduating.

In 1974, my brother was getting married in Berkeley and I came out for his wedding and stayed there for a while. In Berkeley, I worked with severely emotionally disturbed teenagers; one of whom had been institutionalized since he was four years old. He had been strapped down, and because he didn't have stimulus from the outside, he went inside, and he had developed psychic abilities. He knew things that he couldn't possibly know.

When I was still studying at John F. Kennedy University, I had an assignment to have a cross-cultural awareness experience. I was a volunteer at the East-West Academy of Healing Arts, which taught different healing methods. We were invited to come to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas for Easter weekend.

This was in 1978. The program began on a Friday evening, but I had a prior appointment, so I didn't arrive until Saturday at lunch. In the afternoon, the nuns brought us past the big drum and the bell in the fire station building to a big tree by the creek. We sat on cushions in a circle there as the nuns talked to us about meditation.

They said, "We'll try meditating for 15 minutes, and we'll end the meditation with a hand bell. If we're lucky, Master Hua will come speak to us." After about 15 minutes, although I had my eyes closed, I could hear footsteps through the grass that crossed over the circle. I knew that Master Hua had arrived, and he was going to his place by the nuns under the tree. Just as he arrived at his place, there was a loud noise. "Boom!" I thought, Wow, that drum is really loud.

I thought it was the drum in the fire station. Then I realized,

中小學時，我參加一個基督教女童社團，我們有許多類似女童軍的活動，但同時也學習聖經。高中時，我加入「基督教青年會」，這個組織會為基督徒青少年舉辦講座和各種活動。因此，當時的我深深沉浸在基督教氛圍裏。

上大學後，我加入一個基督徒的討論社團。當時社團有我和其他四名學生，除了組長，共有五位成員。推選社團幹部時，我們有五個人，卻只有四個職位。

當時，我對某些社團幹部守則心存疑慮而放棄參選，因此我成了社團中唯一一位非幹部成員。就讀約翰甘迺迪大學時，由於我閱讀和寫作速度較慢，大學讀得不是很順利，沒能畢業就離開學校。

1974年，我哥哥在柏克萊舉行婚禮，我特地去參加，並在那裏停留一段時間。住在柏克萊時，我從事患有嚴重情緒障礙青少年的輔導工作。其中有個男孩，四歲就被送進療養院，常年被綑綁。由於沒有外在世界的刺激，他進入自己的內在，結果有了超感知能力，能說出一些他根本無從得知的事情。

當我還在約翰甘迺迪大學就讀時，其中一項作業是進行跨文化體驗。當時我在「東西方康復藝術學院」擔任志工，該學院教授不同的治療方法。那年復活節週末，我們受邀來萬佛聖城。

時間回溯到1978年。活動於週五晚間開始，因為我之前還有事，直到週六午齋時才抵達。當天下午，幾位女眾法師帶著我們穿過消防屋的大鼓和銅鐘，來到溪邊的一棵大樹旁。我們在那裏圍成一圈坐在墊子上，聆聽女眾法師們講解如何打坐。



This was in 1978. We sat on cushions in a circle near a big tree by the creek as the nuns talked to us about meditation.

這是1978年。我們在溪邊的一棵大樹旁，聆聽女眾法師們講解如何打坐。

No, that was an earthquake! I was still in meditation, and I had opened my eyes, and things looked fine. Since the bell didn't ring yet, I closed my eyes and sat back in meditation. Then I realized that I just sat through an earthquake waiting for the little bell to ring. I am a nervous person; I jump if a pencil drops, but I sat through an earthquake, so I thought I should really listen to what this abbot had to say.

What did he talk about? He talked about earthquakes, of course. He talked about the six types of earthquakes. Then the nuns showed him these tree roots. They had grown together. They were cut, and looked like two people embracing each other with a stone in between them.

The nuns were using it as an incense holder. Shifu then gave the history of these tree roots. He said that these were two people who were too much in love. They vowed to always stay together no matter what happened. "In the heavens, they vowed to be as two birds flying wingtip to wingtip; on earth, they vowed to be two intertwined branches of a tree." So, they did. They were stuck together, and they fell lower and lower together. So here they were as intertwined tree roots. [The stone represents the money that they were attached to, as they were also very attached to wealth]. When he finished speaking, people asked questions.

法師說：「我們先試著坐15分鐘，聽到引磬聲代表打坐結束。幸運的話，或許上人會來給我們開示。」約莫十五分鐘後，雖然我還閉著眼睛，但我聽到穿過草地的腳步聲，越過我們圍的圓圈。我知道，上人來了，他正走向法師們為他準備的位置。就在他剛站定的時候，突然聽到轟然巨響！我心頭一震：「這鼓聲也太宏亮了。」

我以為是消防屋的鼓聲，後來才恍然大悟：「不對，是地震！」我睜開雙眼環顧四周，一切如常。由於引磬還沒響，我再度閉上眼睛，繼續打坐。後來我才意識到，自己是在等待開靜中安然度過地震。我這個人向來膽小，就連一支鉛筆掉了都會被嚇得跳起來，但我卻能在地震中穩坐如山，我覺得應該好好聽聽這位住持的開示。

那上人說了什麼呢？他開示的正是地震。他講解六種地震的因緣。這時，女眾法師們給上人看幾截盤根錯節的樹根——交纏的樹根切開後的橫切面，竟像是兩個抱著石頭緊緊相擁的人。



The Master was talking the history of these tree roots.
上人在為大家講述樹根的因緣。

Some people said, “You made this earthquake, didn’t you?” It was certainly connected to Master Hua, but I don’t think he decided to have an earthquake for the fun of it. He didn’t say anything. People asked questions, and after he answered them, everyone was sitting quietly.

Then there was another “Boom.” Not as loud as the first one, but we had our eyes open this time around. We could see the circle that we were sitting in lift up from one side, and be turned around. At that point, Master Hua stood up and said, “Well, that’s all,” and then walked off. There were other minor tremors throughout the afternoon, and in the evening, we were all required to get up and speak and talk about our experience of the earthquake.

People got up and spoke. One of the other speakers said he had been in Ukiah in town and said that the windows around him were shaking. This made me realize that this wasn’t our private earthquake, that other people had also experienced it for different reasons. I’ll tell you about my second visit to the City of 10,000 Buddhas next time. ❀

法師們將它作為香爐。上人接著講這些樹根的因緣。他說，這原是一對癡情男女，他們發願生生世世永不分離——「在天願做比翼鳥，在地願為連理枝。」於是，願望成真，他們相互糾纏，不斷沉淪。如今，便化作纏繞在一起的樹根。（石頭代表金錢，他們對財富也非常執著。）開示完畢，眾人開始提問。

有些人說：「這次地震是您顯神通吧？」雖然這場地震跟上人確實有關，但我不認為他會一時興起就讓大地震動。上人笑而不答。眾人提問完畢，他一一解惑後，大家都靜靜地坐著。

接著又是一聲巨響。雖然不如第一回那麼大聲，但這次我們眼睛都睜著。我們親眼看到我們所圍成的圓圈從一邊升起，被轉了方向。這時，上人站起來說：「好了，就這樣吧！」就走開了。整個下午還有其他輕微的震動，到了晚上，我們被要求說說自己下午的地震經歷。

大家紛紛起身發言。其中一位提到，他當時正在瑜伽市，周圍的窗戶都在晃動。這讓我意識到，下午並非只有我們遇到地震，其他人也以不同的方式經歷地震。關於我第二次造訪萬佛聖城的經歷，留待下次再跟大家分享。 ❀

