

ROBERT JINSEN KENNEDY

The Case

What I remember about Bernie are his hungry ghosts. He told me his compelling insight was his experience of the hungry ghosts of the world calling him to come and feed them. It was their voices that moved him to dress down, go into the streets, and live their hunger. He said I should not develop a Zen club that does Zen things and uses Zen words but rather, just do the work of compassion. Some of Bernie's students did not want to take this turn to the street and social action and left him for more traditional teachers. Bernie told me he did not want to deal with others' personal problems; he wanted to start up businesses and programs that gave work to others and help them to help others in turn. So he closed the Zen Community of New York and all he had developed there and left it ... for what? He didn't know. He was never more a Zen teacher than he was at that moment.