

New Year's Eve in The Old Days ~ with Shinzen Young

00:00:00 Charlie left me a note reminding me about the old days.
00:00:16 Where are you Charlie?
00:00:17 Right here.
00:00:18 The really old days that he can remember and a few of you can remember.
00:00:26 The really old days I had a center in Koreatown.
00:00:34 We did exactly the same thing that we were doing here.
00:00:39 That was 25 years ago.
00:00:50 So it's downtown LA and it's a long time ago.
00:00:55 We used to do exactly what we do.
00:00:58 We'd sit in the New Year, every single New Year we would do that.
00:01:03 Except it was a lot more dramatic than we're going to get to experience.
00:01:11 Because they hadn't yet outlawed the pistoleros.
00:01:19 I think it's now illegal, right, to shoot off firearms in LA?
00:01:25 They still do it.
00:01:27 Well, it wasn't even illegal.
00:01:28 It wasn't even discouraged.
00:01:29 We were right in the heart of downtown LA.
00:01:37 So what would happen is – yeah, I'd forgotten all about this until Charlie wrote that note.
00:01:43 But Charlie and Judy remember.
00:01:46 Anyone else go that far back to CMC?
00:01:51 Not in this crowd.
00:01:52 Oh yeah, Robert.
00:01:53 So what would happen is we'd do our set and then you're in Samadhi and to some extent
00:02:04 pretty mellow.
00:02:05 You're doing your chant and it was the same things.
00:02:09 You know, money, pot, lay home, exactly the same.
00:02:12 But what would happen during that half hour or so as you're approaching midnight is
00:02:19 that the sonic activity around would escalate.
00:02:25 It would just be like a few rounds here or there and then it's like more and more and
00:02:33 more and more until finally it's like the Battle of the Bulge.
00:02:39 And then you hear the sound of semi-automatic weapons.
00:02:42 And I mean next door.
00:02:43 I mean you can see the flash.
00:02:44 And you know you can hear the sound of a semi-automatic weapon.
00:02:51 It's not just like a gun or something.
00:02:54 It's like, it's like crazy, crazy sounds.
00:03:00 And we're just like totally blown away.

00:03:03 And the contrast was really, really great.

00:03:09 And you know it's like, well like they say, you know, it's good for your practice.

00:03:18 So that was New Year's, yeah, back in the old days.

00:03:21 I was thinking of the daytime.

00:03:23 Yeah, the daytime was pretty crazy too.

00:03:27 We were, that neighborhood is, it's Koreatown, it's right where Koreatown intersects with

00:03:36 an El Salvadorian barrio.

00:03:40 I don't know what the ethnic thing is now.

00:03:45 And then you have a whole Chicano thing also going on.

00:03:49 So and it's downtown.

00:03:53 So all of our retreats, every single retreat, all day, you could hear, you'd get the mariachis

00:04:04 from one side, you'd get, the Koreans were very quiet, okay, but there were also a lot

00:04:11 of Vietnamese.

00:04:12 And so you'd get sort of the Sino-Vietnamese Peking opera kinds of sounds coming.

00:04:18 There was always at least one Florence schizophrenic person acting out on the corner.

00:04:28 And you got the turf wars going on.

00:04:30 They actually ended up blocking off our street with cement barriers eventually.

00:04:37 People couldn't even come in the LAPD because it was such a hot drug selling area.

00:04:44 And they were right on our front lawn.

00:04:46 I mean, literally on the front lawn.

00:04:49 And you could hear the turf wars.

00:04:52 People would get into fights.

00:04:53 You'd be sitting and meditating and it's like you would actually hear people like slugging

00:04:59 each other, I'm going to kill you.

00:05:10 That's the way, that's the old, that's what you were remembering, right?

00:05:14 Do you remember the Chinese Buddhist saying you used to remind yourself?

00:05:21 Oh yeah, I can guess what that was.

00:05:25 Let me guess.

00:05:26 I probably said if you want a small enlightenment, go to the mountain.

00:05:32 If you want a big enlightenment, come to the city.

00:05:39 That is a Chinese proverb I heard from one of the Chinese masters.

00:05:46 So we used to meditate right in the middle of the city.

00:05:50 And so it was a very different New Year's experience.

00:05:55 We hear, sometimes we hear a little, you know, like hooray or something.

00:06:00 If we're lucky, if we're lucky we get something from the neighbors.

00:06:07 It's not like the old days.

00:06:11 That was, that was pretty, that was pretty cool.

00:06:16 The contrast.

00:06:19 And also it was really good because you learned that you didn't have to have silence in order

00:06:28 to have deep practice.

00:06:29 You know, that's the beauty of mindfulness, you can just recycle the reactions.

00:06:37 So that's what we used to do.

00:06:38 What got a little bit difficult was a lot of people got their cars broken into.

00:06:44 You know, usually I'd have to counsel someone after a retreat dealing with calling the cops.

00:06:50 And that was, those were the crazy days.

00:06:54 Things are a lot more mellow now.

00:06:57 So I guess we can appreciate that.