[page 29] **The Temple on a Hill in Seoul**

F.J. SELIGSON

These poems were composed over a period of years living at the foot of An-san (Saddle Mountain) and 10 minutes down the road from Bong Won Sa Temple, which serves as an entry to the numerous walking paths there.

The morning and evening temple bells can be heard from my residence. Often, I climb up to the temple to look around at the carp in the pond, at the ancient trees, the old and numerous temple buildings, and listen to the wind chimes, the frequent ceremonies, often funeral songs, and the witness the many temple pageants with their celebrated monk artists: including national human treasures among the dancers, singers, musicians, painters, even photographers.

In late summer the temple court yard is filled with portable lotus ponds, and flowers are blooming in different sizes, colors and fragrances all over. At night, the frogs take over for the monks and do the chanting. Many a quiet and solitary night have I stood there and listened to the frog chorusers.

Many an afternoon have I sat before the Medicine Buddha or the Mountain God, or the Giant Golden Buddha, or stood outside before the white statute of the Bodhisattva of Mercy and put forth a request for a loved one or for an inspiration.

Every spring I watch the azaleas and magnolias blossom again. Every Buddha’s Birthday we come here to wash the Baby Buddha and enjoy the colorful lit lanterns under the night sky.

For so many more occasions do I journey up this hill, and ever do[page 30] I have in my pocket a small notebook and a half pencil for recording the important events of a day. Here are some highlights.

**“Caught” fishing through the hills**

**just behind our house in S(e)oul**

 Mist

cold

 stone

a

 temple’s

 gate

[page 31]

Fan

 ning

 her

 self

 on

 the

 tem

 ple

 gate,

[page 32]

a

 blue

 tip

 but

 ter

 fly

 o

 pens

 in

[page 33]

 Dirty

with

 magnolia

 petals,

 gold

 fish

 just

 poking

 around

[page 34]

“Croak

 Croak”

 lotus

 lotus

 “Croak

 Croak”

 chanting

 chanting

[page 35]

“Sir

 Bee,

 dusty

with

 powder,

 it’s

 a

 wonder

 you’ve

 flown

 so

 far

seeking

 our

 flowers

[page 36]

 As

other

 fliers

 can

 clearly

 see,

our

 fragrances

 rise

 not

 from

 pink

 petals

[page 37]

but

 off

 honied

 hairs,

 all

 about

 our

 wombs.

[page 38]

From

 our

 green

 uteruses

 come

 six

 pink

 seeds

 of

 life …

 All

 bear

 a

 jewel

 of

 The

 Lotus.”

[page 39]

 Gray

 monks

 grip

 straw

 hats

 - the

 old

 one

 sits

 down

[page 40]

 As

 you

 nod,

 each

 bows

 (o’

 so

 graciously)

 to

 the

 Buddha

 in

 me

[page 41]

 Fish

 chimes

 tinkle

 in

 a

 circle,

 from

 one

 roof

 to

 another,

 with

 you

 in

 the

 center

[page 42]

Thru

 five

 color

 lattices,

 you

 spy

 the

 gold,

 mustachioed

 Buddha

[page 43]

 Under

 the

 jade

 roof,

 curly

 Buddha

 sits

 on

 his

 lotus

 chair

[page 44]

 So

 alone

 in

 a

 cave,

 his

 3rd

 Eye

 gives

 off

 light

[page 45]

 Circling

 the

 chamber,

 old

 Hunch

 Back

 puffs

 out

 flickering

 candle

 lights

[page 46]

 Nose

 Hair

 says,

“Kind

 children

 left

 alone

 this

 night,

 you

 must

 follow

 your

 own

 delights.”

[page 47]

 Surrounded

by

 Buddhas,

a

 big

baby’s

 quietly

snoring

[page 48]

 Forty-

 nine

 days,

 your

 white,

 stringy

 beard -

 sons

 &

 daughters

 (robes

 &

 dresses)

 grand

 kiddies,

 too

[page 49]

Old

 priests

 tooting

 kazoos

 clanging

 cymbals

 pounding

 drums,

 chanting

[page 50]

 Young

 nuns

 dancing

 through

 the

 court

 yard

 &

 white

 butterflies

 over

 a

 stream,

 chasing

[page 51]

 One

 hundred

 years

 mourning

 of

 a

 single

 day