

## It's a Zen thing

(How to evaluate a prospective candidate for membership into the Middle Kingdom Order of the Bronze Ring)

We want them to be an outstanding fencer, but winning tournaments isn't the way to show it.

We want the person to serve and teach, but we can't say what type of service or how much they should teach.

We want the person to participate, but we can't define how much participation is enough.

We want them to be a leader, but that doesn't necessarily mean leading in a melee, nor functioning well in a rapier related office.

We can't define what it takes to be a Warder, but we'll know it when we see it.

Zen \`zen\`: A Japanese sect of Mahayana Buddhism that aims at enlightenment by direct intuition through meditation.

A potential conversation, courtesy of an old TV show.

Cadet KCC: Warder Poe, what is the path to becoming one like yourself?

Warder Poe: The answer is in the lily pond.

Cadet KCC: (studies the lily pond for a while)

Warder Poe: Is the path clear now?

Cadet KCC: No master. I see something which puzzles me.

Warder Poe: Good. Tell me.

Cadet KCC: I know that pole is straight. Yet in the water it seems to bend.

Warder Poe: That is not a puzzle, Grasshopper. It is only something you do not yet *know* (*Warder Poe begins to walk away*).

Cadet KCC: Is what I see so unimportant?

Warder Poe: Do you not know that what you see is made of reflections, sent back to your eyes? Like a ball thrown against a wall.

Cadet KCC: But why does the pole seem to bend?

Warder Poe: The same ball is thrown against two different walls; The water and the air. Your eye is deceived.

Cadet KCC: I am sorry master. I still do not understand.

Warder Poe: Look closer. You will see some things clearer. Perhaps you will see other things you do not know at all. But the puzzle, Grasshopper, that is to find the way so that others may see you.

So. Someone propose a candidate. I will study the lily pond and wait for enlightenment.

Max