



Photo by: Tim Buckley

ZEN IN AMERICA

An Unconditioned Response to a Conditioned World

A new spiritual center has begun in America deep in the secluded mountains of a huge National forest and Wilderness Area of Central California. It is at the site of what was Monterey County's oldest resort, Tassajara Hot Springs, built partly by the Chinese at the end of the last century and used before that by the Indians. Many people from all over the United States have supported the purchase of the land and buildings for this center. And since January 1967, men and women, students and teachers, have been at work not only repairing, building, and cultivating; but also finding a way to transplant and develop this ancient Oriental tradition of withdrawal and return, of spiritual centering for modern America.

Spiritual "Spiritual" is a difficult word for the twentieth century. Its alive meaning is usually lost in our attempt to accept only what we can explain. But a full conscious explanation of anything is impossible: exactly what are you or what is a flower? One must finally say it is itself, its totality is its own definition, and even that is not enough, for its totality includes all of its relationships.

Whatever spiritual means, it is used here to indicate the totality of human potentials and possibilities, which when realized and experienced, is more than the sum of mind, body, will, and feeling. It is a word etymologically related to breath: respire, inspire, expire, aspire, transpire, and esprit. These related words indicate that human beings find some connection between ordinary breathing and man's highest aspirations and inspirations, and that loss of the 'breath of life' is to die, to expire.

Our breathing in and out is the primary or most noticeable involuntary organic activity which relates us to the surrounding environment, and which also can be voluntarily influenced by the conscious mind. One of the first focuses of Zen meditation (zazen) is breathing, and it is found to directly influence our state of mind.

Zen Practice Although Zen practice begins with the simplest things, breathing, or how to sit most awakely on a chair or cushion, it brings us (you) to an experience of totality, a realization and an assurance about who and what we are which eludes verbal definition, but allows us to act with an equilibrium and deep sense of meaningfulness. We find the world not different from the possibilities within us. This does not mean that the definition of the world is limited to ourselves, but rather that we experience and expand that definition to include the mutuality of ourselves and the world.

Freedom The practice of Zen Buddhism is as free from limitations as possible. And the conceptual teaching is aimed solely at freedom from concepts and limitations and even from Buddhism itself. This is why Zen practice is based on sitting still (zazen), free from dogma or a particular way of thinking, in order for us to experience ourselves before we think or act — one might say between thoughts and acts.

Sitting Still Sitting still without any definite plan, we begin to experience more than we know, more than the limitations of our plan or what we have thought in the past. We observe the comings and goings and formation of thoughts. We begin to experience the sources and springs of action



Photo by: Morley Baer

Disciplined sitting prevents the sitter from following habitual avenues of escape. In time— after inevitable periods of frustration and even perhaps increased restlessness— the sitter's scattered psychic energy is mysteriously recollected into a more compact and directed unity. This new charge of psychic energy brings with it an unexpected feeling of completeness and fulness. The sitter, his mind no longer 'separate' from the rest of his being and arrogantly trying to run the whole show, begins to feel in serene harmony with life, and, for the first time, fully alive, He is now in touch with what Zen would call Suchness. . . .

*From Three Ways of Ancient Wisdom
by Nancy Wilson Ross*

The aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy, and depth of awareness is a natural adjunct of electric technology.

from Understanding Media by Marshall McLuhan

One evening after dinner I was telling friends that I was now concerned with improving the world. One of them said: I thought you always were. I then explained that I believe— and am acting upon— Marshall McLuhan's statement that we have through electronic technology produced an extension of our brains to the world formerly outside of us. To me that means that the disciplines, gradual and sudden (principally Oriental), formerly practiced by individuals to pacify their minds, bringing them into accord with ultimate reality, must now be practiced socially— that is, not just inside our heads, but outside of them, in the world, where our central nervous system effectively now is.

*From A Year From Monday
by John Cage*

*Suzuki Roshi
Philip Wilson*



Photo by: Minoru Aoki

just by sitting still for a regular length of time every day. Not learned patterns, but the basic functioning and natural order of body and mind are the guides of practice and the ground of everyday experience. Our experience of ourselves begins to approach the totality of what we are. (Unless we sit every day at a regular time, our practice is limited by the needs and occasions which permit us to sit at this or that time.)

Time and Space This Zen practice of sitting still at a particular place for a particular length of time (20 to 40 minutes) confronts us with the limitations of time and space and the immediacy of who we are at each moment and place. In this sense the limitations of time and space are transcended because they become the very ground and possibility of our being. Man has difficulty when he is not fully grounded in this experience, and instead attaches unrealistically to one or another relative point of view, taking the relative as if it were absolute.

Awareness-Compassion Buddhism does not assert what is the Truth. It directs people to understand and explore their own mind and feelings, for in trying to understand Reality it is more important to know the awareness itself through which we know everything, rather than to know only what the mind knows about. This Awareness includes knowing our mind, feelings, emotions, and the conditions of our physiology. It is sometimes called Big Mind. And when we experience the root-source of our thoughts, feelings-emotions without a particular object of thought or emotion, we discover in ourselves that the essential expression of this pure-awareness is a love-compassion-gratefulness-awe for the people and things of this world. Such an expression is independent of and underlies whether we like or dislike, approve or disapprove, accept or reject.

Altars and Buddhas One of the most difficult things to explain intellectually is the presence of altars and Buddhas in a practice like this. One reason, of course, is that people like to have a focus for those deepest emotions and ideas which are not ever fully satisfied by the mundane world. An altar and Buddha provide a focus for this deeper side of man which refocuses these deeper feelings and ideas on man himself. The Buddha is strictly a reminder not only of the historical person who realized this practice, but also of the unconditioned nature of ourselves beyond thinking and acting as well as the unity or interdependency and relatedness of all things; both of these aspects are also called Buddha. But altars and Buddhas are not necessary; one's own location in time and space is enough.

Middle Way This practice of sitting still, open to the possibilities within us, is called the Middle Way, not because it is between the extremes of subjective and objective, nihilism and materialism, emptiness and form, good and evil, love and hate, but because it includes and gives a unified meaning to these various extremes without falling into the limitations of emphasizing one or the other. In our present day world which is so torn by individual and national strife this practice is needed to restore individual and social coherence— spiritual unity to our personal and universal life. Moment by moment, out of the great changes going on around us, we must create some way for men to live.



Photo by: Robert Boni

Zen Mountain Center

Nature is a true teacher of Zen, but not all who enter the mountains see them as they really are. Only a man who knows himself can see the true nature of mountains. We should live and practice Zen at this site of Great Nature, until we appreciate the poem of Dogen Zenji, the 13th century Zen Master:

*The color of mountains is Buddha's pure body;
The sound of running water is his great speech.*

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

In the canyons, waterfalls, and streams at Tassajara the true face of nature is apparent. Things occur, this rock here, that plant there, because that is the way they are; their patterning does not reflect the impact of man's utilitarian impositions on the land.

Zen Mountain Center was founded to make possible the practice of the Middle Way in America. It is important to have a period of withdrawal from ordinary life in order to focus on this fundamental practice, but when the Way is internalized, practice can be continued anywhere.

The example of a Zen Master is followed because his whole life manifests this teaching and he communicates it in every way. Although he works, eats, and practices under the same conditions as the students, there is some difference. And the students perceiving this difference are led to an examination of their own lives.

This practice is not fixed. It is growing and changing to express its new conditions in America. The essentials are common to everyone, but there are problems in the new unfolding of this ancient way and these very problems help deepen the student's real (unknown) experiential practice.

Spiritual Center A center for spiritual practice like Zen Mountain Center affects not only the students who practice there, it also increases the spiritual—hence human and cultural—possibilities for the surrounding society. These possibilities, even if one has not realized them, become part of the definition of what is possible for human beings—alternatives

It is more possible in such a place to go beyond our self imposed prison of concepts and categories — to know our own nature which is ultimately continuous with what we see around us.

Sterling Bunnell, Psychiatrist

Looking and walking over the ridges and meadows, swimming the cold river holes and the hot spring pools of Tassajara—I know this is the place it has to be. The Indians had it before. The Coast Range mountains are rugged like Chinese mountains—the dry rockiness, warmth, and shady groves are like India. There are numbers of fine people ready to make use of the right place. We can't let this slip by.

Gary Snyder, poet,
longtime student of Zen



Photo by: Ben Lyon

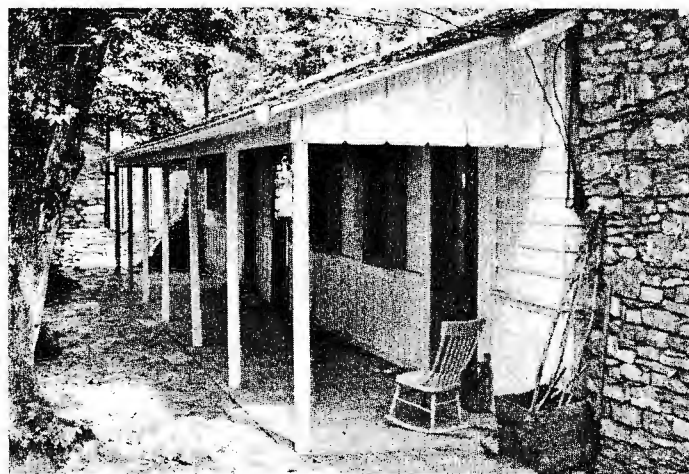


Photo by: Tim Buckley

which have to be considered. Also those who do practice at Tassajara return to the city or country, not to propagate Buddhism, but just to live and work with others and in that way increase the possibilities for those with whom they come into contact.

Students

Since Zen Mountain Center opened early in 1967, more than 400 persons have practiced there for various lengths of time. More than a hundred are practicing there full-time, or for extended periods in conjunction with continued practice with Zen Center in San Francisco or with Zen groups in other parts of the country. Students, both men and women, have come from all over the United States and a few from other parts of the world. Their occupations have ranged from gold miner to Lutheran missionary and kindergarten teacher to psychoanalyst. There have been a number of teachers, college professors, psychologists, Jungian analysts, Protestant seminarians, painters, poets, technical writers, businessmen, college students, housewives, and many others. At present there is no way to meet the full demand for Zen teachers and places to study Zen. But Zen Mountain Center is a first big step in this direction and eventually teachers will be coming from there who can help or begin other Zen groups in this country.

There is a fairly large nucleus of people now who are devoting their lives to making possible the continuing practice at Zen Mountain Center. And the students of course do all the work of growing food, building, cooking, raising money, whatever is needed, following the way of the famous Zen Master who said, 'a day of no work is a day of no eating.' Working is an intrinsic part of the practice—integrating meditation and everyday life.

In the future the facilities at Tassajara must be developed so that not only full-time students can find an opportunity to practice there, but also interested people who have full-time commitments elsewhere can join the practice in a more limited way—attending lectures, meditating, and being in contact with the Zen Master and other teachers. Exactly what buildings will be built, what kind of teachers will develop, and what expression the practice will take, depends a great deal on what people in this country want.

Guest Season

Many people visit Zen Mountain Center in the warm months of late Spring, Summer, and early Fall when the long mountain road is easily passable. They come partly for the mountain seclusion of the natural hot springs, swimming pool, streams and trails; but now more and more they are coming to learn something about Zen Buddhism. They do not have to take on the full program of meditation, meals, work, and study from before dawn to long after dusk; but can participate while enjoying time with their families in the relaxed quiet of the mountains. This relationship between guests and students permits many aspects of American life to come into contact with this ancient Oriental tradition in a way that not only interests and benefits the guests, but also helps Zen develop more realistically in relation to American life. Information about Guest Memberships can be obtained by writing to Zen Center in San Francisco or sending in the coupon on this brochure.

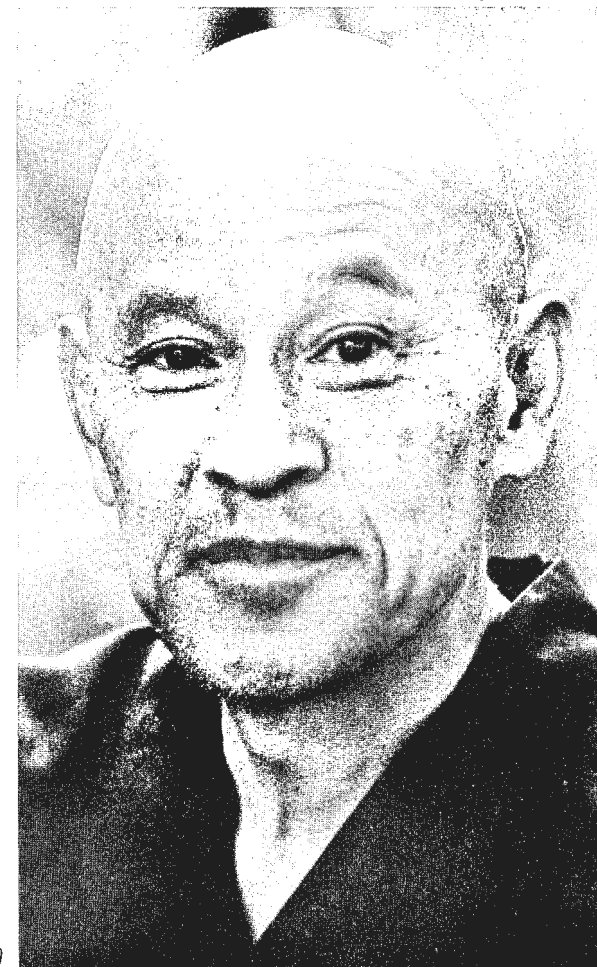
Teachers There are not many Zen Masters in the world, probably less than fifty—almost none of whom speak English, and they do not speak much about themselves. Shunryu Suzuki, Roshi (Zen Master), Head of Zen Center in San Francisco and Abbot of Zen Mountain Center, is in his middle sixties, is the son of a Zen Master, and is married with three grown-up children. He is highly respected in Japan as well as in this country. He came to America in 1958 for a projected two year stay, but because of the many Americans who wanted to meditate with him and because he liked their spirit, he postponed returning several times, finally giving up his temple in Japan and becoming a permanent resident. He speaks English very well as do his two excellent assistant priests, Dainin Katagiri, Sensei (Teacher) and Kobun Chino, Sensei. There are also three or four young Americans who now qualify as teachers or priests and who give substantial assistance in the development of the practice here in America.

Zen Center Zen Center in San Francisco has grown from the few students who first joined Suzuki Roshi. There are now about 100 students who practice regularly, meditating in the morning or evening, or both. There are many more students who just attend lectures. And of course there are the regular students at Tassajara. The combination of Zen Center in San Francisco and the Mountain Center provide the first opportunity in America for extended study of Zen with a resident Zen Master and other teachers.

The Site The site of Zen Mountain Center is incredibly beautiful. It is at the end of a twenty mile dirt road which winds precipitously up over a 5000 foot grade, past vistas of as many as ten separate ranges of mountains merging in the distance, and down into Tassajara Valley. The tens of thousands of acres surrounding Zen Mountain Center are preserved as a National Forest and Wilderness Area— one of the last areas of undisturbed ecology in California. We are preserving that undisturbed ecology in every way we can because the natural balance of this environment has a feeling of wholeness and integration for the people living there. There is something elemental about the valley with its waterfalls at both ends, its natural hot springs, clear streams, and old trees and buildings.

Please help Please help us complete the purchase of Zen Mountain Center. So far we have raised \$130,000 toward the total purchase price of \$300,000. Much of the support has come in small contributions of between \$5 to \$50, as well as in larger contributions. If we can complete the purchase before June 1, 1968 the total price will be reduced by \$20,000, which with savings in interest, fund raising, and other costs, will mean a total reduction of \$30,000 or more. If we can complete the purchase, more effort can go directly into making it possible to study Zen here in America. Zen Center has enough regular support from members to continue the operation of both centers after the purchase is completed. Will you please help us complete the purchase of Zen Mountain Center. Thank you.

Zen Center is a non-profit corporation under California and U.S. Federal laws. Contributions are tax deductible. Checks should be made



Abbot
Suzuki
Roshi
(Zen Master)

To be enlightened may not be so difficult. What is difficult is not to be caught by enlightenment or to be attached to it. To express enlightenment in each moment, is to live each moment afresh without ideas or attachment anywhere. You can be trapped by your own way. You should not try too hard.

To be sincere is not to make haste for attainment by self-centered ideas, but to do zazen for the sake of your Big Self. Do not make haste. Do not try to do something ahead of time or behind time.

If it is raining out, do not walk fast, because it is raining everywhere.

My Master called me "Crooked Cucumber." I have seen many good Zen Masters and I do not think I can be a good Zen Master, so I should not work too hard.

Please walk in the rain with me and if I am too slow for you, please go ahead of me.

From a lecture by Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

Federal laws. Contributions are tax-deductible. Checks should be made out to Zen Center.

Photo by: Robert Boni



The idea of an American center for Zen training, practice, and meditation in the beauty and peace of high Western mountains must certainly make a deep appeal to many people in these times of world-wide chaos and increasing personal tensions. It is very much to be hoped that the plans for such a center at Tassajara Springs, California, will come to fullest fruition. I can think of no project of greater potential significance in our country's present culture.

Nancy Wilson Ross, *author of The World of Zen and Three Ways of Asian Wisdom*

The extroversion of American life requires balancing places where men can turn the searchlight inward, where they can indwell. Our determination to control life requires times and places where we can surrender to life because we sense at some invisible level that it will do us no harm. Our preoccupation with the way things ought to be calls for places where, resonating, we can rejoice in the way they are. Therefore, the Zen Mountain Center.

Huston Smith, Ph.D., *Professor of Philosophy, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; author of The Religions of Man*

The fact of a place where we can go to join others just to be with life in a way so simple and authentic, where no doctrines or authorities are superimposed and where the reality of living and working for its own sake already appeals so deeply to the young, is perhaps the most exciting event for us in recent years.

Charlotte Selver and Charles V. W. Brooks

On the staff of the New School for Social Research, New York, in the field of Sensory Awareness & Non-Verbal Communication

The development of the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in a deep American forest marks the transition of expatriate Buddhism to a native religious discipline—the fulfillment of 80 years of Western Buddhist history. Members of the San Francisco Zen Center are freely giving their life-energy to this project, and we can assure its success if we offer contributions in proportion to their trust and hard work.

Robert Aitken, *Chairman, Diamond Sangha, A Zen Buddhist Group, Hawaii*

The Zen Buddhist way of mindfulness represents an ageless source of the most profound psychological understanding. Tassajara Zen Mountain Center is attempting to integrate this teaching into the fabric of Western life. We need this kind of personal and scientific exploration. I urge you to support it.

Gunther Weil, Ph.D., *Professor of Psychology, Boston College*

At times in our busy lives the teachings of Buddhism can seem remote and even Zen practice may provide only a respite from our trivial and fond concerns. At Tassajara it is different. There is the physical beauty, the considerateness of its monks, its thoughtfully ordered life, the example of its teacher. Above all there is the quiet. Here Buddhism can be lived, and Zen practice seems the most natural thing in the world.

Albert Stunkard, M.D.

Professor of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania



*Chino Sensei
Richard Baker*

Photo by: John Doss

If we are truly involved with the development of the way, there will be no idea of development, of religious or worldly, of Japanese or American, of man or woman, or even of Zen. Such true activity will start when distinctions are forgotten and hindrances become the opportunity for practice. Thus you will know your own way. It is the time to put these seven hundred year old teachings of Dogen Zenji into practice.

Shunryu Suzuki Roshi

To study Buddhism is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self. To forget the self is to be identified by all things. To be identified by all things is to be truth itself, free from attachment to oneself and others.

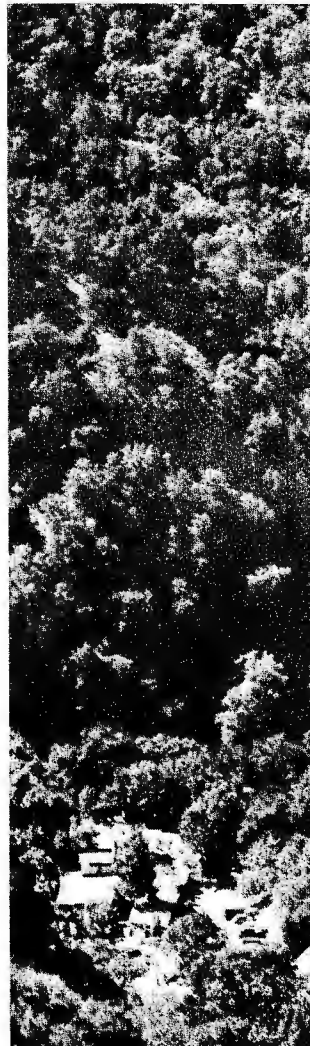
*Dogen Zengi, Founder of the
Soto Zen sect in Japan.*

*The wild geese do not intend to cast their reflections,
The water has no mind to receive their image.*

*When one looks at it, one cannot see it.
When one listens for it, one cannot hear it.
But when one uses it, it is inexhaustible.*

*Sitting quietly doing nothing,
Spring comes.
Grass grows by itself.*

Photo by: Minoru Aoki



The establishment of a Zen Monastery in the wilderness area near Carmel Valley is an important event in the history of religion in America. You are urged to join this oldest of ventures—the establishment of a community for the cultivation of the spirit. Only your support will make it possible.

*Paul Lee, Ph.D., Professor of Philosophy,
University of California, Santa Cruz*

Zen Center is firmly rooted in the ancient Soto Zen tradition. Its teachings are relevant, clear, and intellectually sophisticated; its program adaptable to students' needs and attitudes; and its community stable and attractive. The fullness of a tradition like this offers fundamental perspective to the adventurous but often scattered and superficial attempts at expanded consciousness.

Michael Murphy, President, Esalen Institute

As a human being, the seven missionary years spent in Bolivia were the best years of my life. As a spiritual being, the month at Zen Mountain Center was the best month of my life.

*Brother Dean Winter
Christian Missionary*

I had never tried anything so difficult in my life, but I feel the struggle was well worth the effort. We are attempting to build something here that's totally new and needed in America. We are finding a great communal harmony, and it is a priceless opportunity to be able to live, work and practice with Shunryu Suzuki Roshi.

— A student at Zen Mountain Center

It is time for us in America to realize that the goal of action is contemplation. Otherwise we are caught up in mock progress, which is just going on toward going on, what Buddhists call samsara—squirrel cage of birth and death. That people are getting together to acquire this property for meditation is one of the most hopeful signs of our time. Everyone concerned should support it.

*Alan Watts, philosopher,
author of The Spirit of Zen and many others*

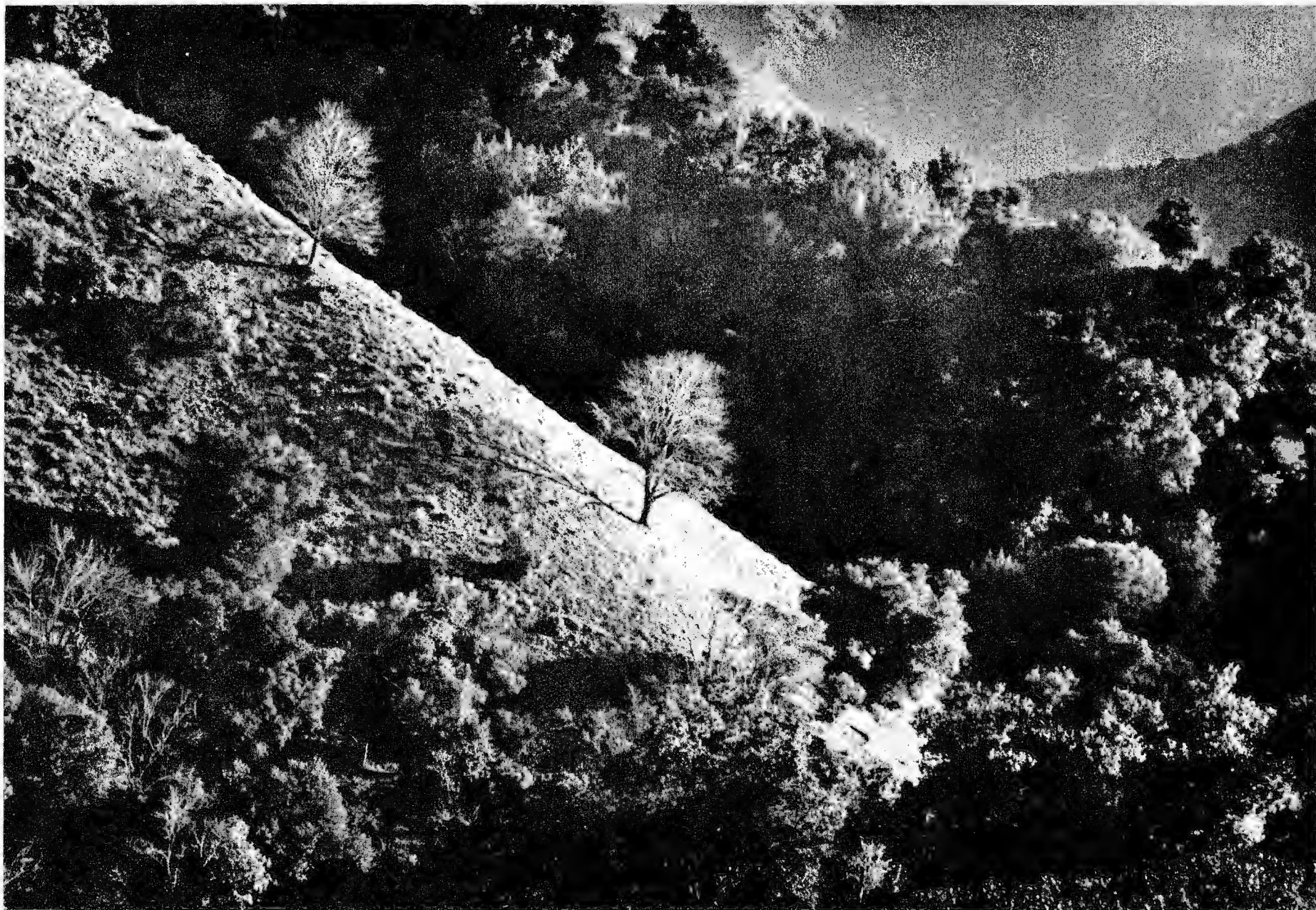
The opening of the Gateless Gate through Nature to our own nature is the great Zen Gift to our age. I see in the founding of this Center such a disclosure of America as home. May it prosper and so, prosper us all in delight.

*Joseph Campbell, author of The Hero With a Thousand Faces
and The Masks of God*

Fire season terminates tonight, for us at full dark. It would be impossible to put into words all the good things you people have done for, and meant to us. Somehow you folks have managed to bring here quiet, laughter, a subtle and impressing gravity, and that just plain simple humanness of which so few of us are capable.

Thank you.

*From a letter from Fred and Lynda Tuttle,
National Forest Fire-Lookouts*



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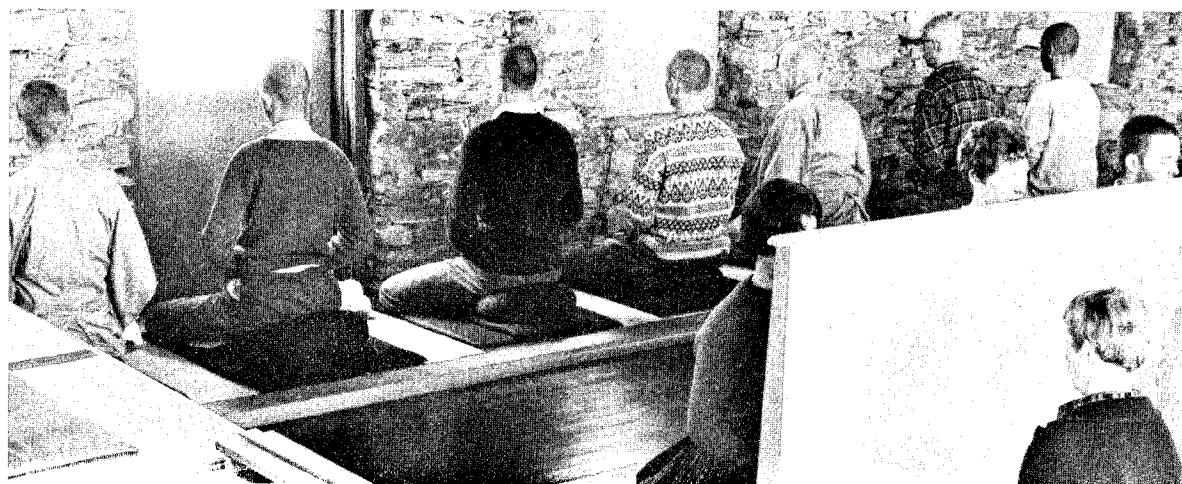




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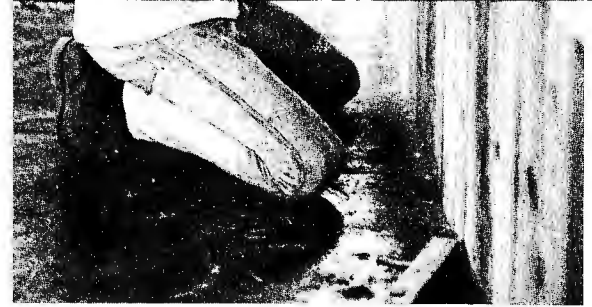
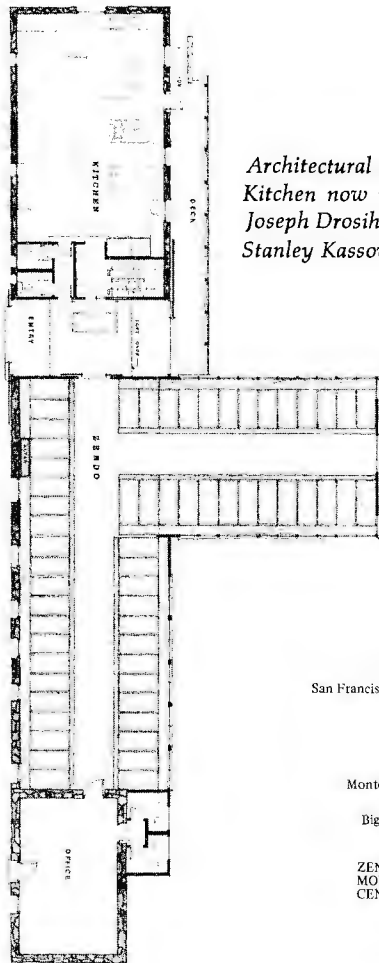
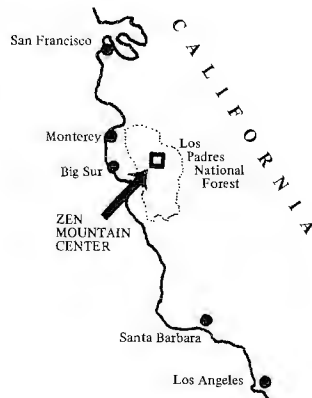


Photo by: Robert Boni



Architectural plans for future building.
Kitchen now under construction.
Joseph Drosihn, AIA, Architect, and
Stanley Kassovic, Associate Architect.



PRIESTS: Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, *Zen Master, Zen Center and Zen Mountain Center.*
Dainin Katagiri Sensei, *Instructor (Tanto), Zen Center;* Kobun Chimo Sensei, *Ass't. Instructor (Ino), Zen Mt. Center.*
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