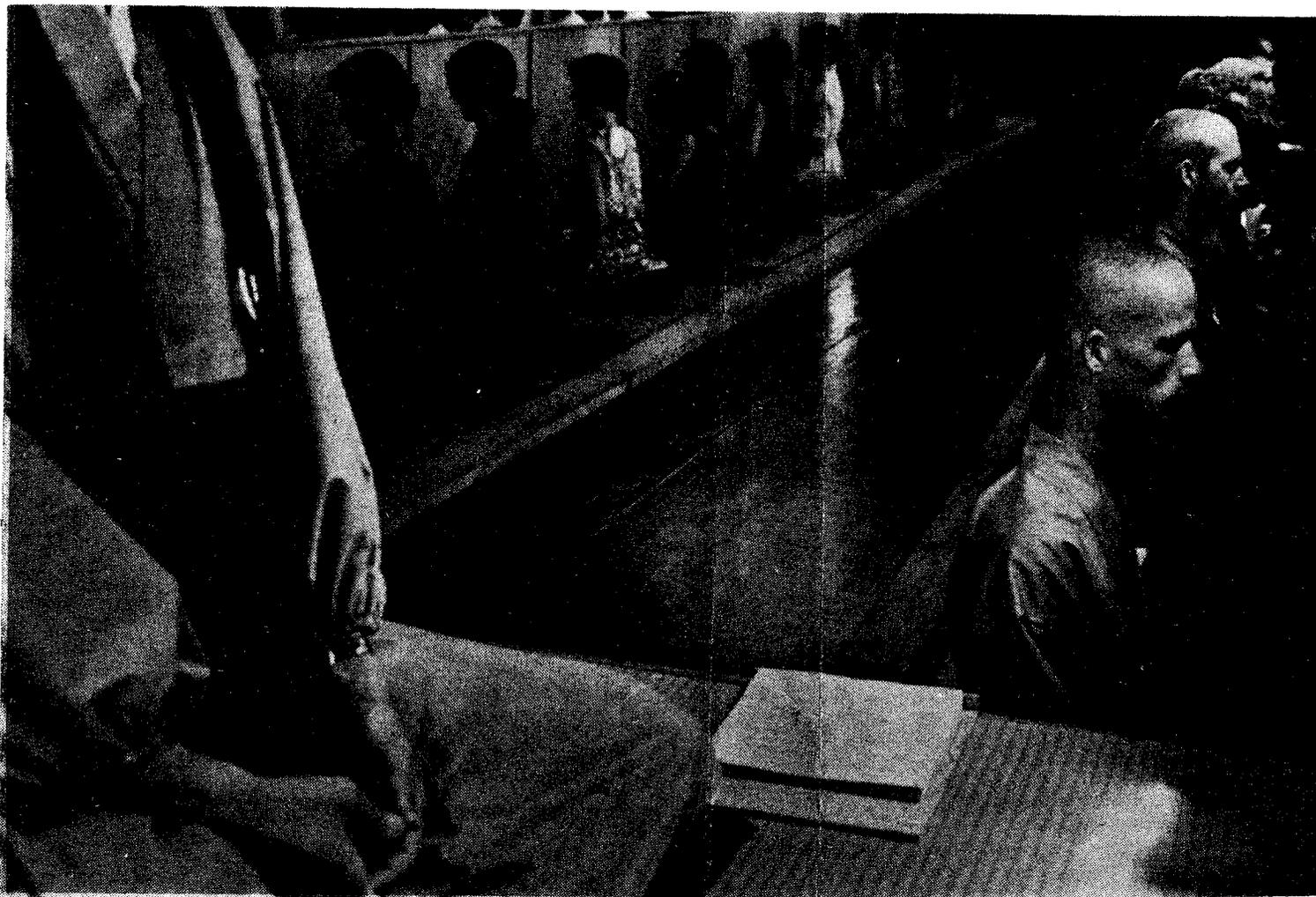


The Way of the Gateless Gate...



Peter Schneider, a student:
"Does a man have a
or does the finger have the
"Buddha nature has the
"What is Buddha nature?
"You can't lift it up w
men."

It is said that there are
right answers to a koan and
are also none. Paul Repp's
book ZEN FLESH, ZEN
says, "... the koan is
the answer, and by the time
is a right answer to it
dead."

Zen adherents are quick
out that koans are not m
be logical. They deal with
of mind rather than words
serve to break the armor
student's verbalism and all
to live in the illimitable.

One of the Zen adherents
Mountain now is Kobun Ch
young Zen monk and scholar
Japan.

His English was broken
spoke to him with the ai
student. This is Kobun's fir
in America and he arrived
three months ago. I tried to
tion him about what he ma
of the strange (to him) w
which Americans come to
had in mind the off-th
guesses of a number of th
dents that half to three qu
of the students had used L
fore coming to Zen.

LSD

Zen Master Shunryu Suzu

by Ernie Barry

To get the story on the now legendary new Zen retreat in the mountains south of the Carmel Valley, I hitchhiked up there last week. Zen Mountain Center is a monastery located at the old Tassajara Hot Springs resort in Los Padres National Forest. Getting there is in some ways as difficult as reaching Satori.

The steep winding road up to Tassajara is one of the most breathtaking rides in this country. The huge mountains dramatically dwarf man. They serve as an ideal preparation for the deep mountain isolation of the hidden valley site of Tassajara. This writer was scared out of his wits by every minute of it on the way down in bright sunshine. At certain points you can see up to 3,000 feet straight down from the edge of the dirt road.

Beautiful valleys and canyons stretch for vistas of ten, twenty miles. One's eyes embrace a good part of the last untouched land in Central California.

Esteban is a very Oriental appearing Central American Zen student. According to him, the narrow, mountain dirt road from Jamesburg to Tassajara was built by Chinese coolie labor in the latter part of the 19th century. The road was intended for robber baron industrialists who sought seclusion in the mountains.

"It was built on a mountain trail which had been used by covered wagons bringing settlers to the hot springs."

MOON VALLEY

I rode up at night and discovered what a valley of the moon really was. There was a full moon that night and up in the mountains it looked amazingly clear and full. It lit up long, deep valleys miles long.

Originally, San Francisco's Zen Center had planned to purchase a parcel of horse pasture just above the Tassajara resort. There are little parcels of private land in the middle of the wilderness of the huge Los Padres National Forest, near the east below the Carmel Valley area.

The horse pasture was flat, undeveloped land; would be a matter of years; it appeared before a full-fledged monastery could be

physically assembled. At the beginning of this year the resort itself suddenly became available for \$300,000. Zen Center snapped it up with a Zen unconcern for the immense difficulties it will have raising huge installment payments twice a year until 1972.

Almost immediately the Center had a complete physical plan for a mountain monastery which would "help to put down real roots for Zen in America."

The people at Zen Mountain feel, "It will never be urbanized or within the sound of traffic." The only access to the land now is that 16 mile dirt road cleared by the county once a year.

NUMBER ONE PHONE

Zen Mountain's phone number is Tassajara Hot Springs #1. There isn't any #2 or #3. There isn't another phone for literally miles. The site is so remote that Pacific Telephone Co. years ago refused to run lines up the mountains for just one number. A compromise was reached. Tassajara Hot Springs Resort set up its own phone company and paid for the lines and their maintenance, and Pacific Telephone hooked them into their system.

With the purchase of Tassajara, Zen Center has assumed ownership of the Tassajara Hot Springs phone company. Dialing the Mountain Center involves a seemingly complex act of hooking into their lines.

I called the number twice from Jamesburg, a community of about

25 unfriendly people at the end of the paved road from Carmel Valley. You dial the operator and ask for Tassajara. At that point I was only 16 miles from Tassajara but three operators had to be involved in placing the call each time. I mention this to indicate how genuinely isolated Zen Mountain is.

Life at Zen Mountain is quite rigorous for all but the springs guests and people who come for non-Zen meditation. Both of the latter pay resort rates and are housed in small cottages and served four course meals of tasteful and healthful American-type food in an airy bright dining room.

The others, Zen teachers and students, also live in small cottages, two to a room, or singly in very small dormitory rooms. Their meals are eaten in the Zendo (a monastery room for meditation) and are blandly simple though probably more varied than in Japanese monasteries.

GRUEL

Breakfast usually consists of gruel and fruit, lunch of soup, salad, and bread. Supper is a simple salad and a bowl of rice and a cooked vegetable.

The meals are eaten in a highly formalized way with everybody squatting on cushions in the Zendo. It is pretty weird as one eats between the solemn chanting of sutras (Buddhist sermons) such as this one:

"First, seventy-two labors brought us this rice; we should

know how it comes to us.
Second, as we receive this offering, we should consider whether our virtue and practice deserve it.
Third, as we desire the natural order of mind, to be free from clinging we must be free from greed.
Fourth, to support our life, we take this food.
Fifth, to attain our Way we take this food."

New students wishing to stay longer than three or four days are required to sit in Tangaryo (intensive meditation) for from three to five days. In Tangaryo in Japan the meditation rooms have peeholes. If you slouch some lurking monk will come in and slam you with a stick.

Zen Mountain Center has two different schedules which it follows. Both are roughly modeled on the daily routine at the Eihei-ji Zen Monastery in Japan and are not for those who like sweets and easy living.

The first schedule, used during training periods, begins at 4 A.M. with thirty minutes of zazen (sitting meditation), with breakfast starting at 6, work from about 7 to 10:20 A.M., zazen, lunch, a short rest, formal study, work at 2:40 P.M., bath at 4:45, supper, free time, lecture or zazen beginning at 7:45, with zazen lasting until 9:30, and followed by "bed time."

At other times, than training periods, the people of Zen Mountain arise at 5 A.M. for zazen and breakfast, and spend the whole day, except for lunch at twelve, working. During these times the work mostly involves building and maintaining the center and caring for the financially important foreign guests who come to use the hot mineral baths.

HOT BATH

The hot baths at Tassajara are real natural hot baths. The water flows up bubbling hot from underground mountain springs. It has a high sulphur content with a sharp odor.

When I went in, the water was 109 degrees F., cool to David Chadwick, a friendly, talkative hip Texan who has been studying Zen for a year. His Zen self-discipline seemed responsible for his quick entry into the water and subsequent underwater swimming in it. For me it was so scalding it took me forty-five minutes to lower myself into it up to my neck. I couldn't go farther than that. My girl friend couldn't even get that far.

I was advised by Chadwick that one follows the hot baths with a plunge into the nearby cold mountain stream and then standing and sitting meditation in their little outdoor steam rooms. They look

like dungeons from inside. I took the baths and the plunge and the steamed dungeons and felt physically totally revitalized.

The baths and steam rooms are supposed to be sexually segregated, there are both men's and women's, but many of the Zen Mountain people choose one or the other on the basis of water and steam temperatures.

The San Francisco Zen Center purchased the cluster of resort buildings at Tassajara and began operation of the Zen Mountain monastery in them while at the same time continuing to operate the resort. While I was there they were handling six other guests: one was a quiet, heavily black bearded husky man who looked anything but the Los Angeles liquor store owner he supposedly was; a soft-spoken sensitive veteran of the Jack Kerouac days who had hiked in via the 25 miles of mountain trails from Big Sur on the Pacific; and two elderly retired couples who had come for the hot springs and were friendly but seemed to this reporter unaware of the existence of the monastery in their midst.

BODHIDHARMA

Zen is often referred to as Zen Buddhism and as a Buddhist sect; actually it is thought by many Zen scholars to have stemmed from sources before the time of Buddha, 500 B.C. It is thought that the earliest known Zen teacher, Bodhidharma, was inspired by an ancient Zen-type teaching existing in Kashmir as far back as 2000 B.C. Then as now those who could see, saw Zen in flowers and grass blades.

Bodhidharma is believed to have originated the modern approach to Zen around 516 - 534 A.D. in India. It is thought that he wandered to China shortly after, and introduced his teachings there. Zen later reached Japan in the 12th century.

Its approach embodies rigid self-discipline and scorn for dogma. Its aim of self-enlightenment and realization of one's inner self is reached principally by meditation.

Dick Baker, who has been studying Zen for seven years, was raised to monk/teacher status in a formal Zen ceremony while I was there. For the occasion Zen leaders came down from San Francisco and up from Los Angeles. The local Monterey daily newspaper, the Monterey Herald, even sent a reporter up the 16 mile twisting mountain road to cover the story.

ZEN RITES

The solemn Zen rites included Dick's posing and answering of koans, traditional Zen riddles for opening and redeeming the mind. He answered this one posed by

Gate . . .

Peter Schneider, a student:

"Does a man have a finger, or does the finger have the man?"

"Buddha nature has the man."

"What is Buddha nature?"

"You can't lift it up with ten men."

It is said that there are many right answers to a koan and there are also none. Paul Reps in his book ZEN FLESH, ZEN BONES says, ". . . the koan itself is the answer, and by the time there is a right answer to it Zen is dead."

Zen adherents are quick to point out that koans are not meant to be logical. They deal with states of mind rather than words. They serve to break the armor of the student's verbalism and allow him to live in the illimitable.

One of the Zen adherents at Zen Mountain now is Kobun Chino, a young Zen monk and scholar from Japan.

His English was broken and I spoke to him with the aid of a student. This is Kobun's first time in America and he arrived only three months ago. I tried to question him about what he may think of the strange (to him) ways in which Americans come to Zen. I had in mind the off-the-cuff guesses of a number of the students that half to three quarters of the students had used LSD before coming to Zen.

Zen Master Shunryu Suzuki, the spiritual leader of San Francisco's Zen Center, laughs and pronounces the initials LSD with a mouthful of ridicule when his students question him about it.

When I interviewed him last week I questioned him for about five minutes on it but came away completely bewildered by his Zen answers to me. The only thing clear was Suzuki's regarding LSD as completely irrelevant to anything.

It was even more irrelevant to young monk Kobun Chino. He had never heard of it and didn't seem to be aware that drug taking was commonplace among young Americans. In truth, all of American life seemed irrelevant to Kobun. After arriving in San Francisco from Japan in July, he immediately went to the S.F. Zen temple on Buxh Street for three days of intensive meditation. He then was quickly driven south to Tassajara where he has been ever since.

I asked him what he thought of America's first actual Zen monastery. "This place is perhaps called Zen Village," he responded.

"I sometimes call it Zen Children Village. There are almost no rules. It is a very rare type of monastery. It is a Baby Village and also a Children's Village and it needs unimpeded growth like most things young."

"Ours is one of the only successfully functioning utopian type communities in the United States," David Chadwick says of Tassajara.

"Suzuki Roshi's spiritual presence provides inner harmony to keep the community operating."

The community will function all year round now. During July and August they had 80 people but they are now down to averaging between 25 and 50.

SHAVEN HEADS

Most of the men students looked like they had recently had their heads shaven and I saw one girl with short hair but the rest of the girls had fairly long hair. I was told that during the summer there was a number of extremely longhaired males in the training sessions. Except for the teachers and master Suzuki, everybody wore esthetic casual clothing when I was there.

This is in marked contrast to the situation in Japanese Zen monasteries where men and women wear exactly the same clothing (uniform robes) and have their heads and eyelashes shaved.

Suzuki seems strangely un-Japanese and a bit American in his support for a basically unregulated approach to Zen enlightenment. He says he is not at all concerned about hair length but prefers shaved heads. "The shaved head is the ultimate in hair styles."

WITH SUZUKI

I interviewed him in his cabin see page 9

GATELESS GATE...

from page 8

at Tassajara. He's a short, gentle man with an air of tremendous serenity about him. He had come down from San Francisco for the ceremonies for Dick Baker.

We discussed American society in general. Like so many other things, he viewed it as irrelevant. "I am very sympathetic with young people here in America. They're tired of the civilization we now have."

I told him how a number of people at Tassajara had said that they came to Zen through taking LSD and marijuana. They no longer found drugs important and didn't take them but believed taking them was indispensable for knocking them out of their straight American mindlessness and opening them up to inner development.

Suzuki listened with scepticism and commented that, "The type of people who take LSD and other psychecal drugs are open to seeking out something deeper."

We discussed the macrobiotic health diet and its current popularity among Americans who practice meditation. The macrobiotic approach stresses a controlled, discriminating choice of foods while the Zen attitude is to humbly eat whatever is served to one in one's rice bowl. Suzuki admitted that in spite of that there is a "cross relation of the Zen diet and the macrobiotic diet."

He summed up Zen response to the increasing violence and conflict on the planet thus: "Zen seeks accommodation between, not conflict. We struggle for accommodation."

(Copyright 1967 by Ernie Barry. All rights reserved.)