



ZEN MOUNTAIN CENTER - ZENSHINJI - TASSAJARA HOT SPRINGS

At the foot of these mountains is the first Zen Monastery, retreat, or practice center in the United States and outside the Orient. It is a functioning reality, led by Shunryu Suzuki Roshí, a Zen Master who has made his permanent home in this country. Zen Mountain Center opened for work and study early in the Spring of this year, and is creating possibilities for the development of Zen Buddhism in America. During the summer more than one hundred students participated in a two month training period. Although about thirty students will be studying there all year round, Zen Mountain Center is not a place to retire permanently from the world, but rather a center to deepen the practice of meditation in a calm and natural environment.

Last Fall, when the original brochure was printed the 160 acres of Tassajara Hot Springs with its buildings and facilities were not for sale. But in December the owner became willing to part with the Hot Springs itself—the purchase of which was our long range objective. The enclosed brochure describes the first land called the Horse Pasture that we had planned to purchase, only a quarter of a mile from the Hot Springs; and the general comments and photographs in the brochure apply nearly as well to the actually purchased 160 acres of Tassajara Hot Springs. We still hope to purchase the Horse Pasture 160 acres sometime in the future.

Many of us are reluctant to express the romantic ideas associated with such a unique, beautiful site; still the "magic" of the mountains has real emotional power and is a welcome antidote to the man-made environment in which most of us live. Tassajara is surrounded by range upon range of mountains, often divided by long fingers of fog reaching in from the Big Sur coast 10 miles away. Seldom does the fog reach the valley of Zen Mountain Center, but it does bring cool nights and chilly mornings. Tassajara is surrounded by tens of thousands of acres of the wilderness area of the Los Padres National Forest through which the long twenty mile dirt road winds precipitously up over a 5000 foot pass and down into the Tassajara Valley. There is something elemental about the valley with its spring waters bubbling up, heated by the fires in the earth to 140 degrees, its rocky cold streams, the waterfalls at each end of the valley, the large old

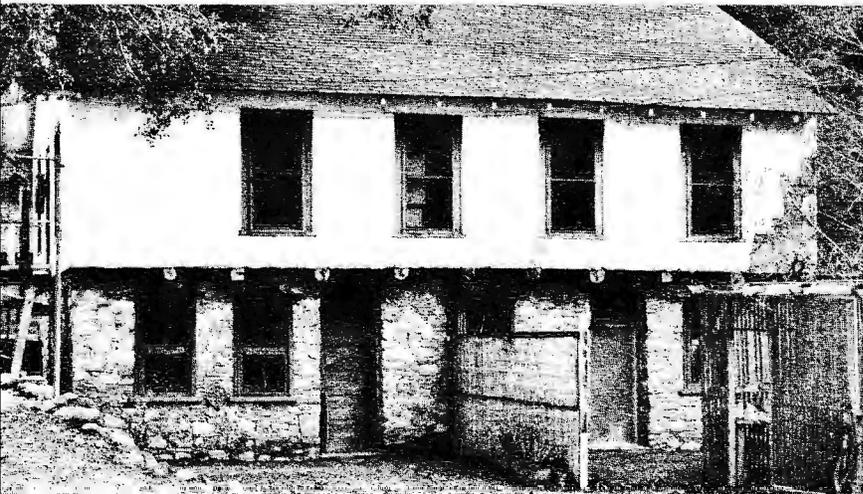
trees, and the hundred-year-old buildings which give us some ancient, clear feeling close to our basic nature. It is a perfect place for a national Zen Meditation Center.

Our original conception as described in the brochure brought about \$90,000 of support over six months for the first two major payments on the purchase of Tassajara. This support plus the opportunity to purchase already developed land with buildings, made clear to us the responsibility we had now to develop a monastery at Tassajara. This we spent the whole spring and summer doing. It consumed all of our energy, everything had to be put aside, except responding to the many many people who wanted to know how they could become students at Zen Mountain Center; the more than 200 formal applications for the Summer Training Period; the problems of feeding, housing, developing the facilities so that 70 students could live and work there; the architects, building inspectors, health inspectors; a road that in the Spring was wheel deep in mud, and on the passes often hood deep in snow; the bringing of a brilliant young priest from Japan to help the Zen Master; the continuing financial problems; the continuation of the guest operation before the training period began as we were obligated to do from previous years when it was a resort; the specific planning of the Training Period, its schedule, what would be studied, building a Zendo and a kitchen; training cooks, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc.; and finally the daily existence and the slow building of a community and environment suitable for meditation.



*Student
Dan Welch
working on
the Zendo.*

Twenty or thirty students at one time were there during the Spring, sixty to seventy during the Summer Training Period (more than a hundred students participated in the Training Period altogether), and now thirty or more students will be there throughout the year. Experience with the weather and road and the purchase of two four-wheel-drive vehicles (a truck and a large station wagon) enable us to keep Zen Mountain Center open all year round.



Part of the training of a Zen student is work . . . "a day of no work is a day of no eating," said Hyakujo, the famous Zen Master who established the rules for Zen monasteries centuries ago in China. A construction company owner who visited Tassajara estimated it would have cost more than \$50,000 to pay for the work done this summer by the students, and more for the general clean up and gardening. The whole plant was improved—electrical and plumbing systems; buildings rebuilt, plastered, painted, roofed, a new floor put in; a new kitchen started; stone foundations of a bridge repaired; the course of a stream redirected; a Zendo built in the largest building; a vegetable garden planted, and a rock garden and landscaping begun. The basic plan is for human use and at the same time conservation of the land and plant and animal life.



Suzuki Roshi and student Bob Watkins working on the stone wall next to the bridge.

In addition to the physical work there is the primary practice of zazen (usually somewhat inaccurately translated as meditation). During Training Period the daily schedule for students is—rise at 4 a.m., 50 minute zazen at 4:20, followed by break-

Paying For Tassajara

In order for Zen Mountain Center to continue we must receive at least \$70,000 in contributions before December 15, 1967 (a \$40,000 payment, plus loans and expenses), and another \$20,000 or more before the March 15, 1968 payment. If it is possible by April 15, 1967 to raise the \$222,500 left to complete the purchase, the price on the land will be reduced by \$15,000. The specific schedule of payments for the 160 acres of land and buildings of Tassajara Hot Springs is as follows:

\$32,000 already paid on December 15, 1966

\$45,000 already paid on March 15, 1967

\$40,000 to be paid by December 15, 1967

\$20,000 to be paid by March 15, 1968

\$20,000 to be paid by December 15, 1968

and \$20,000 payments on the same schedule up to March, 1972 when the final payment is \$22,500.

This coming December 15, 1967 is the last major payment, and after this the advantageous default arrangement goes fully into effect. (If we default before making this December payment, all of the first payment of \$32,500 would be lost and a portion of all other monies paid. After making the December 15 payment, all payments up to that time would be covered equally by the default agreement which requires that all or no less than two thirds of the total paid be returned, based on its resale price or returned within ten years in case the property is not resold.)

We need your help very much. Small contributions are as important as large ones. The many \$5 and \$10 contributions along with a number of major contributions made the previous payments possible. But of course in a project of this size we need more large donations.

We want to respond to the contributions and help of individuals and in some way recognize our gratitude. To do this on or near the Main Entrance Gate we will recognize the names of the major contributors. Contributors of more than \$500 will be listed as Donors, more than \$1000 as Major Supporters, more than \$5000 as Patrons, and more than \$25,000 as Founders.

fast, a three hour work period ending with mid-day zazen, lunch, rest period, study period, a two hour work period, supper, a lecture, and one or two more periods of zazen before bed at 9:45 p.m. During the sesshin (an intensive period of meditation) ending a Training Period, zazen continues all day long except for breaks of walking zazen, lectures, and meals. A leading psychiatrist and professor who has been a student of Zen both in this country and Japan was a student at Zen Mountain Center for the Training Period. He said that "Tassajara has everything Japan has and more."

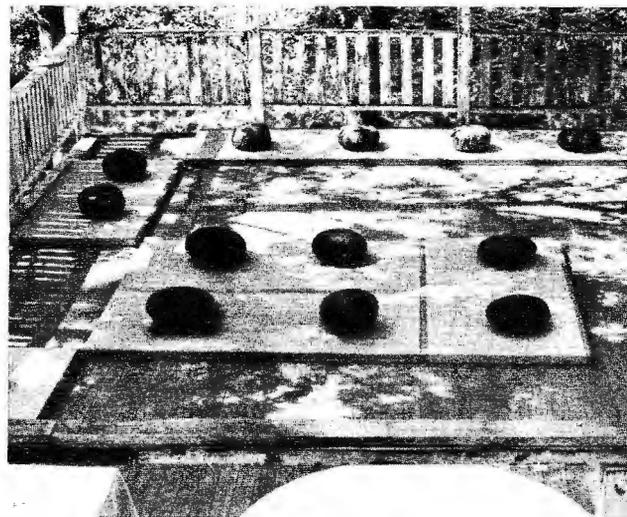
At the same time as we are practicing Zen in a traditional way at Zen Mountain Center, an important part of the effort is finding out how to adopt and adapt Buddhism in America, thus laying groundwork for its future development.

Long term Zen students are not the only people who come to Zen Mountain Center. Ministers and priests of other religions visit; one stayed as a Zen student for more than a month. Artists, poets, scholars, psychologists, and groups of students visit, some stay to work or for a change of environment. Many people visit for a few days specifically to gain some experience and understanding of Zen.

We have not closed Tassajara to the many people who have been going there for years to use the hot springs and enjoy its great natural beauty. This offers many a chance to become acquainted with Zen life. The guests prefer the hot summer months and the students prefer the cool Spring and Autumn months, and so the relationship is a natural one for this beginning monastery.

The opportunity to live, work, and practice with a Zen Master and others practicing Zen life seems to give everyone, guest and student alike, a good feeling. A kind of joy and hard work pervade Tassajara, as the students try to work as effortlessly as the Roshi does moving big stones, and as sensitively as he does in placing one in the garden.

A great deal will stand or fall with the success of this East-West experiment. The significance of the opening of Zen Mountain Center at Tassajara has resulted in national publicity both here and in Japan. It is being watched by people in both countries to find out if Zen, a way so characteristic of the Orient, can really find a home in the West.



Meditation was held here while a Zendo was being built.

Zen Mountain Center is also an opportunity for a revitalization of the Zen way itself. Buddhism is having a hard time in the Orient and even where it seems strongest, its creativity and vitality are stifled by the very traditions which continue it. In America Suzuki Roshi finds a freedom from layers of cultural preconceptions, expectations, and ideas about Buddhism. This freedom and the awakened nature of the students in this country are the possibilities for a real understanding and practice of Zen. He has great confidence in America and the rebirth in Zen which he feels will happen here.

We hope you will support to as great an extent as you are able this first full time Zen Practice Center outside the Orient.

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



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