

Wind Bell

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Contents

Page	1 Mountain Center report
	7 news
	12 lectures
	18 zazen and lecture schedules

Mountain Center Report

First Payment Met

Congratulations and thank you for your generous contributions and for helping to raise the first payment on the mountain land Zen Center is purchasing. As most of you know, Zen Center opened negotiations last fall for the purchase of some private property within the Los Padres National Forest near the coast in central California as the site for a future meditation center. The first payment of \$25,000 plus \$7,500 extra was raised in less than two months and was paid to Bob and Anna Beck, the present owners of the land on December 15, 1966.

About a fourth of the money was contributed by regular members of Zen Center and a larger percentage by the subscribers to Wind Bell. In total there were over 700 individual contributions from all over the United States. The response was heartening not only because of the amount of money raised, but because of the beautiful letters, notes and comments of encouragement that came with the contributions. We had no idea that there were so many people who have been feeling that a place



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Shunryu Suzuki, Roshi, (Zen Master)

like the Zen Mountain Center was needed. Many contributions came from people who know little about Zen, but who have a sense of the importance of meditation and the maintenance of a mountain wilderness for this purpose.

Benefits

A number of people offered their help through benefits. The first one was called a 'zenefit.' There were some objections to the name, but on the whole it was picked up and liked. In New York City, more people had heard of the Zenefit than had heard of the Zen Mountain Center. The Zenefit occurred at the Avalon Ballroom in San Francisco thanks to the invitation and organization of Chet Helms, the manager and director of the Avalon. The rock 'n' roll bands which contributed were the Quick-silver Messenger Service, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and the Grateful Dead. Around 1200 people came to the Zenefit and after expenses, Zen Center realized about \$1600.

Bill and Laura Kwong had a benefit party at their home in Mill Valley, California, at which each person contributed to the Zen Mountain Center.

Charlotte Selver, her husband Charles Brooks, and Mildred Johnstone held a seminar in New York City which resulted in contributions of almost \$900. Charlotte and Charles teach a kind of formless Zen or body practice based on any position that is conducive to awareness and meditation in the Zen sense of the word. The mental framework for the practice is also similar to Zen in that its aim is freedom from preconceived approaches to reality. Mildred Johnstone is one of the foremost experts in the West on the tea ceremony which, when it is properly performed, expresses the relationship of a Zen Buddhist to all things in terms of their 'suchness' and as if they were Buddha's body.

The Zen Mountain Center Benefit Art Exhibition ended January 16 after being open a month. Nearly \$2,000 was raised by the exhibition, clearing about \$1,600 after expenses. In all more than \$10,000 worth of paintings, sculpture, photographs, and pottery was contributed by about fifty west coast artists and ten New York artists. We may open a similar show in Los Angeles with what was not sold from the San Francisco show with additional contributions from artists in the Los Angeles area. In any case, the works which have not been sold, may be seen by making an appointment with Norman Stieglmeyer, the manager of the exhibition. (Leave word for him at Zen Center, 346-0442; or call 647-2481.) The works are being sold at slightly less than they could probably be bought at a regular gallery. They may be purchased by members of Zen Center as well as by the public. The poster-announcement for the exhibition was designed by Mike Dixon with Suzuki Roshi's sumi circle.

The Brochure

The brochure describing the land was planned and written by Richard Baker, and designed by Peter Bailey of East Wind Printers. Its fine photographs of the land, given by Bob Boni, Morley Baer, and Tom Buckley, were major contributions in eliciting support for the purchase of the property.

Mountain Center Plan Improved

We are now buying Tassajara Hot Springs itself, instead of the nearby Horse Pasture valley described in the last *Wind Bell* and the brochure. So now instead of undeveloped land we will have for immediate use buildings that sleep 60 to 70 persons, a kitchen, a reservoir and complete water system, a generator and electric system, an access road, a barn, hot springs, a VW bus, a jeep, and other things. We are now in the process of completing the new kitchen which had already been begun, and building a zendo and dormitory in one of the existing buildings. We will be open this summer, July and August, for the first training period. Except for those two months, Tassajara will continue to be open to guests and visitors.



Aerial view of cabins on Hot Springs land — Photo: Robert S. Boni

Originally the Hot Springs portion was not for sale, but the eventual purchase of it was part of the plan in buying the Horse Pasture. When the Hot Springs portion became available in December, its purchase was an opportunity to skip a number of steps in our plan, and also a necessity because the Horse Pasture's real value was its relationship to the Hot Springs valley. Without the opportunity to eventually purchase the Hot Springs section, we would not have undertaken to buy the Horse Pasture.

Financial Aspects

The cost of the Hot Springs portion is twice the cost of the Horse Pasture, but since the payments are spread out over a much longer period and this time with no interest charge, it is in the long run, a better financial arrangement. And when the cost of developing the water and putting in buildings, electricity, and an access road, and the opportunity to begin the meditation center right away are considered, it is clear that the purchase of the Hot Springs valley is a large step forward toward a national meditation center. The value of the beautiful all-year-round stream, the

hot springs, the larger amount of flat land, and the special quality of this main valley is indefinable.

The cost of the Hot Springs portion including buildings etc. is \$300,000 to be paid in installments over the next six years (into 1972), with no interest charge, and a default arrangement* going fully into effect after the December 1967 payment. The difficult part of the arrangement is that the two payments which have to be made this year are large: \$45,000 by March 15 and \$40,000 by December 15, 1967. These large initial payments are required to meet the financial obligations and agreement made between the two previous owners.

So Zen Center has to pay twice as much this first year as it does in the succeeding years. The specific schedule of payments for the Hot Springs portion of land is as follows:

\$32,500 already paid on December 15, 1966

\$45,000 by March 15, 1967

\$40,000 by December 15, 1967

\$20,000 by March 15, 1968

\$20,000 by December 15, 1968

and so forth up to March 1972 when the final payment is \$22,500. We have a right of first refusal (first opportunity to purchase) on the other two 160 acre parcels of land (one of them the Horse Pasture).

Immediate Plans

A large advantage to buying the hot springs section is that we will be able to use it immediately. It might have been years before the Horse Pasture portion could have been developed enough to put into effect the program envisioned for this summer in the former resort area.

Plans for this spring and summer are for a caretaker and a few workers to be there during February and March. In April, May and June, there will be more workers there and an increased number of visitors, guests, and meditators. At the beginning of July there will be official opening ceremonies and the beginning of the first two month training period. Persons will be able to join the training period at the beginning of July, the beginning of August, the middle of August, and the last week in August for the week sesshin which ends the training period.

At each beginning point new students will be required to spend three days in 'tangaryo', a period of strict meditation and training in a room separate from the main meditation room. Applicants will be admitted into the main training session in the zendo upon the successful completion of tangaryo and as long as there is room in the zendo. However, the sesshin will be open only to participants in the training period and members of

*The default arrangement provides for the return of all or no less than two-thirds of the amount we have paid up to the time of default. If it is sold for as much or more than the present selling price we would receive all our money back. If it was resold for less than the present selling price, we would receive a percentage of what we had paid based on the new selling price to the old selling price, but we would receive no less than two-thirds of our money back. If it was not resold, two-thirds of our money would have to be returned to us within ten years. This default arrangement goes fully into effect after the December 15, 1967 payment. Until then default would result in the loss of all of the first payment of \$32,500, and up to one-third loss of the upcoming March 15 payment.

Zen Center who Suzuki Roshi feels have sufficient experience in zazen (sitting meditation).

During the fall months as in the spring, the facilities will be open to visitors who wish to enjoy the Tassajara area and hot springs, and also to other groups to ust for sesshin, and to artists and scholars, scientists and others seeking a quiet place to work. The summer after this opening summer the program will be broadened and developed. The Tassajara meditation center now and in the future will be open to anyone of any faith interested in meditation.

Reasons For Buying This Land

Both Suzuki Roshi and members of Zen Center feel there is a need for more intensive and extensive contact between students and teacher. The Tassajara meditation center will permit this. And the mountain retreat will also serve as a national center making the opportunity of studying with Suzuki Roshi, and probably other Zen masters from Japan as well, immediately available to many more people. Any interested individual as well as persons from all the meditation groups in the country, can come to Tassajara to further their study. The Tassajara meditation center should help to put down real roots for Zen in America and be a place where Suzuki Roshi's successors and students can continue and deepen the experience of Zen here.

Paying For Tassajara

It is important that this attempt to buy Tassajara be successful. The time seems right for the establishment of this center to strengthen and solidify Zen study in this country. All our plans are of course contingent upon meeting the bi-yearly payments towards the final securing of this property. If we can meet the large March 15 (\$45,000) and December 15 (\$40,000) payments of this year, we should have built up enough support that the smaller payments of the succeeding years through 1972 can also be met. If each of you who has contributed already to buying the mountain center can make a similar contribution before March 15 and all of you who have made no contribution could do so now (even \$5, even \$1 helps and has helped a great deal), we will be able to meet the March 15 payment.

Another brochure or mailer is being prepared to inform groups who have not yet heard about the project about Zen and the possibilities for meditation in this country as expressed in the Tassajara meditation center. These mailings will not be out in time to help meet the March 15 payment, but they should help to raise the December 15 payment. The most important aspect of these mailings and the whole Tassajara project is not the funds raised but the presentation and articulation of the possibilities and implications of meditation in this country. The fund raising is at this point an important aspect of the larger effort to make Zen meditation and this outlook on life in general a possible alternative for Americans.



Waterfall — Photo by Robert S. Boni



Fireplace in the main room



New Zendo will be in this building, with sleeping upstairs

Photo by Robert S. Boni