

## P R E F A C E

Tassajara stories have been piling up in my memory banks since I first went there in February 1967. This was shortly after the San Francisco Zen Center bought the old hot springs resort that lay deep in the mountainous woods of Los Padres National Forest a few hours south of San Francisco. In the late 1980s, I began collecting Tassajara stories—not intentionally—but as a side effect of writing about my teachers and experiences Zenwise and otherwise. For decades these accounts have weaved their way into the books I’ve done, the interviews, and other posts on my cuke.com website. But there were still many I hadn’t collected.

One day I told my wife Katrinka an anecdote set at Tassajara that I’d just remembered. She asked if I’d written it down. The next day I did write it down and read it to her when she came home. The day after that I wrote down another one and read it to her. That continued daily for some time. I decided to throw these stories together with a bunch of other tales and memories I could mine out of Cuke Archives and the Alaya Vijnana and make a little book called *Tassajara Stories*. I kept the focus on the first ten years of Tassajara as Zen Mountain Center, the period in which I lived there two-thirds of the time. One thing for sure. I wasn’t going to let the process drag out for five or six years again.

Ten years later I’m just about finished with this project. I guess I got a little carried away. There’s too much for a single book. This volume takes us through 1967, the opening year of Tassajara as a Zen monastery with Shunryu Suzuki as the founding abbot.

You may notice there's a lot in these pages that didn't happen at Tassajara. That's because my life, our life at Tassajara didn't exist in a vacuum. Just like each of us, it had no separate existence. *Shakkei* is a Japanese term referring to a garden's "borrowed scenery." It's the outlying mountains and trees and whatever else one can see from a garden. If we look at what happened at Tassajara as being the garden of the book, then the other content is the shakkei. This borrowed scenery sets Tassajara and our experience in that valley in a broad context that gives background and color to who we were and how we got there, and includes the mountains, the woods, the road, our neighbors, the city, the times, the war, the counterculture, what was happening all around us.

Also, if you were around back then, you may come upon something you think happened differently or at another time. If so, please let me know, and I'll add your account to the basket of conflicting memories. If you go to [cuke.com/ts](http://cuke.com/ts), you'll find extensive notes and background material that will deal with those sorts of issues—and much more.

Tassajara stories swim in my thoughts, linger a while, and slip away. They are among my favorite indulgences. I'm not alone in this nostalgia. Those of us who were there shared a kind of magic. We learned there how not to dwell on the past, and it is still unforgettable.

So here it is—what occurred—and what occurred to me.

David Chadwick  
Sanur, February 9, 2025