

ZEN NOTES



At Crowfields, the home of Vanessa Coward in Mt. Kisco, U. S. A., members of the zazenkaï of the Institute, thanks to various favorable circumstances, were privileged to come together for a week of intensive practice, in our terms, an O Sesshin, during the month of July, 1959.

Your editor asked some who took part to share whatever they could with those who were not present. The written remarks printed here are those of a sociologist, though they are by no means a sociological report. The sketches are by Bill Briggs, who is not a professional artist. Those who experienced the event can best appreciate their attempts to convey its atmosphere, but we believe others too may like to have a glimpse of those seven days of summer.

This issue has been prepared by Mary Farkas with some advice from Sol Lida and has been printed by Ina Lowthorp.

The days began and continued according to the pre-arranged schedule.

5:30 a.m.	Get up
5:50 a.m.	Chant Sutra
6:10 a.m.	Breakfast
7:00 - 9:00 a.m.	Zazen
11:30 - 12:00 a.m.	Lunch
1:00 - 3:00 p.m.	Zazen
5:00 p.m.	Dinner
7:00 - 9:00 p.m.	Zazen





Americans often tend toward a peculiar notion that nothing is really supposed to happen on the very first or very last day of a long-term planned activity. Thus the four O Sesshin "pioneers" at Mt. Kisco experienced something of a shock when, precisely at 5:30 a.m. on Thursday, they were soundly awakened by Hide's no-nonsense smack of the bell. The uncompromising call to *begin--* then and there -- tested the ingenuity of the small group, which had retired the night before with complacent illusions of a gradual warming-up period to O Sesshin demands. The reports of early morning adventures on this day are understandably somewhat confused. Somehow teeth became brushed, sutras were chanted, and breakfast was assembled in time. When the bewildered students found themselves seated in the zendo at 7 a.m. for the first meditation period they were acutely aware that O Sesshin had really come upon them.



During the intervals between zazen periods some member were put to work weeding rows of flower beds, a task which they undertook with some qualms. Others did the cleaning



When work was over there were a few moments to absorb the beauty of the undefiled sky, or to relax tired muscles.



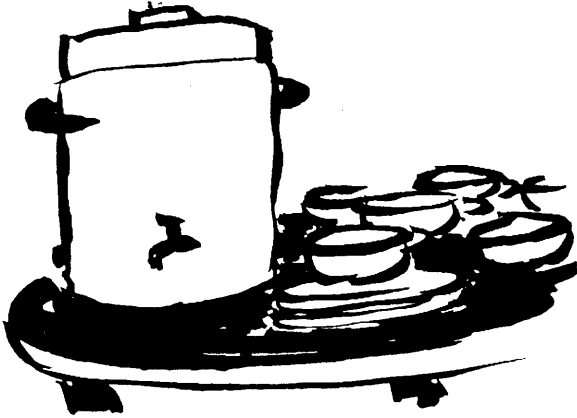


Sleeping space on Saturday night was at a premium, there being a grand total of eighteen guests. One member was ensconced in the living room, while another had a mattress on the floor of the sunporch. Hide was in a pup tent. Dr. S. and I. H. slept in sleeping bags out on the lawn, until a driving rain drove them indoors sometime during the night. Despite the fact that the house was bursting at the seams, the sleeping problem took care of itself. By this time there were many stiff joints and anyone could have rested well almost anywhere.





It did not take kitchen workers long to realize that preparation of meals for larger numbers



involved considerable unanticipated details and minor emergencies



Extra hands were always indispensable at certain phases of the preparation.

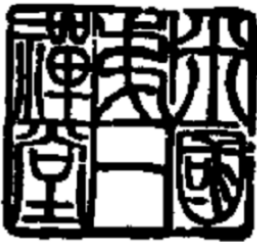






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