The preaching of non-sentient beings

Charles Chaim Wax
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

THE PREACHING OF NON-SENTIENT BEINGS

A THESIS REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE COLLEGE OF GRAPHIC ARTS AND PHOTOGRAPHY,
SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS
IN PHOTOGRAPHY

BY

CHARLES CHAIM WAX

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

MAY 1983

ADVISOR: RICHARD D. ZAKIA
Abstract

In this Thesis Report I have attempted to document the process whereby my photographic concerns shifted from images of urban life to images of the natural world, and from the use of the 35mm and 2½ format to the 8x10 format.

I discuss the development of my Thesis Proposal. It began when I heard a Teisho (talk) by Eido Roshi on "the preaching of non-sentient beings." I then show how my residence at Dai Bosatsu Zen Monastery influenced the direction of my Thesis work.

In this Thesis Report I also discuss in some detail my experience of the two aspects of photographic work, that is photographing in the field, and then printing in the darkroom. I describe both the technical and the emotional aspects of the photographic work.

In addition to the above material I attempted to answer the question: "What is the preaching of non-sentient beings?" I do this in two ways. First, I quote various individuals in diverse fields who explore the many possibilities of the question. I then give a brief statement of my own conclusions.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. ABSTRACT ................................................. iii

II. INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1

III. THESIS PROPOSAL ...................................... 6

IV. EXPOSITION ............................................. 21
    History of photographic work before Thesis... 21
    Residence at Zen Center ......................... 45
    Photographing the Thesis ....................... 64
    Printing the Thesis ............................. 99
    Quotations exploring Thesis Purpose ......... 129
    Conclusion ....................................... 153

V. NOTES .................................................. 159

VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY ........................................... 163
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

I. TRANSPARENCIES OF EACH THESIS PRINT..... 168

II. TRANSPARENCIES OF THESIS EXHIBITION..... 170
Introduction

I came to the Rochester Institute of Technology because I wanted to change my life. Certainly this is a noble desire and an ambitious undertaking. It also requires explanation. I desired to change my life because I was not content in my work. When I came to R.I.T. I had been teaching English in New York City Schools for ten years. To be honest, though, the dissatisfaction began much earlier. Indeed I had been teaching English for two years when I felt that teaching was not all I wanted out of life. That feeling continued more or less unabated until I reached my tenth year of teaching. Then I really began to plan for another career. Thus at the start of my tenth year I sent out a number of applications to Graduate School. I planned to get a Master of Fine Arts Degree in Photography. At the end of my tenth year I felt a cycle had been completed. I had done a decade.

I can clearly remember the day that I was accepted by R.I.T. I received a call from Dr. Zakia. He congratulated me on my acceptance. I was very happy. I now had a chance to "change my life."

I cannot remember the specific moment in my life when I became interested in photography. All I can remember is that I took pictures while I was in High
School and joined a photography club. At that time I used a 2½ Minolta Autocord. I did not have an enlarger but I did make contact prints. All my prints at that time were 2½ inches. I didn't mind the small size. The print itself seemed magical. I took pictures of my mother and father, grandmother, uncle, and many city scenes. For some strange reason when I attended college I did not pursue photography. I became an English major and began to write poetry. I can't explain why I left photography and began poetry. But for my stay at the City College of New York I didn't take any pictures. Instead I wrote poetry. When I started teaching in New York City schools I put aside the poetry and returned to the photography. And thus for many years I photographed as an amateur.

After taking a great number of images simply for my own pleasure I began to feel that I could make a career in photography. I joined the Soho Photo-cooperative and had a number of photographs exhibited in their gallery. I also went on to publish two photographic books. I used my own funds to do this. I had great dreams of earning a living simply from the proceeds of my books. Of course it didn't work out. I then began to think of some other way of earning a living while involved in photography. I was not interested in being a commercial photographer. I just didn't have the temperment.
It then became clear that teaching photography at the college level was the best solution. In this way I could be involved in photography while earning a steady livelihood. When I investigated this possibility I discovered that one could only teach on the college level if one had a Master of Fine Arts Degree.

The first school that I applied to was Pratt. I applied to Pratt because it is in Brooklyn. I felt that while I attended school I could be a substitute teacher in New York City and in that way pay for my education. I sent in a portfolio and was accepted. I was very happy. When I spoke to the Chairman of the Photography Department I found out that I would have to take "art" courses because I had not taken any art courses while at C.C.N.Y. Indeed I would have to take 60 credits (or something like that) to make up for the courses I had never taken. I tried to explain that I was a photographer and was interested in photography; I tried to explain that because I had some talent as a photographer didn't mean that I had any talent as an artist. I was blunt. I said, "I can't draw a straight line." The Chairman told me, "Don't worry. You'll have fun taking art courses. Just tell the professor that you are a photo major and they'll understand." Still
I couldn't bring myself to spend three or four thousand dollars on "art" courses. I had to decline.

I looked through a number of catalogues and R.I.T seemed to have much more diversity than Pratt. If I attended R.I.T. I could take courses in film or video or papermaking or a number of other courses that I was interested in. Thus I decided to apply to R.I.T. I can honestly say that there was not a single class I took which I did not find valuable. Of course some classes were more helpful than others but I didn't feel that any class was a waste of time.

My Thesis Report will discuss my experience in completing my Thesis Project. It will discuss my personal history as a photographer, and how my vision of what photography is all about changed. I will discuss in detail the process of how this change in vision came about. I will discuss my experience of actually taking the photographs for the Thesis and the experience of printing them. I will also attempt to answer the question which the Thesis Proposal enunciates. I present a number of long quotations to give a complete background to this question. I of course also present my own views.

As I stated earlier I came to R.I.T. because I
wanted to change my life. I did and I didn't. Perhaps that sounds a little confusing. Maybe I can best put it this way. When I came to R.I.T. I wanted to change my life. But what does that mean? I suppose it meant to me then that I should have more money and less despair after I got the M.F.A. Degree. However my idea of what it meant to change my life itself changed. Now "to change my life" means to continually change my life. I suppose that means don't get stuck, don't cling, let go, open up, value laughter, despair is not to be feared nor money overly sought after. I don't desire to change my life so much as to accept the necessity of continual change, and somehow be joyous in that necessity.
Thesis Proposal for the Master of Fine Arts Degree

College of Graphic Arts and Photography
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Submitted by: Charles Chaim Wax
May 1981

Thesis Board: Richard D. Zakia

Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Elliott Rubenstein

Assistant Professor
School of Photographic Arts and Sciences
Rochester Institute of Technology

Rafe Martin

Owner-Manager
Ox Cart Bookshop
Rochester, N.Y.
Purpose

To photograph the preaching on non-sentient beings.

Background and Scope

During Memorial Day Sesshin 1980 at Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo Ji Monastery Eido Roshi's Teisho (talk) dealt with Tozan, one of the founders of Soto Zen. Of course I should have been concentrating only on the Teisho but as soon as I heard the story I knew it would be the basis of my photographic thesis.

The story Eido Roshi told is as follows. There are two parts. The first involves Tozan as a young monk in conversation with Master Isan (771-853). The second part takes place many years later. Here Tozan is conversing with Master Ungan (782-841) whom he later succeeded. The following is Eido Roshi's translation from the Japanese:

Tozan asked, "What is True Nature? What is Ultimate Reality?"

Isan said, "Roof tile."

Tozan said, "But the roof tile is non-sentient."

The Master said, "Yes."

Tozan was surprised and said, "Can non-sentient roof tile preach?"
Isan said, "It has been preaching all the time."
Tozan said, "Is that so. But I cannot hear it."
The Master said, "That is because your ears are plugged, but the rest of the people are hearing it very well."
Tozan said, "Who are the rest of the people?"
The Master said, "They are called Buddhas."

The second part of the story goes as follows:

Tozan Gohan Zenji practiced under Ungan and asked the question, "Who can hear the preaching of non-sentient beings?"

Ungan said, "The preaching of non-sentient beings can only be heard by non-sentient beings."

Tozan asked, "Master, can you hear or not?"

Ungan replied, "If I could, you could not hear my Dharma talk."

Said Tozan, "That being the case I have nothing to hear from you."

Ungan said, "You don't hear my Dharma talk. How can it be possible for you to hear the talk of non-sentient beings?"

With this Tozan got insight. He composed a verse and presented it to Ungan:

Wonderful Wonderful
The mysterious Dharma talk
Of non-sentient beings.
If one wants to hear it through his ears
He will miss it.
Only when he hears through his eyes
Will he get it.

Ungan accepted this verse.

Many implications are contained within this brief conversation. I can't deal with them all but in order to make my intention clearer I will touch on a few. The question of defining what is sentient and what is non-sentient existence can be a very complicated one but using just common sense we could say without too much difficulty that in our Judeo-Christian tradition a stone or a tractor is non-sentient existence. The stone does not feel. The tractor does not reason. Thus I think most people would agree that a photograph of a stone or a tree or a wall or a cloud would be a photograph of non-sentient existence.

I don't think that distinction presents too much difficulty. However the concept that non-sentient beings can preach or can teach is somewhat more strange to the Western tradition. Another tradition exists, however, where this idea is not strange or foreign. Tozan existed within this tradition and today Eido Roshi and others continue it. This thesis follows that tradition, and
maintains that a cloud or twilight or rushing water is preaching all the time. The twilight says something but the language it uses exists on a level other than the verbal.

Even this is not all that difficult to follow. But what they preach is another matter and this matter is in fact the substance of my thesis. It is what I shall discover. But how to do this is not so easy. According to the story, "The preaching of non-sentient beings can only be heard by non-sentient beings." When I first heard this I got the impression that stones might be listening to clouds or that clouds might be listening to stones and that one would preach to the other; communication was from non-sentient to non-sentient being. Later I got a little understanding and it became clear that a human being had to, by some means, himself become non-sentient. Once that was done he too could hear the preaching, whatever that might be. But I thought to myself: How is this to be done? Isan said that the ears of the young monk Tozan were "plugged" and that was the reason he could not hear. Tozan said in his verse that if you try to hear it with the ears nothing will come of it. Somehow you have to hear it with the eyes. So how to get the ears "unplugged" is the question, how to hear with the eyes is the question because according to the conversation only when this happens can there be
any communication. Since the subject of this thesis is to photograph what they preach it is of the utmost importance for me in some small way, for however brief a period of time, to become non-sentient.

I will not pretend to exhaust the deep meaning of "becoming non-sentient" but while doing research I came across a number of quotations which I think help to both hint at the process of a human being becoming non-sentient and at the same time hint at what these non-sentient existences might teach. The first comes from the poet Gary Snyder:

I quote to you one of Basho's disciples who took down something Basho once said to a group of students. He said, "To learn about the pine, go to the pine. To learn about the bamboo go to the bamboo. But this learn is not just what you think learn is. You only learn by becoming totally absorbed in that which you wish to learn. There are many people who think that they have learned something and willfully construct a poem which is artifice and does not flow from their delicate entrance into the life of another object."1

Another quotation is also very helpful. It is by Laurence Binyon:
I recall a little painting of uncertain date but inspired by a poem of Wang Wei, the eighth century poet painter; the subject is just a sparse wood of stunted trees on a flat foreland: misty water and still sky. Nothing of what to the average mind is beautiful; yet in this foreland scene there was something strangely moving, just because the painter had absorbed the solitude of trees and water into himself. He had painted it internally so to speak, not as something alien seen from the outside.  

I hope these two short quotations have made a little clearer the tradition within which this thesis will function.

Many photographers have shown interest in the concerns implicit in this tradition, that is they have also desired to hear the preaching of non-sentient beings although they don't use that term. Instead flower or snowflake is preferred. As I have mentioned the way toward understanding this preaching is to dissolve the division between subject and object. I will present a number of quotations to indicate that the tradition within which I will function has also been fruitful for photographers.
Paul Caponigro writes:

Seeing things in nature radiate a being of their own is important to me. How can one do this unless one really loves? All good art, if seen and perceived simply and openly (without prejudice or preference), gives us the chance to experience this sense of otherness with the physical thing.³

In another place in his monograph this "sense of otherness with the physical thing" is extended to his own body. He writes:

Something so delicate, so beautiful and magical as snowflakes. I was making pictures of snow and seeing in it such solid forms. Suddenly I thought of being made of many snowflakes, and just as suddenly I sent them flying to the skies--back from whence they came.⁴

In the introduction to his book on sunflowers he writes:

A sunflower comes as a gift from a friend and quietly took its place on my windowsill. It seemed content, as nature's marvels usually are, with whatever notice it might receive. But as I passed it several times a day and
glanced each time toward its radiance, the flower began to grow less shy. It seemed to ask, if not demand, that I draw nearer and record its moods on film. Finally I gave in and took the first step toward another world. As I dwelt upon the beauty of the sunflower, on its golden crown and ever changing form, it began to whisper of a realm beyond the sensual mind, a realm magnificent and strange.5

Stieglitz, too, in many of his writings concerned himself with "oneness". He writes, "The beginning of peace within--the only peace--Not as theory--but as life itself--swinging with the universe--in sympathy with not for..."6

Minor White has also shown a great deal of concern for "union", for putting aside ego so that subject and object can merge. He writes:

The picture mentioned above climaxed an afternoon's work in which I started out by saying to myself, "What shall I be given today?" It progressed by stages of growing awareness of absorption into the place. Exposure after exposure were sketches leading--in no very conscious way--towards this final one. The same shapes, forms, designs recurred with
growing tension. When this was seen on the ground glass anything separating man and place had been dissolved. 7

In fact while at MIT he devoted a whole exhibition to this question. In his introduction to *Octave of Prayer* he writes, "Losing one's self in something; a flower, an idea, a movement is characteristic of heightened concentration. Occasionally in this state a sense of oneness or union is felt." 8 Later he quotes Chaudhuri and then relates it to photography. First I shall quote Chaudhuri: "Thus, a master landscape painter feels it is not he who paints the landscape but the landscape paints itself through his medium." 9 Minor White comments, "Likewise photographers, not necessarily great ones, occasionally experience identical sensations. Some force, not of their own doing, working through them works through the camera." 10 He also writes:

No one knows how many thousands of photographers never really recognize the connection between their photography and the qualities of religion, prayer or some form of the esoteric. Yet they continue to photograph because of these very qualities. Photography allows them a consciousness of things, places and people, a union with certain visual, auditory and
sensory events in the world. The union growing out of rapport or resonance makes this experience an event for them.11

**Procedure**

Since both a tractor and a flower are non-sentient it would seem that either one could be the subject of the photograph. And indeed either could be but for the purpose of unity I will concentrate exclusively on the preaching of non-sentient beings in the natural world such as water, vines, leaves, wind, trees, grasses, roots, mud, twilight, flowers, rocks, seeds.

I will use an 8x10 view camera and employ black and white film and paper. The final show will consist of twenty to thirty contact prints. The photographs will be taken in Western New York State. I hope to have the prints ready for showing by fall 1981. In addition, as I photograph I shall continue to do research as an aid to exploring various issues related to my thesis. No bibliography is ever final.
Notes


9 White, Octave of Prayer, p. 19.

10 White, Octave of Prayer, p. 19.

11 White, Octave of Prayer, p. 18.
Bibliography


Addendum to Bibliography

I read in the Master of Fine Arts In Photography Handbook, Spring 1978 the following:

It (Thesis Report) should be a relevant report of your thesis experience and useful as a reference for others. It should include:

Thesis proposal

Explanations of the problems you met

Your understanding of those problems and how you solved them (whether they concern aesthetic, conceptual or technical problems). Include examples of failures if they are relevant.

I intend this report to be an exploration of these directions. The instructions indicate that the report should be relevant. Sometimes, though, in art, in addition to the specific, the tangential is also relevant. Thus I would like to begin at a point in time somewhat before the actual Thesis Project began. I do this so the Thesis will be seen in the framework of my existence and not as an isolated exercise requirement for a degree. Thus I shall begin with a brief autobiographical account as it relates to my photographic interests.

Before I came to the Rochester Institute of Technology I had lived in New York City my entire life, and my
photographic interests had been intimately bound to that environment. I had, however, also spent a number of summers in Vermont and photographed while there.

For a very long time I worked with a Minolta Autocord 2½ camera. It was cheap, practical and almost indestructible, but not quite. (After many years of service it just, one might say, "wore out" while I attended graduate school at the University of Wisconsin. I guess the camera really couldn't function in any other place than Brooklyn.) While I lived in Brooklyn I would take the Minolta Autocord and wander along on the Boardwalk and try to photograph the "sea" or "mist". At other times I would take pictures of my grandmother or uncle or street people or street scenes. At that time I didn't have any theory about what I was doing or if the images were good or art, but I enjoyed taking pictures. (Only lately after years in the pursuit of Absolute Images have I come to find out that delight is the benchmark of creation and powerful images merely the residue of one's participation in the primal delight of simply Being.)

After Graduate School I began to teach High School English in New York City. Later that year I purchased a Nikon Ftn and the following lenses: a 50mm lens, a 5mm Micro Nikkor lens, and a 105mm portrait lens. I would pack five or six rolls of 35mm film into my pockets and go out "into the streets". I would just walk and walk
through my beloved Brooklyn. In some strange way unless I did two rolls of film a day, every day, I felt that something was wrong. I felt incomplete. I didn't feel quite right unless I made huge numbers of images. At this time I lived near Prospect Park. Early in the morning before going to work or late in the day after work I would wander through the Park taking pictures. I think in strictly absolute numbers I must have taken more pictures of the Park than any other person. Again I still didn't know what I was doing in a critical sense but I enjoyed myself.

After awhile it came to me that I was taking pictures of trees and water and grass and since these subjects didn't move the 35mm camera wasn't the exact tool for me. I returned to the 2 1/4 format but this time I had money. I purchased a Hasselblad with three lenses: a 50mm Distagon, an 80mm lens, and a 250mm Sonar lens. I found the variety of the lenses quite interesting to work with, and the definition of these lenses was far superior to that of the old departed Minolta Autocord. The Hasselblad's ease of handling made it suitable for street scenes as well as pictures in the Park.

After I had taught English in New York City High Schools for four years I began to find that my main interest did not reside in teaching English but in
making images. Indeed I spent many classes taking portraits of my students. In my innocence I decided to publish a photographic book using the thousands upon thousands of images that I had taken in Brooklyn. I called the book Brooklyn Songs: 1. Of course even before this book was published I had in mind to do Brooklyn Songs: 2. These books were to be the visual equivalent of the often repeated statement: Brooklyn is Infinite. Needless to say this grand scheme did not work out.

The book was a collection of urban images: street corners at night, lovers in the Park, children with funny hats and crossed eyes, an old man in a restaurant, the beach in snow. The book represented for me a song of praise for Brooklyn. All my friends liked it but adequate distribution was lacking. That didn't deter me. A year later I published another book called The Dream of Being. This book consisted of a series of "abstract" images linked to quotations and poems. For the most part these abstract images were taken with the 55mm Micro-nikkor lens. I would walk and walk and then a bit of concrete, a part of a wall became through the process of abstraction a complete world, a different world with its own points of reference, substance and meaning. In a certain sense it allowed me to escape the everyday world by transcending its recognizable form. Again all of my friends liked the book but its sales were disappointing.
The methodology for both books was much the same. I would "go out into the street" and see what was there, and always there was something in the streets: crowds, broken walls, torn posters, children, buses, fire hydrants, bleakness, despair. I would take my camera and walk and walk or get into my car and drive to a spot and photograph. The people were always there. The trees in the Park were always there. The decay was there. The boardwalk was there. The faces were there both in the street and in my classroom. The bridges were there. Loneliness was there. No matter where I went I felt at home. The streets of Brooklyn are infinite.

Punctuating these images were the summers that I spent in Vermont. While I was there I also took pictures. Somehow I also felt at home there although I spent only two months of the year there. I used almost exclusively the 2\(\frac{1}{4}\) camera in Vermont. The small streams and the mists that clung to Mt. Mansfield near Stowe were very suitable subjects for me. But these images were still only a brief change from the urban images that I took in Brooklyn.

Gradually it became clear to me that I desired to change my profession and teach Photography in College rather than teach English in High School. To implement this goal I decided to attend Graduate School to obtain
a M.F.A. Degree in Photography. I applied to and was accepted by the Rochester Institute of Technology. When I came to Rochester I found that R.I.T. was not exactly in the City of Rochester itself but instead was in one of the many suburbs that surround Rochester. In the process of looking for an apartment someone told me that the area near the Zen Center was called the "Greenwich Village of Rochester." I said, "Oh, is that so." I got an apartment on Merriman St. It was close to the downtown area, to railroad tracks, old buildings, factories. Somehow I felt that I would feel more at home in the center of Rochester than in the suburbs, that is my photographic interests were more attuned to that urban type of environment. R.I.T. itself was surrounded by farms. I opted for a smaller, albeit much smaller, version of Brooklyn. I attempted to immerse myself in a known urban environment with the thought that I would again be able to photograph in the streets. At this point I was still using the Nikon and the Hasselblad.

In class I was given various assignments and I attempted to do what I had been accustomed to doing in the Brooklyn past: I would go out in the streets and see what was going on. I wanted to again do what I had done my entire photographic life. But when I went out into the streets I found they were not the same streets that I was familiar with. Something was missing. I
photographed along Anderson Avenue by the Railroad Tracks. At last I thought to myself: Here is Desolation. Here I could do my old thing. I could photograph the despair in the streets, the loneliness in the streets, the intensity in the streets. I took one image at dusk of a small wood frame Church in the late twilight. There was a single light in an upper left window. All the other windows were dark. There was a feeling of Salvation and Abandonment at the same moment. It was a true urban image.

In the same area I photographed a large puddle in the middle of a vacant lot. I went behind the Orange Monkey. There, in a large drainage ditch, I photographed a Bonton potato chip bag submerged under water. To me it looked like a body floating endlessly in grey mist. In class some students said, "Where?" I said, "There, right there. Can't you see it." I went to the Downtown section to walk the streets. I ate fries in Nick Tahou's 24 Hour Diner. But for me the Downtown held no mystery. I guess since I had come from the Ultimate, from New York City, downtown Rochester did not evince any of the Great Despair for me, although I am sure some of it was there.

I did not know what to photograph on a consistent basis. I did the assignments but for some strange reason I did not yet feel great waves of joy surge through me in the same way that I had when I was on my endless walks through the streets of Brooklyn. I thought to myself:
"Am I like my old Minolta Autocord? Can I only take pictures while in Brooklyn?" In Brooklyn each street was a door to Magic. Here to my great surprise there were streets but no one walked on them. Everyone walked in the Malls. I said the word over and over: The Malls, the MALLS and eventually it transformed into The Mausoleums. I didn't know what to do. On one of my trips back home I had an interesting conversation with some of my friends.

I was at Don's house. His wife Maria had just made Chicken and Rice with good strong Puerto Rican Coffee. Russ and Dave were also there. I said in a somewhat despondent tone of voice. "I can't take pictures up there. I feel like an exile. There is nothing for me to take pictures of: No torn posters, no abandoned buildings, no cracks in the cement, no children playing in the street, no all night bus rides from which to photograph the streets. There is nothing."

Don said, "You mean to say there are no lonely people in Rochester. Nobody is sad there. You used to like to take pictures of those kinds of people."

I said, "Up there it's all neat little houses. And in the Winter forget about it. The weather keeps everybody indoors or in the Malls, the MALLS, THE MALLS."

Russ said, "Calm down Charlie. What about your closeups. You know the abstract pictures."
I said, "There's no decay, I mean real decay. Neat little houses, lawns, Malls."

Dave said, "You're a big city boy Chuck. Of course no place can compare to New York City. It has intensity. This is an intense space here."

I said, "You're right. But I'm here for advice, for solutions."

Don said, "You have to maximize the potential of the particular space you presently inhabit." He stopped, smiled and then continued, "Each place has something unique to itself. You have to get into that uniqueness and not bemoan what is not there. Look Charlie, what is it, if anything, that you like to do up there. Something must give you pleasure?"

I said, "This is going to sound really strange but do you know what I like to do. I just like to get into my Van and ride slowly, very slowly all through the back roads that crisscross the surrounding countryside. I feel like an explorer. There are gently rolling hills, apple orchards, streams, trees, corn fields. Then I like to go to a Diner and order a grilled cheese and fries and tea with lemon. I'm honest with you. That's what I like to do."

Russ said, "Wax you got it. You do Local Diners in Western New York State. Don't you remember the picture you took of the K&Z Diner on 3rd Avenue off Atlantic."
It's a classic. And you love to eat Wax, face it."

I said, "That's a possibility."

I went back to Rochester still not sure of what exactly I was going to photograph.

After one term at R.I.T. using the 35mm and 2½ format I decided to purchase an 8x10 inch camera. I purchased the camera during my first full summer at R.I.T. The purchase of the 8x10 camera and what to photograph became intertwined.

The decision to purchase the 8x10 camera was not taken lightly. I would have to create an entire new photographic system. I would have to purchase the body of the camera, a lens, a tripod, negative holders, a case for the camera, a darkcloth, a printing frame. In addition I would have to insure all of the above. The total cost for all items would be well over $2,000.

I took a Deardoff out of the Cage on a number of occasions to get the feel of the 8x10 camera. I assumed that I would purchase a Deardoff because that was the 8x10 camera everyone bought. It was just assumed "8x10" meant "8x10 Deardoff." It was The Camera.

In May I began to look for an 8x10 Deardoff camera. Southtowne Camera had a used Deardoff, a 12 inch Schneider lens, a number of film holders and a case for $1,600.
I asked a number of students if they thought this was a good buy. Their response invariably was, "It's alright but you can do better in New York City." Everyone convinced me that I would have no difficulty in getting a better price once I was in New York City.

I then registered for a five credit independent study with Owen Butler. I hoped to work with the 8x10 camera under his guidance. I also registered for a three credit course in Architectural Photography for the expressed purpose of learning to use the 8x10 camera.

I went down to New York City in the middle of May to purchase all of the equipment. When I got there not a single Deardoff was to be found in the entire New York City. There was not a new or used one to be found. I went to Lens and Repro, Foto-care, Camera Barn. They didn't have a single Deardoff. I immediately called Southtowne Camera in Rochester. "Sorry it's been sold," was the response. I was disappointed because I could have bought the one in Rochester earlier but everyone told me, "You can do better in the City." I couldn't wait to have one ordered because I had registered for eight credits during the Summer Session. I needed one now. There was the possibility of using the Deardoff in the Cage but it would not be mine and the lens I would use probably would not be the same one each day. Each lens is always different to a certain degree. Thus to photograph
seriously you have to get to know the special characteristics of your own lens.

Photographers say, "The only camera to get is a Deardoff. It looks classy and lasts forever." I thought to myself: This is Idol Worship and did I really want a camera that would outlive me. If I have ability another quality 8x10 would serve my purpose just as well. Since all of my intended work was to be done in the field I did not consider an 8x10 studio camera.

I examined what qualities made an 8x10 camera worthwhile. Dependability, ease of operation, steadiness were the crucial factors. I looked at a Wista 8x10 camera. The locks for the camera movements were inconveniently placed and the entire camera itself was just too shaky. When I looked at the Toyo it was solid, the controls were conveniently placed and the parts were interchangeable. Thus the standard bellows could be detached and a bag bellows used when a lens of short focal length was desired. When folded compactly a protective masonite board covered the ground glass. It would be impossible to go into all the features of the Toyo 8x10 camera but it is sufficient to say that everything about the camera was well thought out, convenient, efficient. It had all the features that I found necessary in order to take pictures properly.

This I decided to buy a Toyo 8x10 field camera. I would be the first and only person in Rochester with an
8x10 that was not a Deardoff. But could pictures be taken if they were not taken with a Deardoff? This may sound like a facetious question but in still photography equipment plays a vital role in the creation of images. The Deardoff had the mystique. But I bought the Toyo, among other reasons, because I felt that after a certain point I had to liberate myself from the tyranny of equipment. Indeed it's all too easy to allow equipment to become an end in itself.

In addition to the body itself I purchased as an accessory a bellows lens shade which screwed into the top front standard of the Toyo. This was one of the best investments I made. It increased contrast and thus sharpness by at least 25% because it kept all stray light from the lens. Ansel Adams also made a similar observation that one of the most important pieces of equipment for any camera is an adequate lens shade, and no lens shade is as effective as a bellows lens shade.

I can say that at this moment I am absolutely satisfied with the Toyo camera. It is simple to use and dependable.

The next important decision was the nature of the lens to be used. The jump in the prices of lenses from the 4x5 format to the 8x10 format is considerable. A lens for the 8x10 format will be twice that of a lens for the 4x5 format. Also the price of a lens depends
on its aperture, that is a f/5.6 lens will cost a great deal more than a f/8 lens all other factors being equal. I looked at a number of lenses. The most expensive lenses were apochromatic process lenses. They had an aperture of f/11 and theoretically gave absolute rendition. They also were several thousands of dollars each. I finally settled on a 14 inch f/8 Gold Dot Dagor made in Switzerland. Jerry Kramer of Modern Photography said it was one of the very best lenses ever made. In using it I have found it to be an extremely sharp lens and in combination with the bellows lens shade it gives an especially crisp image.

I considered buying another lens in addition to the Dagor. Since this 14 inch lens was slightly longer than normal 12 inch lens for the 8x10 format I thought that I would buy a wide field lens of 10 inches. Instead I decided to use only one lens for the entire Thesis project. When I looked at the ground glass I knew exactly what the lens would cover and after awhile I began to automatically see with the inherent possibilities and limitations of this lens. I began to know what it could and could not do. Because of the strict intimacy of working with only one lens I was liberated. In a strange way the limitation of working with only one lens gave me freedom. In fact I recommend that a photographer work with one lens for a long period of time to really get to know it.
Of course there were times when a shorter focal length lens might have been helpful because I wanted to include more of a scene than I was able to with the 14 inch lens. I could move the camera back no further because of a tree or stream or mountain wall. Yet just because of the strictures of using one lens I was forced to compose rigorously. With two or three lenses a certain laxness might have occurred because if an image did not look just right I could have changed the focal length rather than work assiduously on the composition derived from the initial inspiration.

In reading through photographic literature I found that many photographers who use the large format employ a variety of filters to achieve certain effects. Ansel Adams especially advocates the advantages of filters for specific circumstances. Because of the construction of my lens no glass filters could be screwed into the front of it. I could have hand held a gel filter before the lens but I decided not to do this. Fred Picker created an arrangement with magnets whereby a gel filter was placed inside the bellows directly behind the lens. Gel filters are far superior to even the finest glass filters. Taking into consideration the advantages of filters and what I would have to do to use them I decided not to use any at all. I wanted to reduce the number of external factors that went into the actual image making process.
Of course filters could be very helpful with foliage since film does not "see" leaves as the eye sees them. Filters are also helpful in rendering clouds distinctly, but I found that through the careful use of the Zone System I could effectively compensate for the lack of filters.

Gradually through critiques and conversations with teachers and fellow students it became apparent to me that my direction in photography in Rochester was not going to be with the hand held camera in either the 35mm or 2½ format. All of the elements in my strongest images lent themselves to the 8x10 format. I also began to be captured by the "potency of tone" and as far as I was able to discover nothing could surpass the quality of the 8x10 print. I also began to notice that those photographers to whom I was drawn all used the larger format camera. Atget, Weston, Soudek, Adams, Stieglitz, Caponigro. I still admired the work of many other photographers like W. Eugene Smith, Dave Heath, Manual Alvarez Bravo but somehow I would return again and again to those photographers who worked essentially in the large format camera.

Also during this period of time Owen Butler was working in the 8x10 format so I felt that this would be a fine opportunity for me to be in close contact with a teacher who was working in this format. Strangely
enough I was not drawn to color even though I had taken
innumerable slides in the 35mm format. I was just drawn
to the 8x10 individual black and white silver print.
The fact that each image was a single sheet of film
helped me to spend a great deal more time on each exposure.
When I was using the 2\frac{1}{4} format I felt that when I went
out I had to use all twelve exposures even though I might
see only three or four scenes that really held my
attention. In a certain sense the importance of the single
image was brought home to me when I started to use the
8x10 camera. It could be said that I began to know what
I was doing in photography when I began to use the 8x10
camera.

As soon as I started using the 8x10 camera, in
fact the very first time, there was a thrill that
surged through me, a certain joy that I had not felt
since the Brooklyn days. I would get under the darkcloth
and something would happen to me. Nothing would exist
except the upside down image on the ground glass.
Everything was there. I could see what was going on from
the center to the corners. I made as many images as
should be made at a given time. I could spend a minute
or an hour on an exposure until everything was right.

With the purchase of the 8x10 camera I no longer
did any photography in the City of Rochester itself
except for one small attempt at backyard photography.
During that summer I took many trips back home to Brooklyn with the 8x10 camera by my side. Now I could really photograph the despair in Bushwick, the cobblestones in Greenpoint, the dead end streets of Red Hook. It was so strange. I was still drawn back to Brooklyn. For some reason even though I had changed the format I still was drawn back to Brooklyn Scenes. I still did not feel at ease in Rochester or the surrounding countryside. I still had not found a place to call my own.

In September and October of that year I began slowly, very slowly to wean myself away from taking pictures in Brooklyn and seriously drive the backroads of Western New York State in search of images. One day I was driving along East River Road. I was coming back from the Star Diner in Avon when I came upon a perfect scene. I had driven along this road countless times before but for some reason today was different. The sun was very low. I was crossing a small overpass when I turned my head to the right and saw the late afternoon sunlight rest easily across a meadow and across a small stream which meandered there among trees and grasses. I stopped my Van and pulled over. I just stood there and looked at the long shadows, the soft sunlight, the stream, the trees, the grasses, the wind off the hills, and the hint of eventual twilight, night and the blue stars twinkling.
in a blue Heaven without differentiation. Then it happened. It just happened. While I stood there I became part of the long shadows across the field. Since the sun was at my back I physically became one with the picture. My shadow too had come to rest across the grasses. Sometimes you don't even have to click the shutter. You know that of all the hundreds of practice pictures this one is just right. All the times of agonized possibility resolve into this certainty. The sun was going down rather fast but I was not in any hurry. Very peacefully I took out my camera and set up the tripod. The shadows were becoming longer and longer but somehow I knew there would be time. I looked at the ground glass. Behind me cars raced past on East River Road. I snapped two images quickly and then two more. It was like a very peaceful frenzy.

From the left, down the road, a young woman with flowing blonde hair and dressed in farm overalls began to walk toward me.

"Hi," she said, "What are you doing?"

"Taking pictures of the shadows. Is this your place? It's very beautiful."

"It's mine and John's. We just bought it."

"Oh," I said. She was very lovely. As I looked at her the sun had completely gone down. The light, as happens at that time of day, seemed to come from within
objects. Such light lasts just a little bit but it is my favorite time of the day. Her face seemed to glow. Her skin was very smooth and what amazed me most was the twinkle in her eye. Of course as soon as I use a phrase like "the twinkle in her eye" I have to be very careful. "A twinkle in her eye." What does that phrase mean? I have thought about the look in her eye many times since that day and have tried again and again to avoid sentimentality when trying to put that look into words. I came up with: She lived without regret or anticipation in the cycle of the seasons. But then I thought: Too poetic. Better to say simply: Her teeth are white and straight, her hair golden like autumn corn and she seems happy.

I said, "I hope you don't mind me taking pictures."

She said, "No, no, of course not but we don't get too many people out here taking pictures."

"I wonder if you wouldn't mind if I went out in the field some day to take pictures. The land appears strong yet soft. I can't put it into words really. Maybe that's why I want to take some pictures."

She said, "John likes this spot very much also. Right where you're looking that's the first thing we saw on the farm. Come over here and I'll show you how to get in." And then she took me about fifty feet toward the house to where the land sloped down to a wooden gate. She showed me how to open the fence. It was locked by a
thick leather strap. She said that anytime I wanted to take pictures just to let her or John know I was on the land and then go right in.

I said, "Sure."

Later that night I developed the negatives I had taken and the next morning printed two of the images. Later when I showed them at school the common reaction was, "This is what photography is all about." Sometimes an image is beyond criticism. These are not many but they do exist. You work and work and then the effort of an entire career comes together to produce an image of absolute harmony which is at once a summation and a leap. This image of the Long Shadows, the first taken at Wadsworth Farm, is such a picture. For some reason I didn't include it in the show because it's too special. Does that make sense? In fact I don't even look at it too often, but for me it's the key. After that day I saw, at least, the direction.

But the picture of the Long Shadows somehow presented a problem. A Problem? I went back again and again to the same spot on the overpass at the same time of the day. I had visions of a whole masterwork evolving out of those shadows on the field. I wanted magnificent image after magnificent image. Of course I don't even have to write what everyone could have told me: Greed spoils art —
among other things.

When I went onto the Wadsworth farm itself everything to me was like an image of Shangra-la. I opened the gate and walked up a long sloping hill onto a wide plateau which swept up into a stand of trees in the distance. Below the plateau was the meandering stream and an intricate mesh of grasses, reeds, trees and huge boulders. I was completely away from roads, homes, the sound of cars, telephone wires. It was as if the hand of man had not touched this part of the land. Later when I spoke to Mary about this she said that a certain part of the land was to remain untouched and allowed to follow a natural evolution. This was part of the condition of sale. I wandered along the stream. The cows came over to investigate me, my camera and tripod. Mary said, "They'll come over to you. The young ones are just like children." I took a number of images on my subsequent visits to the Wadsworth farm, but after awhile more and more I didn't take any pictures at all.

I would always take my camera with me but then I would just leave it. I would lay on my back and watch the clouds or the coming of night. I had no desire to record what I felt or perhaps I believed that what I felt I could not really record and thus did not want the memory of my feeling to be disturbed by images which could never capture that quality of light or emotion.
Somehow this place had become a sacred place and of course there was nothing wrong with taking images in a sacred place but for me this ground transcended art. Perhaps that meant that I would never be a great photographer because I did not use every aspect of my existence as a source for photographs but for me this place was a place to recuperate, dream, wonder, be filled with awe.

Just over the ridge of trees I imagined myself returned to what it must have been like before the land was given up to a conception of endless progress. Here I somehow felt the Indian's respect for the land. I had no regrets at not taking images.

I framed a copy of the Long Shadows and gave it to Mary. The next time I saw her she said that it was hanging in her living room, and that everyone who saw it loved it.

Just before I stopped taking pictures I knocked on her door and said, "I have been taking alot of pictures and would like to give you one. Which one would you like?" She picked the one of the stream flowing through grasses. There had been a hard rain and the stream swelled to capture tall grasses growing on the edge of its banks. The long grasses rooted in earth were now drowned in water and flowed with the delicate current yet went nowhere. The seductive movement of the grasses intermingling
with the contours of the stream and the overcast light evinced the great strength of the soft things of this world. Now what is so strange is that on the previous day during a class critique everyone said, "Charlie, that's the one. The others are nice but that's the one." And Mary picked the photograph that the class had been so thrilled about. I don't know if I thought Mary had no ability to judge photographs but when she picked that one I was overjoyed because it seemed to me to show that a true photograph was true both for the untrained eye as well as the trained eye. Certain images were thus universal. In any case when she picked that image without doubt or hesitation I was amazed.

I met her husband John once. Mary wasn't about so I went into the barn to let John know I was going to be taking pictures on the property. I said, "Hi, I'm the photographer. I'd like to take some pictures." I went to shake his hand. It was dirty because he had been cleaning out cow stalls. Before he shook my hand he cleaned his own hand very carefully on his overalls. He didn't say very much. He wasn't as talkative as Mary, but maybe that's the way it should be. All he said was, "Thank you for the photographs. Me and Mary really enjoy them."

After that the Wadsworth farm then became a central point for me in all of Western New York State. Like so
many other things in life it had always been there, always, but somehow I just didn't see it.

Gradually the days became shorter and shorter and colder and colder. For various Karmic reasons I felt it was necessary for me to go to Dai Bosatsu Zendo in the Catskill Mountains for a period of hard training known as Kessai.

It is not possible nor is it my purpose to describe all that happened to me there but I would like to recount some things which I feel were relevant to the eventual production of my Thesis.

First I would like to describe the physical setting of Dai Bosatsu Zendo and the nature of a Kessai. I shall do this very briefly to allow those not familiar with this situation to later appreciate the relevance of this period of time upon that time when I was actually working on my Thesis. Indeed this period of Kessai was to become an integral part of my Thesis work. In fact I do not think that the Thesis would have been the same Thesis had the work on it not been done right after my Kessai training period.

The important point which I wish to stress is that what I shall say is not a discussion of Zen training as a discussion of Zen training but only a discussion of
Zen training as it relates to my photographic work. There are many other very fine works by highly qualified individuals which deal specifically with Zen training as training which leads to Enlightenment. Of course as soon as I got back home from the Monastery all my friends wanted to know if I had gotten Enlightenment and did they really hit you with a stick and did you have to eat only vegetables and could the Zen Master really read your mind and enter your dreams at night to lead you out of delusion. These questions will not be discussed within the scope of this Thesis Report. I should also state that the discussion of my experiences at Kessai in relation to my photographic Thesis work does not exhaust my experiences at Kessai as a whole.

It is important to discuss first the physical setting of Kessai because this played an important part in the direction of my photographic Thesis. Dai Bosatsu Zendo is located in the Catskill Mountains near the town of Livingston Manor. The Monastery is located about 2800 feet above sea level next to the highest lake in the Catskill Mountains. (Later I was to discover a pond even higher.) Of course when you mention the Catskills people think of the Resorts that abound in the area but a great portion of the Catskills is still relatively wild. At one point in my stay there I saw a Black bear and her cub.

The Monastery is completely isolated from the outside
world. By that I mean you have to travel a small unpaved road to get to the Monastery gate and from the gate you steadily climb another road until you are a Beecher Lake and the Monastery grounds. There you don't hear cars going by. You don't watch T.V. or listen to the radio. You are completely surrounded by the forests and mountains. Thus the three months I spent there were lived "close to Nature." There were no diversions of movies, buses, 24 hour restaurants, museums, subway cars, torn posters. I had never before experienced this direct closeness to Nature without diversions. Of course I had gone to the great scenic places in America where Nature is quite magnificent such as the high passes of the Rockies, the Grand Canyon, Flaming Gorge in Utah, the high plateaus of Wyoming, and the deep summer snows of Red Lodge Montana but I had done so while traveling with music and with frequent stops in Holiday Inns for dosages of T.V. and air conditioning and with excursions into Denny's and A&W root beer floats. Certainly then I was surrounded by the great beauty of these places, as I had been surrounded by the great beauty of Vermont both in summer and winter, but there were always diversions and I was always the tourist.

Here now for the first time I was living within and not just passing in front of Nature. I was in daily
direct contact with great trees, rocks, ferns, snow, the
stars at dawn, mud, the moon, beaver and deer. In such a
setting gradually I began to assume a certain perspective
almost as it were spontaneously, automatically by the
very fact of being in such close proximity with Nature.
Something was happening to me. Of course this something
that was happening to me became much clearer after the
fact. While I was there this something that was happening
to me was simply happening. Only now, afterwards, does
the intellect need and desire to categorize it.

I was there from the beginning of March to the
beginning of June. This span of time included the end of
winter and the start of summer. Strangely enough this
awareness of change rooted me more solidly on the turning
planet.

When I came to Beecher Lake it was frozen solid and
the snow that fell made ever shifting patterns of white
on white upon the surface. When I looked out over the lake
from my window at night or rather just before dawn
because we woke each day at 4:30 I saw the moon just
above the dark outline of trees. There was the moon, the
outline of trees and below that the grey surface of
the still lake iridescent with moonlight, and even though
it was very cold outside there on the mountain late in
March I would open the window for a moment and gulp air.
The air was tangible, it was a presence, a hint, an aroma,
an absolute inspiration. And the movement of the trees in the wind also suggested possibility. Here hope was not a fantasy but a consistent routine toward realization. Of course I couldn't stand by the open window forever. I had to be in the Zendo (Meditation Hall) by 4:50 for morning Zazen (Meditation).

After morning Zazen there was breakfast. It was strange because it was always the same — oatmeal, maple syrup, peanuts, raisins, sour plums — yet always different. After I left the Monastery I tried to duplicate that breakfast. I bought bowls, chopsticks, oatmeal, maple syrup, sour plums, peanuts, raisins. I ate this for a week, but it was not the same as at the Monastery. I was sad but how could it be the same. It couldn't.

Everyone told me, "Charles wait till Spring comes and watch the lake." And Spring did come, all at once, as it were. During evening Zazen there was a thunderous roar. No one in the Zendo moved or made a sound. Absolute stillness was posited against that great roar. After evening Zazen everyone goes to sleep. You have to. You get up at 4:30 and work the entire day and then evening Zazen. You sleep deeply. The next day during morning work period I said to Mickey, "Did you hear that last night?"

He said, "The Lake stirs from the long winter."

I said, "What do you mean?"

Mickey said, "You're a city boy aren't you Charles."
You think the Ice just melts quietly. Nothing wants to
die Charles. Nothing. The Ice wants to go on and on
deep into August."

I said, "You should have been a poet Mickey instead
of a window washer."

"I'm trying Charles." He paused for a moment and
then continued. "The Ice folds in on itself. It's in its
death throes now. Everything changes Charles, but no one
or thing wants to die."

"You talk as if the Ice is alive, as if it's living,
as if it's a living being," I said.

Mickey said, "More Zazen Charles. In your case 50%
more Zazen. More Zazen and less thought and then you can
feel both the agony of the deep thick ice cracking and
the buds straining soon to burst forth into the burning
June sun."

I said, "More Zazen?"

Mickey said, "Charles, always more Zazen."

In an attempt to become economically self-sufficient
Dai Bosatsu Zendo collects sap to turn into maple syrup.
Warm days and cold nights produce the best run of sap.
Thus from eight in the morning till noon we would collect
sap that dripped into the buckets hung on the trees and
then bring the sap filled buckets to large collecting
vats placed along a small road. Of course almost all of
the trees were located on the slope of the mountain. So you went up high or you went down low and brought the buckets filled with sap either up or down the mountain to the road which was roughly in the middle of the mountain.

And then there was the snow. You took a step and sunk down up to your knees and in some places the drifts were even higher. But that's what we did in the morning work period and if there were any sap buckets left that's what we did in the afternoon work period. And buckets filled with sap were heavy. Sometimes there was a cover of ice on top of the sap filled bucket. I would break the ice and take a drink of the cold sap but it wasn't all that sweet. I asked Mickey, "Isn't maple syrup supposed to be sweet?"

He said, "Charles, you're getting an education here. Sap isn't syrup. Sap has to be made into syrup at the sap house. You're going to get your turn there. Everybody does."

Each morning after Zazen, breakfast, and morning meeting we went out to get the sap. Walking up the side of a mountain with two buckets filled with sap is no easy task or for that matter walking down the side of a mountain. In the deep snow you couldn't see exactly what was underfoot. There might be a small rock, or a depression in the land, or an exposed root. No time for daydreams and fantasies. You didn't daydream because it was wrong
or against the rules of Zen training. No. Nothing so intellectual as that. If you didn't concentrate on each step as you went along you invariably fell in the snow with a bucketful of precious sap spilled on the snow or all over yourself. One day I saw Mickey sprawled out on the snow. I put my buckets down and ran over to him. I said, "Are you alright Mickey?" He just smiled. I continued, "You were daydreaming, weren't you?"

He said, "Yea, but what a daydream."

I said, "You're the one who is always telling me 50% more Zazen, 50% more concentration, and here you go getting tripped up in one of your fantasies."

He smiled and said, "But what a fantasy. Don't be too serious Charles. For being too serious tonight 80% more effort in Zazen and don't breathe so loud. You're a human being and not a whale — don't be confused. Concentrate on your breathing Charles. No sound though, Charles. No sound."

I helped him up and for the rest of the work period I concentrated on carrying the sap. Just carrying. Nothing more, nothing less. Just carrying the buckets. Although for an instant I did want to know what fantasy or daydream tripped up Mickey because he is usually so intense and in the Zendo he sits like a mountain. I know I'm not supposed to but every once in awhile I would raise my eyes and catch a glimpse of him sitting. He was like a
mountain, and always in the full lotus.

Some time later I asked him, "Remember that time when you fell in the snow, what were you daydreaming about? A beautiful woman?"

He said, "Charles is that all you have to think about. Work on your Koan. You know Charles the Zendo is not the only place you should work on your Koan. The whole world is the Zendo. The formal Zendo is just the formal Zendo but the whole world is the solution to your Koan. Work on your Koan, and for you tonight during Zazen 80% more concentration."

I said, "Still I want to know your daydream."

Mickey said, "Alright, I'll tell you. I was dreaming about being a great Zen Master in the Tang Dynasty. I had just set a pitcher on the ground and said to my Monks, 'What do you call this?' They were all lined up and one after the other they came forth and gave the wrong answer until some young Monk came to me and said, 'Master what would you call it?' And that is when I fell because you see Charles I was only dreaming of being a Zen Master and since I was only dreaming of being a Zen Master I couldn't give the true wisdom answer even though it was in a dream I myself had created."

Eventually it came to be my turn to go to the sap house. The sap house was a small building at the base
of the mountain where the large vats were emptied into a huge holding tank. The sap was then gradually sent via a tube into the sap house to an oblong cast iron vat which boiled the sap down until it was syrup. Essentially it was just a long cast iron vat with a space underneath for logs. The sap was boiled until the desired consistency was reached and then stored in special containers. This same syrup was the syrup that was used each morning with the breakfast oatmeal. It was also sold to friends of the Zendo and in local health food stores.

It's hard to describe the feeling of actually preparing a food from its very start to consumption. I have never been a farmer. All of the food that I eat I buy in the store. But this time I was the person who went up the mountain and brought down the buckets filled with sap and then watched the sap lose its moisture content until it was a rich golden syrup. After a batch of syrup had been done some of us would take a little hot syrup in a cup and go outside the sap house and take up some untouched snow, form it into a small round ball and pour the hot syrup onto the ball and then eat the maple syrup snow cone. The syrup itself was mellow and not at all sweet like the sweetness of candy bars. The sweetness of fresh maple syrup on mountain snow had resonance and nuance. It was a gift of the sun and of
the earth.

One night at the end of March after evening Zazen I looked outside. It was snowing. And that was strange because during morning meeting someone had read a Haiku about snow: No Heaven, No Earth, Just snow. Eido Roshi said that a better translation might be: No Heaven, No Earth, snowing. He said, "No need for 'just'. Everything is process, process, process. Everything is in motion. No nouns only verbs."

At another morning meeting an unpublished paper was read discussing the thought of Dogen. The paper made the point that the word "mountain" was not completely accurate. It should read "the mountain mountains forth itself" or "the mountain is mountaining." The implication of course being that the mountain is alive. And it is, and for that instant of time when I walked along the high slopes carrying the buckets I too was the mountain mountaining forth. This might sound strange now but then when I was actually there in the deep snow carrying the sap I felt no separation. All I had to do was look at the great boulders delicately there from a distant ice age or at the lichens eating rock or at the great trees growing out of the side of the mountain to acknowledge that the mountain mountains forth existence in total completeness.
I looked out of my window and watched the still falling snow and there was no Heaven and there was no Earth. I am sure that Basho didn't know the term "alienation" but he had experienced in an intuitive way a vital secret which transforms loneliness into harmony. I couldn't contain myself. I had to go out into that dark muted swirling whiteness. I walked slowly down a short slope to the lake. There was a wind and I couldn't tell if the snow was falling from the sky or rising up out of the earth. I sat down in the snow and waited and waited. I waited for Enlightenment. What a wonderful way to become Enlightened in the midst of a snowstorm atop Dai Bosatsu Mountain. I waited and waited. Eventually a poem came into my mind:

I thought that I'd abandoned all—
Even my body.
And yet this snowy night is cold.

I got up quite chilled. I went back inside and got under the warm covers in my room. They were so warm. I guess that's the way it should be. Snow is cold, covers keep you warm. I'm not a snowflake, yet.

In the morning when we went down to collect sap the snow had stopped and the sun was out. Everywhere the snow clung to the branches of the trees. What should we do? Go out into that completely pure snow. I thought if only I had my camera because no one would believe this
sight. I wanted to hold on to this view but because each bucket was filled with sap there was work to be done. I said to Mickey, "Look at this. Just look. I can't believe how beautiful it all is."

Mickey said, "Yes. Yes, yes but not only this Charles. Do you understand 'not only this'.'"

I said, "No, not completely."

Then he said, "Tonight, 100% more Zazen. No more daydreaming. Sit like a mountain. Sesshin is coming soon. Work on your Koan."

I said to Mickey, "Certainly every Koan has to include this sight."

He said, "Do not discuss anything about your Koan with anyone except the Roshi."

And the Spring did come and the buds did burst forth under the burning sun but before it completely became something else the deep thick Ice again made its thunderous voice heard as great rifts in the lake ice became apparent.

Gradually the great movement of the seasons became clear to me. I walked amid ferns that each day unfolded until huge fans swayed in the breeze and orange salamanders were everywhere. Koshin picked one up and said, "They're so orange. The color almost hurts your eyes but then you have to laugh."
After the sap had finished its run I was assigned to splitting logs. In a continuing attempt to make Dai Bosatsu self-sufficient there were two wood burning boilers used to heat the Monastery. There was also one oil burner. Wood was used in the kitchen exclusively. I worked with Mickey and Mark on a high plateau. We split logs into smaller units to be used in the boilers. Others worked in the Garden, others repaired the road leading to the Monastery. Each day that I worked on the log splitter the smell of wood filled my nostrils. Also at this time there was a large tree planting operation. In a large area near the Garden we planted small Evergreen shoots which would some day become huge trees. These small shoots were given out free by the Forest Service. To look at these small shoots one wouldn't think they would become one day the huge trees that were being split for firewood on the plateau. Again and again I came to see a certain natural harmony. The small trees would be in the earth for sixty or a hundred years and then become firewood but before that probably I would never even see them grow to their full height and full strength. The life of a man does not span the life of a tree and the life of a tree does not span the life of a mountain and the life of a mountain does not span the
life of water. Yet somehow I glimpsed the truth that each in its turn undergoes mortality and eternity.

Gradually these natural processes, these natural harmonies began to seep into my aesthetic sensibility. I knew that I didn't want to go back to Brooklyn and photograph abandoned buildings or cobblestones or lonely streets at night.

A great tree is filled with joy and now I wanted to photograph the great joy of great trees.

To say a tree is not completely accurate because a tree is a universe. Everything is connected: roots, worms, birds, leaves like feathers, air currents, rain, earth, insects. It's all one.

A girl who had come from California threw up during the first sitting of a Sesshin. The tension was more than she could handle at that moment. She was led out of the Zendo. But the next day she was back and did in fact complete the entire Sesshin. During the rest break from one to one-thirty in the afternoon I saw her from my window: Near the lake she was holding a tree. She had her arms around the tree and was hugging the tree. Later when I spoke to her after the Sesshin was over she said, "The tree gave me strength and calmed me. We are kindred spirits." In another time and in another place I might have looked askance at her but somehow at
that point in time and in that place I didn't think anything was strange.

During Sesshin Kessai students were encouraged to do extra sitting after the formal sitting had concluded. Students were encouraged but it was not mandatory. In addition to the extra sitting there was extra chanting in the Guest House. The Guest House itself was about a quarter of a mile from the Monastery. I could not participate in all these extra sitting and chantings but towards the end of the Sesshin I found myself growing stronger so I made an extra effort. One night after I had finished chanting I walked from the Guest House to the Monastery. I stopped for a moment and looked up at the stars. Every single one seemed to be in a perfect place in the Heavens and not for a second did I wonder how they got there. Just the fact of them being there was enough.

The next night I did extra Zazen on the wooden walkway which surrounded the inner courtyard on the Monastery. It was somewhat strange because all of the time I had done Zazen it was in a room or in the Zendo. Now for the first time I did formal sitting "in the open air." Each student had a choice of sitting in the Zendo or outside on the wooden walkway. Most people chose to sit outside. Of course the stars were out again. They never leave even though we do not see them in the
daytime. So to say they were "out again" was not completely correct. They are there all the time. Indeed where could they go? A person can't get out of the Universe even if he wants to. Where is there to go? So the stars were where they had always been but now I could see them again. In addition to the stars small streams were running down the side of the mountain into Beecher Lake. The air was chilly and I had a sweatshirt on underneath my Robes. I sat there and the sound of the running water rushed into all that stillness. Each a counterpoint to the other. The water would continue to run down into Beecher Lake whether I sat Zazen or not. The stillness would continue whether I sat Zazen or not yet without me there would be no stillness or rushing water. It was so pleasant. There couldn't have been a lovelier spot anywhere. I thought what deeper peace could possibly come after the Koan was broken through yet there was no need to think about any of this.

I have spent a number of pages on certain experiences I had while at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. I have also left out a great deal that happened while I was there because those things are outside the scope of this paper. I have not discussed the formal aspects of Zen Training. If anyone is interested in learning more about this there are many excellent books which deal with it. The best
Introduction to these matters is The Three Pillars of Zen by Kapleau Roshi.

Zen Masters cannot but have an impact upon students of Dharma. The impact may be immediate or may exist in a dormant form for years and years. The many morning meetings and informal contacts that I had with Eido Roshi either while having tea or working in the field with him is something that I did not discuss. The three full length Sesshins and the two weekend Sesshins that I attended are not discussed in detail. The Koan that was given to me by Eido Roshi is not discussed. The many individuals who were fellow Kessai students were not discussed. Such essential aspects of Zen as Enlightenment, Koan study, Karma were not discussed in detail. Monastic life itself was not specifically discussed. Visitors who came and spoke to us were not discussed. My own personal experiences of Sesshin were only in the briefest way discussed.

If I were to discuss all these items the scope of this Thesis Report would go beyond its stated purpose.

I have dwelt upon the very crucial way the Monastery and surrounding land affected my aesthetic view as to the subject matter of photographs. What I have tried to show is that after leaving the Monastery my photographic interests changed. I no longer had the desire to
photograph old men on the Bowery or abandoned buildings or lonely streets. This does not mean that these subjects are not valid photographic issues, but they are so for others and not for me. Somehow, for me, the Natural World and the joy inherent in the Natural World became the dominant issue of my photographic work. I made a conscious attempt not to photograph anything which evinced "the hand of man". Instead I was drawn to the fading light of sunset on leaves twirling in a slight breeze or water rushing over small plants rooted in a stream bed or stands of poplars in a light rain. I have spent these pages trying to show how my stay at Dai Bosatsu Mountain and the previous discovery of the 8x10 format influenced the general intention of my vision. Thus, in a real sense, the constant exposure to the Natural World while at the Monastery was a relevant and integral part of my entire Thesis experience.

I left the Monastery and returned to Brooklyn. While in Brooklyn I didn't take any photographs. While there I had to decide where I should take the images for my Thesis. I had finished all the course work at R.I.T. so it was not a necessity that I photograph there. I had been to all the great scenes in the American Far West but on its own scale Western New York State was as beautiful a place as any I had ever seen. I decided to return to
Rochester and complete the visual component of my Thesis there.

What I shall now try to do is describe some of my experiences in making photographs. I will try to discuss only those aspects of my experience which in some way relate to the image making process. However at various points in this report experiences in general will be discussed because it is very difficult to dissect or compartmentalize experience.

In the beginning of September I returned to Rochester and set up my darkroom. Here one very important point regarding my procedure should be mentioned. I did not photograph in the field one day and then immediately print the image the next day. For some reason I can do only one thing at a time. I have to totally immerse myself in what I am doing. It may seem that taking an image and then printing that image are closely related, but for me they involved entirely different aspects of effort. In my case the taking of an image and its subsequent printing required very different mind sets, and so I decided that for a certain length of time I would just take pictures and develop the negatives. Then after that certain period of time I would just print the negatives.

Usually I would shoot during the day and then at night I would develop the negatives and number them. All
the film I used was Tri-x rated at ASA 320 and developed one at a time in a tray. I used Kodak HC-110 exclusively as a developing agent. Of course the dilution and length of time the film was allowed to remain in the developing tray varied with the effect I wished to achieve consistent with the principles of the Zone System. Agitation was constant irrespective of time in the developer. Earlier I had taken Dr. Zakia's Zone System class and I was now reaping the benefits of that course. Indeed exposing and developing each negative individually allowed me total control over the image. I found the Zone System and the 8x10 format made an ideal combination. The negatives were then washed, treated in a solution of Perma-wash, given a concluding wash, and air dried in my closet. I found that I did not have to use Photo-flo because the 8x10 negatives all dried quite evenly. I did have one problem which was a small mystery for awhile.

After I had developed forty or so negatives I just happened to run my finger over the surface of a negative and to my surprise there were bits of matter stuck to the surface of the negative. However when I held the negative in front of a light I could see nothing unusual. Since I had already done a number of negatives which I felt were quite good I got somewhat depressed because I couldn't see myself spending endless hours spotting prints. That night I printed a negative that had those bits of
matter stuck to the surface and to my surprise the print was flawless, that is there was no indication at all of the bits of grit that I could so clearly feel with my fingers. I don't know why I had previously developed all those negatives and not felt the grit but that's what happened.

Whenever I have a technical problem I always turn to Photography: Theory and Practice by L.P. Clerc, edited by D.A. Spencer. On page 571 I read: "This deposit, which is quite rough to the touch, is caused by the deposition of lime salts from very hard water." The culprit was "lime salts". I went to Dox Drugstore in Southtowne Plaza to buy some distilled water. I was going to see if a final rinse in distilled water would solve the problem.

While there I just so happened to start up a conversation with the Pharmacist. He was also a photo enthusiast. He said that the area around here had very hard water, that is the water had an abundance of minerals and mineral salts in it and that the reason nothing was done about it was probably because these minerals were healthy although not for negatives. And then it just so happened that I found out he was from Brooklyn and that he had moved up here because his wife was from this area and she wanted to be close to her mother. He went on to say that salt is a very stable compound. If I left the lime salts on the negative nothing would happen, and he
explained that the reason I didn't see any spots on the print was because salt is a crystal and thus absolutely clear. He said that the light passes undisturbed through the lime salts. I said to him, "Now just a minute. How can you tell me that salt is a stable compound when last year a portion of my left rear panel was almost eaten up by rust caused in no small part by highway salt."

He said, "Salt becomes a problem only when it comes in and out of solution, and since you're going to keep the negatives dry there's no problem."

When I went home I soaked one of the negatives that had the deposit of lime salts in the distilled water. After the negatives were dry the lime salts were removed. I didn’t, however, remove the lime salts from the forty negatives that I had done because the deposits didn’t have any effect on the print, but with all future negatives I used a final rinse of distilled water and didn’t have any problems with lime salts. I always let the negatives air dry in a large closet to reduce possible contamination by air bornedust.

My method of taking pictures was quite simple. Each day I would take between five and ten negatives, and on some rare days more than ten. I did this every day. On those days that it rained in the morning I photographed in the afternoon, and if by chance it rained the entire day I photographed the rain on the window or the rain
falling on the meadow outside the window where I lived. Each and every day I photographed. This is an important point.

In a certain sense this constant effort was a form of Zazen for me. I say "in a certain sense" because in a real way only Zazen is Zazen. Maezumi Roshi writes:

The eight awarenesses themselves are meticulous effort. In the original Japanese, "meticulous effort" is shojin. Sho is literally "pure" or in Dogen Zenji's words, "being pure, it is not mixed." Jin is "progress" or as Dogen Zenji expresses it, "going forward, it does not regress." That is what effort is. Just constantly keep on going. 1

Often the concept of an artist is that of one who is swept up in a great motion of inspiration. (Indeed one should not underestimate inspiration or devalue it.) But no amount of inspiration alone can sustain an artist if he lacks will power, consistency, and adherence to daily work. I might even go so far as to say that when inspiration does come it doesn't come out of nothing but rather evolves by mysterious connections out of hard work. The evolution of inspiration is deeply hidden and, as it were, inspiration appears as a sudden and spectacular leap. But make no mistake about it: inspiration is grounded in the extreme effort of daily work. I know this might sound mundane but the more hard work the more inspiration. Just doing the work creates a condition from which inspiration leaps at unknown moments.
Thus my procedure was simple: photograph each day.

The very first day that I began to photograph I drove along Highway 36 leading to Geneseo. I stopped before a huge concrete structure standing in the middle of a large stream. I walked around for awhile and then took six images. While I was there I knew these six images lacked photographic strength but that didn't matter because this was the first day and I was once again working.

The next day I went to Wadsworth Farm. I didn't go to photograph but to say hello and walk. Another of my favorite spots was right next to the Farm. Barber Road runs along the edge of Wadsworth Farm and connects East River Road with Route 15. There is a small field to the north of Wadsworth Farm and along Barber Road. In my Journal for that day I read the following notes: "Two trees together in bright sunshine with blue leaves. Deep mud tracks leading out of an oval shaped puddle. Great heart shaped leaves. Leaves eaten into making irregular shaped holes or sometimes a perfect circle." I don't know why I wrote "blue leaves" but I did.

The next day I again went to Barber Road. When I went to a place I would not have any idea of what I wanted to photograph. I would get out of the Van and just walk around. I would just walk and follow a scent or a curve in the stream bank or a small trail or
investigate a huge tree in the distance. I began to work the area. I became amazed at how many things were all going on in such a small place. One small field off Barber Road to me at that moment was as important as the entire range of the Rockies.

In my Journal I wrote: "Each day in the field is different." But then I saw the word "day" crossed out and instead was written: "Each moment in the field is different. Light, wind, growth, decay. Such infinite combinations."

The light at high noon is not the same field as the light after sundown just before darkness. The light is the field. How can the field be apart from the light. A deep overcast day without shadows makes a different field than brilliant morning sunshine. When a wind blew softly the shape of the tree was not the same as when a stiff wind blew. The shape of the tree is the wind. There are an infinite variety of shapes and there are an infinite variety of shades of light. The light and the wind change the field moment by moment. And if there should be rain things glisten, and the glistening is a new field. When daisies come it is the time for daisies. The intermingling of factors beyond number create infinite fields yet always one field. Other fields kept themselves hidden from me but this field off Barber Road revealed all.
My trip to Powder Mills Park was wonderful. I took eighteen negatives. The next day I went back and did eight negatives. In my Journal I wrote: "One great tree was reticent. No, not exactly reticent but too vast for me. Its vastness was its reticence." I remember that one long limb of the tree had sloped to the right and become incorporated into three distinct other trees without its growth being stopped. Many times a tree rather than resist an object or go around it will simply incorporate the object into itself. In this case the living limb of one tree incorporated the living limb of another tree into itself. Thus this one particular tree limb had literally become part of three other trees. I walked along its length. I tried to photograph all of it but when I looked at the ground glass there was a confusion which made the image weak because everything could not be seen at once. The long limb became lost in the forest. Yet when I looked at it directly and walked the length of that great limb it was wonderful. So vast. In a certain sense this tree transcended art. I went back a number of times and each time I was unable to photograph the vast tree and long limb. Perhaps I was not ready, perhaps I was not worthy.

I went to Eastman Durand Park and spent an entire
day there. I made eight images of a field dotted with trees but when I developed the negatives the neat lawns upset me. I drove along Titus Avenue near Lake Road in Webster and was captivated by the way the sunlight mingled with the leaves in the upper branches of the trees. And all of this not far from the House of Guitars. Beauty is everywhere I thought.

Again I returned to Powder Mills Park. While I was there I was amazed that I was the only person taking pictures. I though to myself: Where are all the students from R.I.T. I spent an entire day photographing reeds in a stream. Sometimes the reeds were straight and at other times they were curved by the wind. A line and then a line made more perfect because it had been made slightly imperfect. Gradually images began to constantly appear to me.

There were days when I did not have enough film in the holders because simply to see was to see strong photographic images. Yet there were other days when each image was a struggle. I accepted both days.

I returned to Powder Mills Park again. This time for vines. But at night when I developed the images of the vines they no longer looked so delicate or rather their delicacy became insidious. At first I was drawn to the vines because they were a symbol to me. They just held on, and for me "holding on" was a very important
virtue. Also as the vines looped from branch to branch they made a visually lovely curve. However when I saw that these vines bent small trees and eventually killed them I shrunk back from the sight. Later I thought: Didn't vines too have a right to live? Weren't they preaching also? But after this I didn't photograph vines anymore.

I would take a road to see where it went. One day while going to Powder Mills Park I saw a dirt road that led down a steep embankment. It was a public access road for fisherman and hunters. At the bottom of the road I came across a small waterfall. It was absolutely nothing like Niagara Falls. It was just a small waterfall rushing over rocks. I took ten images as the light changed. I photographed from the steep embankment and had to adjust the legs of the tripod to assure maximum steadiness. A number of the images were ruined because the camera was quite unsteady due to its precarious position.

I often wondered why I didn't go to Niagara Falls to photograph. I think the problem was resolved in my mind when I went to photograph in Letchworth State Park. If I am correct I think it is called the Grand Canyon of the East. I went there with very high expectations but when I got there I was somewhat disappointed. I wasn't disappointed with the breathtaking view or the
depth of the gorge but somehow everything seemed distant, vast, remote. Also at Letchworth I couldn't walk everywhere. I suppose if I were a mountain climber and could have gone down the steep rocky slopes I would have had more of a desire to photograph there. I somehow couldn't touch the expanse. I couldn't become intimate with the spectacular natural landscape of Letchworth. Other photographers such as Ansel Adams do this photography. But I couldn't become intimate with Niagara Falls or the Gorge at Letchworth in a way that I could become intimate with a small stream in a field off Barber Road, and for me intimacy is crucial. No one, at first glance, would have thought anything of that small stream, but just this "no one, at first glance, would have thought anything of that small stream" which allowed me to relax and be at ease. Others I am sure are at ease with Niagara Falls or other imposing Natural Wonders but for me the delicate curve of a small stream in an out of the way field gives the seclusion so that I can become intimate with what I photograph. And each time I return the relationship becomes deeper.

When I am there in the field off Barber Road I experience "sympathetic time". I mean when I am there time moves neither too slow nor too fast and all potential is rendered as fact. Everything feels "inexplicably right". I am only hinting at what I felt
but the experience is not unique to me and thus a hint is all that is needed for others to remember like moments of experience. And of course the changing light on the stream water constantly creates new points of reference within which one's sense of beauty can navigate.

In Looking at Photographs by John Szarkowski I came across an interesting passage. Szarkowski is discussing a photograph of Paul Strand called "Toadstool and Grasses, Georgetown, Maine, 1928". He writes:

One of the most beautiful and most influential parts of Strand's heroic oeuvre is the series of closeup nature studies that he began in the early twenties. These pictures are not merely descriptions of particular botanical or geological forms; they are, rather, miniature landscapes, organized with the same rigor and described with the same sensitivity to light and space that Strand would have accorded a grand vista. When the great wild continent had been finally conquered, Strand rediscovered the rhythms of the wilderness in microcosm.

In a certain sense this describes the direction of my interest. I call this interest The Little World.

If I go out into the field and look down around my feet I always see a variety of forms that is visually exciting. What a coming and going of plants, what an intertwining, what a layering, what an interfusion of matter. These wild things are absorbed into the cycle of time: growth, decomposition, decay, idleness,
nourishment and rebirth. I usually shot this "wilderness in microcosm" at 1:1. Sometimes, however, I would shoot it at 1:2 or 1:3. These photographs were a voyage of perpetual discovery into the seemingly unassuming. A small bit of ground gave me a taste of adventure.

As I traveled country roads I came across a great number of commercial gravel pits. These were great gaping excavations in the earth. At McPherson Gravel Pit off Route 96 near Route 250 I took a number of images but looking back on them most were "intellectual". I wanted to show what "man did to the Earth". I was photographing an idea only. These images have a static, abstract, flat look. They are, if possible, too well thought out.

After awhile I began to go with the trees. I didn't especially choose to concentrate on them but they always seemed to be there. Near the small waterfall I came across a tree which I called The Rainbow Tree. This was a huge fallen tree which spanned the river. Its roots remained anchored on one side of the river bank while its topmost branches rested across the river on the opposite bank. This tree itself produced no leaves but four full sized trees grew at regular intervals from its body. The four trees appeared almost suspended in air over the river since they grew not out of solid earth but out of
a fallen tree balanced over a river. These four trees seemed utterly joyous. Somehow the fallen tree also appeared utterly joyous. Where does life begin or end?

When I photographed The Rainbow Tree the light was overcast and the night was fast coming on. I was shooting in near darkness at f/64. Each exposure was more than a minute. I hoped that the wind wouldn't come so that each leaf and branch would have perfect sharpness. The first shot was punctuated with great gusts of wind. During the second exposure there was pure stillness. I took only two images. When I developed the negatives, much to my surprise, what I had not wanted had made the picture. The first exposure was best. The wind made the upper parts of the four trees rush across the image like fire. The leaves pulsated. The image in which all the elements were perfectly sharp seemed not to capture the energy I had felt that twilight.

The next day I again returned to Barber Road. Each time I returned things were different. Today the dominant image was milkweed seeds in pods or milkweed seeds blown across the grass or blown into the leaves of small trees and captured there. The seed itself was attached to the most delicate of white fibers so that if the seed was taken up even by the slightest wind it might be sent to some far place and take root. In order to photograph this most delicate of Nature's creations I
would have to get as close as possible. To do this I would have to use full bellows extension and with full bellows extension I would have to use an aperture of f/64 in order to get the depth of field and detail that I desired throughout the entire negative. This in turn meant I would have to have a long exposure. Perhaps I would need 30 seconds. As usual it was twilight and the light was beginning to fade. For a moment I thought to myself that I would come back in the morning when there would be more light, but from long experience both in the field as a photographer and in the Zendo as a student of Dharma I knew each moment is fleeting, different and unrepeatable. It had to be now for tomorrow would mean a different image. It might be a more exciting image or a less exciting image but it would not be this image.

I set up the camera with full bellows extension, tilted it down and waited for the wind to be still although I knew I could not wait too long because the light was going. That light just before the sun goes down illuminates everything with a light bordering on tenderness. Yesterday to my surprise the wind had created a strong image but today I knew from long experience that only the superb sharpness and detail of the milkweed fibers could transfer the feeling of its delicacy. A blur today would not communicate anything. While waiting for the wind to quiet I thought of a line from Baker Roshi,
"Take things seriously but not too seriously." And then the sun came from behind the clouds and the wind stopped and I took the image. Then I felt a surge of courage. I realized that I was transitory. Usually it's the other way; usually the passage of time strikes terror into the heart. But as I stood there making images, totally making images, I felt an immeasurable solidity even as my heart soared in a whirlpool of dim blue light across the horizon.

Afterwards I went to the Star Diner in Avon and ordered a grilled cheese, fries and tea with lemon. The waitress smiled at me and I smiled at her. I said to myself: So this is what Dogen Zenji meant when he said, "Keep in mind that the Buddhas and Patriarchs express their real selves in the everyday activities of drinking tea and eating rice."

I wanted to express myself so much that for dessert I had hot apple pie with vanilla ice-cream.
After awhile my methodology became apparent. I would return to a particular place over and over again. Between these return trips, however, I would wander. I would get in the Van and drive without having a specific destination. I would go to one of my favorite Diners, eat breakfast and then use that as a place to begin to wander until I felt that the place I was at was the right place. The Calico Kitchen in Scottsville was one of my favorite eating places. It had about it the air of a place that might have existed a hundred years ago. One day while driving in and around Scottsville I came across Quaker Road where many of the earliest settlements of the Quakers had been built.

Just outside of Scottsville I came across Catawangu Park. I parked my Van and went inside. The park itself as far as I could tell consisted of a lawn with many trees behind it. But what trees they were, and also that day what a wind. My darkcloth became a wild black sail. Behind the trees of the Park was a farmer's field and a river which ran beside it. It seemed that wherever I walked in this area of Western New York State I would come across water. This river was very full. In the distance a tree was perched at a 45 degree angle over the stream bank. Indeed many of the tree trunks in Catawangu Park were bent. The trunk of a tree would rise straight up for one or two feet and then veer sharply off to the left or
right. When I showed these pictures to some people in school they said, "Charles, these are your first comic 8x10 pictures."

East River Road which runs past the outer rim of R.I.T. and which takes you into Avon and to Wadsworth Farm is one of my favorite roads. I would take a side road leading off from this main road and then just wander. One such side road was Golah Road. It is a fairly short road of not more than two miles. It begins at East River Road and ends at the Golah Station of the Niagara Mohawk Power Company. Just beyond this is a farm. At the gate to the farm is a sign, a very large sign which read: NO TRESPASSING.

The first time I drove to the end of Golah Road the very small stream running next to the railroad tracks was completely dried up but there was a great tree which for some reason had been cut down. But also for some strange reason this tree did not die after it had been cut down. Three shoots with glorious leaves came out of the edges of the cut. I called the image: Tree of the Three Rebirths. (I will discuss this image in more detail when I discuss my printing of it.) About a week later I returned to Golah Road after a rain and this time the stream had filled the small confines of its banks. I have always been fascinated by plants or grasses that grow in water or at the edge of a stream because after a hard
rain these plants become swept up in the motion of water. The plants sway and flow with the currents of the small stream just as leaves sway and flow in the currents of air. For some reason I could always watch these sensuous movements for long periods of time. I have a certain fascination for the random in Nature because the random in Nature always gives me a feeling of freedom.

In this stream were many small water plants. Some were submerged because of the recent rains others were still open to the air. All the plants looked so fragile. I clicked the shutter and thought of something that Eido Roshi said. We had just finished splitting logs and had gone to drink from a stream on Dai Bosatsu mountain. The stream was full and Eido Roshi watched the long grass on the banks of the stream bend in the direction of the current. He said, "Sometimes the weakest is the strongest." I thought that very strange for him to say. If you had even the slightest contact with him it was apparent he was a man of great spiritual strength, and if you had ever been present at Teisho during a Sesshin where he urged each of the participants to struggle on and on without respite this statement of his would have been even the more strange.

Yet "sometimes the weakest is the strongest" went through my mind as I watched the water from the stream run into a huge circular metal tunnel under the road
down into a river a quarter mile away. The weakest is the strongest. Of course there ran through my mind the common image of a great oak cracking under the onslaught of a terrific wind and the reed bending, bending, yielding and thus surviving but I felt there was something more to the statement. Perhaps the weakest were in the best position to enter into a universal harmony. In any case I looked at the small plants in the water and I couldn't help myself. I said out loud, "Damn, how happy you look." As soon as I said that I felt awkward. But so what. I said it again. Then I got down on my hands and knees and put my face close to the water and to the plants in the water. The tip of my nose got wet. I stood up, dried it off and made six exposures.

That evening as I was watching T.V. I read the following lines by D.T. Suzuki about a poem written by Basho:

When I look carefully I see the nazuna blooming By the hedge.

First of all, Basho was a nature poet, as most of the Oriental poets are. They love nature, they feel every pulse beating through the veins of nature. Most Westerners are apt to alienate themselves from nature. They think man and nature have nothing in common except in some desirable aspects, and that nature exists only to be utilized by man. But to Eastern people nature is very close. This feeling for nature was stirred when Basho discovered an inconspicuous almost negligible plant blooming by the old dilapidated hedge along the remote country road, so innocently, so unpretentiously, not at all desired to be noticed by anybody. Yet when one looks at it, how tender, how full of divine glory or
splendor more glorious than Solomon's it is. Its very humbleness, its unostentatious beauty, evokes one's sincere admiration. The poet can read in every petal the deepest mystery of life or being. Basho might have been conscious of it himself, but I am sure that in his heart at the time there was vibrations of feeling somewhat akin to what Christians may call Divine Love which reaches the deepest depths of cosmic life.¹

Just as I finished reading these lines an instantaneous fantasy line flashed into my mind. It went something like this: "And what, in future generations, will the scholars of the mind say of my images."

I shut the T.V. and went to sleep. Tomorrow's work would not gain sustenance from fantasy. Yet I still liked my line.

The next day I went to Rush and meandered slowly along Stonybrook Road until I came to Kavanaugh Road. On Kavanaugh Road I made a left onto a small dirt road. About a mile on I came to another huge gravel pit. It must have stretched for half a mile and although I didn't have much luck when I photographed the other gravel pit I tried again. I made ten images. I wanted so much to show the "insides" of the Earth. All sorts of poetic images about the "exposed bowels" of the Earth raced through my mind. But as with the earlier attempt none of these images were satisfying. I thought about why I had not been able to take one satisfying image
out of twenty attempts. It came to me that when I go to
the gravel pits I go there with a specific idea in mind
of what I want non-sentient beings to preach. I want to
impose my conception upon what is actually there.

Whatever was there I didn't see it because I
wasn't open to it. If I went to a place with a desire
to accomplish a specific photographic task some deep
areas were blocked off. It is as if only the conscious
mind is operating. For the "deeper mind" to operate a
certain openness of intention must exist and that is
exactly what didn't exist when I knew too well before
the shutter was clicked what I wanted to say. It's like
the story of the Zen Master who asked his guest if he
wanted some tea and began to pour tea into the tea cup
and when the tea reached the top of the cup still he
continued to pour. The guest said, "Reverend Sir..." The
Zen Master said, "Yes." But continued to pour as if
nothing in the least bit was strange. The guest said,
"Reverend Sir the cup is already full and yet you
continue to pour." The Zen Master smiled and said, "Only
when the cup is empty can it be filled. If it is already
filled nothing else can enter." When only a conscious
intention fills every part of the negative then the
only thing that can be on the negative is the conscious
intention and not the interaction between the photographer's
total existence and what in the environment presents
itself to him. The relationship between the photographer and his environment is thwarted by the imposition of too strong a will.

Early one morning I took East River Road to West Rush Road and that to Fishell Road. To the left of this road there is a river. I pulled my Van onto a small grassy section just off the road. As usual I did not immediately take out my camera. Instead I looked out over the river. At the spot where I was standing there is a sharp bend in the river. It appears as an almost 90 degree turn. Then suddenly off to the left I saw a huge bird gliding low over the river. It must have been a crane. I could not tell if it was light grey or light blue or both but only that its body was low over the water and that its wings did not move but glided on air currents. Then just as swiftly as the crane had appeared it disappeared around another bend in the river. All that I can remember is the closeness of the huge bird coming out of nowhere low over the water wheeling around a bend in the river and then gone. I was very excited because I had never been that close to such a large bird in the wild.

Near the bank of the river I stumbled upon six gravestones. Nowhere on the road was there any indication that this was a cemetery nor was there any historical marker. The gravestones were not upright but lay flat
on the ground. The inscriptions were nearly rubbed off by the wind and rain and snow of more than a century. One gravestone read: Lorada, March 27, 1841. Aged 28. The earliest date was 1821. It was strange because there was not even the slightest attempt to set these gravestones apart. Just to the left of these gravestones was a huge pine tree. I felt it must be pleasant to be buried below a pine tree and near a river where cranes swoop low. I had no desire to photograph these gravestones although their faded inscriptions made a lovely and delicate calligraphy. I felt these graves were special. How many people were aware of this small and secret burial place? Who were these people? I thought that I might go to some historical society and try to find out exactly who they were and why this site was not cordoned off with a simple low fence and marker. But I decided to let this place remain a little mystery.

I took a number of images of trees growing out of the steep sloping river bank. The roots had been deeply exposed by erosion. About a foot or two of earth had been eroded away leaving the roots clearly visible. Still the trees clung tenaciously to the steep slope. The massive tree trunks seemed to rest in air as its base was a foot or two above the level of the ground. I called these images: Flying Roots. Even though these roots went solidly and deeply into the river bank the
wild shapes of the exposed portions gave them the
appearance of frenetic motion. I thought "Flying
Roots" was not an inappropriate title because although
everything seems so stable and solid all is motion. This
idea is expressed very well by Fritjof Capra and
S. Radhakrishnan. First Fritjof Capra:

The exploration of the subatomic world in the
twentieth century has revealed the intrinsically
dynamic nature of matter. It has shown that the
constituents of atoms, the subatomic particles,
are dynamic patterns which do not exist as
isolated entities, but as integral parts of an
inseparable network of interactions. These
interactions involve a ceaseless flow of energy
manifesting itself as the exchange of particles;
a dynamic interplay in which particles are
created and destroyed without end in a continual
variation of energy patterns. The particle
interactions give rise to the stable structures
which build up the material world, which again
do not remain static, but oscillate in rhythmic
movements. The whole universe is thus engaged
in endless motion and activity; in a continual
cosmic dance of energy.  

S. Radhakrishnan writes:

How do we come to think of things, rather than
of processes in this absolute flux? By shutting
our eyes to the successive events. It is an
artificial attitude that makes sections in the
stream of change, and calls them things... When
we shall know the truth of things, we shall
realize how absurd it is for us to worship
isolated products of the incessant series of
transformations as though they were eternal and
real. Life is no thing or state of a thing, but
a continuous movement or change.
I felt these images of "Flying Roots" made tangible, as it were, the secret motion of all things.

After I had taken a number of images I continued to wander along the stream bank and came to a stand of trees. Intertwined among the trees were huge and ancient vines. The vines were as thick as large rope. I had never seen any vines quite like this. Earlier I had taken pictures of vines that were small and delicate but these vines were established, strong, and had become an integral part of the existence of the trees. For some reasons the vines did not destroy the trees. Both had taken each other's existence as part of their own. When I looked through the ground glass it was clear that existence must accommodate itself to existence. Existence is a process of accommodation.

Further on, but still close to the river, I picked up some black walnuts that had fallen. I rubbed the nut-meat with the tips of my fingers and a lovely brown stain appeared on my fingers. (Later when I tried to wash it off I found that the stain had penetrated some layers of my skin because the brown dye did not come off.) I picked up a few more black walnuts and looked at them. Some of the walnuts that I picked up had many small white worms living inside the ripe nut-meat. These small white worms were on the surface as well as deep inside the walnut. As I held the walnut in my hand the small white worms
were slowly wiggling. The fact that their entire world was now in the palm of my hand meant nothing to them. They continued to wiggle as before, not faster or slower but steadily going about the business of eating. One might almost say they, the small white worms, twinkled.

When I was five or six years old I was frightened of worms. I can recall my cousin Iris chasing after me with long earthworms which she had dug up with impunity. I would run to my mother and of course my mother would cradle me in her arms and tell my cousin to leave me alone. But now standing here with the walnut in my hand and the small white worms twinkling in that blackness I wasn't frightened at all. I was just amazed at the poetry. With a little leap of the imagination it could be said I held in my hand a minute universe and these small worms were stars in the blackness of space. The very large and the very small are indeed interpenetrating forms. The most minute can become the most vast and then reverse itself with ease. All forms change constantly, instantaneously. The only thing necessary for humans to appreciate this is the ability to experience vast stretches of time as real, to see a single day in the life of Brahma as a billion years. The worms no longer frightened me but my hand grew hot and I put the walnut down gently to allow whatever was happening there to continue to happen undisturbed.
I went home in the middle of the day and developed the images. I liked them so that I decided to go back to that very same spot at twilight. I began to photograph the trees in twilight. I went down to the river itself and photographed the great pine that towered over the graves. I began to photograph the fading light on the river itself. I was now exposing the negative for five minutes. I read that Steichen once exposed a negative for an entire day when he photographed pears so that he could show pears breathing.

I locked the cable release and watched the river and the light upon the river and my camera standing there with its single eye open. During those five or so minutes I watched the water flow. While doing this I saw a bottle in the water. It was half buried in the bottom of the river. I picked it up. Its surface was thick with years of river mud. The top of the neck was broken. It was marked with raised letters: Clarke and White. I carefully washed the bottle off while my exposure continued to be made. The green glass of the bottle had small bubbles of air trapped in it. These bubbles were clear so that they looked like hundreds of white stars in a green sky. Again stars, but this time in a green sky. Twice in one day. First the white twinkling worms in the black sky of a rotting walnut and now small clear bubble stars trapped in a green heaven forever.
Everything is eventually something else. I packed up my gear. I had the feeling that the stars were pursuing me. It was already dark. I headed for Avon to the Anais Dairy to see if the ice-cream maker had finally made any more Cinnamon ice-cream. He had. I got two scoops in a cup and sat down by the side of the road and watched the stars exist without metaphor.

Going home it happened again. As I was driving along Route 15 a strange insect hit my windshield. Before it hit the glass I didn't see it but as soon as it hit the windshield it exploded into a phosphorescent green point. I drove on and then another and another green point. My whole windshield was pulsating with green points of light. I pulled over and watched insects no longer alive glow. Yes, glow like green stars. Eventually the green glow slowly faded into nothingness. I got off Route 15 and went down West Rush Road to East River Road and then home.

One day I had dinner at the Thomas C. French Diner. (I believe this Diner has the last 10¢ cup of coffee left in Western New York State.) As I was driving home I decided to take a round about route home. I was driving along 15A when I came to Plains Road. I took it and drove along until I hit Junction Road. There I came to railroad tracks and in the distance I could see a great iron bridge.
There was a road next to the railroad tracks so I decided to take it. Again I was led to water. To the left of the railroad tracks was a sloping hill which led to a river. I took ten images.

The next day, early in the morning, I thought I would go to the same place but as I was riding down 15A I said to myself: "Take it to the end." I kept on 15A and did not take the Plains Road turn-off. Eventually I came to a restaurant known as Locust Lawn. There I had PANCAKES. I was the only one in the restaurant. The tables had white linen tablecloths. When I was finished I walked outside and there was a cage marked: "Boy, the African Lion, born January 10, 1973." The cage was attached to a barn. I waited and after a few minutes "Boy" appeared. He was a large male lion. The sign said that a doctor in Rochester had gotten him as a baby and when he got too big to keep at home he was taken here. To the right of the barn was a large field with trees in the distance. There was a sign which said: "Nine wild Buffalo" I only counted eight. It was all very cute. But then I remembered the crane, low over the water, soaring, elemental, free, one with the environment. I wanted to set "Boy" loose but I didn't.
In looking over the published photographs of Minor White I noticed that a number of his images were taken at Stony Brook State Park located in Dansville. The first time I went there I entered through the North Gate. I parked my Van at Campsite #115. Since it was the middle of November there were no visitors. I had the Park all to myself. I was completely alone except for a few hikers. I began to walk around. I was amazed by the large number of glacial boulders that had been deposited and the number of "Flying Roots" that I saw there. I took six images.

The next day I again went to Stony Brook but this time I entered through the South Gate. I parked my Van and began to walk. I walked about half a mile before I came to the first waterfall. I was overjoyed. Here I found mountains and waterfalls that were grand yet I could touch them. Here I felt a part of the land and not separated from it as I had at Letchworth State Park. Indeed I could climb the sides of the waterfall because stone steps had been carved out of the side of the mountain. After I climbed the first waterfall I continued on. I came to a second waterfall. I continued on and there was a third waterfall. And all around were the sides of the mountain, and the trees that clung tenaciously to its slopes. I climbed down all three waterfalls and returned to the Van. I was exhausted,
and I had not even carried my 8x10 camera, tripod, and holders with me. I was accustomed to parking my Van and then walking a short distance to photograph as I did when I photographed the field off Barber Road or the small stream off Golah Road. Today I did not take any images. But I knew when I returned the next day I would have a task before me: To climb the waterfalls with all my gear.

When I left the park I immediately went to the Cup and Saucer Restaurant in Dansville and ordered a grilled cheese with fries and a tea with lemon. An old fellow who was sitting next to me said to the waitress, "You got any Chili?" Then he added before he had given the waitress a chance to answer, "Well, I'm not interested in it now. No, not today. In the future. Well, maybe in the future." The waitress somewhat impatiently said, "We have it now." The old fellow didn't reply. Instead he says, "Cup of barley soup." When the waitress brings it he puts half a tin of milk in, holds it in both hands and immediately sucks it down. He completely dispensed with the spoon. But then he takes the spoon, fills it with sugar and puts it straight into his mouth. He washes it down with a drink of water. After this he puts salt on the palm of his hand and licks it with his tongue. All this time he is clearing his throat quite loudly. Then again he takes the spoon, fills it with sugar and puts it into
his mouth. He follows that with the drink of water and the licking of the salt in the palm of his hand. He is still clearing his throat assiduously. Then he gets up and goes into the men's room. When he comes out another old fellow, obviously a restaurant regular, asks, "Did you have any luck?" The old fellow doesn't answer but again starts the routine of sugar in the spoon, water, salt in the palm of his hand. Again all the while this is going on he is clearing his throat. I didn't understand what was happening. Is this what old fellows do in Dansville? Just then I longed for the pure rushing water of Stony Brook where ice freezes when it is cold and trees grow toward the sun and rock is hard and smooth stones are smooth and rough stones are rough and where if you pay careful attention to what is under your feet you will never fall.

The next day I left quite early for Dansville. I arrived there about eight in the morning, had breakfast and then went into the Park. The day was very clear. I climbed the first waterfall. There was no one in the Park. I set up my camera on a small ledge overlooking the falls and the river below. In the distance I faced the solid rock wall of the mountain. Since it was quite early in the morning the sun had not yet risen high enough to clear the mountain. The waterfall and the entire valley were still deep in shade. I stood there with the rising
sun at my back. I faced the deep shade and the distant mountain wall. Then suddenly on the highest trees of that mountain the sunlight could be seen. And as the sun rose higher and higher the trees began to be more fully illuminated and then the side of the mountain itself became bathed in sunlight. Between 9:30 and 10:00 the sun descended into the space of the river valley. I took four images at various intervals of the sun's progress. When I went home I stopped in Crocodile Mercantile and bought Pine Incense. That night I developed the images. I read this section from *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* as I waited for the negatives to dry. Suzuki Roshi writes:

> The basic teaching of Buddhism is the teaching of transiency, or change. That everything changes is the basic truth for each existence. No one can deny this truth, and all the teaching of Buddhism is condensed within it. This is the teaching for all of us. Wherever we go this teaching is true. This teaching is also understood as the teaching of selflessness. Because each existence is in constant change, there is no abiding self. In fact the self-nature of each existence is nothing but change itself, the self-nature of all existence. This is also called the teaching of Nirvana. When we realize the everlasting truth of "everything changes" and find our composure in it, we find ourself in Nirvana.

When I read these lines they seemed eminently true. Just this morning I had watched a very lovely manifestation of this truth. Indeed I had photographed a thin slice
of sunlight piercing the heart of a great mountain. There was no harm done since sunlight had pierced its heart countless times and would do so again although differently each time.

Another one of Minor White's favorite photographic areas was Naples. So one morning I set off for Naples. The drive from Rochester was a long one. The trip lasted an hour and a half. When I got there I saw a sign which said: The Italy of New York State. Everywhere around me there were vines from which wine would eventually be made. I decided to take a road called Little Italy Road. As usual I would follow it and see where it went. I always made sure I had a full tank of gas because I might drive for hours before I came across a place to set up my camera. As I was driving along a great rainstorm came. I pulled my Van over to the side of the road and watched a field absorb the long sheets of grey rain. I opened the window and put out my hand. The cold rain hit the palm of my hand with such force that after awhile I began to feel pain. My only regret was I should never be able to capture this great rainstorm on film unless I constructed an elaborate tent structure, but soon the hypnotic effect of the rain dissipated any feelings of regret that I may have had. Eventually the rain
stopped and I made some images of the sky clearing in the distance over a line of trees on the ridge of a mountain. They were acceptable but I think all of my creative energy for that day was expended on absorbing the rain into me. Later that evening my memory cells were still flooded with a sharp wet pain. I wondered if that memory would last as long as my life or whether it would someday disappear.

After I had taken approximately 400 8x10 negatives I felt a certain cycle had been completed. I then began my darkroom work. Of course this did not imply the end of taking pictures but only that a cycle had been completed.

After I stopped making pictures I began the process of printing. The first thing that I had to do was set up the darkroom for printing. Up until this point it had been set up for developing negatives. The printing process is a much more demanding and time consuming task than developing negatives. First I had to decide if I should use the facilities at R.I.T. or use the darkroom set up in my apartment. I decided to use the darkroom in my home because I could set it up exactly the way
I wanted and also I could work whenever I wanted.

I was lucky because I could use an entire room as a darkroom. I blacked out the windows with a kind of thin black plastic which is sold in large fabric stores. When I had set up a darkroom in the past I had always taped the black plastic material to the walls around the window frame but this time a student told me that a much more efficient method would be to staple the material to the wall. I did this and then put some multicolored fabric over the black plastic to make the room a bit more interesting. I then put light traps around the edge of the door so that the room was completely dark.

Most darkrooms have a wet side and a dry side but I have found that a single long space to the right of the light source is most efficient for me. I guess this is because I have never worked in a home darkroom with running water, but I never found this to be a problem.

I used a Beseler 4x5 enlarger with a cold light head for illumination. I found this most efficient because I could use the enlarging lens itself to vary the amount of light to the enlarging paper. I used a standard Gralab timer that is calibrated in terms of minutes and seconds. (It is not capable of tenths of a second.) To the right of the enlarger was a long table that I had
built. It was approximately four feet by eight feet. All the trays were placed on this table. There were trays for various developers, a stop bath, and hardening fixer. In the bathroom I had a 16x20 rotary washer. After washing the print for ten minutes I would place it in a plain hypo bath for three minutes and then in a solution of selenium toner diluted 1:32 and a washing aid such as Perma-wash for five minutes. I would agitate constantly. The prints were then washed for an addition hour. All prints were air dried on fiber glass screens. When dry I flattened them in a dry mount press. I stored each print in an acid free Light Impressions paper envelope. For each print there would be a detailed description of its making. I will now describe in some detail each of the many steps that I have summarized here.

One of the most important decisions that I had to make was the paper I would use for printing the Thesis. I had already decided that it would be impractical for me to use many different kinds of paper so that I could suit each negative to the special qualities inherent in different papers. Although I was aware that a number of photographers I greatly admired did this such as Ansel Adams and Paul Caponigro it was economically not feasible for me to have such a large stock of paper on hand. From a technical point of view I believed that to really work well with a paper one had to know it
intimately so that it would yield its complete range of inherent possibilities.

Earlier in my photographic career I bought 25 sheets of almost every paper that was on the market and tried it out. After printing on a variety of papers I would line up the same image printed on different kinds of paper and try to see which I liked "better". Needless to say I really couldn't tell which one I liked "better". And then there were the different developers to be used with different kinds of paper. And then there were special additives which could be added to the developer to change the contrast or tone of the paper. The combinations began to appear endless. Thus to really get to know the possibilities of a paper one would have to try the paper with different types of developers and additives and then after that one might have to try the paper with different dilutions of selenium toner or gold toner. After a month of all that I gave up and settled for Ilfobrome.

When I began to work with the 8x10 format I saw no reason to change working with Ilfobrome. Indeed all my 8x10 work before the printing of my Thesis was entirely done on Ilfobrome. I was very happy with the results. So on one of my trips to New York City I went to Olden Camera and purchased 500 sheets of Ilfobrome grade number one and 100 sheets of grade number two. (I will later discuss the reason for this.) While I was in the camera
store a guy was buying Ilford Galerie paper and buying it with a vengeance. While I was there he must have spent a thousand dollars on paper. He bought both 11x14 and 8x10 paper. Joel, the darkroom manager at Olden, must have seen the look on my face as I was watching the entire transaction. He called me over to the corner of the room and said, "Do you know who he is?" I said, "No."

Then Joel said, "He's Roy DeCarava. He's buying paper for a show that he's printing now. It's going to be held at the Witkin Gallery and he's also going to have a major book published in conjunction with his show." It was a strange coincidence that DeCarava should be right there because just before I had left Rochester I had been talking with Steve Piper, and he said that he really admired DeCarava's work and was surprised that he wasn't more well known. And now here was DeCarava buying so much Galerie and there I was with 600 sheets of Ilfobrome.

I had tried Galerie once before and didn't think there was all that much difference between it and Ilfobrome. Perhaps I thought that because of the price. Galerie is about 30% more expensive than Ilfobrome. I should mention that I had tried using Galerie with 35mm negatives and not with the 8x10 format.

I said to Joel, "Why is he buying so much Galerie?"

He said, "Ever since it came out it has replaced every other silver based paper on the market."
Nothing even comes close to it."

I repeated his last sentence, "Nothing even comes close to it. But what about the extra cost?"

He smiled and said, "I wouldn't know about that. I get it for free."

I went over to DeCarava. I asked him why he was buying Galerie paper. He said, "It has much more silver than any other paper on the market, and the more silver the richer the print is going to be."

I wanted my Thesis Show to be really something special. I had always used Ilfochrome but here was DeCarava so sure that Galerie paper was quite superior and here I was with 600 sheets of Ilfochrome. I went downstairs to think it over. I got a slice of pizza and a coke and as I was about to pay for it I found that I only had a five dollar bill in my pocket and I was absolutely sure that the change I got from Olden was a twenty dollar bill and a five dollar bill. I searched all my pockets but couldn't find the twenty. The only place that it could possibly be was somewhere in Olden Camera. I thought for a moment but I couldn't remember exactly what I did with the change. I was so interested in the comments about Galerie paper that I wasn't paying all that much attention to anything else.

I went back to the darkroom counter at Olden. DeCarava was still there and Joel was still there.
I went up to the counter and said in a very loud voice, "Excuse me, excuse me. Did anybody find a twenty dollar bill?" For a moment there was silence. Everyone looked at me. I could tell what they were thinking so I said, "No, no, I'm telling the truth. I know this sounds funny but somehow I left a twenty here not more than ten minutes ago." After the novelty of my statement had worn off everyone went on with what they were doing. I said to DeCarava, "It's not the twenty so much as it is the fact that I really can't remember what I did with it. It's like I just had the first taste of senility and it scared me."

He smiled and said, "Nobody gets younger."

I said, "That's the truth." His smile sort of relaxed me and then I said, "Do you really think that this Galerie is such a great paper?" Of course that was a stupid question because here he was spending more than a thousand dollars on it.

He could see that I was somewhat agitated. He again smiled and said, "Printing is a very individual matter. So what may work for me may not work for you. But I can tell you that Galerie has a far higher silver content than any other paper currently in production. But you will have to try it for yourself."

I looked at Joel and said, "Look, I just got this box of 500 sheets and this box of 100 sheets. I know
that once a person takes sensitized materials out of the store you're not allowed to return it but I just bought it a few minutes ago. You remember me. I want to exchange the Ilfobrome for the Galerie.

He laughed and said, "Can't get my line out of your mind." He then repeated his line, "Nothing even comes close to it." Then he said to a salesman, "OK this exchange and give him the Galerie." I got a box of 500 sheets of Galerie number one and for me the paper has just worked perfectly.

The reason that Galerie worked so well for me was it suited the creation of the kind of print I wanted. When I first started to print the 8x10 format I wanted all the prints to have the tone of an Atget print, that is of an Albumen print. When I went to the Eastman House and looked at Albumen prints I was so impressed that I wanted all of my prints to have that tone. The only problem was that Albumen paper is no longer commercially available. There is the Chicago Albumen Works but it is not feasible to get paper from them. In order to get that desired tone some people use Printing Out Paper. This also was not feasible for me since I wanted to print during the months of December, January and February when there is little sunlight. The next best thing for me was to try to strongly Selenium tone the print. Before my Thesis printing I used to dilute Selenium Toner 1:3. This changed
the tone of Ilfobrome paper. It now had a hint of cool purple. Indeed all of my work before the Thesis printing used Selenium Toner diluted 1:3 or 1:2 in order to achieve this hint of cool purple. That changed, however, after I took a workshop at R.I.T. and made real Albumen paper prints. The tones were so delicate and so lovely that when I compared them to the Selenium toned prints the selenium toned prints looked gross by comparison. Thus I decided for the Thesis Show I would have all the prints a "neutral gray black". Of course to define what "neutral gray black" is remains a very difficult task.

I wanted great shadow detail and Galerie gave me this. In addition I wanted most tones to be mid-tones. I did not want great areas of pure black or pure white. I wanted every image to be, for the most part, a delightful variation of subtle grays. When I recently saw an Ansel Adams retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art I was very impressed by the tonal "splendor" of his images but I did not want my prints to have that kind of "splendor". Instead I wanted them to have a certain "muted resonance". Strand's images of his garden in France impressed me as having this "muted resonance". I hoped my prints could achieve such tonality. To achieve this tonality I desired to have details in all areas of the image. Thus if an image had deep shade and strong sunlight I wanted all the blades of grass in the deep
shade to be seen and all the leaves in the strong sunlight to be counted. The Zone System was a great aid in achieving this in the negative but there had to be a paper to maximize the results of the Zone System and for me that paper was Galerie grade number one. It became the paper I used most often. I, however, did not abandon Ilfochrome grade number one. This paper is inherently a bit more contrasty than Galerie number one. Thus I used Ilfochrome grade number one when slightly more contrast was needed than Galerie could give. I found that Galerie grade number two did not fit into the spirit of my negatives, that is if I had to use it I had done something wrong in the exposure or development of the negative.

After I had selected the paper the next most important question for me was to select the developer. One of the most important characteristics of Galerie paper is its ability to respond to the dilution of the developer, that is developer dilution could significantly alter the contrast of Galerie grade number one. I initially selected Beers Developer. I selected Beers Developer because it is a variable contrast developer, that is by combining various amounts of Solution A and Solution B a hard or soft developer is created and thus a range of contrasts can be obtained in a single grade of paper. This was ideal for Galerie because it had been
specifically designed to function in just that way. I also used Beers because it was regularly made at the R.I.T. Lab and available to students. Thus it was very convenient for me to get and use. I used this print developer for about two weeks with great success. On my large table I would have three trays of developer. Each was filled with a different contrast of Beers solution. Usually I had contrast #1, #3, and #7. If necessary I would sometimes use a split development, that is for the majority of the five minutes or more I kept the print in the developer it would be in a tray containing contrast solution #1. If after that time I wished to add just a little more contrast I would switch the print into contrast solution #7 for a minute or so.

After awhile the logistics of transport became a problem. I found myself having to carry many gallons of Beers from R.I.T. to my apartment. I needed a developer that was concentrated, that is one which I could mix in my own apartment. I could have made my own solution of Beers from dry chemicals but one day a fellow student told me of Edwal Super 111. He said this developer produced "Platinum like" tones and came in highly concentrated form. I bought a bottle and tried it. I was very impressed with the results and for the rest of the Thesis printing I used this developer in combination with Galerie and Ilfochrome. I found that the dilution
of Super 111 could be varied from 1:1 to 1:40 with outstanding results. (The recommended dilution is 1:12.)

To get the maximum tonal range in a print it is always desirable to use the lowest possible grade paper and increase the strength of the developer as needed. I found it always best to print on the lowest grade paper possible and then adjust the dilution of the developer to achieve the desired contrast. This procedure allows the print to better hold details in the shadow area. Thus if a print needs more contrast it is always preferable to adjust the dilution of the developer than to go to a a higher grade paper. Of course in some cases it is necessary to use a higher grade paper. Thus if the negative held more contrast than I desired I would use a dilution of 1:40. But even with this dilution the print was still vibrant. If the print needed more contrast I would use a dilution of 1:2 or 1:1. I believe Galerie paper grade number one and Edwal Super 111 were thus well suited to each other.

I also discovered that a print should remain in the developer for a minimum of five minutes and not the two minutes generally recommended. I thus had to vary exposure so that each print could remain in the developer for five minutes or more. David Vestal in his book *The Craft of Photography* also found this to be true.
Apparently the print gains "depth", that is the print appears to resonate rather than merely lie flat on the surface of the paper. Of course this is a subjective opinion but I believe it to be true.

I tried the use of such techniques as water-bath development, developer additives, ferricyanide, and flashing. I found that the results did not justify the effort required to employ these methods. Eventually the two crucial methods of control for me were dilution of developer and burning and dodging. On certain occasions I did find the use of heated straight developer to be very effective. I applied the developer with a small wad of cotton to an area of the print and then gently rubbed the surface of the print. Increased local contrast was the result.

Each tray which I used for developer contained 40 ounces of liquid. There might be 20 ounces of developer to 20 ounces of water or 1 ounce of developer to 40 ounces of water. I would always begin printing by using a lower dilution of developer than I thought necessary and then add very small quantities of straight developer to the total volume in the tray. I would add developer in units of \( \frac{1}{4} \) of an ounce. When fine tuning a print a \( \frac{1}{4} \) ounce of straight developer would produce a visible change in the contrast of a print. Thus by adding small amounts of developer I could very carefully
change the contrast of a print. If, however, I had made a mistake and put too much developer in a tray I would simply reverse the process and gradually add water. I changed the developer for each print because each print required a different dilution. If, however, I were having a very difficult time with a print, that is if I took a long time to get a print just right I would change the developer a number of times even for a single print. I always made sure to have very fresh developer in the tray at all times because even slightly exhausted developer radically alters the contrast and tonal range of a print.

As mentioned before I would sometimes use split development. Thus I would have an extra tray of developer diluted 1:40 or 1:2 next to the tray of developer I was using for the print. I would place the print in the developer diluted 1:2 for perhaps 30 seconds to increase contrast just slightly. If that was too much I would try a 15 second immersion. I found this method helpful in giving a print just slightly more contrast. If I wanted less contrast I would place the print in a developer diluted 1:40 for 60 seconds. But these times and dilutions I have mentioned are just examples. Each print required a specific exposure and a specific variation in developer dilution.

There are many reasons why burning and dodging are absolutely necessary to create a fine print.
First, the negative has a tonal range that as yet no paper can match. Thus it is necessary to create the tonal balance of a print in accordance with aesthetic value, that is no print will ever match the tonal range of a negative so the photographer has to make a choice as to what tonal aspects of the negative he wishes to stress or diminish in the print. Thus the photographer calls attention to a particular element of the image by making it lighter or darker or conversely he may suppress a certain element of the image. The photographer may also want to make certain details relate in a more harmonious way to the major mood of the image. Or the photographer may want to darken an entire image or lighten an entire image to give it a certain feeling. The possibilities are endless. Thus burning and dodging allow the photographer to control an image so as to have it be in accord with his sense of how that specific image should exist. Thus no two photographers would ever burn or dodge a print in the same way.

In many of the waterfall images that I made I had to burn in the water of the waterfall or else the water would have appeared pure white, and to me that was not very pleasing. I wished to have just visible those somewhat dark spaces between the individual streams of falling water which make up the waterfall as a whole. Those dark spaces created for me a sense of space and
tension and depth within the falling water. If the water were just pure white something would have been lost. When I printed the milkweed I dodged the actual milkweed to give it just slightly more lightness. But when I say "to give it just slightly" that process may take hours and hours in the darkroom because there may be three or four other burnings and dodgings in the same print all of which must come out right for the print as a whole to work. If you get two or three corrections right and the fourth is off the print must be discarded and a new one begun. Since your hands or a "tool" are used to achieve the results essentially one works by instinct. If the burning and dodging is fairly intricate I always include a diagram of the print so that I can reproduce it without having to figure out from scratch what has to be done. Thus burning and dodging are a very necessary aspect of printing.

I should note that I didn't use test strips because I had to see all at once the relationship of each tone everywhere on the print. In a certain sense I printed by the Gestalt method. I could not see the image through the screen of different density sections as appear on the test strip print. It would seem that procedure meant more photographic papers would be wasted but I don't think so because I had no difficulty in quickly
getting an acceptable exposure. In fact the first exposure almost always meant a reasonable image on the photographic paper. The real work would begin with fine tuning. It would begin with calculating correct developer dilution and the necessary burning and dodging. But the crucial question always resolved itself into: What did I want the print to say. Sometimes I wished the print to exactly reproduce the original scene and at other times I wanted the print to be different than the original scene in order to emotionally represent what had actually occurred during that time when the image was made. This may sound strange but the print is the print and not an absolute record of reality. It is a record of how I interacted with reality.

One important question which I had to answer was how many prints should be made in one day or attempted to be made in one day. One might say, "As many as possible." But that answer doesn't work very well when a person is working on a specific extended project. When working on a specific extended project the crucial matter is to be consistent. I decided one print a day would be fine but after having done so for three days I found that I wasn't sufficiently exhausted. I tried two prints a day and found I could do that and feel both exhausted and cleansed. I tried three prints for three days and I was
I could not do three prints a day, that is not in a serious way. So I decided that two prints a day was the correct number.

I remember when I first started to print more than fifteen years ago. At that time I lived in a studio apartment in Brooklyn. I had just purchased an Omega B-22 enlarger. The only time I could print was at night when I covered the windows with blankets. What I remember most about that time is the quantity of prints I could do each night I printed and the satisfaction I got from each one. I would do between 20 and 30 prints a night. I thought to myself at that time: "What's all this fuss about printing." And the strange thing for me is that even today I cannot spend much time in printing a 35mm negative.

After I printed a number of 8x10 negatives and saw what a print could really be like I decided I would go back and review the thousands of negatives taken with the 2½ and 35mm format and reprint a number of them. After fifteen minutes or so it looked to me as if I had done all that could be done with the negative. For some reason I can't spend much time when I print a small format negative. Of course many fine and brilliant prints have been produced in that format and I am sure that to do so requires many hours on a single negative but for my sensibility the 8x10 negative inherently contains more
information than a 35mm negative. Thus it is necessary to spend more time on the 8x10 negative to bring out that inherent information. I don't know whether this is absolutely true but it is true for me.

I would like to quote from Fred Picker's book *The Fine Print*:

The photographer Paul Caponigro, looking at the first version of this print said, "The water isn't wet—reprint it and make it wet." How? More contrast? Less? Different paper? Different developer? What imaginative, virtuoso trick would allow the viewer to experience the clarity of a springfed mountain pool? Paul's response to my question was disappointingly ambiguous. "The way to do it," he said, "is to do it. Go into the darkroom and don't come out until the water is wet."

Four hours, thirty sheets of paper, various developers, additives, exposure times, development times, and toners were expended on the tiny pool until, finally, the water was wet. A year later in Paul's darkroom I watched him spend two days creating a pilot print for his "Portfolio II." The print he got after fifteen minutes would have excited most photographers, but he insisted on a print that "lived". He got it using the very same "trick" he had taught me. Persistence.

I find this quote very interesting. First it indicates how difficult it is to produce a fine print. It also indicates the nature of artistic vision. Caponigro wanted the water to look "wet". Someone else working on that print might have wanted the water to look "peaceful" or the water to look "deep" or the water to look "mysterious". Each image is the result of a collaboration between what
is "out there" and what is "in here". By "out there" I mean external reality and by "in here" I mean the inner life of the artist. There is always a tension between "out there" and "in here". External reality and inner life contend with each other toward a resolution which creates the work of art. We see also that the work of art cannot come into existence without extreme effort.

Of course sometimes the photographer can try too much. One day I made four prints of the same negative. Each one was slightly different. I showed these images to fellow students. I asked, "Which one do you like best?" Steve Piper studied the four prints and then said, "They all look pretty much alike." Then I said, "The leaves in the upper right hand corner of this print are slightly denser than the ones in this print." Steve answered, "I guess you could say that but in either case the power of the print is not affected by the slight density change of the leaves in the upper right hand corner." Thus an artist must also realize: The desire for perfection is sometimes counterproductive.

An artist must realize others can never know a print in exactly the way he wishes it to be known. Indeed it often happens that a viewer will see in a print something which the photographer did not realize was there. Thus in a certain sense a photographer may not know his print
as well as a viewer. Indeed many times a strong print will resonate beyond the consciousness of the individual who created it. This does not mean the photographer produces the image in some kind of daze or that he doesn't know what he is doing but rather in the process of creation the artist taps into "something" -- cosmic energy, the Subconscious, Universal Mind -- and produces a work of art which then extends beyond his own specific intention.

One of the most difficult matters in printing is to decide which negatives to print. For most photographers this is a process of deciding whether the image is original or derivative. During classes there were many discussions of this topic, and of course everyone wanted his image to be original and not derivative. Who wants to make a derivative image, to simply take the "same kind" of image already done by another photographer. At first I was somewhat troubled by discussions of this nature. I could already hear someone saying after he had seen my show, "What's original about taking a picture of a tree? It's all been done before. Why bother?" But soon my interest shifted and I was not overly bothered by the words "original" or "derivative". My interest, rather, centered around a somewhat
paradoxical question. Did the image clearly unite a present moment with an ultimate concern? By that I mean did the photograph accurately show the shape of a leaf or the contour of a mountain or the light across a wide field and at the same time, without dualism or separation, address the issues of time, death, loneliness, joy, beauty. I attempted to print such images.

There were other important technical items that had to be considered. One of the important questions concerned the light to be used when viewing a wet print in the darkroom. One aspect of photographic paper is that it dries down, that is the print becomes darker when dry. The problem then was to decide how much a print would dry down and then compensate for that in the darkroom. Of course the entire print does not dry down at the same rate. The lighter values dry down more than the darker values. I found that a 40 watt bulb about 3½ feet from the print provided the best light with which to view the wet print. I found that by working with only two papers (Galerie and Ilfobrome) could I get a firm idea of how much a print would dry down.

After the print dries it is very important for it to be flat. If there is any curve in the paper the print will not reflect the light evenly. The prints were air dried on fiber glass screens but when they were dry
they were not flat. I flattened the prints by putting them in a dry mount press. It is not advisable to dry prints with heat but all the best information available indicates that after a print has dried the application of heat will have no adverse affects on tonality.

Another question then arises as to what light should be used to view the dry print. Ansel Adams advises that the best light would be North Light at two o'clock. Now the light in the MFA Gallery is a mixture of blue and yellow light. Thus when I viewed the prints I tried to use the same kind of light as in the MFA Gallery. I also found that viewing a print under glass as in a frame added a $\frac{1}{2}$ grade of contrast. So that if a print was slightly less than the desired contrast the glass would add just that little more contrast and make the print correct. It was thus necessary to take into account this alteration when printing.

The prints were usually washed for one hour. As I said before I no longer wished to change the tone of the prints to emulate the Albumen print. Thus I used Rapid Selenium toner in the ratio of 1:32. This dilution gave the dark tones more body and also protected the silver from pollution in the air but did not change the tone of the print. Each day I used a fresh bath of Selenium toner and Perma-wash. It was necessary to use the Selenium
and Perma-wash bath in a well ventilated area as strong ammonia like fumes were produced.

I found that I was capable of printing from seven in the morning until three or four in the afternoon after which time my concentration began to waver. Thus I would work on a print for about three hours. Of course on rare occasions I would make a print in a short time but invariably the next print would take more than four hours to make. I could never put together two "short-time" prints in one day. I would have liked to spend two days on a single print as did Caponigro but due to the limitations of time and money I did not have that luxury.

I also kept a detailed record of the following information for each print: The name of the print; the negative number; exposure time; aperture of enlarging lens; type of developer; dilution of developer; temperature of the developer; any additives that I may have used; the paper and contrast grade; minutes in the developer; date of print; after treatment of print; diagram of burning and dodging. (I would only make a diagram if the burning and dodging was intricate. If the burning and dodging was not intricate I would simply write, "Burn in the center of the tree bark for 9 seconds." or "Dodge water for 3 seconds in upper right hand corner.")
I would usually get up at five in the morning, sometimes a little earlier, sometimes a little later. Since I did a lot of printing in the winter months it was usually very cold when I went outside that early but the air was invigorating. I didn't like to eat breakfast at home since I was going to spend the next eight or nine hours in the house. I found it was helpful to "get out" for a little while before I began to work. There were a number of places that I liked to go for breakfast. If I felt like a long trip I would go to the Calico Kitchen in Scottsville. I liked that ride because it took me through farms and since it was still dark through stars. Other times I would go to Denny's because it was the closest restaurant to my home, but my favorite spot was Jay's Diner and the reason for that was because of Marge. I learned a lot from Marge.

Since I got to eat in a lot of Diners I had contact with a lot of waitresses. The overwhelming number of them didn't like the job and were only there because they had to be. They watched the clock. Since they didn't like their job the waitresses didn't pay all that much attention to what they did. So if I wanted a glass of water I would have to ask for the water or if I wanted more coffee I would have to ask for it. I didn't blame them.
Marge was different. She worked the morning shift and she was one with the job. She memorized all the orders of the regulars. (That itself was no small feat for an entire shift.) As soon as I finished a glass of water I had another. I didn't have to ask. The same was true for coffee. She worked an entire counter like that. She missed nothing. If someone liked jelly or marmalade with his toast she made sure that two full jars were there before him. She liked to talk to the customers about the weather or sports but the conversation never intruded upon her function at that moment. As I ate eggs and homefries I watched her. She seemed genuinely happy in what she was doing. Perhaps this was because she did it supremely well or perhaps because being one with a task inherently produces a feeling of well being. There was no space between Marge and what she was doing. At a certain time of the morning it was her responsibility to glaze doughnuts that had just been baked in the kitchen. She did this without any wasted motion. When it was time for the check I didn't have to wait endlessly. It was always ready. If the order she put into the kitchen was taking too long she would call back into the kitchen. When someone left she would clean that place at once so that it would be spotlessly clean for the next customer. Her greying hair was always neatly
combed and her dress immaculate. She spoke of her children but only when appropriate and never in a bragging tone.

It might seem that I had fallen in love with Marge. In a certain sense I had. I had fallen in love with her precision and her grace. Each morning when I started to print I had the image of her "right action" before me.

When a person spends eight hours in the darkroom he needs music. Everyone who has to spend long hours in the darkroom eventually has to deal with music. For the most part I listened to J.S. Bach. I sometimes listened to other composers but only Bach seemed to support what I was trying to do in the darkroom. I think that is because what he did with music I was trying in some small way to do with images. I didn't play the music too loud. Thus I could hear it without being captured by it. But sometimes I did not even hear the music although it was still playing. If I was intensely working on a difficult print the only matter at hand was the print. I can honestly say that at those times I was one with the print. The music again appeared to me only after I had placed the print in the fixer and turned on the small white light. Then I wondered where the music
had been all along. I realized it had been there all the time but I didn't hear it. At such moments I and the print were one. At such times becoming the print was perfectly natural. It just happened. Of course it should happen all the time but it doesn't. Most of the time intrusions come between the individual and what is at hand and these intrusions place the person somewhere other than in the present. Worry, anticipation, fear, regret separate the individual from what is at hand. Most people realize this strange state of "living without total involvement in the present" but because the realization is merely an intellectual one they still stay ontologically separate from the present. I do not exclude myself. Most of the time I too remain separated from total involvement.

One of the reasons that I enjoyed printing was because invariably such moments of unity would come to me and strengthen me. I got a taste of freedom. Of course I could not go into the darkroom and command such moments to happen. It doesn't work that way. I can't predict when such a moment of total involvement will occur. But usually it happened when I was engaged in trying to enter into the totality of a negative and make a past absolutely present. At that moment there was only the negative, the paper and myself each yielding individuality to the effort of total exertion.
In selecting images for the Thesis Show I originally intended to group the photographs according to topic, that is there would be a number of tree photographs all placed together and then a selection of stream images and then a grouping of mountain images. I thought it might be interesting to compare all the images within a particular group. In this way the subtle variations of the life of trees might become visible. After fruitful conversations with my advisors I saw that such a Thesis Show would be very boring. A varied selection of prints would make for a much more interesting and vibrant show.

The discussions I had with my advisors were helpful because they pointed out to me that a Thesis Show must have its own structure. A Thesis Show has to have its own internal rhythm. Thus each image should lead into another and create a new totality. Certainly each separate image should stand on its own merits but somehow for a Thesis Show the relationship between images should manifest a new creation. This meant that certain "strong" images were left out because they did not mesh with other images. A Thesis Show has its own inner necessities based on pace, variety, tension,
repetition, climax, inference, resonance. Thus in selecting images not only the image itself had to be considered but also its relation to other images. Gradually a series of groupings developed which naturally created a unified whole.

I think it is now important to discuss the purpose of this Thesis, that is my desire to photograph the preaching of non-sentient beings. I wish to present a number of quotations which explore this theme. I feel these quotations are very helpful in understanding the complexity of this theme. All of the writers which I quote, in some way, shed a clear light on the purpose of this Thesis. Because the basis of my Thesis Proposal arises from an ancient Chinese text I feel it is important to give a number of different translations of the text. I believe that each different translation gives added nuances so that the complete meaning becomes clear. I will now present a number of different translations of this text and then discuss the purpose of the Thesis. The first translation is from Zen and Zen Classics vol. two by R.H. Blyth:
Tozan went to see Isan, and said to him, "Recently I heard that Tozan of Nanyo spoke of insentient beings preaching the Law, but I can't get to the bottom of it." Isan said, "Do you remember what was said?" "I remember it," said Tozan. "Then try and repeat what was said," said Isan. Tozan recounted the following. A monk asked (Nanyo) what the mind of the ancient Buddhas was, and he replied, "It is fences, walls, and broken tiles." The monk said, "Fences, walls, and broken tiles are insentient, aren't they?" Nanyo said, "That is so." "Do they expound Buddhism?" asked the monk. "Always, and busily," said Nanyo. The monk said, "Why don't I hear it then?" Nanyo answered, "You don't hear it, but you shouldn't prevent others doing so." "Who hears it?" asked the monk. "All the saints," answered Nanyo. "Does your grace hear it?" asked the monk. "Not I," replied Nanyo. "If you don't hear it, how can you explain the teaching of the Law by inanimate creatures?" asked the monk. Nanyo answered, "It's my good luck I don't hear it. If I did, I would be the same as all the saints, and then you wouldn't have the chance to hear my teaching." The monk said, "If that is so, people would have no part in it." Nanyo said, "I myself expound it for the sake of people, not for the sake of saints." The monk said, "After the people hear it, what then?" "Then they're not just people any more," replied Nanyo. The monk asked, "What sutra does the doctrine come in?" Nanyo answered, "clearly, the Superior Man will not say anything out of accord with the sutras. Haven't you read in the Kegon Kyo, 'Countries expound it, people expound it, all things of the past, present, and future expound it?'" With his this Tozan finished his account, and Isan said, "I have my own (ideas about it,) but few persons there are (who want to hear them)." Tozan said, "I'm not clear about the matter; won't you teach me?" Isan held up his hair duster, and said, "Do you understand?" "I don't," said Tozan, "explain." Isan said, "The mouth we receive from our father and mother cannot explain it." Tozan asked, "Is there anyone else who loves the Way as you do?" Isan said, "From here, go to Horyoi Prefecture, near the Stone Room, and you will find Ungan Dojin. If you can tell which way the wind blows from the waving of the grass, you will certainly value him..." Tozan said goodbye to
Isan and went to Ungan. He told him what had led up to this matter, and asked, "Who can hear this Soul-less Teaching?" Ungan replied, "Soul-less beings can hear it." Tozan asked, "Can you hear it, or not?" "If I hear it, you can't hear my teaching." (When I am in the state of hearing the teaching of so-called inanimate, soul-less objects, I am not teaching you about it.) Tozan asked, "Why can't I hear it?" Ungan raised his mosquito duster and said, "You hear it?" "I don't," replied Tozan. Ungan said, "You don't hear even my teaching, let alone that of inanimate things." Tozan asked in what sutra the teaching of Buddhism by soul-less things was taught. Ungan asked him if he had not read in the Amida Kyo, "Waters, birds, trees and forests all repeat the Buddha's name, and proclaim the Law." At this Tozan was enlightened, and made a verse:

Marvelous Marvelous
How mysterious the Inanimate-Teaching
It is difficult to hear with the ears;
When we hear with the eyes, then we know it.9

R.H. Blyth makes the following commentary on the above text:

The doctrine of the teaching of Buddhism by non-sentient beings originated with Nanyo, born 775, the disciple of the 6th Patriach. In Buddhism, not in Zen this would have a pantheistic meaning, but the question arises, what is this Buddhism which rocks and streams teach us? The answer is, they teach us that they teach us. They teach us their existence-value. All teaching is thus non-sentient, non-intellectual, non-emotional. A human being, as Ungan says, teaches before he opens his mouth what in any case he can never say. What is wrong with words is simply that they are late, late arrivals in world history. So, as Tozan says in his verse, it is better to hear with the eyes, which are early.10
In the *History of Zen Buddhism* by Dumoulin we read:

It is related that his master Ungan, whose line he perpetuated, taught him to understand the "sermon on inanimate things" which in Zen signifies not the miraculous power of the Buddhist saint who can hear with his eyes and see with his ears, but the knowledge of the undifferentiated identity of animate and inanimate beings in the unity of Buddhahood.

In *The Golden Age of Zen* by John C.H. Wu we read:

He next visited Issan (771-853), and wished him to enlighten him on the question whether it is true that the inanimate things expound the Dharma, and, if so, how is it that we do not hear their expounding. After some discussion Issan finally said, "The mouth which my parents gave me will never explain it to you." Somehow puzzled, he asked whether he knew another lover of Tao whom he could consult. At Issan's recommendation Tozan went to see Ungan (782-841), to whom he put the question point blank, "When the inanimate beings expound the Dharma, who can hear it?" "The inanimate can," was the immediate reply of Ungan. Tozan again asked, "Do you hear it?" "If I did," said Ungan, "you would not hear my expounding the Dharma." Tozan was still skeptical as to whether the inanimate beings could really expound the Dharma. Ungan then raised his dust-wisk asking, "Do you hear it?" "No. I do not hear it," Tozan answered. Thereupon Ungan said, "If you do not even hear my sermon, how can you expect to hear the sermon of the inanimate beings?" And he added, "Have you not read in the Amitabha Buddha Sutra: 'Streams, birds and trees are all chanting Buddha and Dharma?' At that point Tozan was made aware of the truth, and composed a gatha to record his experience:

How wonderful How wonderful
The inanimate expounding the Dharma
What an unefflable truth
If you try to hear it with your ears
You will never understand it.
Only when you hear it through the eye
Will you really know it.
In *Timeless Spring* edited by Thomas Cleary we read:

Subsequently Tozan called on Issan and asked him about the saying of a past master that inanimate objects expound Dharma. Dharma means the teaching, here the Buddhist, or enlightening teaching, and it also means principle, quality, and phenomena; it is said that all Dharma, all things, are enlightening Dharmas. Issan lifted his wisk and asked if Tozan heard it; Tozan didn't understand and asked what Scripture the expression came from. Issan cited the saying of the Hua Yen, or Flower Garland Scripture, that all things in all worlds in all times expound the Dharma. Finally Tozan asked Issan to direct him to another man of the way, and Issan, who had been a disciple of Hyjakuo, told him about Ungan.

When Tozan questioned Ungan, Ungan told him that the insentient could hear the inanimate preaching. The ancient master explained, "Right now in the midst of all activities, if there is just no arising and disappearance of the twin streams of ordinary and holy, this is subtle consciousness which clearly perceives without belonging to either existence or non-existence; you just perceive without hangups and attachments to feelings and consciousness. That is why the sixth patriarch said, 'The six senses discriminating in reference to objects is not consciousness.'" Tozan asked Ungan if he could hear the inanimate teaching. Ungan said, "If I heard it, you wouldn't hear my teaching." Ungan said, "If you don't even hear my teaching how can you hear the teaching of the inanimate?"

According to one version Tozan then presented his understanding to Ungan in a verse, but another version has it that he again asked Ungan what scripture the teaching of the inanimate was based on and Ungan cited the Amitabha scripture saying that all rivers, birds, trees and forests invoke Buddha, and Dharma, whereupon Tozan understood and presented the verse saying:

Wonderful Wonderful
The sermon of the inanimate is inconceivable.
If you try to hear it with your ears
After all you'll hardly understand.
Only when you hear it in your eyes
Will you be able to know.
Hyjakuo has spoken of the inanimate, or insentient, having Buddha-nature in similar terms explaining 'Insentient' as a metaphor for non-attachment; he says, "Fight now in regard to the two spheres of ordinary and holy, and all things, existent or non-existent, just have no grasping and rejecting mind at all, and also have no knowledge or understanding of not grasping or rejecting; this is called insentient having Buddha-nature. It is just that there is no bondage by feelings, that is why it is called insentient."

In Two Zen Classics by Katsuki Sekida we read:

When Tozan was studying with Isan he asked Isan about Chu Kokushi's "Sermon by Insentient creatures." Isan said, "Sermons by insentient creatures are given here for us too, but few can hear them." Tozan said, "I am not yet certain about them. Would you please teach me?" Isan said nothing, but raised his hossu (wisk) straight up. Tozan said, "I do not understand. Would you explain it to me?" Isan said, "I would never tell you about this with the mouth given to me by my parents." This was his way of teaching.

He suggested that Tozan visit Ungan (whom Tozan later succeeded). Coming to Ungan, Tozan asked, "Who can hear the sermons of insentient creatures?" "Insentient creatures can hear them," answered Ungan. "Why can I not hear them?" Ungan raised his hossu straight up and said, "Do you hear?" "No, I don't." Ungan said, "Don't you know the Sutra says, 'Birds and trees all meditate on Buddha and Dharma'?" At this Tozan was suddenly become enlightened. He wrote the following verse:

Wonderful How wonderful
Sermons by insentient creatures.
You fail if you listen with your ears;
Listening with your eyes, you hear them."
Eido Roshi's translation and commentary follow:

Tozan asked, "What is True Nature? What is Ultimate Reality?"
Isan said, "Roof tile."
Tozan said, "But roof tile is non-sentient."
The Master said, "Yes."
Tozan was surprised and said, "Can non-sentient roof tile preach?"
Isan said, "It has been preaching all the time."
Tozan said, "Is that so. But I cannot hear it."
Isan said, "That is because your ears are plugged, but the rest of the people are hearing it very well."
Tozan said, "Who are the rest of the people?"
The Master said, "They are called Buddhas."

This monk carried this question with him for many years until he later came to another Master called Ungan.

Tozan Gohan Zenji practiced under Ungan and asked the question, "Who can hear the preaching of non-sentient beings?"
Ungan said, "The preaching of non-sentient beings can only be heard by non-sentient beings."
Tozan asked, "Master can you hear or not?"
Ungan replied, "If I could, you could not hear my Dharma talk."
Tozan said, "That being the case I have nothing to hear from you."
Ungan said, "You don't hear my Dharma talk. How can it be possible for you to hear the talk of non-sentient beings?"
With this Tozan got insight. He composed a verse and presented it to Ungan:

Wonderful Wonderful
The mysterious Dharma talk
Of non-sentient beings.
If one wants to hear it through the ears
He will miss it.
Only when he hears through his ears
Will he get it.

COMMENTARY
Most people think that there is some mysterious whisperings of non-sentient beings and that only they can be heard by non-sentient
beings. This is where the misunderstanding starts. The preaching is clear, clear. What does it mean 'non-sentient beings'. It means the preaching can be heard by one who is dead on the cushion, one who has broken through the barrier, who has realized his own True Nature. One who is dead while he is still breathing, that kind of person is called non-sentient being. He is one who has since been dead on the cushion while his heart is still alive.

What then is the preaching of non-sentient beings. There is a simple example that we hear everyday, the wind bell. This is beautiful preaching of non-sentient beings or wind sometimes gently sometimes strongly through the leaves of the trees. This is wonderful preaching. This preaching is not only heard by the eyes but can be heard by ears, tongue, whole body. Vegetables that we eat preach to our tongue. In the Zendo intense neatness preaches to us. In the Japanese language when we burn incense instead of saying "smell" we say that we hear "the fragrance of non-sentient beings combusting."

But somehow today we have lost the ability to hear the cry, the scream of non-sentient beings. It is this sensitivity that must be regained. It is easy to get some meaning from sentient beings or to communicate with them but it is much more difficult to communicate from non-sentient beings to sentient beings because we as sentient beings have to do something to ourselves before this can happen. But the preaching of non-sentient beings we have to hear. It is the essence of Zen teaching.15

I think that these selections give a complete rendering of the Chinese text. Still there is the difficulty of words. Of course one of the advantages of photography is that its inherent call is to the eye and not to the word. Over and over we come to the difficulty of putting this preaching into words. R.H. Blyth translates the following poem and then comments on it:
Plucking chrysanthemums along the east fence;
Gazing in silence at the southern hills;
The birds flying home in pairs
Through the soft mountain air of dusk—
In these things there is deep meaning,
But when we are about to express it,
We suddenly forget the words.

COMMENTARY
Truth, Reality, is inexpressible in words —
and yet it is expressed in words. It is
expressed, if we can hear it, in all the
sounds and sights of this world.16

In doing research for my Thesis I came across a
number of quotations which I found very helpful. These
quotations come from various individuals in diverse fields.
Of course I cannot give all of the quotations but a
selection will be very helpful in clarifying these
difficult issues. In order to make these issues a little
clearer I have divided the subject into four broad areas:
What do non-sentient beings preach? How do we hear the
preaching of non-sentient beings? What are the dangers
for human beings when they separate themselves from this
preaching? What are the benefits to man of contact with
non-sentient beings? I should make clear that these
divisions are not absolute guidelines but simply an aide
to understanding the issues.

I would like to begin the discussion with a long
quote from a book called Dogen Kigen—Mystical Realist
by Hee-Jin Kim. The quote is rather lengthy but I feel
it is essential in order to understand the viewpoint
of one of the greatest Japanese Buddhist thinkers. Dogen lived from 1200-1253. I will now quote Hee-Jin Kim:

In Shobogenzo, Mujo-seppo, Dogen presents a rather unusual view of nature. Speaking of "discourse on Dharma" and "insentient beings" in an extraordinary way as he does with other words and symbols.

Dogen writes:

The way insentient beings expound Dharma should not be understood to be necessarily like the way sentient beings expound Dharma. The voices of sentient beings should follow the principle of their discourse on Dharma.

Even so, it is contrary to the Buddha way to usurp the voices of the living and conjecture about those of the non-living in terms of them. Even though man's judgement now tries to recognize grasses, trees, and the like, and liken them to non-living things, they too cannot be measured by the ordinary mind.

(Hee-Jin Kim continues:)

Insentient beings are often conceived as comprising the physical universe, or what we call Nature, which we think is really dead and only figuratively and anthropomorphically spoken of in human terms. Man, unwittingly or selfishly, anthropomorphizes Nature but thinks that Nature is after all lifeless. To put it another way, man draws a boundary between sentient and the insentient to the degree that he perceives and judges in a certain way with a particular nature. This might lead him to judge that the insentient is not able to discourse, whereas he is. Dogen revolts against such a conception of nature. From the standpoint of the Way, the insentient beings are "sentient." In line with this thesis that all existences are sentient beings, Dogen's use of "sentient beings" here subsumes both the sentient and the insentient, which constitute all existences and in turn are equated with the Buddha-nature. This is not the same as confounding the two as having a certain psychic factor or commonality in the fashion of panpsychism, but to see them under the aspect of the
Buddha-nature which defies any metaphysical commitment to such a substantialistic resolution.

Dogen illustrates the story of Su Tung-p'ō (1036-1101), a well known Sung poet of China, who was enlightened one night through the sounds of brooks. The occasion is explained by Dogen himself.

Dogen writes:

One day Ch'io Ch'ang-tsung (1025-1091), Zen mentor of the poet, preached on the discourse of insentient beings and its great importance for poetic creativity, but Su Tung-p'ō could not quite understand its full significance. One day when he visited the famous resort of Lu-shan and spent a night there, he was suddenly awakened by the sounds of mountain brooks flowing in the silence of night. This was the moment of his enlightenment, and he composed the following poem:

Sounds of brooks are nothing but a gigantic tongue (i.e., Buddha's discourse on Dharma),
Figures of mountains are none other than Buddha's body of purity;
Eighty-four thousand gathas since last night—
How shall I explain them to others at another time?

Dogen then comments on the story he has just told:

The night when this lay poet was enlightened is related to the fact that previously he heard from Master Ch'ang-tsung about insentient beings' sermon on Dharma. Although he was not immediately enlightened by his Master's discourse, the sounds of currents he heard struck him as if raging waves were soaring into the sky. Thus the sounds of streams now awaken Su Tung-p'ō. Is this the working of the brooks' sounds, or is it Chao-chio's discourse flowing into the ears of Su Tung-p'ō? I suspect that Chao-chio's talk on the sermon of insentient beings, still reverberating, may secretly be intermingled with the nightly sound of streams. Dare anyone say that this is a pint of water or an ocean into which all rivers enter? Ultimately speaking, is it the poet that is enlightened, or is it mountains and waters that are enlightened? He who has discerning eyes should apprehend the gigantic tongue and body of purity.
(Hee-Jin Kim continues:)

Here Chao-chio's discourse and the sounds of brooks are inseparably interfused so as to make Su Tung-p'o’s enlightenment possible. As Dogen observes, it is very difficult to say whether this is Su Tung-p'o's enlightenment or the enlightenment of the mountains and waters. Man and Nature, however, mutually partake of each other and co-work with each other as the twin activities of the Buddha-nature and emptiness, and are thus not two separate entities but one. Nature is alive in its own right and speaks to man through its own expressions. In short, man and Nature co-work and co-create "eighty-four thousand gathas" by being enlightened together and by becoming Buddha contemporaneously.17

As one can see from this very long passage there is a very strong tradition within Zen Buddhism to regard "everything as alive." A contemporary Zen Master, Sasaki Roshi, has written:

From the Buddhist standpoint of life you must learn to respect equally the smallest thing, a stone, as well as other humans, because each thing manifests the same unifying center of gravity as you do. The same consciousness which understands the nature of Self is the basis of a respect for life.18

The contemporary American poet Gary Snyder writes:

I have had a very moving, profound perception a few times that everything was alive. (The basic perception of animism.) And that on one level there is no hierarchy of qualities in life—that the life of a stone or a weed is as completely beautiful and authentic and wise and valuable as the life of say an Einstein. And that Einstein and the weed know this.19
Indeed the entire question of what is living and what is dead is explored by the contemporary Naturalist-Philosopher Loren Eiseley:

It is said by men who know about these things that the smallest living cell probably contains over a quarter of a million protein molecules engaged in the multitudinous coordinated activities which make up the phenomenon of life. At the instant of death, whether of a man or microbe, that ordered, incredible spinning passes away in an almost furious haste of those same particles to get themselves back into the chaotic unplanned earth.

I do not think, if someone finally twists the key successfully in the tiniest and most humble house of life, that many of these questions will be answered, or that the dark forces which create lights in the deep sea and the living batteries in the waters of the tropical swamps or the dread cycles of parasites or the most noble workings of the human brain, will much, if at all, be revealed. Rather I would say that if "dead" matter has reared up this curious landscape of fiddling crickets, song sparrows; and wondering men, it must be plain even to the most devoted materialist that the matter of which he speaks contains amazing, if not dreadful powers, and may not possibly be, as Hardy has suggested, "but one mask of many worn by the Great Face behind."20

I would now like to present a number of quotations which show the inherent benefit for man of contact with "insentient beings" or Nature. I can only give a brief sampling of this viewpoint, but I hope it will give some idea of the importance of this theme.
Rachel Carson writes:

Contemplating the teeming life of the shore, we have an uneasy sense of the communication of some universal truth that lies just beyond our grasp. What is the message signaled by the hordes of diatoms flashing their microscopic lights in the night sea? What truth is expressed by the legions of barnacles whitening the rocks with their habitations, each small creature within finding the necessities of its existence in the sweep of the surf? And what is the meaning of so tiny a being as the transparent wisp of protoplasm that is a sea lace existing for some inscrutable reason to us — a reason that demands its presence by the trillion amid the rocks and weeds of the shore? The meaning haunts and ever eludes us, and in its very pursuit we approach the ultimate mystery of life itself.21

Ralph Waldo Emerson writes:

It seems to me as if the day was not wholly profane in which we have given heed to some natural object. The fall of snowflakes in a still air, preserving to each crystal its perfect form; the blowing of sleet over a wide sheet of water, and over plains; the waving of rye-fields; the mimic waving of acres of houstonia, whose innumerable florets whiten and ripple before the eye; the reflections of trees and flowers in glassy lakes; the musical, streaming, odorous south wind which converts all trees into wind harps; the crackling and spurting of hemlock in flames, or of pine logs which yield glory to the walls and faces in the sitting room — these are the music and pictures of the most ancient religion.22

And another great New England Poet-Naturalist-Philosopher Henry David Thoreau writes:
Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness—to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and meadow hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge whereon only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground.23

In Creativity and Taoism: A Study of Chinese Philosophy, Art, and Poetry by Chang Chung-yuan we read the following:

The highest sense of peace is what we might call, in the words of Whitehead, "a deep underlying harmony," which is inherent in both man and the universe. It is the ground of all harmonies, from which emanates the all-expanding energy that constantly creates a new universe. Without it nothing that is real can be achieved. It is invisible and unfathomable, beyond the realm of discursive thinking. It can only be experienced as a profound inward feeling, an immediate reflection of deep metaphysical insight which is unverbalized and yet momentous in its action. We cannot define and point to it, but we may echo the tone of the inner realm of those who have achieved this sense of peace when we read or chant their poetic expressions. Let us try to communicate the voice of some of the great poets. First we come to listen to Li P'o (701-762):

You ask me why should I stay in this blue mountain
I smile but do not answer. O, my mind is at ease.
Peach blossoms and flowing streams pass away
without trace.
How different from the mundane world.

This direct contact with nature produces what the Chinese commentators call "shen yun", or spiritual rhythm. It is this spiritual rhythm vibrating within the poet that gives him joy. The notion of spiritual rhythm is much emphasized by Chinese critics as the outcome of an interfusion between the subjectivity of the poet and the objective reality of things. It is, in fact, an invisible interplay between two poles.24
And lest we sentimentalize Nature or idealize it and thus render it false I would like to give one final quote from Thoreau:

Man is not the judge of what in Nature is good or evil.
We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander. We are cheered when we observe the vulture feeding on the carrion which disgusts and disheartens us, and deriving health and strength from the repast. There was a dead horse in the hollow by the path to my house, which compelled me sometimes to go out of my way, especially in the night when the air was heavy, but the assurance it gave me of the strong appetite and inviolable health of Nature was my compensation for this. I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another; that tender organizations can be so serenely squashed out of existence like pulp, — tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortolises and toads run over in the road; and that sometimes it has rained flesh and blood. With the liability to accident, we must see how little account is to be made of it. The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence. Poison is not poisonous after all, nor are any wounds fatal. Compassion is a very untenable ground. It must be expeditious. Its pleadings will not bear to be stereotyped.²⁵

Of course it would not be difficult to ascertain what would happen if people were cut off from intercourse with Nature or "non-sentient" beings. Medard Boss writes in *Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology*:

"All human beings are fundamentally more or less cut off from the absolute and reduced to individual limited
existences; sorrow is grounded in this condition."\(^{26}\)

Of course this view is a Western view, and one we need not accept as the only truth. Maszumi Roshi writes in *The Hazy Moon of Enlightenment* the following: "In order to discover your own direction, it is important to have great faith in yourself. Believe that Buddha-nature and all kinds of virtues and wisdom are you yourself. See yourself as nothing but the very nature of being."\(^{27}\)

Robert Bly in *News of the Universe: poems of twofold consciousness* writes:

This book asks one question over and over: how much consciousness is the poet willing to grant to trees or hills or living creatures not a part of his own species? I think it is possible to say that every culture sooner or later develops its Descartes: I mean a thinker who encourages the gap the citizen already feels between himself and Nature. When the gap develops, the human being changes. The change shows itself practically in an emphasis on perception rather than on the object that has drawn forth the perception. Rather than working to describe a sea urchin people prefer to say, 'The sea urchin is beautiful or the sea urchin is ugly'. Because of the human being's hugging of his own perceptions, which Descartes ideas encourage, the energy both sexual and spiritual, tends to become interiorized inside the body. It circulates "harmlessly" inside the human body and does not leave it. Rilke in an early poem describes this locked in situation using the metaphor of house bonding:

Whoever you are: some evening take a step out of your house, which you know so well. Whoever you are

Your eyes find it hard to tear themselves from the sloping threshold, but with your eyes slowly, slowly lift one black tree up, so it stands against the sky, skinny and alone.
With that you have made the world. The world is immense and like a word that is still growing in the silence.
In the same moment that your will grasps it your eyes feeling its subtely will leave it...

Rilke says clearly that the problem is to "leave the house". He says that if you make the effort to use your entire imagination power to see one tree you've essentially granted the whole world its being. Giving yourself to one tree is crucial.

We then come to the crucial question: how does one go about hearing the preaching of "non-sentient" beings? How do you "give yourself to one tree"? It is crucial to understand this question because whatever "non-sentient" beings have to say will only be heard by those capable of hearing. Radio waves are in the air all of the time but unless a person has the proper receiver he will not pick up anything. Thus I would like to examine some of the things which have been written concerning how one goes about hearing such preaching.

In all of the discussions which I have come across in reference to hearing the preaching of non-sentient beings there is always a reference to "losing the self" or a reference to the subjective self becoming one with the objective world. In any case the relationship between the limited individual self and the objective world is crucial.

Another important point is the distinction between strictly rational thought and intuition. All writers on
this subject stress intuition as the means to bring
about this state of being able to hear the preaching
of non-sentient beings. In the West the stress has
been on the strictly rational mind being able to
penetrate any mystery. Conversely the stress on
intuition has always been an integral part of Eastern
thought. I will now present a selection from Creativity
and Taoism which will illustrate important aspects of
this discussion:

The understanding of Tao is an inner
experience in which distinction between subject
and object vanishes. It is an intuitive,
 immediate awareness rather than a mediated,
inferential, or intellectual process. Tao
does not blossom into total consciousness
until all distinctions between self and no-self
have disappeared. T'ao Ch'ien of the fourth
century has described this experience in
the following verse:

I gather chrysanthemums at the eastern hedgerow
And silently gaze at the southern mountain.
The mountain air is beautiful in the sunset,
And the birds flocking together return home.
Among all these things is a real meaning,
Yet when I try to express it, I become lost
in "no words".

In this poem when T'ao Ch'ien looks at the
mountains, the birds, the flowers and the
setting sun, we have an initial differentiation
between the seer and the objects seen. But
when the poet penetrates into the reality of
all these things, a unity, a oneness, is
immediately achieved. Subject and object are
mutually identified. At this stage the poet's
self is dissolved in the realm of no words.
Su Tung-p'o of the eleventh century commented,
"the delight of reading the poem lies in the
fact that suddenly, without purpose, the poet's
mind and his surroundings are unified, as he
gazes at the mountains while picking flowers."
This inner experience of interfusion of subject and object may be illustrated by a famous story from the works of Chang Tzu:

Once I dreamt that I was a butterfly, fluttering here and there; in all ways was a butterfly. I enjoyed my freedom as a butterfly, not knowing that I was Chou. Suddenly I awoke and was surprised to be myself again. How can I tell whether I was a man who dreamt that he was a butterfly or whether I am a butterfly who dreams that he is a man? Between Chang Chou and the butterfly there must be differentiation. Yet in the dream no differentiation takes place. This is called the interfusion of things.

In this story Chang Tzu dreams of a butterfly. Chang Tzu, thus, is the subject and the butterfly is the object. But he says, it might be that the butterfly was dreaming of itself as a man, making the butterfly the subject and the man, Chang Tzu himself, the object. Is it possible to make a distinction here between subject and object? The awareness of identification and interpenetration of self and no-self is the key that unlocked the mystery of Tao. 

To hear the preaching of non-sentient beings one must liberate oneself from the strict confines of the intellect and tap into other ways of knowing, namely knowledge through intuition. Again Creativity and Taoism provides a very helpful discussion of this matter:

Both the Ch'an Buddhist and the Taoist mistrust intellect as a means toward acquiring a new point of view regarding life and the universe. There have been many descriptions of this state of mind. Here is an interesting one: Let us look at the frame of mind of the man who has this genuine knowledge of no-knowledge. I will let Lieh Tzu, a contemporary of Chang Tzu
speak for himself:

After nine years of study I can set my mind completely free, let the words come forth completely unbound as I speak. I do not know whether right or wrong, gain or loss, are mine or others. I am not aware that the old Master Shang Szu is my teacher and that Pai-kao is my friend. My self both within and without has been transformed. Everything about me is identified. My eye becomes my ear, my ear becomes my nose, my nose my mouth. My mind is highly integrated and my body dissolves. My bone and flesh melt away. I cannot tell by what my body is supported or what my feet walk upon. I am blowing away, east and west, as a dry leaf torn from a tree. I cannot even make out whether the wind is riding me or I am riding on the wind.

One of the ways of hearing the preaching of non-sentient beings in the East has been through the practice of Art, that is Art assumes the form of Meditation. One of the best discussions of this important matter is to be found in D.T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture*. This is an extremely important point for me because I desired to use photography as a form of meditation. Suzuki writes:

George Duthuit, the author of *Chinese Mysticism* and *Modern Painting* seems to understand the spirit of Zen Mysticism. From him we have this:

When the Chinese artist paints, what matters is the concentration of thought and the prompt and vigorous response of the hand to the directing will. Tradition ordains him to see, or rather feel, as a whole the work to be executed, before embarking on anything.
If the ideas of man are confused he will become a slave of exterior conditions. He who deliberates and moves his brush intent on making a picture misses to a still greater extent the art of painting. Draw bamboos for ten years, become a bamboo, then forget all about bamboos when you are drawing. In possession of an infallible technique, the individual places himself at the mercy of inspiration.

(Sukuki continues:)

To become a bamboo and to forget that you are one with it while drawing it — this is the Zen of the bamboo, that is the moving with the "rhythmic movement of the spirit" which resides in the bamboo as well as in the artist himself. What is now required of him is to have a firm hold on the spirit and yet not be conscious of the fact. This is a very difficult task achieved only after long spiritual training.

The necessity of long training as a prerequisite to hearing the preaching of non-sentient beings is discussed by a writer who compares the penetration of the universe by mystics and by scientists. Fritjof Capra in The Tao of Physics writes:

Anybody who wants to repeat an experiment in modern subatomic physics has to undergo many years of training. Only then will he or she be able to ask Nature a specific question through the experiment and to understand the answer. Similarly, a deep mystical experience requires, generally, many years of training under an experienced master and, as in the scientific training, the dedicated time does not alone guarantee success.

Fritjof Capra points out that Art in the East is not necessarily geared toward the production of a work
of art. In the East the creation of a work of Art can be a form of meditation, and thus a very specific practice in learning how to listen to the preaching of non-sentient beings. Discipline leads to the free manifestation of intuition. Art can thus be a method of learning to experience reality not through the rational mind alone but through intuition. Fritjof Capra writes:

In our everyday life, direct intuitive insights into the nature of things are normally limited to extremely brief moments. Not so in Eastern mysticism where they are extended to long periods and, ultimately, become a constant awareness. The preparation of the mind for this awareness — for the immediate, nonconceptual awareness of reality — is the main purpose of all schools of Eastern Mysticism, and of many aspects of the Eastern way of life. During the long cultural history of India, China, Japan, an enormous variety of techniques, rituals and art forms have been developed to achieve this purpose, all of which may be called meditations in the widest sense of the word. The basic aim of these techniques seems to be to silence the thinking mind and to shift the awareness from the rational to the intuitive mode of consciousness.

Eastern art forms, too, are forms of meditation. They are not so much means for expressing the artist's ideas as ways of self-realization through the development of the intuitive mode of consciousness...

Chinese calligraphy requires the uninhibited, spontaneous movement of the hand. All of these skills are used in the East to develop the meditative mode of consciousness.

When one first hears of the subjective self merging with the objective world it all seems very abstract. Sometimes the very attempt to clarify the issue can be
confusing. Sasaki Roshi, a contemporary Zen Master, discusses the issue in a simple and straightforward way:

When you embrace your lover do you think about pollution or even enlightenment? Your lover probably would shove you away if you were thinking about something else while you embraced. You like to talk about the problems of the world even though you've forgotten the fundamental union of the embrace of God. When a man and a woman embrace, does a woman think, "I'm a woman," and does a man say, "I am a man." Try it. It's only after embracing and separating that the man says to the woman, "You're the prettiest woman in the world," and the woman says to the man, "You're as strong as King Kong."

The important thing here is that as human beings we are composed of two activities. The first is called absolute self in which you forget or do not recognize your self, as in the moment of truly embracing your lover. The second activity is that of the individual self which objectifies the world and the self and deals with these problems. Both are necessary factors for life. Man and woman must separate to do their work in this world. If two lovers spent all their time in bed, after three or four days in bed their sheets would start to smell. You have to get out of bed and leave your lover to go outside, get some fresh air, do your work, play and then go back to bed again. Each of us lives by manifesting ourselves in two ways: as absolute self and as individual self. Human life is basically the endlessly repetitious cycle of forgetting the self and affirming the self.

Without dissolving the individual self you cannot experience the absolute, and if you affirm yourself simply as "I am" without the absolute experience then conflicts are bound to arise.34

The next selection is a long and difficult one. Yet there are certain sections of it which bear directly
upon what non-sentient life is and what it teaches.

After this selection I will discuss my own individual conclusions. In *Golden Wind* Eido Roshi writes:

I will use the wind to illustrate the difference between the fundamental and the existential. Whether the wind is a fragrant spring wind, or a cold winter wind, or just a gentle wind, after all, the wind is merely a movement of air. Metaphorically speaking, the fundamental refers to this air and the existential is the changing condition of the wind. Our True Nature, our Endless Dimension Universal Nature, was never created and can never be destroyed, as far as the fundamental goes.

In the realm of the fundamental, there is no loss, no gain, no birth, no death, no good, no evil, no small, no large. But as far as the existential is concerned, as you can see, there is strong and weak, coming and going, deep and shallow. Thus in our Zazen (meditation) we often feel different conditions...

The chanting of Namu Dai Bosa is another example of the fact that, fundamentally speaking, we are all Dai Bosa, enlightened beings. Not only we human beings, but also all sentient beings are primarily, fundamentally enlightened. This not only applies to all beings, but also the bowing mat, the broken chopstick, the sick cat — all are enlightened beings. To put it in a more comprehensible way, they are absolutely all right as they are. In fact, everything is all right as it is. At this moment, a fine bowl is all right as a fine bowl. If it is broken, it is all right as a broken bowl, and if it is fixed, it is all right as a repaired bowl. The fact that everything is all right as it is, and, in fact, cannot be otherwise — this is Namu Dai Bosa. Some of us have already testified to this, but if you have not yet done so, at least believe it. You must believe it...

The inseparability and, at the same time, the clear distinctiveness of fundamental and existential is the factuality of the universe, existing even before the creation of heaven and earth. This is not particularly
a religious concept, nor is it a speciality of Zen Buddhism — it is plain fact. But in the tradition of Mahayana Buddhism, it is emphasized time and again to realize Fundamental Reality, as we human beings have a tendency to look at only one aspect, that is the existential, ever-changing condition of phenomena. We have a tendency to miss seeing the other fundamental aspect.

The two appear simultaneously, not like the famous saying, "Two sides of a coin." This is a wonderful expression, but when we see one side of the coin we cannot see the other side. The fundamental and existential aspects of phenomena are appearing right now, simultaneously like water (fundamental) and wave (existential). Nothing is hidden. And consequently, nothing need be uncovered. So from the fundamental point of view, birds sing — that is the birds' Teisho (preaching); chrysanthemums bloom silently — that is the chrysanthemums' preaching; a candle burns, dust moves; gongs gong. From day to night there are millions of instruments playing in the Dharma orchestra. Once we are able to realize this fact, we know whether we are going or returning, sitting or not sitting. We are the Dharma itself. So, let us make very clear that we are not searching for something outside, and we are not trying to uncover something concealed. Rather, we are working for the realization of that which is already revealed. But it is so close and so familiar to us, our habit of emphasizing existential phenomena is so strong, and our judgement of good and bad so deeply rooted that it is difficult for us to appreciate this wonderful Dharma teaching.35

My conclusions are tentative, exploratory and certainly not final. To a certain extent they have already been indirectly stated by my decision to select certain quotations and not others, that is the previous selections represent beliefs similar to my own. Rather than state my conclusions formally
as a philosophical treatise I would like to recount an incident which happened to me as I was photographing.

Late in November I stopped on East River Road in front of a corn field. The corn stalks had all been cut down to a few inches above the soil. It was about three in the afternoon. A cold wind swept out of a low grey sky. I took my gear out of the van and set it up. There was no one about. Row upon row of cut stalks receded into the distance. I wanted to photograph just that point where the corn stalk goes into the soil. That point fascinated me because just where the stalk enters the soil it divided into six or eight individual root strands. These root strands produce an irregular architecture of random lines which then anchor the tall mature stalks against August thunderstorms.

A fine snow began to fall as I photographed this point of differentiation. I covered my 8x10 camera with the darkcloth to protect it from the snow. The top of the cloth had been sprayed with Scotchguard water repellent for just such an emergency. The small bits of crystalline snow could not adhere to the top of the cloth. I wore a pair of boots that had been with me since my first trip West more than a decade ago. There were large cracks in the leather and the bottoms had been resoled three times, but they still endured.
I watched the fine snow fall and sat down in the field and let the snow collect on my hat and beard as I flipped time over and dwelt in the past. I looked at the hundreds and hundreds of cut stalks and remembered early spring and the brown naked ground deep with furrows. Then the first green shoots rose toward the sun and the delicate roots descended into the soil. In high summer the tall shoots floated broad green leaves into the August air and glistened after a rain. The smell of wet earth mingled with the aroma of yellow corn pulsating with thick sweet substance. And then the Harvest Days and all along East River Road the air was heavy with the smell of ripe corn.

Then the present reasserted itself as the wind turned about and began to blow the snow into my glasses. I started to count the snowflakes on my glasses but it was an impossible task. I stopped and looked across the field. There was snow in front of my nose and in the distance well beyond the horizon line. Still no matter how many snowflakes fell there would always be a number but my eyes were not sufficient to the task, and amid all this profusion of swirling no two snowflakes would ever be identical.

I felt immensely joyful. I didn't care anymore. I was lost in a billion snowfalls yet there was a place for me. I didn't care. It's hard to explain this
"I didn't care." It has nothing to do with irresponsibility. Indeed I felt a surge of unbounded generosity. Surely others should feel this state and know, at least once, life without desire: not passivity, not despair, not life with the suppression of desire, not its conquest, but life without clinging to desire.

The cold snowflake falls with ease and melts on my warm nose as easily. In this state what can be taken? One can only give.

My whole beard was getting heavy with snow. I didn't take any more images. I packed my gear and got in the van and looked out over the field. For some reason Delores came to my mind.

Delores was married for forty years to the same man. She met him when she was seventeen and they married at nineteen. For the next forty years they lived together. They had no children. The marriage had, as she said, "Its ups and downs but which marriage doesn't." Then one day without warning or comment her husband didn't come home. He didn't come home for a month. At the end of the month he came and gave her an envelope filled with money. She knew it was over and she cursed him, but he didn't say anything. And each month after that he came to give her the envelope. She neatly placed each envelope on the top of her dresser.
There were now fourteen empty envelopes. She said to me, "I'll never give him a divorce. And I don't want him dead. That's too good for him, too quick. I want his arms and legs off and he should just lay there in the gutter."

I looked out over the snow and the descending darkness. Everything seemed just right. I wanted Delores to see this, but she wasn't here. She dreamt of an armless and legless man getting what he deserved. She said to me, "He goes out with hookers now. He brings them in his car to the front of our house — my house. He wants me to see him with the young hookers. Why does he insult me like this? Why does he insult himself?" I got out of the van and walked onto the field. I was so happy I tried to walk on my hands, but I couldn't. I tumbled to the ground and heard orange salamanders deep asleep in a dreamless world. Delores said to me, "He got old but he didn't want to get old so he gets fifteen and sixteen year old girls to sleep with him. I remind him of death. But what's wrong with getting old with someone you love. Getting old has to happen, doesn't it Chuck? No. I wouldn't take him back now. I have my pride. I never once ran after him or begged him to come back."

I said to her, "You seem alright now."

She said, "Don't ask how I cried and cried."
You live with somebody for forty years and then
without a word he leaves. I felt my life pass away.
But now I just don't care."

The snow just fell and fell on me. A few cars went
past on East River Road and illuminated long cylinders
of snow. Such a beautiful, beautiful scene. The
preaching here is clear, so clear. When I put the
preaching into words it doesn't sound so spectacular.
Still I'll try. It would go something like this:
It's all OK. The incredible beauty of the world never
ceases. Snow is cold. The wind has no home but
everywhere. None escape pain. No need to worry.
Notes


6 Capra, The Tao of Physics, p. 278.


18 Joshu-Sasaki, "Who Pollutes the World,"


30 Chang Chung-yuan, *Creativity and Taoism*, p. 87.

32 Capra, The Tao of Physics, p. 36.

33 Capra, The Tao of Physics, pp. 37-38.


Bibliography


