

R.R.1, Black Creek, B.C.  
Jan. 14, 1972

The Editor  
The Courier  
Campbell River, B.C.

Dear Sir:

It was a pleasure to read Peggie Rowand's article, COLD MOUNTAIN...It is refreshing to know that a Campbell River newspaper can get beyond the endless reporting of council and schoolboard to give us such an intriguing account of the life of the Cortez community. Peggie, in my opinion, is by far the best reporter in C. River, and this article with magic of artist-photographer Ed Robertson to assist, helps to strengthen that opinion.

But Peggie was not altogether happy about her reporting, saying, that it "will go down in my reporting history as the first time I have ever failed to achieve communication in a personal interview." She felt that she was not able to communicate to the general public in specific terms what happens to people who share a few days with the Cole Mountain community. But perhaps she was seeking a "Body", a "Corpse" that does not exist, and certainly one that can never be described.

Zen is a Way. Zen is an approach to reality. It is an experience, an experience of the ground of being. Zen can be a valid approach for Anglicans, Protestants, Orthodox, Catholics, as well as Buddhists. But what one discovers is not something for ones-self, not a corpse, not a possession or something that can be communicated.

I observe the eagles that circle and descend my river, seeking the carrion lying in it - the dying, decaying coho and chums. The dead are attacked by the living. There is gain and loss. Most people approach contemplation, Zen, with the idea that there is something to be gained by it. Often, where there is a lot of buzz about "spirituality," "Enlightenment" or just "turning on," it is often because there are eagles hovering around a corpse. This circling, hovering, descending, this celebration of victory, are not what is meant by contemplation, by the Study of Zen. It can be a useful exercise, and the eagles may be enriched.

Zen enriches no one. There is no body to be found. Eagles may come and circle for a while in the place where it is thought to be. Soon they go elsewhere. After they are gone, the "no-body" that was there, suddenly appears. That is Zen. All the time it was there. The scavengers missed it. It was not their kind of prey.