Taoism, A Plunge into Nature
One man's solution to
the problems of living.
by Janine Tartaglia
photos and poem by Mark Katayama

Taoism
through Peace
The big picture on a
pint-sized town.
photos by Mary Russell

Secret Places.... Shored
The fine art of
being alone.
by Vicki Medgyesi Bylesby
photos by John Calderon

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Taoism, a plunge into nature

and when the world gets you down,
and when the boredom is eternal,
and people don’t seem to care anymore,
Oh, if I only had the time......to see the central coastline from atop San Luisa Mountain, hear the leaves skipping across sidewalks, smell the salty freshness of a secluded beach, or touch the sticky threads of a dewy spider's web.

Ever catch your senses tearing you away from term papers, work and worries, then sending your mind off on a peaceful, nature-filled journey? Mark Katayama has.

That's why this 22-year-old Photojournalism major suggested that outlook lie in the beauty of nature surrounding Cal Poly for its color issue. And with a keen eye behind a trusty Nikon, and a discomposing vocabulary steering a flair pen, he set out to compose its introductory pictures and prose. Mark's appreciation for nature might have stemmed from his childhood in a smog-shrouded southland city.

More likely than not, Mark will tell you the concern for his surroundings really began when he adopted the Tao (pronounced Dow) philosophy.

"Tao suggests that a person work with nature, rather than against it," Mark explains, groping for the words to describe the ancient Chinese belief. "Though not a religion, Tao reverently proposes the idea that nature provides for everything without discrimination and, like nature, man should treat all men and things as equals."

Aside from offering principles to live by, Taoism teaches Mark to become more aware of nature around him. The hills and nearby shores of San Luisa County provide him with an excellent opportunity to try out the awareness.

The minute he set foot on this campus, Mark admits he was overcome by its royal blue skies, Kelly green hills and toned-down tempo.

"Perhaps," Mark sighs, "that's one of the assets that draws people to this university."

It would be nice to think so, but all too often a student spends four years at Poly without becoming familiar with anything outside the perimeter of the route to school from his apartment.

This outlook issue is not just for agriculture majors who, with their tractors and plows frequently come into contact literally with nature, or the archies who must blend their designs with the environment. It's for everyone who has ever taken time out of their daily routine to find peace in the earth's natural offerings.

Nature is not just "Bounton" spelled backwards, or a jar of tranquillizers that can be capped and put away when not needed. To Mark Katayama, the wonders of nature are alive and well everyday in the life of a Cal Poly student, if he chooses to appreciate it.
Someday when you have a little time, take a drive past Santa Margarita, through Rinconada Ghost Town, beyond civilization, and back into the past...to a place called Pozo.

Today it's really not much. Just a couple of buildings left from a tiny village built almost one hundred years ago. Pozo is located about eighteen miles southeast of Santa Margarita as it was in 1880.

At that time it consisted of a schoolhouse, a store, a blacksmith shop, a sort of hotel, a saloon, and a hall. The small rustic saloon is still standing.

It is an anachronism in a modern age...a time capsule. As you step into the Pozo Saloon you step back into the past. An entire pictoral and
artifactual history of San Luis Obispo county adorns the walls of this Old West bar.

Pozo Balcony serves as a meeting place for many of the town’s folk who tell some interesting tales. Visitors also frequent them and come to Pozo for a picture window view of the San Jose Valley.

This valley was visited in the latter part of June, 1870, by Will Murray, then editor of the San Luis Obispo Tribune. Murray enjoyed his trip to Pozo and the valley surrounding it so much that he published a feature article about the area in his paper. In a paragraph describing the natural environment he writes:

"This place once bore the more dignified title of 'Ranchita valley'... The situation is fine, and the climate is very fine, especially for those inclined to troublesome health. Everybody wants to make him money, land speculators, and stock buyers bought up the pieces of property. The patients inhabited the San Jose Valley. It's one of the places we ever saw."

Ten years after Murray, this feature story about the San Jose Valley another writer on the conditions of the

1880:

"This little valley has a halo all of its own. Its green, dotted here and there, thousands of particulars and the varied landscape, by dark and rugged mountains, in beauty with any other whole of lovely San Luis."

This magnificent view still around the tiny town of Pozo. Together Pozo and her natural surroundings remain as a step back into the past.
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remnants of a dying Indian summer. She sat there watching the New Jersey lifeguards place the crowds into clusters of half-submerged bodies, as if they were just a bunch of dim-witted salt water sheep or something.

The Steel Pier protrudes into the right ink of the Atlantic Ocean, and the lights of Atlantic City form a dome of neon in the northern sky.

In a day or two, Ocean City will be a sleepy village and Somers Point a small town. The vibrating discotheques will settle into the sand and sleep with the softer music of the sea. The playboys and party-people will be back in Philly, losing their tans in the pizzeria and daily routine. Soon the reeds will be a rest home.

She too, would be gone from the Jersey shore. Her California waited across the continent for a visit with relatives was ending.

But, for now, the quiet beach was all she needed, though the companionship of vacant, sandy footprints and dark windows and salt-water taffy fascinated onlookers with a pink-and-white belly dance, she was something...
than a warm hand and a
friendly voice. She sees ants crawl
to the depths of thrown-away
melted snow-cone cups just so they
can mine a minor bit of sweet ar-
tificial raspberry syrup that remains
in the sticky bottom. And in this
she sees life.

Somewhere, far from the dance
floor of the Steel Pier and the
convention halls of Atlantic City,
she'd turn her eyes and thoughts
from still and silent seas and drop
them into textbooks. A vast sea of
words and figures and facts waits
back home in San Luis Obispo. And
before she attempts to swim that
sea again, she needs to drink from
the ocean of tranquility and
patience that lay before her tonight.

She needs to quaff a lot of this
after-midnight-empty-beach-quiet-
shop-Ocean City patience before
she could even think about
swimming in the Cal Poly sea.

It's a month later. The days are
still sunny, as they often are on the
central California Coast, well into
the fall. The warmth is more
disturbing than relaxing, however,
as students scurry like squirrels in
and out of holes that some call
doorways. It's hectic and the pages
are turning too fast to be read. Cal
Ploy is no different than any other
university. Life flies by...it doesn't
drift. One thing, though, it's close
enough to the ocean.

Cal Poly has that in it's favor.

When things get too hectic and the
books get too heavy, the seashore
is a good place to go to mellow out.

Students from Cal Poly have such
places as Montana De Oro, Hazard
Canyon, Avila Beach, Pismo Beach,
Shell Beach, Pirate's Cove, Morro
Bay, Cayucos, and Cambria within
easy distance of the university. And
it is no coincidence that on sunny
days or weekends before and after
periods of study, these places are
populated, largely, by students.

It was such a day for her. Since
she'd returned to school from her
I'm not sure what this page is about. It seems to be a mix of text and images, possibly a newspaper or magazine page. The text is not coherent and seems to be a jumble of words and phrases. There is also a section about Seascapes, but it's not clear what the connection is. Overall, it's hard to make sense of this page without more context.
She sat on the beach with her knees curled up under her chin, watching as the sun dipped lower in the afternoon sky. She thought of all the poems and all the poets arising from situations like this. "The tide rises, the tide falls. Darkness comes and the curlew calls." Who wrote it? Was it Longfellow? Yes, it must have been. He must have felt this way.

She wondered about the young man in the distance. Why did he stay out there so long? Did he feel about seashores the way she felt about them? He looked almost like a statue; he stood so still and serene.

They both remained until the sun was almost down. She walked up and down the beach, feeling as if time had stopped for her, even if just for a few hours. He was sitting now, on the same point of rocks protruding into the ocean. He watched a seagull wheel in the sky, and it made him think of how that fella wheel stood motionless on that lonely, lovely night in Santa Cruz. He thought of college as a fella wheel — or better yet, a merry-go-round. While he was at Cal Poly that damn fella wheel seemed to be going full speed. But now, at last, it was stopped again.

Finally he walked back along the beach. He would be able to face the world for another week or so. She, he, was ready to go back to the city life.

She pressed the beach again, and sensed the young man walking toward her. At one time they had been three thousand miles apart, on opposite shores. Now, the sea seemed to be telling them to meet, pulling them together. They were very close and the gentle ocean and the setting sun made everything just right.

He raised his eyes from his sea-shell search, and they met hers. She blinked and he smiled. Then they passed, saying simply, "hello."
Secret Places...Shared

by Vicki Medgyesy Bylesby
photos by John Calderon

Poets have written about it. Philosophers have tried to define it. Musicians have listened to capture it as a tune.

A universal desire: to find your own places in the world. A secret place where your thoughts are your own and your fantasies become a reality.

Three secret places...shared...

It sat squating in the sun. The white adobe walls absorbed the light, gave off a cool touch. It was a castle; isolated, imperious, collected.

I wondered about its "queen." Skirting the circular drive twice, making sure the time was right...I don't think I've been this nervous since the sixth grade.

Maybe the dragon doesn't bite. But still, it seemed a secret place. The kind of place where you wonder if your jeans are OK and your shirt is clean.

I rang the bell.

The queen answered. Where were the shady Harlequin glasses and flowing Dior gown? My jeans felt more comfortable.

"Hi, I'm Mary Kennedy," she said, opening the oak door wide. Stepping in, I wondered how I missed the door.

After that, it was easy sliding. Mary Kennedy: the woman, the wife of the president. Perched in adoration in the middle of a university. A handsome woman, a handsome room. Both cool, composed, yet beckoning. Tasteful but, surprisingly, the whole flavor was more like apple pie than caviar and toast.

Was this her haven? Her secret place? Where do you go, mysterious lady, who looks more Mother than Queen?

"Secret places," she said, smiling, "I can remember back to high school when a librarian let me use a little tower room for studying. It was my own personal castle." My mouth dropped. Was she putting me on or reading my mind? She shifted in her chair..."to be secret means to set aside," she mused quietly. "You know, a secret place doesn't have to be a place at all...it can just be a space inside your mind. The ability to zero in on something."

I could hear the birds outside; a clock started ticking louder. It was as if two strangers had suddenly stepped over the line into slightly embarrassing territory.

"But we do have this trailer," she suddenly blurted out. "A trailer at the beach...It's just like a little playhouse. I leave my home and go to the playhouse for a few hours. Of course this house is home, but it belongs to the state...and you always have that feeling..."

"Life is simpler there. For a few hours, life becomes simple and intimate."

Words come easier now. No longer strangers sitting in straight-back chairs...but two people reaching out, leaning forward, sharing experiences.

"I think we need change," she said. "A place to be alone with our thoughts. There is something refreshing in the movement...if there wasn't, why would people always
But when I left, the house had shrunk in size. I realized that Mary Kennedy-the-woman couldn't be divided from those things...after all, you can't divide what isn't divisible.

...Shared

"I was kicking down the railroad tracks, bitter as hell. I'll get them, I told myself. I'll get them because they struck down my program...I'll get those bastards!"

Dr. Stanilalus J. Dundon, Philosophy. From the name springs visions of starched white fronts, mortarboards and black bow ties. In reality, the image runs more towards tee-shirts, striped flannel and a snappy pair of hi-tops in the best P-F Flyer tradition.

Young. A philosophical man minus the must. A teacher's teacher who sees his most important goal as bringing peace and happiness to the mind of a student.

"Sometimes I'll almost go haywire. But in teaching, just like anything, you can't always get what you think is best. When that happens, I strike out to be alone."

Dundon has his special places for mediation. Stop-gaps in time where he hangs his frustrations out to dry. Places where he hopes to rejuvenate what he calls the "strong interior life."

Those rusty rail tracks, stretching out with precises measured distance, snake a path back into the hills. One...two...three...four...the eyes blur as the feet hit the ties in a trance-like monotony.

He follows the tracks, winding up somewhere behind Poly Canyon. Battling down in the damp grass, the mind cleared; ready to paint clean thoughts on a fresh palette.

"I think the worse thing is to be angry, or to strike back at someone. When that starts happening, I head out. I don't really believe you need a place to go, but beauty helps to clear the mind."

The trick seems to be

not to look back...to appreciate the beauty without dwelling on it. The goal is to keep the mind clear and channelled.

The peacefulness of a tramp around Bishop's Peak brings an reflections of an old Chinese philosophy; that of the "interior"...the carrying of interior peace as a stabilizing force.

"When you go into your interior cell, it isn't like a retreat, says Dundon. "You don't really go into yourself, but you take all those outside influences along. You balance your motives to find a peaceful sense of purpose in what you're doing."

He settles back comfortably with his ideas, giving it all a chance to fall into perspective.

"You know, conflict only happens when you let other people's value mountains in on your own. Breaking away physically once in awhile is like a catalyst...it brings it all back together again."
gentle wake as it a last hurrah.
It was a collage of gold and bronze,
plundered only by screaming sea gulls
who frantically dove for the last
catch of the day.
The wind whipped across the sand—the grains refusing to be
an inch.
It was the kind of sunset
countless photographers have
captured, that thousands have
captured their breath for. Yet, some
1ime it happens, you'd swear it
never been another quite as good.
An isolated strip of beach in
San Simeon: a little colder, a little
windier. The elements worked
tandem to keep away all but the
hardy.
For Ken Gordon, It's a place
without time.
He describes himself as a
sawed-off guy with a mustache,
who likes people but can't handle
the hassles. But as he works with
his art, his photographs, he senses
a mixture of strength and
gentleness. That certain kind of
"bionness".
He slips away to the area to keep
about pressures and to just let
nature wipe clean the slate.
"It's different than an escape.
Being here adds dimension, a
quality... depth. I go for the beauty
and the feeling of aloneness."
He talks with a certain respect,
if an awe, the seemingly untouchable serenity would remain.
"Life manipulates needs.
start losing touch with
There is something about
feeling of total aloneness
makes you see things for what
are," said Gordon.
Photographs of his 'place'
on the walls of his house; a
himself imprinted in each glass;
There is a recognizable sunset,
same grey-white gull; yet it is the
wet footprint in the sand, a trace
silhouetted against the surf that
show the irrepressible pleasure
e solitary playground.
I live in Morro Bay because it's
a retreat from the hassles in San
Luis," he said, "I guess you could
say that the beach is just a step
further than that. To remove myself
from all the pressures...com-
pletely."