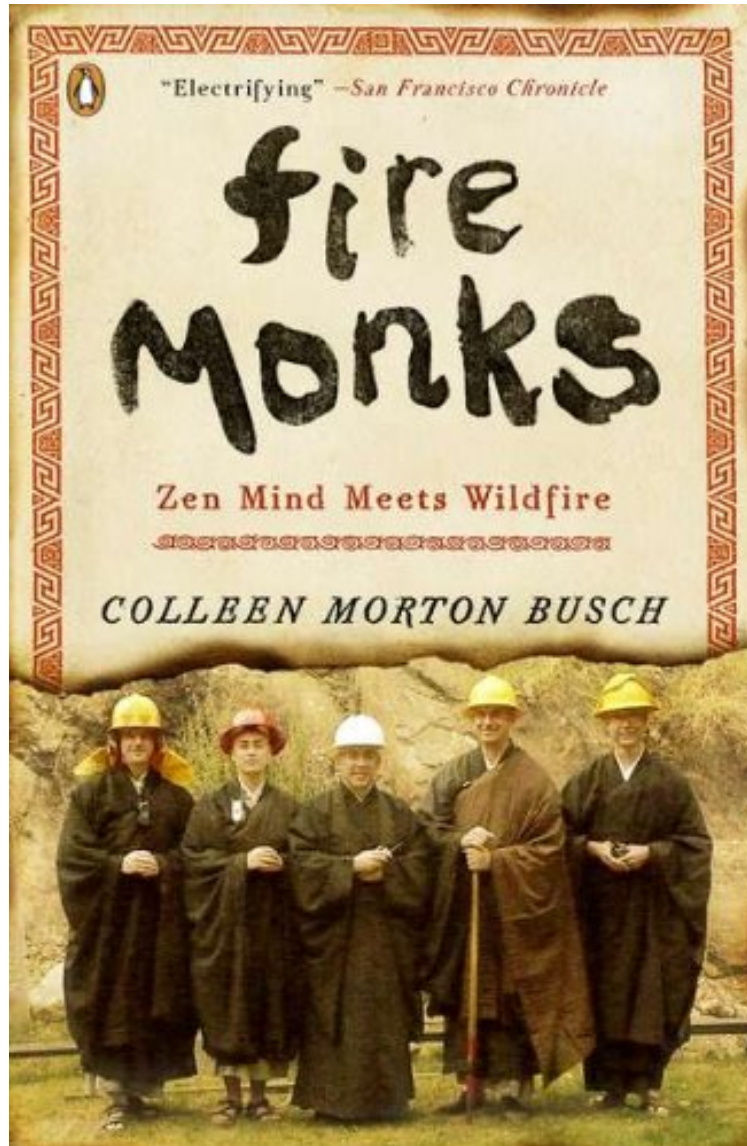


(Mobile ebook) Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire

Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire

Colleen Morton Busch

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Colleen Morton Busch : Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An honest and accurate book about life at Tassajara and the residents responding to a life threatening fire. By Silvia I lived at Tassajara back in 1971-73 for sixteen months when the monastic regimen was being established, so while it is different in some ways now, the basics are the same. Reading this book I could physically feel much of what was being described. The author does a good job of describing the

people and their various reactions to the crisis situation. I gave this book to two people who have never been to Tassajara and they enjoyed it also. I found it hard to put down and ended up reading much too late into the night! 10 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Broadly Good Study of Zen and Wildfires By Customer Fire Monks is a book about the California wild fires that swept through the state in 2008, and the defense of a Zen retreat called Tassajara by the small group of monks that remained behind even after they were ordered to leave by authorities. Tassajara is a retreat maintained by the San Francisco Zen Center, one of the oldest Zen Centers in the United States. Founded by Suzuki Roshi when he came over from Japan to teach, it is probably one of the most renowned as well. This particular retreat is located fairly deep within the Californian wilderness and is only accessible by a single road. The SFZC uses this center both as a retreat for intensive periods of zazen meditation and as a sort of summer resort for those who are wishing to learn about Zen and other various subjects. In the summer of 2008, this retreat found itself under threat by several of the numerous wildfires that threatened that area in what was the worst summer for forest fires on record. This book follows both several members of the SFZC in their attempt to save Tassajara as well as a handful of fire officials who were both for and against the attempt. It is to be noted that, in the end, the attempt to save Tassajara came without any official support - officials made it very clear early on that there would be no support and that they believed Tassajara should be abandoned. The author actually turns this into a study of Zen Buddhism, by looking at the teachings in the context of fighting the fire. In this, she is broadly successful. The book is a great example of not only how a Zen Buddhist approaches a situation like this wildfire, but it is also great at presenting how that approach differs from situation to situation and person to person. Ms. Busch does a fantastic job of presenting the different viewpoints of the students and monks, whether they chose to stay or not to stay. She does not present the monks who chose to finally accept the advice of Stuart Carlson to abandon the monastery as cowards. She approaches their reasons and, in many cases, their regrets with a very open mind, and attempts to present absolutely no conclusion beyond "they did what was best, by their way of mind, in the moment". She also does a good job of presenting the motivations and reactions of the five who did end up staying throughout the fire, and does a terrific job of making the danger they were in very clear. The book is weakest when it is attempting to analyze the actual response and motivations of the fire officials in their decision to not defend Tassajara. This seems to be the case for a variety of reasons, both that the book was not entirely about analyzing the policy decisions of officials and because she was, to a certain extent, stone-walled when she attempted to get those answers. I would recommend reading this book to anyone with an interest in how Zen plays out in practice, as well as for anyone curious about what it is like to be in the path of a massive forest fire. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Suspense, human interest, and an intro to zen and firefighting, all in one By ZZI resisted buying this book, because I already pretty much knew the story and how it turned out. And yet, I ended staying up half the night reading to the end, because the telling sucked me into wanting to follow the details of who and how. I had not expected to become so emotionally involved. This gracefully and generously written story of real events creates a character of the place itself (Tassajara Zen Mountain Resort, a remote and beloved sanctuary that was threatened by wildfire). The book also engaged my interest by providing background on the key actors in the drama of decision making and resolve under pressure, a drama in which everyone's roles and their different reactions are treated with compassionate respect and understanding. What most surprised and touched me was how the book made the straightforward story of meeting a wildfire also an object lesson on the benefits of zen practice, elucidating its central lessons through simple examples. It did this without ever being preachy or smug or evangelizing, but, instead, simply pointing to how ancient teachings could help recognizable people (not heroes on pedestals) act in ways that fulfilled the promise of their best selves. It was also interesting to see how controversies about wildfires and firefighting played out in a complicated application, where there was no one righteous way, but a humbling multiplicity of options and expert positions. This is a work that should appeal to a broad audience: an exciting and heart-warming good read that also is satisfyingly thought-provoking and inspirational, without being simplistic, manipulative, or agenda-driven.

A San Francisco Chronicle Best Book of the Year A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year In June 2008 more than two thousand wildfires, all started by a single lightning storm, blazed across the state of California. Tassajara, the oldest Zen Buddhist monastery in the United States, was at particular risk. Set deep in the Ventana wilderness north of Big Sur, the center is connected to the outside world by a single unpaved road. If fire entered the canyon, there would be no way out. Disaster struck during the summer months, when Tassajara opens its doors to visitors, and the grounds fill with guests expecting a restful respite. Instead, the mountain air filled with smoke, and monks broke from regular meditation to conduct fire drills. All visitors were evacuated, and many Zen students followed. A small crew of residents and firefighters remained, preparing to defend Tassajara. But nothing could have prepared them for what came next. When a treacherous shift in weather conditions brought danger nearer still, firefighters made the flash decision to completely evacuate the monastery. As the firefighters and remaining residents caravanned out the long road to Tassajara, five monks turned back, risking their lives to save the monastery. Fire Monks is their story. A gripping narrative as well as an insiders portrait of the Zen path, Fire Monks reveals what it means to meet an emergency with presence of mind. In tracking the four men and one woman who returned all novices in fire but experts

in readiness we witness them take their unique experiences facing the fires in their own lives and apply that wisdom to the crisis at hand. Relying on their Zen training, the monks accomplished the seemingly impossible greeting the fire not as an enemy to defeat, but as a friend to guide. *Fire Monks* pivots on the kind of moment some seek and some run from, when life and death hang in simultaneous view. Drawing on the strength of community, the practice of paying attention, and the power of an open, flexible mind, the Tassajara monks were able to remain in the moment and act with startling speed and clarity. In studying an event marked by great danger and uncertainty, *Fire Monks* reveals the bravery that lives within every heart.

A San Francisco Chronicle Best Book of the Year
A Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year
"Vivid prose as electrifying as any beach novel you're likely to find this summer." --San Francisco Chronicle
"This day-by-day account of the defense of Tassajara Zen Mountain Center against massive wildfires in summer 2008 brings a Buddhist twist to the age-old preoccupation of humans living with--and trying to control--fire." --Publisher's Weekly (STARRED REVIEW)
"An absorbing account of how two priesthoods -- professional wildland firefighters and Zen monastics -- confronted the fire's threat." --Los Angeles Times
"This book reads like a hair-raising adventure novel." --Shambhala Sun
Not only a gripping narrative of the 2008 wildfire events, but also how Zen allows people to meet such colossal crisis with a focused mind. --Seattle Post-Intelligencer
"Fire Monks demonstrates the clarity of thought and action that can spring from Zen practice." --Tricycle
About the Author
Colleen Morton Busch's nonfiction, poetry, and fiction have appeared in a wide range of publications, from literary magazines to the San Francisco Chronicle, Tricycle, and Yoga Journal, where she was a senior editor. A Zen student since 2000, Busch lives in Northern California with her husband and two cats.
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