

WHAT A

HUNGRY

HAWK

# Desert

AND

AN

INNOCENT

DOVE

CAN

TEACH US

ABOUT

SERENITY.

BY

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PHOTOGRAPHY

BY

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**The Tao is "The Way,"** the natural order of things and the natural "way" of life. The Tao just is... water flowing around a rock, a tree blowing in the breeze and even sometimes the apparent brutality of Nature. They are all part of the Way.

I keep close tabs on the nests of doves in my Asian garden at my home here in the desert. I have witnessed road-runner egg-eating nest invasions, where all of the other birds in the courtyard distract the velociraptor-ish, carnivorous roadrunners away from the other birds' beloved nests.

Even the different species of birds seem to bond together in this moment with the universal common interest of saving the little ones. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. This is the Tao... This is The Way.

When I am around, I try to do my own production number, if warranted, as I did when I followed one of the new young doves out of my garden and into the pathway leading to the carport. As I talked sweetly to the little dove (who was just learning to fly), wishing it a long and happy life, feeling so spiritually clear

and happy, knowing without a doubt that this was such a bonding human/dove moment that not even I in my "woo woo" clarity could have predicted the large audaciously bold hawk that swept down so quickly and right in front of my disbelieving eyes, snatched up that sweet little dovelet, carrying it off to the top of the carport to reset his grip. My curtain went up fast and my production number began with an aghast stop-frame pose, followed closely by a slow-motion jaw drop, a flinging of my bag and an hysterically wild screaming

running fit, concluding with a Shaq-like leap up to the carport roof, my fingers within inches of the long talons of the hawk and the still writhing little dove. This keen performance was all interwoven with some highly spiritual dialogue like, "You bastard, drop that little thing NOW!"

It was a much-appreciated production number, most likely viewed by many (bunnies, birds, lizards, mostly) but one that did not cause the hawk to lose his grip, or save the life of the dove. The hawk actually took a moment to look down at me from the carport roof in a semi-interested way but rather emotionless. "Nice try, buddy..." kind of way, and then off he went with his wriggling prey.

As I stood there breathlessly reflecting upon what

### Dr. Bill Edelen Adds These Notes

In Chinese medicine and philosophy, the Five Elements are represented in Wood, Metal, Earth, Fire and Water. The balance of Yin and Yang opposites, like the hawk and the dove, are apparent in the structure of the Five Elements. According to Michael Tse, author of *Qigong for Health and Vitality*, "Wood and Metal form a pair: Wood is soft, natural and gathering; Metal is hard, polished and separating. Fire and Water form another pair: Water is soft, cold and flowing; Fire is strong, hot and damaging. Earth is the center, connecting all the elements, but does not belong to any of them."

had just happened, I noticed there were two larger doves up above where the little dove had been snatched, and I knew instinctively through their agitation that they were the parents of that little dove. We had an interspecies compassionate moment of sadness, a feeling, a look, a loss, a reflection (I think I even told them I was very sorry) and then a strange quick resolve. The feeling was that the jour-

ney was over for that little dove, for now, and it is best not to linger in that moment, because it is done and the next moment is here.

Somehow I think the parents of the dove got the lesson more quickly than I did, and it was their child for God's sake. I, however, have to write about it, ponder it and find deep hidden meaning. The Truth is, the hawk didn't set out that morning and say,

"Hmmm... today I am going to ruin the lives of two bird parents by stealing their child and freak out a neurotic wellness expert in the process by making him watch." The hawk was hungry, he saw his prey and took it — simple as my going to Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonald's or Burger Doodle.

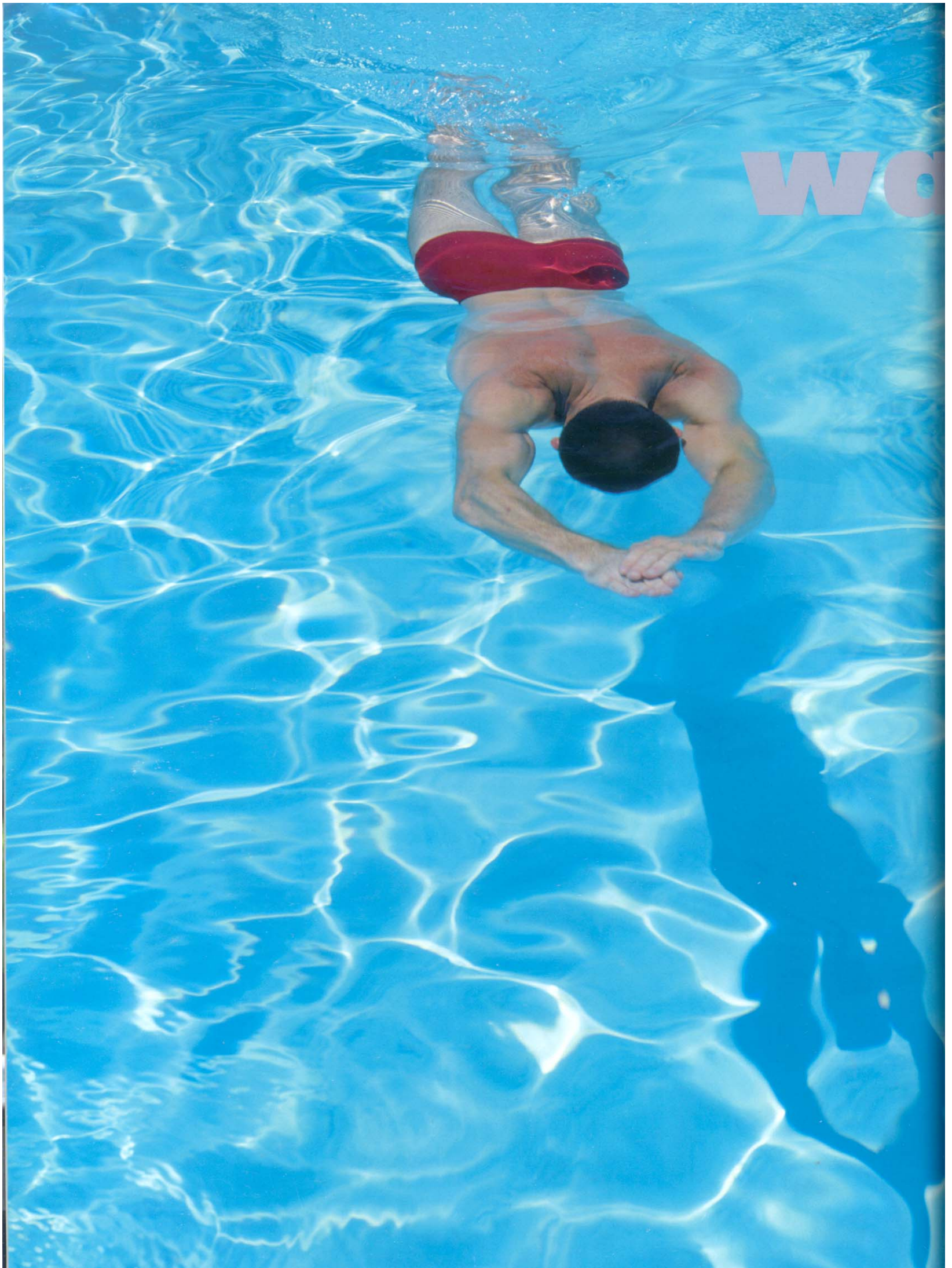
I do find it somewhat hilarious that my Irish-Cherokee-Texas Longhorn background has emerged into Taoist philosophy and an Asian garden in Palm Springs full of dove nests — but that, in essence, proves my Taoist point: It is fruitless to fight the current of your life, and so enlightening to go with it, to the often surprisingly wonderful places life has to take all of us — flowing down the stream of life and dealing with exactly what passes by us, embracing what feels right for us, instead of wishing and searching for another part of the stream that we are not yet a part of, or even really aware of.

My experience in meeting photographer Wayne Williams (who shot these beautiful images, and whose book, *America's Vanishing Landscape* has been compared to the works of Ansel Adams) was a Taoist adventure in and of itself. We met at the now defunct Nature's Express restaurant in Palm Springs and were two men standing near each other with so much in common in our stream of life — yoga, tai chi, art, videos — which we discovered through friendly conversation and by following up on that internal mutual nudging of "I really feel I need to talk to this person," and had we have not both been present, we would not have connected and would have stayed just two strangers.



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standing near each other, not connecting with our focuses on the past, the future or elsewhere. And this article would not be here.

The Tao works in mysterious ways, yet surprisingly easy ways when we follow the path of least resistance. Why not recognize and acknowledge the people around you who are in your life, swimming in the stream with you? Better or worse is all a state of mind, a perception. It is a beautiful

thing to be alive, to be drawn together and to have the human capacity to actually enjoy it, make sense of it, cry about or laugh about it — and as part of the stream, yield to the driving force and keep going to see what's ahead.

The hawk will show itself, many times, so will the dove and in the balance of yin and yang, following the Way of the Tao we must learn to deal with both, because the stream doesn't stop. Once one begins

to understand Taoist principles, embracing all of Nature (what Native Americans call "The Great Spirit") or at least embraces the fact that Spirit is multidimensional, inclusive and ultimately loving, one truly changes — life becomes more rich from time alone, or perhaps more alone from time that now feels so rich.

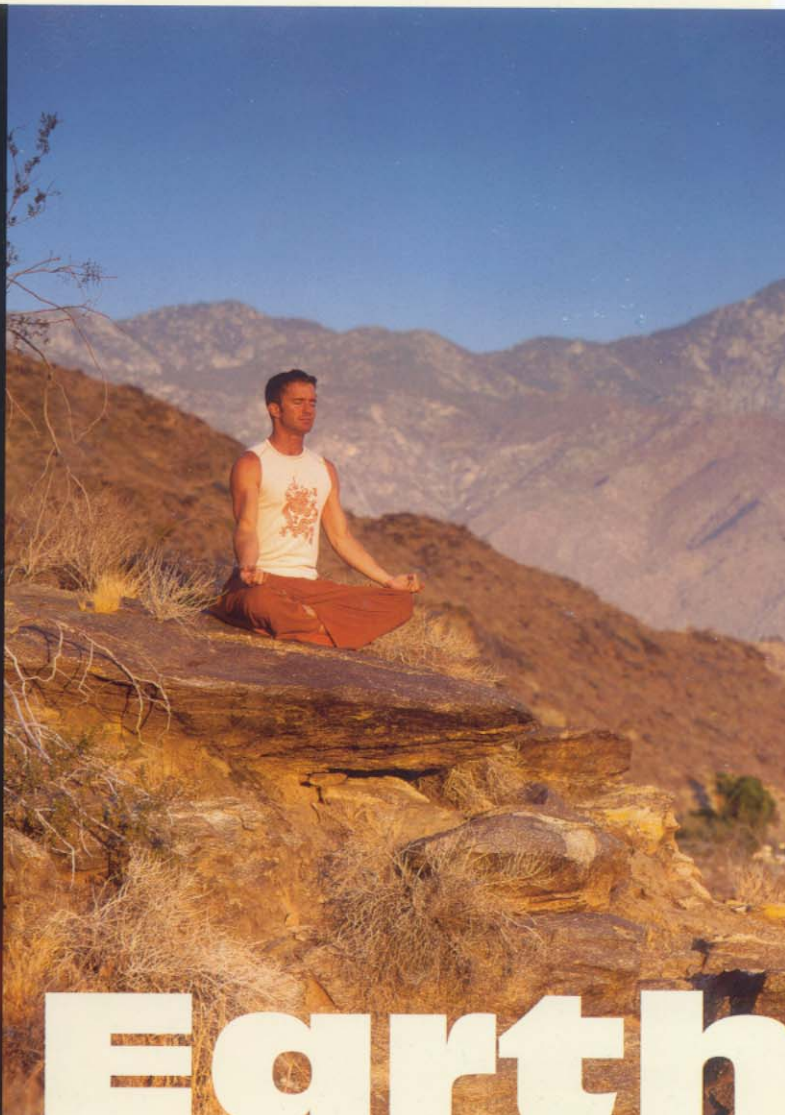
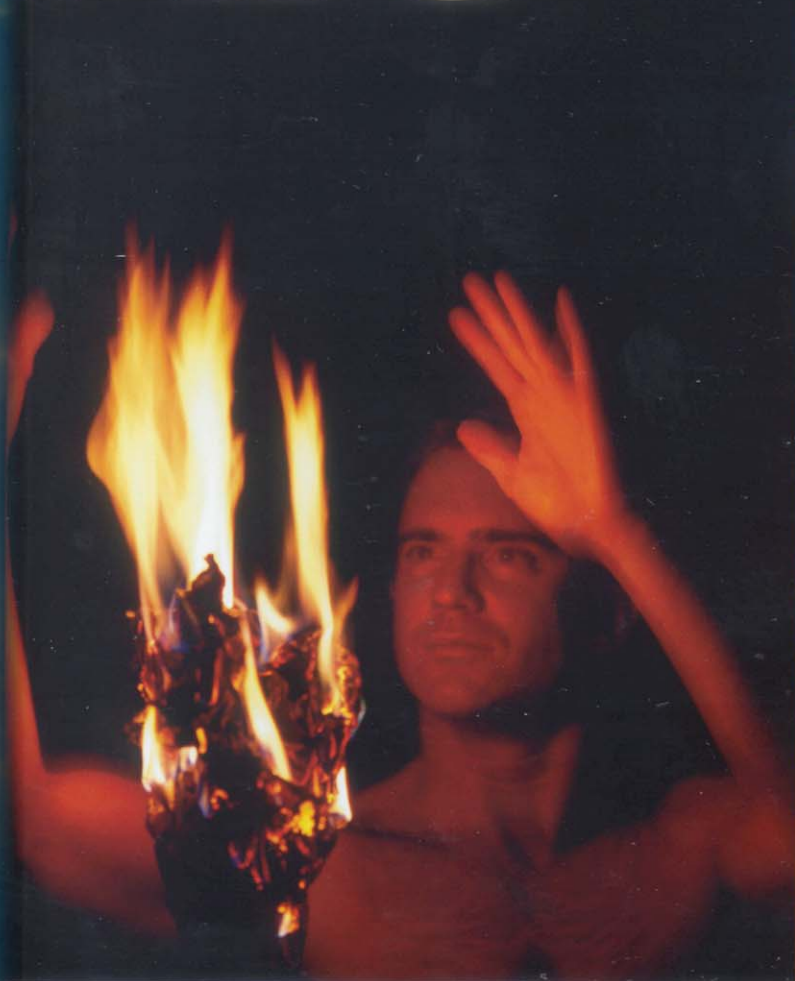
The spiritual masters all spoke of going out in Nature to quiet oneself, to observe, to be part of the Whole, to find

answers within. Our beautiful Coachella Valley is an undisputed place of great beauty, and so worthy of exploring. Wayne Williams and I shot in some of the desert's most inspiring locations to whet your appetite and engage your senses with physical, mental, spiritual and emotional images honoring the Five Elements of Fire, Water, Wood, Metal and Earth.

Enjoy your Tao, enjoy our desert.

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# Fire



# Earth