Interesting the two critical voices shared here: one is the “not intellectual enough, too soft, weird, flaky.” The other was too rigid, analytical. This is the get in touch with emotions, feelings, being. I feel at this stage I really have a nice balance of both intellect and heart, and the meditative “calmness” to explore both for the best wisdom they can give me. The “voices” have quieted and are more part of the “symphony.” I can also look at them with more “curiosity” and “amusement”—and even be the “Laguna eccentric with joy and playfulness. If I had advice now (69) for my younger self (32) it would be you’re doing just fine; trust yourself; those are the natural developmental struggles of that phase as you find your way in society (and yourself), your voice. All will be well©. And it was....
Talking about the two “sides of my mind” analysis, and “letting go”: And a lovely meditative experience:

Whether by nature or training, I am a curious, inquiring person. Until ten years ago, my main response to a new situation was, in general, to cope by intellectual means. More often than not that is still the case. Over the past ten years, through flute playing, meditation, poetry writing, and Sumi-e (brush stroke painting), I have worked on cultivating a style different from my rational, intellectual one: a more yielding, non-analytical, delicate mode. However, writing this book in general and the content analysis article in particular (Chapter Three) have made me confront some strong barriers I have to writing about my own meditation experiences. I feared that analyzing that new mode in the service of professional career could destroy the very thing I was trying to create.

Let me give an example. One morning while meditating on the beach at Laguna, I had a glowing, warm feeling which was, in many ways, overpowering. Images of friends, colleagues, loved ones and enemies came pouring forth. Each person’s face had a vivid detail to it. Further, each person’s face had a certain pose of delicacy and graciousness. Even when the face of a person whom I did not like appeared, it was in a friendly, kind posture, showing them in their best light. This posture was one which I had in fact seen them in at some point in our relationship. I saw and I experienced an essence of tenderness and gentleness in each person. I could feel and think no evil thoughts; they were transformed into a positive glow.

This is lovely experience. I hadn’t remember it. It’s morning thankfulness prayer now (plus forgiveness evening prayer, all in one! Grace. (Thank you!)
An example when I “let go of thoughts” with a Haiku:

Creative words
flow down stream
with the current.
Another issue for me relates to my own ego. Meditation traditions are quite clear about the importance of humbleness, honesty, purity and integrity, as important preparatory virtues for facilitating meditation practice. I strongly believe in these virtues and work toward attaining them. Several times during my meditation experiences, I have felt that “inner peace,” and, as Mickey Stunkard once jested about his own experience, I too felt, if they gave certificates for enlightenment, I was ready. But my daily existence is filled with ego-oriented events: first and second authorship; annoyance at seeing “my” meditation tape passed over for another’s, etc. During my “content-analysis” experiment, I was surprised and not a little disturbed at the number of ego-related competitive thoughts I had. So the vision remains tantalizing; sometimes reached and experienced but lost again; sometimes a self-acceptance, even with the imperfections of the struggle; often not. Again, the goal seems clear; the path difficult.

Breath soaring
a seagull’s meditation
yielding to the wind.
Wrestling with goal orientation and “shoulds”:

Another issue for me, and others with similar “goal-orientation,” is the problem of approaching meditation in a “Western way”—looking for the end product, rather than at the process. This has two ramifications. First, there are a lot of “shoulds” associated with reaching the goal, and doing so “perfectly.” For example, during the initial years of practice, I felt I “should” practice a certain length of time. If I did not, I felt I was failing not only myself but also “The Great Meditation Teacher in the Sky.” There is a discipline involved in learning to still one’s mind and body; however doing it with a compulsive “I had better succeed” attitude, and trying to compete, if only with myself for “longer times” was not helpful. Rather, as in the case study in Chapter Two, it was just another opportunity for me to be critical about myself. What do I do, for example, when I am trying to meditate for a half hour, and my two and four-year old children come home, rush in, and say “Hi, Daddy.” Of course the true Zen master makes them part of his meditation. Sometimes I could, but for me, formal meditation is an important time to clean out, to reduce inputs, and get away from stimulations. I wanted to “finish” and so I would brace as I heard them, try to breathe, hug them, and ask them to give me a few more minutes alone. Then I would continue with meditation, and try to learn to accept “guilty feelings.” How discrepant were my visions of whom I wanted to be with how I live each moment, leaving me to wonder if that gap would ever be closed.

Also, once having felt peak experiences, in which I was suffused with a lovely inner peace, I wanted them every time I meditated. Sometimes it would occur so easily. Other times I could try hard, I could try not trying, I could not try, but could not find the “entrance” into that special place. This still remains a frustration to me.
Sweet ending: positive assertive, positive yielding and xujing dongjing (in 2015 terms): peace indeed....;) 

So, the book ends, with respect for two traditions, humility at the size of the task and a recognition of the limitations of our humanness. The challenge remains: to struggle to push the limits of the self, personally, professionally, while remembering to temper the struggle with acceptance.

In peace.
DHS
December, 1979
Laguna Beach, CA.