



Prairie Wind



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Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple is a Soto Zen Buddhist temple established for Zen practice. The center follows the tradition established in Japan by Zen Master Eihei Dogen in the 13th century and transmitted in this century by two Masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, who assisted Rev. Suzuki in San Francisco and later founded Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Rev. Katagiri was instrumental in establishing Nebraska Zen Center in 1975.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW, is NZC's Head Priest. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. Rev. Chowaney is the founder of the Order of the Prairie Wind.

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple is NZC's sister temple. ZCP also follows the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition established by Zen Master Dogen..

Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW, is ZCP's Head Priest and a founding member of the Order of the Prairie Wind. She is the senior ordained student of Rev. Nonin Chowaney and has trained at Hokyoji Monastery in Minnesota, San Francisco Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm in California, and Zuioji and Shogoji monasteries in Japan. Rev. Roberts received Dharma Transmission from Rev. Chowaney and was authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. She was appointed to serve as ZCP's Head Priest in 2001

Prairie Wind (© 2011 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover: Buddha from Thailand

We always need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Spring** issue is **February 1st**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: www.prairiewindzen.org.

Nebraska Zen Center's e-mail address is: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.
Zen Center of Pittsburgh's e-mail address is: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org

KAN-FENG'S ONE ROAD

by Nonin Chowaney

"Kan-feng's One Road" is Case 48 in *The Gateless Barrier*, an ancient koan collection known in Chinese as the *Wu-Men Kuan* (Jap. *Mumonkan*). The koan reads:

A monk asked the priest Kan-feng, 'Baghavats in the ten directions, one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is.'

Kan-feng lifted up his staff, drew a line in the air, and said, 'Here it is.'

Later, a monk asked Yun-men about this. Yun-men held up his fan and said, 'This fan jumps up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and strikes the noses of the deity Shakradavendra. Give a carp of the Eastern Sea one blow and the rain comes down in torrents.'"

This is one of my favorite koans. In it, Kan-feng cuts to the essence of what Zen practice is all about. I'm going to comment on each line of this koan and also on the commentary and poem added to it by Wu-men, the Chinese master who compiled *The Gateless Barrier* and published it in 1229. But first, a few words about Kan-feng.

The Zen master Kan-feng was a disciple of Tung-shan Liang-chieh, whose name in Japanese reads as Tozan Ryokai. He was a seminal teacher in Soto

Zen. At Heartland Temple in Omaha, we chant his name every morning as part of our lineage. Another of Tung-shan's main disciples, along with Kan-feng and a few others, was T'sao-shan Pen-chi. His name is read in Japanese as Sozan Honjaku. If we take the "So" of Sozan and the "To" of Tozan we have the "Soto" of Soto Zen.

Since Kan-feng was Tung-shan's (Tozan's) disciple, he was a dharma brother of T'sao-shan's. He's not as well known as Tung-shan and T'sao-shan, but he was part of the formation of the Soto Zen practice style that has been passed all the way down to us. From this koan, we can see that he was a pretty sharp Zen master.

The koan begins, "A monk asked the priest Kan-feng, "Baghavats in the ten directions, one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is." "Baghavats" is one of the names for Buddha. It means "Lord" or "Honored One." "Ten directions" refers to the four cardinal directions, the four other ones in between them, and up and down, zenith and nadir. In other words, the "ten directions" refers to the whole universe, all of space. So, there are buddhas throughout the whole universe, but only one straight road to nirvana. Where is that road? What the monk is asking is, "What direction should I take in practice to manifest nir-

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Kan-feng's One Road

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vana?" "Which way should I go?"

The word *nirvana* is an important one in Buddhism. What it refers to can be hard to grasp. Literally, nirvana means "to blow out," as in a candle being blown out, or extinguished. In the mental state known as nirvana, what is extinguished are the "three poisons," greed, hatred, and delusion. When we extinguish all craving for what we don't have, hatred for what we do have (I prefer "aversion" instead of "hatred"), and all confusion about what and who we are, we extinguish the gap we have created between ourselves and others by discriminating consciousness and ego-involvement. We exist clearly and purely in the present moment with the mind at peace. This is nirvana.

Also, nirvana can be understood as the realization of perfect wisdom, *prajna paramita*, which manifests as existence as we are in this moment, without encumbrances, the greatest of which is the idea of a self. Once this idea arises – and it is only an idea – it manifests as greed, hatred, and delusion. In the earliest Buddhist texts, the Pali Canon, the teaching is that if you practice and practice and practice, you can eventually realize nirvana; it is presented as a goal we work hard to reach sometime in the future. In Mahayana teaching, especially in Zen teaching, nirvana is the practice itself. Perfect wisdom, which is the practice of nirvana, is manifested through the selfless practice of zazen in our daily lives.

In our koan, the monk asks Kan-feng, "one straight road to nirvana. I wonder where that road is." Kan-feng lifts his staff, draws a line in the air, and said, "Here it is!" This is the one straight road to nirvana. Right here. This is it. It doesn't lead somewhere else. The one straight road to nirvana begins and ends right here, right now, in this very place. In every moment, at any place, we have the opportunity to manifest the absolute truth of nirvana.

Kan-feng's manifestation of this is drawing a line in the air. The line is not pointing anywhere. The line means nothing. He could have drawn a circle in the air. He could have picked up his staff and hit the monk with it. He could have scratched his nose. He could have done any of these things. Walking the one straight road to nirvana means to enter into this moment as it is, openly, without encumbrances from previous moments, and responding in whatever way is required of us.

The road to nirvana is everywhere and goes nowhere but here. At any time and in any place, we can walk it; we have the opportunity to manifest out of the deep part of our life that is masked by delusion, by greed, and by aversion. That deep, open place is always right here, right now and is always available to us. What we have to do is just touch it and then manifest ourselves from it.

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Kan-feng's One Road

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Nirvana, then, is a state of mind where there's no gap between self and others. It's a state of mind that looks at ordinary people and sees buddhas. On the other hand, samsara, which literally means "journeying," and in Buddhist terms means journeying through various states of mind: hell realm, hungry ghost realm, fighting spirit realm, animal realm, god realm, human being realm. Journeying, or transmigrating through all these realms, is samsara.

Ordinary beings look at buddhas and see ordinary beings. Buddhas look at ordinary beings and see Buddhas. If we look at people and see ordinary beings, that state of mind is samsara. If we look at human beings, tree beings, automobile beings, and see buddhas, that is nirvana. The two are like opposite sides of a coin. True reality is the coin itself.

My master, Dainin Katagiri, used to say that you have to dig a well and keep digging and digging until water comes flowing up. This is our practice, the digging itself. He didn't mean that we practice and practice and practice and then all of the sudden something comes up. What he meant was that in the digging, water comes up. It happens here and now and is not the result

of digging. Every time we sit zazen, we dig the well all the way down. Each moment of our lives affords the opportunity to live in the deep place from where the water springs.

So the monk in our koan asks, "one straight road to nirvana. I wonder

where that road is." Or, how do I get on it? He is ultimately asking, "How do I free myself?" When I think of this question, I am reminded of what Seng Ts'an, the third Zen ancestor in China, said

when a monk asked, "Show me the way to liberation?" Seng Ts'an replied, "Who binds you?" The monk said, "No one binds me." Seng Ts'an responded, "Then why do you seek liberation?"

When we get locked into discriminating consciousness, also known as ego-consciousness, we create a gap, not only between ourselves and all other beings, but between ourselves as we think we are and ourselves as we truly are. To understand ego-consciousness, we have to understand how the awakened person, or buddha, views the functioning of consciousness.

In Buddhist psychology, ego-

*This valley rings
with the rattle of standing corn*

*Withered husks flay and hum
In the November wind*

Kanho Doug Dittman

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NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, February 4th at 10:00 a.m.** We will be replacing Board members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2012. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2011. **We encourage all who practice at Heartland Temple to attend this meeting. Lunch will be served afterwards.**

Winter Practice Period will begin with **February Sesshin** on the **11th and 12th** and will end with **April Sesshin** on the **21st and 22nd**. Practice Period is designed to provide structure for those who wish to **intensify their practice and their sangha connections for a specific period of time**. Practice Period students commit to intensifying their practice in three areas: (1) **daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), (2) **regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., on Sunday mornings and for work practice, and (3) **special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups and Precept Ceremonies. Students also commit to keeping a **daily practice journal** and to attending periodic **Practice Period Group Meetings**. Interested students should write up their **Practice Period Commitments** and turn them in to **Nonin** before **February 8th**. If this is your first Practice Period, **speak with Nonin** before turning in your commitments.

Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer was ordained a **Soto Zen Buddhist Priest** by **Nonin** this past July. Currently, She is participating in Fall Practice Period at **Shasta Abbey**, a Zen Buddhist monastery in Northern California. She will return to Heartland Temple in mid-December.

Many thanks to all those who've kept up with their temple jobs and also to those who helped with the fall yard clean-up. **Special thanks** go to those who've donated their skills toward building our new temple additions, especially **Kanho Doug Dittman** and **Sokei J.P. Loeffler** for roofing work, to **Jose Correa** for roofing and drywall work, to **Kanho Doug** for brick work and to **Mike Zagozda** for electrical work, not only on the new additions but also for hooking up the new furnace and air conditioning. **Deep thanks** also to **Pam Griffin** for her work in the gardens all Summer and to **Sozen George Patenode** for changing out screens and storm windows and to **Sokei J.P.** for helping. **Thanks also to anyone else helping around the temple that I might have inadvertently left out!**

Nonin visited and gave talks to classes at **Millard North High School** this past Fall, and he also spoke to groups visiting NZC from **Metro Community College**, **Omaha Central High School**, **University of Nebraska — Omaha**, **Nebraska Wesleyan College**, and **Creighton University**.

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this winter, a seven-day sesshin from Dec. 1-7, a two-day sesshin on Feb. 11-12, and a One-day sesshin on March 10th. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035** to register.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Winter. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 a.m. till noon** on February 25th and on March 3rd, 10th, and 17th. We will be studying manifestations of the dharma in contemporary poetry. The class is **free to members**. The fee for non-members is **\$15 per class**. For further info, call **402-551-9035** or e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org.

LAY INITIATION -RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

A **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** will be offered at Heartland Temple next March. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin**. He suggests the following for considering this step: making firm commitments to **sitting zazen**, to **practice with a teacher**, to **sangha**, and to **dharma study**. **Rakusu sewing** will begin on **February 5th**.

WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE — NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

Morning

Tuesday — Sunday

6:00 - 7:00 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as Needed)
7:00 - 7:30 — Service
7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning

Sunday Only

8:30 — Zazen Instruction
9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation
9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation
9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation
10:00 - 10:10 — Service
10:10 - 11:00 — Dharma Talk

Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as needed)

Thursday

6:00 - 8:30 — Classes as scheduled

Friday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as need-

We are closed on Monday.

If you are new to the temple, you must have zazen instruction before joining us. Please arrive by 8:30 on Sunday morning for instruction.

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

If you want to receive monthly schedule updates and last-minute changes to events, join our e-mail list. Go to <http://www.prairiewindzen.org/zcp/list.htm> and register. Or, e-mail ZCP at kyoki@prairiewindzen.org.

We've been busy going to high schools and colleges this Fall or hosting them here. Some of them are: **Freeport HS, Butler HS, Knoch HS, and Duquesne, Mt. Aloysius, and Waynesburg Universities.** We also led services for the **Interfaith Animal Blessings** and hosted the **Pittsburgh Interfaith Initiative** here at our temple.

Jisen continues with the **Council of Religious Affairs** and is leading a group at **Carnegie Mellon University.**

Many thanks to **Tadashi, Gia Cacalano, Jeff Berman, and Phat Mandee**, who presented a dance and poetry performance for us to raise money for the Japanese Disaster Relief.

In October, we had a baby naming ceremony for **Albena and Emil Iossifova's** daughter **Yoanna**. She received the Buddhist name of **Jihi**, meaning **Benevolence.**

Congratulations to our resident **Steven Coraor** for his lay initiation on November 22. He received the Buddhist name of **Zenshin, Complete Trust.**

And, if you haven't seen it yet, please check out Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple's **public television documentary**, which aired in November: <http://www.wqed.org/tv/horizons/index.php?id=301>

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website: www.prairiewindzen.org

ZCP WINTER EVENTS

DECEMBER

- 1-7 — Rohatsu sesshin*
- 8-9 — ZCP Closed
- 23-26 — ZCP Closed
- 31 — New Year's Eve Celebration, 6 p.m.
till midnight

JANUARY

- 1 — ZCP Closed
- 8 — See Website for schedule
- 12 — Precept Renewal Ceremony, 6 p.m.
- 19 — Katagiri-roshi's Birthday
- 26 — Zen Master Dogen's Birthday
- 27-29 — Two-day Sesshin*

FEBRUARY

- 5 — World Peace Ceremony
- 9 — Precept Renewal Ceremony, 6 p.m.

- 15 — Buddha's Parinirvana

MARCH

- 1 — Katagiri-roshi's Memorial Day
- 1-4 — Sesshin w/ Doshō Port*
- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 8 — Precept Renewal Ceremony, 6 p.m.
- 17 — Buddhist Studies Class
- 24 — Buddhist Studies Class
- 31 — Buddhist Studies Class

*Please register for this event

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Closed Mondays

- Tuesday — 7-7:40 a.m. DST
6-7:15 p.m. DST
- Wednesday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. DST & FMH
- Thursday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. DST
- Friday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. DST
- Saturday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
- Sunday — 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. DST

DST — Deep Spring Temple, Bell Acres
FMH — Friends Meeting House, Oakland

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

COMMUNITY CUSTODY

by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald

Recently, a White Lotus member went from maximum security to work detail. I couldn't wait to go see him. Not just because I like the guy, but because I enjoy talking to inmates who after a long incarceration go to community custody which has 2 levels, work detail and work release. In work detail the inmate receives a state job, but qualifies for passes and furloughs to go shopping, to a movie, a religious institution or to visit family. In work release the inmate finds a "real job" out in the community.

These inmates are really excited about their newfound freedom. Everything seems fresh and new. One inmate described a trip to Walmart in vivid detail recollecting the various aisles and their contents. "You wouldn't believe all the stuff they have!" he exclaimed. "They have rows of towels, lamps, sheets and a whole section of auto accessories. And the electronics," he said with amazement holding up his index finger an inch away from his thumb, "they have iPods this big." He was so present. Am I that present when I go to Walmart?

Another inmate excitedly told me about a pass to Godfathers Pizza. I used to have a routine with that pizza joint. Every Friday on the

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets on Friday evenings in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha. For further information, see **the Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org**, call **(402) 551-9035**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

way home from work I used to pick up a cheese pizza, my personal favorite, and go home to unwind after the work week. It was routine. I never recalled feeling gratitude.

Inmates in community custody always tell me about the lack of razor wire fences. They are awestruck and say things like I walked outside and could keep walking if I wanted! Look! I'm standing in the parking lot. There's no guard here! An inmate told me about being able to see the stars better since the lighting is for illumination not security. I thought to myself, what kind of lighting do they have at work? The grocery store? How often do I notice the lighting or do I just run in to do what I came to do? How often do I look up? When another man told me about the first time he drove himself to work, I expected him to say that he felt independent, in control, free. Instead he said that he felt like he was escaping. It felt strange for him to be driving on his own with no guards. In

NIRVANA

Various Views

The ideal that Buddhism teaches is called *Nibbana* (*Nirvana* in Sanskrit). This is absolute peace, the release from affliction, the ultimate liberation, the escape from the miseries of rebirth. While worldly joys are mutable and fleeting, *Nibbana* is firm, sorrowless, and secure. While worldly pains are piercing, unpredictable, and recurrent, *Nibbana* is altogether free from pain. It is the end of suffering, the vanishing of all greed, hatred, and delusion. It is the highest happiness, the incomparable emancipation.

Bhikku Nyanasobhano from *Landscapes of Wonder*

The meaning of the word *nibbana* is clearly defined as freedom from *dukkha* [suffering] and as freedom from the mental defilements, which are the causes of *dukkha*. At any moment that our minds are void of "I" and "mine," that is *nibbana*. For example, at this moment, as you sit reading, you probably have a mind void of the feelings of "I" and "mine," because there is nothing engendering those feelings. There are just the words you are reading for the sake of abandoning "I" and "mine." If there is some voidness (and I merely use the word "some," it's not completely or unchangeably void), then you are dwelling within the sphere of *nibbana*. Even though it is not absolute or perfect *nibbana*, it is *nibbana* just the same.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu From *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*

Nirvana is a state of mind leading to true spiritual perfection rather than a reward in the hereafter, as it has sometimes been described. This state of mind has perhaps best been described by Meister Eckart in the words, "And a man shall be free, and as pure as the day prior to his entry into his mother's womb, when he has nothing, wants nothing and knows nothing. Such a one has true spiritual poverty." This is when compassionate oneness has so transcended all thought of self that not even the oneness exists.

Roshi Jiyu Kennett from *Selling Water by the River*

The Monk's Room, Shu-ku Monastery

At a place deep
in green trees,
a lamp's light
burns long.

Spring pilgrims
make their way to the temple;
blossoms fall
at a monk's closed gate.

In the mind,
the ten thousand doctrines are still;
a clear lone spring
purls over rocks.

We so not ask
about our lives, our work,
and the silence between us
we keep.

Ch'I Chi trans Mike O'Connor

The Song of Zazen, by Zen Master Hakuin

*All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.
As with water and ice, there is no ice without water:
Apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas.
Not knowing how close the truth is,
We seek it far away*

—what a pity!

*We are like one who in the midst of water cries out desperately in thirst.
We are like the child of a rich man who wandered away among the poor.
We transmigrate through the Six Realms because we are lost in the darkness
of ignorance.
Going further and further astray in the darkness, how can we ever be free
from birth-and-death?*

*As for the Mahayana practice of zazen, there are no words to praise it fully.
The Six Paramitas, such as giving, maintaining the precepts, and various other
good deeds, like invoking the Buddha's name, repentance, and spiritual practice
all finally return to the practice of zazen.*

*Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all karma erased.
Nowhere will they find evil paths, and the Pure Land will not be far away.
If we listen even once with open heart to this truth, then praise it and gladly em-
brace it, how much more so then, if on reflecting within ourselves, we directly
realize Self-nature, giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no-nature.*

*We will have gone far beyond idle speculation.
The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is thereby opened, and not-two, not-
three, straight ahead runs the Way.*

*Realizing the form of no-form as form, whether going or returning we cannot be
any place else.
Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought, whether singing or dancing, we
are the voice of the dharma.*

*How vast and wide the unobstructed sky of samadhi!
How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the Fourfold Wisdom!
At this moment what more need we seek?
As the eternal tranquility of Truth reveals itself to us,
This very place is the Lotus Land of purity,
and this very body is the body of the Buddha.*

SANGHA MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER / ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

Membership

While no one needs to formally join either temple to share in our practices, we invite you to become a member of either Nebraska Zen Center or Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Members are people who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and who wish to express that feeling by joining a community of practitioners.

If you are interested in becoming a member, please speak with the appropriate person at either temple after Sunday services.

Financial Support

Buddhist communities have always relied on the generosity of their supporters. For income, we depend on those who believe in the good of what we do and wish to nourish it.

No one is refused temple membership due to an inability to pay. We do, however, encourage members to commit to our financial support through monthly pledges. We also encourage members to exhibit this support through participation in work projects.

The amount of your pledge is your personal decision. We ask you to support the temple at a level appropriate to your means. For those who participate regularly, we suggest a monthly pledge that reflects one hour of your earnings per week, or four hours per month. Because we are non-profit religious corporations, all donations are tax deductible.

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets in weekly on Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm at Branched Oak Farm, 17015 NW 70th St, Raymond, NE 68428-4041. For further information, e-mail or call Kanho Doug Dittman at doug@windstream.net (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Kan-feng's One Road

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consciousness, or *manas*, is the seventh of eight aspects of consciousness. The first six depend on the senses: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. These forms of consciousness arise when a sense organ comes in contact with a sense object. When the eye comes in contact with its object, a person, a car, or a tree arises. This arising is called "eye-consciousness." If no contact is made, consciousness does not arise. Eye-consciousness is sights arising. Ear-consciousness is sounds arising. Mind-consciousness, the sixth sense consciousness, is thoughts arising.

One of the best explanations of mind-consciousness I know occurs in the following koan: A monk asked a Zen master, "Does a newborn baby have sixth consciousness?" The teacher said, "Like a ball on fast-flowing water." The monk did not understand. Later, he approached another Zen master and asked him how he understood the first Zen master's answer. The second master's response was "Moment-by-moment uninterrupted flow."

A baby's manifestation of mind-consciousness is moment-by-moment, uninterrupted flow, thoughts arising and passing away. In the same way, the other five sense consciousnesses – sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and bodily sensations – also arise and pass away. This is non-clinging. As a baby grows, seventh consciousness, or ego-consciousness, develops more and more. It arises after sense conscious-

ness and manifests as the state of mind that forms judgments about say, a person perceived through the eye organ. That person may be a male we do not know. A negative feeling may arise depending on previous encounters we've had with other males. A judgment may be formed: "Men are no good." This is the function of ego-consciousness, and it can lead us to see the person not as he is but as the person we think he is. A baby's consciousness is moment-by-moment flow. That's pure sixth consciousness. Things come up, things go. Adult sixth consciousness is moment-by-moment flow interrupted by ego-consciousness clinging to what comes up!

We can become intimate with this process through Zazen. If your sitting is anything like mine, then the flow is frequently interrupted by ego-consciousness. Instead of "like a ball on fast-flowing water," the ball is constantly getting hung-up on rocks and branches. When this happens, what I do – and instruct others to do – is let it go, and return to breath. Zazen is a process of letting go of all thoughts, ideas, and opinions and bringing the mind back home to here and now. Then, we can really live – unimpeded, free.

The last of the eight aspects of consciousness is Storehouse Consciousness, *alaya vijnana*. Storehouse consciousness is a repository of all our experiences, and it is from there that thoughts arise and flow. In other words all our experience, and because there are really no gaps between human be-

Kan-feng's One Road

from previous page

ings, all human experience, is available to us, right here, right now in this moment. What arises as sixth, or mind, consciousness arises from the huge, vast storehouse of our experience known as storehouse consciousness, which is always available to us.

This is what generates mind-consciousness (thoughts arising, thoughts passing away). Mind as organ comes in contact with its object, and thoughts arise. That's all. There's nothing underneath this. Mind does not exist as a separate entity, and mind objects also do not exist as separate entities operating independently of this process. What we call "mind" is a functioning, not an entity.

Also, there is nothing behind this process – no person, no "I." We may *think* there is, but in reality, there is not. What we call "I" is just an idea, and its creation – or, the arising of ego-consciousness – is what keeps us from experiencing the vast openness of being known as absolute reality, sometimes referred to as "suchness," or, things as they are. The way to nirvana, the state of mind that allows us to experience things as they are is dropping off everything and entering the here and now free and clear. As Kan-feng says, the road to nirvana is right here.

Our practice is to keep ego-consciousness in its rightful place, which is as a mediator between storehouse-consciousness and mind-consciousness. In other words, when things come up; allow them to come up,

Meditation Workshop at Nebraska Zen Center

A **three-hour workshop** in Zen Meditation for the beginner, including instruction in **sitting and walking meditation that harmonizes body, mind, and breath.**

Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple, at 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on **Saturday, March 24th, from 10:00 a.m. till 1:00 p.m.**

For further info or to register, either e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call 402-551-9035.

Community Custody

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situations like these it's easy to see how people act from their conditioning even if they may not want to. How am I acting from my conditioning?

The visit to the new guy in community custody was no exception. He was very present, totally aware of things most of us take for granted, expressing gratitude at every turn and trying not to act from his conditioning. What a joy.

Zenryu Vicki Grunwald is a senior member of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple. She serves the White Lotus Sangha as a Lay Clergy Person.

CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at www.prairiewindzen.org. Click on **Nebraska Zen Center** and go to Nonin's calligraphy pages.

There are **over fifty items for sale**, one and two-character pieces, longer phrases, and specialty items. All are **signed and stamped originals** and are written on high-quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper, Rives BFK, or archival matboard.

Nonin also accepts **commissions** to write temple names, individual dharma names, and specific characters or Zen phrases. **For further information**, contact him directly at the following e-mail address: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.

We sell and ship the calligraphy unframed. **Each piece can be mounted and framed by a good framer using traditional methods.**

All profits from website calligraphy sales go directly to Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.

Kan-feng's One Road

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and then allow them to leave. When ego-consciousness gets overly involved, we pick and choose what we want to hold on to as the object of consciousness and what we don't want to hold on to. We also create the "I," which fundamentally doesn't exist. We create this "I" based on ego-consciousness, and we say "my" thoughts, "my" views, "my" ideas, or "my" opinions. This is the great human disease, not keeping this unruly beast, ego, where it's supposed to be as a healthy mediator between thoughts. As human beings, we can't help but discriminate. Katagiri-roshi used to say that we all love ourselves best, and we should. Survival is the most important thing for all beings. Healthy ego definition is something we have to have for a healthy human life. For people who don't, life is very difficult. Before you can practice Zen and begin to strip away ego-involvement, you have to have a solid ego to begin with. Most of us, however, don't have to worry about this issue. We all have very healthy egos; usually, far too healthy! What we need to do is keep the ego under wraps. See it for what it is. See that when it creates itself, that "me," it's creating a fiction. Then, drop it.

When we manifest from perfect wisdom, we realize that there is no "I," no self. What we call a self is merely a constantly changing collection of conditioned elements that ego-consciousness fashions into a fixed entity moment by moment. When we realize this and drop it, there's no gap, no separation.

This is nirvana. This is what happened to the great Michael Jordan when he played basketball. All of a sudden, he couldn't miss the basket. His tongue hung out, and he got a focused look on his face. His teammates fed him the ball, and it ended up in the basket. Athletes call this phenomenon, "being in the zone."

Another example of this was the famous ballerina, Maya Plisetskaya. Some years ago, Katagiri-roshi and I saw a film about her on TV. She was teaching a master class, and every movement she made was exquisite, whether she was walking, talking, or dancing. Katagiri-roshi remarked that, "Her whole body is dance. She has made her whole body into movement, into dance." When she pointed, it was dance. When she mopped her brow, it was dance. When she talked to her students, it was dance. The title of the film was *Plisetskaya Dances*. But this title implies a gap. There was no gap. She had become "dance." She had completely erased herself.

"Kan-feng lifted up his staff, drew a line in the air, and said, 'Here it is!'" Right here. This is where we live; this is where we manifest nirvana. We are living absolute truth every moment, but we don't realize it. We think that we have to do something different, be someone different, but we don't. We think we have to go somewhere else, but we don't. We have to go anywhere. All we need to do is accord with our life as it is, accept it, and just be

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Kan-feng's One Road

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there, wanting nothing. That is nirvana, and it manifests right here, right now. All we have to do is realize it. I practice calligraphy, and one of my favorite sayings to write is "One path, myriad gates." There is only one path, but we can enter it through myriad gates, through any human activity, whether it's the activity of college administrator, public health nurse, lawyer, cook, or Buddhist priest.

After Kan-feng said, "here it is," the koan turns to another famous Zen master's response: "Later a monk asked Yun-men about this. When asked about Kan-feng's One Road, 'Yun-men held up his fan and said, 'This fan jumps up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and strikes the nose of the deity Shakra-davendra.'" Shakra-davendra is an old Hindu deity. Yun-men is saying that this fan can jump anywhere. The whole universe is right here. He gives the same answer as Kan-feng: Heaven, hell, past, present, future, all right here. This is the place. All heavens; all hells; right here.

Yun-men continues: "Give a carp in the Eastern Sea one blow and the rain comes down in torrents." He is referring to an old Chinese folktale. What it means is that when it rains, it rains. When you strike that magic carp, the rain comes down. In other words, when you call, the universe responds. All we can do in our life is respond to these calls of the universe, which is our life.

Whenever I read this line, I think about my entry into the monastery in Japan.

When teaching us how to follow the daily schedule, the novice master repeated an old Zen saying: "When the bell sounds it's the buddha hall; when the *han* (wood block) sounds it's the zendo." In other words, when the bell rings, you go there; when the wooden block sounds, you go there. When the clappers are struck, you go there. That's all. Monastic life is very simple. When the universe calls, respond. Zen monks are trained to leave their personal agendas aside and respond to the calls as they come up. When the phone rings, answer it. On Sunday morning, people gather to hear a dharma talk. So, I talk. That's it.

However, when we sit zazen, we think, "Gee, my legs are hurting and I'd like to get up from here. I wonder what I can do later, maybe go have a nice cup of coffee and a piece of cake. When I get out of here, that's what I'll do," and we continue to fantasize. Where, then, are we living? Our attitude is, "This is not enough; I have to do that, or, I'm tired of this; I should do that." Meanwhile, life is blooming moment by moment, and we miss it.

As many people are these days, a friend of mine is troubled by depression. She went to a treatment center to try to get a better handle on it. Last week, I sent her a card. It had a few lines on it from a poem by Thich Nhat Hanh, the Vietnamese Zen master. The lines read: "The real miracle is not to walk on water or to float in air,

TEMPLE ADDITIONS



Back — Zendo addition at right



Front — additions at right



Zendo Addition



Back — Bathrooms, foyer, & garage at left



Front — Bathrooms, foyer, & garage



Garage

Kan-feng's One Road

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but to walk on the earth." That's the real miracle in our lives. The miracle of life, the wonder of life, is just to be able to stand up and walk. Do you realize what that takes – in this wonderful machine, this human body – to coordinate it all so that we can just walk. It's a miracle. What greater miracle do we need?

Every day in our lives, there are miracles everywhere. Have you ever really looked at a rose, watched it bud and then flower? What more do we need? What more do we need than to be here with each other? What more do we need than to sit down, have a cup of coffee, and quietly look out the window? It's a miracle to be able to do that. Life is moment-by-moment wonder. That's the miracle of human existence. Anything is possible, and the miracles unfold moment-by-moment.

Wu-men's commentary on "Kang Feng's One Road" is:

"One goes deep, deep, to the bottom of the sea and winnows mud and pumps up the sand. The other goes high, high, to the top of the mountain and raises foaming waves that spread over the entire sky. They are like two children running from different directions who

collide with each other. In this world there is almost no one who can touch the True Essence. In the view of the True Eye even these two ancient worthies do not know the road."

The one who goes, "deep, deep to the bottom of the sea and winnows the mud and puffs up the sand" is Kan-

ROBERT AITKEN INSCRIBES MY COPY OF THE PRACTICE OF PERFECTION

Of him

A shyness or withdrawal in

As we spoke quietly that afternoon

And who or what these Japanese I asked

Faint smile turning away he said

Philip it's all there in the book

— Philip Boatright

feng. He goes deep, right into this moment and mucks around freely there. The one who "goes high, high to the top of the mountains and raises foaming waves that spread over the entire sky" is Yun-men, flying high, up to the heavens, right here, in this moment. We can go up to heaven or down to hell at any moment. If I say something you don't like and anger comes up, you're in hell. If I say something you like and satisfaction arises, you're in heaven. You can go to either place in an instant.

Kan-feng's One Road

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Wu-men's commentary continues: "Maintaining, releasing, each using but one hand. They safeguard the vehicle of the Tao. They're like two children running from opposite directions and colliding with each other." I really like this image. The two Zen masters like two kids. One comes from the way of the present moment, right here, to the depths of here-it-is. One comes from the manifestation of emptiness in this particular moment. So they each come from different directions, both on the path, and then boom, they collide and fall over. In his commentary to this koan, the American Zen Master Robert Aitken said that they probably get up laughing. Ha, ha, here we come – boom! Ah, isn't that fun?

Wu-men ends his commentary with, "In this world there's almost no one who can touch the true essence. In the view of the True Eye even these two ancient worthies do not know the road." I would say that even Buddha does not know the road because there is no road. These two teachers don't know the road because every moment in their lives they have to get on the path that's under their feet, as do we. The path we walked a moment ago doesn't exist. The path we'll walk a moment from now doesn't exist. What do we do right now? The insights we've had don't matter. All our experiences don't matter. Nothing matters but what we do now and how we live now. Where are you? I'm right here. Hello!

The Zen master Tao-shun addressed this fundamental issue periodically through the day by stopping what he was doing and saying, "Tao-shun, where are you?"

Then, he would answer, "Here I am. Right here." A while later, he'd ask, "Tao-shun, where are you?" He'd answer, "Here I am. Right here." That was his teaching.

Another Zen master would appear at the front door of the zendo when it was time to eat, pick up a bowl of rice, and say "Come on, bodhisattvas," as he laughed and dancing around, "let's eat our rice." That was his teaching.

The two masters in our koan, Kan-feng and Yun-men "do not know the road," because it's not fixed. It's changing all the time. Moment by moment we have to present ourselves on it, ready for whatever comes up. That's all we can do, just present ourselves, that's all. If we can do it with a sense of humor, it helps, and it doesn't matter what we did the other day. It doesn't matter what we did five minutes ago. All the nasty things we've done in our lives don't matter. What matters is what we are doing right now and how we're doing it.

When he compiled *The Gateless Barrier*, Wu-men not only commented on each case but also added a poem to each. His poem for Kan-feng's one road is:

Before you take a step, you are already there;
Before your tongue has moved, your *teisho* is finished.
Though your every move is ahead of the last,
Remember the vast all-encompassing crater.

Kan-feng's One Road

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"Before you take a step you are already there. Before your tongue has moved your *teisho* [formal dharma talk] is finished. Before I open my mouth it's all over. What and how I am is the dharma talk, not what I say. As soon as we open our mouths, we've fallen into the crater, because language is dualistic. Language creates a gap. It can only point to things. So the true dharma talk, the *teisho*, is finished before it's begun.

Wu-men's poem ends, "Though your every moment is ahead of the last, remember the vast, all-encompassing crater." Though every moment comes ahead of the last, no matter what we do, no matter what milestones we have in our life – graduation, awards, insights, ordinations – underlying all of this is emptiness; nothing is permanent, nothing is fixed, and nothing exists from its own side moment by moment. People, birds, trees, windows, books, and bells are constantly changing. Nothing remains the same from moment to moment. What we think we are doesn't exist. If we believe it, we're believing a fiction. What we are is created moment by moment, so just let go and create. That's it. Just let go and be what you are. That's all we can be.

Another koan in *The Gateless Barrier* is very similar to "Kan-feng's One Road." It's Case 31, "Chao Chou Investigates the Old Woman. In it, A monk asks an old woman, "What is the way to Mount Tai?" The old woman responds, "Go straight ahead." But when the monk takes a few steps down the road, the old woman says, "A good respectable monk but he, too,

goes off like that."

Mount Tai is the ancient mountain in China supposed to be the abode of Manjusri, the embodiment of perfect wisdom. When the monk asks the old woman, "What is the way to Mount Tai?" He is asking for directions to this mountain. However, the old woman gives the answer to the question "What is the way to Perfect Wisdom?" Her answer, "Go straight ahead" is the same as Kan-feng's "Here it is!" The monk, however, misses the point. He walks off towards Mount Tai. The old woman laments his mistake. There he goes, looking for wisdom over there. Too bad.

Nonin Chowaney is the Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.



NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER 2012 PRACTICE SCHEDULE

Jan 1-15	NZC Closed	Jul 1	World Peace Ceremony
19	Dainin Katagiri's Birthday*		Group Discussion
26	Zen Master Dogen's Birthday*	4	Precepts Ceremony
Feb 5	World Peace Ceremony	20	Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day*
	Group Discussion	Aug 1	Precepts Ceremony
	Rakusu Sewing Begins	5	World Peace Ceremony
8	Precepts Ceremony		Group Discussion
11-12	Two-day Sesshin	Sep 2	World Peace Ceremony
15	Buddha's Parinirvana*		Group Discussion
Mar 1	Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day*	15-16	Two-day Sesshin
4	World Peace Ceremony		Fall Practice Period Begins
	Group Discussion	26	Precepts Ceremony
	Precepts Ceremony	29	Zen Master Dogen's Parinirvana*
7		Oct 7	World Peace Ceremony
10	One-day Sesshin		Group Discussion
13-18	Lay Initiation Week	13	One-day Sesshin
18	Lay Initiation	18	Bodhidharma Day
Apr 1	World Peace Ceremony	24	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion	Nov 4	World Peace Ceremony
	Precepts Ceremony		Group Discussion
8	Buddha's Birthday*	28	Precepts Ceremony
21-22	Two-day Sesshin	Dec. 1-7	Rohatsu Sesshin
	Practice Period Ends	8	Buddha's Enlightenment Day*
May 6	Remembrance Day	26	Precepts Ceremony
9	Precepts Ceremony		
Jun 3	World Peace Ceremony		
	Group Discussion		
	Precepts Ceremony		
6			
23-24	Two-Day Sesshin		

*Special services commemorating these days will be held before dharma talk on the Sunday nearest the date indicated.
Precepts Ceremony follows evening zazen.
World Peace Ceremony precedes monthly Group Discussion

New Year's Eve at Nebraska Zen Center

All are welcome to join us for New Year's Eve services at **Nebraska Zen Center**. We'll begin at **6:00 p.m.** with a **Pot-luck Dinner**, followed by **Services at 8:00**. We'll then **sit zazen from 9:00 till midnight**, with walking meditation when needed. During sitting, we'll **ring the temple bell 108 times** to mark the turning of the year.

You may attend during any part of the evening. **Come when you like and leave when you wish.**