



Prairie Wind

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QUIET DAILY PRACTICE WITH OTHERS

by Nonin Chowaney

The other day, a copy of *Wind Bell*, San Francisco Zen Center's magazine, came in the mail. It told of recent events, well-known teachers who've come to visit, and workshops and retreats scheduled for the future. SFZC is a big place; it includes three practice places: Page Street Center, Green Gulch Farm, and Tassajara Monastery, so there's always a lot going on.

While leafing through the magazine, I got a little nostalgic, for I practiced in San Francisco and at Tassajara in the mid-1980's, before I went to Japan. It was a very exciting time. Tenshin Anderson was installed as abbot during my stay at SFZC, and everyone was excited over the new beginning. Also, many Zen Buddhist teachers came through Tassajara and gave talks during my two-and-a-half years there: Kobun Chino, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Taizan Maezumi were some of them. Also many scholars, such as Thomas Cleary, Carl Bielefeld, and Anne Klein came for a few days and gave lectures and led study seminars. California was a hotbed of Zen Buddhist activity in America at that time, and I was fortunate to be able to participate in it.



Harmony — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

When there are a lot of people around, it's easier to carry on a daily zazen practice, whether you are in a monastery or connected with a small temple. This is why sangha is so important. Spiritual practice can be difficult no matter where you are, but the support of others helps you along and can carry you over the rough spots. Sangha also provides the opportunity for us to experience the devotional side of practice, such as the chanting and bowing services characteristic of Soto Zen Buddhism.

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PHOTOS FROM PRACTICE PERIOD AT DEEP SPRING



Dharma Study Class with Nonin



Sammy (with ball) and Buddy



Monk's Day Out at Linn Run State Park — Kanho Doug Dittman, Eisai Elizabeth Muia, and Jisen Coghlan



Jisen, Kyoki, Kanho Doug, Nonin, Eisai Elizabeth, Ryushin John Ott, and Taikan Doug Gouge at Linn Run



Kyoki and Taikan Doug at the Grill



Hoetsu Leslie Hospodar, Eisai Elizabeth, and Jisen

THE WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF THE REAL TRUTH

by Dainin Katagiri

Contradictions

A. If we zero-in on the real truth and express it with body, mouth, and mind, nothing hits the mark. How do we know it?

“He rouses waves where there is no mind. Still he wants people to know. He casts off a boat that’s sunk on solid ground.”

B. If the real truth is not expounded with body, mouth, and mind, it is impossible for us to understand it. How do we know it?

“Without passing a test, how could he discern the truth?”

Symmetry

C. The real truth is something real that is constantly demonstrated or manifested beyond whether it is expounded with body, mouth, and mind or not, beyond whether or not is conceptualized or experienced. This means that the real truth has no form, no color, no smell, no taste of its own. This is “emptiness.”

Asymmetry

A and B apply to our usual world, where we live. C is the source of the world that is realized with the eye of insight. Accordingly, A and B cannot be separated from C. We cannot ignore our lives interconnected with these three. How do we live?

In other words, A and B cannot exist without C, which cannot exist without A and B.

Symmetry in Asymmetry

We believe that we usually live in A and B only, not in C, because C is so tremendously deep and genuine that we don’t feel familiar with it, even though is very close to A and B. Actually, there is no separation at all. Separation is what is called “prejudice created by attachment.” Attachment is fabricated by a wrong view, or inverted view. This wrong view originates from ignorance, considered as the original nature of consciousness.

Practically speaking, we have to manage to live in A, B, and C simultaneously. There is attachment, more or less, as long as we live in A and B. Therefore, with our best effort, we have to learn to free ourselves from this attachment as soon as possible. This is expressed by Zen Master Dogen’s teaching of “returning home with empty hands,” or by “*gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi svaha.*”*

We must practice C, emptiness, while living in A and B.

Dainin Katagiri (1928-1990) was a Japanese Soto Zen Master and the abbot of Minnesota Zen Center and Hokyoji Zen Monastery. He was Nonin Chowaney’s teacher. (Nonin is the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple)

* The last line of the Heart Sutra

Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Ryoshin Joe Marshall	President
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Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW Abbot



Nebraska Zen Center 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, an American Zen Master, is NZC’s Head Priest and Teacher. 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 certified to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD will begin with a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 9th and 10th**. Practice Period is designed to **provide structure for people who wish to intensify their practice and their sangha connections in three areas for a specific period of time**. Those three areas are: (1) **daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), (2) **regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., specific morning or evening sittings, Sunday morning practice, or work practice), and (3) **attendance at special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, or precept ceremonies). Practice Period students will also keep a **daily practice journal** and will **meet with Nonin as a group** two or three times during the period, which will end with **Rohatsu Sesshin** (Dec. 1-7).

Sangha member **Fran Anania** and **Aaron Quinn** were married May 27th at First Unitarian Church in a joint Buddhist / Catholic ceremony officiated by **Nonin** and **Fr. Bert Thelen**. Fran and Aaron have moved to Vermont, where Aaron will pursue a graduate degree in Environmental Studies at the University of Vermont. **Congratulations and best wishes to you both!**



Nonin, Eisai Elizabeth Muia, and Kanho Doug Dittman participated in the entire **June Practice Period** with our sister sangha at Deep Spring Temple near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. **Chuko Jean Bailey** also attended for part of Practice Period.

This past July, **Eisai Elizabeth** was a Counselor at Ann Arbor Zen Buddhist Temple's annual **Peace Camp** at Friend's Lake near Chelsea, Michigan. Over one hundred children and adults attended the weeklong camp. **Eisai Elizabeth** also visited **Millard South High School** to speak to a World Religions class last May.

Zenryu Vicki Grunwald attended the annual seven-day **Great Sky Sesshin** at Hokyōji Zen Monastery in Minnesota this past August. The sesshin was led by five Soto Zen teachers from across the Midwest.

In July, **Nonin** attended the annual **American Zen Teachers Association** meeting at a Tibetan Buddhist Retreat Center in the Texas Hill Country. The event was co-hosted by Austin Zen Center, Houston Zen Center, and Maria Kannon Zen Center of Dallas. **Nonin** also plans to attend the **Soto Zen Buddhist Association** meeting at Zen Mountain Monastery in New York this coming September. Last May, **Nonin** addressed a **Religious Diversity Issues Conference** for High School teachers at the Jewish Community Center in Omaha and hosted World Religion Classes from **Bellevue West High School** here at the temple

Many thanks to **Nonin, Kanho Doug Dittman, Eisai Elizabeth Muia, Zenryu Vicki Grunwald, and Seishin Larry Pelter** for visiting our **White Lotus Sangha** groups at three prisons in Nebraska.

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Fall, a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 9th & 10th**, a **One-day Sitting** on **October 21st**, and **Rohatsu Sesshin**, from **December 1st through 7th**. Fees; \$30 per day for members; \$40 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035** to register.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Fall. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 a.m. till noon**, on **October 14th, 21st, 28th, and November 4th**.

The class will focus on **Zen Buddhism in European and Middle Eastern Poetry** and will examine the dharma in poems by Rilke, Machado, Mirabai, Kabir, Rumi, and others. The class is **free to members**. The fee for **non-members** is **\$15 per class**. For further information, e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035**

OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 3	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
6	Precept Ceremony
23	Sesshin at Tecumseh Prison
Oct 1	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
4	Precept Ceremony
Nov 5	World Peace Ceremony
8	Group Discussion
18	Intro to Zen Meditation Workshop

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 3 - World Peace Ceremony
- 5 - Precept Ceremony*
Buddhist Studies Class
- 12 - Buddhist Studies Class
- 15-17 - Communication Workshop**
- 19 - Buddhist Studies Class
- 21 - Intro to Zen**
- 26 - Buddhist Studies Class

OCTOBER

- 1 - World Peace Ceremony
- 3 - Precepts Ceremony*
Buddhist Studies Class
- 12 - Intro to Zen**
- 13-15 - Two-day Sesshin**
- 17 - Buddhist Studies Class
- 24 - Buddhist Studies Class
- 31 - Buddhist Studies Class

NOVEMBER

- 2 - Intro to Zen**
- 5 - World Peace Ceremony
- 7 - Precepts Ceremony*
Buddhist Studies Class
- 18 - Beginners' One-day Sitting**
- 22-24 - ZCP closed

*After evening zazen

**Please register for this event

If you want to receive monthly schedule updates and last-minute changes to events, join our e-mail list by going to <http://www.prairiewindzen.org/zcp/list.htm> and registering, or send an e-mail to Zen Center of Pittsburgh at: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org.

Our **Sixth Annual June Practice Period** was a rousing success. Many thanks to **Rev. Nonin Chowaney, Rev. Kyoki Roberts, Eisai Elizabeth Muia, Taikan Doug Gouge, Kanho Doug Dittman, and Rev. Jisen Coghlan** for spending the whole month at Deep Spring and also **many thanks to all those** who joined us for shorter times.

This past May, **Kyoki** traveled to Turkey with a group of Americans from various faiths to participate in **religious dialogues** with **Turkish Muslims**. The trip was sponsored by a Turkish Cultural Association from Pittsburgh. In July, **Kyoki** attended the annual meeting of the **American Zen Teachers Association** in Austin Texas and from there went to Asheville, North Carolina to attend meetings at **Great Tree Zen Temple**, where she serves as a Board member.



ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

AM

Tuesday

7:00 a.m. - Zazen at the Mattress Factory

Wednesday - Saturday

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

PM

Tuesday - Friday

6:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Zazen

Sunday

10:00 a.m. - Zazen

10:40 a.m. - Work Practice

11:15 a.m. - Service/Dharma Talk

12:30 p.m. - Lunch

Closed Mondays

Our thanks to **Aimee Curran** for donating a vacuum cleaner to the temple, to **Rob Moore** for donating a computer, to Ryushin John Ott for organizing garden and grounds work, to **Aimee Curran, Manzen Jay Volk, and Jisen Coghlan** for garden work, and to **Dan Kendgia** for donating window fans and altar items.

Thanks also to **Dan** for installing gutters on the new bathroom and for rewiring the garage and to **John and Joy Bray** for their work on the temple grounds.

Quiet Practice with Others

from page 1

Also, you can't think of yourself and your problems so much when others are depending on you. In a group setting, you have to drop your personal agenda and leave yourself behind to go along with the group. This is a good practice. Discriminating mind, or ego, is always trying to assert itself, to put our individual wants and needs first, and we need to learn not to follow our own desires so much if we are going to live in peace and harmony with others.

Of course, there's always "the other side" to everything. In a big place, it can be easier to drift into following your own agenda and more difficult to have an intimate relationship with the teacher than it is in a small place. It's also very easy to be seduced by "a lot going on." My master, Dainin Katagiri, called this "sweet-candy" – lectures by famous people, lots of activity, frequent sesshins, and new and exciting events. There's nothing wrong with any of this *per se*, but in such situations it's easy to lose sight of the true aim of our practice, which, according to Zen Master Dogen, is to study ourselves by quietly sitting zazen and paying close attention to daily life.

After I left Tassajara, I went to Japan and practiced at Zuioji, another active monastery where something was always going on. Again, I found myself being carried along by group energy. In fact, we likened life there to traveling on an express train. Once the doors closed, you were irrevocably "on," and everyone *whooshed* along together.

After spending a few months at Zuioji, I went to its satellite monastery, Shogo-ji – which was being developed as an International Training Monastery for Zen Buddhist priests – and spent two-and-a-half years there. Shogo-ji was isolated, far up in the mountains, with no electricity, no hot running water, no gas, no phone, and no vehicle. We never had more than six monks in residence, most of the time only three or four, and we likened the practice to pushing a wheelbarrow uphill. At Zui-

ji, the express train carried us along. At Shogo-ji, we had to provide our own power!

While at Shogoji, I came to love quiet day-to-day practice. Zen Master Dogen wrote that the ideal number for monastic practice was seven to ten monks. With this number, all the necessary jobs would be covered, and the group would be small enough for intimate practice and frequent contact with the teacher. In a group of this size, it is also possible for the teacher to maintain intimate contact with every student.

All of us connect with a particular teacher and resonate with a particular form of practice and practice place depending on our needs and individual make-up. For me, the best practice place was Shogo-ji, up in the mountains, quiet, isolated, with very little "going on." This kind of practice resonates very deeply with me, for it does not provide many opportunities to be sidetracked by music, movies, sports events, or romantic relationships, activities I've always loved to participate in. At Shogoji, I learned the most about myself, and I also learned how important it is to carry on day-by-day and to practice continuously, gaining strength from within.

At Shogo-ji, we rose every morning at 4:00 and sat zazen for an hour-and-a-half. We then did morning service, which lasted anywhere from forty minutes to an hour. Then, we had breakfast – sometimes formal oryoki style – did some cleaning, and then met for tea. After tea, we had a short break and then we worked for two or three hours – either preparing meals in the kitchen, taking care of the altars and other practice spaces, cleaning, working in the gardens, or taking care of the grounds. We did a short service before lunch, and after lunch, had about a 45-minute break – usually my nap time! – before afternoon work period, which lasted about two hours. We had a short service before supper and then about an hour-and-a-half break after supper, during which we could either study, exercise, take a bath,

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets in Lincoln weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Church, 6300 A St.** For further information, e-mail or call **Seishin Larry Pelter** at **lpelter@alltel.net** (402-483-1755) or **Kanho Doug Dittman** at **dougdittman@earthlink.net** (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

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

or go for a walk. We sat zazen for an hour-and-a-half to two hours in the evening, ending at 9:00. Lights out was at 9:30 p. m.

This was the daily schedule we followed year-round, with a few exceptions. Wake-up was at 5:00 a.m. every fifth day and morning zazen was shortened. After service and breakfast, we were free to tend to personal things, such as laundry and room-cleaning. There were no work periods morning or afternoon on personal days – I usually hiked in the mountains in the afternoon – and optional zazen in the evening. Three or four days out of the month, we went on begging trips (*takuhatsu*), and oc-

Quiet Practice with Others

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asionally, we would pack a lunch and go on an outing to either a hot spring or a scenic spot nearby. We also had a two-day sesshin every month and followed a yearly monastic schedule that celebrated Buddha's Birthday, New Year's Day, and other auspicious events with special services.

However, it was the quiet daily schedule and the rhythm of morning and evening zazen that most appealed to me about Shogo-ji. Sitting every morning sets the tone for the entire day, and sitting every evening ends the day by clearing out all the stuff accumulated since morning.

When I returned from Japan after my master died, I went back to his temple in Minneapolis, Minnesota for a couple of months and then made my way to Hokyoji, our fledgling monastery in Southeast Minnesota. I spent a year-and-a-half there, mostly alone. That was the hardest it ever was for me to carry on daily practice, for there was no one else to provide energy and no schedule to shape the day.

When living in a practice place with others – whether the place is large or small – you have to get up when everyone else does. There's no other option, so it's assured that you'll sit zazen regularly, which is required for serious Zen Bud-

dhist practice. However, I'm one of those people who find it difficult to get up in the morning. One of my greatest pleasures in practice life is sleeping in on a day off! Left to my own devices at Hokoji, I sometimes found myself sleeping in an extra hour or so, and occasionally getting up so late that I didn't sit at all. Because I wasn't bound by a schedule during the day, I frequently put essential things off – like cleaning the creosote out of the woodstove chimney in the winter – to do what I felt like doing at the moment – like studying, doing calligraphy, or blowing everything off and going cross-country skiing. Also, even though I'm a person who enjoys solitude, it got lonely at times at Hokyoji, especially in the wintertime, when days went by without a visitor.

From my experience at Hokyoji, I learned that I'm not the kind of person that does well practicing on my own. I also gained a great deal of respect for people who sit alone daily, far away from Zen temples and sanghas. Whenever anyone tells me they sit everyday by themselves and have for years, I want to put my hands palm-to-palm in respect.

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ZEN MEDITATION WORKSHOP

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 **Nebraska Zen Center**

on **Saturday, November 18th**, from **10:00 a.m.** till **1:00 p.m.**

Cost: **\$20**

For further information or to register, either e-mail NZC at heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035**.

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.

Quiet Practice with Others

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When I first began to practice with Dainin Katagiri over twenty-five years ago, I thought that monastic life would be the hardest way to practice, but I've learned that it's not. It's the easiest way. It's harder to practice in a small group, and it's hardest to practice alone. That's why most teachers recommend that people don't go out on their own until they're so steeped in the practice that they *can't* turn back and so well-disciplined that they can carry on by themselves. Most of the "old worthies" who lived alone up in the mountains were monks who had finished their training with their masters and were truly ready to go off by themselves.

I thought that monastic life would be the hardest way to practice, but I've learned that it's not. It's the easiest way. It's harder to practice in a small group, and it's hardest to practice alone.

Dainin Katagiri addressed this issue once after he gave a dharma talk about a Zen Master in T'ang dynasty China named Damei (*Daibai* in Japanese). Damei trained with his master for many years and then lived as a hermit up in the mountains for many more. Although the hermit's path is very difficult and few practitioners follow it, this kind of life has a certain amount of romantic appeal for beginning Zen students, who sometimes would like to chuck it all and go up into the mountains and live on nuts and berries.

After his talk, one of Katagiri-roshi's students asked, "You always tell us that our practice should be with a teacher and in a sangha; yet, Damei lived as a hermit up in the mountains. Isn't this a legitimate way to practice?"

Katagiri-roshi replied, and I paraphrase, "Well, Damei was a Zen Master who studied for many, many years with his teacher before he went off to practice by himself. This is not something a beginner

should do."

The student replied, "How long should a student practice before he can do this?"

Katagiri-roshi paused for a moment and said, "Well . . . twenty five . . . maybe thirty, forty years. Not you!"

When I came to Omaha fifteen years ago, I wanted to carry on the quiet, day-to-day practice with a small group of serious practitioners that I came to love at Shogo-ji, and for the most part, I have, although in a modified way, for Heartland Temple is not a monastery, but a small city temple. Rev. Kyoki Roberts,

now Head Priest at Deep Spring Temple near Pittsburgh, lived and trained with me here for nearly seven years, except for the two years she practiced at Shogo-ji in Japan. After she left, I lived here by myself for six years until last August, when Eisai Elizabeth Muia began her residency. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to cultivate a group of residents to join me in this practice, but people have come to sit with me most mornings and evenings over the years. We are a small but very active group of practitioners here at Heartland Temple.

Also, for the past few years, Kyoki and I have lead a month of monastic practice during June at Deep Spring Temple. That has allowed me to intensively practice in the way that's nearest to my heart and to reconnect to the ancient way that I love so well.

Sometimes, however, I find myself longing for the "old days" at Tassajara or in Japan, and I read the *Wind Bell* the other day with some nostalgia. There's so

much going on out in San Francisco. Here in Omaha, the temple is small and special activities are few, for this area is hardly a hotbed of Buddhist activity, and unfortunately, Buddhist teachers, Zen or otherwise, rarely come to town, or even pass through. At times, I find myself going back and forth between being quite content carrying on quiet daily practice here and thinking that I might be able to teach the dharma more effectively and help more people in another place. In the following poem, David Buddbill captures this ambivalence with great clarity:

Perched in These Green Mountains

Han Shan says, *Perched in these green mountains, letting my hair grow white, pleased with the years gone by, happy with today.*

Imagine such contentment, happiness with yourself. Yet I know for Cold Mountain, tomorrow always brought something else as well, for Han Shan also said,

If you hide yourself away in the thickest woods, how will your wisdom's light shine through? A bag of bones is not a sturdy vessel.

Back and forth, back and forth. That's the way it goes. Happy and content one day,

ambition and desire eat you alive the next.

It's always been this way. Back and forth, back and forth. That's the way it goes.

Yes, David. That's the way it goes for me, too!

A few months after I first came to Omaha fifteen years ago, very few people were coming to the temple, and I got discouraged. I wrote a letter to one of my old teachers, Sojun Weitsman, abbot of Berkeley Zen Center and former abbot of

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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.

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

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

Quiet Practice with Others

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San Francisco Zen Center, asking for his advice. Part of his reply was:

The main thing is to sit zazen and encourage anyone who comes. Success is not measured in numbers or activities. This present situation can be seen as a kind of test to see how you can deal with what looks like not much happening. The only way that the situation will mature is to lead a simple, dedicated existence and to find your own joy in it. Then things will happen by themselves. Today is cloudy; tomorrow is sunny. Hey! What's the problem?

I followed Sojun's advice, and little by little, the situation did mature.

Soto Zen Buddhist practice is not spectacular. It consists of, as Zen Master Dogen said, studying ourselves by quietly sitting zazen and paying close attention to daily life. To that, I would add that this practice is best carried out under the guid-

ance of a teacher and within a group. This is the way that has been most beneficial to me.



From the editor:

We **always** need material. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, letters, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Winter** issue is **November 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

from *The Meaning of Practice-Enlightenment*

By Zen Master Dogen

The *Meaning of Practice – Enlightenment (Shusho-gi)* was compiled in 1890 to present a short compendium of Zen Master Dogen’s most important teaching to lay people. It consists of five sections, the first and last of which are presented here. This translation is by Yuho Yokoi and Daizen Victoria, with minor editing by Nonin Chowaney.

1. General Introduction The thorough clarification of the meaning of birth and death — this is the most important problem of all for Buddhists. Since the Buddha [enlightenment] dwells within birth and death [delusion], the latter do not exist. Simply understand that birth and death are in themselves Nirvana, there being no birth-death to be hated nor nirvana to be desired. Then, for the first time, you will be freed from birth and death. Realize that this problem is of supreme importance.

It is difficult to be born as a human being, let alone come into contact with Buddhism. By virtue of our good deeds in the past, however, we have been able not only to be born as human beings but to encounter Buddhism as well. Within the realm of birth-death, then, our present life should be considered to be the best and most excellent of all. Do not waste your precious human body meaninglessly, abandoning it to the winds of impermanence.

Impermanence cannot be depended upon. We know neither when nor where our transient life will end. This body is already beyond our control, and life, at the mercy of time, moves on without stopping for even an instant. Once the ruddy face of youth has disappeared, it is impossible to find even its traces. When we think about time carefully, we find that time, once lost, never returns. Faced suddenly with the prospect of death, kings, state ministers, relatives, servants, spouse and children, and rare jewels are of no use. We must enter the realm of death alone, accompanied only by our good and bad karma.

You should avoid associating with those deluded people in this present world who are ignorant of the law of causality and

karmic retribution. They are unaware of the existence of the three stages of time and unable to distinguish good from bad.

The law of causality, however, is both clear and impersonal: those who perform negative actions [karma] inevitably fall [into negative realms of existence]; those who perform positive actions inevitably ascend [into positive realms of existence]. If this were not so, the various Buddhas would not have appeared in this world, nor would Bodhidharma have come to China.

your actions even though you mistakenly assume that because you do not recognize its existence you are not subject to it.

5. Constant Practice and Gratitude The opportunity to awaken to the Bodhi-mind [enlightenment] is, in general, reserved to human beings living in this world. Now that we have had the good fortune not only to be born in this world but also to come into contact with the Buddha Shakyamuni, how can we be anything but overjoyed!

Quietly consider the fact that if this were a time when the true Law had not yet spread

Each day’s life should be esteemed; the body should be respected. It is through our body and mind that we are able to practice the Way; this is why they should be loved and respected. It is through our own practice that the practice of the various Buddhas appears and their great Way reaches us. Therefore each day of our practice is the same as theirs, the seed of realizing Buddhahood.

The karmic retribution of good and bad actions occurs at three different periods in time: (1) retribution experienced in one’s present life, (2) retribution experienced in the life following this one, and (3) retribution experienced in subsequent lives. This is the first thing that should be studied and understood when practicing the Way. Otherwise, many of you will make mistakes and come to hold wrong views. Not only that, you will fall into negative realms of existence, undergoing a long period of suffering.

Understand that you have only one life, not two or three. How regrettable it is if, fruitlessly holding false views, you vainly do wrong, thinking that you are not doing bad when, in fact, you are. You cannot avoid the karmic retribution of

throughout the world, it would be impossible for us to come into contact with it, even if we were willing to sacrifice our lives to do so. How fortunate to have been born in the present day, when we are able to make this encounter! Listen to what the Buddha said: “When you meet a master who expounds the supreme Bodhi-wisdom, do not consider his [or her] birth, look at his [or her] appearance, dislike his [or her] faults, or worry about his [or her] behavior. Rather, out of respect for his [or her] great Wisdom, reverently prostrate yourself before him [or her] three times a day — morning, noon, and evening — giving him [or her] no cause for worry.”

We are now able to come into contact with the Buddha Shakyamuni and hear his teachings due to the compassionate kind-

Practice-Enlightenment

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ness that has resulted from the constant practice of each of the Buddhas and ancestors. If the Buddhas and ancestors had not directly transmitted the Law, how could it have come down to us today? We should be grateful for even a single phrase or portion of the Law, still more for the great benefit accruing from the highest supreme teaching — the Eye Storehouse of the True Law. The injured sparrow did not forget the kindness shown to it, rewarding its benefactor with four silver rings. Neither did the helpless tortoise, who rewarded its benefactor with the seal of Yun-pu t'ing. If even animals show their gratitude for kindness rendered to them, how can human beings fail to do the same?

The true way of expressing this gratitude is not to be found in anything other than our daily Buddhist practice itself. That is to say we should practice selflessly, esteeming each day of life.

Time flies faster than an arrow; life is

more transient than the dew. No matter how skillful you may be, it is impossible to bring back even a single day of the past. To have lived to be a hundred years old to no purpose is to eat of the bitter fruit of time, to become a pitiable bag of bones. Even though you have allowed yourself to be a slave to your senses for a hundred years, if you give yourself over to Buddhist training for even one day, you will gain a hundred years of life in this world as well as in the next. Each day's life should be esteemed; the body should be respected. It is through our body and mind that we are able to practice the Way; this is why they should be loved and respected. It is through our own practice that the practice of the various Buddhas appears and their great Way reaches us. Therefore each day of our practice is the same as theirs, the seed of realizing Buddhahood.

All the various Buddhas are none other than the Buddha Shakyamuni himself.

The Buddha Shakyamuni is nothing other than the fact that the Mind itself is the Buddha. When the Buddhas of the past, present, and future realize enlightenment, they never fail to become the Buddha Shakyamuni. This is the meaning of the Mind itself being the Buddha. Study this question carefully, for it is in this way that you can express your gratitude to the Buddhas.



RAKU POTTERY FIRING AND SALE

Ceramic bowls and plates and other pieces made by sangha member Seishin Larry Pelter and decorated with calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney will be fired and offered for sale,

with all proceeds going directly to Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple,

on Sunday, October 29, from 2-6 p.m.

**at Kanho Doug and Krista Dittman's
Branched Oak Farm, 17015 NW 70th, Raymond, NE 68428**

Visit an organic dairy farm, watch the raku firing, and enjoy the Fall countryside!

Call 402-783-2124 or 402-483-1755 or
E-mail lpelter@alltel.net or dougdittman@earthlink.net for directions

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

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.

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 needed)

We are closed on Monday