



Prairie Wind

Volume 17, Issue 3

Published by the Order of the Prairie Wind for Nebraska Zen Center/Heartland Temple and
Zen Center of Pittsburgh/Deep Spring Temple

Fall 2007

SANTOKA

by Nonin Chowaney

Santoka Taneda (1882-1940) was one of the most famous and influential haiku poets in twentieth century Japan. He was also a Soto Zen Buddhist monk, and his haiku is steeped in our tradition.

Santoka was no ordinary monk, however. By the time he was ordained, he was an accomplished poet whose life had more than its share of tragedy. When he was eleven, his mother committed suicide. His father, a notorious womanizer, mismanaged the family's property and eventually lost everything, with Santoka's help, for the young man became an alcoholic at an early age and helped ruin the business he was involved in – a sake brewery. Santoka's younger brother also committed suicide, and Santoka's marriage was a disastrous failure.

My favorite collection of Santoka's poetry translated into English is *Mountain Tasting*, translated by John Stevens. In his introduction to the book, Stevens recalls the circumstances by which Santoka became a monk:

Near the end of December 1924, Santoka, drunk and apparently intent on committing suicide, stood in the middle of some railroad tracks facing an oncoming train. The train screeched to a halt just in time, and Santoka was pulled out of the way. He was taken to a nearby Zen temple called Ho-on-ji. The head priest there, Gian Mochizuki Osho, did not reprimand or question Santoka; he didn't even ask his name. The monk fed Santoka and told him he could stay at the temple as long as he wished.

A year later, Santoka was ordained as a Zen Buddhist priest by Gian. He was 42 years old. For the rest of his life, Santoka mostly wandered throughout Japan, living from hand to mouth and composing a remarkable body



Santoka, photographed by Reireika Chikaki
in Shimonoseki during a pilgrimage in 1933

continued on page 6



Ancient Practice — Calligraphy by Ikko Narasaki

OPENING THE HEART

by Dainin Katagiri

The most important practice in spiritual life is compassion, opening the heart. It is very difficult for us to practice, however, because it's not so easy to live human life compassionately. It's not so easy because we always live our lives in terms of "I." We carry this "I" throughout all our activity, emphasizing the self in all we do. This is called egoism, selfishness. This is human life. If you look at the human beings around you, you'll see that almost everyone does it.

But those drawn to the spiritual life naturally feel something more important than selfishness, something beyond it. That's why you want to practice. You don't know what it is, but you feel it. That is why you are seeking for it.

Because we are so egoistic in everyday life, we have to make a great effort, each one of us, to practice opening the heart. We can't leave it to other people. This is the spiritual life. This is what creates a peaceful world, and whatever happens, whatever kind of world there is, or whatever comes, we have to continue to seek this peaceful world based on the practice of compassion. This practice is unexplainable in words, but is manifested in our lives as flexibility, softness, and magnanimity. When compassion is practiced, mind and body understand and feel it immediately, so practice makes further practice possible.

Perfect compassion, openness, can be understood by examining two aspects of life: one is the world you see; the other is the world you are seen by.

Usually, we live our lives in terms of the first aspect: the world I can see. At that time, very naturally, self-emphasis comes up. We say, "I do," "I make the effort;" "I can hear." "I" comes first. So, even if you try to practice spiritual living, you always see the spiritual life in terms of the "I." In other words, you try to pull it down to the level of individual feeling, individual view, individual understanding. You never "do,"

forgetting yourself. You never jump into the ocean first. This is the usual way we live our lives, and we can't manifest an open heart in this way.

The other aspect is: the world we are seen by. This is very important. This world is not something you can hear or see. Because your life as a whole is supported by this world, you see before you are conscious of it. But if you always emphasize yourself, you completely forget the world you are seen by. This means there is something missing in the human world. That's why human beings are always irritated. Always, "I" comes first. That's why no matter what kind of work you are in, or whatever lifestyle you are following, at the bottom of your life, there is always irritation, uneasiness, no comfort. The more you are successful, the more you will feel irritated, uneasy, the more you suffer.

To practice compassion, we can't forget the world we are seen by. For instance, I always feel grateful for the wonderful opportunity to sit in zazen. In terms of self-emphasis, I don't like it; but on the other hand, there's something that allows me to have this opportunity to sit zazen with all of you. It's wonderful for me. This is the world I am seen from. This is different from the world I can see.

If I am the head of a Zen Center or another group, then naturally, my life is my life; but my life is not my life. My life is -- how can I say it -- my life is Zen Center's life. My life is all of your lives. So, very naturally, you will set up a schedule of sesshin, zazen, lectures, even though I don't like it. Everyone sets me a certain schedule, a certain way of life. In terms of my ego, I don't like it, because I want to do what I want.

Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Ryoshin Joe Marshall	President
Kanho Doug Dittman	Vice-President
Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer	Secretary
Chuko Jean Bailey	Treasurer
Milo Alexander	Board Member
Zenryu Vicki Grunwald	Board Member
Toze Hal Holoun	Board Member
Sozen George Patenode	Board Member
Greg Walsen	Board Member

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.

So we always say, "Don't tell me what I should do." This is egoistic human life. But I cannot take care of my life just in terms of the world I can see based on ego. There is a big world I am seen by. So even though I don't like it, everyone provides a great opportunity for me to sit zazen. I immediately feel

Continued on page 8

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD will begin with a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 8th and 9th**. 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 **George Patenode** completed **Lay Initiation** at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple in May. George's dharma name is **Sozen** (Ancestral Zen). **Congratulations to you!**

Sangha member **Greg Walsen** and **Julia (Jules) McCraw** were married August 11th at the Spring Creek Prairie Audubon Center near Lincoln. **Nonin** officiated at the ceremony. Greg and Jules are changing both of their last names to a combination of their two. They will be known as **Greg and Jules McLawsen**. **Congratulations and best wishes to you both!**

A CORRECTION FROM NONIN: In my last Prairie Wind article, I mentioned and thanked the many bodhisattvas who helped me when I was so sick the first few months of this year. Unfortunately, I left two very important people out, **Rev. Haju Murray** and **Eisai Elizabeth Muia**. Haju's omission was inadvertent. She is one of my dearest friends and flew down to Omaha from Ann Arbor, Michigan to be with me when complications from emergency surgery almost claimed my life. Eisai Elizabeth, my student who lived at the temple for a year-and-a-half, left for Tassajara Monastery in California, which I encouraged her to do, three days before the complications. However, Elizabeth helped me immensely during the few months before surgery. She was there for me when I was hospitalized once, and she also drove me to the emergency room three times in the middle of the night in the months leading up to my surgery. She was also an enormous help and comfort to me in many other ways, including her telephone calls from Tassajara. **My apologies to two wonderful bodhisattvas, Elizabeth and Haju, for leaving them out!**

FUNDRAISING FOR THE NEW ADDITION. We have begun a **major capital fundraising drive** to finance the proposed new addition to our temple by contacting previous donors to NZC. We need **\$160,000**, and so far, we have **\$50,000 dollars** donated by Board Members in our Building Fund and another **\$24,000 pledged** over the coming months. **Many thanks** to all who have contributed so far, and **special thanks** to those serving on the Fundraising Committee: **Nonin, Zenryu Vicki Grunwald, Toze Hal Holoun, Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer, and Greg Walsen.**

Comings and Goings: **Zenryu Vicki** went on a two-week trip to **China** this Summer on a tour of Zen Buddhist sites led by **Andy Ferguson**, who wrote *Zen's Chinese Heritage*. **Kanho Doug Dittman** and his sons **Nelson** and **Andreas** attended a **Buddhist Peace Camp** attended by over one hundred children and adults near Ann Arbor, Michigan. It was led by **Rev. Haju Murray**, Head Priest at the **Ann Arbor Zen Buddhist Temple**. **Nonin** recently returned from California, where he attended the annual meeting of the **American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA)** hosted by **San Francisco Zen Center** and afterwards visited **Tassajara Zen Monastery**, where he served as Head Monk twenty-one years ago and where sangha member **Eisai Elizabeth Muia** is now practicing. **Elizabeth sends her love and best wishes to all!**

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Fall, a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 8th and 9th**, a **One-day Sitting** on **October 20th**, 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. call **402-551-9035** or e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org** 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 13th, 20th, 27th and November 3rd**. The class will focus on Zen Buddhism in Contemporary American poetry, and will examine the dharma in poems collected by Nonin since a similar class a few years ago. Some of the poets are: David Budbill, Mary Oliver, Jane Kenyon, and Raymond Carver.

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 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
26	Precept Ceremony
Oct 7	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
24	Precept Ceremony
Nov 4	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
17	Intro to Zen Workshop
28	Precept Ceremony

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 2 —World Peace Ceremony
7-9 —Compassionate Care for the Dying Workshop***
13 —Introduction to Zen
23 —Lay Initiation Ceremony
25 —Precept Ceremony*
29 —Dogen's Memorial Day**

OCTOBER

- 4-7 —Rev. Tonen O'Conner Visits
4 —Introduction to Zen
5 —Bodhidharma Day**
—Workshop w/Tonen O'Connor
7 —World Peace Ceremony**
9-15 —Rev. Barbara Kohn Visits
12-14 —Fall Sesshin w/Barbara Kohn
23 —Precept Ceremony*
25 —Introduction to Zen

NOVEMBER

- 4 —World Peace Ceremony
15 —Introduction to Zen
16-18 —Sesshin w/Rev. Daigaku Rumme
21-23 —ZCP Closed
27 —Precept Ceremony

*After evening zazen; open to all

**Special morning service

***Please register for this event

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

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.

Kyoki and **Liaoran Mimi Jong** returned home in Mid-August after traveling in **China** for a month. The sangha enjoyed mapping their travels through the e-mail messages they sent. Prior to returning home, **Kyoki** attended the annual **American Zen Teachers Association (AZTA)** meeting in San Francisco.

Thanks to all those who took care of the temple while **Kyoki** was away, and special thanks to **Kogen Hernan Brizuela**, **Ryushin John Ott**, and **Brian Ritti** for moving plants so that old pine trees could be removed, **Taikan Doug Gouge** for office work and lawn mowing, **Tom Rudy** for re-organizing and cleaning the kitchen, and to **Dan Kendgia** for the new office altar.



Buddha in the Circle
Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

Also, our thanks to **Ryushin John Ott**, **Tony Roscoe**, **Ryan Minster**, **Hoetsu Leslie Hospodar**, **Dan Kendgia**, and **Jisen Coghlan** for converting the old office space into living quarters.

Ryushin John Ott has moved into the temple, joining current residents **Kyoki Roberts**, **Brian Ritti**, and Brian's two-year old daughter, **Paige**.

Brian Ritti and **Rob Moore** are sewing rakus in preparation for **Lay Initiation**. Thanks to **Manzen Jay Volk**, **Hoetsu Leslie**, **Ryushin John**, and **Jisen** for sewing assistance. The ceremony will be on **Sunday, September 23rd**. A reception and pot-lunch will follow. All are invited to attend.

Our thanks to those sangha members who have taken temple positions: **Liaoran Mimi Jong** (Tenzo), **Ryan Minster** (Work Leader), **Tony Roscoe** (Doan), **Dan Kendgia** (Chiden), and **Jisen Coghlan** (Ino).

Santoka

from page 1

of free-style haiku. He never overcame his alcoholism, however, and his addiction dogged him throughout his wanderings.

Mountain Tasting is one of my favorite books of poetry. In this essay, I'd like to introduce Santoka to those of you who don't know his work and comment on some of his poems and the dharma contained in them. All of the poems we'll look at are from *Mountain Tasting* and were translated by John Stevens.

One of my favorite Santoka poems is this one:

Just as it is –
It rains, I get wet, I walk.

Here's another one along the same lines:

Begging: I accept
The blazing sun.

One of my favorite Zen Buddhist phrases, one that I've written in calligraphy many times is "nyoze" in Japanese. I translate this into English as "just this." The phrase represents our primary concern, what's right in front of us – things as they are. In Santoka's first poem, he faces "just this" squarely and walks on through the rain, getting wet. In the second, he's begging and accepts what he's given, "just this," the blazing sun. There is no complaining and no wishing for things to be different in either of these poems. I find this refreshing.

All we can do is live what's in front of us, whether we like it or not. What we think of it is really of no consequence, for thinking doesn't change anything, nor do our likes and dislikes. When we lose a loved one, we grieve and walk on. When we get sick, we live it through till the end. Sometimes we get better; sometimes we don't. What we think of any of this is beside the point.

Last January, I had three emergency surgeries and almost died from complications afterwards. During the surgeries, my colon was removed, and I have an ileo-

stomy. In other words, the end of my small intestine, the ileum, was routed up through my skin, and I poop into a bag attached to my lower abdomen. Periodically, I have to empty the bag into the toilet and change the bag itself every few days. Whether I like this or not is beside the point. This is my life: things are as they are. My poem about this would be:

Just as it is –
I poop; I empty the bag;
I go about my business.

What do likes or dislikes have to do with it?

Here's a pair of Santoka poems:

After all,
It's sad to be alone –
The withered grasses.

After all,
It's good to be alone –
The wild grasses.

What's the difference here? Santoka's state of mind. One moment he's lonely and the grasses are withered. The next moment, he's content to be alone, and the grasses are wild. Most of the time, our mental states determine how we view things. We view the world through the lenses of our thoughts, sensations, and desires and project them onto the scenes in front of us.

One April Sunday here at the temple, I had planned a yard-cleanup after services. However, wet, dense snow started to fall just as people began to arrive for 9:00 a.m. zazen, and I was bummed out. I walked downstairs and said to Albert, one of our members, "It's snowing pretty hard out there." Albert replied, "Yes, there's something quite beautiful about these spring snowstorms." Well, not if you'd planned a yard clean up for that day and all you can see is the snow ruining your plans!

Those two poems by Santoka remind me

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 **dougittman@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-**

of this one by the contemporary American poet David Budbill:

Of Two Minds

As Ryokan said,
Truly I love this life of seclusion.

Then why do I pine away
for a visit from friends?

And why,
when they do come,

why is it that all I can think about
is how to get away,

continued on page 7

Santoka

from page 6

back into the woods, back to my life
of seclusion?

Why? Because that's the nature of mind
– always grasping, always clinging. Santoka
looks at this in another way in the
following poem:

My heart is empty;
The violent waves come and go.

Even though his heart is empty, which
means that it doesn't consist of anything
fixed and permanent, violent waves come
and go. Why? *Because* it is "empty" of
anything fixed and permanent, whatever
arises *has to* come and go. One moment
we love the person next to us dearly; the
next moment, we can't stand to be
around her! This is the nature of the
heart, or of the mind. It's interesting that
the character for "heart" and "mind" is
the same character, *shin*, in Japanese.
Because the heart (or mind) is empty, the
waves, violent or not, come and go, like
the waves on water. Below the waves, the
ocean is deep and clear. On the surface,
however, the waves can be violent.

Here's another of my favorite Santoka
poems:

In the grass trampled by the horse:
Flowers in full bloom.

Oh, they've been trampled! What a
shame. Did the horse mean to trample
them? I don't think so. He or she was just
being a horse going from one place to the
next. Sometimes something beautiful gets
crushed and the crusher didn't intend it.
That's one of the aspects of life, isn't it?
A beautiful young woman is killed in a
tragic car accident. Maybe it was a sud-
denly icy road, or a mechanical failure, or
a bridge collapse, like the one in Minnea-
polis a short time ago. What a shame.
But, that is life.

Santoka knew loneliness intimately, for
he was a solitary wanderer. Sometimes it
was fine:

No path but this one –
I walk alone

Sometimes it was not fine:

This straight road
Full of loneliness

Sometimes it was wonderful wandering
alone:

Aimlessly, buoyantly,
Drifting here and there,
Tasting the pure water.

Sometimes it was a relief:

Well, which way should I go?
The wind blows.

These are the ups and downs of life,
which Santoka knew intimately and
accepted wholeheartedly. Some days,
solitude is wonderful, but the next day,
it can be overwhelmingly sad. Santoka
wrote about all aspects of the solitary
life unflinchingly.

One of Santoka's most economical and
beautiful poems is the following:

I have no home;
Autumn deepens

This poem touches something deep
within me. Santoka's homelessness is
especially poignant and troubling for
him when autumn comes; can winter
with its snow and cold be far behind?
This is no time to be homeless, but he is,
as, ultimately, we all are. This life is
transitory, and any home we have is
only temporary. As the Buddha says in
the Diamond Sutra:

So you should view all of the fleeting
worlds:
A star at dawn, a bubble in the stream;
A flash of lightning in a summer cloud;
A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a
dream.

trans. Mu Soeng

The following poems were written by

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.

Santoka during the Sino-Japanese war,
which started in 1937. John Stevens intro-
duces these poems in *Mountain Tasting* by
saying, "No one in Japan was permitted to
oppose this conflict, and all poets were ex-
pected to support the war effort in their
works." Nevertheless, out of great compas-
sion, Santoka wrote and published these

Santoka

from page 7

poems, along with others dealing with the war:

Winter rain clouds –
Thinking: Going to China
To be torn to pieces.

Leaving hands and feet
Behind in China,
The soldiers return to Japan.

The bones,
Silently this time,
Returned across the ocean.

There is a universality in Santoka's poetry that transcends the circumstances of his life, and it's this universality that makes him a great poet. He touches us all, no matter where and when we live.

Santoka's most famous poem is this one:

Going deeper
And still deeper –
The green mountains.

This is a poem about spiritual practice. "Going deeper and still deeper" means to look into ourselves as deeply as we can to try to get to the bottom of who we are and what human life is. When we look deeply, we come to "The green mountains," which are huge and unfathomable. This is a metaphor for the ground of human life. We can always go deeper and deeper. The spiritual pilgrimage is constant and endless, for we can never reach bottom. Understanding can always be deepened.

Santoka saw his wanderings as pilgrimages, and early on, he completed a few of the famous pilgrimages in Japan. Later, he went wherever "the wind blows," as he stated in a poem above, and his pilgrimage never ended.

In a collection of twentieth century Zen Buddhist art, in which Santoka's calligraphy is displayed, Audrey Yoshiko Seo

says this about him: "He has become beloved in Japan for the difficulty of his spiritual journey, the depth of his trial and effort, and the simple but profound haiku that he left to the world." Hopefully, as time goes on, there'll be more and more translations of Santoka's poems, and he will be beloved by people in more and more countries throughout the world.



Opening the Heart

from page 3

grateful for the opportunity to sit with all of you, the big world I am seen by.

The practice of compassion, or opening the heart in these two worlds is completely unexplainable because compassion is -- what? "I can do it?" Or, "I cannot do it?" What is compassion? What is kindness? What is opening the heart? When you feel good, can you open your heart? Yes, you can. But not all the time; sometimes you cannot do it, even though you feel good. You have lots of memories, customs, patterns, and lots of habits. Even though you feel good, you cannot open your heart. Intellectually, you know you should do it, but you cannot do it emotionally.

So, who can do it? Who can practice compassion? Who can open the heart? You can do it? Yes, you can do it. But pretty often you cannot do it. So, the practice of the perfect open heart is -- what? You don't know. But, even though we don't know, we want to know. Don't you think so? We can use the words "openness" or, "compassion," but how much can you practice compassion and kindness in your own life? Not much, probably. But egocentricity can be mani-

festated quite often!

Strictly speaking, compassion is something beyond our speculation. It's buried; but it's there. It's the total picture of the reality you live day-to-day. This is openness. That's why compassion exists in two worlds: the world you are seen by or the world you are seeing. "The world you are seen by" means the world you don't know. The world you cannot see. But that world is already with you.

So if you want to practice compassion, I think you should accept the two kinds of worlds simultaneously. You cannot judge your life just in terms of your self. Very naturally, you must practice patience and mindfulness. You must also cultivate calm mind. Those practices naturally come up. That's why opening the heart is right now, right here.

When I first became a monk, many years ago, I encountered a great teaching given in a famous koan: "take one step from the top of a hundred-foot pole." I didn't understand the meaning of this teaching, but I felt something, and then I loved it. I don't know what it was but I was deeply moved by it. I was eighteen years old. I had no understanding of Buddhism. Nothing. But when I met this teaching I was deeply moved. I felt good. What was it? I don't know.

This is very important for us. Why do you sit zazen? Can you explain the reasons? Why do you practice with teachers? You cannot answer exactly why. Whatever you say does not hit the mark. It's incomplete. You are not Japanese. You are not Oriental. You are Americans. Why do you do this? In terms of intellectual understanding, you are stupid. All of you are stupid. Why don't you follow Western culture, Christianity? Why do you do this?

I was thoroughly insulted by two middle-aged women when I came to the United

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.



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

Opening the Heart

from page 8

States by boat. They asked me,

"Where are you going?"

I said, "I'm going to the United States."

"What are you going to do there?"

"I am going to teach Buddhism."

"What's that uniform you're wearing, they asked.

"This is such and such," I explained.

Then, they said, "That's ridiculous. You shouldn't wear that stuff in the United States."

You may also be criticized by your friends because you wear this funny stuff and bow so much, so why do you do it? I've often been asked that question. But we have no answer. What is the place where you want to do it beyond speculation, beyond human agency, beyond intellectually understanding or not understanding? *This* is the place, right here, right now, where compassion, an open heart, is working. Remember this, because it's something you always want to know.

If you sit down in zazen, you feel something, but you don't know what it is. You become "you" exactly, right now, here, and you become peaceful with something else: others in peaceful circumstances. It's not a matter for discussion. Yet you can feel it, right now, right here.

Compassion is just like spring water coming up from the ground. When you touch a water vein under the ground with a pipe, the water immediately comes up. This is your life. The pipe is your life, and your life touching the water vein means what? How can you know the water vein? Where is it under the ground? Can you know intellectually? No way; because no

one knows it that way. But, you can know.

At the monastery next year we are planning to dig a well. At that time we will ask somebody to drill the pipe into the ground to get water. How do we know? We don't know. But, we can; we can know. We can know something we don't know. How? Who knows?

Anyway, when you sit down, you can feel something. Intellectually, we don't know what it is. This is the place you can drill your pipe. Drive your pipe anywhere into the ground and you can get it.

Compassion is just like spring water coming up from the ground. When you touch a water vein under the ground with a pipe, the water immediately comes up. This is your life.

That is sitting down. Then, compassion comes up. You become flexibility, generosity, softness, and kindness.

All of you probably have lots of questions about many areas of life: politics, the economy, spiritual life, psychology, morality, ethics. You ask "why." No matter how long you ask why people are egoistic, why human beings create atom bombs, you never get a clear answer. But your life is always going right in the middle of no answer to the questions. Why? We don't know, but your life continues, right in the middle of no answer to these questions.

Even though you don't understand the reasons why people do what they do,

you must be brave. "Brave" means that you must do something courageously, boldly. "Do something" means to open the heart and live in peace and harmony. That is not so easy, but it can be done. Just light your own candle first; then, light another candle. This is what you can do, and keep lighting until all candles are lit. But first, you must light your own.

Whatever kind of religion you practice, Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, whatever occupation you have, this is important if we are to build a peaceful world. In the workaday world, it's difficult to sit down to dig a well. That's why we have Zen temples like this; so we can have the opportunity to practice compassion.

From now on, you should practice forgetting yourself. This will not destroy you. Forgetting yourself means to see yourself from a different angle, and you will see yourself as huge, vast. So don't be afraid to forget yourself. If you practice properly, don't

worry; zazen is good for you! You can forget yourself completely and you can forget anything completely. Then, you become you, and you are just being yourself, just sitting right now.

I think you have lots of questions about zazen, Zen Buddhism, etc., but be patient. In the process of your practice, you will find answers, little by little, one by one. Don't expect too many. First of all it is more important to take care of human life day-to-day peacefully and harmoniously, with an open heart.

When I was fourteen years old my mother died. I felt that the world was completely dark and that there was no hope for me. Every night, I cried in my bed. While I

Opening the Heart

from page 10

was crying, Mother was going away from me. The more I tried to get her, the more she was going away. That made me cry constantly. But, all of a sudden, I stopped crying. At that time, I felt Mother come into my heart; she was with me. What do I mean by this? I can explain in words, but if I do, there's still dualism there -- Mother coming to me. What I felt was not dualistic. We were together in my heart. What made me stop crying? I cannot explain, because my body is exactly Mother; Mother is exactly me. No separation. I cannot say, "Mother is with me," or, "Mother is coming into my heart." This is an explanation in words but no explanation like that made me stop crying because there's a separation there. So, what made me stop crying? Mother and me; no gap between.

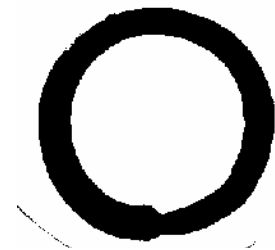
You and the world. There is no gap between. But when culture, psychology,

philosophy, etc. arise, there is a gap. Between you and zazen, you and Buddhism, there is always a gap. Between you and nature, there is always a gap. At that time, you never know, you never answer your questions. That's why I say forget yourself first. Mother and I become one exactly. When you forget yourself, the heart opens.

So, we do zazen, and you and zazen must be one. Don't create a gap between "I" and zazen. When you do, cold winds blow in, to your zazen, to you. That cold wind is, "explaining why I do zazen," more discussion coming up. At that time, you cannot open the heart.

Rev. Dainin Katagiri (1928-1990) was founder and abbot of Minnesota Zen Center in Minneapolis. He was a Soto Zen Priest for over forty years. "Opening the Heart" was originally

given as a lecture at Missouri Zen Center on November 28, 1987. It was transcribed by Joe Janowski and edited by Nonin Chowaney. The article originally appeared in the Spring, 1993 issue of Prairie Wind; it was printed by permission.



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 17th**, 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**

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

Nebraska Zen Center
3625 Lafayette Avenue
Omaha, NE 68131-1363

(402) 551-9035
heartland@prairiewindzen.org

Address Service Requested

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Omaha, Nebraska
PERMIT NO. 1370