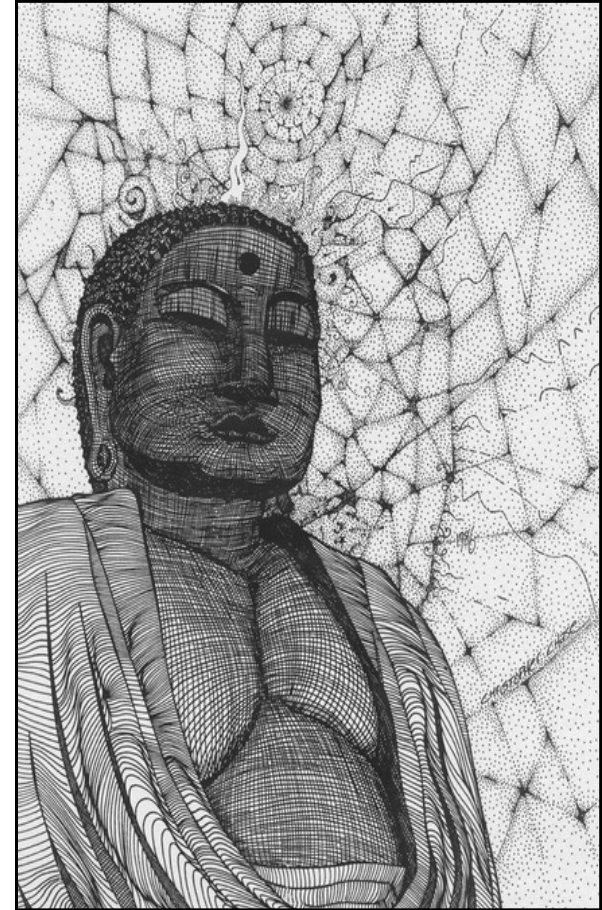


# Prairie Wind



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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** (© 2008 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

### Cover drawing by Christopher Chase

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

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org).

**Nebraska Zen Center's** e-mail address is: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org).  
**Zen Center of Pittsburgh's** e-mail address is: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org)

# HAPPINESS

by Nonin Chowaney

A short time ago, I was given a book titled *The Beggar King and the Pursuit of Happiness*, by Joel ben Izzy. It's an engaging memoir written by a professional storyteller who lost his voice as the result of an operation that removed his cancerous thyroid gland. Each chapter of the book begins with a story that the author has gathered from one of the many different cultures around the world. My favorite is "The Happy Man's Shirt," an old story from Italy. Here it is:

*Long ago in the north of Italy there lived a king who had everything, including a son whom he loved dearly. Yet, for some reason, this son was not happy.*

*"What can I do?" asked the king. "If there is something that will make you happy, you have only to say it, and it shall be done."*

*"I do not know," said the son.*

*"Is there someone you would marry? Whether she is the richest princess or the poorest peasant, you may do so!"*

*"I do not know, father," was all the son would say.*

*The king consulted philosophers, doctors, professors, and priests, asking what might be done to make his son happy. After much discussion, they*

*announced that there was a simple solution. The king must find a man who is completely and truly happy. "Once you find him," they said, "you have only to exchange his shirt for your son's, and thereafter, your son will be happy."*

*With some relief, the king sent messengers to find a truly happy man. Although they found many who professed to be happy, when they questioned them more closely, each proved to be unhappy in some way.*

*After months of looking, the king began to despair. However, one cold day, while out hunting, he heard someone singing in the fields. So sweet and light was the voice that it seemed the singer must be happy. The king looked and saw a young man, bundled against the cold, sitting under a tree.*

*"Tell me," asked the king. "Are you happy?"*

*"As happy as can be," said the young man.*

*"What if you were to come live in the palace? Would you like that?"*

*"No, thank you; I'm content to be right here."*

*"What if I was to offer you riches?"*

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## Happiness

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*“That’s kind of you,” said the man,  
“but I’m happy with what I have.”*

*These words thrilled the king, for he realized that he had, at last, found a truly happy man.*

*“I must ask you a favor, pleaded the king.*

*“Anything at all!” replied the youth.*

*Trembling, the king said, “Come here! Only you can save my son!”*

*With shaking fingers, the king unbuttoned the man’s jacket – and then he stopped, for the happy man wore no shirt.*

I love this story, for it confirms something I learned from my master many years ago: Peace and contentment – which means “happiness” to me – cannot come from outside oneself. It has to be cultivated from within.

The story has two pivotal moments. The first occurs when the king asks the young man, *“What if you were to come live in the palace? Would you like that?”* The young man replies, *“No, thank you, I’m content to be right here.”* Then, the king asks, *“What if I was to offer you riches?”* The young man replies, *“That’s kind of you but I’m happy with what I have.”*

It took me a long time to come to the place that the young man articulated. For a dozen years after I graduated from college and graduate school, I thought that if I could only satisfy myself in three aspects of life, I would be happy. These three aspects were the right career, the right woman, and enough marijuana!

However, I could never completely satisfy these three aspects totally at any given time, and even when I came close, life changes so rapidly that something would slip away. So, I remained quite unhappy much of the time.

I majored in English in college and decided early on that I wanted to teach, mainly literature, for I felt that the world’s great literature truly got at what was important in life. During graduate school, I taught part-time at two universities in the New York City area and after graduate school, I got a full-time job teaching at a community college on Long Island. The summer before I began the job, I married a woman I’d met when teaching in New York City, and shortly thereafter, we had a child.

After a few years of teaching, I began to be dissatisfied with my career choice and my marriage began to fail. During this time, I was

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## Happiness

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introduced to Zen Buddhism and the practice of zazen, but even though I felt from the first that Zen Buddhism was my path, I never found a teacher and wasn’t able to keep up a consistent practice. Eventually, I ended my marriage, and through some friends who’d returned from the West Coast hippy scene (this was the late 1960’s) I was introduced to LSD, marijuana, and other psychotropic drugs.

***Peace and contentment – which means “happiness” to me – cannot come from outside oneself. It has to be cultivated from within.***

Eventually, I took a sabbatical from college teaching, moved to an out-of-the-way area in Upper Michigan with my girlfriend (who had become the great love of my life), and settled on marijuana as my drug of choice.

After my sabbatical ended, I decided to stay in Michigan, so I quit my teaching job. I began working as a musician in a rock band, something I’d done when I was younger, and when the band broke up, I got a job working as a counselor in a home for kids with behavioral issues. After a couple of years, I got tired of that, quit, and tried to get back into teaching. However, the field had dried up, and I couldn’t find a job. I spent a few months living

on unemployment insurance, and in the middle of all of this, the love of my life left, which devastated me emotionally.

Eventually, I decided to train in a field which allowed me to work with my hands for a change, so I went to welding school at Northern Michigan University’s Skill Center, became a pipe welder, and worked heavy

construction jobs in oil refineries, nuclear power plants, and other industrial settings for four years. Throughout this time, I was involved in a

couple of romantic relationships, but they each only lasted a few months. Fortunately, I was making enough money during this time to keep me in quality marijuana.

My goals of the right job, the right woman, and enough pot all proved elusive in one way or another during the eight-to-ten year period from the time I left college teaching until I landed in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 1978. I’d had a few careers, but I got tired of them after a while. A consistent, long-term committed relationship never materialized. Sometimes, when I was down and out, it was very difficult to keep myself in good pot. So, happiness had

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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

**FALL PRACTICE PERIOD** will begin with a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 13th and 14th**. 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).

As many of you know our abbot, **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, was diagnosed with **lung cancer** last May. It was caught early as a result of a chest x-ray taken when he was preparing for gall bladder surgery. Nonin has been undergoing **chemo and radiation therapy** all Summer at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and was scheduled for lung surgery on August 13th. He's responded very well to the treatments so far and was able to keep up with his gym workouts and dog walks throughout treatment. This issue of **Prairie Wind** went to press before Nonin's surgery, so hopefully, he is well on his way to recovery.

Sangha member **Milo Alexander** completed **Lay Initiation** at the temple last Spring. Milo's dharma name is **Koshin** (Constant Trust). **Congratulations to you!**

**Kanho Doug Dittman** has been working on planning the new zendo addition with our architect and our contractors. The finalized plans have been accepted by the city **Zoning Board** and **Planning Board** and we are currently working on fundraising and financing. Hopefully, we'll have broken ground by the time this issue of **Prairie Wind** reaches you! **Many thanks to Kanho Doug for all his work!**

**Comings and Goings:** **Kanho Doug** and sons **Nelson** and **Andreas Dittman** attended the **Buddhist Peace Camp** sponsored by the Ann Arbor **Zen Buddhist Temple** and led by **Rev. Haju Murray** at Friends Lake in southern Michigan this past July. **Kanho Doug** and **Sozen George Patenode** attended the seven-day **Great Sky Sesshin** at Hokyoji Zen Monastery in Southeastern Minnesota this past August. The sesshin was led by four Soto Zen teachers from around the country. Long-term temple resident **Eisai Elizabeth Muia** has moved into an apartment a short distance from the temple. **Our best to her in her new home!**

**Many thanks to Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer** for garden flowers and to all those currently doing temple jobs!

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER FALL EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Fall, a **Two-day Sesshin** on **September 13th & 14th** and a **One-day sesshin** on **October 18th**. 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 us at [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto: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 11th, 18th, 25th, and November 1st**. The text for study will be announced later. The class is **free to members**. The fee for non-members is **\$15 per class**. For further information, e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or call **402-551-9035**.

### OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 7	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion	Oct 29	Precept Ceremony
Oct 1	Precept Ceremony	Nov 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
5	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion	19	Precept Ceremony

### 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)
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Thursday

6:00 - 8:30	— Classes as scheduled
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Friday

7:00 - 8:30	— Sitting Meditation (Walking as needed)
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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 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](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org).

Our summer started early as seventeen members joined together to lay a new patio and paint, weed, plant, and clean around the temple to prepare for the marriage of sangha member **Shikaku Meghan O'Donnell** and **Tim Murphy** on May 24<sup>th</sup>. Kyoki also married members **Chiara Getti** and **Jerry Lowder** on July 12<sup>th</sup> in Husum, WA. **Congratulations to the newlyweds!**

**Comings and Goings:** Resident **Jyoshin Bryan Ritti** took a train trip to New York and on to the west coast and Grand Canyon to visit family and various Zen Centers. **Tom Rudy** and resident **Ryushin John Ott** took off to hike the Colorado trail. Unfortunately, John had a bad fall, injured his head, and was med-flighted to Denver. He is now back at ZCP and almost at full speed. **Taikan Doug Gouge** and **Hoetsu Leslie Hospodar** also had surgeries this summer and are doing great. We're happy to have members **Shodo Debra Callahan** and **Kaethejean Bleicher** back after long illnesses. We have one more to go: **Nonin**, we wish you well!

We've recently had groups visit from **Taylor-Allderdice HS, New Garden Friends School (NC), West Penn Hospital, Winchester-Thurston Academy, Institute of Mortuary Science, Carlow College, St. Joseph's Peace Camp,** and a **Maryland meditation group.**

**Kyoki** led a memorial service at **Animal Friends Shelter** and an inter-faith dialogue with the **Masonic Village**. She also attended the **American Zen Teachers Association** meeting in Vermont. We've also hosted the **Kwan Um School Zen Group** and visiting teacher **Judy Roitman** from Kansas. **Harry Troelstra** and **Jisen Coghlan** are working on an interfaith **Peace Vigil** with the **Sisters of Mt. Alvernia**. **Genkai Rob Moore** is leading a work crew to replace our garage roof, and his wife **Amy** presented us with a quilt wall-hanging she made for our community area. **Many thanks to all mentioned above!**

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple, 124 Willow Ridge Road,  
Sewickley, PA 15143 tel: (412) 741-1262 e-mail: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org)  
website: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

## ZCP SPRING EVENTS

### SEPTEMBER

- 7—World Peace Ceremony, 10 am
- Board Meeting, 1 pm
- 10—Intro to Zen, 6 pm\*\*
- 14—Lay Initiation, 10 am
- 16—Precept Ceremony, 6 pm
- 17—Intro to Zen, 6 pm\*\*
- 21—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am
- 24—Intro to Zen, 6 pm\*\*
- 27—1/2 Day Sitting, 1-5 pm\*\*
- 28—Founders Day Service, 10 am

### OCTOBER

- 2—Intro to Zen\*\*
- 5—Bodhidharma Day\*  
World Peace Ceremony, 10 a.m.
- 12—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am

- 14—Precept Ceremony, 6 pm
- 19—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am

### NOVEMBER

- 2—World Peace Ceremony, 10 am
- 9—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am
- 11—Precept Ceremony, 6 pm
- 13—Intro to Zen, 6 pm
- 15—1/2 Day Sitting, 9-12 am
- 16—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am
- 23—Buddhist Studies Class, 8:30am
- 26-30—ZCP Closed

### DECEMBER

- 1-8—Rohatsu Sesshin in Nebraska

\*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
- Closed Mondays

### SUNDAY ONLY

- 10:00 a.m. — Zazen
- 10:40 a.m. — Work Practice
- 11:15 a.m. — Service/Dharma Talk
- 12:30 p.m. — Lunch

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

The sangha at Nebraska State Penitentiary sat sesshin this past April 14th. Volunteers **Kanho Doug Dittman, Seishin Larry Pelter, and Zenryu Vicki Grunwald** joined inmates **John, Tom, Gangleri, Tony, and Paige** for this practice opportunity.

Since blue is a gang color, rakusus sewn in prison must be a neutral gray hue. We've ordered the material and **three sangha members** at NSP and **one** at Tecumseh State Correctional Institute will **begin sewing** soon in preparation for **Lay Initiation** under the guidance of **Zenryu Vicki** and **Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer**.

**Zenryu Vicki** offers this about her volunteer experiences: "My life is deeply enriched by knowing White Lotus Sangha members. I learn something every time I visit a prison. Some people think that I go to the prisons to "fix" the men, but I don't. I relate to them as they are, not as they were before they came to prison. This involves suspending my judgements about prison inmates. After a few visits, I realized that my friends, family, and co-workers would probably like it if I suspended my judgements about them, too. This is one thing I've learned from volunteering.

## 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**.

Another thing I've learned is the importance of respect. Once while walking through the yard at TSCI, a man saw me gassho and bow to someone, and he then gasshoed to me and I gasshoed and bowed back. He then strutted up to me and asked what it was about. I told him that it's a greeting and a sign of respect. When I told him that, his attitude changed. He dropped the macho pose and held himself with dignity and self-respect as he walked away. This had a profound effect on me, for it made me think about the ways we disrespect others, a store clerk, a co-worker, or another motorist. From this and similar experiences I am much more aware of my judgmental attitudes and try to show respect to everyone I meet.

I truly enjoy visiting and practicing with White Lotus Sangha members."

## 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.

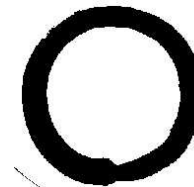
Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

At **Nebraska Zen Center**, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131

On **Saturday, November 22nd**, from **10:00 am** 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**.



## Happiness

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proved elusive, no matter how hard I tried to satisfy my definition of it.

Shortly after I came to Minneapolis, I decided to try sitting zazen again, but I no longer had proper cushions. I looked in the phone book and found Minnesota Zen Center, so I called, asked if they sold zafus and zabutons, and found out that they did. I drove over, bought some, and learned that there was a Japanese Zen Master named Dainin Katagiri living and teaching there. Later that day, I called a friend in California who practiced Soto Zen Buddhism and found out that Katagiri-roshi had assisted Shunryu Suzuki-roshi at San Francisco Zen Center and that he had an excellent reputation as a Zen Buddhist teacher.

Katagiri-roshi was giving a dharma talk a few days later, so I went and was very impressed. He seemed totally present and content with where he was and with what he was doing. He also was very wise, compassionate, and kind. I saw in him everything that I wasn't and wanted to be.

I began practicing at Minnesota Zen Center immediately and haven't stopped since. At first, I wanted to be like Dainin Katagiri, for I was still determined that I had to acquire something to be happy. Over time, however, Katagiri-roshi taught me that peace and contentment -- true happiness -- came from being exactly who you are, accepting it, and living it, not from trying to be like someone

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## *Happiness*

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else. Most importantly, he taught me that true peace and contentment had to come from within, from where you are at any given moment, not from without at sometime in the future. If you're looking outside yourself, you're looking in the wrong place. If you say to yourself that I'll get it later when I've done thus or so or accumulated this or that, you're looking at the wrong time.

Shortly after I began practicing with Katagiri-roshi, I quit smoking marijuana, for I no longer needed it. The practice of zazen cultivates clarity. Smoking pot interferes with that, and deepening the practice of zazen was the direction in which I wanted to go. I continued to work as a pipefitter welder for about a year after I came to Minnesota Zen Center, but the bottom fell out of the iron and steel industry in the late 1970's, and I was unable to find work. Once again, the bottom had also fallen out of my "happiness plan."

I was back on unemployment for a year -and-a-half until that ran out, and I had to find different work. A fellow Zen student was working for a remodeling and painting contractor and recommended me to him. I hired on with him and began yet another "career." This one fit perfectly for this period in my life, for I was able to sit mornings and evenings with Katagiri-roshi and participate in every sesshin (Zen retreat) scheduled. Home

remodeling opportunities are few and far between in the winter, so I was able to participate even more at the temple. Eventually, I began contracting small jobs on my own, which allowed me even more freedom to focus on Zen practice.

After practicing as a lay person for four years, I was priest-ordained, and this became the main focus of my life. I still did painting and remodeling work for a time, but eventually went on to monastic practice, and since 1985, I've lived in monasteries and temples exclusively. Since 1991, I've served as abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple. This "career," I've found, is no different from any other. Some things I like about it; some things I don't. However, I've learned to accept it all, for peace and contentment stems from that, not from constant seeking the "perfect job." It took a long time for me to understand this, but my life has become much more peaceful since I did.

The search for the "right woman," however, persisted for many years, and I never satisfied this aspect of my "happiness plan" either. I've had a couple of romantic relationships over the years, but none lasted. After a time, I learned to cherish them when they happened and let them go when they ended. For the past dozen

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## *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 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@neb.rr.com** (402-483-1755) or **Kanho Doug Dittman** at **dougdittman@earthlink.net** (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

# CHELSEA MORNING

by Jim Kahle

My wife, Allyn, and I walk two miles almost every morning starting at 5:30. We do this all year round. You can imagine what some of those walks are like in the middle of January. The other day we headed out, and it was windy and warm. All the trees and bushes were an intense and brilliant green. The birds were singing. We heard the wind chimes ringing at a neighbor's house, *ting ta ting ting*. There was the sound of a woodpecker out there whacking away at something (somebody's got to play the drums). We crossed the bridge, and listened to the sound of the brook. It had that vibrant, gurgling sound of fast moving water. It was like it was laughing. It was like the universe was laughing; kind of laughing with itself at some inside joke.

I thought about the song *Chelsea Morning* by Joni Mitchell (I know, I know, I should have stayed in the moment). It's one of my favorite pop songs. *Woke up it was a Chelsea morning, and the first thing that I heard, was a song outside my window, and the traffic wrote the words.* That's what this morning felt like, a Chelsea morning. I felt so happy and alive. I could hardly wait to throw myself into the events of the day. *Won't you stay, and we'll put on the day, and we'll wear it 'til the night comes.*

In the afternoon, I went to a hospice meeting. It was sort of a graduation/

orientation ceremony for new volunteers. Four of us were asked to talk a little about our hospice experiences. We were asked to recount a memorable relationship. I talked about a patient who died from Lou Gehrig's disease a couple of years ago. Actually, she was a friend of mine when our kids were young. She always struck me as a person of innocence and purity.

I was really shaken when I found out what had befallen her, and I was grateful to have been with her as a hospice volunteer. By that time, she was almost totally paralyzed. If a piece of food got stuck between her teeth, she had to have someone help her get it out. If a mosquito landed on her arm, she couldn't brush it away. I talked about her grace and courage in a very difficult life, and about her amazing will to live. I choked up as I tried to describe the relationship to the group.

So there it is. Wake up, and it's a Chelsea morning in a world filled with pain and suffering inflicted on beautiful people. How are we to make sense of a world such as this, and how do we go about living our lives? Zen Master Ummon said, "Every day is a good day." Sensei has said, "Be grateful for everything." I can understand the rightness of those words. The challenge is to live our practice in a way that makes them more of a daily reality.

## Chelsea Morning

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On Sunday mornings, as I drive to the Center, I often listen to a radio show called *Speaking of Faith*. Last Sunday, I heard this prayer from another religious tradition. It was a translation of Psalm 4 from *A Book of Psalms* by Stephen Mitchell, and it speaks poignantly about this matter.

*Even in the midst of great pain, Lord  
I praise you for that which is.  
I will not refuse this grief,  
Or close myself to this anguish.  
Let shallow men pray for ease;  
Comfort us; shield us from sorrow.  
I pray for whatever you send me,  
And I ask to receive it as your gift.  
You have put a joy in my heart  
greater than all the world's riches.  
I lie down trusting the darkness  
For I know that even now, you are there.*

When Zen Master Dogen returned to Japan from thirty years of training in China, he was asked what he had attained there. He replied, "A tender heart." A tender heart, an open heart; is there really anything more that we need? The world is full of beauty. Can we be open to it, moment by moment? The world is full of suffering. Can we find the compassionate eyes and hands of Kannon within our own hearts as these challenges inevitably arise in our lives? We are exceedingly fortunate to have this practice as a path which leads us inexorably in this direction. We just need to wake up every morning with the

faith and determination to follow it, step by step.

***Jim Kahle practices at Vermont Zen Center in Shelburne, VT. The previous article originally appeared in Walking Mountains, the newsletter of that group. It is reprinted here by permission.***



continued on next page



## CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

Nonin's calligraphy can be purchased through our website, at [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://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](mailto: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.**

## Happiness

from page 12

years or so, I've remained single, and have come to accept my life as it is with gratitude. I'm fine living alone, and I'm fine with being a temple abbot. The core of my life is Zen Buddhist practice, and the core of that is peace and contentment with "what is."

As I mentioned earlier, the first pivotal moment in Joel ben Izzy's story occurs when the king asks the young man, "*What if you were to come live in the palace? Would you like that?*" The young man replies, "*No, thank you; I'm content to be right here.*" He's perfectly at peace and content with where he is at the moment – no longer looking for anything different.

Then, the king asks, "*What if I was to offer you riches?*" The young man replies, "*That's kind of you, but I'm happy with what I have.*" He's perfectly at peace and content with what he has at the moment – no longer wanting anything else.

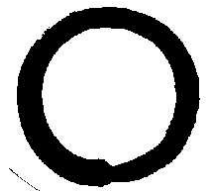
The second, and ultimate, pivotal moment in the story occurs at the very end, when the king unbuttoned the man's jacket and then stopped, for the happy man wore no shirt. At that point, we understand, and hopefully the king does also, that no one can make his son happy. He has to accomplish that himself.

Impermanence is the cornerstone of the Buddha way, for change is constant, and nothing lasts forever. Anything we have can be taken away; anyone we love can leave or be taken from us. True happiness means peace and contentment with things as they are. This can only come from within, not from without, and it's a question of attitude.

This does not mean that we can't move in a different direction or make changes in how we live. What it does mean is that we have to accept things as they are and live them fully; if we don't, peace and contentment is not possible, for it is only an abstract idea, not a living reality. Moving in a different direction or making changes has to come later, however, after we accept the conditions of our life and live them fully, for we only have this moment to live. How we live this moment is our responsibility and ours only. No one or no thing

can make us  
happy. Only  
we can do that.

Nonin



**Chowaney is the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.**

# LAY INITIATION AT NZC



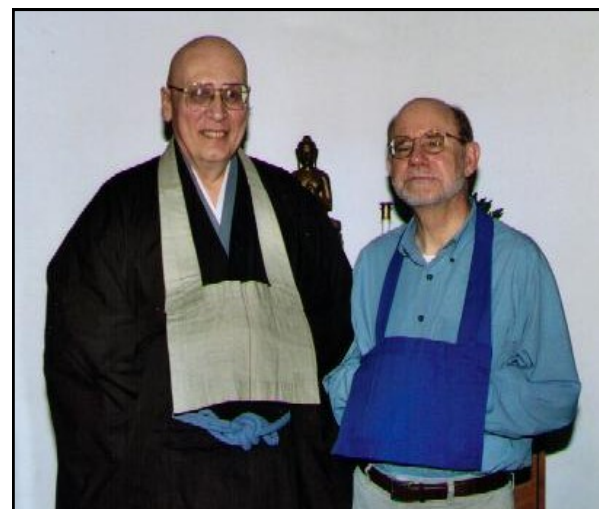
Incense offering



Wisdom water purification



Milo receiving rakusu



Milo and Nonin after ceremony

# POEMS

*The aim of haiku is to bestow  
on things the poetic life which  
already they possess in their  
own right.*

— R.H. Blyth

## The Four Noble Truths

\*  
*seeing December*  
lone pomegranate on branch  
the oncoming dusk.

\*\*  
grand illusionist!  
plump white bird on branch is gone  
morning comes rising.

\*\*\*  
driving to the city  
coyote in open field  
strengthens me today.

\*\*\*\*  
crack! my neighbor's tree  
falls dead — caressed by the wind  
and its own fine age.

Philip Boatright

Dew climbs with gray fog.  
Morning replaces the night.  
Dreams linger, then flee.

Joseph Vuotto

Snow broken by feet,  
Deep shadows like memories  
Vanish with the sun.

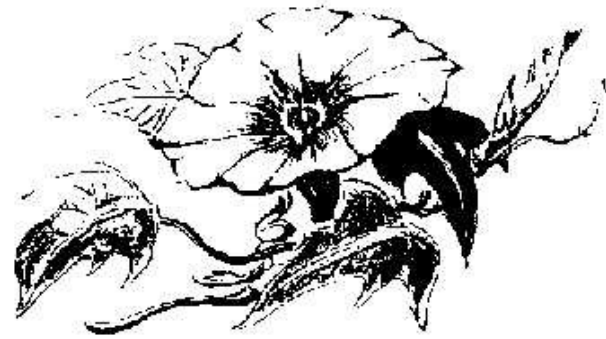
Joseph Vuotto

### on the trail

yellow and black  
curved stick  
wiggles

snake darts into the grass

Nonin Chowaney



## Cherries on Sale At The Produce Market

There are red ones and white ones.  
I buy a pound of each  
and think of the healthy bounty I'm taking home.  
I drive the short drive back, the two  
bags by my side and begin to eat, first  
a few red then a few white. Though  
I tell myself to go easy, I can't. One,  
two, three at a time becoming  
more and more addicted to the texture  
and sweetness. I sit by the curb  
in the parked car, salivating for the next  
bunch, though my mouth is full.  
Emptying the bags was not by design.  
If they call me "Fat Boy," tomorrow — so be it!

Marvin Blaustein

## BODHISATTVA'S VOW

*When I, a student of Dharma,  
Look at the real form of the universe,  
All is the never-failing manifestation  
Of the mysterious truth of Tathagata.  
In any event, in any moment, and in any place,  
None can be other than the marvelous revelation  
Of its glorious light.  
This realization made our ancestors and virtuous Zen masters  
Extend tender care, with a worshipping heart  
Even to such beings as beasts and birds.  
This realization teaches us that our daily food and drink,  
Clothes, and other protections of life are the warm flesh and blood,  
The merciful incarnation of Buddha.  
Who can be ungrateful or not respectful  
Even to senseless things, not to speak of people?  
Even though they may be fools,  
Be warm and compassionate toward them.  
If by chance they should turn against us  
And abuse and persecute us, we should  
Bow down with humble words, in the reverent belief  
That they are the merciful avatars of Buddha,  
Who use devices to emancipate us from harmful karma  
That has been produced and accumulated upon ourselves  
By our own egoistic delusion and attachment  
Through the countless cycle of kalpas.  
Then in each moment's flash of thought  
There will grow a lotus flower,  
And each lotus flower will reveal a Buddha.  
These Buddhas will glorify Sukhavati,  
The Pure Land, every moment, everywhere.  
May we extend this mind over the whole universe  
So that we and all beings together  
May attain maturity in Buddha's Wisdom.*



Gillian and Damon Moore sitting with their buddies. Mom Amy Moore says that Gillian set up the buddies this way before school one day so that they could sit zazen while she was gone. Dad Genkai Rob Moore and the Moore family practice at Deep Spring Temple.

### Sayings of the Jewish Buddha

The following were sent to us by Taïdo Jon Kayne. We're printing them here because they gave us some good laughs, and we want to pass them on. — ed.

If there is no self, whose arthritis is this?

Be here now. Be someplace else later. Is that so complicated?

Wherever you go, there you are. Your luggage is another story.

Accept misfortune as a blessing. Do not wish for perfect health or a life without problems. What would you talk about?

There is no escaping karma. In a previous life, you never called, you never wrote, you never visited. And whose fault was that?

Breathe in. Breathe out. Breath in. Breathe out. Forget this and attaining Enlightenment will be the least of your problems.

Be aware of your body. Be aware of your perceptions. Keep in mind that not every physical sensation is a symptom of a terminal illness.