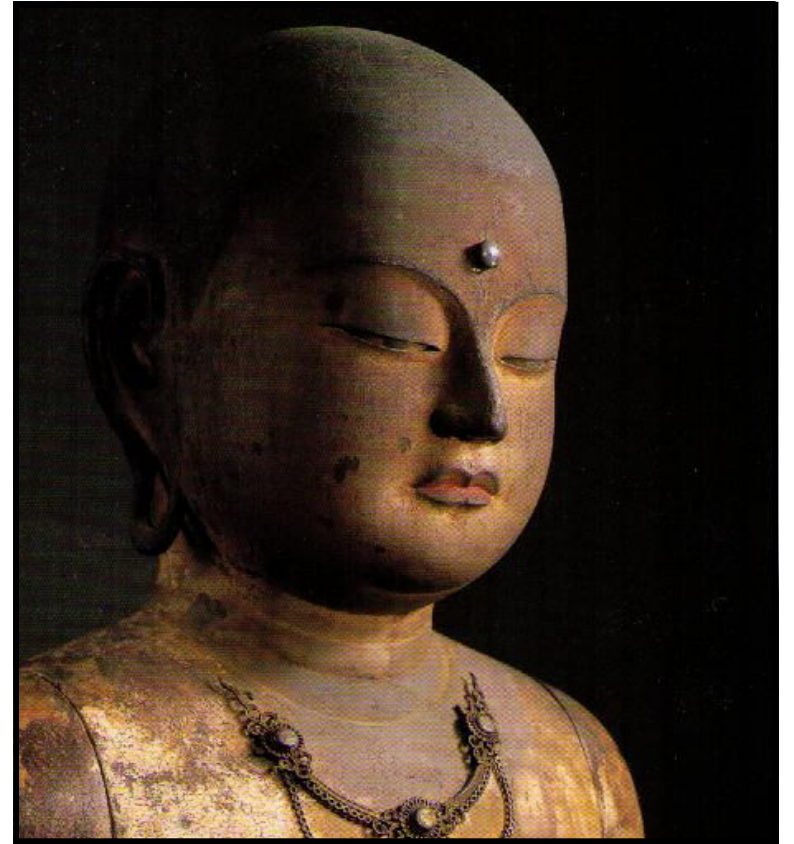


Prairie Wind



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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 (© 2009 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover Photo: Bodhisattva — Japan, photographer unknown.

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**.

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

OUR TRUE HOME

by *Nonin Chowaney*

*Breathing in, breathing out,
Moving forward, moving back,
Living, dying, coming, going --
Like two arrows meeting in flight,
In the midst of nothingness
There is a road that goes directly
To my true home.*

*Zen Master Gesshu Soko
trans. Stephen Addiss*

Gesshu Soko wrote this poem shortly before he died. It speaks to me more about life, however, than about death, about finding our true home right in the middle of what's happening now, whether it be living or dying, moving forward or moving back, coming or going.

When we are fully in accord with things as they are, we meet the circumstances of our lives like two arrows shot from different directions coming together point-to-point in mid-air. Breathing in or breathing out, we live our lives as they are, not as we want them to be or as they once were.

This moment, then, is our true home. The road that goes directly to our true home is the road that leads to this moment. For me, that road is zazen, and it doesn't go anywhere. It doubles back on itself and leads to this moment as it is.

Walking the road of this moment can be very difficult when we don't like where

it leads -- when this moment means intense pain when a love relationship turns sour, or intense disappointment and regret when things at work go badly, or deep grief when we lose someone we care about. We are happy to live in the true home of this moment when it's comfortable and peaceful but are ready to vacate whenever it becomes uncomfortable and unpleasant.

Whenever I'm troubled about something, when I'm sad and discouraged about a relationship that isn't working out or when I'm angry and can't seem to let it go, my first impulse is to hop into the car and go for a long drive or to take a strenuous hike, anything to avoid the anguish. However, because our life is our only true home, this is not possible, for no matter how hard we try, we can't escape; our life is with us wherever we go.

Once, shortly after I had fallen in love, I found out that the person I loved was seeing someone else, and I fell into a bad state of mind the day before a sesshin. I dreaded having to sit. But there was no escape. I was leading the retreat and couldn't not sit. So I sat, and not long into morning zazen, I learned a lesson I've had to learn over and over again. When I'm troubled and caught in a negative state of mind,

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the best thing to do is to sit down right in the middle of whatever is going on and let it happen. Let things come up, experience them, and let them go, and then, let them come up again, experience them, and let them go again. In this way, we live things fully.

Letting go, or non-attachment, is very important. All forms of Buddhist practice emphasize it. However, we sometimes forget the middle step: to fully live what comes up. We want to push aside

negative states of mind, or throw them away. This is denial. Until we fully accept and live through all that comes up for us, positive states of mind as well as negative, they keep

coming up. Until we accept and live them, we cannot let go, and until we let go, we cannot move on. How to do this without denial and without clinging and getting stuck is the central issue of zazen, and of human life itself.

When I was a boy, there was a carousel near the lake outside my home town. It was inside a beautiful wooden building protecting it from the elements. On the inside wall of the building, a long wooden arm was attached, and it extended to within three or four feet of

the stationary horses on the outside row of the carousel. The arm held metal rings that fed out one at a time, and we would sit on the horses and try to reach out and grab a ring as we rode by. Most of the rings were iron, but a few were brass. If you grabbed the brass ring, you got the next ride free. Every once in a while, the rings would stick, and if you didn't let go, you'd get jerked off your horse. This happened to a friend of mine once. The stuck ring was brass, and he was

Until we fully accept and live through all that comes up for us, positive states of mind as well as negative, they keep coming up. Until we accept and live them, we cannot let go, and until we let go, we cannot move on.

determined to jerk it out of there, but it jerked him, and he ended up on the concrete floor, bruised and embarrassed.

On the carousel of life, it's better to let go as soon as possible and flow with the process. But sometimes, the letting go takes a while, and we get stuck, or worse, jerked off the horse. Whenever I get stuck, I try to remember these words by Zen Master Dogen: "No matter how bad a state of mind you

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get into, if you hold out over the long run, the clouds will disappear and the autumn winds will cease. That is a fact."

This "long run" can take a while, however. A few years ago, a woman came to sit a sesshin with us. Her face and demeanor projected a lot of pain. When speaking with her privately, I found out that her teenage son had committed suicide. She was deeply troubled. She talked to me about how it was still difficult to get through even half a day without falling into tearful despair, and she asked if I had any advice on how she could deal with things better. I asked her how long ago this had happened, and she said, "six months." My response was, "That's such a short time ago; no wonder you feel the way you do." I felt that she was responding exactly as she should in the face of such tragic circumstances. The practice of letting go is the way to the end of suffering, but sometimes, the pain is so deep it takes what seems like forever to live it through. Even though it is very difficult, this is how we learn who we are and what human life is all about.

We talked for a long time, and she looked carefully at her life over the past six months. She realized that the tearful episodes were gradually getting farther and farther apart, and that there actually were times during the day when she was able to function at work

and at home and not be overcome with pain. All I could tell her was that in the face of such deep suffering, she couldn't expect any "miracle cure" that would make it go away. All she could do is let it happen, let it come up and experience it fully, moment by moment, time after time, day after day.

I can't imagine what it is like to be a mother and lose a child in this way. But I have lost people I have deeply loved, and I know how long it can take to live such things through. My father died unexpectedly of a massive heart attack forty years ago. We were not close at the time, for there were many unresolved issues between us. The biggest one for me was not being able to tell him I loved him before he died. Over the years, he kept appearing in my dreams, and in one of them, I told him. I woke up feeling relieved and at peace.

Thirty-five years ago, I was involved in a long-term passionate and stormy love affair that ended badly and abruptly. She left me and got married within a year. There was no opportunity to mutually resolve things, and it took five years for me to be able to think of her without anger, resentment, and pain. For five years more, she would appear from time to time in my dreams, and I would wake up angry and resentful. Then, I had a different kind of dream, and wrote

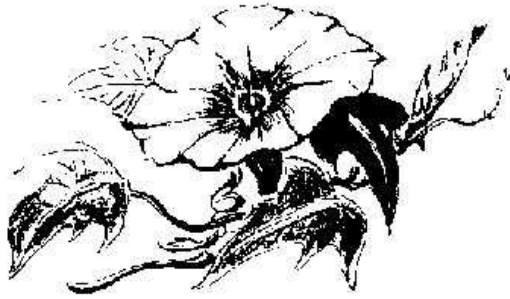
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NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD will begin with a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 12th and 13th**. 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. 1st—7th).

HEALTH UPDATE: **Nonin** recently had a regular check-up and is still cancer-free a year after the surgery that removed part of his right lung. He will continue to have check-ups every three months. He's feeling stronger and stronger, is working out at the gym regularly, and is taking the dogs for hikes on the days he doesn't go to the gym.



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 five Soto Zen teachers from around the country. **Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer** will attend a three-month practice period at **Shasta Abbey Zen Monastery** in northern California beginning in September. **We'll miss you, Valdene!**

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER FALL EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Fall, a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 12 & 13th** and a **One-day sesshin** on **October 17th**. Fees; \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. call **402-551-9035** or e-mail us at 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 **Oct. 10, 17, 24, and 31**. 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 info, call **402-551-9035** or e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org.

OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 2	Precepts Ceremony	Oct 7	Precepts Ceremony
6	World Peace Ceremony	Nov 1	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion		Group Discussion
Oct 4	World Peace Ceremony	4	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion		

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

Deep Spring Temple celebrated its **10th anniversary** the week of August 18th — 23rd. The highlight of the week was a visit by Rev. Kainei Edward Brown, who taught a day-long class on Thursday in the **Art of Zen Cooking**. Edward was priest-ordained in 1971 by Shunryu Suzuki and is most well-known for his *Tassajara Bread Book* and a movie about him called *How to Cook Your Life*, which was shown on the evening of the cooking class and was attended by over 150 people.



Cooking Class

On Friday evening, we had eighty-plus people for a dinner supplied by Asian restaurants from around Pittsburgh. **AppalAsia**, an East-West music group featuring sangha member **Liaoran Mimi Jong** and the **Oriental Star Dance School** supplied entertainment prior to a **Silent Auction** of many donated items and services. On Saturday, we had a **Family Fun Day** with Judo, Tai Chi, Qi Gong, Yoga, and bead-making workshops, along with a variety of games. On Sunday, we had a ceremony and buried a time capsule that is to be dug up in August of 2024, which will be our 25th anniversary. **Thank you all for making**

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

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

6 —World Peace Ceremony
8 —Precept Renewal Ceremony
10 —Intro to Zen, 6 pm**
11-12—Two-day Sesshin**
29 —Founders Memorial Service*

OCTOBER

1 —Intro to Zen, 6 pm**
4 —World Peace Ceremony
6 —Precept Renewal Ceremony
9-11 —Ryokan Workshop w/ Eido Carney
22 —Intro to Zen, 6 pm**

NOVEMBER

1 —World Peace Ceremony

3 —Precept Renewal Ceremony
15 —Lay Initiation
25-30—ZCP Closed

DECEMBER

1-8 —Rohatsu Sesshin in Nebraska**
6 —World Peace Ceremony
12 —Intro to Zen, 9 am—12 noon**
23-26—ZCP Closed
29 —Precept Renewal Ceremony
31 —New Year's Eve Celebration, 6 pm—1 am

*Special morning service

**Please register for this event

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Closed Mondays

Tuesday — 7-7:40 a.m. MFM
6-7:15 p.m. DST
Wednesday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. FMH
Thursday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. DST
Friday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
6:00-7:15 p.m. DST
Saturday — 5:30-7:15 a.m. DST
Sunday — 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. DST

MFM — Mattress Factory Museum, Northside
FMH — Friends Meeting House, Oakland
DST — Deep Spring Temple, Bell Acres

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

Two White Lotus Sangha members at Nebraska State Penitentiary, **Tony** and **Tom**, completed Lay Initiation on August 16th in a ceremony at the prison led by Nonin. Tony's dharma name is **Zensan** (Zen Mountain) and Tom's is **Anzen** (Quiet, Calm Zen).

White Lotus Sangha members and other NSP inmates participated in the ceremony, along with Heartland Temple members **Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer**, **Zenryu Vicki Grunwald**, **Kanho Doug Dittman**, and **Ryoshin Joe Marshall**.

Many thanks to Shuji Valdene for teaching the men how to sew their rakusus and to Zenryu Vicki for organizing the Lay Initiation process. Our special thanks go to NSP **Religious Coordinator Steve Marsh** for facilitating the process at the prison.

During his remarks at the end of the ceremony, Nonin recited the following poem by **Gesshu Soko**, an important master in our dharma lineage:

*Receiving the precepts,
sentient beings are one with
Buddhas,
Buddhas are one with all beings.*

*Individuals, just as they are,
reveal the unity of Buddhas and*

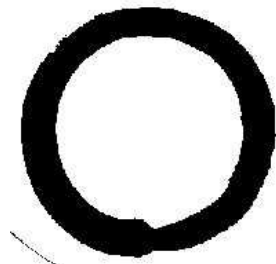
WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

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**.

*beings
without inside or outside.*

*It is wholly manifested
at this very moment
in this very place.*

Many thanks to Tony and Tom for moving past this important practice milestone.



Our True Home

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this poem about it:

ten years later

*ten years later
you appear*

in a dream

*long red hair
streaming*

as you leave

*and this time
finally*

*no vicious goodbyes
no lies unforgiven*

*only the coming
and going*

of love

Over the past thirty years, through the practice of zazen, letting go has become easier because that is what zazen cultivates. However, daily sitting coupled with studying with many teachers has helped me learn also that we cannot avoid suffering as long as we are involved in human relationships; this is the nature of our existence. Even though we can learn to let go, suffering can keep coming back; it's re-occurrence and duration depend on the depth of involvement. We cannot always expect immediate and lasting relief. We want our lives to be peaceful, quiet, and pleasant, and

sometimes, they are. But they also can be unpleasant, disturbing, and painful. That's just the way it is. We have to learn to accept it all, live it all, and let go as soon as we can without cultivating more suffering by wallowing in it. Although Buddhism promises an "end to suffering," the way to this end leads *through* it, not *around* it, and this "end" is not something we experience once. As long as we live, we will suffer, so we must deal with it as it comes up and follow the process through each time until we become adept at it. As my teacher, Dainin Katagiri was fond of saying, "You're suffering? That's a sure sign you're alive."

When I first got involved with Zen practice thirty years ago, I thought that if I practiced long enough and hard enough, I would be able to live in such a way that nothing would bother me. Life would be totally peaceful and serene. I also had a lot of romantic notions based on old Zen stories about people like Han Shan and Shih Te, two ancient semi-mythological Chinese Zen wanderers who roamed the mountains living on nuts and berries and scribbling poems on rock walls. I thought, "What a great way to live, carefree and unencumbered. I could handle that." Later on, I was taking care of maintenance at Tassajara Monastery in California, and during a break from lugging around and setting up fifty-gallon drums of kerosene, I asked Tenshin Reb Anderson, one of the teachers

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there at the time, when we got to roam the mountains and scribble poems on rock walls. He looked at me as if I were nuts.

Escape not what Zen practice is all about. Also, the seemingly romantic, carefree life has its dark side. We can see this in the poetry of Ryokan, the famous Japanese Zen monk who lived as a hermit in the mountains for many, many years. His work deals not only with the joy found in the solitary life of a spiritual wanderer but also with the pain of loneliness and regret, the hardships brought on by illness, and the many tears shed over the loss of old friends left behind. Here's a poem by Ryokan that deals with this side of the wanderer's life:

*I sit quietly, listening to the falling
leaves --
A lonely hut, a life of renunciation.
The past has faded, things are no
longer remembered.
My sleeve is wet with tears.*

trans. John Stevens

Here's another one:

*Light sleep, the bane of old age:
Dozing off, evening dreams, waking
again.
The fire in the hearth flickers; all
night a steady rain
Pours off the banana tree.
Now is the time I wish to share my
feelings --*

But there is no one.

trans. John Stevens

So, over the years, I've come to realize that my true home is my life *as it is*, not as I want it to be, or as it used to be, or as it should be according to some romantic notion, but *as it is*. Sometimes it is messy, badly in need of repairs, or unpleasant, but whatever it is, it's my home nonetheless; I can only live *this* life, even if I don't particularly like it right now.

A few years back, while in the midst of a love relationship that not only was complicated and painful but also was keeping me from doing something Katagiri-roshi wanted me to do, I called him long distance from California, poured my heart out to him on the phone, and shed a few tears. Then I asked him: "Do you still fall in love?" He replied, "Yes It causes me a lot of pain." Boy, did that hit me. Love can mean pain, even for a Zen Master who'd been practicing for forty years. I expected him to tell me how to get through without the pain. I thought that if I practiced hard enough, I could avoid the bad stuff, take all the good stuff, and get through without the pain, with perfect equanimity, in perfect tranquility. What a mistake! If you're in love, you will feel not only the joy that springs from it, but also the pain, no matter what your spiritual credentials. This is not only the nature of love relationships but also of all other

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 **Kanho Doug Dittman** at **dougdittman@windstream.net** (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Our True Home

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human relationships.

It might seem that the obvious solution to this problem would be to suppress our feelings or distance ourselves and stay out of human relationships, but avoidance, escape, and denial are not what our practice is about either. This is illustrated by the following ancient Japanese story:

An old woman allowed a young Zen monk to live in a hut on her property. When he had been there a couple of years, she started to wonder about his practice and decided to test him. She asked her beautiful granddaughter to test him by going to his hut, cuddling up to him seductively, and asking him how it feels.

The granddaughter was reluctant, but finally agreed to do as her grandmother asked. When the young girl asked the monk how he felt, he replied, "I feel like a dead tree next to a cold rock in the middle of winter."

When the girl reported this response, her grandmother exclaimed, "That worthless fellow! He hasn't learned a thing about Zen!" She then threw him out and burned down the hut.

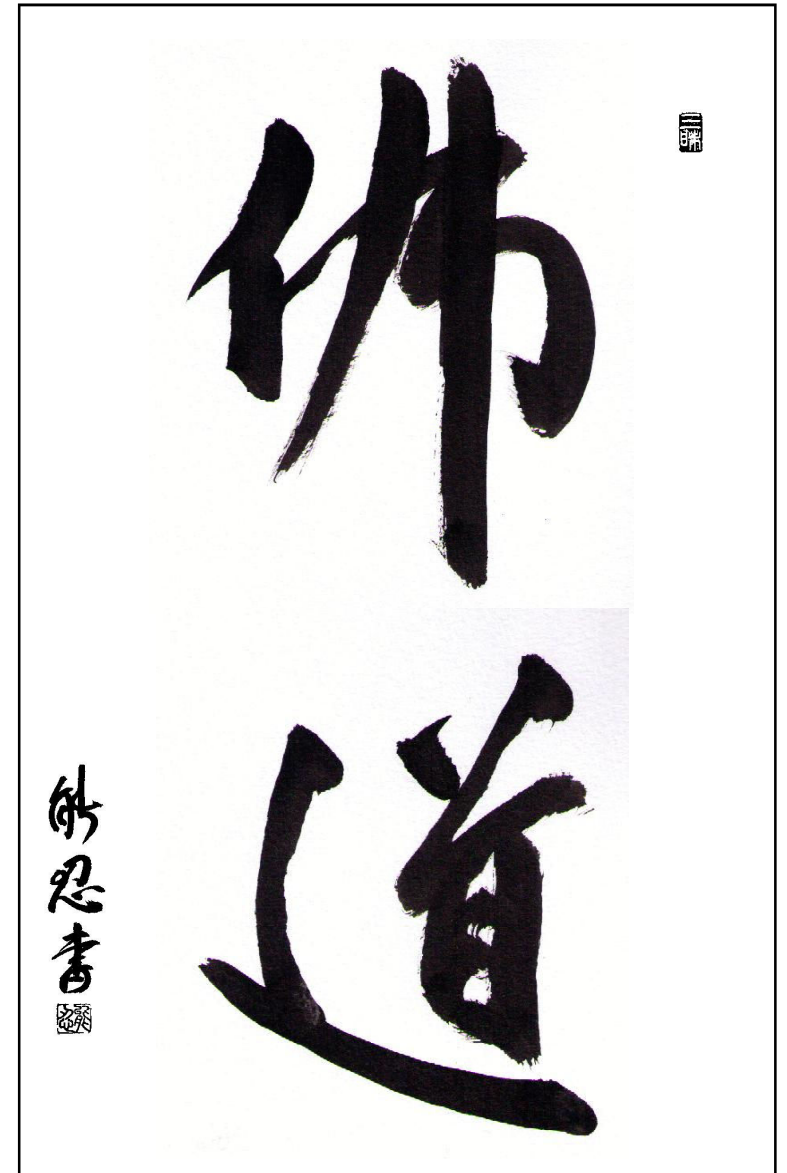
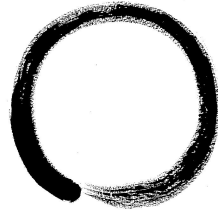
In the poem we began with, Gesshu Soko writes:

*Breathing in, breathing out,
Moving forward, moving back,*

Living, dying, coming, going --

This about covers our life. Like two arrows meeting point-to-point in mid-flight, we need to meet our lives totally and fully in each moment. This is our true home. We must live here, for it is only here that we are fully alive. Accept the moment, live it, and let it go. Then, we are ready for the next event.

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



Buddha Way — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

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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.

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

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

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

THE ZEN DAIRY FARMER

by *Kanho Doug Dittman*

As a dairy farmer living in rural Nebraska, I'm probably not the most likely candidate for meditation.

Of course, in the process of living and working with plants and animals, it can become readily apparent, even painfully apparent, that we human beings are so easily lost, so quickly swept away by thought. We bounce from past-to-future and from future-to-past like ping-pong balls, in direct contrast to the seemingly continuous presence and attentiveness of the rest of the natural world.

So many mornings I find myself grumbling to myself, rain running off the bill of my ballcap, stumbling down the muddy pasture-lane, while the cows — free of any concept of self-pity — just go: no grumbling, no cursing.

After all, simply navigating the mud and avoiding lightning strikes is challenge enough without adding "me and my problems" to it, and yet I usually forget that fact and do it anyway.

This is where meditation practice comes in.

Essentially (at least in the Zen Buddhist tradition) meditation works directly with this grumbling,

wandering mind, cutting it off in mid-grumble and returning to what is immediately in front of you.

Rain is rain. Mud is mud. Cows are cows.

Of course, the mind quickly returns again to grumbling. Once again, drop the grumbling mind and return to *this*: keeping your balance and navigating the mire.

One of the positive result of the process (in addition to being a more pleasant person to be around) is that it opens you up to the big picture. By de-emphasizing the little grumbling self, I'm suddenly inserted into the wide landscape of sky, clouds, grass, water, birds, wind, air, fence, and soil. My work suddenly becomes everything's work—or no work at all — and I'm part of this world-wide effort of putting food on the table, and maybe even getting the job done quite nicely and not at the expense of even the cows themselves.

The Zen Buddhist path is a pretty simple and straightforward process, and yet there are plenty of ways to jump the track. We are quite expert at talking ourselves into and out of almost any conceivable thing, and we give a lot of weight to these views instead of carrying them lightly, like

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ZCP'S ANNIVERSARY EVENTS



Starting out on the garden walk



Ed Brown chopping



Zazen Instruction at Friends Meeting House



Mingling in the garden before dinner and auction



Cooking class —making bread



Ed Brown, Kyoki, and Jisen before closing ceremony

The Zen Dairy Farmer

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passing fancies. Then we get so entrenched in them that we can't see things as they are. This is where the teacher comes in. The teacher works directly with the calcified ego that will not turn loose of "me and my problems."

So where does a hard-headed Dutchman like me find such a person? Fortunately, I finally got up the courage to go to the Nebraska Zen Center in Omaha, and the resident teacher there, Rev. Nonin Chowaney, was there to open the door and let me in.

A big guy, Nonin looks more like a pro wrestler than a Zen Master. And while Zen

Buddhist training can get pretty edgy working directly with the hazardous terrain of the human ego, time and again, Nonin has shown me that his heart matches his frame, giving me a hand up when I've felt hopelessly stuck.

However, a word of warning for the Zen intellectual: if you show up aping 10th century Zen masters, flaunting mastery of the literature, and claiming to have "tamed the ox," you'll

probably get a forceful "Bullsh*t!" in return.

The truly helpful aspect of Zen meditation is also the most problematic: essentially allowing the mind to return quite naturally to bare perception, bare awareness, and not becoming quite so drunk on our own thoughts, views, opinions, and judgments. Concerns like the date of

The truly helpful aspect of Zen meditation is also the most problematic: essentially allowing the mind to return quite naturally to bare perception, bare awareness, and not becoming quite so drunk on our own thoughts, views, opinions, and judgments.

my impending death, whether I'm fathering my children properly, what the neighbors think, or will I be able to pay my taxes — while perhaps important to consider at the proper time — have nothing to do with the simple act of milking cows at this moment.

It's quite possible to attend Zen Center for years, to sit all meditation retreats, and yet to feel that you are not being taught and that the "enlightened state" eludes you. But

teaching and learning are going on all the while, the teacher is constantly teaching — setting down the foot, turning the head, extending the hand — and the student is constantly learning, absorbing, and gradually transforming. If I had to say what the core of what I have learning from my time at Nebraska Zen Center, from studying and practicing with Nonin, and from practicing on my own, it would be this:

1. Sit (meditate) regularly
2. Connect with a group
3. Practice under the guidance of a recognized teacher.

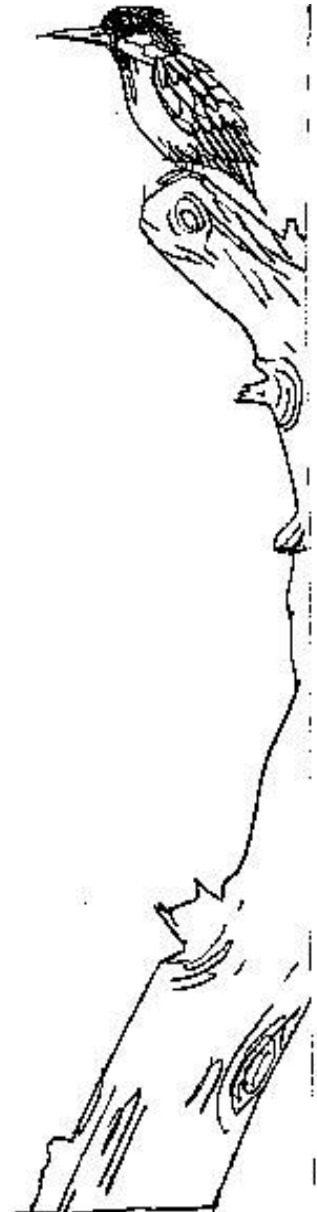
Ultimately, we have to get up from the cushion, however, and put our practice into motion. We have to not be afraid to put ourselves into situations where we bang up against one another and wear away the sharp edges, the edges that we use to hold one another at bay, that we use to hold the whole world at bay.

Meditation is not some passive state. Quite the contrary. It is an active state, expressed not only in sitting but also in standing, walking, and all the other postures of our life.

Kanho Dittman of Nebraska,



Doug lives outside Raymond, where he



DHARMA GEMS

*When the mind is still
the floor where I sit
is endless space*

Muso Soseki

What is life? It is the flash of a firefly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the wintertime. It is the little shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the sunset.

Crowfoot

Do not think that you will necessarily be aware of your own enlightenment.

Zen Master Dogen

The figure of the Buddha, seated on his lotus throne — serene, stable, all-knowing and all-encompassing, radiating boundless light and compassion — is the foremost example of perfect enlightenment. Rodin's "Thinker," on the other hand, a solitary figure lost in thought and contorted in body, remote and isolated from his self, typifies the opposite state.

Philip Kapleau Roshi

Things are not as they seem. Nor are they otherwise.

Eido Shimano Roshi

The center of the universe is the pit of your belly.

Daiun Harada-roshi

There is no object so soft but it makes a hub for the wheeled universe.

Walt Whitman

*As the crickets soft
autumn hum
is to man,
so is man, to the trees
as are they
to the rocks and hills*

Gary Snyder

Whatever may be the value of "life in the world: there have been, in all cultures, people who have claimed to find something they vastly prefer in solitude.

Thomas Merton

Meditation Workshop at Nebraska Zen Center

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

Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple at **Nebraska Zen Center**, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on **Saturday, November 14th**, from **10:00 a.m.** till **1:00 p.m.**

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