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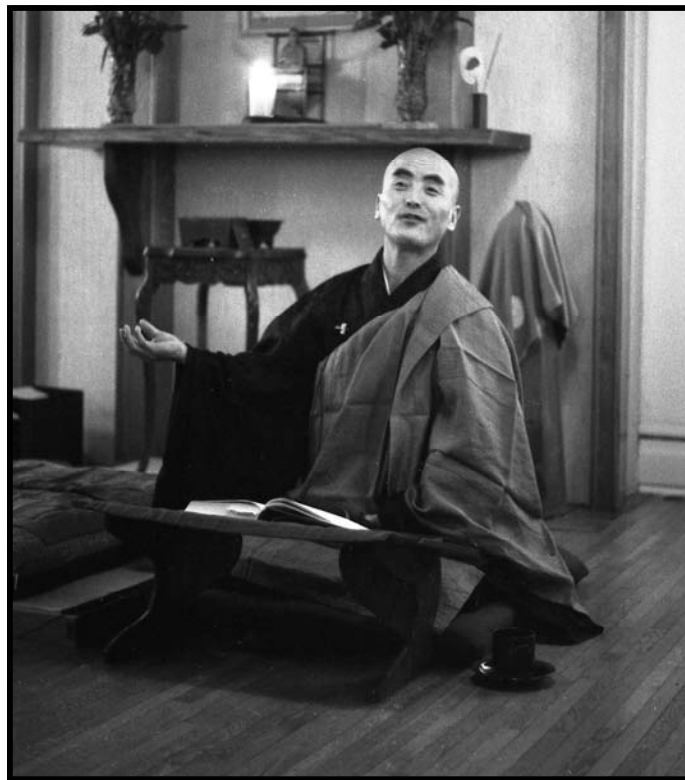
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# Prairie Wind



Dainin Katagiri-roshi

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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*** (© 2010 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

**All Katagiri-roshi photos courtesy of Dosho Port**

We **always** need material for ***Prairie Wind***. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, 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](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)

# BEYOND WORDS

by *Nonin Chowaney*

I either give a dharma talk or lead a group discussion every Sunday at our temple in Omaha, and I frequently discuss the dharma and answer questions about it in various contexts throughout the week. I'm also active in a general Zen Buddhist forum on the internet and in a Zen teachers e-mail forum. Sometimes, I get all caught up in words, in talking, analyzing, theorizing. Some of this is okay, but it can get tiresome after a while, draining.

One of the aspects of Zen Buddhism that first attracted me was the communication of its spirit and essential teaching by non-verbal means – just sitting (zazen), painting, flower arranging, tea ceremony, calligraphy -- and by less discursive uses of words, such as poetry and koans.

Many years ago, I was working long hours at a high-pressure job as a pipe welder in a nuclear power plant, was involved in an intense love relationship, and was working on various writing projects. In a rare quiet moment, I was paging through a book of landscapes by Zen practitioner/painters, and I was struck by the relationship between people and the rest of the environment. Unlike Western painting, where human figures stood out, Zen-influenced painting integrated them much more. Tiny houses with tinier figures inside nestled in the mountains and were part of a cohesive whole. I was calmed and settled by this. Later, I wrote a short poem

about the experience.

## looking at Chinese painting

pagodas, twisted trees  
waterfalls  
rivers and mountains  
no beginning  
no end

in a tiny cottage  
a tiny man  
cross-legged  
in solitude

immense peace

I found myself longing for the peace projected by these paintings.. Shortly thereafter, I met my Zen master, Dainin Katagiri, and began serious practice with him, driven by the desire to realize this peace (and the peace manifested by him) in my own life.

Zen practice emphasizes the transmission of dharma beyond words and letters. Case One of the *Book of Serenity*, (*Shoyoroku*) an ancient koan collection, reads:

One day, the World Honored One [Buddha] ascended the seat [to lecture]. Manjusri struck the gavel and said, 'Clearly observe the Dharma [truth, or teaching] of the King of Dharma. The Dharma of the King of Dharma is thus.' The

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## Beyond Words

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World Honored One then got down from the seat.

How refreshing! The truth, or teaching, is fully manifested and expressed by the teacher without uttering a word, by merely presenting himself (or herself), as he is, to the assembly. Later on, in Case Seven of the same collection, we find the story of Zen Master Yaoshan:

Yaoshan hadn't ascended the seat for a long time. The temple superintendent said to him, 'Everybody's been wanting instruction for a long time -- please, Master, expound the Teaching for the congregation.'

Yaoshan had him ring the bell; when the congregation had gathered, Yaoshan ascended the seat; after a while he got right back down from the seat and returned to his room. The superintendent followed after him and asked, 'A while ago you agreed to expound the Teaching for the congregation. Why didn't you utter a single word?'

Yaoshan said, 'For scriptures there are teachers of scriptures, for the treatises there are teachers of treatises. How can you question this old monk?'

A short time ago, I got a card from from an old friend. At the top, she had copied these lines from St. Francis of Assisi: "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words." Ah, once again, license to shut up. Good advice,

from a Christian teacher this time. A spiritual second opinion!

Because words cannot express the true nature of reality, Zen practice demands a living example to learn from. So it's very important to practice with a teacher. Sitting zazen is our cornerstone, but sitting zazen only is not enough. In fact, Zen Master Dogen said that if you don't sit under the guidance of a teacher, it's better not to sit at all. Why? Because it's too easy to get onto the wrong track, and, more importantly, it takes "face-to-face" involvement to see how zazen is manifested in daily life and to see how important the precepts are in Buddhist practice.

The importance of face-to-face involvement is manifested in the *Menju* ceremony, which opens the week-long series of dharma transmission (*shiho*) rituals during which master and disciple confirm their sameness. "*Menju*" means face-to-face transmission and is an acknowledgement that student and teacher met, that actual dharma transmission took place. In the ceremony, the disciple offers incense to the teacher, bows, and the teacher says, "The dharma gate of face-to-face transmission of Buddha and Buddha, Ancestor and Ancestor is realized." Then, the disciple bows again and leaves. Nothing more is said.

I've learned from my teachers by

## Beyond Words

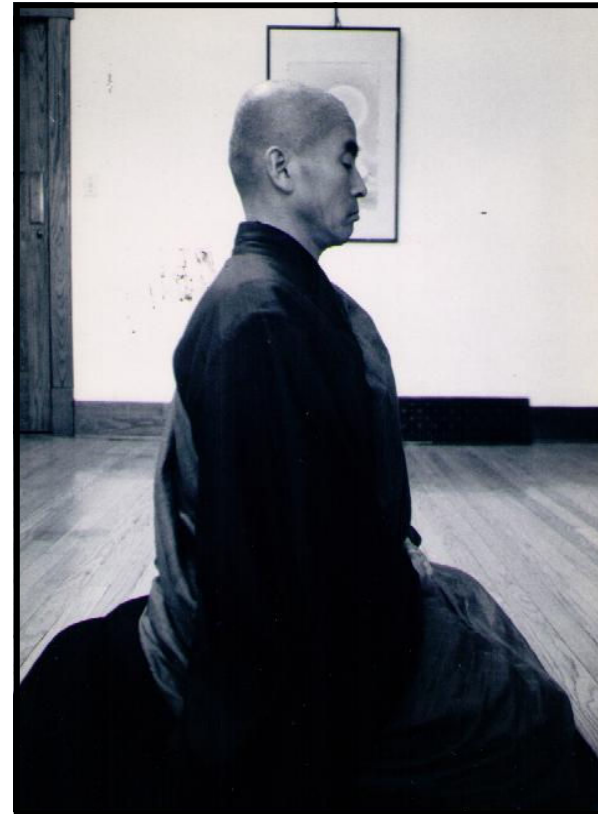
from page 4

closely observing how they live. I never heard Ikko Narasaki say a harsh word about anyone when I was study-

putting down others than any of his dharma talks on these subjects.

When my master, Katagiri-roshi, was leaving Shogo-ji monastery in Japan after practicing with us there, one of the Japanese monks said, "He teaches by his silence and his straight back." Dharma talks are important and meaningful, but they have their limitations. We can learn a great deal from weeding the garden with our teachers, from observing how they handle themselves when someone lashes out at them in anger, or, from absorbing their silence.

I became interested in practicing brush calligraphy while in Japan. Katagiri-roshi was an excellent calligrapher, and once, at Shogo-ji, I asked him to write



Dainin Katagiri-roshi

something for me. When someone asks for a piece of your work, the tradition is to give them one, but he was reluctant. I insisted, however, and he finally agreed. One day, I and another monk ground ink all morning

ing with him in Japan, and when I put down other people, he responded with silence. This silence struck with great force and taught me more about following the practice of right speech and the precept of not extolling the self by

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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

**FALL PRACTICE PERIOD** will begin with a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 18th and 19th** led by **Rev. Doshu Port**, Nonin's dharma brother. **Practice Period** provides structure for those 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).

We have revised our **Temple Addition** plans and have scaled back from expanding into the property next door. Our new plan is to **extend the zendo into the backyard**. Our architect says that the money we have in our building fund should be enough to finance the project. We hope to break ground **next Spring**.



**Comings and Goings:** Former temple resident **Eisai Elizabeth Muia** recently came back for a visit. It was great to see you again, Elizabeth! **Nonin** is going in for surgery on August 16th to repair an abdominal hernia. He'll be in the hospital for five or six days and will be recuperating at the temple after that.

**Shuji Valdene Mintzmyer** is practicing daily at the temple five days a week, and the place is looking great due to her efforts during work practice. We especially thank her for **refinishing the kitchen floor**. Many thanks to **Valdene, Pam Griffin, Mike Zagozda, and Deb Spicka** for their work on the gardens, trees, and shrubs. They've done work that has been neglected and have kept up our grounds this summer. Also, many thanks to **Ryoshin Joe Marshall** for donating a brand-new, self-propelled Toro lawnmower and for mowing the lawn.

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER EVENTS EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC coming up, a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 18th & 19th** and a **One-day sesshin** on **October 16th**. 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](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 **Oct. 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th**. 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](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org).

### OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 5	World Peace Ceremony	20	Precepts Ceremony
	Group Discussion	Nov 7	World Peace Ceremony
	22		Group Discussion
Oct 3	World Peace Ceremony	17	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

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

Our **June Intensive** began with a four-day sesshin led by visiting teacher **Rev. Daishin McCabe**, from Mt. Equity Zendo in Muncy, PA. **Our thanks to him!** After the Intensive, **Jigetsu Kaethejean Bleicher**, **Jokai Dustin Misosky**, **Shogen Gary Crouth**, and **Kakuon Rick Lohmeyer** (Have we forgotten anyone?) prepared the temple and grounds for a meeting of the **Soto Zen Buddhist Association Board of Directors** in mid-July. **Allen**, **Chelsea Attwood**, **Jyoshin Bryan Ritti**, **Gary**, and **Rev. Jisen Coghlan** supplied food and labor for the meeting. **Our thanks to Rev. Kyogen Carlson**, co-abbot of Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland, OR and President of the SZBA, who arrived early and gave dharma talk on Sunday of that week. Following the meeting, most of the SZBA Board drove to Rochester, NY for the **American Zen Teachers Association's** annual meeting.

**Kyoki**, who worked as a professional mediator (for the state of Nebraska) and facilitator before becoming a Zen priest and teacher, **facilitated a meeting** of a Buddhist group in Ohio in late July and then attended a **Restorative Justice** training in Bethlehem, PA. This fall, **Kyoki's** term on the SZBA Board ends, but she will continue to serve on the **Ethics Committee** and hopes to use her mediation and facilitation skills to help resolve difficult issues within Buddhist sanghas.

**Rev. Jisen Coghlan** is working with Carnegie Mellon University students and has been nominated to serve on their **Interfaith Council**.

On August 27th, we are hosting a Picnic Under the Stars. All are welcome to join us!



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website: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

## ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER	19 —Precept Ceremony
5 —World Peace Ceremony	22-24 —Two Day Sesshin*
9, 16, 23 —Working with Anger	
Work Shop at UUShady- side*	NOVEMBER
10-12 —Two-day Sesshin*	7 —World Peace Ceremony
21 —Precept Ceremony	13 —Half-day Sitting*
	14 —Precept Ceremony
OCTOBER	**Please register for this event
3 —World Peace Ceremony	
17 —ZCP Board Meeting	

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Closed Mondays

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

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

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

### *Separation is an Illusion*

by Vicki Grunwald

“Separation is an illusion,” echoed Nonin’s voice in my head as I walked through the prison. Then, my escort spoke into a radio clipped to his blue shirt near his left shoulder: “49 to Tower, escorting one ten-fourteen from turnkey to religion.” A buzzer sounds and a door that weighs 2000 pounds opens. This is the fourth and final such door that I must pass through; as the door closes with a thunderous **thud**, the sound echoes for a few seconds. Then, I stand in the yard at Tecumseh State Correctional Institution. A new volunteer in a sea of khaki uniforms interspersed with islands of blue shirts — them and us.

Actually, it is more like them, us, and me. In guard-speak, a ten-fourteen is someone requiring an escort. Inmates may need escorts to the visiting room or to the segregation unit, which the inmates call “the hole.” Therefore, some guards refer to me as an ‘outside’ ten-fourteen. Other guards prefer to use the layman’s term “religion volunteer.” Regardless of the title used, it identifies me as an outsider.

Some guards are female, but most are male. I am female. Khaki means inmate; blue means staff. My

## 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**.

clothes are different colors, for they are my own, and they make me stand out.

A razor wire fence surrounds the prison yard separating the men from the outside world. Four incredibly heavy doors separate the yard from the parking lot. Red lines separate who can walk where. Men dressed in khaki who are separated from the rest of those in the yard by the activity in their minds walk past me with downcast eyes. I am a different gender; I wear different clothes. I am inside a separating fence, and I’ve walked through separating doors. I can’t recall ever feeling more separate in my life. I’m in a system that is the epitome of separation. Not only is it palpable, it is painful. What did Nonin mean by “separation is an illusion?” How could I ever speak to the men about this topic if I don’t believe it? I decided right then that I needed to break down the perception of separation.

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## *Separation is an Illusion*

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At our meetings, I try to show the men that they are part of the sangha of Nebraska Zen Center, that they are not one of our “projects.” When speaking, I pay special attention to pronoun usage. saying things like, “Here is an update on “our” temple, or Nonin is “our teacher. or “we” will have a Remembrance Ceremony, one at the temple in Omaha and another here at the religion center. At first, the men saw me as an outside volunteer who came to visit their prison group. “She” comes to see “us.” In time however, many came to see themselves as part of NZC.

Prison inmates are part of our religious community. At the temple in Omaha, we updated our ekos (dedications after sutra chanting ) to include the White Lotus Sangha. Our health and well-being list includes loved ones of members both incarcerated and free. Our board meetings have a White Lotus update so the non-volunteers can hear about the rest of our members.

A former inmate, John Paul, recently received parole. He attended NZC in prison, when in work release, and now comes to our temple in Omaha. He has said that although these are all different places, integrating with the group on the outside was not a problem because he was already a part of it.



## *iron goddess of mercy*

*ti guan yin*

*whoever said  
this was supposed  
to be easy  
got it wrong*

*any moment now  
our heartache  
could crush me*

*each one of us begins  
as the finest raw quality  
but most are ruined  
in the processing*

*improperly cooled  
tossed  
curled*

*sun-dried too long  
our eyes withered shut*

*tea of the iron bodhisattva  
to develop your  
compassion is the hardest  
master yet*

*nothing special  
I give my life  
sweeping your temple clean*

*Andy Helgesen*

# Dreams

by Kanho Doug Dittman

Since we're in the business of waking up, perhaps it follows that we shouldn't concern ourselves with dreams. However, over the years, I've found that practicing Zen Buddhism in general and studying with a teacher in particular has triggered potent dreams, and I've found it fruitful to reflect a little on what's going on in them.

An example would be the dream I had a few nights ago that came hard on the heels of having sat a two-day sesshin (meditation retreat). In this dream my teacher, Nonin, and I are walking together. I carry a heavy bag of cement-mix on my shoulder. We walk down to the edge of a pond, and I immediately wade in. Surprisingly, it's not a shallow pond but a deep pool, and directly, I find myself on the bottom in fifteen feet of water!

I look up and Nonin is there, bending over, calmly peering down at me. I'm in a bit of a fix, but I figure I'll just shrug off the sack and pop back up, only to realize that the sacking is sewn into my clothing, so it will not come off. I'm in real trouble, for I cannot breath and begin to struggle wildly.

Luckily, I woke up at this point, but I couldn't help but reflect on the dream.

First of all, it's not surprising that the dream came following sesshin. For some time now, I've found sesshins to be freeing experiences and have learned to set aside my personal burdens, such as difficulties at home, problems on the

farm, etc., at least for that proscribed period of time. However, as lay people, we have to leave the temple and return home when the retreat is over and once again pick up the unique responsibilities that each of us carries. This is our life as it is, and these obligations are neither good nor bad. However, it's certainly possible to take on more weight than we can carry, just as it's possible to not shoulder enough.

Sewing the sack into our clothing is a problem, for this is carrying things too far and fixes our responsibilities as deathly important and permanent. It's essential that we can both pick up the weight and then put it back down again.

If you add deep water to the picture, you've got a real problem. If you shoulder too much weight and feel that you cannot put it down, you're quickly at the bottom of a deep pool, and you cannot breathe. If something doesn't change quickly, you're going to drown!

I was angry as I struggled underwater in my dream. As I reflect on it now, I like how Nonin merely peers down upon the fix I've gotten myself into. While I assume that Zen Masters carry every bit as much weight as the rest of us, perhaps they're more adept at saying "no" to certain burden offers and certainly avoid sewing them into their robes. So, Nonin walks freely in the dream, no burden, and when we

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

### Membership

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

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

### Financial Support

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

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

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

## LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

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



## Dreams

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come to the water's edge, he stops and doesn't fall in. How many times have I fallen into the same hole?

So, once again, Nonin in the dream (which I take as somehow a manifestation of myself) is simply showing me an option, a different way of being. The bags of cement, the needle and thread, and the deep water are all things that I create.

The sun is shining on the bank of the pool, a friend is there, and the scene to him is probably quite beautiful. Slowly, I learn that drowning in the midst of my life is a poor choice, especially when in reality, it is such a gorgeous day.

**Kanho Doug Dittman is a student of Nonin's and long-time member of Nebraska Zen Center. He maintains a zendo at his farm, at which the Lincoln Zen Group meets. The zendo website is <http://www.branchedoakfarm.com/zendo.php>**



Dream

## Beyond Words

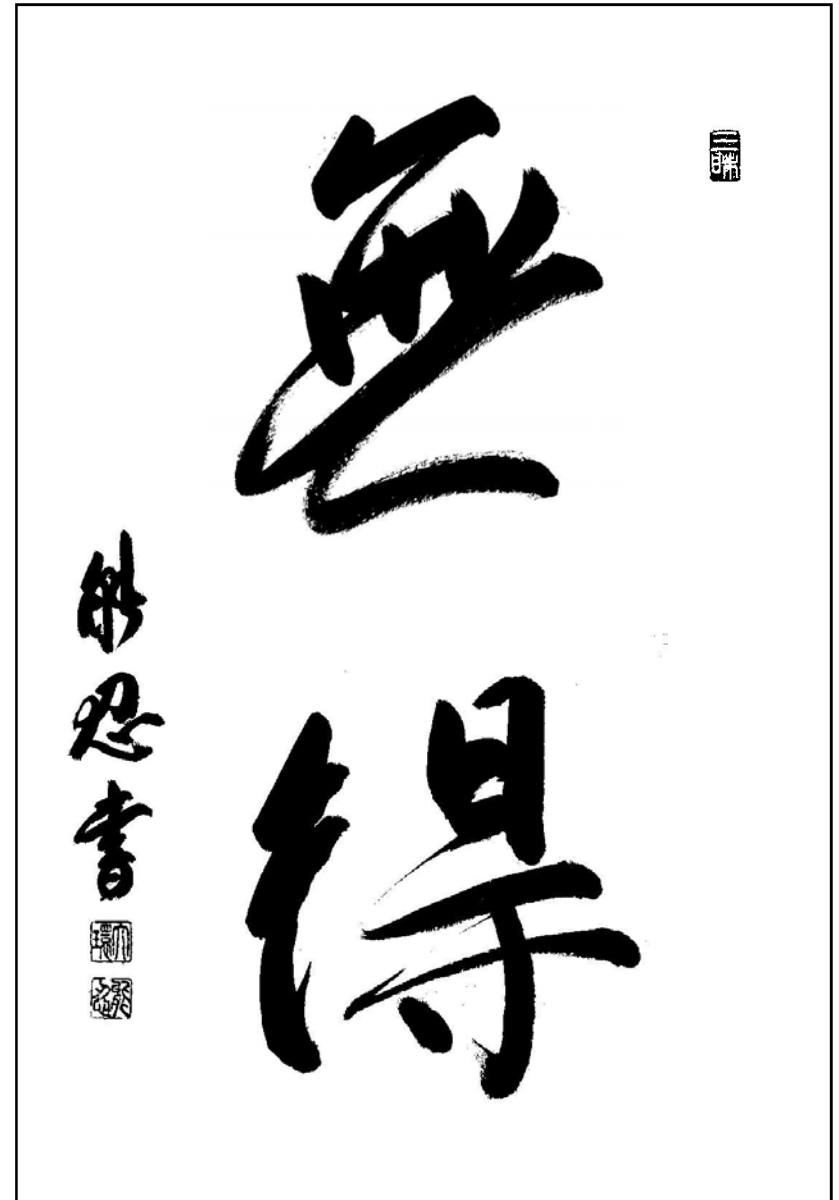
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and prepared paper and brush for him.

Katagiri-roshi joined us after lunch and carefully inspected our work. He picked up a brush, dipped it in ink, and put it down on the paper with great authority, drawing a clear, precise line. Then, he began to tell me that the most important thing was how you first put the brush down and how this had to be practiced time and time again with each one of the seven basic strokes. Next, he got up and handed me the brush. He walked behind me and, by stretching over my back and guiding my hand, showed me what he meant. After about five minutes, he got up, told me to keep practicing, and left! The other monk and I were shocked. Though I got no calligraphy from him, I got one more valuable lesson in how to stand on my own two feet and do my own practice.

The ancient master Bodhidharma spoke of Zen as "a special tradition outside of the scriptures, no dependence on words, directly pointing to reality." What a relief to be able to just shut up, sit down, observe, and practice without getting all tangled up in words.

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



No Gain — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney



## 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.**



Koshin Milo Alexander, Nonin, and Zenryu Vicki Grunwald



Front: Buddy, Kanho Doug Dittman  
Back: Ron Semerena, Dosho Port

# ZAZEN

by *Dainin Katagiri*

In Japanese, *zazen* means "sitting meditation." Literally, "Za" is sitting, "Zen" is tranquility. I use the term "zazen" because the *zazen* we do is a little different from the kind of meditation other religions do. That is why I want to use the original term, *zazen*.

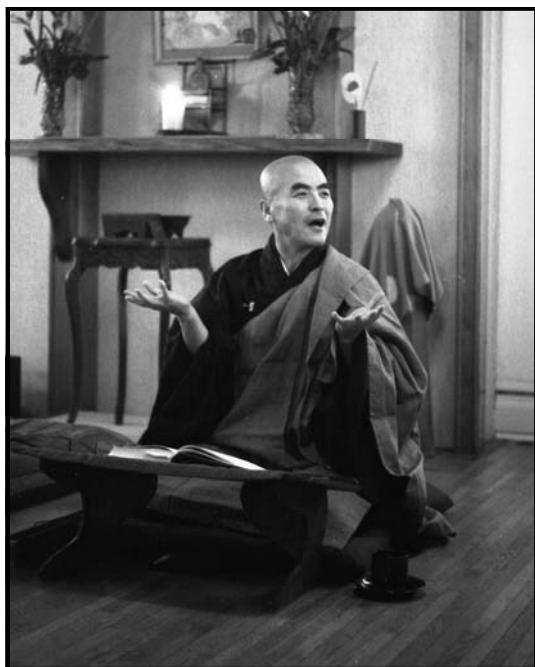
In Chinese, etymologically, "za" means "two persons sitting in the universe." That means, "sitting;" it means you have to sit with more than two beings, not only human beings. You cannot sit alone. So you should sit with more than two beings in the universe, not in your own egoistic, selfish territory. So you must open yourself and sit in the universe. Very naturally, you have to sit with all sentient beings. That is called sitting.

Very naturally, that sitting is *zen*, tranquility, because all sentient beings around you are exactly sitting with you. So very naturally that is called *Zen*, tranquility. So you, and the universe, earth, all beings, and all circumstances become sitting with you. This is called "zazen."

So all we have to do is do our best to sit in the universe with all sentient beings. That is all we have to do. Don't expect anything special. Just do your best to do

this *zazen*. Just like a spinning top. The top is spinning, just spinning; at that time the top becomes still on the floor, very naturally. That's all you have to do.

But if you even slightly expect some-



**Dainin Katagiri-roshi**

thing from *zazen*, *zazen* becomes me, two ends; at that time, *zazen* has a purpose. So very naturally there is something else and you cannot do your best to sit because you expect something besides *zazen*. So, when you want to do *zazen*, anyway, do your *zazen*.

## *Zazen*

from previous page

That's all we have to do.

If you feel hungry, all you have to do is just eat, and then, after eating, you can very naturally see something. But before you eat, you cannot expect a full stomach because you haven't eaten yet. So all you have to do is eat. But intellectually, you have to know, "What is *zazen*?" "What is our purpose?" "What will be the result?" So that's why we have to explain how to do *zazen*, how to eat breakfast, supper, etc. But when you jump into something with the full functioning of your intellectual sense and just eat, it's not "just eat" blindly but with your full attention, full kindness; then you eat. And then very naturally, you can see something else.

But usually we expect something before we do *zazen*, from *zazen*. So always your mind is spinning, "What is *zazen*? What is the purpose of *zazen*?" So if you do *zazen* after hearing something about *zazen* from your friends, from books, like, "*Zazen* makes you calm," you expect calmness. But actually your mind is busy. It's pretty hard to find calmness, so this is confusing. But calmness or not calmness, that is intellectual understanding. Why do we have to do this? Many reasons there. But when you start to do *zazen*, forget those explanations. Just sit.

*Nonin's teacher, Rev. Dainin Katagiri (1928-1990), was founder and abbot of*

*Minnesota Zen Center in Minneapolis and Hokoji Zen Monastery in Southeastern Minnesota. He was a Soto Zen priest for over forty years.*

*We give Zazen Instruction at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple every Sunday morning. E-mail us at [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org), and we'll let you know how to participate.*

*apostle islands 1983*

*wind  
waves  
rocks*

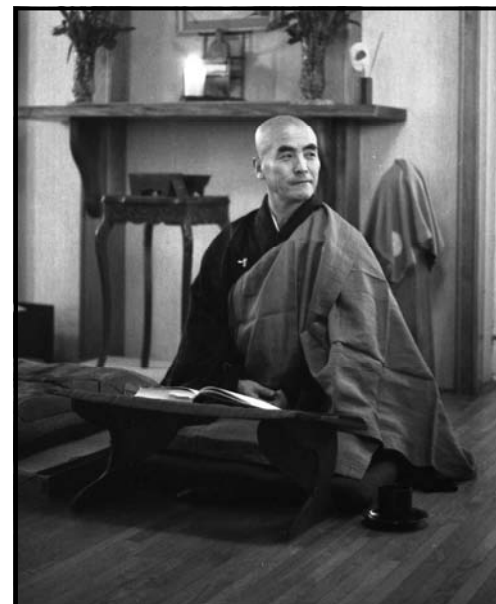
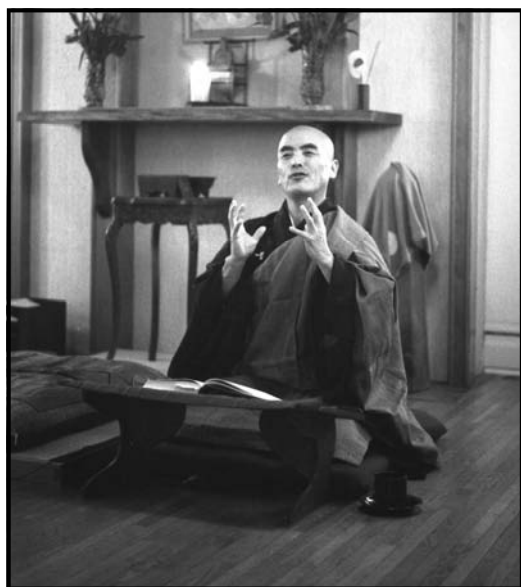
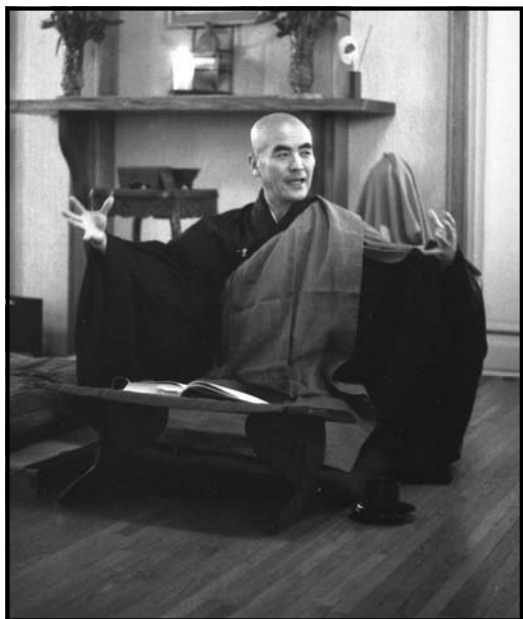
*lichens  
reaching back  
hundreds of millions  
of years*

*rock doesn't end  
i don't begin*

*just zazen  
with the sand  
and lake superior*

*Nonin Chowaney*

# KATAGIRI-ROSHI



# SANGHA LIFE

by *Dainin Katgiri*

According to Zen Master Dogen, there are three aspects to functioning in the Buddhist community we call the sangha. We practice (1) to benefit others, (2) to develop the sangha, and (3) to follow the ways of the Buddhas and ancestors.

The sangha is not a place to practice Buddhism just for ourselves; we practice to do something for others. Our practice is not to enhance our personality or deepen our character but to express our deepest gratitude for all beings, by which our lives are already supported and helped. If we don't practice in this way, our practice is consciously or unconsciously based on egoism.

Yesterday, I received a journal from Eiheiji Monastery. In it, a professor of education wrote of his impressions when he visited Eiheiji. From the monks' attitudes he felt very deeply how strict their life was. On the other hand, he found something completely different, a sense of arrogance. A monk showed him all the buildings, explained their functions, and described the strictness of daily life, but this monk never expressed his gratitude for all beings.

Monks cannot practice at Eiheiji without the help of all beings. Many people work in order to support the monastery and the monks – growing vegetables,

working at jobs, and serving society. To create just one grain of rice takes a lot of effort. Without expressing our deepest gratitude for these people and these things, we cannot practice. That is why the professor said that he found a sense of arrogance. This is really egoism. Though we practice very hard, if we don't express our deepest gratitude for our lives, we cannot practice as Buddha taught. Practice must go on very quietly, not showing off, with humility, gracefulness, even shyness sometimes, with nothing to say, no comment, very quiet.



## *fading away*

*for katagiri-roshi*

*walking in the mountains  
outside kyoto  
above shorin-ji*

*up a two-track  
covered with  
fallen brown cedar  
and fresh spring green*

*i pull out  
my journal*

*paper falls out*

*your name  
written to place  
on the altar  
the night you died*

*jikai dainin daiosho*

*i pull out a match  
and strike it*

*paper flares  
curls into ash*

*smoke rises into  
overhanging branches*

*fades away*

*Nonin Chowaney*

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