

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 (© 2012 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover: The Soto Zen Buddhism Mandala: Shakyamuni Buddha, with Dogen Zenji on his left, Keizan Zenji on his right.

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Winter** issue is **November 15th**.

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

SITTING AND PAIN

by Nonin Chowaney

The following article appeared many years ago in Prairie Wind. It is reprinted here by request.

During Zen meditation (*zazen*), it's important to sit upright and still. Body and mind are not two, so if body is not stable, mind is not stable. To concentrate the mind on the issue at hand – whether following the breath, koan work, or “just sitting (*shikantaza*)” – proper posture must be assumed and maintained. Therefore, Zen teachers encourage their students to assume a stable posture and sit still. Fidgeting, scratching, or stretching is counter-productive and is discouraged.

However, moving as a result of physical pain is a different matter. Everyone who sits *zazen* has to deal with pain, for we sit for long periods of time, from thirty to forty minutes a session, sometimes longer. Whenever the body is held in *any* position for long periods of time, something is going to hurt. Given that reality and also given that it's important to sit upright and still, the question that arises for all of us who sit is: What should I do when the pain comes?

Answers to this question vary from temple to temple and from teacher to teacher. I've sat in temples where if anyone moves during *zazen*, the teacher will shout “SIT STILL!” or “DON'T MOVE!” In those temples, once you assume a posture, no movement is allowed for the duration of the sitting period. If anyone moves, they'll get

hollered at. However, I've also sat in temples where the teacher says nothing when someone moves. In those temples, moving to change posture is okay if our original posture becomes too uncomfortable. If someone moves repeatedly, those in charge will later find out why and deal with each situation case by case.

As at all Zen temples, we at Heartland Temple in Omaha teach people to sit upright and still, without fidgeting, stretching, or scratching. We also encourage them to handle pain individually, for we are all different. Some are limber; some are not. No one can determine how much pain another person is feeling or can tolerate because no one else can feel that person's pain. When I give *zazen* instruction, therefore, I tell people to sit with an attitude somewhere between “wimp” and “macho.” In other words, don't switch postures immediately when the pain comes. If we do, we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to stretch ourselves not only physically but also mentally so that we can subsequently sit for longer periods. If we move too soon, we also deprive ourselves of the opportunity to sit with the pain instead of running away from it. If we learn to sit with pain, we may be surprised at how much pain we can sit with. This can be a help in learning to live with physical and mental pain in other

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areas of our lives instead of running away and escaping through things like alcohol, drugs, exercise, food, and television.

However, we must also learn to move when the pain is too much, when it makes it impossible to sit well, and when if we don't move, we could injure ourselves. We also need make sure that we don't make zazen an endurance contest or a competition between ourselves and other practitioners to prove

ment pain, or nerve pain and numbness is another matter. It's not a good idea to try to sit through this kind of pain. If you damage a nerve, it takes a long time to heal, up to six months per one-eighth of an inch of damage. If you seriously damage a nerve, it may never heal.

During my first sesshin with my master, Dainin Katagiri, I was sitting in a kneeling posture (Jap. *seiza*) and numbness developed in a heel that

Things turn out best for the people who make the best out of the way things turn out.

Art Linkletter

who's the best or the toughest. This is the "macho" side of zazen practice. This attitude contributes to a "culture of toughness" that we sometimes experience at Zen practice centers.

I mentioned before that at our temple in Omaha, we encourage people to determine for themselves how much pain is too much and when to move. Before we can clearly determine what to do when pain comes, however, it helps to be clear about what kind of pain it is. Soft tissue pain is usually temporary and goes away quickly when we get up. We can sit through this kind of pain for a while and then change postures when it gets too uncomfortable without doing any permanent damage. Joint pain, liga-

lasted well after the last zazen period of the evening. I talked to Katagiri-roshi about it the next day. He told me to sit in a different posture and if necessary, to use more cushions to prop myself up. He was very clear that I shouldn't sit in the posture I was using if this type of problem persisted.

Ligament or joint pain should also not be overdone. American Zen lore contains more than a few stories about practitioners who overdid it sitting cross-legged or in *seiza* and ended up having arthroscopic surgery on a knee, which doesn't always solve the problem. Rev. Kyoki Roberts, Head Priest at Deep Spring Temple near Pittsburgh, has had two knee surgeries to

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repair injuries that she attributes to overdoing it when she trained at a temple on the West Coast. She was sitting in a kneeling posture during a sesshin, and whenever anyone moved in the zendo, a sharp "DON'T MOVE" came from the teacher's seat. She was relatively new to practice at the time and had only entered this temple a few days before, so she felt that she had to follow instructions. She ended up sitting through more pain than she should have and had her first surgery for a torn meniscus shortly after she returned to Omaha.

Roshi Jiyu Kennett, a British Zen Master who founded Shasta Abbey in California, used to recall that while in Japan, an old monk in charge of zazen guidance at Sojiji monastery told her that zazen was not an endurance test and that people new to sitting should not learn to dread it. He said to sit for as long as one can do it in reasonable comfort then push a little further. After that, change positions. This way you stretch your capacity without injury and don't lose the desire to keep sitting. This is good advice, and I pass it on to all who sit, especially to beginners.

I've been sitting zazen daily for over thirty years. For me, zazen is not, never was, and never will be pain-free. Early on, my personal experience with pain during zazen was, well, painful! I began sitting with Katagiri-roshi at Minnesota Zen Center in the late

1970's. At that time, we sat for forty minutes a period. I was thirty-eight years old when I began sitting. I'd never been very limber, and I'd suffered a variety of sports injuries to my knees and ankles over the years. At the start, cross-legged postures were impossible for me, so I began by sitting in *seiza*, the kneeling posture in which the sitting cushion is straddled and the feet are extended out behind it. Sitting through a forty minute period of zazen without moving was agony for me at first, but I didn't dare move. Why? Because no one sitting around me was moving. No one had told me *not* to move, but I assumed that you weren't supposed to move because no one was moving.

One evening, I sat next to someone who, in the middle of zazen, put his hands together, bowed, and changed his posture. No one said anything. Later, I asked someone about this, and they said that changing postures in the middle of zazen was okay. Unfortunately, the person who gave me zazen instruction neglected to mention this! Later still, I realized that when I first came to the temple, I'd been sitting near more limber, experienced students who didn't need to move much!

However, even after I found out that changing posture in the middle of a sitting period was okay, it was still problematic for me. For one thing, Katagiri-roshi never moved, and I wanted to be like him. Of course the

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NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

FALL PRACTICE PERIOD begins with a **Two-day sesshin** on **September 15th and 16th**. Practice Period provides structure for intensifying one's practice and 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** (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).



Sarah Neppel, Nonin, & Deb Spicka after **Lay Initiation** in March. Sarah's dharma name is **Kyosai** (Great Capability or Talent) and Deb's is **Hoen** (Dharma Garden). **Congratulations to you both!**

We are moving along with our **major temple remodeling**. We're now sitting in our **new zendo** on the East side (see page 20), and are using the **new garage** on the West. The rest of the West side addition should be functioning by late Fall. **Many, many** thanks to those temple members who volunteered on this project. You've saved us a lot of money, and it's been a great time working together!

Also, **many** thanks to those who've been doing temple jobs this Spring and Summer. Special thanks go to **Pam Griffin**, who once again this year has put in a lot of time on the gardens, weeding, re-arranging, planting, replanting, and making sure things get watered during the severe drought we're experiencing. **Thanks so much, Pam!**

Rev. Jisen Coghlan's dharma transmission was held last June at Deep Spring Temple. Rev. Kyoki Roberts officiated, and Nonin attended. **(Photos on pg. 22)**

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER FALL EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Fall: a **Two-day sesshin** on September 15th & 16th, a **One-day Sitting** on October 13th, and a **Seven-day sesshin** (Rohatsu) from December 1-7. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035** to register.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **Dharma Study Class** at the temple this Fall. It will meet on four successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 a.m. till noon**, on **October 6th, 13th, 20th & 27th**. The subject for study will be announced later.

OTHER FALL EVENTS

Sep 4	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion	Nov 4	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
26	Precepts Ceremony	28	Precepts Ceremony
Oct 7	Word Peace Ceremony Group Discussion		
24	Precepts 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 need-)
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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. You will also receive our monthly e-Newsletter.

The Highlight of our June Practice Period this year was a **Dharma Transmission Ceremony** (photos on pages. 23 & 24) for **Rev. Jisen Coghlan** on June 10, officiated by Deep Spring's Head Priest, **Rev. Kyoki Roberts**. Jisen has been practicing at Deep Spring since its inception in 1999. She also trained with Rev. Master Eko Little, past abbot of Shasta Abbey, and Rev. Dai-En Bennage of Mt. Equity Zendo. **Rev. Master Shiko Rom of Shasta Abbey**, and **Rev. Nonin Chowaney** and **Jose Correa** of Heartland Temple came for the ceremony. Jisen now leads a group that meets at the Church of the Redeemer in Pittsburgh Thursday evening and one that will be meeting this fall at Kearns Spirituality Center in the North Hills Tuesday evening. She continues to meet with students and is teaching a class at Deep Spring.

Groups from Sewickley Academy, Trekkers of Maine, and the Pittsburgh School of Mortuary Science visited Deep Spring this summer, and *An Olive Branch*, ZCP's mediation service for non-profits, held a training on diversity issues led by **Tokuen Barbara Gray** of Penn State.

Work on the new living space off the garage continues with help from architect and temple member **Liaoran Mimi Jong**, along with **Jigetsu Kaethejean Bleicher**, **Tom Slater**, **Jokai Dustin Misosky**, **Zenshin Steven Coraor**, and **Kyoki**. Special thanks to **Dr. John Bray** for use of his truck and deep bows to Jisen's husband **Kevin Coghlan** for laying the tile!

In August, **Choan Ryan Minster**, **David Pettersen**, and **Steven** went to Hokyoji in Minnesota for the Great Sky 7-day Sesshin, and **Kyoki** traveled to Minneapolis to lead a *Difficult Conversations* workshop at Minnesota Zen Center.

Sangha Members **Dave Belako** and **David Pettersen** sewing rakus in preparation for **Lay Initiation** this November.

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website: www.prairiewindzen.org

ZCP FALL EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

- 1,8,15 — Buddhist Studies Class on Genjo Koan led by Jisen, 8:30-10:00 a.m.
- 2 — World Peace Ceremony, 9:00 a.m.
Does the Buddha Salsa Concert & Picnic, 4:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- 27 — Precept Ceremony
- 29 — Founders Memorial Service

OCTOBER

- 7 — World Peace Ceremony
- 19-21 — Two-day Sesshin*
- 25 — Precept Ceremony

NOVEMBER

- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 11 — Lay Initiation, 9 a.m.

23-24 — ZCP Closed

29 — Precept Ceremony

DECEMBER

- 1-7 — Rohatsu Sesshin*
- 8 — ZCP Closed
- 9 — Buddha's Enlightenment Day
- 20 — Precepts Ceremony

*Please register for this event

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

Prison Practice

by Vicki Grunwald

When NZC first came to the prisons, we not only taught everyone how to sit zazen but also how to do our short chanting and bowing service with only the inkin (handbell). Now that the men have deepened their practice, we have added liturgical supplies such as a gong and a rin (small bell) which are used by the doan, the one who rings the bells and leads chanting during service.

When people are learning the doan role, they need to be corrected if they make a mistake, sometimes publicly. The role also brings up one of the basic fears, the fear of public speaking, which is hard for some people. The priest (doshi) may stop the service, correct the doan and have him or her redo some of the chanting or bell striking. When this happens, the tendency is for the doan to think either “Nonin thinks I’m an idiot” or “everyone is looking at me,” or “I am failing at this task.” But these are just stories about what the person is feeling. Eventually the practitioner learns that correction is just correction, and the practitioner learns to drop the stories and accept the correction. This idea is a hard sell in the Department of Corrections where correction probably means that you have committed a felony, are losing a privilege, or having your file

documented in a way that may affect your parole eligibility. Yet many inmates get past these ideas and perform the doan role as skillfully as a practitioner on the outside.

As in all sanghas, White Lotus Sangha membership ebbs and flows. The sangha at Tecumseh State Correctional Institute (TSCI) had 3 core members and a few

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**.

some-timers (those that attend semi-regularly) when I started visiting. The core members knew the doan role well and even sewed rakus and went through Lay Initiation. Due to transfers and paroles, the group dwindled down to member. Then a some-timer whose attendance waxed and waned over the years decided to commit to the practice. He became a regular, and the

GRATITUDE

by Tonen O'Connor

There is a significant difference between the Buddhist viewpoint on gratitude and that commonly held within the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic faiths. These great faiths all hold deep beliefs that all things come from God and that gratitude must be expressed to this powerful creator of all things.

So it might be said that Jews, Christians, and Muslims express gratitude TO a higher power, a great Being that is the source of all. Buddhists, however, feel gratitude not TO someone for kindness granted, but rather gratitude FOR their very existence, for being *included* among the billions of entities interconnected in the great web of life. When I began to search for quotes that would verbalize our sense of infinite gratitude, I found that the gratitude that is the bedrock of our faith is not something expressed as “thanks to...” It is expressed in our love for all beings.

The source of Buddhist gratitude lies in a particular conception of existence. We see the infinite expanse of the universe as a great web of interconnectedness, for which something called Indra’s Net offers a beautiful image. Imagine a vast net knotted like a fisherman’s net. At every intersection hangs a brilliant, many faceted, jewel, each facet of each jewel reflecting all the other jewels to infinity. Reality lies not in the knots or the jewels, but in the reflections — the constantly shifting, ever changing *relationships* among all things in the vast universe.

This net of relationships is a living process that performs with absolute purity as pure, intentionless cause and effect. This process is unknowable in the usual sense because it is without characteristics of its own. It is vast potential. This potential realizes itself as the material world that we know and inhabit. Here cause and effect create an ever-changing universe of physical and emotional entities, where each result is both the reflection of a cause and in itself a cause of new reflections.

As Buddhists, we have a sense of immense gratitude for being realized as human beings within this vast interconnected network. There is an old Buddhist saying that it is as likely to be born a human as it is for a blind turtle that surfaces from the depths of the ocean once every hundred years to stick its neck through a golden ring floating at random upon the surface of the sea. Our gratitude is for every breath we take.

We owe this deep debt of gratitude for the wonder that within the vast workings of probability we have emerged as human beings, for human beings are, as far as we know, the only creatures given the ability to perceive the enormous implications of this process of change and interdependence. We have the ability to consciously play our part in the world of Buddha Nature.

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In Loving Memory Rosie 1996-2012



Ryoshin Joe Marshall writes:

“As usual, Rosie met me at the door this morning [Thursday, 8/7] at about 5:45 a.m.. Usually she leads me into the kitchen to give her a treat at this point. Instead, she said “myeh” three times and lied down. I thought she might want her tummy rubbed so I petted her just a bit. I turned on the light and took off my shoes and by the time I turned around she wasn’t moving.”

This was completely unexpected. Rosie was 17 years old, but was as active as ever. I'm assuming that her heart gave out. Joe and I set up a table in front of the Buddha Hall altar, and we placed Rosie on it. That afternoon, I wrapped her in a nice cloth and did a service for her. I then dug her grave in the back yard, placed her in it, chanted the En Mei Juku Kannon Gyo, and buried her.

She will be missed.

Nonin

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 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 (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

Sitting and Pain

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thrust of his teaching was to guide me toward being completely *me*, stiff, injured legs and all, but early on, I didn't realize this. I also wanted to be like the older students, who all sat nice and straight for long periods of time. I wanted to be something other than I was, which was creating lots of problems for me. The biggest problem was excruciating pain in my knees and ankles as I stubbornly tried to cling to the idea that because others weren't moving, I shouldn't move either. Of course others weren't me, but this realization didn't dawn on me until later in my sitting career.

I laugh at all this now, but it wasn't funny then. I realize now that the pain was inevitable, but the suffering I created by not moving when I should have was optional. I chose to suffer with the pain because of the problem I created by wanting to be something different than what I was. I wanted people to look at me and see an experienced practitioner, which I wasn't. Fortunately, I never permanently injured myself by my stupid behavior. I was lucky.

Of course, after I finally gave in and began to change my posture when the pain got to be more than I could easily bear, other problems arose. One was guilt. I felt guilty for moving. I also felt like a failure. These ego problems were sometimes harder to deal with than the pain, so I still continued sitting without moving longer than I should have even though I knew I

could and should move. Then, at the end of the period, I at least felt triumphant instead of defeated. I had prevailed! Sore knees, yes, but they were easier for me to handle at that time than a sore ego.

After I'd been practicing with Katagiri-roshi a couple of years, a pivotal moment occurred during a seven-day sesshin. Since cross-legged postures were as yet beyond me, I was still sitting seiza at the time, and sesshins were particularly grueling. On the second

*Mud begets lotus
A paw print barks in dust on
Nonin's zabuton*

Courtney Gibbons

day, I found myself unable to sit for more than twenty minutes or a half-hour without changing my posture, which meant splaying my feet out to the side for a while and then putting them back pointing behind me when the pain in my ankles and knees subsided. (If you can't sit cross-legged, it severely limits the postures you can change *to*.) During the break after lunch, I was sitting glumly in the downstairs office having coffee. I was *Ino* (practice coordinator) at the time, and I was particularly disappointed in my inability to sit very long without moving. I had this notion that because I held a position of responsibility, I should serve as an example to

Sitting and Pain

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others and moving a lot really wasn't a good example.

While I was sitting there feeling like a failure, Joen Snyder (now Snyder-O'Neal, a Zen teacher in Minneapolis) came in. She noticed my glumness and asked what was the matter. I explained myself, and her response was, "Oh, Nonin, you just had to move, that's all; why add all this extra *stuff*?"

Her response rang like an alarm clock. Yes, I thought, I just had to move. It's okay to move. All this extra stuff – guilt, disappointment, despair – was unnecessary. I returned to the zendo in the afternoon, moved when I had to move, and then let it go without creating all the suffering. How liberating that was! I was so grateful to Joen for what she had said to me in the office.

After four years of practice in Minnesota, I spent two years at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and then went on to practice in Japan. There, at Shogoji Monastery, we experimented with free walking meditation. Morning and evening sittings were about two hours long, and we could walk when we wanted to in the hallway outside the zendo. Some research indicates that this is how Zen Master Dogen — the seminal Soto Zen Buddhist teacher in Japan — and his disciples practiced.

Free walking meditation was another liberating experience for me. I found that I could shorten or lengthen my sitting periods according to the condition of my body, and I found myself listen-

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 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on Saturday, Nov. 10th, from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.

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

ing to my body more and more. I noticed that when my legs were in good shape, I was sitting longer than the forty minute periods I used to struggle to get through. I also found myself looking forward to zazen, even when I was experiencing physical problems. Since I could walk whenever I needed to, I no longer felt uneasy before sesshins, which also became less stressful.

After practicing this way for a while, I finally came to understand what Dogen meant when he said that zazen is the "dharma gate of joyful ease" and that "smiling on our sitting cushion, there is nothing lacking." And I also understood what Shakya-muni Buddha meant when he said that "meditation is returning home to

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.

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sit in peace.”

When I established the practice at Heartland Temple in 1991, free walking meditation became a part of it. Our policy now is this: we encourage people to sit upright and still, without fidgeting, for as long as they can. When sitting becomes too uncomfortable, there are three options. The first is to quietly change posture. The second is to sit with both knees up or in the “royal ease” posture at our places for a time. The third is to do walking meditation in the buddha hall. Also, there are chairs available for those who need them. This procedure is also followed at Deep Spring Temple in Pittsburgh, where Kyoki Roberts is now Head Priest.

After thirty-two years, zazen for me is still not pain free, but I'm no longer troubled by it. Sometimes, I welcome it, for it certainly keeps me in the present moment! I've learned over the years to just be with the pain and sit with it. This experience has helped me live through physical ailments and the emotional pain of sadness, grief, and loss with some measure of equanimity as I grow older. However, I've also come to learn that when it gets to be too much, when I find myself straining, to just move before I injure myself. I now do this without even an instant of guilt or recrimination, even when I'm giving a dharma talk.

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Gratitude

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This consciousness is, however, also a dangerous thing, for it can give us a sense that we are separate, that we are observers of the world rather than participants in it. We can feel that all other beings and things are there for our convenience; we can grow angry when our will is denied. We set up

SPIRIT CREEK

*Snow melt —
water rushing over smooth polished stone:*

*the great blue heron
takes a step.*

Edwin Emerson

hierarchies of power, rank, and privilege.

But when we allow the teachings of the Buddha to penetrate our ego-imprisoned selves, we are liberated by the understanding that we are participants in this vast and glorious dance. Both our sense of entitlement and our sense of deprivation disappear and we realize the great truth of the universe that all things have equal importance within it, for the whole is always inseparable from its parts.

I'd like to share with you an example of the inseparability of the whole and

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Gratitude

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its parts that I like very much, given by the 7th century Chinese monk, Fa-Tsang. He asks us to imagine a large wooden barn. The barn seems to be the “whole,” yet Fa-Tsang says that one of its rafters is also the whole. What this means is that if we take away the rafter, we no longer have the barn and, conversely, the whole (the barn) is the part, for what was a rafter within the barn is no longer such lying on the ground. Even more interesting is the realization that a tiny nail in the barn has, through its function, equal importance with the rafter.

Sudden overwhelming gratitude emerges when we realize that we, and all things, are essential to this universe. We make it what it is at this moment. Our gratitude for being included at the heart of the matter evolves into a grateful compassion grounded in our intimate connection with all the other components of the whole. Our gratitude is expressed in seeking beneficial behavior that will benefit our home, the universe, and our family, all beings.

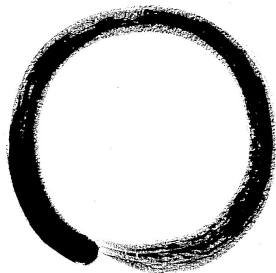
What I have expressed here is the teaching of Hua-yen Buddhism, one of the most revered of Mahayana Buddhist philosophies. It is Hua-yen philosophy that is being expressed by Dôgen, the 13th century Japanese founder of Soto Zen (my tradition) when he says in his great essay on Buddha Nature: “All beings/entire being is the Buddha Nature.”

In this, Dogen is rejecting a view that is sometimes put forward that we have Buddha Nature, something like a seed

within us that can be nurtured into a Buddha. The question arises where this seed may have come from, who might have planted it within us. It begins to creep close to the idea of a “soul”, something Shakyamuni Buddha reasoned we do not have... we are, rather, the coming together of causes and conditions that are in a state of ceaseless change, so we have no fixed or permanent self. Following this early teaching of the Buddha, Dôgen reasons that Buddha Nature is the name for the vast, universal process of impermanence and interdependence, and hence we ARE Buddha Nature.

Our gratitude flows from the deep realization that we are *included*. We are not outside, struggling to belong. There is no gratitude sufficient to express the wonder of this. It is not directed to one single Creator, but to all our fellow partners in the making of this universe.

Tonen O'Connor is Resident Priest Emerita at Milwaukee Zen Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



Sitting and Pain

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Pain when sitting is unavoidable; sooner or later it's going to hurt. What I tell myself is: Don't move too early; don't move too late. Don't do yourself damage, but don't sell yourself short. When you have to move, move, but don't add anything extra, like guilt. Suffering because you moved is optional. We already suffer enough in our lives as human beings. Why add more?

Nonin Chowaney is the abbot of Nebraska Zen Center/Heartland Temple in Omaha.

Prison Practice

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one previous member took a leave. The new regular talked to some buddies, who decided to come. For a few months, we enjoyed stable members. Then the some-timer-turned-regular went on work-release, leaving only the buddies. Is there even a group, I wondered? Do I need to start them over again with a handbell and the short service? Will the practice slip back to an earlier state? The answer surprised me. Not only is the group stable, the practice is non-retrograde. In other words the group is attracting serious members who are dedicated and who can and do perform the full service, including the doan role. They even ask about special services like Ryaku Fusatsu, our precept ceremony. I am really impressed with this group and am even “jazzed” about going to see the group at TSCI.

Zenryu Vicki Grunwald is a Lay Minister at White Lotus Sangha.



Rain, Flowers, Wind,
Pines; All Teach Zen

Calligraphy by
Nonin Chowaney

OUR NEW ZENDO



THE WAY

*I know the way to Peach Blossom Spring
a creek meandering through deep woods untouched;
to find the source all you have to do
is cut through this thicket of small shrubs.*

Edwin Emerson

MINNESCONSIN

*There is something of the mystical deep
in these north wood forests
of Minnesota and Wisconsin.*

*This ecotone of hard -
woods, this primordial
white pine ever-reach . . .*

*the wildness of woods and streams
of black bear and coyote and wolverine . . .*

*It is the long and lingering winter
that makes us vacant and numb.*

*Spring's magic transcendence
we sow the seeds
into black dirt . . .*

*And always the cruel shadow
of frost threatening to destroy
all we had planted.*

Edwin Emerson

DHARMA TRANSMISSION AT DEEP SPRING TEMPLE



Nonin, acting as a barrier gate, questions Jisen as she enters, with Rev. Master Shiko in the background.



A happy Kyoki



Nonin giving dharma words



Kyoki presenting lineage papers to Jisen



Kyoki and Jisen at the altar, ending the ceremony

Photos by Tony Roscoe