



# Prairie Wind

Volume 10, Issue 1

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Spring 2001

## DHARMA POETRY

by *Nonin Chowaney*

I like to take the dharma where I find it. By “dharma,” I mean truth, and by “taking it where I find it,” I mean anywhere, from anything that manifests it, or from anyone who writes about it. I define “truth” as “things as they are,” or sometimes, “words that describe things as they are.” When things, events, or words manifest truth, we intuitively know it, and we can learn from it.

Neither Zen Buddhist practitioners nor followers of other spiritual paths have an exclusive franchise for either understanding or manifesting the truth of human existence, so I don’t limit my activity to temple life or my friends and acquaintances to Zen practitioners. Nor do I limit my reading and study to Buddhist books. Recently, I’ve been giving dharma talks based on poems by contemporary American writers – William Stafford, Jane Hirschfield, Robert Bly, Wendell Berry, Mary Oliver, and others. Some of these poets are familiar with Buddhism; some aren’t. All of them, however, have discerning eyes and are able to see “things as they are.” When they write poems about these experiences, we are able to share their insights, and when these insights are the same as our own, they confirm our own experiences and function as a spiritual second opinion.



Bath Altar — Heartland Temple

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Floating Clouds — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

# WORK PRACTICE

by Mary Rapaport

One Sunday, after an especially busy week, I made time to visit Zen Center of Pittsburgh (ZCP). As usual, sitting zazen delivered a most blissful moment of peace. I breathed deeply and enjoyed this chance to escape the mundane, to turn inward and outward, to be in any moment that didn't involve going to work, making dinner, doing laundry, or scrubbing toilets.

When the zazen period was over, Work Practice began. Each sangha member stood, bowed, and waited to be given a job. Though it may be irreverent to admit it, after spending blissful moments sitting quietly, the last thing I wanted to do was to participate in Work Practice.

Kyoki, ZCP's resident priest, assigned chores to each member. I watched as everyone happily and eagerly accepted their assignment. Each one bowed and thanked Kyoki for the chance to sweep the sidewalk, scrub a floor, or take out the trash. Oh, oh -- my turn. Would I care to please clean the toilets? I bowed deeply. "Thank you," I said, but secretly and sarcastically thought, "Scrub the toilets? Why of course. I'd love nothing more! I'd be delighted to scrub toilets used by people I hardly know. In fact, that's exactly the sort of spiritual enlightenment I've been looking for."

I smiled and thanked Kyoki, but I really felt like I'd rather go back to sitting on the zafu. I picked up the toilet brush, however, and padded off towards the bathroom. Sighing resolutely, I swabbed under the rim, wondering what spiritual lesson I was supposed to be learning.

To be honest, I never really "got" Work Practice. Though I realized that my donations probably didn't pay for visits from a maid service and though I knew it wasn't fair to expect Kyoki to clean the whole temple herself, I didn't really relish the thought of housekeeping. Intellectually, I knew it was sensible that everyone should

pitch in and keep the place clean. Emotionally, however I was less than eager to do it.

I recalled an earlier visit where Kyoki explained what Work Practice was supposed to be. "If you are washing the floor," she explained, "don't lose yourself in thinking about the significance of each wipe. Just clean the floor." I experienced a brief Catholic-school memory of Sister Mary Vivian's instruction to simply "offer it up." Oh, shut up, I told myself. What did Sister Mary Vivian know about Buddhist practices, anyway?

OK, I thought, there must be something to learn here. I'll look around and see if everyone else is growing spiritually. I stole a glimpse at the others. Each seemed content to be doing the chore they were assigned. Everyone was serious and silent. From the looks on the others' faces, vacuuming and dusting were clearly providing a deep and meaningful spiritual experience. Why wasn't I feeling spiritual?

And nobody was talking. I noticed that if they did speak, it was to ask the location of some cleaning supply, and always in a quiet, reverent whisper. Is silence important? Should I have lowered my voice to ask for the Lysol? Was cleaning the bowl supposed to be a reverent act? Everyone is so solemn. Should I piously scrub the seat? What am I supposed to be thinking about while I'm cleaning this toilet? What should I be feeling? What I really feel is *confused*, and yes, I'm embarrassed to admit it, but I'm really feeling *annoyed*.

As I scrubbed, I chided myself for not "getting it," for not being more grateful to scrub a toilet, for not

## Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Jisen Caryl Dumaine	President
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Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW

Abbot



Nebraska Zen Center is a Soto Zen Buddhist Temple established for Zen practice. The center follows the tradition established in Japan by Zen Master Eihei Dogen in the 13th century and transmitted in this century by two Masters, Rev. Shunryu Suzuki, founder of San Francisco Zen Center and author of *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind* and Rev. Dainin Katagiri, who assisted Rev. Suzuki in San Francisco and later founded Minnesota Zen Meditation Center in Minneapolis. Rev. Katagiri was instrumental in establishing Nebraska Zen Center in 1975.

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, an American Zen Master, is NZC's Head Priest and Teacher. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been

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knowing what I was supposed to be learning, and for feeling stupid.

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

Our **ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DRIVE** has been very successful, our most successful ever! We have raised nearly \$5,000 more than we did last year, and have decided to begin planning an addition to our zendo, which would double our seating capacity and include a main entrance through the back yard. **Thanks to all for your generosity!**

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** brought some changes. **Joe Marshall, Ken McClure, and Jay Pashalek** were newly elected to our Board of Directors and **Taido Jon Kayne** was re-elected. Our **Officers** for the coming year are: **President — Jisen Caryl Dumaine; Vice-President — Joe Marshall; Secretary — Jeff Graef; Treasurer — Albert Lickei.** A complete list of Board Members appears on page three. **Thank you all for serving!**

**Rev. Kyoki Robert's** term on our Board has expired. Kyoki's contribution to the temple



over the years has been huge, and we thank her once again for all she's done. Kyoki is now serving as **Resident Priest** at **Zen Center of Pittsburgh/Deep Spring Temple.** Because of her membership in the **Order of the Prairie Wind** and her upcoming **Dharma Transmission,** Kyoki will continue to be involved with NZC.

**Joe Marshall, Ken McClure, Jay Pashalek, and Margaret Kurtz** — a member of the Pittsburgh sangha — are **sewing rakus** and will be **lay-ordained** at NZC on March 4th. **Jisen Caryl Dumaine** is sewing a rakusu for her son, **Winslow,** who will also participate in the Ceremony. **We congratulate all of you for passing this milestone.**

**Nonin** will be continuing to travel this year to **lead workshops and retreats.** So far, he has workshops in **Zen and American Poetry** scheduled at **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** and at **Zen Buddhist Temple — Ann Arbor.** He will be leading a **Calligraphy Workshop** at **Clouds in Water Zen Center** in **St. Paul, Minnesota** and **Retreats** at **Empty Hand Zendo** in **Rye, New York** and at **Zen Center of Pittsburgh.** For information about any of these events, call NZC at **(402) 551-9035** or e-mail us at **heartland@prairiewindzen.org.**

NZC will be closed over the Memorial Day weekend. There'll be no sitting on Friday, May 25th. The temple will re-open with evening sitting on Tuesday, the 29th.

### SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Spring, a **One-day sitting** on **Saturday, March 17th,** a **Two-day sesshin** on **April 14th and 15th,** and a **One-day sitting** on **Saturday, May 19th.** Fees: \$30 per day for members; \$40 for non-members. Lower rates may be arranged for those with limited income. **Please call 402-551-9035 to register.**

### BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** this year with a special ceremony on **Sunday, April 8th at 10:00 a.m.** Afterwards, there'll be a **pot-luck lunch** and **birthday cake and ice-cream.** Everyone is invited to attend.

### REMEMBRANCE SERV-

A service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held on **Sunday, May 13th** before dharma talk. Either **bring photographs** of those you would like to remember or **write their names on small cards** to place on the Buddha Hall altar (cards will be available at the temple). You will have an opportunity to read the names and make an offering during the service.

### OTHER SPRING EVENTS

Mar 7	Ryaku Fusatsu
Apr 1	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
11	Ryaku Fusatsu
May 6	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
9	Ryaku Fusatsu

# ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH — SANGHA NOTES

## ZCP SPRING EVENTS

### MARCH

- 1 — Katagiri-roshi's Memorial Day
- 2-4 — TELJO MUNNICH RETREAT\*
- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 31 — WORKSHOP WITH NONIN\*  
(9-4)

### APRIL

- 1 — World Peace Ceremony
- 8 — Buddha's Birthday  
Sangha Work Day (1-5)
- 16-28 — ZEN CENTER CLOSED

### MAY

- 5 — BEGINNER'S RETREAT\*
- 6 — World Peace Ceremony
- 13 — Remembrance Day

### JUNE

- 1-30 — ORDER OF THE PRAIRIE  
WIND PRACTICE PERIOD\*  
(members are invited to participate in all or part)

As some of you know, we had difficulties last Fall with the local zoning board in **Bell Acres Borough**, which were brought on by concerns voiced by some of our neighbors on **Willow Ridge Road**. We were forced to take the Borough to court, and subsequently, all issues were settled in our favor. **We are now settled in our new home on the hill!**

We held our first **Rohatsu Sesshin** from **December 8th - 10th**, and on **New Year's Eve**, quietly sat candlelit zazen in the Zendo with a fire in the fireplace



## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday - Zen Center Closed

Tuesday - Saturday

5:30 a. m. - Zazen

6:45 a. m. - Morning Service

6:00 -

7:15 p.m. - Zazen

Sunday

9:00 a. m. - Zazen Instruction

10:00 a. m. - Zazen

10:40 a. m. - Work Practice

11:30 a. m. - Service/Lecture

12:30 p. m. - Tea

Zen Center of Pittsburgh is now located in a rustic farmhouse atop the hills of Sewickley. Its quiet location and panoramic views of the area are a part of what makes Deep Spring Temple an ideal place for practice.

In January, **Nonin** came from Omaha to lead a workshop on **The Dialogue on the Contemplation Extinguished**, and in February, his dharma brother, **Shoken Winecoff**, led a retreat for us. We will have a retreat with **Teijo Munnich**, Nonin's dharma sister, in early March, and **Nonin** will return in late March to lead a workshop on **Zen in American Poetry**.

In February, **Kyoki** traveled to Atlanta to visit her dharma brother, **Eido Espe** and his wife, **Dr. Judith Heggen**. Eido and Kyoki worked on sewing Kyoki's **dharma transmission robes** in preparation for the ceremony in Pittsburgh this coming June. Both of them then went to **Zen Center of Asheville, NC**, where Kyoki led a **Conflict Resolution Workshop**.

**Many, many thanks** to **Margaret Kurtz** and **Jane Harter** for re-doing the office, **Cressida Magaro** for insulating the blinds, **Patrick Le** for updating our database and financial package, and to **Scott Leonard** and **Jane** for writing thank-you notes to those who so generously donated to **ZCP**.

Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple is located at 124 Willow Ridge Rd, Sewickley, PA 15143

tel: (412) 741-1262, e-mail: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org), website: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

## Dharma Poetry

from page 1

Mary Oliver's poem, "Morning Walk" has the ring of truth to it and is one of my favorites. It appears in *West Wind*, published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 1997:

Morning Walk

Little by little  
the ocean

empties its pockets –  
foam and fluff;

and the long, tangled ornateness  
of seaweed;

and the whelks,  
ribbed or with ivory knobs,

but so knocked about  
in the sea's blue hands

that their story is at length only  
about the wholeness of destruction –

they come one by one  
to the shore

to the shallows  
to the mussel-dappled rocks

to the rise to dryness  
to the edge of the town

to offer, to the measure that we will  
accept it,  
this wisdom:

though the hour be whole  
though the minute be deep and rich

though the heart be a singer of hot  
red songs  
and the mind be as lightning,

what all the music will come to is  
nothing,  
only the sheets of fog and the fog's blue  
bell—

you do not believe it now, you are  
not supposed to,  
You do not believe it yet – but you  
will –

morning by singular morning,  
and shell by broken shell.

This poem is a clear, uncompromising look at "things as they are." Under scrutiny, things prove to be impermanent, and Mary Oliver uses the whelks, snail-like marine invertebrates that inhabit a spiral shell, to show us this. The whelks then become metaphors for all beings and events, and the poet becomes the bodhisattva (enlightened being) Manjushri, the Buddhist personification of perfect wisdom, whose sword of wisdom tough-mindedly cuts through delusion to the reality of "things as they are."

If we understand impermanence, we know that no matter how deeply we love, it will come to an end, as will the person we love. We'll know that no matter how well-thought out our plans and goals, there's no guarantee they'll come to fruition, and even if they do, that job, that career, or that relationship will come to an end. We'll also know that no matter how smart we are, how clear our understanding, and how wisely we live, we too will come to an end. We live in a world of constant change, and if we look closely, we will see this reality played out by all beings, as Mary Oliver does by the whelks littering the beach along the ocean where she walks.

A clear awakening to the truth of impermanence is very important in Buddhism. The great Indian Buddhist teacher Nagarjuna said that the "mind that sees into the flux of arising and decaying and recognizes the transient nature of the world is also known as the Bodhi-mind." "Bodhi" means "enlightenment," so Nagarjuna is saying that when we see – or understand – that everything in the world is in a state of constant flux and

## LAKE SUPERIOR ZENDO

Lake Superior Zendo is located at **407 E. Arch St. in Marquette, Michigan**. It is affiliated with NZC and offers daily sitting, special ceremonies, and retreats. Zazen instruction is available for newcomers. Call **Rev. Tesshin Paul Lehmborg, OPW** at **(906) 226-6407** (e-mail: [plehmbor@nmu.edu](mailto:plehmbor@nmu.edu)) for information.

## LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets weekly on **Sunday evenings, 7:00 p.m.** at the **Lincoln Women's Club, 407 South 14th St.** Zazen instruction is available for newcomers. For further information, call **Kido Albert Lickei** at **(402) 466-7597** (e-mail: [Albert.Lickei@alltel.com](mailto:Albert.Lickei@alltel.com)) or **Seishin Larry Pelter** at **(402) 483-1755** (e-mail: [lpelter@alltel.net](mailto:lpelter@alltel.net)).

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

A group affiliated with NZC meets bi-weekly at the **Nebraska State Penitentiary** in Lincoln. For further information, call **(402) 551-9035**, e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org), or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette**

only lasts in its present form for a brief moment, we have awakened to "things as they are" and are manifesting deep wisdom.

This clear, uncompromising look at real-



## Dharma Poetry

from page 6

ity  
is only half the story, however. To live an awakened life – the word “buddha” means “awakened person” – we must balance wisdom with compassion, which can be defined as, “opening the heart to all beings’ pain and wanting to ease it.” Without compassion, we can become detached, cold, and unfeeling, no matter how wise we are. Without wisdom, compassion can degenerate into ineffectual sentimentality. In Buddhism, we encourage the development of both.

Mary Oliver’s poem “Spring,” explores the manifestation of compassion. This poem also appears in *West Wind*:

Spring

This morning  
two birds  
fell down the side of the maple tree

like a tuft of fire  
a wheel of fire  
a love knot

out of control as they plunged through  
the air  
pressed against each other  
and I thought

how I meant to live a quiet life  
how I meant to live a life of mildness  
and meditation  
tapping the careful words against each  
other

and I thought –  
as though I were suddenly spinning, like  
a bar of silver  
as though I had shaken my arms and *lo!*  
they were wings –

of the Buddha  
when he rose from his green garden  
when he rose in his powerful ivory body

when he turned to the long dusty road  
without end

when he covered his hair with ribbons  
and the petals of flowers  
when he opened his hands to the world.

Mary Oliver sees two birds whirling in a metaphorical love knot and remembers how she meant to live a quiet, contemplative poet’s life, one detached from the swirling passions inherent in love relationships, or in any human relationships. But then, she thinks of the historical Buddha, Gautama Siddhartha, and how he didn’t shut himself off in a hermitage after he awakened but turned to the “long, dusty road [human life]” and “opened his hands to the world.”

***Because we emphasize meditation and because of the historical emphasis on monastic practice, people sometimes think that turning away from human life and cultivating detachment are what Buddhism is about. But this is not the case, as Gautama Siddhartha’s life illustrates.***

This “opening” is compassion. After Gautama Siddhartha awakened to the causes of human suffering – and therein became a buddha – he remained by himself for a while. He thought about living a quiet, peaceful life and not getting caught up again in the ways of the world. However, after a few days, he decided to share his life with others and to help those who wished to awaken to the causes of suffering, even though he knew that by engaging with others, he was opening himself to the difficulty and pain inherent in human relationships. This is the “rising from his green garden” in Mary Oliver’s poem and is the manifestation of compassion.

Because we emphasize meditation and because of the historical emphasis on monastic practice, people sometimes think that turning away from human life and cultivat-

ing detachment are what Buddhism is about. But this is not the case, as Gautama Siddhartha’s life illustrates. A famous Zen story also points this out:

A famous Zen master’s oldest disciple, the one he had designated as his successor, had died. As he was giving a eulogy at the funeral service, the master burst into tears and was unable to continue.

One of the master’s youngest disciples was mortified by this. He said to the master later, “You’re supposed to be a Zen master, one beyond life and death. Why did you cry like that?”

The master replied, “He was my oldest and closest disciple; if I don’t cry now, when am I supposed to?”

Like most people, I began to practice Zen because I wanted to wake up, and then, to live a quiet, peaceful, stable life. I took as my models the ancient Zen hobos like Han Shan, who wandered the mountains in Central China, living on nuts and berries and scribbling poems on rock walls. But after I began to practice in earnest, I realized that this was just a romantic fantasy. This is not what Buddhism is about. The practice of wisdom teaches us that all things are impermanent and that our attachment to them will bring us suffering and pain. The practice of compassion teaches us that engagement and involvement with all beings is how we fulfill ourselves as human beings and ultimately, as

continued on page

## Work Practice

from page 3

What is wrong with me? I'm supposed to be growing from this, but I don't feel enlightened. I feel uncomfortable and cold and wet. I guess I must be doing it wrong. Maybe I'm not working hard enough. I'll try harder. Is Kyoki going to inspect my work to see if the bowl is clean enough? If I do a really good job, will she compliment me?"

Back and forth my mind would go. I'd beat myself up for my less-than-commodious thoughts about cleaning the commode; then, I would silently grouse that I could

***Finally, the bowl was clean and I returned to the group, disappointed that cleaning a toilet at the temple wasn't more enlightening. Cleaning a temple toilet, I realized, was unfortunately just***

have stayed home if I wanted to do housework.

Though the toilet was getting cleaner, I noticed I was feeling nervous, uncomfortable, and unhappy. This toilet-cleaning Work Practice was becoming anything but a spiritual experience. Finally, the bowl was clean and I returned to the group, disappointed that cleaning a toilet at the temple wasn't more enlightening. Cleaning a temple toilet, I realized, was unfortunately just like cleaning a toilet at home.

During subsequent visits, I'd endure Work Practice, and sometimes I suspected Kyoki was reading my mind and was testing me by assigning jobs I especially disliked. Though I always got the chore, done, I never "got" Work Practice; I never liked Work Practice, and I never liked the fact that I didn't like or "get" Work Practice.

But life goes on, and so does "Work Practice."

I manage to make my way through a typical daily schedule without giving it too much thought. It all gets done, and life continues. I'm supposed to raise a family, have a successful career, keep the house clean, exercise, eat right, make time to sit zazen, remember to be at peace with all things, and never once wish my life was any different than it actually is.

When occasional fatigue and monotony take their toll, I find myself grouching again, wishing I didn't have so much to do and worrying that I'll never get it done. It is during these times that I find myself wishing I could forget about cleaning the toilet bowl and wanting to curl up with a good book and a cup of tea instead.

Then, the week before Christmas -- holiday stress in full swing -- I found myself starting down a miserable worrisome path. There is so much to do! How will I get it all done? I'm so tired and I don't want to wash this floor, but I have to get the house clean. Shame on me; I'm a grown-up. I'm supposed to just buck up and get it done. But I'll never have enough time to do it all! I hate this anyway.

On and on the internal dialog continued, making me more upset. Each self-flagellating remark and worrisome thought made the job harder and harder. Finally, out of sheer fatigue, I suddenly screamed at myself to just shut the heck up! All this head talk was making me upset and miserable. I would just do the best I could do. There was as much time as there was. Worrying about it or wishing I were doing something else wasn't helping. It was actually making it harder. Stop thinking about it. Shut up and do it.

Suddenly, I found myself thinking of Kyoki's initial Work Practice instructions: "Just clean the floor." I forced myself to let go of the anxiety and worry. As I mopped, I tried to quiet my thoughts, focusing on doing, rather than thinking. Slowly, I stopped complaining to myself, and I just cleaned the floor.

I have to admit that in some way, I was reluctant to stop the head talk. It was as if part of me wanted to cling to the inner talk, as if it might somehow be useful. But in the end, I realized that the internal dialog was really just making things more difficult. When I finally *did* shut up, I found the doing wasn't as painful as the thinking had been.

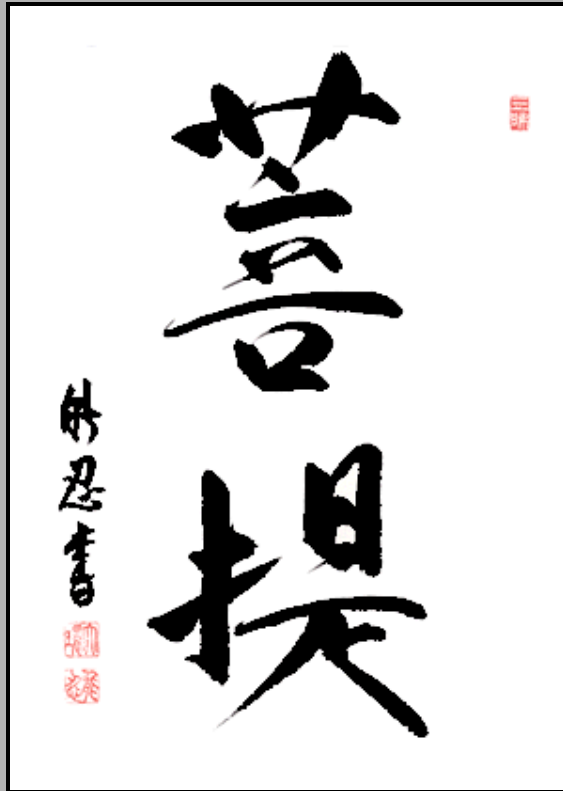
I thought about the temple and realized how much anxiety I had created around Work Practice. All along it would have been much easier to stop all the head talk and just clean the toilet. I noticed how liberating it was to clean the floor without worrying about whether it was good enough, wondering if others would comment on the job, and without judging the job, myself. It was at that moment that I think I actually "got" Work Practice.

As the demands of life continue, I've had ample opportunity to put my newfound insight to work. Work responsibilities are accomplished, bathrooms are cleaned, the never-ending task of putting toys back in the toy box doesn't seem to be such a burden (Okay, THAT still annoys me, but I'm trying). Since it all has to be done, mostly I try to "just do it." When I remember to shut off my internal dialog, I'm amazed to find that I feel less stress and more contentment.

I'm sure I'll never love housework, and some part of me will probably always want to complain about the daily grind. While making school lunches, beds, and also a living, integrating Work Practice into my daily life is challenging, but important. I am coming to understand that I don't have to like every aspect of my life,

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Enlightenment (Bodhi)

## Calligraphy For

Nonin's calligraphy is now for sale.

All are originals signed and stamped by him and are written on high quality paper, either watercolor or printmaking paper or archival matboard.

We sell and ship them unframed. Each piece can be mounted and framed using traditional methods by any good framer.

The calligraphy can be viewed and purchased through our website, at [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org). Click on the **Nebraska Zen Center** website and go to Nonin's **calligraphy pages**.

### *Work Practice*

from page 8

I only have to live it. Wishing things were otherwise only makes it worse. And though I might prefer to grow spiritually using the zafu, sometimes it's the toilet brush that does the teaching.

*Mary Rapaport lives, works, writes, raises kids, practices Zen, and cleans toilets in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

### **From the editor:**

We **always** need material. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, letters, etc. The deadline for publication in our Summer issue is **May 15th**.

NZC's Website Address is:  
[www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

Our E-mail address is:  
[heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)



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## *Shy About Coming to Zen Center?*

Maybe you came to Zazen Instruction once on a Thursday night, but it's been a while and you've forgotten what you learned. Maybe you haven't come back because it would be too embarrassing to make mistakes in front of everyone, or maybe it was so different from what you're used to that you felt uncomfortable and awkward. Perhaps you don't feel you could sit for the length of time that we do. Maybe you came a few times a while ago but haven't been back since and would feel awkward coming after all this time. Maybe you felt uncomfortable during bowing and chanting services.

All of the above reasons for not coming to the temple have been expressed by newcomers. They've also been felt by most of us when we first started coming!

If you'd like to come sit with us some evening or would like to come on Sunday morning for the 9:00 a.m. sitting, service, and dharma talk but haven't for whatever reason, give us a call at **551-9035**, or e-mail us at **heartland@prairiewindzen.org**. Let us know when you'd like to come, and someone will meet you a little early and help you orient yourself. We will also help you with zazen posture and with the forms of our services. Even though we do sit for long periods in the evening, walking meditation can be done at any time.

We are not a closed and insular group. We welcome you to come practice Zen with us, no matter what your experience or lack of it.

*We shall not cease from  
exploration*

*And the end of all our  
exploring*

*Will be to arrive where we  
started*

*And know the place for  
the first time*

*T.S. Eliot*

## *Dharma Poetry*

from page

Buddhas.

When things get tough in my life – when there's a huge pile of work on my desk, when a clash arises between myself and a student, or when someone fails to follow through with their temple responsibilities and leaves me to pick up the pieces – I long for the hermit's life, and the romantic ideal rises again: a quiet life of solitude and contemplation off in the woods somewhere, in a cozy little cabin with my dog! But this doesn't last long. At this stage in my life, I know I'm not going to fulfill this pleasant fantasy! Other ones arise, however, and last year, I even went as far as to check the Internet for places to move to and set up another temple, cities larger than Omaha, where there would be more people interested in Zen and, consequently, more people committed to the practice who could then help with all the

work at the temple!

But this is just another escape fantasy. "Opening our hands to the world" means responding to our lives and to all beings in them here and now, not running away.

When I practiced in a Japanese monastery, all the monks slept side-by-side in the meditation hall. After the morning wake-up bell, we knelt on our beds and chanted this verse:

Waking this morning in perfect peace  
May all beings  
Realize everything without exception  
Embracing the ten directions

Chanting this verse set the tone for the coming day. "Ten directions" means everywhere, all of space. "Embracing it" means opening our arms and accepting

our lives as they unfold, rejecting nothing. We chanted this verse for all beings, but of course, we were chanting it first as a reminder to ourselves.

In "Morning Walk" and "Spring," Mary Oliver gives us beautifully crafted, evocative examples of the functioning of wisdom and compassion in human life. These two poems, and all the other poems I've been using in my dharma talks lately, speak to me in a way that a dry Buddhist text can't, for they root the teaching in daily life. Theory is easy to dismiss. Concrete examples are hard to ignore, for they strike with great force, especially when they are presented by great poets.

## **Soto Zen**

*Koho Chisan (1879-1967) was a **Soto Zen Master**. He was the abbot of **Soji-ji Monastery** — one of the two head temples of the Soto Zen Buddhist sect in Japan — and the teacher of **Jiyu Kennett**, founder of **Shasta Abbey in California** and the **Order of Buddhist Contemplatives**. **Shasta Abbey Press** has recently re-printed one of Koho Chisan's books: **Soto Zen — An Introduction to the Thought of the Serene Reflection Meditation School of Buddhism**. The following are excerpts from that book:*

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF SOTO ZEN**

1. All beings have the Buddha nature at birth and consequently are essentially enlightened.
2. One can enjoy fully the bliss of the Buddha Nature through the practice of serene reflection meditation [zazen].
3. Training and enlightenment are identical.
4. The strict discipline of the religious ceremonies and temple regulations must be internalized and applied to our everyday activities.

### **ESSENCE OF SOTO ZEN**

1. To ground yourself with an unwavering practice of meditation and not be sidetracked by the petty demands of greed and anger.
2. To wholeheartedly seek the way of truth by utterly forsaking all desires for fame and gain.
3. To live in truth, avoiding the company of those who pursue wealth and power.
4. To practice meditation and to perfect religious training for the sake of training.
5. To teach the necessity of continuous religious training and enlightenment, which are one and the same thing.
6. To transmit correctly the teaching of the Buddha and Ancestors from master to disciple and to cause this transmission to grow ever wider.
7. To harmonize theory and practice and not to cling to either the ideal or the actual.
8. To express our gratitude by diligent application of our religious practices in every activity of our

## WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE

### 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

### Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation  
(Walking as needed)

Thursday

7:00 - 8:30 — Zazen Instruction  
(by appointment; call 551-9035)  
— Classes as scheduled

Friday

7:00 - 8:30 — Sitting Meditation  
(Walking as needed)

We are closed on Monday