



# Prairie Wind

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## TRAVELING AROUND

by Nonin Chowaney

Zen Master Dogen's "Universally Recommended Instructions for Zazen (Jap. *Fukanzazengi*)" is an important text for those who practice Soto Zen. At our temple in Omaha, we chant it at the end of every evening sitting, and we study it together from time to time.

When writing in the *Fukanzazengi* about the buddhadharma – the awakened way – Dogen says, "It is never apart from this very place; what is the use of traveling around to practice?"

These are well known words and present an important teaching for us. Dogen is saying that everything we need is right in front of us – everything we need to practice Zen, to manifest awakening, or to completely realize our inherent buddha nature. If we want to practice Zen, we should sit down where we are, turn our attention inward, and fully explore who and what we are.



Buddha in the Snow — Photo by Tozan Hardison

However, we are also taught that it's important to have a teacher, and if there's none where we are, that we need to "travel around" to find one. Dogen did. He eventually went all the way to China, where he finally met his master, Rujing. There are many other Zen stories about people traveling around to find a teacher, stories about people traveling around to study with other teachers not only while already deeply committed to a teacher and still training with one but also after completing training with a specific teacher. Even after beginning to teach, many Zen masters have traveled around to study with other masters.

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# FREE AND EASY

by Venerable Lama Gendun Rinpoche

*Happiness cannot be found  
through great effort and willpower,  
but is already present, in open relaxation and letting go.*

*Don't strain yourself,  
there is nothing to do or undo.  
Whatever momentarily arises in the body-mind  
has no real importance at all,  
has little reality whatsoever.  
Why identify with, and become attached to it,  
passing judgment upon it and ourselves?*

*Far better to simply  
let the entire game happen on its own,  
springing up and falling back like waves--  
without changing or manipulating anything--  
and notice how everything vanishes and  
reappears, magically, again and again,  
time without end.*

*Only our searching for happiness  
prevents us from seeing it.  
It's like a vivid rainbow which you pursue without ever  
catching,  
or a dog chasing its own tail.*

*Although peace and happiness do not exist  
as an actual thing or place,  
it is always available  
and accompanies you every instant.*

*Don't believe in the reality  
of good and bad experiences;  
they are like today's ephemeral weather,  
like rainbows in the sky.*

*Wanting to grasp the ungraspable,  
you exhaust yourself in vain.  
As soon as you open and relax this tight fist of grasping,  
infinite space is there--open, inviting and comfortable.*

*Make use of the spaciousness, this freedom and natural  
ease.  
Don't search any further.  
Don't go into the tangled jungle*

*looking for the great awakened elephant,  
who is already resting quietly at home  
in front of your own hearth.*

*Nothing to do or undo,  
nothing to force,  
nothing to want,  
and nothing missing----*

*Emaho! Marvelous!  
Everything happens by itself.*



# WHAT IS ZEN?

by Doshō Port

Doshō Port, a dharma heir of Dainin Katagiri, is the Guiding Teacher at Clouds in Water Zen Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. The following dharma talk was originally given at CIWZC and appears on their website: [www.cloudsinwater.org](http://www.cloudsinwater.org). It is reprinted here by permission.

## Pointer:

Working Zen, motorcycle Zen, tennis Zen, walking-in-the-park-smiling Zen. At war with what's too long and too short, the simple truth is obscured. Even though the word "Zen" is used in the zazen halls, what is it?

## The Case:

Zen Master Daowu visited the assembly of Great Master Shitou. Daowu asked, "What is the essential meaning of the buddha-dharma?" Shitou said, "Not to attain, not to know." Daowu asked, "Is there some turning place when going beyond or not?" Shitou said, "The vast sky does not hinder white clouds from flying."

## Commentary:

These days in our culture "Zen" is a word that is used more and more commonly. Yesterday's *Pioneer Press* [the local newspaper] reviewed a play saying, "If you can Zen your way through this part of the play" then it isn't too bad." "Zen" is used as a verb here that means humming out. This definitively is not Zen. It's a misuse, a misappropriation of the word.

On the other hand, during the Olympics, and one of the commentators said that snowboarding was like Zen in motion. In my view, that was more fitting, for the snowboarder, while snowboarding, must drop the distinction between self and mountain. To go down the mountain as fast as they do, and do all those funny things that they do, they must thoroughly let go. Walt Whitman wrote, "Unscrew the locks from the doors, unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs."

Within the American cultural context, it seems very important to me that we be very clear about what Zen is and what zazen is. This way of practice and waking up is backed by 2,500 years of giving and receiving. So let's digest this koan from one of our Zen Ancestors that clearly expresses the essence of Zen teaching, practice, and realization.

Shitou was a great teacher in ancient China. Three of the five schools of Zen spring from him. Although many people came to practice with him, apparently he didn't like the hubbub of the monastery. He built a hut out of grass with his own hands on a rock platform on a nearby cliff. He lived there in ten square feet and would sometimes go up to the monastery to teach. He likened the process of building a grass hut to the life of Zen:

Bind grasses to build a hut and don't give up! Let go of hundreds of years and relax completely. Open your hands and walk, innocent.

Daowu asks Shitou this wonderful question: "What is the essential meaning of the buddha-dharma?" In the Zen tradition, we celebrate the inquiring mind in person-to-person encounter. Daowu actually is saying, "Shitou, old teacher, after practicing for all these years, please show your guts!"

I offer this koan to you now not as a dialogue between two old dead guys, but as an expression of a question you might find in your heart, too. The question could be, "What is true?" Or, "What in this fluid life is reliable?" Or, "Fundamentally, who am I?"

## Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Yuki Mark Prideaux	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 certified to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan.

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These are not questions that someone else

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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

Our **ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DRIVE** has been very successful. We raised over \$13,000 plus monthly pledges. **Thanks to all for your generosity!**

**Heartland Temple** and **Augustana Lutheran Church** have signed a **purchase agreement for the lot next door!** We will close on the property in a couple of weeks. Our **deep thanks** to **Bryant Brooks** for donating the legal work for this project. We are moving forward with our plans to add an addition which will provide a **new entranceway, handicap access, and a zendo that will double our seating capacity.**

**Marcia Prideaux** is sewing a rakusu and will be lay ordained at the temple on March 9th. **Congratulations to her.**



Nonin Conducting Calligraphy Workshop at the Omaha Healing Arts Center in the Old Market

Long-time Sangha member **Taido Jon Kayne** has resigned from our **Board of Directors** after **many years** of service. We offer our **deepest thanks to him** for all his work over the years!

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** brought some changes. **Marcia Prideaux** was newly elected to our **Board of Directors**. **Kido Albert Lickei, Jisen Caryl Dumaine,** and **Chuko Jean Bailey** were re-elected. Our **Officers** for the coming year are: **President — Yuki Mark Prideaux; Vice-president — Ryoshin Joe Marshall; Secretary — Chuko Jean Bailey; Treasurer — Kido Albert Lickei.** A complete list of Board Members appears on page three. **Thanks to all for serving!**

**Many Thanks** go to **Doug Dittman** for donating the new **Cedar picnic table** in the backyard. We're looking forward to using it as soon as the snow melts!

Heartland Temple will be **closed over Memorial Day Weekend.** There'll be no sitting on Friday, May 23rd. The temple will re-open with evening sitting on Tuesday, the 27th.

### SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Spring, a **One-day sitting** on **March 22nd**, a **Two-day sesshin** on **April 12th & 13th**, and a **One-day sitting** on **May 17th**. Fees: \$30 per day for members; \$40 for non-members. Lower rates may be arranged for those with limited income. E-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or Call (402) 551-9035 to register.

### BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** this year with a special ceremony on **Sunday, April 6th at 10:00 a.m.** Afterwards, there'll be a **Dharma Talk** and a **Pot-luck Lunch** with **birthday cake** and **ice-cream**. Everyone is invited to attend.

### REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

A service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held on **Sunday, May 11th** 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 WINTER EVENTS

Mar 9	Lay Ordination
19	Ryaku Fusatsu
Apr 16	Ryaku Fusatsu
May 4	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
14	Ryaku Fusatsu

# ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

## ZCP SPRING EVENTS

### MARCH

- 6-8 — ZCP Closed
- 11-12 — ZCP Closed
- 18 — Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Service)\*
- 20 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia\*\*
- 22 — Rakusu Sewing Begins

### APRIL

- 6 — Buddha's Birthday Observed
- 8 — Buddha's Birthday\*\*\*
- 15 — Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Service)\*
- 17 — Precept Ceremony (Lay Ordination)

### MAY

- 1 — All-day Sitting at Loretto
- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 10 — Workshop with Rev. Jerome Peterson
- 11 — Remembrance Ceremony
- 16-17 — ZCP Closed
- 27-31 — ZCP Closed

\*after evening zazen

\*\*There is no evening sitting at ZCP on the nights we sit at Mt. Alvernia Monastery

\*\*\*special morning service

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday - Zen Center Closed

Tuesday - Saturday Mornings

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

Tuesday - Friday evenings\*

6:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Zazen

\*We no longer sit Saturday evenings.

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

1:00 p.m. - Closed till Tuesday a.m.

Snow and more snow here at Deep Spring Temple this winter led to a furnace on the blink and frozen pipes. **Thanks to those who donated money to make repairs.** Also, **many thanks to all** who painted Kyoki's room and installed new carpeting and curtains while she was away on vacation in January.

**Our Annual Fundraising Drive** brought in nearly \$6,000. **Thanks** go to those who donated and to those who have pledged **monthly donations** for 2003. **We appreciate your support!**

**Rev. Jerome Peterson** of **San Francisco Zen Center** will be visiting Deep Spring Temple to lead a **One-day Workshop** on **May 10th** and a **Discussion Group** the afternoon of **May 11th**. Jerome was an early student of **Shunryu Suzuki-roshi** and has been a resident of SFZC since its inception. He is the benefactor who donated nearly **500 books** to our temple library last year.

There are still copies of our **Stone Soup Cookbook** for sale. See our website: **www.prairiewindzen.org** for details. All proceeds from it go to Deep Spring Temple.



Deep Spring Temple in Winter

**Comings and Goings:** **Myo-en Margaret Coghlan** completed a three-month practice period at **San Francisco Zen Center** last December and is back with us. **Dustin Misosky** has recently completed his residency at **Deep Spring Temple**.

**Special thanks** go to **Mike Kenneweg** for organizing and cataloging our library.

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

## Traveling Around

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So, there's always another side to everything. Even though it's essential to understand that everything we need is right here in front of us, or within us, it's also sometimes necessary to "travel around."

I was encouraged to do so by my master. I began practicing with Katagiri-roshi in the late 1970's. I was his student until he died in 1990, and I completed dharma transmission with him. However, he was not my only teacher during that time; he recommended that I study with other teachers, and I did. He sent me to study Buddhist Psychology at San Francisco Zen Center with Tenshin Anderson, who became an important teacher for me, as did Sojun Weitsman, who was the resident teacher when I trained as head monk at Tassajara monastery. After my time at Tassajara, Katagiri-roshi sent me to Japan to study with Ikko Narasaki, who also became very important to me. I've had four main teachers, all Soto Zen masters. I consider myself very fortunate.

Early on in my training, I had also wanted to explore other traditions, such as Korean Zen with Master Seung Sahn in Rhode Island, but Katagiri-roshi discouraged me from doing that until I had completed my training, that is, become steeped in Soto Zen. He told me that exploring other traditions would be a good thing to do after dharma transmission but not before. Katagiri-roshi was my master; I was his disciple. Although others have been my teachers, my relationship with Katagiri-roshi was the deepest and the most complete, so I usually followed his advice.

Later on, I did experience practice in the Korean Zen tradition. A few years ago at an American Zen Teachers Association meeting, I met Rev. Haju Murray, the resident teacher at the Zen Buddhist Temple in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and we became friends. I've given dharma talks and conducted workshops at the Ann Arbor temple, and Haju Sunim has done the same here in Omaha.

The Ann Arbor temple follows a Zen

tradition that came through Korea and was transmitted to America by a Korean teacher, Samu Sunim. Even though our styles and forms are somewhat different, they can both be traced back to the Sixth Zen Ancestor in China, Huineng, and ultimately back to our original ancestor in India, Shakyamuni Buddha.

Every morning before zazen at the Ann Arbor temple, they do 108 bows (full prostrations), which is quite different for me; we start our morning practice with zazen. I've never done so many bows that early in the day, and never so vigorously! After zazen, they do a chanting and bowing service, as we do, but their chanting is much more melodic than ours. It's quite beautiful. On one visit, I noticed that the verse they chant in honor of the Triple Treasure (Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha) comes from the same Chinese source as ours.

I've learned a lot from visiting the Ann Arbor temple and from visiting other practice places over the years. I've seen that not only other Zen Buddhist traditions but also different schools of Buddhism can create awakened, wise, and compassionate people from whom we can learn. This has been my first experience with Korean Zen, but I have experienced practice with Thich Nhat Hanh, (a Vietnamese Zen Master), have visited a couple of Rinzai Zen temples in Japan and America, and have tasted Tibetan Buddhist practices in a few different forms.

I've found all these experiences to be quite valuable. Opening ourselves to and experiencing other ways of practice can broaden us, help us get unstuck from one narrow view of things, and add spice to our practice life.

Traveling around can also help clarify for us what a dharma teacher is. Although teachers can be similar, no two teachers are alike. Jack Kornfeld, a well-known Vipassana teacher, puts it this way:

Some teachers are rascals and coyotes

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets in three Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln and **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh. For further information, call **(402) 551-9035**, e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

who trick and surprise their students; some are harsh taskmasters trying to whittle down ego and pride; others teach more through honoring and encouragement, nurturing the best in a student; some teachers lecture like a professor; others can melt us open with their love and compassion. The greatest and simplest power of a teacher is the environment of their own freedom and joy.

By experiencing these different environments when traveling around to study with different teachers, I came to understand that there is no one way in which a teacher must teach and also no one distinct form or model that a Zen teacher must assume to be authentic. Also, each teacher has his or her weaknesses and limitations – our own teacher as well, although we don't always like to admit it – and we can learn from these weaknesses and limitations as well as from a teacher's strengths.

When I was practicing with Dainin Katagiri in Minnesota, some of us thought that his way was the right way and that everyone else was wrong, especially the people in San Francisco! I remember one of Katagiri-roshi's priest-disciples saying that the people out there didn't have the "true dharma." Thinking back, this seems so silly, but we took it seriously at the time. Most of us had no experience with Zen apart from the way Katagiri-roshi was

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## *Traveling Around*

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presenting it in Minneapolis, so the “true dharma” was the way we were doing things. If anyone did them differently, it had to be the “false dharma.” Sometimes, Katagiri-roshi himself reinforced these attitudes. He saw that San Francisco Zen Center was drifting away from the Japanese way of doing things, and his cultural arrogance came up! But mostly it was our own ego. We wanted to be something special, so we viewed others as below us on the dharma chain.

This attitude was not limited to Katagiri-roshi’s students, however. A famous Japanese Zen teacher was invited to lead a sesshin at our monastery in southern Minnesota not too long after Katagiri-roshi died. Around that time, I had coincidentally called a friend who was a lay practitioner at this teacher’s monastery in Japan. In the course of conversation, she said that the Western monks there were very happy that they were finally going to bring “real Zen” to America. They felt that although Katagiri-roshi was a sincere monk, their teacher had the “true dharma,” and they were going to help bring it to America. What arrogance! I thought at the time that if their teacher were so good, why hadn’t he knocked these attitudes out of his students by then? Or maybe he had tried, but they just didn’t get it.

Now, I hear the same kinds of things coming from students of Katagiri-roshi’s disciples, a number of whom are leading groups around the country. I’ve had people tell me that a particular disciple of Katagiri-roshi’s really doesn’t carry on his tradition but that their teacher does. I’ve also heard it said that only one particular practice place carries on the legacy of Katagiri-roshi fully and that others don’t because the teachers there have been influenced by other traditions and lineages.

These attitudes are usually the function of

garden variety egoism, but such misguided attitudes frequently arise in groups that are isolated, or in students who have practiced with only one group or teacher. I don’t think, therefore, that it’s a good idea to stay in one place entirely or to practice with one teacher exclusively. It is essential to steep yourself in one practice by totally immersing yourself wholeheartedly in all its forms – this is true – but it’s also essential not to get stuck, or to develop the attitude that “our way is the only true dharma,” or that “my teacher is the only truly authentic one around.” The best way not to get stuck is to broaden our experience and deepen our

roshi, Dosho practiced with Thich Nhat Hanh at Plum Village in France and in New York with Toni Packer. After completing dharma transmission, Dosho spent a year at Bukkokuji monastery in Japan studying with Tange Harada, a Soto Zen Master, and has also practiced with the Rinzai Zen Master Shodo Harada in Washington state. Over the past couple of years, Dosho has been visiting Zen Mountain Monastery in New York and practicing with the well-known Zen Master John Daido Looi.

I deeply respect Dosho for continuing to strengthen his practice and deepen his understanding by studying with other teachers even after dharma transmission,

***Practice can always be deepened; understanding can always be deepened. The process continues day after day, month after month, year after year, and lifetime after lifetime. There is no end to it. Even though the awakened way is, in Zen Master Dogen’s words, “never apart from this very place, traveling around to practice certainly has its uses.***

understanding by travelling around to practice, and this applies not only to students but also to teachers as well.

A good example of a Zen Master who’s traveled around to practice and study both before and after beginning to teach is one of my dharma brothers, Dosho Port, Guiding Teacher of Clouds and Water Zen Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. (“Dharma brother” means that we were priest-ordained by the same master, in our case, on the same day.) Dosho carries on Dainin Katagiri’s Soto Zen tradition as well as any of his disciples, yet he’s practiced with a variety of teachers. Before completing dharma transmission with Katagiri-

which marks a point in Soto Zen practice life when a priest is deemed capable by one’s master to practice and teach on his or her own. I also respect Dosho for traveling long distances to seek out and study with these teachers.

I realize, however, that for some, it’s not possible to do a lot of traveling and visit places for long periods of time, especially if you have a spouse and family, a job that doesn’t allow you much time off, or both. Most teachers realize this and invite other teachers to visit their practice places and lead retreats or study seminars. Although we’ve done this in the past here in Omaha, it’s been limited because of our limited finances and because Omaha’s just not a

## *Traveling Around*

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place a lot of Buddhist teachers pass through! Our sangha is growing however, and I hope that in the future, we will again be able to invite teachers to come here.

Even when they do, however, I will still recommend that students travel around to practice, even if it's limited to a weekend retreat or seminar from time to time or a seven-day sesshin if a longer stay is not possible. In the past, our sangha members have practiced and studied at San Francisco Zen Center, Green Gulch Farm, Tassajara Monastery, Berkeley Zen Center, and Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in California. They've also traveled to Zen Mountain Monastery in New York, Clouds in Water Zen Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, Naropa Institute in Colorado, Zuioji and Shogoji monasteries in Japan, and Hokyoji Monastery on the Minnesota/Iowa border. Their experiences at these places has been invaluable in their spiritual development.

Another benefit of traveling around is that it affords us an opportunity to observe how other sanghas govern themselves and administer their practice places. We inherited our Zen Buddhist traditions from Asian masters who set things up according to the ways in which they functioned in their home countries. Methods of governance based on Asian cultural traditions, however – such as hierarchical structure, decision-making by one person or an elite group, or gender inequity – don't work so well in America. We are committed to things like horizontal group structure, democratic decision making, equal participation in group process, facilitated conflict resolution, and ethical principles based on American cultural values. We can observe how all of the above function by visiting various Zen Buddhist practice places in this country.

In my travels, I've encountered ways of temple governance, such as the Carver Model for Non-profit Organizations, that I didn't even know existed. I've also

participated in professionally facilitated conflict resolution meetings that my Asian teachers wouldn't be caught dead at! I've learned about Quaker Process, by which meetings are run and group decisions are made. I've learned again and again that democratic group process,

and Zen groups and practices places are springing up like mushrooms all over the country, on both coasts and everywhere in between. There are seasoned teachers available who've had thirty to forty years of practice experience and temples and monasteries that have been around for many years and are now firmly established. We are very fortunate to have these resources and especially fortunate to have such a variety of Zen Buddhist traditions to draw from – Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Chinese – and also various practice forms from within these cultural traditions to experience and explore.

Practice can always be deepened; understanding can always be deepened. The process continues day after day, month after month, year after year, and lifetime after lifetime. There is no end to it. Even though the awakened way is, in Zen Master Dogen's words, "never apart from this very place," traveling around to practice certainly has its uses. I highly recommend it.

### *Roaming in the Clouds I Come Back Alone*

*Alone I go  
And alone come back  
And get myself some freedom.*

*Finally  
No dusty thoughts  
Hang up the top of my head.*

*From here on in  
I'm throwing out  
True and false together.*

*Isn't this  
Cold Mountain's  
Finest flowing stream?*

*Hsu Yun  
trans. Paul Hansen*

consensual decision-making, and ethical financial practices are essential for any sangha in this country to function well and survive.

When I started to practice Zen Buddhism in the late 1970's there were very few opportunities available in this country. There were only a half-dozen or so qualified teachers available and less than a handful of practice places, a couple each on the West and East Coasts. Now, there are dozens of qualified teachers,



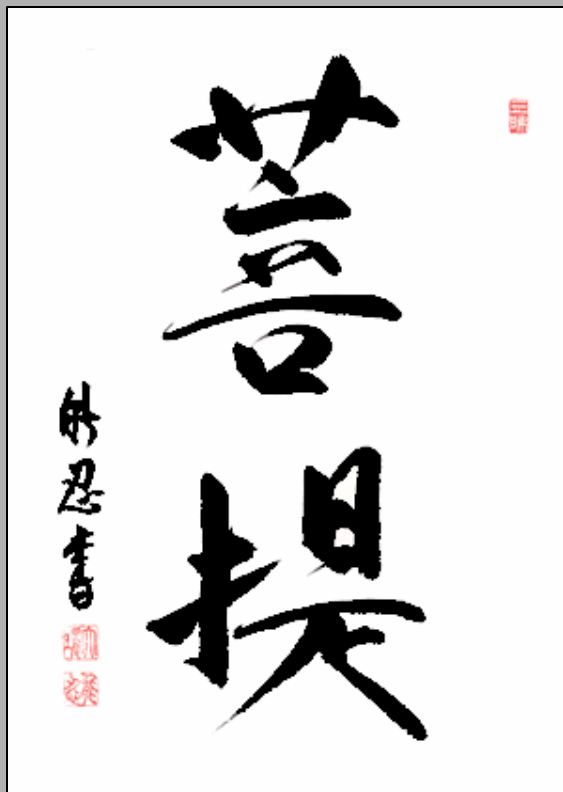


## Calligraphy Wall Hanging Auction

Zen Center of Pittsburgh is offering at auction a **hand-stitched, quilted wall hanging** featuring an **original calligraphy by Rev. Nonin Chowaney**. The piece, crafted by sangha member **Dainei Jane Harter**, is made entirely of cotton fabrics; the framing is soft black velveteen; the outer border and back is finished in red. The characters read **“Peaceful Heart/Mind”** and the overall dimensions are 30” tall x 18” wide.

Bids will be accepted by e-mail at [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org) or by phone at (412) 741-1262. Bids will be posted on Zen Center of Pittsburgh’s website at: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org), and the piece may be viewed in color there.

All proceeds will be used for remodeling our bathroom facilities for handicap access.



Enlightenment (Bodhi)

## Calligraphy For Sale

Nonin’s calligraphy is **for sale over the Internet**.

All are **originals signed and stamped by him** and are written on high quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper or Rives BFK printmaking paper.

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**.

## What is Zen?

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will be able to answer for you. As Daido Looi once said, "Zen is a process, not an answering machine." In this same spirit, a student recently said to me, "I don't see you as the Wizard of Oz." I thought, "Phew!"

Coincidentally, I've been reading my daughter *The Wizard of Oz*. Right at the beginning, when Dorothy gets blown into Oz, she meets the good witch and the good witch kisses her on the forehead. Throughout the rest of the story, no harm can come to her — but she doesn't know it. She's originally protected by the incredible power of good. That's just like the teaching of this koan. We're all kissed — not to attain, not to know. We all have the invisible lip marks of the good witch of the north right on our foreheads — and all over the body and mind.

In the intimate meeting presented by this koan, Daowu asked about the truth. Shitou figuratively kisses Daowu on the forehead. He doesn't tell him to kiss off with Buddha babble. He says, "Not to attain, not to know." Shitou directly, vividly, hits the bull's-eye of this precious human life.

You might hear this kind of meeting when the Han (the wood block that hangs in Great Patience Hall) is hit. Just before we moved into this zendo, I showed the space to Michael O'Neal and Joen Snyder O'Neal [Founders of Compassionate Ocean Zen Center]. As we were walking around, Joen saw the Han. Without saying anything, she walked up, took the hammer, and struck it. "TOCK!" Clear, strong meeting!

This is the practice of zazen itself. Not to attain, not to know. And brilliantly, the koan is letting go itself. This is theme-less meditation, meditation without props. In Japanese it's *shikantaza*. Shohaku Okamura used say it's like riding a wild horse. Sitting upright and letting go moment after moment. If there isn't constant letting go, you go down the slope of discursive thinking and are lost in the historical, psychological self. Earnest, vivid sitting is not just sitting and spacing

out.

Only through not attaining and not knowing can we be fully alive. When you hook onto something as that which you've attained, you miss the fresh possibility of going beyond your idea of the moment. One teacher said, "Strip off the blinders, unpack the saddlebags." Those saddlebags we like to carry around — full of both good stuff and oozing sores — may seem so very important. And of course, each thing has its own integrity. This integrity is most fully honored in unpacking the saddlebags and pulling off the blinders. Actually, throwing the blinders out the window is the spirit of Zen that is pointed to in this expression, Not to attain, not to know.

Fully alive zazen has the qualities of holding tight and letting go. In holding tight, like you might hold a lover tightly, there is being engulfed and there is engulfing. In unity, there is flow between engulfed and engulfer. Then, there is letting go. How does it work to cling to the love that is evoked through holding and being held?

Daowu continues raising the inquiring mind, clarifying the way for us. He asks, "Is there some turning point in going beyond or not?" If it's simply not to attain, not to know, is there some sweet place, some fixed position or not? Enlightenment is often thought of as such a thing — a perfected state.

Shitou answers, "The vast sky does not hinder white clouds from flying." Zen Master Dogen says, "From these white clouds there may be no thunder or lightning and still the whole earth is drenched with sweet drizzle."

Daowu is served this powerful teaching: "Not to attain, not to know." He responds: "Is there a turning point in going beyond or not?" In other words, "Can I be saved?" He just can't take in the radical impermanence of this life. Who can fault him? He's no slouch. And he's not just some guy that lived in China a thousand years ago either. Daowu is this

flinching mind. The mind right in the middle of arising and vanishing in profusion, crying, "What about me?"

What about me? Shitou says, "The vast sky does not hinder white clouds from flying." So there it is — both sides. The truth is not to attain, not to know. In zazen, just do it.

You can say — and some practitioners do for many years — "I can't do it." I don't know if you can or not. The only way you can do it is just to do it, cutting through cleanly. One voice is yelling "Can't, can't, can't." Another voice is yelling, "Can, can, can." Both are troublemakers, flipping from deflation and hell to inflation and god realm. One moves right into the other. In a clear moment, "Ooh, meditation; ooh, zazen; ooh, I'm really present; ooh, I love Zen!" Then suddenly, the mind drops; "Phooh." Then a different "ooh" comes up. "Ooh, I'm really in some sticky goo here; I really hate Zen."

Fortunately, the vast sky does not hinder white clouds. The falling maple leaf of our life presents front and back in turn: clarity and delusion, sameness and difference in harmony. Each presentation has this integrity — to be free of itself. The vast sky of emptiness does not hinder the flowering of the 10,000 things.

May we together, walking hand-in-hand, continually realize and manifest this truth.



# The Song of Zazen

*All sentient beings are essentially Buddhas.  
As with water and ice, there is no ice without water;  
apart from sentient beings, there are no Buddhas.  
Not knowing how close the truth is,  
we seek it far away*

*--what a pity!*

*We are like one who in the midst of water cries out  
desperately in thirst.  
We are like the child of a rich man who wandered away  
among the poor.  
The reason we transmigrate through the Six Realms  
is because we are lost in the darkness of ignorance.  
Going further and further astray in the darkness,  
how can we ever be free from birth-and-death?*

*As for the Mahayana practice of zazen,  
there are no words to praise it fully.  
The Six Paramitas,  
such as giving, maintaining the precepts,  
and various other good deeds  
like invoking the Buddha's name,  
repentance, and spiritual training,  
all finally return to the practice of zazen.*

*Even those who have sat zazen only once will see all  
karma erased.  
Nowhere will they find evil paths,  
and the Pure Land will not be far away.  
If we listen even once with open heart to this truth,  
then praise it and gladly embrace it,  
how much more so then,  
if on reflecting within ourselves we directly realize*

*Self-nature,  
giving proof to the truth that Self-nature is no-nature.*

*We will have gone far beyond idle speculation.  
The gate of the oneness of cause and effect is thereby  
opened,  
and not-two, not-three,  
straight ahead runs the Way.*

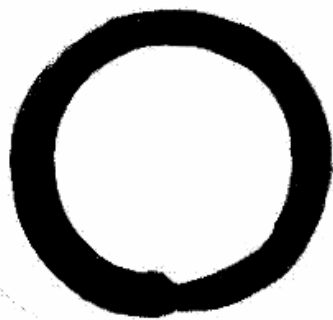
*Realizing the form of no-form as form,  
whether going or returning we cannot be any place  
else.*

*Realizing the thought of no-thought as thought,  
whether singing or dancing,  
we are the voice of the Dharma.*

*How vast and wide the unobstructed sky of samadhi!  
How bright and clear the perfect moonlight of the  
Fourfold Wisdom!*

*At this moment what more need we seek?  
As the eternal tranquillity of Truth reveals itself to us,  
this very place is the Lotus Land of purity,  
and this very body  
is the body of the Buddha.*

*Zen Master Hakuin*



## 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:  
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## 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**

**10:10 - 11:00 — Dharma Talk**

### 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**