



Prairie Wind

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ONE PERSON IN THE BOAT

by Nonin Chowaney

Many years ago, while I was practicing at San Francisco Zen Center, I attended a lecture in Berkeley by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese Zen master. During the lecture, he told a story about the “boat people,” Vietnamese refugees who left their country by ship after the war.

Desperate to leave Vietnam, the boat people sometimes had to take passage in old, rickety, under-powered, and often over-loaded boats piloted by mercenary ship captains. In the frequently severe weather of the South China Sea – known for its precipitous, violent storms – the boats rolled and floundered. People would panic and run from rail to rail, which made a dangerous situation worse.

In these extreme circumstances, the boat people found that if just one person remained calm and did not panic, their behavior had a deep effect on others in the boat. The presence of a calm, centered person calmed others and kept them from worsening an already desperate situation. It was not that the person took charge and *did* anything. They just remained calm and simply *were*. They didn't do anything special, but they had a positive effect on everyone in the boat.



Peace — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

All of us are sailing through life in little boats. Sometimes we sail alone, but most of the time, we share a boat with others – at work, at home with our families, at the practice place, at the movies, in the political arena, or at the ball park. When the weather gets rough and the boat starts to rock, the person who can remain calm and by their presence enable others to do so becomes especially important.

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CHINESE MOUNTAIN POEMS

from Mountain Poems

*You're bound to become a buddha if you practice
If water drips long enough even rocks wear through
It's not true thick skulls can't be pierced
People just imagine their minds are hard.*

*Stonehouse (Shih-wu, 1272-1352)
trans. Red Pine*

Four Mountain Postures

*Walking in the mountains
unconsciously trudging along
grab a vine
climb another ridge*

*Standing in the mountains
how many dawns become dusk
plant a pine
a tree of growing shade*

*Sitting in the mountains
zig-zag yellow leaves fall
nobody comes
close the door and make a big fire*

*Lying in the mountains
pine wind enters the ears
for no good reason
beautiful dreams are blown apart*

*Stonehouse (Shih-wu, 1272-1352)
trans. Red Pine*

Reclusion, Late Summer

*To this place of retreat,
the world does not follow;
but many old ailments heal here.*

*I polish words
of old poems;
view mountains,
and sleep outside my hut.*

*Colored clouds
cross the setting sun;
cicadas ring
in the leaves of trees.*

*With this
my heart again knows happiness;
and who would have thought it,
without wine or money?*

*Yao Ho (c. 830)
trans. Mike O'Connor*

from The Three Sages Harmonies, no. 30

*The rich worry about getting poor
for me poverty would be a good year
I followed fate into these myriad peaks
you don't need a penny here*

*thatched eaves beside a racing brook
cragflowers draping the bamboo fence
in winter, I turn my back to the sun
come summer, park myself at water's edge*

*Shih-shu (late 17th century - early 18th)
trans. James H. Sanford*

PRISON DHARMA

by Doc and Mauricio

HERE, NOW

by Doc

“It is called ‘practice’ because you must work at it everyday. Every day. All of the time. And everything counts all of the time, too,” the monk told me with a smile and a bow at the end of his little talk to the hapless foreigner uncomfortably seated cross-legged before him.

I was in Kyoto and thought I was in love with a lovely and gifted violinist. We were living together. She was a Zen Buddhist and thought I might get serious about it, “instead of just reading about it so much,” she chided. And so I did, for a while.

Her career took off, as did mine. But I became angry, greedy, and deluded. My practice was the second casualty of those developments.

After a very long absence, I resumed regularly sitting and studying about five years ago. While the scenery here is not so beautiful as that of my old neighborhood in Kyoto, my practice deepens a little most days. By the way, “here,” now is the Tecumseh State Correctional Institution in Tecumseh, Nebraska.

Formally, our group (White Lotus Sangha) meets Friday nights from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and Sunday afternoons from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. On Fridays, we sit zazen for twenty minutes and do walking meditation for ten. This is followed by a short chanting and bowing service and then dharma talks and sangha business. Nonin, Larry, or Mark each come down from Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple about once a month — sometimes more, seldom less. Their talks are interesting, invite us to think, and send us back to zazen, the Sutras, and other texts for further study and understanding. On Sundays, our meetings are self-led and usually shortened because we are not allowed into our place of worship on time

because Security has other priorities. We adapt.

I’ve taken to sitting from 5:30 to 5:50 most mornings. In prison, noise — often angry and usually loud voices, walkie-talkies, the BAM-Z-Z-T! of magnetic locks — is nearly constant. This time is the quietest (I stayed up a couple of nights to determine this.). I have cellie who, though primarily Wiccan, is also a member of our sangha, since we welcome those of other beliefs. I am thankful for him knowing our ways. With both of us practicing, we manage to keep our cell pretty clean and orderly. One can “sweep floors and carry water” within prison as well as outside of it. Wherever you are, it’s all a matter of being aware and doing, doing and being aware.

I used to have a profession. Now, to the degree I think of myself as being anything at all, I think I am a poet. I’ve had some minor success, I suppose, but using the best words in the best way to say what I must remains my focus and is part of my practice. Of course, my life really is my practice, as is yours.

During the day, every day, I work as a clerk in our small library. In addition to cataloging books and performing “other duties as assigned,” I have a chance to help a few fellow inmates with their own writing. Sometimes, I get to encourage someone to improve his literacy. A Creative Arts Workshop (music, drama, creative writing) recently was initiated by several TSCI staff. My boss allows me to be an integral part of this. To be of service, to help others, is both a privilege and a responsibility. And the simple truth is that I have a lot of bad karma to work off . . . a lot.

On those days when my anger seems bigger than I am, I have members of

Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Ryoshin Joe Marshall	President
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Noshin Marcia Prideaux	Secretary
Chuko Jean Bailey	Treasurer
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Kido Albert Lickei	Board Member
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Randy Putnam	Board Member
Bob Schenck	Board Member

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.

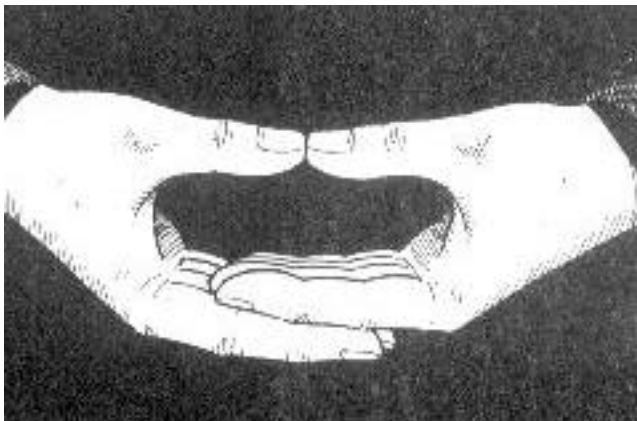
the sangha to listen and to ask why I am hanging on to something which happened in the past or am torqued at something that has not yet occurred. They are a forgiving

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

Our **ANNUAL FUNDRAISING DRIVE** has been very successful. We raised over **\$14,000** in cash donations and over **\$12,000** in pledges for 2004. **Thank you all for your generosity!**

We are moving ahead with our **temple expansion plans** in two areas. First, by **developing a fund-raising brochure** that will include an artist's rendering of the completed project and by **beginning full-scale fundraising this Spring**. Second, we plan to install a **geothermal heating system** this Summer. Our current furnace will need replacement soon, and instead of replacing it and buying another one for the new addition — one residential furnace wouldn't be enough for both areas — we'll use money already donated to our building fund to install an **environmentally friendly system** big enough to heat the whole temple.

Sangha members **Bob Schenck** and **Doug Dittman** are **sewing rakus** in preparation for the **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** on **March 7th**.



Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** brought some changes to our **Board of Directors**. **Heishin Ken McClure's** term had expired, and he declined to run again. Both **Yuki Mark Prideaux** and **Jisen Caryl Dumaine** have resigned their positions. **Thanks to all three of you for your service!**

Ryoshin Joe Marshall was re-elected to the Board, and newly elected were **Zenshin Keith Hale**, **Koken Greg Petitto**, **Randy Putnam**, and **Bob Schenck**. Our **Officers** for the coming years are: **President — Ryoshin Joe Marshall; Vice-President — Hal Holoun; Secretary — Noshin Marcia Prideaux; Treasurer — Chuko Jean Bailey**. **Kido Albert Lickei** has stepped down as Treasurer. Our **special thanks to him** for his many years of service in that position. He remains on the Board.

Many thanks also go to **Zenshin Keith Hale** for heading up the **zafu and zabuton re-stuffing project** and to all those who worked on it. The project has been completed and sitting at the temple is much more comfortable!

Heartland Temple will be **closed over Memorial Day Weekend**. There'll be **no sitting on Thursday, May 27th**. The temple will re-open with **morning sitting on Tuesday, June 1st**

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins this spring, a **One-day sitting** on **March 20th**, a **Two-day sesshin** on **April 17th and 18th**, and a **One-day sitting** on **May 15th**. Fees: members, \$30 per day; non-members, \$40. Call **(402) 551-9035** or e-mail **heartland@prairiewindzen.org** to register.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **dharma study class** at the temple on three **Thursday evenings**, from **6:30 till 8:30 pm**, on **April 1st, 8th, and 15th**. The text we'll study will be announced later. The class is **free to members**. For non-members, **\$15 per class**.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** this year with a special ceremony on **Sunday, April 11th at 10:00 am**. Afterwards, there'll be a **dharma talk** and a **Pot-luck Lunch** with **birthday cake** and **ice-cream**. Everyone is invited to attend.

REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

A service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held on **Sunday, May 16th** 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 (we'll have cards at the temple).

OTHER SPRING EVENTS

Mar 3	Ryaku Fusatsu
Apr 4	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
7	Ryaku Fusatsu
May 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
5	Ryaku Fusatsu

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

ZCP SPRING EVENTS

MARCH

- 5 — Intro to Zen, 6 pm
- 6 — Rakusu Sewing Begins
- 7 — World Peace Ceremony
- 9 — Ryaku Fusatsu*
— Class Begins (Lankavatara Sutra)
- 18 — Sitting at Mt. Alvernia**
- 20-21 — Visiting Teacher Rev. Sevan Ross

APRIL

- 3 — One-day Sitting***
- 4 — Buddha's Birthday
Spring Cleanup
- 6 — Ryaku fusatsu*
- 18 — Precept Ceremony
- 20 — Class Begins (Overview of Zen)

MAY

- 2 — World Peace Ceremony
- 5 — Ryaku Fusatsu*
- 8 — Garage Sale
- 9 — Remembrance Day
- 14-16 — Two-day Sesshin***
- 21 — Karen Han Concert
- 25-30 — ZCP closed

*after evening zazen

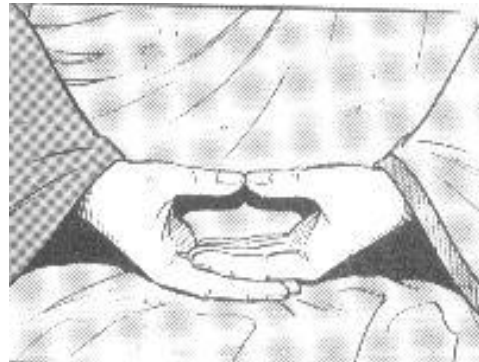
**There is no evening sitting at ZCP on the nights we sit at Mt. Alvernia Monastery

***Please Register for this event

Many thanks to all who donated to our **Annual Fund-raising Drive**. We raised **over \$18,000** in cash donations and pledges, and we also received a most generous gift of **\$20,000**. Many thanks to our anonymous donor!

Sangha members **Gary Crouth, John Digilio, Eden McNutt** and **Mimi Jong** will soon begin **sewing rakus** in preparation for the **Precept Ceremony** to be held in April. Other upcoming events include a **visit** by **Rev. Sevan Ross**, Head Teacher at **Chicago Zen Center**, a **Sangha Work Day**, and a **Karen Han Concert** sponsored by ZCP. Many thanks to **Dainei Jane Harter, Mimi Jong**, and **Hoetsu Leslie Hospodar** for organizing the concert. Dates for the above events are listed to the left.

The annual **Prairie Wind Practice Period** will again be held at **ZCP** during the **month of June**. **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, Head Priest at Nebraska Zen Center, will again lead practice. We look forward to our fourth year together here and **invite you to join us**, for either all or part of the month-long event. **Please speak to Kyoki for details.**



ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

AM

Tuesday

7:00 a.m. - Zazen at the Mattress Factory

Wednesday - Saturday

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

PM

Tuesday - Friday

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

Sunday

10:00 a.m. - Zazen

10:40 a.m. - Work Practice

11:15 a.m. - Service/Dharma Talk

12:30 p.m. - Lunch

Closed Mondays

Kyoki and other **sangha members** continue to visit the **federal prison** at **Loretto** each month to sit with the inmate group there. **Kyoki** will also travel to **Nebraska Zen Center** in May to lead a **Communication Workshop**. And, she will offer **two classes** at **ZCP** this Spring, one on the **Lankavatara Sutra** beginning **March 9th**, and an **Overview of Zen Buddhism** class beginning on **April 20th**.

Many thanks to those who have committed to temple jobs: Ino, **Hoetsu Leslie Hospodar**; Chiden, **Steven Bend**; Jisha, **Eden McNutt**; Doan, **Doug Gouge**; Work Leader, **John Ott**. Many thanks also to **Tom Persinger** for making a beautiful **donation box** for the **Mattress Factory downtown**, where we're now **sitting zazen** every **Tuesday morning**.

One Person in the Boat

from page 1

Who is that person? We all can be. Zen practice is a calming and centering process, and if we practice daily over a period of time, we become centered and calmed. We then project that everywhere we go and in everything we do, being that one person in the boat.

There is a lot of stormy weather out there as we begin this new century – war in Afghanistan and Iraq, intense conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, terrorists operating all over the globe, and localized conflicts in a variety of places. It may seem as if this time is a particularly stormy one, but these types of situations are always with us. Stormy weather is constantly arising and passing away not only in the global arena but also in each country, and in specific localities within each country. Yesterday's issues may have been resolved or have passed away, but new ones have arisen. Gay marriage is a big issue in America right now, as is the economy – the job market has been on a downward spiral for months. Religious, environmental, and political storms brew everywhere; they are constantly arising and passing away. How we weather them is the important thing, for they'll never stop coming up.

We experience storms in our personal lives as well. They arise at work, when we have problems with co-workers or with the boss, and at home, when we argue with spouses or fall out with friends. These personal storms will also never stop arising, for there is no end to the ups and downs of life. How we weather them is the important thing.

I've found that the more storms in my life – not only those storms arising in my personal life but also those arising in response to local and global events – the more important it is to continue to practice regularly, to sit every day. Regularly returning to the cushion and to that calm and stable place within enables me to function with some measure of equanimity as I sail my little boat through the surface turbulence of daily life.

Not only do I sit every day, but I also sit every sesshin at the temple, and I especially treasure the one month Prairie Wind Practice Period offered every June at Deep Spring Temple near Pittsburgh. This month of intensive practice provides me with the opportunity to deepen my life in a way that only monastic training can provide. I always return from Deep Spring settled and centered, ready to resume my work in Omaha from a stable and peaceful place.

Whatever work we do in the world is best done from a such a place. If we move from a stable and peaceful place, our movements will be centered and straight; if we move from an unstable, agitated place, our movements will be un-centered and crooked. This kind of movement cannot bring about the desired result. This is especially true in the political arena. Many people, not only in this country but all over the world, are opposed to the war in Iraq and have taken to the streets to show their disapproval. I myself marched in a peace demonstration here in Omaha when the war was about to begin. Most of the people involved that day peacefully registered their opposition to the invasion of Iraq, but when the demonstration and march were winding down, a group of young people split off from the main body of the march and headed for a shopping area nearby. They blocked traffic; motorists got upset; a scuffle ensued. Eventually, the police were called, and people were arrested.

I was on my way home when the trouble broke out, and when I read about it in the newspaper the next day, I remembered a talk my master, Dainin Katagiri, gave many years ago about peace. He talked about how people care about peace so much and want peace so badly that they go into the streets carrying signs saying, "Peace Now" to show everybody how much they're for peace. But when someone not for peace hollers at them, they hit them over the head with their signs! Katagiri-roshi asked, "Where's the peace?"

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets in Lincoln weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Church, 6300 A St.** For further information, e-mail or call **Seishin Larry Pelter** at **lpelter@alltel.net** (402-483-1755) or **Koken Greg Petitto** at **gppetitto@hotmail.com** (402-477-0558). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in advance.

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**.

Where indeed? If we want peace, we must *be* peace, for the quest for peace begins inside. The real peace work, the most difficult peace work, is performed there, on ourselves. If we want a peaceful world, we must be peaceful people. Then, that peace will spread outward and affect everything and everyone we encounter, like the peace of the one person in the boat. We don't have to go anywhere or do anything, just *be*, and the only place we can be is in our own sphere, where we are right now.

When controversial global, national, or local storms arise, people want to do *something*, but what is there to do? What *can* one person do? Some people feel so

One Person in the Boat

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strongly about things that they become full-time social and political activists, but not all people are cut out to do that. I'm not. I was cut out to be a Zen Buddhist priest, so that's the direction my life took. However, everything, without exception, is interconnected. I am affected as much as anyone by social, political, and economic events. We are all in one big boat, and are all affected in some way by everything that happens in and around the boat.

When I feel moved to action by a particular issue, I act, and I do so within my own particular sphere of influence. I make my views known by engaging people in dialogue about issues that concern me. I keep myself informed. I write letters to the newspaper and to my governmental representatives. I belong to an on-line political group that reflects my views, and I sign petitions they circulate that are presented to government officials. I attend community forums here in Omaha, and I also work with other clergy in groups advocating positions I support. I always try to do these things in a peaceful, measured, and balanced way. Whenever I find myself beginning either to get upset or to lose my temper, I take a deep breath and focus on it. If that doesn't work, I either shut up and sit with my breath for a while longer or back off and walk away from the conversation, the event, or the computer until I calm down and re-center myself.

I encourage Zen students who feel a need to act to do so within their own spheres of influence if they are not cut out for full-time activism, even though some Zen students and teachers think that practitioners should stay out of politics altogether, that the true spiritual path leads away from involvement in the social and political arena. I don't think so. The phrase "engaged Buddhism" arose out of the mistaken notion that Buddhist practitioners are "dis-engaged" because there's such an emphasis on meditation and retreat within the Buddhist traditions, especially in Zen Buddhism.

In my view, if you're not "engaged,"

you're not practicing Zen, and this engagement has to be with everything in front of you. That includes politics and social work. The Zen Ox-herding series is a pictorial and poetic blueprint for the awakening process, and the last frame in the series is "Returning to the Marketplace with Bliss-bestowing Hands." This refers to the Bodhisattva path, which is not quietist and isolationist. The first Bodhisattva Vow, the vow of an awakened person, is "to save all beings." From what? From suffering. This is first and foremost an internal, personal struggle, but as the Ox-herding pictures attest, after the struggle is won, the mission is to return to the marketplace, to everyday life wherever people live it, and to guide others to awakening.

Sometimes this mission can involve working to remove the economic, social, and political constraints that deny people the opportunity for spiritual practice. It's hard to find time or space to practice Zen if you're spending most of your waking hours earning enough money to feed your family, if you're chronically ill because you can't afford health insurance, or if you're dodging bombs and bullets.

That one calm person in the boat is especially valuable in the marketplace. This is not only limited to the marketplace of social and political action but also the marketplace we enter when we go to work everyday.

During our last practice period here at the temple in Omaha, one of the participants was having a difficult time with gossip at work. She wrote about it in her practice journal, which practice period students keep and turn in to me on a weekly basis. I then make comments about what they've written and give the journals back to the student. This student was feeling more and more uncomfortable working with people who are constantly complaining about others, and we carried on this discussion thread over three or four journal entries.

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.

Prison Dharma

from page 3

and usually good-humored bunch. They also are persistent and real – two qualities I don't always like but nonetheless appreciate. I am fortunate they are in my life. Come to think of it, I don't get as angry as often for as long as I have in the past.

I can't change what was done to me or what I've done to others, nor can I change what others may or may not do. I can, however, change what I do and how I react. There are the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts to guide me, even when I screw up. I review them often, but find the thought that “while perfection is approachable it is not attainable” perhaps somewhat too reassuring.

A smiling face. A humble bow. “And everything counts all of the time too.” So it does.

Doc (who asked that his last name not be used) practices at the State Penitentiary in Tecumseh, Nebraska with the White Lotus Sangha, a group affiliated with Nebraska Zen Center.

LETTER FROM MAURICIO

I once thought I was a free man, so free I just frittered time away, hypnotized by a big screen TV, brain numbed by weed, squandering practically every second of the day.

In my ignorant mind, I was an enviable man. For I was independent, had my own home, a beautiful wife whom I adored, and a loyal friend, my boxer dog, who followed me wherever I went. That's how my life went everyday; working with my wife as a team and hustling on my own, here and there, until one dreadful day the inevitable finally came. I was greedy and wanted more, so I decided to accept an offer to run an illegal errand that would only take me a couple of hours and make me thirty-five hundred dollars richer than I was before. Well, you guessed right, that one errand became the last one I would ever run. So much for the so-called

freedom that I had – no more wife, dog, home, or anything else – just a long seventy-month federal sentence snickering ahead of me.

I was shipped to Loretto, Pennsylvania, to a five-star federal resort that awaited me, with reservations – all inclusive – until April of 2004. I was devastated and lost all hope, for I knew there was nothing I could do that could take me back to my old world. I could cry, shout, or even stand on my head but yet nothing, absolutely nothing, could possibly change that fact. That was something very hard to digest.

Soon after, with my tears dried out and everything else drained, I decided to face reality and do my time with a smile on my face. A positive attitude, I thought, was the best way to begin my new life. I knew something good had to come from so much torment. As Nietzsche said, “What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.”

I was born and raised Catholic, and those teachings affected much of my consciousness and spirituality. “Good boys go to heaven; bad boys go to hell” was the maxim with which I was raised and the reason why those teachings never got to percolate. I am, however, grateful for many Catholic teachings, which I still today feel very much in my heart – like the love, suffering, and compassion of mother Mary and her son and great master Jesus Christ. Such examples have been the foundation to my spiritual understanding and yet so many other Catholic teachings have made such little sense, if anything at all, that I decided to embark on my own search.

I looked and delved everywhere, climbed the highest mountains, looked for the perfect sunrise and or sunset, read different books, experimented with psychedelics and transcendental techniques, but the most I accomplished was to scratch the surface. I was certain that there was more, somewhere, waiting for me.

I have found more since I've been incarcerated that in all the years I had been groping around the world. Like Jesus once said, “The kingdom of God cometh not from observation, neither shall you say Lo here nor Lo there for the kingdom of God is within You.” Here inside these brick cells, I have come to realize that the answer to all my questions have been no further from my nose, in my breath, in the here and now, in the present moment, in every second of every day. With all my senses receptive, wide awake with no intoxicants burdening the way, I try to just be here, now, to accept reality without judgement, with open hands, whatever it may be. I also try to live in harmony with what cannot be changed and to have the strength to continue living breath by breath not only for myself but also for the benefit for all.

I know that everything will fall in place, maybe not immediately or maybe not how I want to be but nevertheless, it will be perfectly fine. Of course, my boisterous monkey-mind doesn't always seem to agree. I can hear it pestering me. I observe it and let it pass away, but it goes like this, “Oh man, I'm worried. I'll be going home soon after all these years in prison, almost 32 years old, unemployed, with no wife, or children, or place of my own, going back to my mother's house like I was a teenager again. What about clothes, transportation, money. Poor me; what am I going to do??”

I just let go and return to my breath. Here and now, with nowhere to go, all my feelings make up the world. My pains and sorrows are no different than those felt by the displaced by horror and war. They come from the same place where I was born and where I will be living once again, in Columbia, where there has been a war for forty years now and where suffering continues undeterred.

My love and appreciation go to all spiritual teachers whose books and tapes I've learned from, but especially for those who give their precious time to visit inmates like myself. My special thanks to Kyoki and all the others from Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Thank you with

continued on page 9



Nirvana

Calligraphy Pages Re-done!

Nonin's calligraphy pages on our website have been **completely re-done**. There are now **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.

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 at and purchased through our website, at www.prairiewindzen.org. Click on **Nebraska Zen Center** and go to Nonin's calligraphy pages.

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

Prison Dharma

from page 8

all my heart for the greatest teaching I've received in my spiritual journey – how to sit still.

Hands to palm to palm with full vow,

Mauricio

Mauricio Pieschacon practices at the Federal Penitentiary in Loretto, Pennsylvania with a group affiliated with Zen Center of Pittsburgh.

ZEN MEDITATION WORKSHOP

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

Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, abbot of
Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

at **Nebraska Zen Center**

On **Saturday, March 27th**, from **10:00 am till 1:00 pm**

Cost: \$20

For further information or to register contact
Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131-1363
(402) 551-9035
heartland @prairiewindzen.org

One Person in the Boat

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One of the things we discussed was the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts. One of them says, "I recognize that words can hurt others; I do not slander." Another says, "I am humble; I do not praise myself or judge others." We discussed how necessary it was for a peaceful workplace to adhere to these ethical guidelines and what strategies we can use in adhering to them, such as remaining silent when others gossip or saying politely that you'd rather not talk about it when others try to draw you into gossiping about someone. We can also not contribute to the negativity by bringing up the positive qualities of the person getting slammed, or we can quietly get up and leave when the gossip starts. The most important thing is to remain calm and centered and not to get sucked into the negative energy. If we don't, we can at least bring a measure of stability to this little boat, and eventually, our behavior will have a positive effect on others.

A calm and stable person is much appreciated in the workplace. Many years ago, when I was teaching English in college, our faculty meetings were especially contentious. It was during the Vietnam era, the mid-to-late 1960's, which was a time of great upheaval on American college campuses. In those days, I was a campus radical, and if there was a hot issue at the college, I was usually right in the middle of it. One of my friends at the time taught at the same school I did and was also a serious Yoga practitioner and teacher. She brought a calm, stabilizing presence wherever she went, and I found myself seeking her out to sit next to at faculty meetings. If I'd have been asked at the time why I always sat next to her, I'd have said that she was a friend, and I like to sit next to friends at meetings. When I went to that lecture by Thich Nhat Hanh many years later, however, I thought of

my old friend right away, and realized that years before, I must have known on some level that I'd be better off sitting next to someone whose presence might calm me down, so I sat next to that one person in the boat!

I remember talking often with my friend

I treasure all my friends, but I especially treasure those who bring peace and stability into my life by their calm and centered presence. At times of agitation, worry, sadness, or grief, I look for these friends, for I just want to be with them; their presence helps. When they are troubled, I hope that they look for me, for I would like to be for them what they are for me.

I encourage all serious Zen students to practice daily, to sit sesshins, and, from time to time, to engage in longer, more intensive practice periods in residential centers. The more we get in touch with the deeper parts of our lives, the more we can live from those calm, stable places after we rise from our cushions and return to share our lives with our families, our co-workers, and ultimately, with all beings. We can then be of great service to everyone we encounter. Being that one person in the boat is the bodhisattva's way.

The Snow Man

*One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine trees crusted with snow;*

*And have been cold a long time
To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter*

*Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,*

*Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place*

*For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.*

Wallace Stevens

about Yoga and Zen. She was considerably older than I was and had led a very interesting life. At that time, I was mostly interested in reading, not practicing, and she once said to me that someday, I was going to have to stop talking about Zen Buddhism and start practicing it. What she said stuck in my mind, and eventually, I followed her advice.

COMMUNICATION WORKSHOP



Kyoki

Rev. Kyoki Roberts, Head Priest of Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple will offer a **Communication Workshop** she has developed especially for **Buddhist Sanghas** at **Nebraska Zen Center** on the weekend of **May 1st**. She will lead participants through **skill development in Active Listening, Speaking Up, and Managing Difficult Conversations and Conflict**.

The Workshop has as its foundation the **Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts** and the recognition that **each of us is Buddha**. It will begin with **zazen** at **6 pm on Friday evening, April 30th** and will end at **10 am on Sunday, May 2nd**.

Kyoki has over **ten years** of hands-on mediation experience and was formerly a **mediation trainer** for the State of Nebraska. She has also **worked professionally** as a mediator and facilitator with **church** and **sangha** groups.

This workshop is free to NZC members. For non-members, the cost is \$75, including meals.

For further information and to register, contact **Nebraska Zen Center** at **3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131-1363** **(402) 551-9035**
heartland@prairiewindzen.org

PRAIRIE WIND PRACTICE PERIOD

The annual **Prairie Wind Practice Period** will be held at **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple** for the entire **month of June**. **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, Head Priest at Nebraska Zen Center, will lead practice, assisted by **Rev. Kyoki Roberts**, Head Priest at Zen Center of Pittsburgh.

We will follow a daily schedule of **zazen, services, formal and informal meals, work practice, and dharma talks and classes** based on Soto Zen practices in the tradition of **Zen Master Dogen**.

We invite you to join us, for either all or part of this practice period.

For further information, cost inquiries, or to register, please contact **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** at **124 Willow Ridge Road, Sewickley, PA 15143** **(412) 741-1262**
kyoki@prairiewindzen.org

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 1st**.

NZC's Website Address is:
www.prairiewindzen.org

Our E-mail address is:
heartland@prairiewindzen.org

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)

Thursday

6:00 - 8:30 — Classes as scheduled

Friday

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

We are closed on Monday