

# Prairie Wind



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

**Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW**, is NZC's Head Priest. He trained with Rev. Katagiri and was ordained by him. Rev. Chowaney also trained at Tassajara Zen Monastery in California and in Japan at Zuio-ji and Shogo-ji monasteries. He received formal Dharma Transmission from Rev. Katagiri and has been authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. Rev. Chowaney is the founder of the Order of the Prairie Wind.

**Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple** is NZC's sister temple. ZCP also follows the Soto Zen Buddhist tradition established by Zen Master Dogen..

**Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW**, is ZCP's Head Priest and a founding member of the Order of the Prairie Wind. She is the senior ordained student of Rev. Nonin Chowaney and has trained at Hokyoji Monastery in Minnesota, San Francisco Zen Center and Green Gulch Farm in California, and Zuioji and Shogoji monasteries in Japan. Rev. Roberts received Dharma Transmission from Rev. Chowaney and was authorized to teach by him and by the Soto Zen Church in Japan. She was appointed to serve as ZCP's Head Priest in 2001

*Prairie Wind* (© 2011 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

**Cover Calligraphy: Enso — No Birth; No Death, by Nonin Chowaney.**

We **always** need material for *Prairie Wind*. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, etc. The deadline for publication in our **Fall** issue is **August 1st**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: [www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org).

**Nebraska Zen Center's** e-mail address is: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org).  
**Zen Center of Pittsburgh's** e-mail address is: [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org)

# A ZEN BUDDHIST POET

by *Nonin Chowaney*

Poetry has always had a prominent place in Buddhist culture in general and in Zen Buddhist culture in particular. Shakyamuni Buddha's disciples, male and female, composed oral poems about their practice lives that were eventually written down and passed on to us. When Zen Buddhism came to China, a strong poetic tradition was already present, and Zen Buddhist lay practitioners, such as Wang Wei and Chia Tao, wrote poems about their practice, others' practices, and their everyday lives that are filled with the spirit of Zen. Many monks and nuns also contributed to this cultural tradition in China.

After Zen Buddhism came to Japan, the tradition was carried on by monks, such as Saigyō and Ryōkan, by nuns, such as Rengetsu, and also by many lay practitioners over the years. This poetic tradition has also been carried on by many poets in the West, such as Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and Jane Hirschfield, who is one of my favorites. In this article, I intend to present some poems by her and examine the Zen Buddhist spirit reflected in them.

Jane Hirschfield was born in New York City in 1953 and received her bachelor's degree from Princeton University, in the school's first graduating class to include women. She later studied at San Francisco Zen Center, including three years of monastic practice at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center. She received lay ordination in Soto Zen Buddhism in

1979. Over the years, she has become one of the foremost figures on the American poetry scene. Her poetry has appeared in a variety of newspapers and magazines, and she has published six collections of poetry and a book of essays. She has also co-translated the work of the two foremost women poets of classical-era Japan, and has edited three books collecting the work of women poets. One of my favorite Jane Hirschfield poems is the following:

## *Secretive Heart*

*What's this? This is an old toolshed.  
No, this is a great past love.*

## *Yehuda Amichai*

*Heart falters, stops  
before a Chinese cauldron  
still good for boiling water.*

*It is one of a dozen or more,  
it is merely iron,  
it is merely old,  
there is much else to see.*

*The few raised marks  
on its belly  
are useful to almost no one.*

*Heart looks at it a long time.  
What do you see? I ask again,  
but it does not answer.*

continued on page 4

## ***A Zen Buddhist Poet***

from page 3

Jane Hirschfield has come across an old Chinese cauldron, either in a museum or a shop, feels an affinity for it, and is transfixed by it. It touches her heart. Why? She doesn't know, and no answer from within is forthcoming. All she knows is that something deep within her, which she calls "heart," has been deeply touched. Why this cauldron, why a Chinese piece? Who knows? "Heart" gives her no answer.

This poem speaks to me about the depth and breadth of human life. How many of us have gone to a museum or an art gallery or gone to a movie that depicts a time past or a different culture and been deeply affected by a certain object, or a scene, or a particular way of dress? I remember seeing Akira Kurosawa's movie *Seven Samurai* many, many years ago when I was teaching at a college on Long Island in the state of New York. At the beginning of the movie, the title and credits were displayed on the screen in vibrant Japanese characters called *Kanji*. I couldn't read any of them, but they affected me so deeply that I stayed after the movie was over to see them again at the start of the next showing. Eventually, I learned how to do Japanese and Chinese calligraphy using these characters and have continued to do so to the present day.

Where did this interest come from? Who knows? I had an affinity for calligraphy that transcended my upbringing in a Ukrainian family in a small

factory city in Central New York. At about the same time that I saw Kurosawa's movie, a friend gave me a book about Zen Buddhism. I immediately felt an affinity for Zen, and eventually, practicing and teaching it became the central focus of my life. After coming to an understanding of the vastness and depth of human life, which transcends all time and place, this affinity for calligraphy became understandable to me, as does Jane Hirschfield's affinity for the Chinese cauldron.

Here's another poem:

### ***Only When I Am Quiet and Do Not Speak***

*Only when I am quiet for a long time  
and do not speak  
do the objects of my life draw near.*

*Shy, the scissors and spoons, the blue  
mug.  
Hesitant even the towels,  
for all their intimate knowledge and  
scent of fresh bleach.*

*How steady their regard as they ponder,  
dreaming and waking,  
the entrancement of my daily wanderings  
and tasks.  
Drunk on the honey of feelings, the  
honey of purpose,  
they seem to be thinking,*

## ***A Zen Buddhist Poet***

from page 4

*A quiet judgment that glistens between  
the glass doorknobs.*

*Yet theirs is not the false reserve  
of a scarcely concealed ill-will,  
Nor that other, active shying: of pelted  
rocks.*

*No, not that. For I hear the sigh of  
happiness  
each object gives off  
if I glimpse for even an instant the  
actual instant –  
as if they believed it possible  
I might join  
their circle of simple, passionate thus-  
ness,  
their hidden rituals of luck and soli-  
tude,  
the joyous gap in them where appears  
in us the pronoun I.*

Here, the poet is celebrating those moments when our idea of self drops away, and we can be intimate with things around us in a new way. Buddhist teaching is that there is no self. There is nothing inside a human being that is fixed or permanent. By creating the idea of a fixed or permanent self, we create gaps between ourselves and other beings. We cut ourselves off from others, and true intimacy is not possible. The "joyous gap" that the poet celebrates in the objects around her is emptiness, which means that there is nothing fixed and permanent within them either. The "passionate thusness" is also known as "suchness" in Zen Buddhism, things as they are.

When we drop our idea of self, we can come closer to other beings and they to us.

The title of the above poem is, "Only When I Am Quiet and Do Not Speak." Speech is dualistic, and it separates us from other beings. When we are quiet and attentive, we can really "see" and become intimate with not only other people but also all the beings that make up our lives.

A talented poet like Jane Hirschfield can present a fairly complex understanding of human life in just a few lines. Here's a poem that does just that:

### ***I Imagine Myself in Time***

*I imagine myself in time looking back  
on myself—  
this self, this morning,  
drinking her coffee on the first day of  
a new year  
and once again almost unable to  
move her pen though the iron air.  
Perplexed by my life as Midas was in  
his world of sudden metal,  
surprised that it was not as he'd ex-  
pected, what he had asked.  
And that other self, who watches me  
from the distance of decades,  
what will she say? Will she look at me  
with hatred or with compassion,  
I whose choices made her what she  
will be.*

continued on page 5

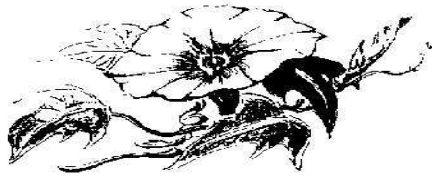
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## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

Sangha members **Deb Spicka** and **Sarah Neppl** are sewing rakus in preparation for a Precept Ceremony signifying **Lay Initiation** at the temple on Sunday, April 1st at 10:00 a.m. **All are invited** to attend the ceremony.

**Valdene Mintzmyer, who was priest-ordained by me at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple last Summer, is no longer my student. Soto Zen Buddhist Association Ethical Guidelines require students who leave their ordaining teacher before completing training to disrobe and return their robes and bowls. After the person does, he or she is free to seek another teacher and may eventually re-ordain with that person.**

**Nonin Chowaney**



We are moving along with our **major temple remodeling** and are nearly finished with our **new zendo** on the East side of our building (see pictures on page 20). Many thanks to sangha members **Kanho Doug Dittman** and **Nonin** for insulating the space, to **Jose Correa** and his friend for installing and taping drywall, to **Nonin** for patching the walls in the old part of the zendo, to **Sarah Neppl, Mark Neppl,** and **Nonin** for painting the space, and to **Nonin, Kanho Doug, Sarah,** and **Mark** for installing the new floor and for sanding and applying Tung Oil to the entire floor.

Also, many thanks to sangha member **Mike Zagozda** for completing the electrical work on the new zendo and for continuing to work on the West side addition. Thanks also to **Rob Bailey** for spearheading the trim installation in the new zendo and to the many **sangha members** who have taken on **temple jobs** and have kept the place clean and running smoothly!

**ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH / DEEP SPRING TEMPLE IS HOLDING A 4-WEEK INTENSIVE PRACTICE PERIOD FROM JUNE 1ST— 30TH LED BY REV. KYOKI ROBERTS. YOU MAY REGISTER BY CONTACTING [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org).**

## NZC SPRING/SUMMER EVENTS

### SESSHIN

There will be two sesshins at NZC this Spring and Summer: **Two-day sesshins** on **April 21st & 22nd** and on **June 23rd & 24th**. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** us at [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or call **402-551-9035** to register.

### BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** with a special service on **Sunday, April 8th.**, at **10:00 a.m.**, after regular 9:00 zazen. Afterwards, there'll be a **dharma talk** and a **pot-luck lunch** with **birthday cake** and **ice-cream**. **Everyone is invited to attend.**

**Please Note: the temple will be closed over Memorial Day Weekend from Thursday evening, the 24th, through Tuesday, the 29th. We will re-open with morning sitting and service on Wednesday, May 30th.**

### 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 need-

We are closed on Monday.

If you are new to the temple, you must have zazen instruction before joining us. Please arrive by 8:30 on Sunday morning for instruction.

## ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

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

And, if you haven't seen it yet, please check out Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple's **public television documentary**, which aired in November: <http://www.wqed.org/tv/horizons/index.php?id=301>

**Rev. Jisen Coghlan** is now leading three sitting groups, one at **Carnegie Mellon University** — where she also gave the opening prayer for Martin Luther King Day — one at **Church of the Redeemer** in Squirrel Hill, and one at **LaRoche College** in the North Hills. Please contact us at [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org) for days and times.

ZCP resident **Steven Coraor** spent six weeks touring Zen Buddhist practice places on the West Coast. Pictures from his trip may be accessed here: <http://www.tripcolor.com/user/9549/trip/5C5A70A4-A831-465F-858D-E3A33FD6E2DC>

Sangha member **Dustin Misosky** is sewing priest robes in preparation for ordination.

**Rev. Dosho Port** led our largest sesshin to day from March 1st — 4th. **Our deepest thanks to him.**

**Kyoki** offers her **deepest thanks** to **sangha members** who sent notes and flowers to Kyoki's family after her mother's passing on February 15th. Also **many thanks** to those **sangha members** who helped prepare the temple of the reception following the church service.

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

## ZCP SPRING/SUMMER EVENTS

### MARCH

17,24, & 31 — Buddhist Studies Class

### APRIL

1 — World Peace Ceremony  
6 — Precept Renewal, 6 pm  
13-14 — Beginners' Sesshin, Friday 7 pm to Sat 5 pm\*  
21 — Temple Clean-up Day

### MAY

3 — Precept Renewal, 6pm  
6 — World Peace Ceremony  
20 — Vesak Ceremony, 3 pm, UUNorth side  
22-31 — ZCP Closed

### JUNE

1-30 — June Practice Period\*  
1-3 — Sesshin\*  
7,14,21,28 — Precept Renewal Ceremony  
22-24 — An Olive Branch Meeting

### JULY

1 — World Peace Ceremony  
2 — Ikko Narasaki Memorial  
3-6 — ZCP Closed

\*Please register for this event

## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

### Closed Mondays

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

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

# WHITE LOTUS SANGHA NOTES

## Practice in Prison

by Zenryu Vicki Grunwald

White Lotus is the prison sangha of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple. Volunteers go to Tecumseh State Correctional Institute (TSCI), Nebraska State Penitentiary (NSP), Lincoln Correctional Center (LCC), and Omaha Correctional Center (OCC). All house maximum and medium security male inmates except for OCC, which houses minimum security males. Some people call it a prison program, although I never refer to the men that way unless I am talking to the prison administration. I am not a program of Nebraska Zen Center; I am a spiritual practitioner. The inmates are not a program of Nebraska Zen Center; they are spiritual practitioners.

Many people are curious about what Zen Buddhist practice is like in a prison. In most ways, it is no different than practice on the outside. Practice is practice. The numbers are small, but the men are sincere, which is how I like it.

One big difference is the extreme flexibility you need to function within a prison system. The men receive two timeslots per week, one for worship and the other for study. Since Friday night was the volunteer night at the four participating White Lotus prisons, volunteers came to

Nebraska State Penitentiary on Fridays, despite that it was study night, not worship night. The prison had a classroom off of turnkey, the control station that opens and closes doors and houses keys for the prison. We sat zazen in uncomfortable resin chairs made with a circular impression for our rear ends. And we sat with our shoes on. Without liturgical supplies, I clapped my hands to signal the beginning

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets on Friday evenings in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha. For further information, see **the Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org), call **(402) 551-9035**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

and end of zazen and kinhin. Using a notebook with a picture of a Buddhist altar as our altar, I clapped my hands in a standard roll down and then we all did standing bows to my notebook. It felt like a curtain call.

I then decided to come on Sundays, during the worship time at this prison. At

## Practice in Prison

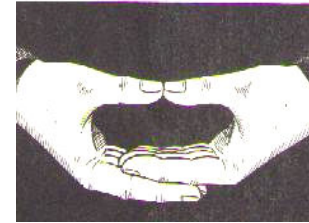
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first, we had one inmate doing a Tibetan style bow, another doing a curtain call, and still another who didn't know when to stand back up. That day reinforced how important our rituals are in that they facilitate a group practice -- a group functioning as one body. The men in that prison are now one of our strongest groups. Many inmates perform the rituals, including the role of doan (the person who times zazen and plays the instruments during service) with the same skill as the practitioners at NZC. Over the past 6 years, a total of five inmates have sewn raku-sus and vowed to dedicate their lives to living the Buddha way.

I'm a woman visiting male prisons, so many people are surprised to learn how well respected I am. The men treat me like a lady. I don't feel threatened by them in any way. My first trip to a prison was to TSCI. Two female volunteers and I along with 3 inmates had to wait outside the religion library where our services were held for the guard to get the keys. An inmate grabbed three resin chairs (the kind with circular impressions for the derriere) off a large stack, set them up and motioned for the three ladies to sit down. What a gentleman.

The things that get through to prison inmates are the things that get through to most people. Sometimes I see the

“getting through” in their faces, and their realizations are quite moving. At first, some inmates see me as a powder puff, a nice lady who comes to visit the prison. They have difficulty believing that I also suffer from the three poisons, specifically anger. I've never gone to prison, lost a job, or been arrested for losing my temper, but I still suffer from the three poisons: greed, anger, and delusion. They are surprised and sometimes relieved that these poisons are a human thing, not just an inmate thing.



Another saying many practitioners respond to is “you are perfect just as you are (of course there is plenty of room for improvement.)” The belief that they are broken or need to be fixed is more common with prison practitioners. The belief is compounded by the association of “correction” with something negative. After all they are in the Department of Corrections, something very bad. Most inmates think that “life will begin when I parole.” This is a variation on the themes, “life will begin when I graduate; I will be happy when I get married, get the good job, etc.” Sometimes I have to be persistent to explain to the inmates that their life has value, that they are Buddha even if they have a life sentence without parole eligibility. Yes, spending time with your buddy who



**Mindful Monk, Head Filled With Emptiness**  
Wire Sculpture by Tom Laurent

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

### **Membership**

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

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

### **Financial Support**

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

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

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

## **LINCOLN ZEN GROUP**

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

## A Zen Buddhist Poet

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Our past and present actions, or karma, shape our lives into the future. What we choose to do shapes what we will become. What we are now has been shaped by past actions, and what we'll become will be shaped by present and future actions. In the above, the poet imagines her future life, in a moment when she is unable to write – as she is at the present – perplexed and surprised that her life has not turned out exactly in the way she wanted or expected. She wonders how her future self will look back on the choices she's making now that will shape her down the line; will it be with hatred or compassion? Did she shape a satisfying, a life of contentment and satisfaction? Or, did she shape an unsatisfying life full of regret and turmoil?

This poem focuses on our own responsibility for what we become. Nothing is fixed or permanent. Because this is our true nature, we have the potential to go in any direction and become what we make of ourselves. If we are not satisfied with the results, we only have ourselves to blame. That's why it's so important to live ethically. The three Pure Precepts are: (1) Do no harm, (2) Do good, (3) Live to benefit all beings. If we live thusly, our actions will be positive and we will reap positive results from them into the future. It's also important to cultivate wisdom and compassion. If we live wisely and compassionately, we will experience the results into the future. We need to live what we wish to become or we will look back on our lives

with regret for not shaping ourselves into what we wanted to become.

Here's yet another poem:

### *It Was Like This: You Were Happy*

*It was like this:  
you were happy, then you were sad,  
then happy again, then not.*

*It went on.  
You were innocent or you were guilty.  
Actions were taken, or not.*

*At times you spoke, at other times you  
were silent.  
Mostly, it seems you were silent – what  
could you say?*

*Now it is almost over.*

*Like a lover, your life bends down and  
kisses your life.*

*It does this not in forgiveness —  
between you, there is nothing to for-  
give —  
but with the simple nod of a baker at  
the moment  
he sees the bread is finished with trans-  
formation.*

*Eating, too, is a thing now only for  
others.*

*It doesn't matter what they will make of  
you  
or your days: they will be wrong,  
they will miss the wrong woman, miss  
the wrong man,*

continued on next page

## A Zen Buddhist Poet

from previous page

*all the stories they tell will be tales of  
their own invention.*

*Your story was this; you were happy,  
then you were sad,  
you slept, you awakened.  
Sometimes you ate roasted chestnuts,  
sometimes persimmons.*

What a wonderful assessment of a person's life! No judgment; no recriminations; just this, and then that. My favorite lines in this poem are:

*It doesn't matter what they will make of  
you  
or your days: they will be wrong,  
they will miss the wrong woman, miss  
the wrong man,  
all the stories they tell will be tales of  
their own invention.*

Our view of another person is not really that person; it is only our view. Once, when giving a dharma talk at our temple, I said that no one here looks at me and sees the same "Nonin." What everyone calls Nonin depends physically on where they are sitting. What they assess as "Nonin" depends on what they bring to the dharma talk. I'm a big person; some people are intimidated by me, some afraid of me. Some are not. Some see me as kind and gentle. Which one is the true Nonin? The fearsome one or the kind and gentle one? Some women have been taught to be wary of men, that they are not to be trusted, so they bring that to the dharma talk and are wary of me. Some people have adopted what others have told them of me, whether positive or negative, and will bring that to the

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## *Meditation Workshop at Nebraska Zen Center*

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

Taught by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney**, abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple, at 3625 Lafayette Ave, Omaha, NE 68131 on **Saturday, March 24th**, from **10:00 a.m.** till **1:00 p.m.**

For further info or to register, either e-mail [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org) or call 402-551-9035.

## *Practice in Prison*

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just got out of segregation is Bodhisattva practice, I tell them. Helping your cell mate who is new to prison cope with decreasing visits from family is Bodhisattva practice. Showing up to sit zazen with the prison sangha is the practice of a Bodhisattva. The list goes on.

Overall, I see more similarities than differences between Zen practice in the prison and on the outside. The White Lotus Sangha is a thriving sangha due to the sincere efforts of the prison practitioners.

*Zenryu Vicki Grunwald functions as a Lay Minister with the White Lotus Sangha.*



## CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

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

There are **over fifty items for sale**, one and two-character pieces, longer phrases, and specialty items. All are **signed and stamped originals** and are written on high-quality paper, either Canson watercolor paper, Rives BFK, or archival matboard.

Nonin also accepts **commissions** to write temple names, individual dharma names, and specific characters or Zen phrases. **For further information**, contact him directly at the following e-mail address: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org).

We sell and ship the calligraphy unframed. **Each piece can be mounted and framed by a good framer using traditional methods.**

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

## A Zen Buddhist Poet

from page 15

dharma talk. Which person is the true Nonin? None of them, for as Jane Hirschfield says, "*all the stories they tell will be tales of their own invention.*"

It's very difficult to approach people completely open and see them as they are rather than as we think they are or should be. One summer day a few years ago, I was sitting on the temple front porch drinking a cup of coffee, and four young African-American teenagers came walking up the middle of our street. They were dressed in baggy pants, shirts down to their knees, and ball caps cocked sideways on their heads. I immediately thought, "Oh oh, future hoodlums of America." When they passed by the front of our temple, one of them stopped and read our sign. He looked up at me, and said, "Sir, what is this place?" I thought, how many gangsters would call you "sir?"

I said, "It's a Zen Buddhist temple."

He said, "What that?"

I replied, "Come here, and I'll tell you."

His buddies were motioning him to come on, let's get going, but he motioned them to come with him, and they did. I sat on our front steps and talked with them for a few minutes, and they asked some good questions. They weren't gangsters, or future hoodlums. They were nice, bright kids. As they left, they all thanked me, shook my hand, and we all went about our business.

We bring all our conditioning, all our previous experiences, biases, and opinions to every encounter with another person. Unless we can drop them and meet someone with an open heart and mind, we will be unable to see the person as he or she really is.

Jane Hirschfield's poem says:

*You were innocent or you were guilty.  
Actions were taken, or not.*

*At times you spoke, at other times you  
were silent.  
Mostly, it seems you were silent –  
hat could you say?*

*Now it is almost over.*

*Like a lover, your life bends down  
and kisses your life.*

*It does this not in forgiveness –  
between you, there is nothing to for-  
give –  
but with the simple nod of a baker at  
the moment  
he sees the bread is finished with  
transformation.*

It's done; that's all; of what use are judgments and recriminations? The poem ends with:

*Your story was this; you were happy,  
then you were sad,  
you slept, you awakened.  
Sometimes you ate roasted chestnuts,  
sometimes persimmons.*

continued on page 18

## *A Zen Buddhist Poet*

from page 17

Sometimes this; sometimes that. Sometimes happy; sometimes sad. Sometimes bitter; sometimes sweet. Just a life.

Jane Hirschfield's poems are finely crafted and deeply insightful into the way things are. She is a perfect example of reflecting the dharma through poetry.

I'll leave you with this one:

### *The Promise*

*Mysteriously they entered, those few minutes.  
Mysteriously, they left.  
As if the great dog of confusion guarding my heart,  
who is always sleepless, suddenly slept.  
It was not any awakening of the large,  
not so much as that,  
only a stepping back from the petty.  
I gazed at the range of blue mountains,  
I drank from the stream. Tossed in a small stone from the bank.  
Whatever direction the fates of my life might travel, I trusted.  
Ever the greedy direction, even the grieving, trusted.  
There was nothing to be saved from bliss nor danger.  
The dog's tail wagged a little in his dream.*

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



Not One Thing (Mu Ichi Butsu)  
Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

### *To Opinion*

*Many capacities have been thought to define the human —  
yet finches and wasps use tools; speech comes  
into this world in many forms.  
Perhaps it is you, Opinion.*

*Though I cannot know for certain,  
I doubt the singing dolphins have opinions.*

*This thought, of course is you.*

*A mosquito's estimation of her meal, however subtle,  
is not an opinion. That's my opinion, too.*

*To think about you is to step into*

*your arms? a thicket? pitfall?*

*When you come rising strongly in me, I feel myself grow separate  
and more lonely.  
Even when others share you, this is so.*

*Darwin said not fact or description that fails to support an argument  
can serve.*

*Myoe wrote: Bright, bright, bright, bright, the moon.*

*Last night there were whole minutes when you released me.  
Ocean ocean ocean was the sound the sand  
made of the moonlit waves  
breaking on it.*

*Jane Hirschfield*

## OUR NEW ZENDO SPACE

Once the molding, trim, and baseboard are installed, it'll be ready to use!



### *Not Running From Here*

*Your only duty  
Is to not run from here  
Even if the hole  
Of loss burns deep  
In your belly  
And on waking  
You feel the dread  
Of walking into the day  
Stripped bare  
Feeling the wind  
Pierce those  
Empty Places within*

*You can always pretend  
Try putting on a face  
Other than your own  
But that's a game  
That's never worked  
And only burns  
A deeper hole inside  
The pocket of longing  
And makes the shell  
You've chosen to live in  
Even more hollow*

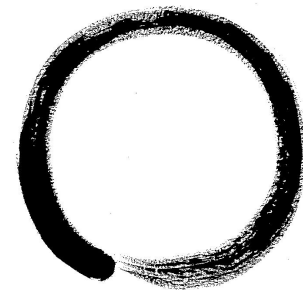
*And when you touch  
The emptiness inside*

*You've spent a lifetime  
Running from  
With delicate hands of love  
The way the evening fog  
Envelopes the solitary tree*

*Without flinching  
Pressing into and  
Loving every gnarled crevice  
Every twisted branch  
Even the forgotten needles  
Fallen to the ground*

*This is the first step  
That begins the slow  
Journey of completeness  
Keeps inviting you deeper  
Into the roots of yourself  
Claiming your place  
That has always been  
Waiting right here*

*Mark Coleman*



## ***View with a Grain of Sand***

*We call it a grain of sand,  
but it calls itself neither grain nor  
sand.*

*It does just fine without a name,  
whether general, particular,  
permanent, passing,  
incorrect or apt.*

*Our glance, our touch mean nothing to  
it.*

*It doesn't feel itself seen and touched.*

*And that it fell on the windowsill*

*is only our experience, not its.*

*For it, it is no different from falling on  
anything else*

*With no assurance that it has finished  
falling*

*Or that it is falling still.*

*The window has a wonderful view of a  
lake,*

*but the view doesn't view itself.*

*It exists in this world*

*colorless, shapeless,*

*soundless, odorless, and painless.*

*The lake's floor exists floorlessly*

*and its shore exists shorelessly.*

*Its water feels itself neither wet nor  
dry*

*and its waves to themselves are*

*neither singular nor plural.*

*They splash deaf to their own noise*

*on pebbles neither large nor small.*

*And all this beneath a sky by nature*

*skyless*

*in which the sun sets without setting at*

*all*

*and hides without hiding behind an  
unminding cloud.*

*The wind ruffles it, its only reason  
being*

*that it blows.*

*A second passes.*

*A second second.*

*A third.*

*But they're three seconds only for us.*

*Time has passed like a courier with  
urgent news.*

*But that's just our simile.*

*The character is invented, his haste is  
make believe,*

*his news inhuman.*

*Wisława Szymborska*

*Being told that it is impossible  
one believes, in despair, "Is that so?"*

*Being told that it is possible,  
one believes, in excitement "That's right."*

*But, whichever is chosen,*

*it does not fit one's heart neatly.*

*Being asked, "What is unfitting?"*

*I don't know what it is.*

*But my heart knows somehow.*

*I feel irresistible desire to know.*

*What a mystery a "human" is!*

*As to this mystery:*

*clarifying*

*knowing how to live,*

*knowing how to talk with people,*

*demonstrating and teaching,*

*this is the buddha.*

*From my human eyes,*

*I feel it's really impossible to become Buddha.*

*But this "I," regarding what the Buddha does,*

*vows to practice,*

*to aspire,*

*to be resolute,*

*and tells myself, "Yes, I will."*

*Just practice right here now,*

*and achieve continuity,*

*endlessly, forever.*

*This is living in vow.*

*Herein is one's peaceful life found.*

*Dainin Katagiri*

