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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. (OPW)

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 (© 2014 Nebraska Zen Center) is the newsletter for both **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple**.

Cover: Vast Emptiness, Nothing Holy; Calligraphy 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.

Nebraska Zen Center's e-mail address is: heartland@prairiewindzen.org.
Zen Center of Pittsburgh's e-mail address is: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org

INTERDEPENDENCE

by *Nonin Chowaney*

Currently, much interest has developed in the phenomenon of global warming, its effect on the earth's environment, and we human beings' responsibility for creating it. It is one more reminder of how everything is interconnected. What happens here effects what happens there. This article originally appeared in Prairie Wind in the year 2000. We are reprinting it here. — Ed.

In 1998, a large body of warm water in the Pacific Ocean called El Nino affected weather patterns all over the Western Hemisphere. There were news reports about the phenomenon all that fall and winter, and during that time, while listening to National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, I heard a meteorologist talking about another El Nino that he'd studied in 1973.

During that year, a large body of warm water lay off the coast of Peru, in an area where the water is normally quite cold. Small fish known as anchovies are usually abundant in those cold waters and are harvested by Peruvian fishermen. They are then sold to companies that grind them up and use them as the main ingredient in a meal used to feed catfish and chickens in large agricultural operations in both South and North America.

However, because of the 1973 El Nino, the anchovies moved farther north to escape the warm water. This severely affected the fishing industry in Peru. Because there were no anchovies to catch, there were none to use in fish and chicken meal, so feed companies as far away as North America were affected. They needed to find substitutes. Soy-

beans are one of the best, so they were in great demand. According to the economic law of supply and demand, the market price for them went up, and since a large part of the American soybean crop is sold to Japanese food processing companies, the price of *tofu*, a widely used soybean product, went up considerably in Japan.

When I heard this report on the radio, I thought, "Hmmm. Because of a warm body of water off the coast of Peru, the price of tofu rises in Japan. How interesting." On the surface, there seems to be no connection between the two occurrences, but under closer observation, the connection becomes clear.

In Buddhism, this kind of interdependence is known as *pratityasamutpada* (in Sanskrit) or *paticca samuppada* (in Pali). Some translations of this term are "dependent arising," "conditioned genesis," and "interdependent co-origination." Whatever the translation, however, the term means that everything is interdependent, or, interconnected. No thing arises, or comes together, independently. All things depend for their existence on a myriad of causes and conditions. This includes both material things, such as coffee cups, trees, books, or human beings, and non-material things, such as energy, magnetism, radio waves, or thoughts. Dependent arising is one of the major tenets of Buddhism and is a condition of existence that Shakyamuni Buddha became deeply aware of while sitting under the tree of enlightenment 2500 years ago.

continued on page 4

Interdependence

from page 3

When Buddha lived in what is now India and Nepal, there were four theories of causation espoused by various religious leaders and philosophers. These theories were: (1) Things are self-caused; they bring themselves into existence. (2) Things are caused by other things; one thing brings another into existence. (3) Things are caused by a combination of themselves and another things; one thing and another thing work together to bring a third into existence. And, (4) things have no cause; they arise spontaneously. Through deep insight into the nature of reality, Buddha rejected all these theories and spoke of all things as arising out of a myriad causes and conditions.

In the following example, The Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh uses a piece of paper to illustrate interdependence:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, you cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent on the existence of a cloud. Paper and cloud are so close. Let us think of other things, like sunshine. Sunshine is very important because the forest cannot grow without sunshine, and we humans cannot grow without sunshine. So the logger needs sunshine in order to cut the tree, and the tree needs sunshine in order to be a tree. Therefore you can see sunshine in this sheet of paper. And if you look more deeply, with the eyes of a bodhisattva, with the eyes of those who are

awake, you see not only the cloud and the sunshine in it, but that everything is here; the wheat that became the bread for the logger to eat, the logger's father – everything is in this sheet of paper.

Thich Nhat Hanh concludes, "A sheet of paper is made of non-paper elements." So, we can say that this sheet of paper is "empty." There is nothing in the paper that is fixed and permanent, nothing, actually, that we can call "paper," for this is only a word we use to describe the thing that provides the surface on which the words we are reading are printed. The existence of paper, then, depends on other things. If we continue to speculate, we can include many other things in the paper -- the logger's mother and father, the bowl the logger ate his breakfast out of on the morning he cut down the tree, the potter who made the bowl, the axe the logger used, the metal in the axe head, the people who sold the axe, and on and on ad infinitum. If we speculated long enough, longer than we probably have in this lifetime, we could include everything in the universe in this piece of paper! This is what is meant by interdependence. All things depend on other things for their existence and, in turn, are contained in all other things.

Human beings, too, are subject to this law of cause and effect. We are certainly different from other beings in our physical and mental make-up, but we are put together in the same way. We, too, are "empty." There is nothing fixed inside a human being that we can call a permanent "self," or a "soul." We, too, like the piece of paper, are dependent on other things for our existence. We do not exist independently from the rest of the uni-

continued on next page

Interdependence

from previous page

verse but in concert with it.

According to Buddhist teaching, a human being is a mixture of the five skandhas, or aggregates -- form, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. "Form" means our material aspect: atoms, bones, flesh, and blood. Form also means our physical shape, our body type, size, and coloring. Sense organs -- eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind -- are also included under "form." "Sensations" are pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant feelings experienced when sense organs come in contact with objects. These feelings can be sensations of cold or warmth, or unpleasant aversion to putrid smells, or great pleasure when ice cream touches the tongue. "Perceptions" means gross recognition based on contact between sense organs and objects. These perceptions can be of the blue of the sky, of male and female human beings, or of large and small shapes. "Mental Formations" means all volitional activity of the mind, things like attention, desire, anger, joy, mindfulness, pride, and shame, what we usually consider "mental activity." "Consciousness" means the contact between sense organ and object, such as seeing, smelling, or thinking. It also means the functioning of discriminating mind, or ego consciousness.

Human beings, then, are a coming together of different aspects of these five aggregates. Just as there is nothing in a sheet of paper that we can pull out and say, "This is paper, or essence of paper," there is nothing inside the person writing this article that we can pull out

and say, "This is Nonin, or essence of Nonin."

How, then, does this being, Nonin, come together? Well, some of it is genetic; I'm a tall person; it runs in my family. Our genes depend on our parents, and, as we know, genes can run through families for many generations. Part of what is called "me" existed in not only my parents but also in my grandparents on both sides, and in my great-grandparents, too. Who knows how far back these genes go? If we trace our families back twenty-five

***This being, that comes to be;
from this arising, that arises;
this being absent, that is not;
this ceasing, that ceases.***

Shakyamuni Buddha

generations, we accumulate over thirty-three million ancestors. Each generation means twenty years, so twenty-five generations means five hundred years. The numbers double each generation, so in twenty-six generations, we accumulate sixty-six million ancestors in five hundred and twenty years.

This is one way we can look at interdependence in terms of human life. However, some of what constitutes provisional being "Nonin" is not genetic, so other things have to be taken into consideration when determining what causes a person to exist. Consciousness

continued on page 14

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER SANGHA NOTES

Sangha members **Joe Smolsky** and **Eric Currie** are sewing rakus in preparation for a Precept Ceremony signifying **Lay Initiation** at the temple on **Sunday, March 31st** at 10:00 a.m. **All are invited** to attend the ceremony. There'll be a pot-luck lunch afterwards, so please bring a dish to share.

When the weather breaks and Spring arrives, we'll begin **painting the white trim on our building**. We'll be setting up some **Saturday work days** to get the job done. **Please help**. If you have painting experience, great; if not, we'll teach you. If we get a good-sized group of people together, we can get it done on a few work days. Also, Nonin will get you oriented and started if you can come during the week.

Nonin has adopted a new dog to go with Buddy the old guy, a **13-month old lab / hound mix** from a place over in Iowa (more **pictures on page 18**). His name is **Jackson**, Jack for short, Jackie as a term of endearment! He's fully of energy and suffers from separation anxiety when Nonin leaves, so he has a crate in the spare bedroom that he occupies when Nonin's gone. That way, he won't chew up everything in sight. He's very friendly and knows many commands, so please make him sit when you give him a treat and don't let him jump up on you. Turn your back to him if he does, and don't let him play-bite you. Give a yelp and pull your hand back if he does.



Jack and Buddy

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER WINTER EVENTS

SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this Spring/Summer: a **One-day Sesshin** on March 8th and **Two-day Sesshins** on **April 12th and 13th** and on **June 21st and 22nd**. Fees: \$40 per day for members; \$50 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. **E-mail** us at heartland@prairiewindzen.org or call **402-551-9035** to register.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** with a special service on **Sunday, April 6th**, at **10:00 a.m.**, after regular 9:00 zazen. Afterwards, there'll be a dharma talk, and then, there'll be 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 22nd, through Tuesday, the 27th. We will re-open with morning sitting and service on Wednesday, May 28th.

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

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.

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

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH SANGHA NOTES

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

Dear Friends of Zen Center,

A short while ago, I called Leslie Hospodar, who is our Board President, and informed her that because of the continued pain in my left knee, I would be stepping down as Head Priest of Deep Spring Temple. I have also informed the Sangha and now want the rest of you to know as well. As Head Priest, I have always stated my role as "displaying Zen practice." I define that as stumbling down stairs each morning to sit zazen, bowing to Buddha (morning service), and caring for the temple and Sangha with the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts as my guide. "Just follow the schedule" was my Master's teaching and I've made that my spiritual life.

Now, I am unable to display Zen practice in the role of Head Priest as I understand it, and the Sangha needs someone to fulfill this role. I have asked the Board to create a process to discover that person. We hope to find someone who manifests wisdom and compassion for our Sangha and who will display his/her practice for us. I will continue to practice, but mostly in my room. A schedule is really hard for me. I'd like to try on a title of "resident" priest. I'm afraid "don't know" mind is the best I can offer here. I will take care of the temple as I can, follow the schedule when I can, and offer dharma talks and dokusan if I can.

After last fall's Sangha meeting, so many of you stepped forward and said, "Yes, I'll do that." It touches my heart watching Sangha members care for the building and grounds, offering zazen instruction, leading service, and sitting quietly with each other. A very deep bow of gratitude to each of you.

During the World Peace Ceremony, we chant "Verses on the Faith Mind". One of the passages says, "For the unified mind in accord with the Way all self-centered striving ceases. Doubts and irresolutions vanish and life in true faith is possible. With a single stroke we are freed from bondage; nothing clings to us and we hold to nothing. All is empty, clear, self-illuminating with no exertion of the mind's power. Here thought, feeling, knowledge, and imagination are of no value. In this world of Suchness there is neither self nor other-than-self."

May we find great joy and deep peace within our continuing life together.

Kyoki

Hands palm-to-palm,
Kyoki
H

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Sewickley, PA 15143 tel: (412) 741-1262 e-mail: kyoki@prairiewindzen.org website:
www.prairiewindzen.org

ZCP WINTER EVENTS

MARCH

- 1 — Katagiri-roshi's Memorial, 6:30 am
- 2 — World Peace Ceremony & Group Discussion, 9 am
- 23 — Annual Sangha Meeting, 10 am, Pot-luck Lunch, Noon
- 29 -30 — Sesshin with Revs. Daishin McCabe and Jisho Siebert:

[Sesshin is an intense period of practice consisting of sitting/walking meditation, services, work, and dokusan (private interviews with teachers).]

Please note: Sesshin begins at 5:00 a. Saturday and ends at 12:30 Sunday. No Intro To Zen will be offered on that Sunday

APRIL

- 6 — Buddha's Birthday Observed

MAY

- 4 — World Peace Ceremony & Group Discussion, 9 am

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Due to Kyoki's current physical disability, we are only open on these days at these times:

- Wednesday — Zazen, 6:00 — 7:15 p.m.
- Saturday — Zazen & service — 6:30-7:30 a.m.
- Sunday — Zazen & services — 9:30 a.m.— Noon



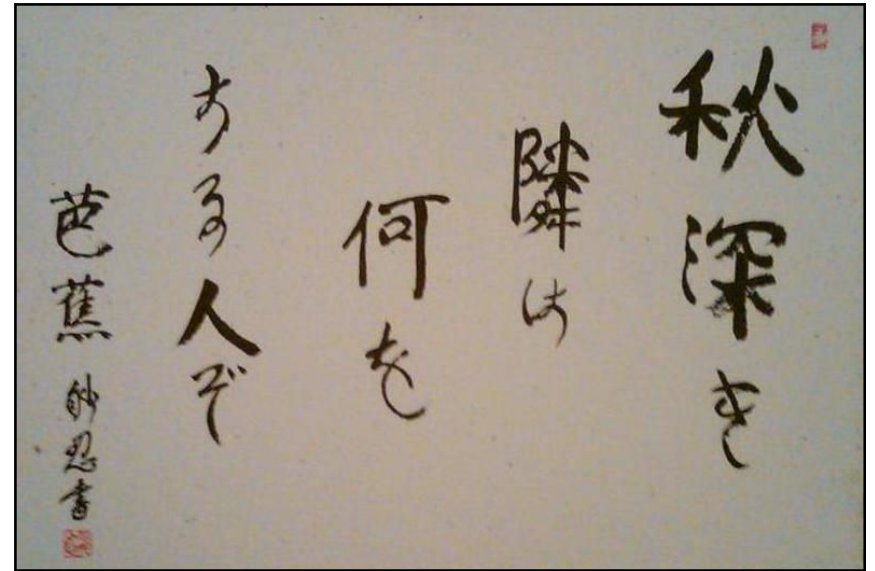
A RAGGED MONK DRIVES DEEP INTO KANSAS

*You drive straight as a geometric
abstraction as dawn erupts
dreaming of fire. No one is there.
You are frightened by the extent
of the vacant horizon filling
with light and a weathered
brick church that rises alone
from an Emptiness you imagine
only a Buddha would understand.*

*Expert at pointing out the obvious
in a world where it grows increasingly
obvious that nothing is obvious,
you slip into Oblivion, an unincorporated
town somewhere south of Salina,
during a year in which dates matter little
and seasons quite a lot, if only
for the sake of the weather they produce.*

*The mountains along the Nepalese border,
heaped slowly by ancient catastrophe,
continue to throw their weight around,
holding as they do, the secret of life,
which isn't really much of a secret,
but simply water cascading down
ravines into networks of rivers leading
to seas, which never thought once
about anything at all, though people
equate them, quite rightly, with gods
and goddesses floating like smoke
through the wastelands of heaven*

Ernst Niemann



**Deep into autumn;
I wonder how my neighbor is doing.**

Haiku by Basho

Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

THE WINTER OF LISTENING

*No one but me by the fire,
my hands burning
red in the palms while
the night wind carries
everything away outside.*

*all this petty worry
while the great cloak
of the sky grows dark
and intense
round every living thing.*

*What is precious
inside us does not
care to be known
by the mind
in ways that diminish
its presence.*

*What we strive for
in perfection
is not what turns us
into the lit angel
we desire.*

*What disturbs
and then nourishes
has everything
we need.*

*What we hate
in ourselves
is what we cannot know
in ourselves but
what is true to the pattern
does not need to be explained*

*Inside everyone
is a great shout of joy
waiting to be born.*

*Even with summer
so far off
I feel it grown in me
now and ready
to arrive
in the world.*

*And
here
in the tumult
of the night
I hear the walnut
above the child's swing
swaying
its dark limbs
in the wind
and the rain now
come to
beat against my window
and somewhere
in this cold night
of wind and stars
the first whispered
opening of
those hidden
and invisible springs
that uncoil
in the summer air
each yet
to be imagined
rose.*

David Whyte

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.

TENDING THE OX ZENDO

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

Interdependence

from page 5

is one of them. We say that every moment of consciousness is conditioned by a previous moment of consciousness. A moment of equanimity is conditioned by a moment of equanimity, a moment of anger by a moment of anger. Previous moments of consciousness condition subsequent moments of consciousness, manifesting in what I call “provisional being Nonin,” the per-

All beings, human and otherwise, and all events – in other words, all phenomena -- are “dependently originated,” as one translation of pratityasamutpada has it. We can even go as far as to say that the existence of any phenomenon is dependent on all other phenomena.

son writing this article. If we add years of parental and societal conditioning and years of perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and opinions, it becomes clearer that what we call Nonin in this moment is a result of a myriad causes and conditions, and among them, we have to include the sun, whose existence and functioning allows humans to live on this earth, and, of course, the earth’s atmosphere, and also, all the animals and plants that feed us, and on and on.

All beings, human and otherwise, and all events – in other words, all phenomena -- are “dependently originated,” as one translation of pratityasamutpada has it. We can even go as far as to say that the existence of any phenomenon is dependent on all other phenomena.

If we observe the earth from space, it is clearly one body, yet, it, too, is subject to the law of cause and effect. It, too, is empty. There is nothing inside this globe that is fixed and permanent. The earth, like all things in the universe is made up of myriad different things, all interconnected and interdependent. The closer we come to the earth, the more we can observe the myriad things that make it up. As we get closer to each mountain, or building, or automobile, we can see the myriad things that make them up. If we look at one of the smaller things through an electron microscope, such as a human skin cell, we can see all the things that make it up - atoms, nuclei, electrons, protons, quarks, and whatever else quantum physicists have discovered lately!

There’s nothing fixed or permanent there either.

If we look at the world closely, with open eyes and an open mind, we can see things more clearly. When I was living in a Japanese Zen Monastery, we took a trip to Mt. Aso, one of the largest active volcanoes in the world. It was not erupting at the time, so we could go right up to the edge of one of the craters and look down into it. At the bottom was a wide hole, and a deep red glow emanated from it. Things were happening down there, and from looking around up top, we could tell that things had happened up there also, and not too long ago. Huge boulders, some the size of small houses, lay next to scorched and scarred rock shelters built to protect tourists in the event of a sudden eruption. It was quite clear to me then that the earth is not a fixed, solid, per-

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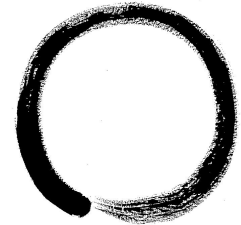
Interdependence

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manent mass with things moving around on its outer surface. It is a swirling, living thing, a mass of animate and inanimate beings interconnected in one impermanent body.

Of course, this body we call earth is also a part of a larger body -- our solar system. Our solar system is also a part of a larger body -- the Milky Way galaxy -- which is part of a larger body, the universe. Where does it stop? Who knows? Where does it begin? Who knows that, either? When we look inside as far as we can go, we find nothing fixed and permanent. When we look outside, it’s unfixed, impermanent, and infinite. This is about all we can say. Human understanding doesn’t go any further than this. Being awake means seeing things clearly, as Buddha did under the tree of Enlightenment. With Buddha’s eyes, the eyes of an awakened person, we see that our existence is deeply interconnected with all the other beings in the universe and that all things exist interdependently with all other things.

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



CALLIGRAPHY FOR SALE ON OUR WEBSITE



Mu (nothing)

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

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

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

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

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

BRANCHED OAK, FIRST ZAZEN

*The bell chimes into dark tinsel of stars,
we begin sitting, eyes open, gazing down.*

*There's incense, snapping of fire. A window
where the moon's full body distracts me—*

*a wild lover, and I'm trying to keep still.
I can hear the woman next to me swallow.*

*My friend told me she believed her father's
open-heart surgery really opened his heart.*

*Spine is strong as my open gaze,
mind certain as my feet. The grain*

*in wood floor breaths with me, comes to life,
the way you'd see branches shift in wind.*

*This room is small as the universe.
We aren't limited to one place.*

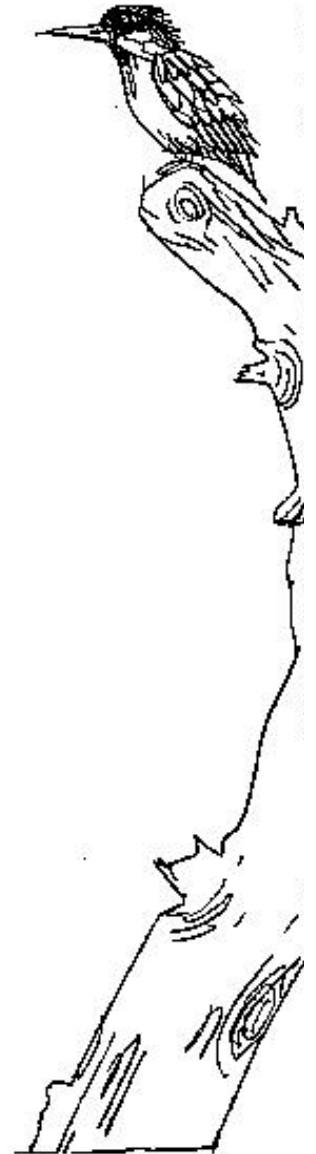
*A hibernating click beetle awakens from a log
just in time to be saved from cremation.*

*How much time is left
before I, too, am fully awake?*

*Awake to the breath of those around me—
cat, bird, shrew, brother, awake to knuckles*

*in the hand, soft touching of thumbs,
the oval strength of this moment, now.*

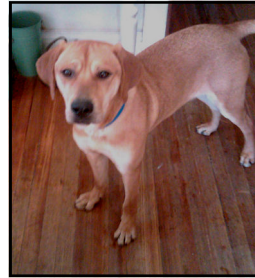
Amy Plettner



AROUND THE TEMPLE



Sozen George and Kanho Doug in the kitchen



New adoptee — 13 month old Jack



Buddy and Jack



Joe Smolsky sewing rakusu



Study Group

南無佛法僧

Homage to Buddha, Dharma,
Sangha

Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

The **White Lotus Sangha**, a group affiliated with NZC, meets on Friday evenings in four Nebraska prisons, **Nebraska State Penitentiary** and **Lincoln Correctional Center** in Lincoln, **Tecumseh State Correctional Institute** in Tecumseh, and **Omaha Correctional Center** in Omaha.

For further information, see the **Religious Coordinator** at either of the above institutions, e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org call (402) 551-9035, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363.**

WRITINGS OF HONGZHI

from *Cultivating the Empty Field*

translated by Taigen Dan Leighton with Yi Wu

Buddha Flowers, Leaves, Roots, and Dusts

The Way is not what the ancestors transmit. Before the ancestors come, it already pervade the whole environment. Emptiness is inherently without characteristics; spirituality cannot be imitated. On its own, illumination emerges from causes and conditions. Constantly living apart from surface appearances is called being the ancestor. Simply certify and unite with it; you cannot be handed it. All buddhas arrive here and regard this as the ultimate. They respond to transformations and disperse their bodies as flowers, leaves, roots, and dusts. Wisdom enters the three times, and the ten thousand changes do not disturb us, each dust is not outside us. This marvel is beyond the vast thousands of classical texts, so where could you hold on the the shadowy world?

The Bright, Boundless Field

The field of boundless emptiness is what exists from the very beginning. You must purify, cure, grind down, or brush away all the tendencies you have fabricated into apparent habits. Then you can reside in the clear circle of brightness. Utter emptiness has no image, upright independence does not rely on anything. Just expand and illuminate the original truth unconcerned by external conditions. Accordingly we are told to realize that not a single thing exists. In this field birth and death do not appear. The deep source, transparent down to the bottom, can radiantly shine and can respond unencumbered to each speck of dust without becoming its partner. The subtlety of seeing and hearing transcends mere colors and sounds. The whole affair functions without leaving traces, and mirrors without obscurations. Very naturally mind and dharmas emerge and harmonize. An Ancient said that non-mind embodies and fulfills the way of non-mind. Embodying and fulfilling the way of non-mind, finally you can rest. Proceeding you are able to guide the assembly. With thoughts clear, sitting silently, wander into the center of the circle of wonder. This is how you must penetrate and study.

The Practice of True Reality

The practice of true reality is simply to sit serenely in silent introspection. When you have fathomed this, you cannot be turned around by external causes and conditions. This empty, wide open mind is subtly and correctly illuminating. Spacious and content, without confusion from inner thought of grasping, effectively overcome habitual behavior and realize the self that is not possessed by emotions. You must be broad-minded, whole without relying on others. Such upright independent spirit can begin not to pursue degrading situations. Here you can rest and become

from previous page

clean, pure, and lucid. Bright and penetrating, you can immediately return, accord, and respond to deal with events. Everything is unhindered, clouds gracefully floating up to the peaks, the moonlight glitteringly flowing down mountain streams. The entire place is brightly illumined and spiritually transformed, totally unobstructed and clearly manifesting responsive interaction like box and cover or arrowpoints [meeting]. Continuing, cultivate and nourish yourself to embody maturity and achieve stability. If you accord everywhere with thorough clarity and cut off sharp corners without dependence on doctrines, like the white ox or wildcat [helping to arouse wonder], you can be called a complete person. So we hear that this is how one on the way of non-mind acts, but before realizing non-mind we still have great hardship.

The Solitary Beacon and the Single Road.

People of the Way journey through the world responding to conditions, carefree and without restraint. Like clouds finally raining, like moonlight following the current, like orchids growing in shade, like spring arising in everything, they act without mind, they respond with certainty. This is how perfected people behave. Then they must resume their travels and follow the ancestors, walking ahead with steadiness and letting go of themselves with innocence. The solitary beacon is without companions. The piercing, awe-inspiring voice on the single road to the other shore instantly can full center or borders and pervade from top to bottom. Killing or giving life, rolling up or unrolling, is your own independent decision.

Casting Off All Duality

Purity without stain is your body; perfect illumination without conditioning is your eyes. The eye inside the body does not involve sense gates; the body inside the eye does not collect appearances. So it is said there is no wisdom outside suchness that can awaken suchness. Moreover, there is no suchness outside wisdom that can be awakened by wisdom. This may be called, buddha is the dharma family's buddha, dharma is the buddha family's dharma. Patch-robed monks arrive here and then know that to follow buddha's utterances and to follow dharma's blossoming is to attain buddhadharma. Restoring the absolute, they all sit and cut off any duality. Only this is what people from ancient to present times have needed to celebrate fully.

Contemplating the Ten thousand Years

Patch-robed monks make their thinking dry and cool and rest from the remnants of conditioning. Persistently brush up and sharpen this bit of the field. Directly cut through all the overgrown grass. Reach the limit in all directions without defiling even one atom. Spiritual and bright, vast and lustrous, illuminating fully what is before you, directly attain the shining light and clarity that cannot attach to a sin-

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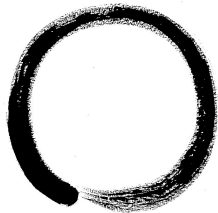
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gle defilement. Immediately tug and pull back the ox's nose. Of course his horns are imposing and he stomps around like a beast, yet he never damages people's sprouts of grain. Wandering around, accept how it goes. Accepting how it goes, wander around, Do not be bounded by or settle into any place. Then the plough will break open the ground in the field of the empty *kalpa*. Proceeding in this manner, each event will be un-observed, each realm will appear complete. One contemplation of the ten thousand years is beginning not to dwell in appearances. Thus it is said that the mind-ground contains every seed, and the universal rain makes them all sprout. When awakening blossoms, desires fade, and Bodhi's fruit is perfected self.

Investigating Wonder

In clarity the wonder exists, with spiritual energy shining on its own. It cannot be grasped and so cannot be called being. It cannot be rubbed away and so cannot be called nonbeing. Beyond the mind of deliberation and discussion, depart from the remains of the shadowy images. Emptying [one's sense of] self-existence is wondrous. This wonder is embodied with a spirit that can be reenacted. The moon mind with its cloud body is revealed straightforwardly in every direction without resorting to signs or symbols. Radiating light everywhere, it responds appropriately to beings and enters the sense-dusts without confusion. Overcoming every obstruction, it shines through every empty dharma. Leaving discriminating condition, enter clean, clear wisdom and romp and play in *Samadhi*. What could be wrong? This is how one must genuinely investigate the essence.



Hi from India!

New Delhi, 2nd Century CE