



# Prairie Wind

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## COMPASSION AND WISDOM

**Compassion is deep empathy for another being's suffering and misfortune. When fully realized, it is accompanied by a desire to alleviate the suffering, or remove its cause. Wisdom is deep understanding. When fully realized, the true nature of the universe and of human life is fully understood. Wisdom and compassion are both essential to realizing the Buddha-way. Without one or the other, the way is only half-realized, and we who practice it are not yet complete.**

Wisdom without compassion is cold and unfeeling. Compassion without wisdom is directionless pity. Wisdom with compassion manifests as understanding the causes of suffering, deeply feeling our own and another's pain, and knowing what to do about both.

Wisdom and compassion come together like our right and left hands when we put them together palm-to-palm in the Oriental gesture of respect and devotion called *gassho* in Japanese. The right hand is wisdom; the left, compassion. When they come together, they make Buddha, the completely realized awakened one.

In this issue of *Prairie Wind*, John Daido Looi, abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery and Head of the Mountains and Rivers order, writes about issues raised in *Zen at War*, a recently published book dealing with prominent Zen priests and their support of Japanese involvement in World War II. The essential issue he addresses is how without fully realizing deep compassion, we can stray from the way, no matter how deeply wisdom is realized. And then, we can easily justify heartless behavior.

Arising together, wisdom and compassion make buddhas; when either one falls away, buddhas become ordinary beings. This is an endless process, one realized only through practice, for, in the words of Zen Master Dogen, "practice and realization are one and the same."



*Bodhisattva-Korea*

**Nonin Chowaney  
Abbot, Heartland Temple**

# POEMS

## *War Is Over*

*Our school children cast brass buddhas  
from spent shells. But while we're planting rice  
in our fields, the war comes to us:  
mines tear up the soil, and guns are more common  
than hoes.*

*In the killing fields, skulls wear blindfolds  
tied on before execution. You can still see  
the fear in their eyes.*

*Gary Kuhlman*

## *Haiku from Prison*

*Sparkling razor wire  
Coiled like a snake in the  
sun  
Twelve more years to go*

...

*Golden clouds: sunset  
I watch the sky from my  
bunk  
Prison disappears*

...

*"It's us against them!"  
I grow weary of conflict  
Can't I just relax?*

...

*Nothing is so hard  
As changing the momentum  
Of life in mid-stride*

*Craig Hanson*

## **War**

*i will  
not  
forget  
the scorched rivers  
of your lips  
whispering  
past  
the borderlines  
between  
you and  
me.*

*or  
the lush layers  
of your skin  
peeling  
away  
in blisters  
under the tips  
of my fingertips.*

*or  
the pyres  
in your eyes  
lighting  
up  
a small corner  
of the planet.*

*what  
have I done?  
and now, why  
do you  
put up with it  
again?*

*Gary Kuhlmann*

# ENGAGED BUDDHISM AND ZEN AT WAR

by John Daido Looi

I've been reading and hearing a great deal about what is referred to as "engaged Buddhism," and I've been thinking about the dangers inherent in doing "engaged Buddhism" without basing our actions in the practice heart of the Dharma – in wisdom and compassion. It is not wrong to engage in social activism; doing good is always valuable. But we should understand that doing good is different than realizing compassion. It is only doing good. We should examine what is being served when we do good. Almost always, doing good arises from a sense of a self. In compassion, there is no sense of self, no sense of the doer or the thing the doer is doing. I would characterize the only true compassionate Buddhism as realized Buddhism.

The Buddhadharmā can be seen as having two aspects: wisdom and compassion. In coming to a new culture, the Dharma responds to the relevant needs and conditions of that culture. All the wisdom for taking care of the problems is present within the Dharma. The difficulty is that Dharma can be distorted, warped to suit our own self-centered views. This is the danger of being too easily satisfied with our "goodness;" we need to keep going, challenging ourselves with honest, raw practice.

Years back, Gary Snyder talked about the relationship of wisdom to compassion as they inform engaged Buddhism. In 1968, Snyder was studying in Japan and had a good appreciation of the Dharma. He wrote a piece that was called "Buddhism and the Coming Revolution." It was written during the time of heavy American involvement in Viet Nam, when people were very committed to social activism. But it was the same time when many people who had been activists were beginning to practice Eastern religions and becoming pacifists. Many retreated from social involvement and weren't doing any-

thing. They were just sitting there getting enlightened. In response to this, Snyder wrote, "Institutional Buddhism has been conspicuously ready to accept or to ignore the inequalities and tyrannies of whatever political system it found itself under. This can be death to Buddhism, because it is death to any meaningful function of compassion. Wisdom without compassion feels no pain."

In this passage he also pointed out the danger of how easy it is to distort the Dharma. He went on to say, "The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void. We need both. They are both contained in the traditional three aspects of the Dharma path: wisdom (prajna), meditation (dhyana), and morality (sila). Wisdom is intuitive knowledge of the mind of love and clarity that lies beneath one's ego-driven anxieties and aggressions. Meditation is going into the mind to see this for yourself – over and over again until it becomes the mind you live in. Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live through personal example and responsible action, ultimately towards the true community (sangha) of all beings."

[A good] example of how Dharma can be distorted in social activism was recently brought to my attention. A few months ago I received a book from a student who works for Weatherhill Press titled *Zen at War*, by Brian Victoria. The student asked me to read it, and if I was so moved, to write a blurb for the back of the book. The author is a Soto priest [originally] from [Omaha, Nebraska] who is a professor at the University of Auckland [in New Zealand]. I started reading the book, and I was appalled by what I read. It was an indictment of Buddhism and its involvement

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## Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Shozen Ned Harrison	President
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<b>Rev. Nonin Chowaney</b>	<b>Head Priest</b>



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

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

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## SANGHA NOTES

Rev. Kyoki Roberts has left Heartland Temple of Nebraska Zen Center. She has relocated near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, her original home, and is planning to establish a temple there. Currently, she is staying with her parents and is offering Zen practice and Buddhist teaching at a variety of places in the Pittsburgh area.



Kyoki was a long-term resident at Heartland Temple. She came to Omaha from Hokyo-ji Zen Monastery in Minnesota with Nonin to establish Zen practice here in 1991, and was the first priest ordained by him, in 1993.

Kyoki worked with boundless energy and strong spirit to establish and maintain Zen practice in Omaha. Her generosity also had no limits. We would in no way be where we are today without her. She will be deeply missed.

Kyoki is maintaining her deep ties with Nonin and with Heartland Temple, however. She will be returning in June to help with Eido Bruce Espe's priest ordination and will spend the month practicing with us and teaching Bruce and Rev. Tesshin Lehmborg,

who will also be here, ceremonial practice and other priestcraft.

We are looking forward to seeing Kyoki in June and to hearing from her in these pages through a "Letters from Pittsburgh" feature in the future. We offer her our best wishes and our continued support. Those in the Western Pennsylvania area are most fortunate to have her! She may be reached c/o Helen & Joe Roberts, Barberry Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143.

Our Annual Sangha Meeting also brought some changes. Bill Callahan has left the Board of Directors after many years of service. We thank him very much for his help over the years. Board President Shindo Mike Gillespie has moved to Washington state and has also left the board. We thank him, too! Win Finegan and Jeff Graef are newly elected members and Carolyn Hadsell was re-elected. Shozen Ned Harrison replaces Mike as President and Taido Jon Kayne replaces Ned as Vice-President. We thank all of you for serving on our Board. A complete list appears on page 3.

Our Annual Fundraising Drive has been very successful. We are currently over \$3000 ahead of where we were last year at this time. Thanks to all for your generosity!

Erin Walter will be Lay-ordained at NZC on February 28. Eido Bruce Espe will be Priest-ordained here on June 6th. We congratulate them both for passing these practice milestones.

The dogs that lived at NZC, Australian Shepherds Badger and Li'l Red, have relocated to Pennsylvania with Kyoki. We now have a new resident, a year-old Yellow Lab/Husky mix named Sammy, who loves to chase small animals. Rosie the cat had a hard time with Sammy at first, but they're getting along better. She now regards him as just a nuisance!

## REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

A service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held at NZC on Sunday, May 9 before dharma talk.

Either bring photographs of those you would like to remember or write their names on a small card to place on the altar (cards will be available at the temple). You will have an opportunity to read the names and make an offering during the service.

## OUTSIDE EVENTS

In the past few months, Nonin or a senior student has given talks and/or led retreats at the following places:

Creighton University  
Millard North, South, and West High Schools  
Empty Hand Zendo — Rye, N.Y.  
Nebraska Wesleyan College  
Hastings College  
Lake Superior Zendo — Marquette, Michigan  
Ralston High School  
Duchesne Academy  
Unity Church  
St. Bernard's School  
Santa Monica House  
Benson United Methodist Church  
Urbandale, Iowa High School  
Lincoln Zen Group  
Omaha Public Schools Counselors Group  
Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility  
Hindu Temple

Groups from the following places have visited NZC for talks, workshops and/or zazen instruction:

Creighton University  
University of Nebraska — Omaha  
Bellevue College  
Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church  
Elkhorn High School

## Zen at War

from page 3

in some of the worst atrocities of World War II. The book quoted Zen Master Daiun Harada Roshi – my Dharma great-grandfather – as saying, “[if ordered to] march: tramp, tramp. [If ordered to] shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom [of enlightenment]. The unity of Zen and war of which I speak extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war [now under way].” Harada Roshi said that in 1939. I was stunned. I kept reading and learned how not only Harada Roshi, but also Yasutani Roshi, The Soto School, and the Rinza School were all co-opted by the Japanese government in support of the war effort. The book also talked about Soen Shaku, who was the first Zen Master to come to America, appearing in Chicago in 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions. The book details how he served as a chaplain in the war between Japan and Russia. At that time Soen Shaku wrote: “In the present hostilities into which Japan has entered with great reluctance, she pursues no egoistic purpose, but seeks the subjugation of evils hostile to civilization, peace and enlightenment” The truth is, most historians agree that the Japanese invasion of Russia was entirely self-serving and hardly reluctant. But to Soen Shaku, Japan was engaged in a holy and just war, a war of compassion fought by bodhisattva soldiers against the enemies of the Buddha.

Another of our Soto ancestors – Sawaki Kodo – who died in 1965, talked about how when he was a soldier, they justified killing people. In 1945 he wrote, “It is just to punish those who disturb public order. Whether one kills or does not kill, the precept of forbidding killing is preserved.” What an unmitigated distortion of Dharma! He continued, “It is the precept forbidding killing that wields the sword. It is the precept forbidding killing that throws the bomb.” There is definitely something wrong here.

All of us to one extent or another can fall into that kind of a trap, though maybe not so dramatically. It may be hard for us to appreciate what was going on in Japan at

that time. Keep in mind that long before World War II, the history of religion and mankind was filled with similar atrocities. The Christian Crusaders and the Moslems they fought both saw themselves as killing the enemies of God. In the crusades, thousands of people were annihilated. The God of Exodus ordered the extermination of the Canaanites, instructing his chosen people to show no pity. The commandment “Thou shalt not kill” did not apply in this case. Somehow, I did not expect this from the Buddhadharma. My first reaction was to want to deny this kind of behavior, defend it if I could, ignore or evade it: anything but acknowledge it, confront it, and change it.

I immediately wanted to know, “Who is this guy Victoria who wrote the book? What does he have against the Soto School?” I called the publisher and asked about the author. [I was told that] “He’s a professor who spent many years in Japan and is well-regarded.” Victoria was not the first person to reveal some of this material. He actually quoted Japanese sources that had written about this already. This is kind of interesting since almost none of their writing has been translated. Victoria also revealed that in addition to the stories I have mentioned, there were several priests who were incarcerated or executed because they resisted the official Buddhist support of the war. The government either imprisoned dissidents or killed them – the traditional ways of dealing with opposition. Throughout the history of Asian Buddhism, any monk who opposed official government actions would meet this kind of threat. If you spoke out, the government would burn the monasteries down, cut off the heads of the monks, and that was the end of Buddhism. As a result, Buddhist practitioners in the non-democratic countries where it tended to thrive often looked the other way when social issues were at stake. . .

Gary Snyder says, “Wisdom without

## SESSHIN

There will be one sesshin at NZC this Spring, a **Two-day sesshin on April 24th and 25th**. Our suggested donations will apply: \$40 per day for non-members and \$30 for members. Lower rates may be arranged for those with limited income. Please write NZC or call (402) 551-9035.

## LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

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

## LAKE SUPERIOR ZENDO

**Lake Superior Zendo** is located at **407 E. Arch St. in Marquette, Michigan**. It is affiliated with NZC, and offers daily sitting, special ceremonies, and retreats. Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers. Call **Rev. Tesshin Paul Lehmborg** at (906) 226-6407 for information.

compassion feels no pain.” That is very true. But as far as I am concerned, if compassion has not manifested, then *realization* is not complete. If the precepts have not manifested, then *realization* is not complete. Enlightenment without morality is not yet enlightenment. Morality without enlightenment is not yet morality. It is not yet the Buddha’s precepts. On one side, we have the danger of wisdom

without compassion. On the other side we have the danger of so-called compassion without wisdom. But compassion is dependent on wisdom; wisdom is dependent upon compassion. They are mutually arising and interdependent. They live together; lift up one and you have lifted both. That is realized Buddhism.

If Buddhism is not realized, it doesn't matter if it's engaged or disengaged. Disengaged Buddhism is the so-called wisdom with no compassion; engaged Buddhism could be no more than so-called compassion without wisdom. When the Way is realized, it brings wisdom and compassion home. . . .

In Zen, we tend to say that after realization you drink a cup of tea. We can take that kind of metaphor and miss the whole point of realization. "Have a cup of tea" means to patch up the hole in the ozone layer and keep it from happening again. "Have a cup of tea" means to take care of those who do not have a shelter over their heads and are hungry, to take care of kids living in abject poverty who do not have an opportunity to thrive or people discriminated against because of their race, culture, or gender. *That* is to have a cup of tea.

You end up with distortions of Buddhism when Zen is not realized but is self-styled, intellectualized, self-serving. D.T. Suzuki [also quoted in *Zen At War* in support of Japanese militarism before and during the war] was a great scholar. He was well read in both Eastern and Western literature; he was a master of the philosophies of the world and understood the different religions. But he had not realized himself. He was not transmitted to by his teacher, Soen Shaku. Even if he had been, I don't care how many transmissions you

have, or how many certificates you can pile up, if compassion and wisdom are not manifesting in your life, your realization is not real. If it is not manifesting in how you interact and interface with the rest of humanity and this great earth itself, it is

***Beneficial action in Buddhism is to give thought constantly to how we can cause everybody, all sentient beings, including inanimate beings, to awaken to themselves, and beneficial action is to lead them to the Buddha Way — a peaceful, harmonious life — day by day. The Way means the practice we do with all sentient beings, not practice just for ourselves. The Way is the universal path. We have to actually pass along this universal path practically, day by day. This means to live our daily life with all sentient beings in peace and harmony. This is our hope, the target we have to aim at, whatever circumstances we are in.***

***Dainin Katatgiri***

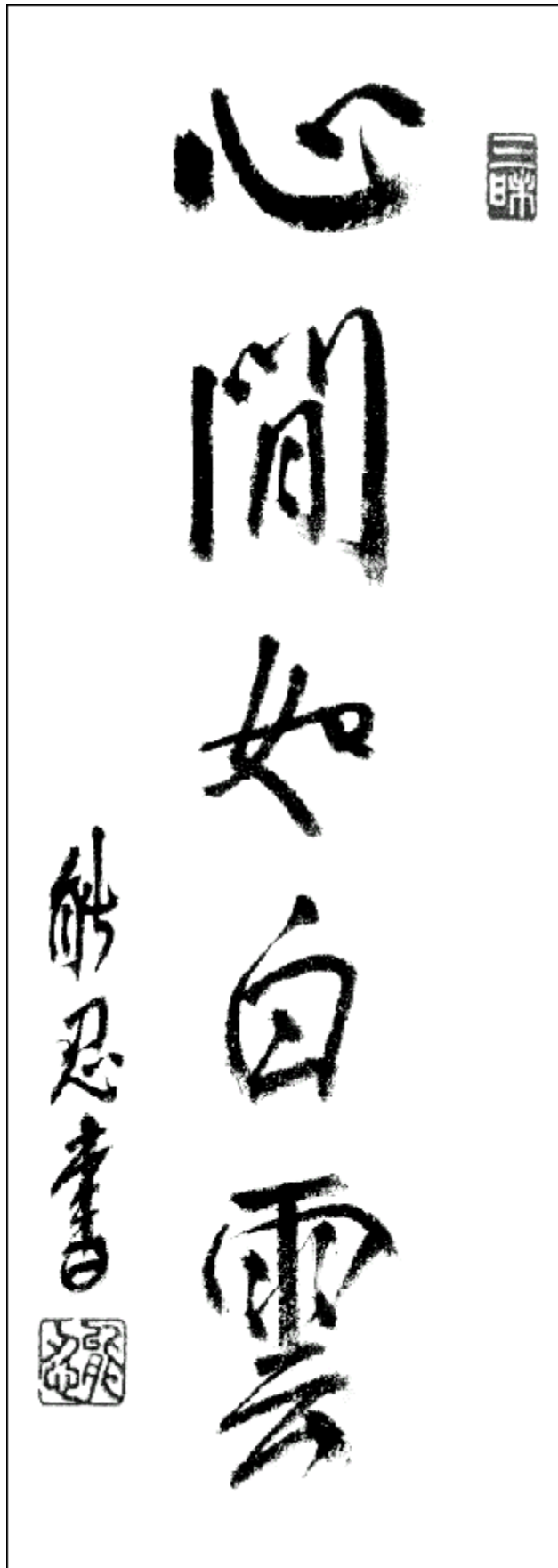
not real. . . .

It is very difficult to take responsibility for our actions, particularly when they have to do with our closest concerns. I did not want to believe the revelations in *Zen at War*. I called some Japanese friends — priests, lay people — and asked them, "Do you know about this? Is this true?" I did not get a straight answer. I was side-stepped, sidetracked. I was advised not to get involved in that kind of a controversy

by writing a blurb and identifying myself with the book. But if it was true, I did want to identify myself with the book. If it was true, it is vitally important to get involved. But it is very hard to look at our own actions, or actions that involve a group with which we identify ourselves.

Kaz Tanahashi [a noted author and translator] has written an article about Genpo Roshi, who was the teacher of Soen Roshi, my first teacher. He tells how Genpo Roshi towards the end of the war was called in by General Kantaro Suzuki, who was offered the prime ministership of Japan because of the failure of Tojo. The Japanese were losing the war, and they were bringing in General Suzuki, who wanted to know what Genpo Roshi thought about the situation. Japan was in the midst of hysteria. It was clear that Japan was losing the war, but everybody was effectively brainwashed and believed that it would be impossible to live if they lost the war. Even the kids in the high school Kaz attended were ready to be killed by the enemy, or kill themselves by jumping off a cliff and drowning themselves. In this atmosphere, Genpo Roshi told Suzuki that he should accept the office and lead the country to surrender as soon as possible. A week later, Suzuki became the prime minister and there was the unconditional surrender of Japan. When Suzuki told Genpo of his appointment, Genpo said, "Your true service is now beginning. You must endure the unendurable and bear the unbearable." He was also the one who convinced Suzuki that the Emperor should no longer be considered anything other than a symbol, and that became part of the constitution. So Zen and Zen people also rendered good service during the war. . . .

No matter what the warped manifestations of Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, or Muslim teachings might be, the fact remains that there is an implicit wisdom in each. That is why it is so important to practice. Nobody can give you bum information when you practice. When you



Heart free as white clouds - Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

## *from The Mind of Clover, Essays in Zen Buddhist Ethics*

*by Robert Aitken*

When Bodhidharma says that in self-nature there is no thought of killing, as he does in his comment on the First Grave Precept, this was his way of saving all beings. When Dogen Kigen Zenji says that you should forget yourself, as he does throughout his writing, this was his way of teaching openness to the mind of the universe. However, it seems that teachers worry that “no thought of killing” and forgetting the self” could be misunderstood to mean that one has license to do anything, so long as one does it forgetfully.

I agree that the pure words of Bodhidharma and Dogen Zenji can be misunderstood, but for this very reason I think it is the responsibility of Zen teachers to interpret them correctly. Takuan Soho Zenji fails to live up to this responsibility, it seems to me, in his instructions to a samurai:

The uplifted sword has no will of its own, it is all of emptiness. It is like a flash of lightning. The man who is about to be struck down is also of emptiness, as is the one who wields the sword . . .

Do not get your mind stopped with the sword you raise; forget about what you are doing, and strike the enemy. Do not keep your mind on the person before you. They are all of emptiness, but beware of your mind being caught in emptiness.

The Devil quotes scripture, and *Mara*, the incarnation of ignorance, can quote the *Abhidharma*. The fallacy of the Way of the Samurai is similar to the fallacy of the Code of the Crusader. Both distort what should be a universal view into an argument for partisan warfare. The catholic charity of the Holy See did not include people it called pagans. The vow of Takuan zenji to save all beings did not encompass the one he called the enemy. . . .

The buddha-nature view is summed up in the *Heart Sutra*. “There is no old age and death, and also no ending of old age and death.” It is important to see into this passage clearly. The first point is that in the world of nirvana, the real world of empty infinity, there is nothing to be called death. From this point of view, Takuan Zenji is right: there is no one killing, no killing, and no one to be killed. The peace of infinite emptiness pervades the universe.

I discussed the risks of this absolute position, when taken exclusively, in “The Nature of the Precepts.” If there is no sword, no swing of the sword, no decapitation, then what about all the blood? What about the wails of the widow and children? The absolute position, when isolated, omits human details completely. Doctrines, including Buddhism, are meant to be used. Beware of them taking life of their own, for then they use us. Nirvana, the purity and clarity of the void, is the name we give to the total peace one experiences in deepest realization. But that is the same sea that we experience rising and falling in samsara, the relative world of coming and going. We cannot abstract depth from surface, nor surface from depth. Killing, even in an exalted state of mind, cannot be separated from suffering.

## *Zen at War*

from page 6

realize the nature of reality, you verify and actualize the truth for yourself. It is not dependent on anything. It is not the Buddha’s Dharma. It is *your* Dharma when you make it your own. You do not need to follow the footsteps of the ancestors. You need to create your own footsteps out of practice, realization, verification, and actualization. When you have actualized it, your life can touch the life of another and nourish it, heal it. Then you have verified all the Buddhas of past, present, and future.

*John Daido Loori is abbot of Zen Mountain Monastery in Mt. Tremper, N.Y. and Head of the Mountains and Rivers Order. The above article was excerpted from a longer article appearing in Mountain Record, a journal published by Zen Mountain Monastery. It is printed here with permission.*







## ***NEW WEEKLY SCHEDULE***

Our weekly schedule has been changed. Our regular Saturday morning schedule (sittings, dharma talks, etc. ) has been moved to Sunday morning. **All Sunday events are open to the public, and newcomers are especially welcome.** There are also some other changes. **SEE PAGE 10.**

## ***SITTING CUSHIONS***

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## ***MEMBERSHIP***

Membership in Nebraska Zen Center represents a commitment to the Sangha and its support. One becomes a member by participating and by filling out a membership form.

We encourage members to commit to monthly donations. The Board of Directors has adopted the following membership categories:

A **Full Member** pledges at least \$40 per month;  
An **Out-of town** or **Student Member**, \$15 per month.

NZC's Website Address is:  
[www.geocities.com/Tokyo/temple/7228/](http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/temple/7228/)

Our E-mail address is:  
[nzc@ gateway.net](mailto:nzc@gateway.net)

### **From the editor:**

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

## WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE

### Morning

**Tuesday — Sunday**

**6:00 - 7:00 — Sitting Meditation  
(Walking as Needed)**

**7:00 - 7:30 — Service**

**7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning**

**Sunday Only**

**9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation**

**9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation**

**9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation**

**10:00 - 10:10 — Service**

**10:00 - 10:45 — Dharma Talk**

### Evening

**Tuesday — Wednesday**

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

**Thursday**

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

**Friday**

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

**We are closed on Monday**

**Nebraska Zen Center  
3625 Lafayette Avenue  
Omaha, NE 68131  
(402) 551-9035**

**Address Service Requested**

