



# Prairie Wind

Volume 11, Issue 2

Published by the Order of the Prairie Wind at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple

Summer 2002

## A DIFFERENT VOICE

Usually, an article I have written begins each issue of *Prairie Wind*, but occasionally, we like to feature an article by a different voice. In this issue, that voice belongs to Sevan Ross.

I first met Sevan at an American Zen Teachers Association meeting in San Francisco a few years back. We sat together at a dinner closing that meeting and found that we had a lot in common. In fact, we determined that his ex-wife worked for my cousin many years ago in Syracuse, New York, near where I'm from!

Sevan and I reminisced about mutual friends at that dinner and about living in Central New York. We also spoke of our experiences in Zen practice and found that we began at about the same time, the mid-1970's. Over time, Sevan and I have become good friends.

Sevan began practicing with Philip Kapleau in Rochester, N.Y. and was eventually priest-ordained by Bodhin Kjolhede, one of Roshi Kapleau's dharma heirs and his successor as Director of the Rochester Zen Center. Later, Sevan was sanctioned by Bodhin Sensei as a Resident Teacher and in 1996 was asked to serve as Director of Chicago Zen Center, a position he still holds.

Sevan Sensei's article begins on page three and is an account of a visit he made to speak about Zen Buddhism at a university class in downtown Chicago not long after the war in Afghanistan began last fall. The article reflects Sevan's strong spirit, his sense of humor, and his deep commitment to zazen.



Compassion — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

*Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW  
Abbot, Heartland Temple*

## The Ten Praises of Tara

1)

*bluish smoke from the incense  
rises.*

*her presence fills my consciousness:  
yellow wine and sea of palest green.*

*desire destroys my meditation.  
I think of blood, laughter, tenderness,  
risk.*

2)

*yogis, we sit facing.  
fingers touching, eyes clinging.  
she leans forward,  
rests her mouth on mine.*

*wind in the trees.  
a bird calls softly, twice.  
the afternoon sun falls across her hair.  
pale gold, all.*

3)

*the rush of it!*

*her presence binds me.  
doors opening.*

*her perfect breasts  
the centers of my cupped hands.*

*loving.  
summer lightning.*

4)

*nightfall. north wind rising.  
fingers laced, we walk quickly.  
voices fail. touching is all.*

5)

*rooms. dinner guests. music.  
her pale eyes steal my speech.  
my helplessness shames me.  
but in the night, secretly,  
I will say the sound of her name  
until breath is seized,  
the pulse rhymed, silence spoken.*

6)

*serenely  
she sits on the floor beside me  
at dinner.  
out of the corner of my eye  
I study her earring.  
such discipline!*

7)

*in the night  
I reach for her hand,  
wanting.  
she sleeps elsewhere.  
my eye touches  
the small of her back.*

8)

*waken to snow,  
squinting to interpret  
white  
slow falling  
in the still air.  
winter grins.  
my longing blinds me.  
she is away.*

9)

*sometimes  
her hushed eyes  
tell me she  
knows of our future  
but will not say.  
this binds me to her.*

10)

*in the far room  
it is already summer.  
the dark air sings of lilac.*

*the face in the mirror  
reads:*

*you are a passionate man who understands—  
nothing.*

Philip Boatright



Tara is an emanation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, the personification of compassion. She embodies the feminine aspect of compassion and is revered in Tibetan Buddhism.

# Why We Invaded Afghanistan

by Sensei Sevan Ross

I am fresh out of the shower, fresh off the sitting mat, freshly shaved, freshly dressed in clean clothes, freshly turned out in my four-year-old VW bug. I am off to a local university to give a presentation on Zen, on the True Eye of the Dharma.

The VW costs a lot to maintain. It's a good car, but it costs a lot to maintain. Brakes cost a LOT of money. The dealer wants \$70.00 per hour to send someone under the car to poke around to see if I need a new "belly pan." I often do need one, for I keep damaging them driving through the snow in tough Chicago winters. They don't plow the alleys, and I have to drive out one alley and into another to get to the Zen Center each day, so I'm always going through a lot of snow that's piled up, because nobody plows the alleys. The city doesn't plow the alleys because it costs too much and also because of the liability insurance the city would have to carry. If they destroyed a bicycle or something, almost certainly one of the residents would sue, and then there would be legal costs and bad publicity. If the City of Chicago lost, everyone would sue, and then the city would go broke because they plowed the alleys. So they never plow them, even though we all have to drive through them.

Residents can't get the alleys plowed either because they are city property, and residents have no right to plow city property. Also there is the matter of liability, since the resident plow owner can not afford liability insurance either and, therefore, is not willing to take the chance that there is an object, or an animal, or a kid buried in the snow. So, no one plows the alleys.

Residents can, however, shovel out the area immediately behind their own garages, but since there is really no place to put the snow, they often shovel it into the alleys. Snow piles up there, and some of it hardens underneath. I run over it, hit the hard spots with my belly pan, and rip it off. It's needed to protect the car's belly,

so I have to get it replaced often. It costs \$45 for parts and \$70 for labor, if the workers are fast. It often costs more, since they are often slow.

Recently, I went to buy four new tires at one of the local "tires only" professional places. In the showroom, a rather young Asian woman helped me pick out the tires. Well, she didn't know anything about tires, so I picked them out based on the information presented in the displays. She did know all about ringing me up on the computer, however. After paying a lot of money (a VW Bug has 16" wheels, so the tires are the most expensive ones available for a passenger car), I sat in the waiting room, where the TV was tuned to the news. I could see planes dropping bombs on vacant desert land, but there was no sound, so I couldn't tell what was happening. There was no remote control and no dials or buttons on the TV, so I watched in silence while planes visited great destruction upon rocks and sand.

In a little while, a young Asian guy came in and told me that they could not sell me the tires they had already sold me because they could not install them. They could not install them because they could not get the old wheels off the car. They tried everything they knew -- which amounted to pneumatic drill use -- and the lug nuts wouldn't budge. I asked if I could take a look at the situation to see for myself what all the trouble was. He said that I couldn't because customers were not allowed into the mechanic's work area because they were not covered by insurance if customers got hurt there. It was, he explained, a liability issue. I measured him with my eyes and decided that I

## Nebraska Zen Center Officers

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Abbot



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

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

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was bigger and stronger, so I walked past him into the forbidden area where my VW

## NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

Two people participated in **Lay Ordination** at **Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple** in March: **Greg Petitto** and **Mark Prideaux**. Their dharma names are — Greg: **Koken** (Constant Manifestation), Mark: **Yuki** (Abundant Spirit). **Congratulations to both of you!**

The annual **Prairie Wind Retreat** in June will be held at **Deep Spring Temple** near Pittsburgh this year, so **Nonin** will be gone for the entire month. We will, however, be maintaining our **regular schedule** (printed on **page 12**) with two exceptions: there will be **no early (6:00 a.m.) sitting on Saturdays and Sundays**. Sunday dharma talks will be given by students on the dates specified in the box on the right.

**Hearty congratulations** to sangha member **Son Tran**, who recently graduated from the **University of Nebraska Medical School**. Son will be moving to Salt Lake City, Utah this summer to begin his residency in Internal Medicine. **We wish him the best.**



Lay Ordination

Sangha members **Sarah Chapman** and **Koken Greg Petitto** will be **married** in Lincoln, NE on July 6th. Nonin will be performing the ceremony. **We wish you both the best.**

**Many thanks** to all who helped with work around the temple this Spring, especially **Marcia Prideaux**, **Caryl Dumaine**, **Winslow Dumaine**, **Mark Prideaux**, **Greg Petitto**, and **Doug Campbell**, who participated in the neighborhood clean-up day. Thanks also to **Caryl** for her work with insurance and re-financing, and to **Larry Pelter** and **Jon Kayne**, who've been helping Nonin with the **White Lotus Sangha**, which now includes groups at three prisons, Nebraska State Penitentiary, Lincoln Correctional Center, and Tecumseh State Correctional Institution. Also, thanks to **Dallas Marshall** for Lay Ordination photos.

### SESSHIN

There will be no sesshins at NZC this Summer. Our usual **Two-day Sesshin** in June will be held at **Deep Spring Temple, outside of Pittsburgh**, on **June 8th and 9th**. Contact Deep Spring Temple for details. Their addresses and phone number are at the bottom of page 5.

### JUNE STUDENT TALKS

On **June 2nd**, we'll have our **World Peace Ceremony** and monthly **Group Discussion**. During the **rest of June**, **Sunday morning dharma talks** will be given by **students** on the **9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th**. Students will focus on what brought them to Zen practice, what their joys and difficulties have been, and what has kept them at it over time.

### SANGHA PICNIC

Our **Annual Sangha Picnic** will be held on **Sunday, July 21st**. All are welcome. Our regular morning schedule will be in effect that day — early sitting and service, 9 a.m. sitting, and dharma talk. **The picnic will be from 11:00 a.m. till 3:00 p.m., with potluck lunch @ noon.**

The temple will provide beverages. **Please join us, and bring the kids**. We also invite people from the neighborhood. **If the weather's bad, we'll do it inside.**

### OTHER SUMMER EVENTS

Jun 26	Ryaku Fusatsu
Jul 7	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
24	Ryaku Fusatsu
Aug 4	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
21	Ryaku Fusatsu

# ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH – SANGHA NOTES

## ZCP SUMMER EVENTS

### JUNE

- 1-30 — Prairie Wind Practice Period
- 2 — Lay Ordination (formal taking of the Bodhisattva precepts)
- 7-9 — Sesshin
- 24 — Ryaku Fusatsu (precept ceremony)

### JULY

- 7 — World Peace Ceremony
- 20 — Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day\*
- 23 — Ryaku Fusatsu (precept ceremony)

### AUGUST

- 1-30 — Limited Schedule: Open Sundays Only

### SEPTEMBER

- 3 — Regular Daily Schedule Resumes

\*special morning service

The Deep Spring Temple Sangha has been very active lately. **Dustin Misosky** has returned from **San Francisco Zen Center**, where he sat **Spring Practice Period** and **Myoen Margaret Coghlan** is back from practicing with **Rev. Daien Bennage** at **Mt. Equity Zendo** in Muncy, PA. Since her return, **Margaret** has put in many hours on our **computer database** and on **temple finances**. **We owe her many thanks!**

Five sangha members, **Patricia Carpenter**, **Wiltrud Fassbinder**, **Jane Harter**, **Leslie Hospodar**, and **Cressida Magaro** have been **sewing rakusus** in preparation for **Lay Ordination**, which will be held on **Sunday, June 2nd**, at **10:00 a. m.** A **reception**, including a **pot-luck lunch**, will follow. **All are welcome to join this happy occasion!**

**Tom Persinger** has completed our new **computer network** and has completely re-designed our **website**. Check out Tom's beautiful work at **www.prairiewindzen.org**. Click on **Zen Center of Pittsburgh**. **Thank you, Tom, for your efforts!**



## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday - Zen Center Closed

Tuesday - Saturday Mornings  
5:30 a.m. - Zazen  
6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

Tuesday - Friday evenings\*  
6:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Zazen  
\*We no longer sit Saturday evenings.

Sunday  
9:00 a.m. - Zazen Instruction  
10:00 a.m. - Zazen  
10:40 a.m. - Work Practice  
11:30 a.m. - Service/Lecture  
12:30 p.m. - Tea  
1:00 p.m. - Closed till Tuesday a.m.

**Thanks also go to Myoen Margaret, Patricia, Shauna Hines, Leslie, Jane, Belden Ham, and Paul Ericson** for remodeling the upstairs hallway and to **Kevin Coghlan** for installing the **new hallway light**. Tall people won't be banging their heads like they did on the old light when they walk in and out of the **Buddha Hall**. And **thank you to Mimi Jong and Belden**, who have been working on the **new windows**, for which we received a grant from **History and Landmarks**.

The beautiful **perennial garden** begun last year with a generous gift from **Julia Kurtz** has benefitted by additions by **Marlene Lauver, Alice Greller, and Rhonda Rosen**. **Thanks so much!** By the way, does anyone know who left the pansies?

**Harriet Ross**, who practices at **Empty Hand Zendo** in Rye, New York, has donated some of her beautiful pottery for us to sell on the temple's behalf. **We are very grateful for her generous gift.**

On **May 25th**, sangha member **Scott Leonard** and **Chris Miletz** will marry. **Congratulations!**

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

## Afghanistan

from page 3

sat on a lift with its wheels hanging down. This drew the attention of all the men at the nearby work stations, who were changing tires on other cars. They all slowly walked over to my car to see what this invading customer who was not covered by insurance was about to do.

I could see that they had tried to power the lugs off with their special air guns by the way the lugs were worn around the edges. I turned to the oldest among the five or six workers who had gathered and asked if I could have a "cross bar" or an "X" bar, and he asked me what that was. I leaned against the car for support before patiently describing the X-shaped bar that used to be standard issue with many cars and was (I could only hope) still a daily-used, trusted, familiar, and universal tool in any store that claimed to specialize in the selling and installation of tires. One of the young men finally said, "Oh, a *manual tire bar!*"

I straightened up, smiled, and said "yes!"

"We don't have one of those," he replied.

"None?" I asked.

"No, we only use these," as he held up an air gun.

"But if there is a really tough lug, how do you 'break' it to start it off?" I questioned.

"We don't," he replied. "We return the car to the owner and tell them that we can't get the lugs off and that they'll have to go somewhere else for tires."

"But why?" I asked. "Why don't you just buy one for \$10 at the local auto parts store, put two guys on it, and loosen the lugs?"

"Because we could break the bolts," he said.

I guess that could happen, and maybe has happened at some time, somewhere in the world, but I've never of it. Tire bolts are

probably made out of the toughest metal around. They hold the wheels on.

I said, "I'm willing to go to the local auto parts store, buy both a tire bar and a hammer, come back and lend them to you, and patiently wait in the waiting room for my car. OK? I'll even sign a waiver that if something happens and you break something, I will not hold you responsible."

The mechanic replied, "We can't do that. If we broke the bolt or get injured using equipment that the company doesn't issue and train us on, there could be a liability problem, and we may not be covered by insurance. I'm sorry, but my hands are tied."

It was not a pleasant experience.

But, I digress. I'm on my way to give a talk on Zen at a local college, and I stop for gas at one of the local stations where they know me. The pump says "pay cashier first," but I wave to the guy behind the bullet-proof class, and he turns the pump on for me before I pay. He is from Pakistan, as is everyone at the station except for the Russian owner and one guy from South Africa. The Pakistanis have hung plaques with Arabic script underneath pictures of Muslim men on the wall behind them in the bullet-proof area. Out front, along with a variety of newspapers, they give away a little paper called "Islam Marketplace" where you can buy all sorts of equipment to help you be a better Muslim. You can buy rosaries, several editions of the Koran, and plaques with Arabic script. I have never seen any "news" in this paper. Nor have I seen any article about Islam, articles like "Daily words from the Prophet," or anything merchandise for sale. It's a bilingual paper, Arabic and English.

There is a way to buy gas without ever going into the station. Northwestern University students "swipe" their credit cards at the pump when they fill up their SUV's. Most of these students never go into the gas station. I bet they've never

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

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

seen the Russian guy who owns the place and is usually there in one of the two bays, helping his Pakistani mechanic work on cars.

I could have bought tires for my Bug here, but they only sell used tires. They can't afford a national tire franchise dealership license. This station gets used tires from a used-tire-only dealer. Those guys get their tires from the Mexican and Asian junk dealers who scour the alleys in broken-down pickup trucks looking for metal that they can sell to scrap yards on the South Side of Chicago (or in northern Indiana) and for tires that still have life in them. They sell the tires to a wholesaler on the North Side of Chicago, who in turn sells them to the Russian at the service station, who sells them to guys like me.

It's really hard, though, to get four matching tires at this station. It's a great way to replace a tire if you have a blowout. This I have done. The Russian and his crew can be very helpful, if you are willing to negotiate for the work done. He will sell you wrong-sized wiper blades at a big discount and then cut them to the size and shape you need. He is always in a good mood, and if he does not actually have the part you want, he can usually get it quickly. I have actually seen a "cross bar" in use in his garage. He and his men will work on any kind of car.

## Afghanistan

from page 6

However, I have never seen him working on one of the Northwestern University students' SUV's. I guess they don't know about the Russian and the Pakistanis because they always pay by "swipe" at the pump. The SUV's are always well cared for, and since they are usually quite recent models, they probably don't need the Russian's help.

Most of the tires that the Mexicans pull from the alleys are from the wealthier suburbs north of Chicago. I myself have seen perfectly good tires, sometimes even on wheels, along with all sorts of other things that are still useful sitting there in those alleys, waiting to be picked up. The best time of year by far to look in the alleys here in Evanston is at the end of Northwestern's school year. Students move out of the apartments they have rented, and they keep only what they really want. The rest ends up the alleys. I have seen furniture and TV's piled up so high and wide in the alleys behind Ridge Ave. that I couldn't drive through. When on foot, I couldn't see over the pile. I'm short, however. The university students are tall, at least the ones whose family has been in this country for generations. They can probably see right over the piles of furniture and equipment they throw away every spring.

The fax machine at our Zen Center came from Students-are-done-with-school-and-are-throwing-everything-away Day. Once I got a hardback copy of Luigi Barzini's *The Europeans* from the pile. It was interesting reading. Once, while trying to dig out what looked like a working vacuum cleaner (I've uncovered two good ones like this in just the last year), I got an entire set of relatively new books on ecology. I found a lot of useful information underlined and highlighted.

But, I again digress. I leave the gas station after paying the Pakistani, who has told me that he is very glad to be in this

country. He is still behind the thick glass, but I feel I've come to know him. He lets me pump before paying.

I resume my trip deep into the city to talk to the class about the Dharma. On the radio, there is a traffic report. We get these every ten minutes on several stations in Chicago. There are two companies that sell their computer models and traffic reports -- from planes, helicopters, and hundreds of "traffic cams" -- to the media. They used to watch traffic flow only during rush hour, but now they do it, as they say, "24/7." Every ten minutes, we can get a traffic report on the six million city and

has sold parking passes to the local large grocery store chain. There are very little parking opportunities for university visitors. I pay six dollars for the right to park at Blockbuster Video, which must do pretty well renting parking spaces in this neighborhood. Someone who knows all about such things told me recently that General Electric makes much more money in the financial markets than they do manufacturing electrical products, so perhaps Blockbuster Video is now transforming into a parking lot empire.

When I get to class, the students are attentive when I'm talking about Zen training and Buddhism. They generally ask

***Zen practice is not popular. What would happen if it were required in high school and college? Formal sittings, say two hours per day. Roll call. Dharma talks on the most pervasive evil in the world -- the evil of separation. If we catch the terrorists alive, Bin Laden and his gang, perhaps we should have them go to a special facility where they have to do sesshin after sesshin. Maybe for years. We could all sit right there with them and pass through that small and deadly space, the space between self and other.***

immediate suburb drivers.

My problem is that I still cannot really understand the reports they give, such as, "The Edens is heavy northbound, and it's twenty-five from Lake Cook to the Junction." This and the other reports don't ever apply to my situation. I usually find myself standing still or barely moving on some unknown avenue heading in I'm not sure which direction and never quite sure what it is up ahead that is holding everything up. Often I never find out.

So I ignore all the traffic reports and eventually find myself near the university in the inner city. At first, I can't find a place to park. I used to be able to easily find parking in this neighborhood, but now the university

good questions. Some, however, ask questions like, "Are you married?" "How do you make money?" "Do you have to shave your head like that?"

I teach them how to sit, and during zazen (in their desk/chairs, facing the wall), they are obviously trying hard to concentrate. This is made somewhat more difficult by other students talking and laughing in the hall as we meditate, and by the backhoe that is ripping the ground near the foundation of the building we are in. As I adjust postures, one student gets up suddenly and runs out of the room just as I get to him to adjust his posture. As he runs out, he shakes his head vigorously. He has dyed hair. It is extremely red. He never returns to the class, and I never find out why he ran away.

On my way out of the building, two of the

## *Afghanistan*

from page 7

younger students come up to me. I presume that they have questions, but they don't. They hold out their hands, shake my hand, and tell me that I "did a good job." They say that I had just the right mixture of seriousness, humor, and information. I take this to mean that they were adequately entertained.

On my drive back to Zen Center, I am held up in heavy traffic. It takes over an hour and a half to return. I never learn why traffic is so slow. I try different routes, but traffic is slow everywhere. A young man on foot walks past my car. I advance and pass him. A few moments later, he walks past me again. We repeat this many times. He is walking, yet he is moving as fast as I am driving my car. I am burning gas, with all the expense and pollution that entails, and he is moving faster than I am.

I do some zazen in traffic. I read all the interesting foreign language signs and billboards. I strain to see what's ahead around Ford Explorers and other SUV's. I even fantasize about about stopping to see a movie while I wait. I see many people in cars talking on cell phones. Some people look angry. Some are listening to music or rap that is so loud the bass notes vibrate right through my little car, and I feel them on my skin. One woman seems to be making lunch as she drives. Two cars in a row sport T.V. sets that are on, in the front of the cars, watched by the drivers as they sit in traffic. One man is typing on a keyboard. Another is reading a newspaper as he drives.

I listen to various radio stations. Many AM stations and some FM ones are in Spanish or Polish, but there is also a Japanese station, a Korean one, and some language stations I don't recognize. I sort through the English stations -- rap, oldies, swing, sports, talk, news, and traffic -- and settle on a station where an expert is being interviewed about the War on Terrorism. He is holding forth on how we will proceed in the ground war and how this is a different war from any other war we

have fought.

I finally get to Zen Center but can't pull into the alley in back via any of the three entrances because of delivery trucks, phone repair trucks, and a car illegally parked blocking the way. After I park at a nearby meter, put in my quarter, and get into the Center, I call the police about the illegally parked car. They promise me

### *A Poor Bowl*

*Be empty of all, a bowl  
microscopically cracked  
so that tears will not pool,  
Be worn and too weakly backed  
to hold grudges, too rough  
to harbor exquisite schemes.  
You will be enough.*

*Dana Delibovi*

that they will send over a parking enforcement person.

I go to my office and check the e-mail, snail mail, and voice mail. I realize that at no time today have I been able to get into any deep communication with anyone. I look forward to evening dokusan with my students and to sitting zazen in the zendo, breath after breath, with others trying to close all the gaps in us and between us. We will not need liability insurance, credit card swipes, money, approval, parking permits, or good or bad reviews.

There will be no traffic jams, no bombs on TV, no SUV's, no higher, no lower. There will be no terrorists, no war. There will be only *This*.

Zen practice is not popular. What would happen if it were required in high school and college? Formal sittings, say two hours per day. Roll call. Dharma talks on the most pervasive evil in the world -- the evil of separation. If we catch the terrorists alive, Bin Laden and his gang, perhaps we should have them go to a special facility where they have to do sesshin after sesshin. Maybe for years. We could all sit right there with them and pass through that small and deadly space, the space between self and other. Or is it easier for us to drop "Daisy Cutters" from B52's?

*Sevan Ross was ordained a Zen Buddhist Priest by Bodhin Kjolhede, director of Rochester Zen Center and Dharma Heir of Philip Kapleau. Sevan served on the staff of Rochester Zen Center for eight years and in 1996, moved to Chicago to become director of the Chicago Zen Center. Sanctioned as a resident teacher by Sensei Kjolhede, Sevan Sensei lives with his wife Kathleen in Evanston.*



## Communication Workshop

**Rev. Kyoki Roberts**, Head Priest of Zen Center of Pittsburgh/Deep Spring Temple, has developed a **Communication Workshop** especially for **Buddhist Sanghas**. In it, she leads participants through **skill development** in **Active Listening, Speaking Up, and Managing Difficult Conversations and Conflict**.

This **one or two-day workshop** begins and ends with **zazen** and has as its foundation the **Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts** and the recognition that **each of us is Buddha**.

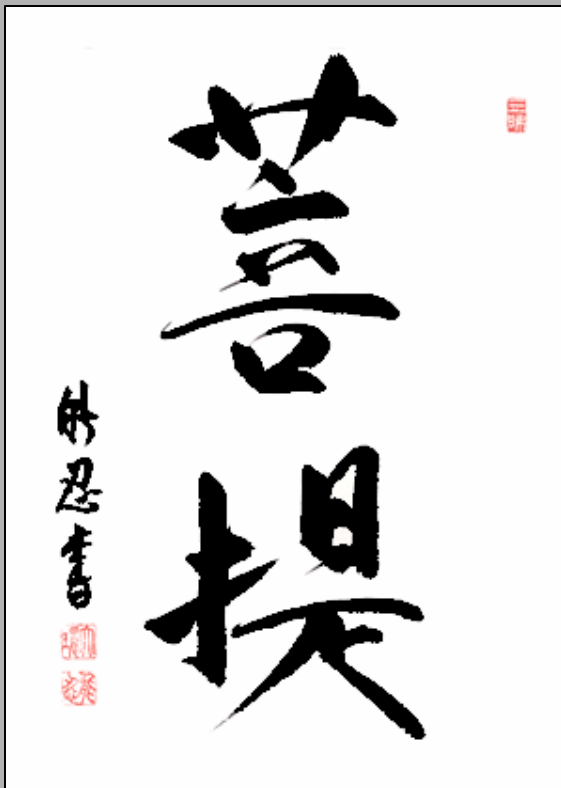
Kyoki has over **ten years** of hands-on mediation experience and was formerly a **mediation trainer** for the State of Nebraska. She has also worked professionally as a mediator with **church and sangha groups**.

Kyoki also can provide this workshop to facilitate **visioning** and **decision-making** processes for the Sangha.

If you or your sangha are interested in these workshops, call **(412) 741-1262** or e-mail [kyoki@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:kyoki@prairiewindzen.org) for details.



Rev. Kyoki Roberts



Enlightenment (Bodhi)

## Calligraphy For Sale

Nonin's calligraphy is for sale over the Internet.

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

We sell and ship them unframed. Each piece can be mounted and framed using traditional methods by any good framer.

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

## from *The Mahaparinirvana Sutra*

The Mahaparinirvana Sutra, also known as the Sutra of the Great Decease, is an account of the last days of Shakyamuni Buddha. The following are the last sections of the sutra. Having temporarily recovered from his illness, Shakyamuni Buddha instructs his followers to rely on themselves and practice diligently.

So, the Exalted One, by willful, strong effort, bent the sickness down again, and kept his hold on life until after he had finished what he needed to finish, and the sickness eased. Soon after, the Blessed One began to recover, and when he was strong again, he came out from his lodging and sat down in the shade on a seat prepared for him. The venerable Ananda went to him, bowed, sat down respectfully to one side, and said, "I have seen you now in health and in sickness. When you were ill, I became weak as a creeper, my eyes began to fail, and my faculties became weak. Yet, I took comfort in thinking that you would not pass away without leaving instructions for the Order."

The Exalted One replied, "Does the Order expect that of me, Ananda? I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; in respect to the truth, Ananda, the Tathagata does not hold the closed fist of the teacher, keeping some things back. Surely, if there is anyone who thinks, 'It is I who will lead the Order,' or, 'The Order is dependent upon me,' it is they who should give instructions concerning the Order. The Tathagata does not think that it is he who should lead the Order or that the Order is dependent on him. Why then should the Tathagata leave instructions for the Order? I have grown old, full of years; my journey is coming to a close; I have nearly reached the end of my days. Just as a worn out cart, Ananda, can be kept going only with the help of braces and thongs, so the body of the Tathagata can only be kept going by bandaging it up. It is only when the Tathagata, by not attending to outward things, becomes absorbed in the concentration of heart that is not concerned with material objects is the body of the Tathagata at ease.

Therefore, Ananda, be lamps to yourselves. Be refuges to yourselves. Take no external refuge. Hold to the truth as a lamp. Do not look for refuge to anyone beside yourselves. And how is one to be a lamp to oneself, a refuge to oneself, taking no external refuge, holding to the truth as a lamp, taking truth as a refuge, and not looking to another as refuge?

Friends, one strenuously observes the body, remaining self-possessed and mindful, overcoming desire and aversion. One observes feelings, perceptions, and mental formations in the same way, strenuously, remaining self-possessed and mindful, overcoming the desire and aversion common in the world. And those who Ananda, either now or after I am dead, are lamps to themselves and refuges to themselves, who take no external refuge but hold to the truth as a refuge and do not take refuge in anyone beside themselves, it is they, Ananda, among my disciples who will experience the deepest understanding, but, they must be anxious to learn."

Then, the Exalted One, with a great many Sangha members, went to the Sala Grove of the Mallas. At that time, the twin Sala trees

were blooming out of season and their flowers dropped and covered the Tathagata, in reverence to the successor of the Buddha of old. Heavenly Mandarava flowers and sandalwood powder came down from the sky and descended on the Tathagata; heavenly music sounded and songs were sung — all in reverence to the successor of the Buddha of old.

"Now, it is not in this way, Ananda," said the Exalted One, "that the Tathagata is truly honored and revered. The Tathagata is most truly honored by the man or the woman who walks according to the precepts, who fulfills them, whose life is in accord with them. Such people rightly honor and revere the Tathagata. Therefore, Ananda, be constantly at one with the precepts, walk according to them, and fulfill them in your daily life."

Then, the venerable Ananda went into the Vihara and stood leaning against the door, weeping. "Oh," he cried. "I am still not completely awake; I have still not worked out my own salvation, and the Master, who has been so kind, is about to pass away." Now the Exalted One asked, "Where, friends, is Ananda?" "He has gone into the Vihara," a disciple replied. "and he leans against the door weeping, for he is thinking, 'I am still not completely awake; I have still not worked out my own salvation, and the Master who has been so kind, is about to pass away.'" The Exalted One then said to the disciple, "go call Ananda, and tell him I am asking for him." The disciple did as the Exalted One wished, and Ananda came to the Exalted One, bowed down, and respectfully took a seat to one side. Then, the Exalted One said, "Enough, Ananda! Do not be troubled; do not weep. Have I not already told you many times that it is the nature of all things, even those most near and dear to us, to pass away and that we must leave them, divide ourselves from them, sever ourselves from them. Everything born must die; all beings carry within them the seeds of dissilution. For a long time, Ananda, you have been very close to me. You have been kind, good, and loving, in thought, word, and deed; that has never varied and is beyond measure. You have done well, Ananda. Put forth great effort, and you, too, will soon be free.

In you and in some other disciples, Ananda, the thought may arise, 'The words of the master have ceased; we no longer have a teacher.' But it is not so, Ananda. The dharma, and the rules of the Order, which I have set forth and laid down for you, will be your teachers after I am gone." Then, the Exalted One addressed the Sangha and said: "Friends, impermanence is inherent in all conditioned things; work out your own salvation with diligence!"

These were the last words of the Tathagata.

# Bowing

by Bob Schenck

Under the influence of Shunryu Suzuki's book *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, I began both meditating and bowing at home on my own in earnest. Bowing was especially wonderful. Suzuki-roshi wrote that his own master bowed so often that he had a thick callous on his forehead. The simple physicality of this gesture appealed to me both as a student and as a teacher, and I determined to adopt it.

Soon, in the privacy of my home, any time I felt the need to express my gratitude — for life, for consciousness, for my family, for my good friends, for good fortune, for hearing the dharma — slowly and deliberately I would kneel, bend at the waist, and press my forehead to the floor. In that position I would remain until I felt satisfied. Then I'd lie all the way down, stretch out flat, prostrate myself, my arms and hands extended before me, and in that position, once more press my forehead to the floor until I felt spent and empty of my wordless prayer.

Part of what I loved about bowing was my surrender to impulse. Whenever I felt the immensity of the universe, death, and God, and my own tiny insignificance, I bowed. It felt so good to be small! It felt so good to be dirt! It felt so good to be nothing! My wife and two children gradually grew accustomed to my odd behavior. Eventually they were no longer startled to discover me prone on the floor of our home, my forehead pressed to the rug or the linoleum. Without a word, they just stepped over or around me.

One evening, our friends Roger and Mary Lou were visiting me and Ruth and our kids. While they all visited in the living room, I was washing, drying, and putting away the dinner dishes. I bent down to stow away the last pot in the bottom drawer of the stove. Then I stood up — fast, eager to join my family and friends — right under the cupboard door I'd left open directly above my head. The blow

stunned me. I hurt like hell. With both hands, I grabbed the top of my head where it hurt and sank to my knees on the kitchen linoleum, grimacing noiselessly and holding my breath until the pain subsided. As I knelt there, I was aware that someone had come into the kitchen, looked down at me, and returned wordlessly to the living room. When I finally felt able to stand, I walked in and told everyone what had happened.

"Oh, I saw you kneeling on the floor!" my wife said. "But I just thought you were thanking the kitchen gods."

...

One night at my evening class, a senior seminar for English majors, I found myself awkwardly trying to describe and explain my experience of bowing to my nine students. We were all sitting at school desks arranged in a circle in a small room on the top floor of the library. I decided to demonstrate. I felt a little self-conscious about doing this in public, but even this embarrassment I interpreted as a test of my humility and commitment. I announced my intention, and I told Dotty, the young woman sitting directly opposite me, not to be alarmed. Then, just as I have described, I bowed. The following day a young man in the class confided to me that as I was bowing, another student, a young woman in the desk beside mine, had held up behind my back a hand-printed sign for Dotty (and all the other students) to see.

It read: "He's going to look up your skirt!"

*Bob Schenck lives in Omaha and practices at Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple.*

## ZEN MEDITATION WORKSHOP

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### 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 **August 15th**.

NZC's Website Address is:  
[www.prairiewindzen.org](http://www.prairiewindzen.org)

Our E-mail address is:  
[heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)

## WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE

### Morning

**Tuesday — Sunday**

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

**7:00 - 7:30 — Service**

**7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning**

**Sunday Only**

**8:30 — Zazen Instruction**

**9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation**

**9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation**

**9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation**

**10:00 - 10:10 — Service**

**10:10 - 11:00 — Dharma Talk**

### Evening

**Tuesday — Wednesday**

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

**Thursday**

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

**Friday**

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

**We are closed on Monday**