

# Prairie Wind

Volume 9, Issue 4

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Winter 2000

## DIFFERENT VOICES

Usually, an article I have written begins each issue of *Prairie Wind*, but this issue is different. There are different voices speaking. A member of the Toronto Zen Center writes about how practicing Zen changed her attitude about work. A member of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh writes about how it was when she first got interested in Zen. And, in our main article, beginning on page three, Zen Teacher Roko Sherry Chayat talks about *Mu* practice, something a little different for those of us practicing at Heartland Temple.

In Soto Zen, we don't practice with koans. Roko trained in and teaches Rinzai Zen, however, which uses koans in zazen practice. The koan *Mu* is probably the most important. In Rinzai Zen, it is usually the first koan assigned when the student begins this practice.

The more I learn about different Zen traditions and the more I visit and practice at temples transmitting these different traditions, the more I realize that despite the differences in practice forms and style, Zen is Zen. Whether it's Soto or Rinzai, or whether we inherited it from Japanese, Korean, Chinese, or Vietnamese teachers, the similarities in how we practice the Buddha way and in what we are trying to accomplish are much more substantial than the differences. Roko's article, originally given as a dharma talk during a seven-day sesshin (intensive retreat) gives us a glimpse into koan practice and points this out to me one more time.

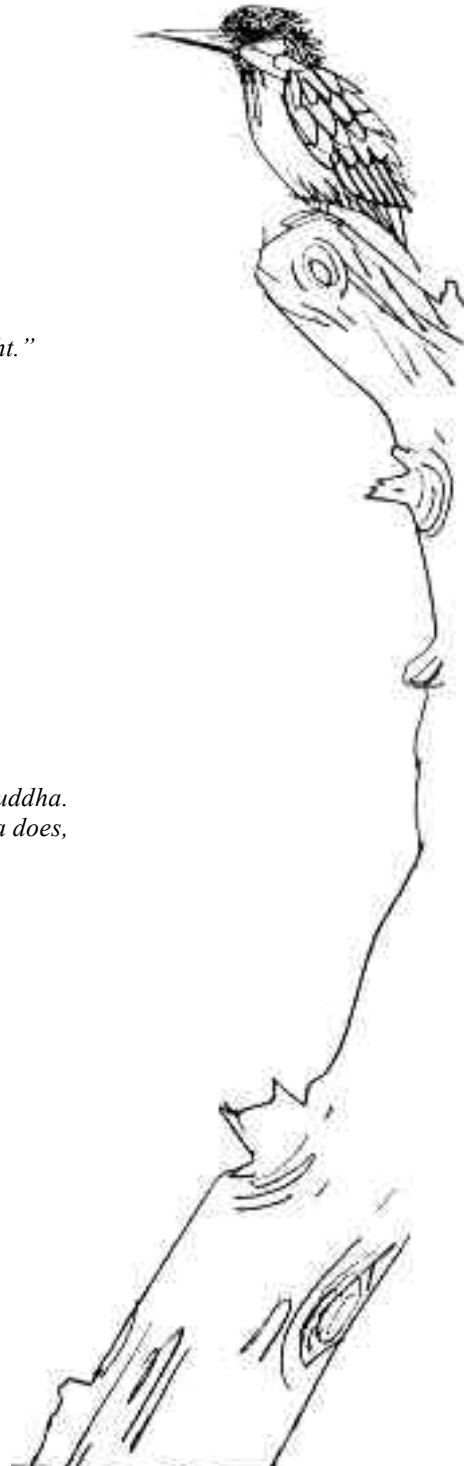


Mu — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

Rev. Nonin Chowaney. OPW  
Abbot, Heartland Temple

*Being told that it is impossible  
one believes, in despair, "Is that so?"  
Being told that it is possible,  
one believes, in excitement, "That's right."  
But, whichever is chosen,  
it does not fit one's heart neatly.  
Being asked, "What is unfitting?"  
I don't know what it is.  
But my heart knows somehow.  
I feel irresistible desire to know.  
What a mystery a "human" is!  
As to this mystery:  
clarifying,  
knowing how to live,  
knowing how to talk with people,  
demonstrating and teaching,  
this is the buddha.  
From my human eyes,  
I feel it's really impossible to become buddha.  
But this "I," regarding what the buddha does,  
vows to practice,  
to aspire,  
to be resolute,  
and tells myself, "Yes, I will."  
Just practice right here now,  
and achieve continuity,  
endlessly,  
forever.  
This is living in vow.  
Herein is one's peaceful life found.*

*Dainin Katagiri*





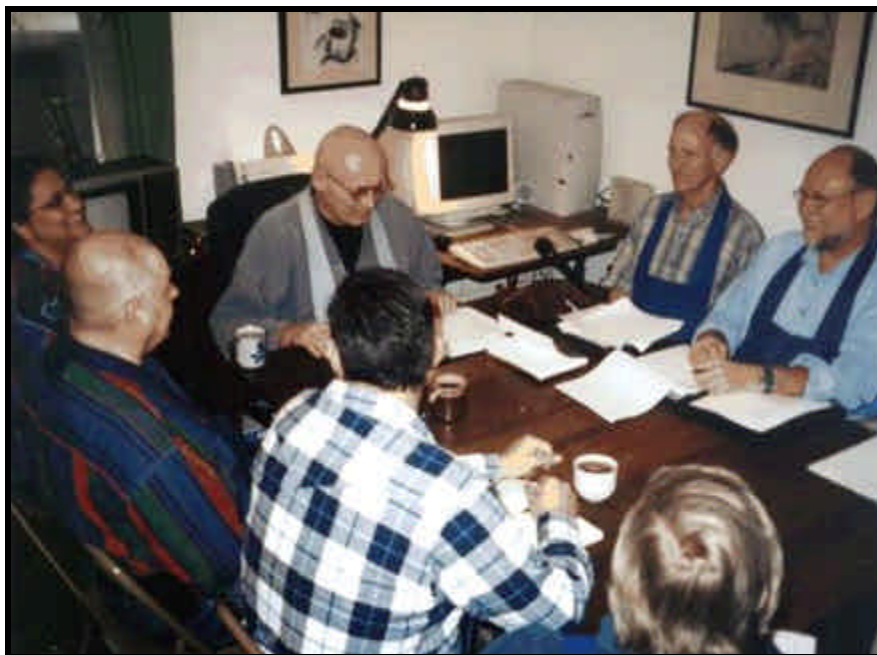
# NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

**ANNUAL FUNDRAISING BEGINS.** By now, each of you should have received our **annual fundraising appeal**. We do a lot at NZC, and we do it with limited funds (Our annual budget is under \$30,000). **Please consider helping us with a donation.** We will be grateful for any support you can give. All donations to NZC are tax deductible.

**Rohatsu sesshin**, held between December 26th and January 1st, commemorates Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment. Students are encouraged to sit part of this sesshin if they can't do all of it. Please discuss with **Nonin** how you would like to participate.

**NZC WILL BE CLOSED FROM MONDAY, JANUARY 1ST TO SATURDAY JANUARY 13TH. WE WILL OPEN ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 14TH WITH OUR REGULAR SUNDAY SCHEDULE.**

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Sunday, February 4th at 6:00 p.m.** We will be replacing Board Members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2001. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2000. **All are invited and encouraged to attend.**



Dharma study in the community room

Longtime member **Tessho Mike Delia** has moved to Asheville, North Carolina. Mike is our **Webmaster** — he's done a terrific job with our website — and will continue taking care of it. He also served as **Ino** the past few months. We'll miss him, and **we wish him well!**

We are updating our **e-mail address list** to help us communicate better within the immediate Sangha. If you come to the temple regularly or semi-regularly (once a month?) or would like to be on the list and kept better informed, **send your address to: [heartland@prairiewindzen.org](mailto:heartland@prairiewindzen.org)**

## SESSHIN

There will be three sesshins at NZC this winter, a **One-day sitting** on December 10th, a **Seven-day sesshin** from **December 26th to January 1st** and a **Two-day sesshin** on **February 17th and 18th**. Our regular fees will apply: \$40 per day for non-members and \$30 for members. Lower rates may be arranged for those with limited income. **Please call 402-551-9035 to register, and for further information.**

## RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS (LAY ORDINATION)

A **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Ordination** will be offered at NZC next March. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin**. He suggest the following guidelines for considering this step: **a commitment to zazen, a commitment to the sangha, a commitment to dharma study, and a commitment to study with a teacher.** Rakusu sewing will begin on **Sunday, January 28th.**

## SPECIAL WINTER EVENTS

We are offering two classes this Winter: an **Introductory Meditation Workshop** (details are in the enclosed flyer) beginning on **Thursday, February 1st**, and a **Dharma Study Class** beginning **Saturday morning, February 3rd**. The Dharma Study class will run for four weeks and is free to NZC members. Others may attend for \$40.

## OTHER WINTER EVENTS

Dec 5	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
13	Ryaku Fusatsu
Jan 17	Ryaku Fusatsu
Feb 4	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
7	Ryaku Fusatsu

# ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH — SANGHA NOTES

## ZCP WINTER EVENTS

### DECEMBER

- 8-10 — ROHATSU SESSHIN\*
- 18-26 — Zen Center Closed
- 31 — New Year's Eve Ceremony

### JANUARY

- 7 — World Peace Ceremony
- 13 — LORETTO RETREAT\*
- 19 — Dainin Katagiri's Birthday
- 19-21 — WORKSHOP WITH NONIN\*
- 26 — Dogen's Birthday

### FEBRUARY

- 2-4 — RETREAT WITH SHOKEN WINECOFF\*
- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 17 — INTRO TO ZEN WORKSHOP\*
- 18 — Sangha Work Day (1-5 p.m.)

### MARCH

- 1 — Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day
- 2-4 — RETREAT WITH TEIJO MUNNICH\*
- 4 — World Peace Ceremony
- 30-4/1 — WORKSHOP WITH NONIN\*

\*please register for these events

On September 10th, we started sitting at our new place and began preparing for our official opening. Many thanks to those who helped with these preparations: **Debra Chielli and family**, who brought mums and planted them in our window box, **Sara Curtis and Trevett Hooper**, who made cookies, **Patrick Le**, for taking pictures, **Mimi Jong**, for her work on architectural drawings for the new parking lot and handicap-accessible bathroom, and **Hank Walshak**, for handling publicity and for working on our conditional use permit.

Thanks also to **Bob Massie**, our realtor, who donated a cut-leaf Japanese Maple tree, to **Alice Greller**, a friend of Kyoki's mother, who brought garden design books and ideas for landscaping, to **Carol Dougherty**, who sent flowers from California, to **Joe Roberts**, Kyoki's father, who fixed the riding mower and then mowed the grass, and to **Helen Roberts**, Kyoki's mother, who brought flowers and a pie. **Special thanks** go to **Margaret Kurtz** — who was everywhere, doing everything — and to out of town guests **Rev. Eido Espe, OPW**, from Atlanta, Georgia, and **Zenshin Keith Hale**, a long-time student of Nonin and Kyoki's, from Albany, New York. **Eido** and **Keith** came early for the ceremony and worked from the moment they got here until everything was done.

And of course, our **most special thanks** go to **Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW**, who engineered the purchase of our building and land, and whose continuous, tireless, and persistent efforts made **Deep Spring Temple** possible.

Our opening ceremony was conducted on **October 1st** by **Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW**, abbot of Nebraska Zen Center and Head of the Order of the Prairie Wind. Over fifty people attended, including sangha members, family, and friends.

**Nonin** of course brought **Sammy** — the big white dog — with him, and he also brought a natural wood block with **his calligraphy of the Four Bodhisattva Vows** inscribed on it. He also brought a *han* [wood block] for the zendo and a beautiful **outdoor sign** for our driveway entrance. The sign was donated by a group of **Kyoki's** old friends from the **Nebraska Zen Center Sangha**. We **thank them very much!** Our **hearty thanks** also go to NZC sangha member **Jay Pashalek**, for making the *han*, engineering the wood block, and donating both to ZCP.

**Please come** to practice with us, or just to visit our new place. Our **new Zendo** is twenty-four by eighteen feet, with wormy chesnut paneling, a cathedral ceiling, and oak floors. There are five bedrooms upstairs — one of which we use as a **Buddha Hall** for services — and a modern kitchen, a utility room, and a sangha room — along with the zendo — downstairs. We're located on **six acres of land** on a dead-end road. To the north is a view for miles over Big Sewickley Creek valley and the forest covering it. **Deep Spring Temple** is truly a special place to be!



## ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

Monday - Zen Center Closed

Tuesday - Saturday

5:30 a. m. - Zazen

6:45 a. m. - Morning Service

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 (except for those doing a retreat)

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



# WORKING AND ZEN PRACTICE

by Linda Bayne

Zen practice has made an impact on every part of my life; my business career is a perfect example of that.

Zen, as a spiritual practice of mindfulness, offers many practical benefits, including better concentration, heightened awareness, inner peace, and joy. These are immediate and somewhat fleeting, depending on the depth and intensity of our practice. Working on another level, with a teacher guiding us toward realizing our own Buddha nature, provides benefits not only for ourselves but also for all sentient beings, with the ultimate intention of eliminating all suffering. Our own suffering and that which we cause others is often a result of greed, anger, and ignorance. My position within a corporate sales environment has produced enough of my own anger when having to deal with greed and ignorance that it has kept my practice evolving and changing, and that has meant changes within my business life as well.

For thirteen and a half years, I have worked in the fast-paced world of food sales. The company manufactures perishable specialty foods for the wholesale trade. You can find our products throughout the country. I worked my way through sales and into management, all the while preoccupied with my 'title' and my salary. As long as I was secure and comfortable, I was happy. Unfortunately, I had no idea what true happiness really was. So I always felt out of sync with myself and with others in my business. I kept wondering why I was so empty when I should be so "joy-full." After all, I was a single woman, independent, respected by associates and clients alike, earning more than the average man, and able to call my own shots. What more could I want? What was this dis-ease?

I finally found my way into Zen Buddhism, and then the little gnawing questions became volcanic eruptions. Through my practice, I started to look at

those questions and 'sit' with those feelings. In Zen, that sitting is called zazen. We sit paying attention to what comes up, acknowledge the thought or feeling, and then let it go. When you become aware of what continually comes up it starts to make a difference in your life.

Soon the questions regarding my work became more thoughtful. I started to realize there were aspects of sales and people in that business that I just didn't like or agree with. I began to question the relevance of the work; suddenly, what I was doing seemed insignificant. Compared to saving all sentient beings, selling pate and dips was frivolous drudgery. What was real and what was delusion? Where was the wisdom and compassion in getting stores to buy more and more products that nobody really needed? How could I be part of this business world yet remain outside of its preoccupation with trappings and expectations? What role does greed play in my company, in this consumer society, and in me? As a company are we being socially responsible? Are we producing in a sustainable fashion? Is this right livelihood? If not sales, then what? Am I becoming a better or worse sales person, a better or worse employee? Why didn't I care anymore about a title or the money? Am I becoming weaker or stronger? I was grinding myself into a sharp point.

My own teacher, Sunyana Graef, echoes the words of many old Zen masters when she says that to realize one's true nature takes great faith, great doubt, and great determination. I have always recognized faith and determination as strengths in my life; however, I never understood the significance of doubt.

This willingness to question, which may seem quite natural to some people, was very new to me. Instead of trying to find answers to the questions, I became content just to sit with and

## 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. Teshin Paul Lehmburg, OPW at (906) 226-6407 (e-mail: plehmbur@nmu.edu) for information.

## 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 (e-mail: Albert.Lickei@alltel.com) or Seishin Larry Pelter at (402) 483-1755 (e-mail: lpelter@alltel.net).

## WHITE LOTUS SANGHA

A group affiliated with NZC meets bi-weekly at the Nebraska State Penitentiary in Lincoln. For further information, call (402) 551-9035, e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org, or write Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363.

stay open to the vulnerability they brought. In my other life, I would hide from or ignore my uncertainties, not admit to them. But, as with many paradoxes in Zen, I was developing confidence in my insecurities. In time, I learned to trust my instincts, not so much that they're right, but that they're right for me. I could no longer justify staying with my company, not because of any great revelations, but because the passion

## 2001 PRACTICE CALENDAR

<b>Jan</b>	17	Ryaku Fusatsu
	19	*Dainin Katagiri's Birthday
	26	*Zen Master Dogen's Birthday
	28	Rakusu Sewing Begins
<b>Feb</b>	4	World Peace Ceremony
		Winter Practice Period Begins
	7	Ryaku Fusatsu
	15	*Buddha's Parinirvana
	17-18	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
	26-3/3	Lay Ordination Week
<b>Mar</b>	1	*Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day
	4	Lay Ordination
	7	Ryaku Fusatsu
	17	<b>One-day Sitting</b>
<b>Apr</b>	1	World Peace Ceremony
	8	*Buddha's Birthday
	11	Ryaku Fusatsu
	14-15	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
		Winter Practice Period Ends
<b>May</b>	6	World Peace Ceremony
	9	Ryaku Fusatsu
	13	Remembrance Day
	19	<b>One-day Sitting</b>
<b>Jun</b>	1	OPW Practice Period Begins
	3	World Peace Ceremony
	6	Ryaku Fusatsu
<b>Jul</b>	1	World Peace Ceremony
	11	Ryaku Fusatsu
	20	*Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day
<b>Aug</b>	5	World Peace Ceremony
	8	Ryaku Fusatsu
<b>Sep</b>	2	World Peace Ceremony
	5	Ryaku Fusatsu
	15-16	<b>Two-day Sesshin</b>
	29	*Zen Master Dogen's Parinirvana
<b>Oct</b>	3	Ryaku Fusatsu
	7	World Peace Ceremony
	21	*Bodhidharma Day
		<b>One-day Sitting</b>
<b>Nov</b>	4	World Peace Ceremony
	7	Ryaku Fusatsu
<b>Dec</b>	2	World Peace Ceremony
	5	Ryaku Fusatsu
	8	*Buddha's Enlightenment Day
		<b>One-day Sitting</b>
	26-1/1	<b>Rohatsu Sesshin</b>

\*On these days, a ceremony follows morning service.  
 Note: Ryaku Fusatsu follows shortened evening zazen.  
 World Peace Ceremony precedes Sunday dharma talk.

## WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD

Winter practice period will begin on **Sunday, February 4th** and end with **April Sesshin** on the **14th and 15th**.

**Practice period** is designed to provide structure for those who wish to intensify their practice and their Sangha connections for a specific period of time. Committing to practice period provides a clear time period when Zen practice and involvement at the temple take a higher priority in your life.

**Practice period students** commit to intensifying practice in three areas: daily practice at home (sitting and devotional services), regular involvement at the temple (e.g., on Sunday mornings and for work practice), and special events (e.g., sesshins, study groups, and ryaku fusatsu).

**Interested students** should meet with **Nonin** before February 4th to develop a suitable structure for practice and at least once a month during practice period.

### *Working*

from page 6

wasn't there any longer. No passion; no purpose. It was just time to move on.

A couple of months ago, I had an opportunity to help a friend with her small vegetarian food business. Today, I am her business partner, and we own the company. It just seemed like the natural thing to do. As the saying goes, "Only to the extent that I expose myself over and over to annihilation, can that which is indestructible be found in me."

*Heartbeats* (the name of our enterprise) is a growing concern. Both my partner and I are working at levels that we didn't anticipate this soon. Accounts and sales are steadily creeping upwards with profits and a pay check, hopefully, to follow. So far, the challenges of running our own business have proven to be exciting, if not a real adventure. My partner has finally resigned herself to the fact that we're "flying by the seat of our pants!"

A big challenge for me right now is to continue building that doubt mass which has taken me this far. Can't let up. Can't get complacent. Can't get sucked into the entrepreneurial whirlwind of working night and day and sacrifice my zazen. It's too easy for me to do that. Last weekend during *Jukai* [the Buddhist precepts ceremony], it struck me, once again, when Sensei Graef said, "Zazen is the foundation of our practice, and following the precepts is a natural extension of zazen leading to true liberation." What more could I want?

*Linda Bayne practices at Toronto Zen Center in Canada, under the guidance of Sunyana Graef, dharma heir of Philip Kapleau.*

## Always and Forever

from page 3

this corner, do turn and bolt. It's not unheard of. But the vast majority of us get pushed into a corner in our sitting, and we persevere; we decide, OK. *Mu*. Might as well *Mu, Mu, Mu*. And despite these halfhearted attempts, despite ourselves, *Mu* becomes stronger. Or *One*, or *Just Breath* becomes stronger. And then what? Mumon says, "When you pass through this barrier, you will not only see Joshu face-to-face, but you will walk hand-in-hand with all the ancestral teachers of our lineage. Your eyebrows will be entangled with theirs. You will see with the same eyes, hear with the same ears . . . don't

***As Bodhidharma said to Emperor Wu, the first principle of Buddhism is "vast emptiness, nothing holy." It's right here, not held secret by some ancient master.***

you want this?" OK, "Then throw your entire being into THIS MU" — THIS NO! Everything that comes up, Bam, Bam! "Make your whole body a mass of doubt!" Is this it? NO! Can I stay here, where it feels so comfortable? NO!

Most of you are familiar with the "trinity" of Zen, Great Doubt, Great Faith, Great Determination. We chant in the morning, "*Atta dipa*" — you are the Light. "*Viharatta*" — do not doubt! What does this mean? Great doubt; do not doubt! It sounds contradictory. When we say great doubt, what are we referring to? Are we referring to *Atta dipa*, to entangling our eyebrows with the ancestral teachers? No. We have no trouble doubting that we are the light, unfortunately.

We need to bring great doubt to bear on the discriminating mind that thinks it knows everything: "This is time." "This is the floor." "Each one of us is a separate individual," all the things in which we have utter confidence. In other words, we are called upon to doubt. Doubt! Are you

sitting on the ground? "Yes, I am." Oh yeah, really? What is it composed of? This kind of doubt. What is the universe? What is this? What is today?

"Keep digging into it ceaselessly." Don't get trapped by such ideas as Nothingness. "Oh, *Mu* means nothingness, *Mu* means No, *Mu* means..." *Mu* doesn't mean! When you are truly throwing yourself into *Mu*, "It must be like a red-hot iron ball that you have swallowed; you try to vomit it up, but cannot." Now this is very important. Most of the time, what we are looking for, and what we have come to

Zen practice looking for, is a feeling of ease, of serenity, and a kind of resolution to all the things that plague us. We don't like it when someone says, "Oh, you want to be enlightened? Well then, swallow a red-hot iron ball that you can't vomit up!"

This point is really the crux of working with *Mu*. We come to sesshin, and each one of us sitting on the cushion starts to see certain things about our lives, about ourselves. It's unavoidable. Has anyone gotten to this point without some interesting observation about how you operate—about your *modus operandi*, your M.O.? And when you get to this uncomfortable place, the tendency is to seek any way at all to get away from it. Maybe some of you saw the film or read the book called *Anywhere But Here*. In our practice, we'll go "anywhere but here," anywhere but this place of discomfort. What we're called upon to do is to be naked, to be exposed. This is why I always tell you, if you're an officer and you make mistakes — Good! Good! When you are in a position of total humiliation, you are able to be nothing but *MU*. Your illusion of a separated individuality, an ego-entity, a personality, as the Diamond Sutra puts it, has been stripped away.

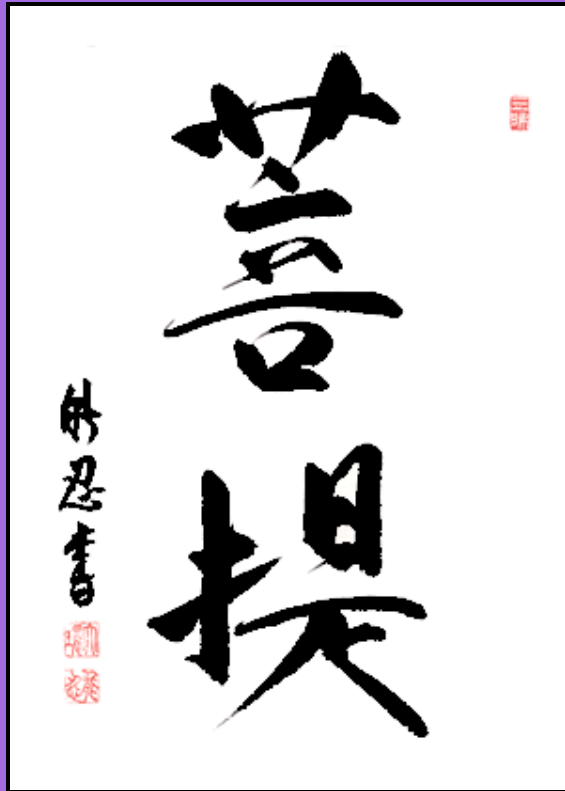
We can only get to the place where we can be free of these carefully

manufactured identities when we are willing to stop defending them, when we're willing to drop the expenditure of energy that it takes to keep the old ruse going. Then when we drop it, we may feel miserable, but what can happen is a profound release! All the energy that we've used in self-protective ways — protecting this illusion of self — is liberated. So, to be healed from disease, enter into what causes you the most disease. That's a good way to think of it. When you are suffering, when you have great pain in your sitting, emotional, or physical, or both, your body is giving you a gift. It's reminding you that you have separated from THIS. From *Mu*, from breath. And we all have to remember this every single sesshin. No matter how many sesshins we've attended, we get to this point: "Arrgggh! Oh yeah, I'm supposed to relax into the pain!" But it's the only way, other than bolting. If you bolt, you have to do it all over again, if not in this life, then in the next; the seeds are already planted! You're committed! It's a life-after-life sentence.

So Mumon goes on: "After awhile *Mu* will ripen. Inside and outside will be understood as *One*." This is so beautiful! To experience this: inside equals outside; space outside, space inside; "like a dumb person with a dream" — who can speak?" As Mumon says, "you will know yourself and for yourself alone." This may sound selfish, not a part of the Bodhisattva Way, but don't misunderstand. There is nothing that can be said about it. You will know yourself and for yourself alone, and thus you will be a being of light for so-called others. To know yourself and for yourself alone IS to dedicate your practice to the healing and happiness of all beings.

Mumon then says, "If you meet a Buddha, kill him; if you meet an ancient master, kill him!" What does this mean? It means to kill any revered or elevated notions in the mind. There is no one to put above your own head, and nothing to hold as holy. As Bodhidharma said to





Enlightenment (Bodhi)

## Calligraphy For Sale

Nonin's calligraphy is now for sale.

All are originals signed and stamped by him and are written on high quality paper, either watercolor or printmaking paper or archival matboard.

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

The calligraphy can be viewed 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 editor:

We **always** need material. Send us articles, drawings, poems, photos, cartoons, letters, etc. The deadline for publication in our Spring issue is February **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)

### *Always and Forever*

from page 8

Emperor Wu, the first principle of Buddhism is vast emptiness, nothing holy. It's right here, not held secret by some ancient master. WE are entangled in our eyebrows! Intimate, intimate. Buddha's teaching is like a raft, the Diamond Sutra tells us. "It must be relinquished; how much more so misteaching!" Let go, let all your concepts go! Then, true reverence for everything, for the smallest, most insignificant molecule, floods our being.

Mumon says in his verse, "Dog! Buddha!" This moment, this being, is fully revealed, right here! Alive! No faltering! No "is it?" Or, "isn't it?" Or, "which is it?" Or, "how much is it?" Mumon says, "A moment of has or has-not" — discriminating mind! — "and

body and soul are lost." Another way of putting it is what The Chinese Zen Master Sosan said in *Verses on the Faith Mind*: "A tenth of an inch's difference and heaven and earth are set apart." A tenth of an inch's difference between exhausting yourself with this practice and thinking, "Well, hmmm, I don't know about this *Mu* practice, maybe I should do some other practice," and you've faltered; you've separated into has and has-not; you're back in your cell of self-imprisonment.

It's so difficult for us just to fling ourselves off the cliff in our zazen, but this is what is required. "Cast away!" It sounds terrifying, but what we discover in this free-fall is complete and utter peace. This is peace, and it's not

continued on page 10

## *Always and Forever*

from page 9

something we can bargain to achieve. In the *Tao te ching* we read, “If you want to be given everything, give everything up.”

This is it! It’s so easy to remember; you don’t have to remember another thing: If you want to receive perfect peace, give up everything. Everything. This is *MU*. Something arises. Right now, what’s arising? Pain? Whose pain? “Mine!” This “mine” is what you must give up. It’s so easy! This is where it begins: MY pain!” Receive all beings’ pain, and you will give up yours.

*Mu* practice is not something we do for awhile until we get it and can say, “Oh, I’ve passed *Mu*, yay.” It’s not something we finish. From the beginning, once we understand, it is complete. It’s lifetime after lifetime after lifetime. As Mumon said in his enlightenment poem: MU MU MU MU MU MU MU. Or, it’s the fourth Bodhisattva Vow: “However endless the Buddha’s Way is, we vow to follow it.” It’s Soen Roshi’s *Endless Vow*.

Speaking of Soen Roshi, this sesshin reminds me of his frequent attendance at sesshins at Hosshin-ji in northern Japan. Even after his being named Gempo Roshi’s Dharma heir, and being made abbot of Ryutaku-ji, Soen Roshi would go as an ordinary monk to sit sesshin with the famously fierce Harada Sogaku Roshi at Hosshin-ji, a temple known for its severity. Every day, one full hour would be devoted to screaming *Mu* while keisaku [encouragement stick] blows fell on every one — no need to request it, as we have to do here! He said the most profound enlightenment experience of his life occurred after one such sesshin. My teacher, Eido Roshi, also went several times to Hosshin-ji for sesshin. And here, during this winter sesshin in Syracuse, we walk outside to the dining room in below-zero weather without coats, and we run in the snow to *dokusan* [private interview with the teacher]. This is really something!

On September 15, 1968, to commemorate the opening of New York Zendo Shobo-ji,

Soen Roshi wrote this haiku:

Like a day  
Of an ancient autumn  
Today’s New York!

And here we are, thirty years later:

An ancient winter  
Snow swirls through the temple door  
Today’s Syracuse!

We find ourselves at the beginning of a new year, a new century, a new millenium. What is our wish? What do we yearn for? What is our reason for doing this practice? Beyond our small, entangled, veiled, murky, self-absorbed, self-addicted, discriminating mind, what is here to be discovered? What is our vow? “If we do not turn the light toward true wisdom,” Soen Roshi wrote in January, 1958, “we will go off the track and destroy ourselves. Does a dog have buddha nature or not? An ancient buddha said, ‘Mu!’ Investigating this *Mu*, we celebrate the New Year with a wish for humanity’s inexhaustibility.”

Our great Dharma ancestor, the Japanese Zen Master Hakuin went through rigorous Buddhist practices of various kinds. After a period of unbearable frustration, sitting through seven days of sesshin, suddenly his “body and mind dropped completely away.” And then what? He tells us he became “extremely proud and arrogant. Everyone around me seemed like so many lumps of dirt.”

This is not so uncommon. I want to tell you this, because it’s very possible to have some awakening, some small insight that has knocked your socks off, anyway, and to become smug, to think, “Well, I’m a realized being, I’m a Buddha, I don’t need *dokusan*, I don’t need anything or anyone. I’ll just sit, and bask in my own enlightenment.” OK. It’s OK with me.

But Hakuin didn’t do that. He heard about a teacher he wanted to meet, an old hermit named Etan Zosu at Shoju-an. At *dokusan*, Etan told him, “Commitment to

the study of Zen must be genuine.” Or, as Dogen said, “Practice must be true practice, realization must be true realization.” So, Etan continued, “How do you understand the koan about the dog and Buddha-Nature?” Hakuin replied, “No way to lay a hand or a foot on that.” And Etan abruptly reached out and twisted Hakuin’s nose. “Got a pretty good hand on it there!” Hakuin said he was “put into a very troubled state.” And then one day, during *takuhatsu* (begging), as he stood with his begging bowl in a kind of trance in front of someone’s house, totally absorbed in his koan, a woman came running out. Evidently she had no use for Buddhist monks. She began beating him with a broom until he lay unconscious. And when he came to, he found that the insoluble koan “was now penetrated completely, right to its roots. It suddenly ceased to exist.” Laughing uncontrollably he picked himself up, and made his way back to the hermitage. And his teacher took one look and said, “Something good has happened to you.” Etan took his fan and stroked Hakuin’s back and said, “I sincerely hope you live to be my age. You must firmly resolve you will never be satisfied with trifling gains. Now you must devote your efforts to post-satori training.”

There is no end to our practice. We are so fortunate. *Mu, Mu. Mu. Mu, Mu.* With a grateful heart, with a spirit of inexhaustibility, let us fulfill our own endless vow.

***Roko Sherry Chayat, a dharma heir of Eido Shimano, is Abbot of Zen Center of Syracuse Hoen-ji. She lives in Syracuse, New York with her husband and son. The above article originally appeared in Dharma Connection, the news-magazine of Zen Center of Syracuse. It is reprinted here by permission.***

# THE DOUBLE DARE CHALLENGE

by Mary Rapaport

I'd like to say that my introduction to Buddhism started as an intellectual investigation, or a quest for spiritual enlightenment. How it actually happened was much less flattering. One day, while shopping with a friend, I spotted the book, *Funny, You Don't Look Buddhist*, by Sylvia Boorstein. I loved the title, and mostly bought the book just to shock my friend. I was just like a kid making a "double dare" challenge. Plus, it was on the bargain rack, so I figured that at only four bucks, how bad could it be? The book, however, intrigued me. The idea that most suffering comes from wanting things to be different than they are was really interesting. I read more and learned more.

In general, I'm not keen on declaring myself as anything. I have never been good at being told what to believe or what to think. When it came to deciding on a religion, I was pretty content to ignore the subject. Still, I was reading this book on Buddhism, which suggested ideas that sounded so basic, so practical, and so very different from my Western upbringing. Coming from the Far East, Buddhism has a kind of a *cachet* beyond Western philosophies. It had always sounded very exotic, so maybe I could stand to learn a little more about it.

Trying to learn about Buddhism is a lot like trying to learn about Christianity. It's hard to know where to begin. Should I look into Tibetan teachings or Zen schools? Japanese or Chinese Zen? I was happy learning from a distance. I didn't know any Buddhists, and I didn't know anyone who knew any Buddhists. I wasn't setting foot in a Zendo, or whatever it was called. Everything I knew came from books. What were Buddhists like, anyway? Was it like the TV show, Kung Fu? Could somebody just tell me which group Richard Gere belongs to, and I'll visit that one? He seems like a pretty normal guy, after all. I was putting up a lot of obstacles, because, oh, gosh, if Buddhism wasn't IT, then I'm really screwed.

Maybe I'll just e-mail a "local Buddhist" see what happens. So, I did. The reply, from Kyoki Roberts at Zen Center of Pittsburgh, was simple and straightforward. She told me that we should meet. What could I do, darn it? It was another "double dare."

When I went to meet Kyoki at ZCP, I was nervous. What would she be like? Would she speak in riddles? Would I have to undergo trials of Koans? Would she call me "Grasshopper?" And although it isn't every day that I have a chance to meet a shaven-head female priest in full-length black robes, we eventually sat down to have what turned out to be a very nice, every-day conversation. Kyoki was quite friendly, seemed normal enough, and most importantly, she was willing to teach. When she asked if I would I stay for services, I thought, "What the heck – I can always bolt for the door."

The atmosphere was friendly, and the philosophy seemed sound. It was OK to be a beginner here. It was amazingly "non weird." Nobody told you how to think or what to believe. The only requirement was to stop and sit quietly. Was Buddhism the big IT, I wondered? The message was "sit down and figure IT out for yourself."

I come to the ZCP often now. I'm still pretty new to Buddhism, and there is much to learn. Kyoki, my teacher, is patient and has never once called me "Grasshopper." I'm learning that there is no perfect anything, that everything is, in fact, perfect in its imperfection. It is the human part of me that wants to label, cling to, and search for something other than what I already have. I'm learning that whatever you call it, human life is a banquet. Buddhism provides senses to sample the tastes. And the biggest treat is that the meal never ends! You only have to stop long enough to see the cheesecake!

*on the road*

*a crow broken black flat*

*still*

*in the wind*

*a wing rises*

*Ryushin Jan Freier*

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

New year's eve services will begin at **9:00 p.m.** with a **Candle and Fire Ceremony**. All are welcome to participate.

We'll then sit (and walk) till midnight. During sitting, we'll ring the temple bell 108 times to mark the turning of the year.

**Refreshments will follow.**

**Please join us** at the temple to welcome the New Year peacefully and quietly.



## 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

10:10 - 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)

Friday

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

We are closed on Monday

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