



Prairie Wind

Volume 14, Issue 4

Published by the Order of the Prairie Wind for Nebraska Zen Center/Heartland Temple and
Zen Center of Pittsburgh/Deep Spring Temple

Winter 2005

HOW SHOULD WE PRACTICE?

Usually, each issue of *Prairie Wind* begins with an article that I have written. At least once a year, however, we like to feature a different voice. In this issue, that voice belongs to Sallie Jiko Tisdale, a long-time practitioner and lay teacher at Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland, Oregon.

In her article, which began as a dharma talk given when she was preparing for priest ordination last October at Dharma Rain, Jiko speaks personally about an issue that arises at one time or another for all serious Zen Buddhist practitioners: How should I practice: as a lay practitioner, as a priest, or as a monk?

Everyone who walks the Zen Buddhist path sooner or later asks this question. When I began practicing twenty-eight years ago, all our teachers were priests, and even though most were married, all had spent long periods of time in monasteries. They told us repeatedly that you didn't have to be ordained or go to a monastery to be a serious practitioner, but much Buddhist literature holds up the monastic life as the ideal, and our teachers reinforced this by the pleasure they took in ordaining priests, by encouraging people to take this path, and by the wistful looks that came over their faces when talking about the monastic life! So, there was a bit of a contradiction, and it caused a dilemma for some of us. Everyone said that you didn't have to get ordained or go to a monastery to be a serious practitioner, but historically, nearly all serious practitioners and teachers were monks.

Now that I've been a priest and teacher for a number of years, I've learned that each person has to resolve this issue for themselves. There is no one way of practice that fits everyone. I've also learned that throughout Buddhist history there were many serious lay practitioners and teachers. Today in America, and throughout the world, there are not only a variety of practice opportunities for all but also many lay teachers in all the different schools.

Our thanks to Sallie Jiko Tisdale for examining these issues in such a thoughtful and personal way. Her article begins on page three.



Practice — Calligraphy by

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW
Abbot, Heartland Temple

PRIEST ORDINATION AT DEEP SPRING TEMPLE

On September 18th at Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring Temple, Myoen Margaret Coghlan was ordained by Rev. Kyoki Roberts, Head Priest at ZCP, as an Order of the Prairie Wind novice priest. Margaret's priest name is **Jisen**, which means "**Compassion Spring**." Rev. Nonin Chowaney, Abbot of Nebraska Zen Center / Heartland Temple and Head of the Order of the Prairie Wind attended the ceremony along with over eighty sangha members and guests.



Rev. Kyoki Roberts Addressing the Audience Before the Ceremony



Jisen Bowing to Nonin



Jisen Receiving Her Priest's Robe (Koromo)



Head Shaving

HUNGER AND GLADNESS

by Sallie Jiko Tisdale

Imagine a path into a forest. You've heard rumors about beautiful and secret places in that forest, along that path. You know it's a long road, but you set off, full of ideas about what these beautiful, secret places might be like.

After a while, with some dismay, you come to a fork. No one mentioned a fork! No one said there were two paths! Left or right? There aren't any maps; there are no guides standing by with helpful advice. Many people in such a position are paralyzed for a while, with no idea how to proceed. A few people even turn around and leave the forest, for they are so afraid of making the wrong choice, or, of choosing itself.

Facing such moments, most of us do proceed. We may wonder for a while if we made the right choice, but we quickly stop worrying about it because the path itself captures our attention. Then we come to a meadow, and then a lake, a lovely distant view, a place of small, hidden flowers. What a good choice we made! What a nice path this is, with its beautiful and secret places.

After a while, you begin to glimpse other people in the distance. You hear steps, you see a passing shape, not so far away. A person waves to you from across the lake, and you say to yourself, "Hey, that's the other path! Hey, that's a nice view! I'd like to see *that* view. Dang! Maybe I picked the wrong path. Maybe those people, over there, are getting to see a lot more of the secrets than I am." We are beset by jealousy and fear even as we walk our chosen path.

More time goes by, more time on the path, and after a while, we realize that this path isn't all easy and nice. There's a certain amount of slogging, some mud, a few bogs full of mosquitoes. Then, it rains. The trees are scraggly, and the mountain completely disappears from view. Then, we're sure that the people on the *other* path are having a lot more fun

than this!

Another surprise: there are more forks in the path, more crossroads, more choices. Some of the forks turn out to be places of connection with the first path and provide another chance to take it. You can change your mind. But you begin to see how very many paths there are, and if you choose another, you have to leave the path you're on, the wonderful path that has come to mean so much in part because it is hard, the path that has been so rewarding, the path you have worked so long to climb.

Everyone approaches crossroads in life. We don't always notice them, however. We just walk ahead on the more obvious trail, only realizing later that we had a choice. We come to these forks with jobs, careers, relationships, families, living places, and lifestyles. Some choices are forced on us; others we seek. Often, we make a choice lightly that will become all the difference in the long run.

I've come to one of these places again. This time, I'm taking the other fork, the one I couldn't take before, for I'm a postulant here at Dharma Rain Zen Center and am preparing for ordination. [A "postulant" is a candidate for priest ordination – ed.] From the very beginning of my practice, many years ago, I longed for monastic life. I have longed for it in one way or another since I was a little girl watching Hayley Mills in "The Trouble With Angels." I spent some time crashing around in the undergrowth, looking for the trail to this life. When I found this practice, however, I was committed to rearing children and that process has gone on somewhat longer than I expected it to.

Off and on over the years, I would be filled with longing for monastic life,

Nebraska Zen Center Officers

Ryoshin Joe Marshall	President
Koshin Bob Schenck	Vice-President
Noshin Marcia Prideaux	Secretary
Chuko Jean Bailey	Treasurer
Kanho Doug Dittman	Board Member
Hal Holoun	Board Member

Rev. Nonin Chowaney, OPW 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.

even when my attention was captured by other things. I have been filled with longing for it even when I loved the path I was on very much. I had come to see my path as whole and complete, beautiful and secret, infinite, and full of opportunity and joy.

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER — SANGHA NOTES

ANNUAL FUND-RAISING BEGINS. By now, you should have received our **annual fund-raising appeal**. We do a lot at NZC, and we do it with limited funds. **Please consider helping us with a donation.** We will be grateful for any support you can give. All donations to NZC are **tax deductible**.

HEARTLAND TEMPLE WILL BE CLOSED FROM SUNDAY, JANUARY 1ST THROUGH MONDAY, JANUARY 16TH. WE WILL RE-OPEN TUESDAY, JANUARY 17TH WITH OUR REGULAR SCHEDULE IN EFFECT.

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held **Saturday, February 4th at 10:00 a.m.** We will be replacing Board members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2006. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 2005. **We encourage all who practice at Heartland Temple to attend this meeting. A communal lunch will be provided afterwards.**



Heart Free As White Clouds — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

Our **Temple Expansion Project** has been put on hold until after the first of the year. We'll then work with the **City Planning Board** to make sure that our building plan is within all zoning and code restrictions. After that, we'll be **contacting builders** and **soliciting bids**, so we'll know what our fundraising target is. We plan on resuming **Expansion Project fundraising** early next Spring.

Many thanks to **Doug Dittman** for the brickwork and latticework around the piers under the kitchen, to **Fran Anania** for the coffee grinder, to **Hal Holoun** for the picture frames, to **Joe Marshall** for computer help and for the waffle maker, and to all those who helped with the Fall yard clean-up!

NZC Head Priest Nonin Chowaney serves on the Soto Zen Buddhist Association's **Priest Training Committee**, and he traveled to **Milwaukee Zen Center** in September, where the Committee met and finalized a comprehensive **Priest Training Document**. **Nonin** also serves as **Chairperson** of the American Zen Teachers Association's Membership Committee and continues his work with that group. Next February, **Nonin** will travel to **Empty Hand Zendo** in New Rochelle, NY to lead a study seminar on **Zen in Japanese Poetry** and show his **calligraphy**. He'll also show his work and lead a study seminar on **Zen in Chinese Poetry** at **Zen Buddhist Temple — Ann Arbor** in March.

SESSHIN

There will be **three sesshins** at NZC this Winter, a **Seven-day sesshin** from **December 1-7** (Rohatsu), a **Two-day sesshin** on February 11th & 12th, and a **One-day Sesshin** on March 11th. Fees are: \$30 per day for members, \$40 for non-members. Lower rates are available for those with limited income. Call (402) 551-9035 or **e-mail heartland@prairiewindzen.org** to register.

LAY INITIATION RECEIVING THE PRECEPTS

A **Precept Ceremony** signifying **Lay Initiation** will be offered at Heartland Temple next March. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin**. He suggests the following guidelines for considering this step: **a commitment to zazen, a commitment to study with a teacher, a commitment to sangha, and a commitment to dharma study.** Rakusu sewing begins **January 29th**.

DHARMA STUDY CLASS

Nonin will lead a **dharma study class** at the temple this Winter. it will meet on three successive **Saturday mornings** from **10 am till noon**, on **March 4th, 11th, and 18th**. The text(s) for study will be announced later. This class is **free to members**. The **non-member fee** is **\$15 per class**.

OTHER WINTER EVENTS

Dec 14	Precept Ceremony
Jan 18	Precept Ceremony
Feb 5	World Peace Ceremony
	Group Discussion
15	Precept Ceremony

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH — SANGHA NOTES

ZCP FALL EVENTS

DECEMBER

- 1-7 —Rohatsu Sesshin (in Nebraska)***
31 —New Year's Eve (6 pm - 1 am)

JANUARY

- 5 —Intro to Zen (6 pm)***
8 —World Peace Ceremony
17 —Ryaku Fusatsu*
19 —Dainin Katagiri's Birthday
—Sitting at Mt. Alvernia**
20-22 —ZCP Visioning Retreat***
26 —Zen Master Dogen's Birthday
27 —Intro to Zen***

FEBRUARY

- 5 —World Peace Ceremony
14 —Ryaku Fusatsu*
15 —Parinirvana Day
16 —Sitting at Mt. Alvernia**
23 —Intro to Zen***
24-26 —Precept Sesshin***
28 —Buddhist Studies Class

*After evening zazen

**There is no evening sitting a ZCP on the nights we sit at Mt. Alvernia Monastery

***Please register for this event

On September 18th, **Margaret Coghlan** was ordained an Order of the Prairie Wind novice priest by ZCP Head Priest **Rev. Kyoki Roberts**. Margaret's priest name is **Jisen — Compassion Spring**. Our deepest congratulations to **Rev. Jisen!** OPW Head **Rev. Nonin Chowaney** was in attendance, as were over 80 sangha members and guests. **Many thanks to all** who helped prepare for the event, and special thanks to **Jodo Debra Callahan** for cleaning the carpets and **Hernan Brizuela** for acting as Tenzo. Pictures of the ordination appear on **page 2**.

A **special farewell** to **Rev. Yuko Wakayama**, who is finishing a six-week residency at Deep Spring Temple. Yuko came to us from the Aichi Senmon monastery in Japan by way of Mt. Equity Zendo, where she is involved in a three-year translation project with **Rev. Daien Bennage**.

Many thanks to **Dan Kendgia** for his many donations of time and supplies for various temple projects, including a new lighting system for the zendo. Thanks also to **John Ott** for garden work and to **Jay Volk, Hernan Brizuela,** and **Tom Persinger** for their computer wizardry!



Saving All Beings — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

ZCP DAILY SCHEDULE

AM

Tuesday

7:00 a.m. - Zazen at the Mattress Factory

Wednesday - Saturday

5:30 a.m. - Zazen

6:45 a.m. - Morning Service

PM

Tuesday - Saturday

6:00 - 7:15 p.m. - Zazen

Sunday

10:00 a.m. - Zazen

10:40 a.m. - Work Practice

11:15 a.m. - Service/Dharma Talk

12:30 p.m. - Lunch

Closed Mondays

Special thanks to all who donated to the **handicapped accessible bathroom project**. It should be up and running by New Year's Eve.

Shortly after her ordination, **Rev. Jisen Coghlan** attended a **novice priest training session** sponsored by the Soto Zen Buddhist Association at Mt. Equity Zendo in Central Pennsylvania. The training was organized by **ZCP Head Priest Kyoki Roberts**, an SZBA board member, and led by **Rev. Daien Bennage**. This Fall, **Kyoki** is continuing her work as **Director** of the **Soto Zen Institute** by organizing more **priest training sessions**.

Deep Spring resident **Zenshin Keith Hale** recently represented the temple at Pittsburgh's first annual **Spiritual Day Out**, an ecumenical event centered on Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual, and Transgender spiritual issues.

Next Summer, Zen Center of Pittsburgh / Deep Spring temple will offer a week-long **Dharma Day Camp** for youth. There'll be more details coming in the Spring issue of *Prairie Wind*.

Hunger and Gladness

from page 3

Learning that, I have had to return to the longing, examine it, and also examine in great depth my own motives, desires, delusions, and ideals. This hasn't been an easy or even steadfast decision, for a lot of reasons. I feel really sad at times, to think of leaving the life I've led, because it is so rich. But now, I will take the other path, for now, I finally can. In all these years, the urge for the monastic path has not dimmed.

Lately, I've been reviewing the endlessly branching paths of my past and the almost uncountable number of branching turns I've taken, where what-ifs multiply endlessly at every corner. We die and are reborn many times in a given body. For me, this is a dying process and eventually, a rebirth. We don't always know we're dying until it is under way, but this is more like euthanasia, so it's important to be as clear as I can be.

I'm convinced that solving this koan about the form of practice life — what it looks like for oneself — is key to mature practice. We have to learn to “do something by oneself without copying others.” This is the Great Matter of Birth and Death, self and no-self, the nature of form and the meaning of the absolute. Thinking about lay life and monastic life brings up many of our fantasies about form and essence.

Like most Zen students, I've struggled at times with the idea that being a monk is “better.” The historical and institutional message sometimes tells us this, that this overt form of renunciation is more serious, more important. However, if you look carefully, you can find a lot of messages about how complete lay life is, too. So, I guess we shouldn't believe everything we read.

Though the general image is mostly monastic, Buddhism has many models for lay practice, both historically and in modern life. All the Zen lineages have lay ancestors, and both Soto and Rinzai Zen offer a form of lay transmission. One of Zen Master Taizan Maezumi's main teachers, Koryu Osaka, was a lay person

his whole life. His other main teacher, Hakuun Yasutani, was a priest who left monastic vows to marry and have a family. But Zen Buddhism was transmitted to America by monks and was taught to lay people as a quasi-monastic practice. Most American Zen centers now have a kind of mixed form that is atypical of traditional Zen. There is much confusion about the difference between the paths of lay life and monastic life and about the role of priests and teachers.

All the questions lay people ask about practice, like, “What it form *should* I choose,” “How *should* I do it,” or “How *should* I look” are asked by monks, too. At one time or another, we all wonder whether the people on that other path are having a better time! Maybe it's easier for monks. They usually have the advantage of living in a dedicated container with a schedule and a timekeeper. Wouldn't lay people like to have a timekeeper? Monks have an imposed routine, and this is helpful. Lay people live with self-direction, but sometimes, this is helpful, too. Sooner or later, each individual student, no matter what shape their practice life takes, has to take hold of it for himself or herself.

When Shunryu Suzuki started the San Francisco Zen Center, he said to his students, “I think you [Americans] are a special people and want some special practice that is not exactly priest's practice and not exactly laymen's practice.” This was a prescient comment, for over time, Americans have tried to do this. I, however, don't want to do this. My decision has meant that at Dharma Rain, I waited a lot longer for the chance to be ordained than I would have in another center, for there are places where people raising children and working outside the temple are ordained. At Dharma Rain, they are not. I support the clarity with which Dharma Rain defines priest and lay life by insisting that these are, in fact, different paths. Similar in many ways and of equal worth but yet, different.

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

A group affiliated with NZC meets in Lincoln weekly on **Thursday evenings at 7:00 pm** at the **Unitarian Universalist Church, 6300 A St.** For further information, e-mail or call **Seishin Larry Pelter** at **lpelter@alltel.net** (402-483-1755) or **Kanho Doug Dittman** at **dougditman@earthlink.net** (402-783-2124). Zazen Instruction is available for newcomers if arranged in

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**, or write **Nebraska Zen Center, 3625 Lafayette Ave., Omaha, NE, 68131-1363**.

At times, the attachments and demands of daily life made me feel like I was wrapped in cobwebs. More than once, I thought that the way to the priest's life was clear, but then, someone in my life still needed me in a way that was incompatible with residential practice. I've often felt resentful and frustrated, but each time I've been needed, I've found something important in meeting that need, something just as complete as what I thought I wanted to be doing instead.

This summer, when becoming a monk really began to seem possible, I felt a mixture of curiosity and relief – curiosity

Hunger and Gladness

from page 6

because I really don't know what will happen and relief because it feels like putting on old clothes. At the time I was accepted for postulancy, I had been working two jobs, studying Japanese, and meeting deadlines. I was also beginning to worry about bills and families and about how this new path will work. I began to feel wrapped in all those old cobwebs. The whole idea of closing up large sections of my life seemed only theoretical for a while.

I've been a lay teacher for quite some time, but I won't be for much longer, which is probably a good thing, for I haven't been a very good one lately. My mind has been turning away from that path in the confusion of these last few months preparing for ordination. But, everything passes. I learned years ago that the feeling of being cornered, trapped, or thwarted was a good sign. In our practice, we walk through open meadows, and we crawl through small tunnels, too. Those tight places are like the ass end of the tunnel or a cocoon just before splitting. If we can just relax into that tight, impossible place, be wholly confused or trapped or whatever, something does happen. The tunnel ends, or the cocoon opens. That's how it feels now, like I've stepped out into the meadow again. However, there are surely more tunnels ahead!

I've gone in and out of this "form koan" many times, each by a different door. I finally just had to go all the way through it. I had to sink completely into my own form, into my life as it is. I came to realize the precious perfection of my life, its totality and completeness, its total body. This is sinking into the emptiness of all things, all the way through, and knowing that self, activity, and form are empty: robes are empty; rank is empty; family is empty; we are empty. Ways-of-life are empty. *Life* is empty.

I've had to get past the idea that I was limited in what I could understand or realize. I've had to feel the Way as my own pulse, no matter where I was. The fears about other paths and what we might

be missing rises out of emptiness. They are only dreams.

We say that a bodhisattva takes rebirth without resistance as circumstances require. That's what mothers and fathers do, what nurses do, what teachers do, what all of us do if we are awake. The monk does it in the context of open sharing of Dharma. Robes and shaved heads are not intrinsically important; they are tools of expression and need to be used appropriately, like all tools. We must find the proper tools to express and define our lives, to make our personal truth visible and spoken. No one else's tools are better for that.

In ancient story, Sogyanandai is enlightened when he asks his teacher to ordain him and Rahulata says, "Since I have no self, you should see my self. Since you take me as a teacher, know that I am not my self." Zen Master Keizan tells us that understanding this principle is to "meet the Buddhas and Zen masters. Therefore you make yourself the teacher, and the teacher your self." Lex Hixon puts it a slightly different way: "This is the ordination beyond ordination, the homelessness beyond monastic vows." This homelessness means to pick up our empty lives with both hands. That doesn't mean being passive. Seeing the utter emptiness of form is the only way to truly pick it up freely. The form in which we do this practice is by far the *least* important part of it. The sincerity with which we engage in any given form is the key.

As I stand here at the crossroads, these two paths – monastic and lay – look more similar than not. I know one well, and the other isn't entirely new to me. I've taken short walks along it. Now it's time to walk it with total attention.

At Dharma Rain Zen Center, postulancy is intended to be an experience of being a junior practitioner wholeheartedly, an experience of willingness, humility, and acceptance. I feel it to be a continuation, with a more intense focus, of the

SANGHA MEMBERSHIP AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

Membership

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

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

Financial Support

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

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

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

practice I've long tried to do, which is to bow ever more deeply to the circumstances of my life as it is. If you're like me, in the midst of this effort you find a lot of trash in there, like fear, resentment, desire, and hope. Now is a time for me to examine this more closely, with fewer distractions.

Practically, postulancy is time of putting the rest of your life down as much as possible

Hunger and Gladness

from page 7

and being available to the teacher, the Dharma, the sangha, and ultimately, to the needs of the moment. Before I do this, I have to take off my kesa [teacher's robe at Dharma Rain] and step completely out of the teaching role. Like anything else, this role can be put down and picked up freely. No one is always a teacher, always a senior practitioner, or always a junior practitioner, for the contexts in which these roles are assumed continually change. The trick is to be free enough to make these role shifts when necessary.

Postulancy is just *my* life at this moment. My path is just mine. But in the sangha, in this context, it has some particular effects, which is why I'm sitting here telling you these things. The role of the lay teacher is so important to me — not for my own sake, but for the community. Even as I've been a kind of product-tester for all the possible mistakes a person could make in this practice — I've *invented* mistakes! — I've been aware that I'm holding a role that has iconic meaning to the community. I've been so humbled by the weight that I've carried at times, to be some kind of model for lay practice even when I feel like a mess. People who have known me a long time, and know that I wanted to be ordained, have had various reactions to my choice. Some people have a sense of being abandoned or betrayed by my leaving this role. At times, I've felt that it is so important for American Zen to uphold and protect that image of mature lay practice that I've wondered if I should just bow to this as the real purpose of my life. But I know there are others, here in this room and countless others in the world, who can hold this position. The role — monk, lay teacher, lay person, priest — is empty too. What you project on it, what you imagine and expect it to be is your idea.

I especially want to make it clear that postulancy and ordination are not “the next steps” after being a lay teacher. There is no continuum here; these are

separate, parallel paths. I believe that the role of the lay teacher can and should be a “complete” role, leading to true authority and leadership and long term intimate relationships with students who want to lead a lay life of practice. I hope, no matter what happens on my own path, to help support this role for the community. I hope someday to be a priest who never forgets how hard and important lay practice is.

Why do I want to be a monk? I know that I haven't answered this question.

Every life is “missing” every other life. Learning the lessons and receiving the gifts of my particular life, I miss all the lessons and gifts of a hundred thousand lives.

There are too many answers and ultimately, no answers. There are small answers, selfish ones, big ones, and fancy ones. I could give a lot of answers, but I know myself well enough to know that few motives are pure or simple. I've learned to be skeptical of my own agenda.

One of my favorite quotes is by a Christian writer named Frederick Buechner, discussing the word “vocation.” He writes, “It comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call, and means the work a person is called to by God. There are all kinds of voices calling you to all kinds of work, and the problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than of Society, say, or the Superego, or Self-Interest... The place God calls you to it the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.”

It's easy to come up with answers about the world's hunger — about helping others, offering sanctuary, offering the Dharma, and so on. But for me a lot of it is about gladness. It's not the most pleasurable way to live. It's not the most

fun. It's not the most playful. But for me it is the most happy. This call keeps on calling. And to say even this is only a shorthand for years and years of complicated conversations and musings and lessons. My life is a good life, a blessed life. But in some crucial way, it's not my life, as it is.

Most of us carry around some sense of not belonging to the world — a product of continual tension between ego and how the world tells you to be. That tension drives us to reify our identity, to say, “I *am* such-and-such.” With a deep realization that the self isn't solid after all and can't be relied upon, we come to an abyss. The dark secret we never say out loud is this knowledge of incompleteness. The world often intensifies the coalescing concept of insecurity and separation, because the world is going in the other direction, toward solidification. The paradox is that we belong to the world, totally. Discovering this

allows us to fall into true completeness. Seen wholly, the world and any given life is extraordinary. Zen Master Rinzai's “true person of no rank” dwells nowhere and acts freely, without expectations, hopes, or fears. He or she meets each condition head on, cultivating anonymity and expecting no gratitude, offering what is available and accepting what is given. This is ceaseless practice without struggle; this is knowing that there is no resting place and resting in that.

Whichever path one chooses, there will be regrets. There will be wonder. When it's rocky and steep, when the views disappear, when it's muddy, or when the trail seems to fade away completely, we wish that we'd chosen a different path, one smoother, clearer, and prettier. As a girl, and into adulthood, part of my attraction to monastic practice was the belief that it was harder than lay life, so the gain would be greater. We know that if there's “no pain, no gain,” right? In the midst of rearing a family and having a job and trying to have a practice, I was convinced that the monastic path was easier. Now I think it is both — harder and easier — because at any given time any

continued on page 10

Galaxies

by Koshin Bob Schenck

There are a minimum of fifty billion galaxies in the known universe and a minimum of two hundred million stars in each galaxy. That's 10,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars. The total is actually much greater, since some galaxies contain as many as a trillion stars.¹ I trim the wet green stem of a white carnation. From an isolated spot in rural Nebraska on a clear dark night less than 1500 stars are visible to the naked eye. These 1500 stars are a tiny fraction of the 400 billion stars in the Milky Way, a giant spiral galaxy with a diameter of 100,000 light years or 9,939,096,000,000,000,000 miles. One of the stars in the Milky Way is our Sun, a relatively small star. I light a white candle. Orbiting the Sun are the nine planets of our solar system and their moons. The third planet from the Sun is Earth. There are about 6,260,000,000 human beings alive on Earth. Each day about 178,000 human beings are born, and each day about 177,000 human beings die. I shovel cold white snow. About 282,000,000 of the more than six billion people alive on Earth live in the United States of America, six percent of the world's population. One of them is me. One day, perhaps tomorrow, perhaps today, I will be one of the day's 177,000 dead. I gaze at the cold, white, dead full moon. Measured at its equator, the Earth spins on its axis at 1,035 miles per hour. In its elliptical orbit around the Sun, the Earth revolves at 68,000 miles per hour. The Sun and its solar system speed within the spiral arm of the Milky Way at 43,200 miles per hour. The spiral arm of the Milky Way revolves around its center at 650,000 miles per hour. The Milky Way speeds outward toward the limit of the known universe at 1,300,000 miles per hour.² I sleep. At 4:00 a.m. my alarm sounds, a clock radio tuned to white noise. It says, "Shhhhhhhhh!" I wake. I rise. I brush my teeth and hair. In my mirror I see me. I dress. I bow. I sit. I breathe.

¹According to recent estimates by astronomers and scientists associated with the Hubble Space Telescope.

²David Wallechinsky and Irving Wallace, *The People's Almanac #3* (New York: Bantam, 1982), pp. 354-355.

Calligraphy For Sale



Suchness

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

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

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

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

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 15**.

Websites for **Nebraska Zen Center** and **Zen Center of Pittsburgh** are at: www.prairiewindzen.org

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

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

Sacred / Profane

Nothing is sacred

*I can examine
anything without fear.
There is nothing
better than me.*

Nothing is profane

*I can look at
every experience.
Anything there is nothing
worse than me.*

Everything is sacred

I can see anything

*as an expression of
its own unique perfection.*

*When I fail to see this,
It is because I am resisting
some part of the whole picture.*

Everything is profane

*Loving or fearing anything
causes distortion.
By emphasizing one detail,
I lose the whole picture.*

Ryoshin Joe Marshall

*Dharma Rain Zen Center in Portland,
Oregon. It is re-printed here by permission.*

Hunger and Gladness

from page 8

other life is harder or easier than my own.

At the beginning of this talk, I said that some people are paralyzed by the fork in the road and some retreat. But these are choices, too. You *have* to choose. Each of us is stuck with the fact of being alive. Teachers are like trail guides, people who have walked it before. But most of the time, these trail guides do a lot less than we want them to do. The guide says, "Watch out for that rock — I just tripped on it." The guide says, "Hey, it looks like it's going to rain." The rest is up to you.

We come back, then, to the great dilemma: "Oh my god, I'm missing something!" I've been saying in various ways that I'm not, you're not, no one is missing anything. But of course, we all are, because we are all missing "the other path." We only get one at a time. Every life is "missing" every other life. Learning the lessons and receiving the gifts of my particular life, I miss all the lessons and gifts of a hundred thousand lives. You can never see what you've missed. You can never see what has gone behind, what

might have been. There is grief in this, but no recourse.

The key to "I'm missing something" is to know that it is true. I *am* missing something, and I have to accept that and know at the same time that I am not — I cannot be —missing something essential.

I know, I *know*, deep in my heart, that the only difference in our paths is the point of view. No point of view is complete. No point of view contains everything that can be seen. In the end, no path is harder or easier or longer or shorter. The Buddha Way stands open wide.

I feel myself bobbing and flowing in the froth of life's river, filled with a sense of beauty and fullness and richness in this river. This froth of air and water gets worked into a meringue of wet light everywhere, and this is true, no matter which path I'm on, no matter where or who I am.

*The preceding article was originally
published in Still Point, the newsletter of*

Dying Cow

*Bedded down in dead leaves
eyes sunken
tail shitty
You eagerly accept water
and nibble green nettles
not yet bitten
by the frost*

Kanho Doug Dittman

Nebraska Zen Center 2006 Practice Schedule

Jan 18	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
19	(Dainin Katagiri's Birthday*)
26	Zen Master Dogen's Birthday*
29	Rakusu Sewing Begins
Feb 5	World Peace Ceremony
11-12	Two-day Sesshin Winter Practice Period Begins
15	Buddha's Parinirvana*
	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
Mar 1	Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day*
5	World Peace Ceremony
6-12	Lay Initiation Week
12	Lay Initiation
15	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
18	One-day Sesshin
Apr 2	World Peace Ceremony
8	Buddha's Birthday*
12	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
15-16	Two-day Sesshin
May 7	World Peace Ceremony
14	Remembrance Day
17	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
Jun 1	OPW Practice Period Begins(at ZCP)
3-4	Two-day Sesshin (at ZCP)
4	World Peace Ceremony
14	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
July 2	World Peace Ceremony
12	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
20	Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day*
Aug 6	World Peace Ceremony
9	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
Sep 3	World Peace Ceremony
6	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
9-10	Two-day Sesshin Fall Practice Period Begins
29	Zen Master Dogen's Parinirvana*
Oct 1	World Peace Ceremony
4	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
18	Bodhidharma Day*
21	One-day Sesshin
Nov 5	World Peace Ceremony
8	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)
Dec 1-7	Rohatsu Sesshin
8	Buddha's Enlightenment Day*
13	Ryaku Fusatsu (Precept Ceremony)

*Services commemorating these days will be held before dharma talk on the Sunday nearest the date indicated. Ryaku Fusatsu (precept ceremony) follows a shortened evening zazen.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

All are welcome to join us for **New Year's Eve Services**. We'll begin at **6:00 p.m.** with a **Pot-luck Supper** followed by **Services at 8:00**. We'll then **sit zazen from 9:30 till midnight**, with walking meditation when needed. During sitting, we'll **ring the temple bell 108 times** to mark the turning of the year. **Refreshments will be served at midnight.**

You may attend during any part of the evening. **Come when you like, and leave whenever you need to.**

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD AT NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

Winter Practice Period will begin with **February Sesshin** on the **11th and 12th** and will end with **April Sesshin** on the **15th and 16th.**

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. **Practice Period students** commit to intensifying practice in three areas: **(1) daily practice at home** (sitting and devotional services), **(2) regular involvement at the temple** (e.g., on Sunday mornings and for work practice), and **(3) special events** (e.g., sesshins, study groups, and Ryaku Fusatsu). Practice Period Students also commit to keeping a **daily practice journal** and to periodic **Practice Period Group meetings.**

Interested students should write up their Practice Period commitments and turn them in to Nonin **before February 8th.** If this is your first Practice Period, **speak with Nonin** before turning in your commitments.

WEEKLY ZENDO SCHEDULE — NEBRASKA ZEN CENTER

Morning

Tuesday — Sunday

- 6:00 - 7:00 — Sitting Meditation
(Walking as Needed)
- 7:00 - 7:30 — Service
- 7:30 - 7:45 — Cleaning

Sunday Only

- 8:30 — Zazen Instruction
- 9:00 - 9:25 — Sitting Meditation
- 9:25 - 9:35 — Walking Meditation
- 9:35 - 10:00 — Sitting Meditation
- 10:00 - 10:10 — Service
- 10:10 - 11:00 — Dharma Talk

Evening

Tuesday — Wednesday

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

Thursday

- 6:00 - 8:30 — Classes as scheduled

Friday

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

We are closed on Monday