



Prairie Wind

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SPEAKING OUT

by Nonin Chowaney

Although we put most of our energy as Zen Buddhist practitioners into meditation and devotional practices because it is through these that we learn to manifest awakening, we sometimes forget that *any* situation can be an opportunity for enlightened activity, once we have learned how to manifest it.

When we first begin to practice, we focus on the zendo, or the temple, or monastery, the practice place. As we mature, however, we gradually learn that anywhere can be a practice place and that every moment of our lives is an opportunity to practice, no matter where we are. Then, we continue to meditate and otherwise engage ourselves in temple life, but we also realize that we don't have to shut ourselves up and withdraw from all human affairs. In the Zen tradition, Bodhisattvas, awakened people, manifest themselves in everyday life. After awakening, they return to the marketplace to share their lives with all beings.

Buddhist practitioners bring a different perspective to human affairs, and it's important that we share this with others. I've seen the light come on in high-school students' faces when I've told them that to me, pouring pollutants into a stream is the same as pouring acid on your foot. Talking about the interdependence and interpenetration of all life as it applies to

The mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self/void.

We need both. They are both contained in the traditional three aspects of the Dharma path: wisdom (prajna), meditation (dhyana), and morality (sila).

Wisdom is intuitive knowledge of the mind of love and clarity that lies beneath one's ego-driven anxieties and aggressions.

Meditation is going into the mind to see this for yourself — over and over again, until it becomes the mind you live in.

Morality is bringing it back out in the way you live, through personal example and responsible action, ultimately toward the true community (sangha) of "all beings."

Gary Snyder

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Patience — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

A ZEN WARNING

by Susan Jion Postal

The following article originated as a talk of encouragement to open a five-day sesshin, an intensive Zen retreat.

At the end of the *Gateless Gate*, an ancient koan collection compiled by the Zen Master Mumon (Ch. *Wu-men*) there is a section entitled, "Mumon's Zen Warning." I would like to open this sesshin by taking this warning to heart. Mumon writes:

To stick to rules and regulations is to tie yourself without a rope. Arbitrary self-indulgence is heresy and devilry. Clinging to silence is false Zen. Selfish neglect of your surroundings is falling into a deep pit. Perfectionist watchfulness is wearing a yoke and chain. Thinking good and evil is attachment to heaven and hell. Addiction to Buddha and Dharma invites banishment beyond the two iron mountains. Alternating daydreaming and awakening is playing with your own spirit. Practicing the zazen of the dead is the devil's project.

If we pay attention to Mumon, we find that the place of true practice is a thin line; it's almost invisible! All of us fall to one side or the other over and over. We stick to rules and we tie ourselves without a rope. We give in, and self-indulgently practice heresy. We cling to silence and we miss the mark.

That doesn't mean that there isn't silence and that there aren't rules. But very easily, we find ourselves with a yoke and chain on either side. Too lax, too tight; perfectionist watchfulness, daydreaming. So Mumon warns us, lest we sit like Zen dolls in a window: perfect posture, immobile, mannequin Zen, corpse Zen. I've seen that. I've seen it in Zen centers where some people get so hooked on perfect form that there's no life or warmth. People are completely tied up in "looking right."

But that doesn't mean that the answer is

to be sloppy, and it doesn't mean that the answer is to break the rules. That's not what he is saying here. In fact, he is saying that too much self-indulgence and you have heresy and devilry. Old fashioned words, but the point still rings true.

So how do we proceed together, finding a way to tread that thin line where rule and form is in no way a yoke, or a rope, or, most importantly, a barrier? We will fall off. We will continue to slip somehow, somewhere. In a certain sense, that doesn't matter. We have to take our slippages lightly, with acceptance (sometimes, with humor), and then immediately get back on track. Immediately, we return to that thin line. What is important is to *see* it. If we are busy defending one way or the other, we are certainly stuck. Actually, slip-ups are fine teachings; we're shaken, and we have a chance to see. We can see defensiveness coming up, justification coming up. We have all kinds of internal conversations that protect our "dignity" after we've slipped. But there is a chance for a moment of clear seeing: "Ah, look how I am with this," and then, we can let it go.

So sesshin begins. We sit long, and we get tired. What a wonderful opportunity to find that very thin line that is true practice. During zazen and during the time of silently living together in community, we will have lots of opportunities to see the self arise. And that's why we're here. That is the important point for each of us, to *see more*. If we are all deeply committed to that seeing, the outward result will be beautiful. Even if there is a bit of spilled milk along the way, it will be beautiful. The more that we, as a community, share the container of the sesshin, both in this basement zendo and

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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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during our times of taking care of our life together, it will be most beautiful. It will

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). We recently contracted to upgrade our water supply, which will cost nearly \$3,000. This will strain our resources as we finish out this year and move into the next. **Please consider helping us with a donation.** We will be grateful for any support you can give. All donations to NZC are tax deductible.

WE HAVE RESTRUCTURED OUR MEMBERSHIP

CATEGORIES to encourage a wider range of participation at NZC. Please note the **membership section** on **page 10**.

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** will be held on **Sunday, February 6th at 6:00 p.m.** We will be replacing Board Members whose terms have expired and electing Officers for 2000. We will also be reviewing and finishing business from 1999. **All are invited and encouraged to attend.**

WINTER PRACTICE PERIOD will begin on **Sunday, February 6th** and end with **April sesshin** on the **22nd and 23rd**.

Practice period is designed to provide structure for people who wish to intensify their practice and their Sangha connections for a specific period of time. Committing to a formal practice period provides a clear beginning and end to a 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 (such as sesshins, study groups, and ryaku fusatsu).

Interested students should meet with **Nonin** before practice period begins to develop a suitable structure for practice and at least once a month during practice period. Further details will be posted on the bulletin board in January.

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

Shozen Ned Harrison has resigned from our **Board of Directors**. Ned served on the Board for the past few years and helped NZC in many ways. **We thank him for his service!**

Shindo Mike Gillespie will be leaving in December to rejoin his family in Washington state. **Our best wishes go with him.** Mike will be back to teach at University of Nebraska — Omaha and to practice with us next Fall.

We are compiling an **e-mail address list** to help us communicate better within the immediate Sangha. If you attend NZC regularly or semi-regularly (once a month?) or would just like to be on the list and kept better informed, **send your address to nzc@aol.com.**

SESSHIN

There will be four sesshins at NZC this Winter, a **One-day sitting** on **December 12th**, a **Seven-day sesshin (Rohatsu)** from **December 26th to January 1st**, a **One-day sitting** on **January 23rd**, and a **Two-day sesshin** on **February 19th and 20th**. 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.

LAY ORDINATION

Lay Ordination will be offered at NZC next **February**. Anyone interested in participating should talk to **Nonin**. He suggests the following guidelines for considering Lay Ordination: 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 16th**.

SPECIAL WINTER EVENTS

We are offering two classes this Winter: an **Introductory Meditation Workshop** (details are in the enclosed flyer) beginning on **Thursday, January 14th**, and a **Dharma Study Class** beginning **Saturday morning, February 5th**. The Dharma Study class will run for four weeks and is free to NZC members. Others may attend for a nominal fee. For further information write NZC or call **(402) 551-9035**.

OTHER WINTER EVENTS

Dec 5	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
22	Ryaku Fusatsu
Jan 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
19	Ryaku Fusatsu
Feb 6	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion Annual Sangha Meeting
23	Ryaku Fusatsu

Speaking Out

from page 1

environmental issues can be an eye-opener to students who've been brought up to believe that human beings are the most important beings in the universe.

Also, we have to live within the political and social systems of this country, so I think it's a mistake if we shy away from the processes that shape them. For me, it's important to speak out on social and political issues.

I become active in politics or for social change when I feel compelled to do so. For me, this means either working for a particular political candidate, writing letters to the newspaper and to my governmental representatives, or attending and speaking at meetings and events. By "speaking out," however, I don't necessarily mean through words. This is usually how I do it because I'm a writer and teacher, but we make statements by anything we do, say, or even think.

How much and how often we speak out depends on our interests and on how much time we are willing to give. Some put no energy at all into social and political work apart from discussions at the office. Some become full-time activists. Some spend a few hours a month working in a soup kitchen or AIDS hospice. Some join anti-death penalty demonstrations or do environmental work. Some write an occasional letter to their congressperson. What our level of involvement is depends on what our heart tells us it should be. We need to be engaged on whatever level satisfies this inner voice. And, we need to determine what our sphere of influence can be and work in that sphere. For some, it'll be family and friends only. For others, the office, or the neighborhood, city, state, or nation. Within whatever sphere we choose to work, we can have an effect, and whether our sphere is large or small, our efforts have value.

Many social and political issues personally

interest me. Capital punishment, nuclear arms, and environmental ethics have all occupied my time over the years. I am still motivated to speak out on these issues from time to time. It's not so important what the results of our activity are but that we continue working, that we put a consistent message out there. If it's positive and truthful, others will pick it up. It may take a while, but eventually, it'll happen. Recently, I watched a PBS special on the Women's Suffrage movement led in the nineteenth century by Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Today, we take voting by women for granted, as if it's always been this way. But these women worked tirelessly for over fifty years and neither lived to see their efforts come to fruition. Yet, in the early nineteen-twenties, it eventually happened; others picked it up and saw it through. Now, we're all the better for their efforts.

Lately, I've found myself compelled to speak out concerning the recent upsurge in right-wing fundamentalist Christian political activity in America, especially in my part of the country. I am most interested in the Constitutional issue of separation of church and state because this provision guarantees religious freedom in America, an important principle to all practitioners of minority spiritual paths such as ours. If this guarantee is eroded, we could see things like the Christian Bible's version of the creation of the world taught in our public schools and similar intrusions into our public institutions. Where would it stop?

In Kansas, our next door neighbor, the state Board of Education recently voted to eliminate questions about evolution and cosmology from the state science-testing requirements. This means that fundamentalist Christians can pressure local school boards, some of which have been packed with their sympathizers, to have science teachers stop teaching evolution because students don't need to learn it.

LINCOLN ZEN GROUP

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

LAKE SUPERIOR ZENDO

Lake Superior Zendo is located at **407**

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

ZEN CENTER OF PITTSBURGH

Zen Center of Pittsburgh is located on **Little Sewickley Creek Road, in Sewickley, PA 15143.** It is affiliated with NZC and offers daily sitting, classes, special ceremonies, and retreats. Zazen Instruction is available. For information, contact **Rev. Kyoki Roberts, OPW at (412) 741-1262.**

Then, what would the next step be, pressuring these same school boards to include the Christian Bible's version of creation in the curriculum because if there's no state science requirement, anything can be taught?

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Then all students, no matter what religion they practice, would be taught that the world is only about six thousand years old and was created as it says in the Christian Bible.

It's difficult to speak out about such matters, because I don't want to put-down Christianity itself. The Buddhist tradition teaches that no religion has a lock on truth. All the major religions of the world lead to it, and all religions should be respected. If we don't, we only create more distrust and discord.

Nor do I want to put-down or offend the many Christians I have come in contact with who aren't in accord with fundamentalist views, who wouldn't consider supporting the fundamentalist political and social agenda, and who are genuinely openhearted, kind, and tolerant people.

The Buddhist tradition teaches that no religion has a lock on truth. All the major religions of the world lead to it, and all religions should be respected. If we don't, we only create more distrust and discord.

But I do have a problem with Christians who believe that theirs is the only true religion and with those who believe that the Bible is the only legitimate moral and ethical authority for Americans. I have a problem with those Christians who are constantly promoting these attitudes on billboards, in other media, and in the political arena. And I especially have a problem with those who want to overturn the constitutional guarantee of separation of church and state so that they are then free to establish their belief system as the standard all Americans should live under and that our public institutions should promote and uphold.

and uphold.

So, I speak out when so moved. Last year, I read an article in the *Omaha World-Herald*, our local newspaper, about a demonstration downtown called "March for Jesus." The article quoted some of the march's organizers, and I found some of their comments offensive and disturbing. My response was to write to the newspaper's daily letters section, as I've done before. This section has become an active public forum in Omaha. Many write to it and many more read it. Here's my response:

I found the article in the May 31 World-Herald concerning the March for Jesus disturbing, especially Dorene Nelson's comment that the "the body of Christ is taking Omaha back for Jesus."

How can you take anything back that didn't belong to you in the first place?

Originally, Native Americans practiced a variety of spiritual traditions in Nebraska and Iowa. When the area was settled by Europeans and African-Americans, they brought with them many different traditions. By now, many

many Asian-Americans have settled here and have brought their religions with them. None of these groups has ever held an exclusive religious franchise for this area.

Also, Omaha is not open for taking by any specific religious group. Our Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, and we maintain separation of church and state in America to guard against takeovers by any specific group, which can lead, and has led in other countries, to domination and persecution of religious minorities by those in control of the political apparatus.

I have no problem with lawful, peaceful gatherings by any religious group, and I welcome all prayers given for our city. However, because I am an American who practices Buddhism, talk of "take-overs" makes me very uneasy.

Many people told me over the next few weeks that they appreciated my comments. A Jewish woman came up to me after a talk I gave at a local college and thanked me for my words. She told me that she was glad to read that people other than Jews shared these views. After I visited his Senior honors class to talk about Buddhism, a high school social studies teacher told me that he'd discussed this letter and others I'd written to the newspaper over the years in his classes. He thanked me and said that it was good for his students to be exposed to other points of view because they have to learn how to live in a pluralistic, diverse society and respect other religions.

I felt compelled to speak out last summer when the House of Representatives passed a bill allowing public schools to post the Ten Commandments. It's highly unlikely that this will even be brought up for a vote in the Senate, and it's such a clear violation of separation of church and state that I don't see how it could ever stand up in court. However, stranger and more repressive things have been set into law in this country, so I sent a letter to both of our United States Senators and to our Congressional Representative, who voted for the measure in the House. I asked all of them not to support such measures, and I enclosed copies of the following letter I had written to the Omaha newspaper:

As a Buddhist priest of European descent who practices and teaches Zen in Omaha, I have been most disturbed by the right-wing Christian political movement's attempts to establish its version of Christianity as America's state religion. Posting the Christian Ten

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Speaking Out

from page 6

Commandments in public school classrooms and attempting to force public schools to teach the Christian Bible's story of creation are affronts to millions of American children and parents who either practice other religions or practice none at all.

America was not founded as a Christian nation but as a political entity capable of including many different belief systems. Those who framed our Constitution guaranteed religious freedom for all. By also guaranteeing the separation of church and state, they made sure that religious zealots who believe that they have the "true word" cannot oppress or eliminate those they regard as heathens and heretics. Many of our ancestors fled from countries controlled by such zealots. They came here because we are governed according to our constitution, not according to a specific religious text like the Christian Bible.

In a pluralistic society and diverse world, there is no "true religion," "true creation story," or "true word." Such distinctions occur only in the mind, and such thinking is egoistic and divisive. Its public expression breeds only disrespect and discord.

Right-wing Christians' attempts to make their version of Christianity American's state religion are resented by all of us who follow other paths.

Both of our United States Senators responded to me personally in a form letter. They said that they'd considered the issue and wouldn't support such a bill because they feel that religion is best taught and practiced in the home, not in public institutions. This was gratifying to hear.

Our Congressional Representative, however, called me on the telephone to discuss the issue. He said that he'd seen past letters I'd written to the newspaper and thought he'd call about this one (Once again, I found out that those letters get read!). He stated his position, and I reiterated what I'd written. I also told him that Buddhists have ethical guidelines concerning killing, stealing, lying, and

slander that are similar to the Christian commandments but that I specifically objected to the ones that deal with God and remembering the Sabbath. I told him that these are specific only to Christians and Jews and that they promoted religious practices that were inappropriate to promote in public schools because they violated the separation of church and state. We also talked about other things, such as how Buddhist parents and children and those of other religious minorities might feel when confronted with such postings



Bodhisattva — Thailand

and about how I feel when some Christians denigrate Buddhism and other religions. We didn't agree on much, but at least we spoke, and dialogue never hurts. He did say that he wouldn't mind posting the ethical guidelines of other religions in public schools also, including the Buddhist precepts, which I found interesting. Most importantly, by speaking out, I got his attention, and he listened to a point of view that was mostly foreign to him.

These issues and similar ones continue to resurface in the American cultural soup. The other day, when driving back to the temple, I passed a new billboard that said, "Put God back in the schools." This demand was accompanied by a Christian Bible verse. I thought, "What do they have in mind?" Christian images on the walls? Christian prayers over the loudspeakers? Anyone can pray in school in any way they want at any time as long as they do it silently. What's the problem?

I asked a friend, a Catholic monk, about this, and he said, "They don't understand that God is everywhere." Hmm. That's interesting. Sounds almost like Zen! So the problem is that they don't understand! It's just ignorance.

Now that's a helpful perspective, but not necessarily a comforting one. Ignorance can lead to many things, including political and social domination and repression. We could be on the receiving end, so I think that vigilance is in order. We need to keep an eye on things and speak out, or we may find ourselves on the bottom end of a repressive political and social structure and deeply regret our silence.

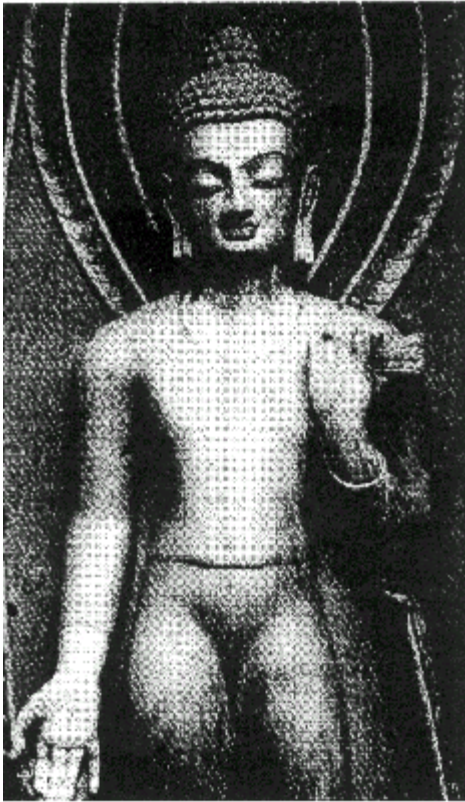
I am also very interested in the issue of Gay and Lesbian rights. In Buddhism, sexual orientation is a non-issue, and many Zen practitioners are either gay or lesbian. I feel their anger and hurt when they are virulently railed against in the newspapers and on the streets by right-wing fundamentalists waving the Christian Bible or when they are denied basic civil rights by governmental institutions either insensitive to or openly hostile to their concerns.

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A Zen Warning

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take care of us. If we separate from it, if we pull back, through criticism, some kind of discomfort with what's going on, then the whole container is affected. So if we can notice when that impulse to separate arises, right then, it can dissolve in our noticing. The whole has its own



Buddha — Nepal

beauty and is just large enough to take in all our spills and our stumbles.

You know, during our times of formal zazen practice, all our slips and stumbles are invisible to each other. Believe me, no one in this room is in steady consistent one-pointed samadhi for thirty minutes — no one. It comes; it goes; it flashes; it floods; it disappears. Thoughts arise; thoughts leave; and then, the bell rings. You're not seeing what is happening in my mind, and I'm not seeing your mental shenanigans. But our shared commitment to keep coming back to this breath, this moment, is what gives our zazen such strength. And now we're also

living together. Suddenly, lots of behavioral shenanigans are very visible — to ourselves and to everybody else! How wonderful that we can alternate between having our inward mirror during sitting and being totally exposed during work-practice, eating, and sleeping. The actual witnessing is, in both cases, the same process of really *looking* at what is happening. In community life, however, we have our embarrassment, and we have our need to look good. I don't think we are trying to impress each other so much on the zafu any more. But we want to look good in the kitchen, while sewing, cleaning, whatever we are doing. We can see this self incessantly arising, and that's the *study* of the self that becomes really possible in a long sesshin. Here, community is in our face. There's no escaping each other. This container has sprung to life, so a new thing is in place now — Us. Can we enter it wholeheartedly? I know you have all heard me speak of the two wings of the "practice bird." On the one side, we have to see how the self operates, how we defend and judge. On the other side, we need to see no-self; we need to penetrate emptiness. We have perfect conditions for both wings to grow strong. Hopefully, not by alternating, but at the same time.

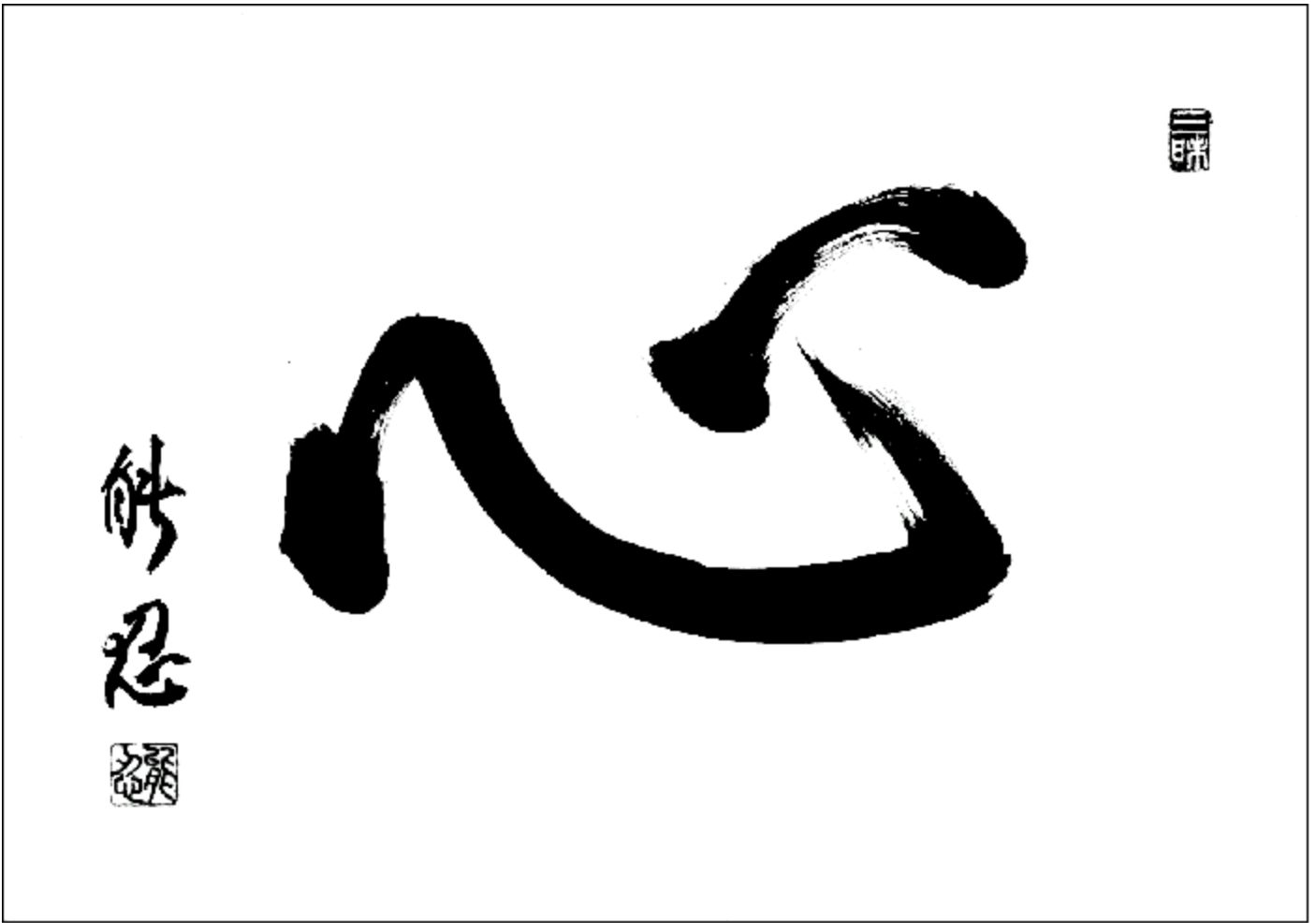
We've often talked about how Zen is not self-improvement. I just thought I'd remind you about that. This week we will all run into our tendencies and habits. I already have, and I'll bet you have too. Can we somehow accept *this* package, who we are, both personality and style, and find a way to be so light and easy with our tendencies that we can see the emptiness of the self that wants to justify and defend? If we can see our attachment, things usually change enough so there's no problem; things re-adjust.

This re-adjusting reminds me of a story. It's from a Chinese tale called *Monkey*.

The hero is a supermonkey who is so powerful he can travel 180,000 miles in one somersault. In the story, he was traveling to the Western paradise of Amitabha Buddha, and he came to five mountain peaks. But first, he rested and relieved himself; he peed. That's what you do before you take a great leap. Then, he somersaulted over the mountains! When he landed, he noticed a funny smell, and he thought, "some shameless monkey must have taken a leak here." Of course, he had landed in his original spot. It was his own urine he was smelling.

I think that's exactly our situation. We take a tremendous leap, and then, we're right back home where we have always been, tendencies and all. We have to work with our own stuff; it will always be there. Our practice isn't about getting rid of our own smell. Our own particular tendencies, once we are not heavily invested in them, can actually serve. I am more and more convinced of this. Here, our "container" for sesshin is a fourteen-sided figure — each of us is in a slightly different place; each approaches life and practice from a slightly different angle. Our practice is not to level all that down, but to let our differences serve the whole. If you are someone who is really big on rules and regulations and want this sesshin to be real tight, it's a great gift to all of us. It's not an obstacle at all. It becomes an obstacle if you pull back and criticize others; then, it becomes a separation. If you are someone more on the other side, who's easy to laugh, kind of jolly, it's a great gift, provided you don't pull back and say, "why are the rest of you so serious?" Everyone's tendencies can serve the whole in ways we haven't begun to see. They serve more and more freely as our attachment to "my way" melts away. During this sesshin, each of us will be confronted with the way we are over and over again. Please accept this as just the way we are, neither good nor bad. Our practice invites us to look at ourselves as we are, not to try to improve ourselves according to some

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Heart — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

Speaking Out
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I try to do what I can to let people know that there is nothing anti-homosexual in Buddhism and to lend my support to the gay and lesbian community. I've participated alongside other religious leaders in AIDS memorial services and helped commemorate World AIDS Awareness week. I also make it clear that I'm willing to join gay and lesbian couples in marriage. Whenever I speak to high school and college classes or to community and church groups, I make it a point to say that in Buddhism, anyone is welcome to participate and that awakening depends only on quality of effort, not on age, gender, race, ethnic background, or sexual orientation.

Like most people aware of the importance of speaking out and participating in political and social processes, I sometimes feel that no matter what I do, it's not enough. What can one person do anyway? But as I mentioned earlier, it's not so important what the results of our activity are but that we continue working, that we consistently put honest, truthful, and positive messages out there.

Actions taken by local, state, and federal governments eventually effect all our lives in some way, and it seems only prudent to participate in the process.

If we speak out, even if it's just a little bit, we not only protect our own interests but we put our perspective out into the public forum. If it's out there, someone may see it, or hear it, and maybe, even pick it up.



MEMBERSHIP

AN INVITATION

We invite you to become a member of Nebraska Zen Center. Members are people who feel that Zen Buddhism is an important part of their lives and who wish to express that feeling by joining the community of practitioners or by supporting the Sangha.

Members may use the library and receive discounts on sesshins and other Zen Center events. After participating for a year, members are eligible for approval by our Board of Directors to vote in the annual election to choose the next year's Board. **One becomes a member by participating and by filling out a membership application.**



PARTICIPATION

While no one needs to formally join Nebraska Zen Center in order to share in our zendo practice, NZC offers two kinds of membership to people who wish to be more involved in the Sangha.

General Membership is for those who want to participate at a basic level of their own choosing. This can mean occasional attendance, once a week participation, or sesshin attendance only. Frequently, people who live some distance away or those new to the group who have not yet decided how involved they want to be become General Members.

Participating Membership is more formal in nature because those becoming this type of member make a certain minimum level of commitment. They begin by privately meeting with the Head Priest to discuss their practice. They also commit to regular sitting, continued contact with the Head Priest (including periodic interviews), and regular participation not only in sangha practice events but also by helping maintain our

building and services. Participating members are those who want to assume more responsibility for nurturing the practice on a regular basis by helping with such things as ringing bells for services, leading chanting, cleaning, arranging altar flowers, and maintaining our building and grounds.

Participating members may also choose to become **Personal Students** of our Head Priest, Rev. Nonin Chowaney. To do so, one meets with Nonin and makes a formal request. The terms of this relationship are set by the teacher and are periodically reviewed in formal meetings between teacher and student.



FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We encourage members to commit to monthly donations. Buddhist communities have always relied on the generosity of their supporters, and NZC is no different. For income, we depend on those who believe in the good of what we do and wish to nourish it. Monthly pledges generate over half our income and allow us to plan our expenditures over the year.

The amount of your pledge is your personal decision. We encourage members to pledge financial support at a level appropriate to their means and their desire to support NZC. We suggest a pledge of at least \$40 a month for those who participate regularly. We suggest \$15 a month for students and for those with limited income. Because we are a non-profit religious corporation registered in the State of Nebraska, donations are tax deductible.

2000 PRACTICE CALENDAR

Jan	2	World Peace Ceremony
	16	Rakusu Sewing Begins
	19	*Dainin Katagiri's birthday Ryaku Fusatsu
	23	One-day Sitting
	26	*Zen Master Dogen's Birthday
Feb	6	World Peace Ceremony Winter Practice Period Begins
	15	*Buddha's Parinirvana
	19-20	Two-day Sesshin
	23	Ryaku Fusatsu
	22-27	Lay Ordination Week
Mar	27	Lay Ordination
	1	*Dainin Katagiri's Memorial Day
	5	World Peace Ceremony
Apr	22	Ryaku Fusatsu
	2	World Peace Ceremony
	8	*Buddha's Birthday
May	19	Ryaku Fusatsu
	22-23	Two-day Sesshin Winter Practice Period Ends
	7	World Peace Ceremony
	14	Remembrance Day
	17	Ryaku Fusatsu
Jun	1	OPW Practice Period Begins
	4	World Peace Ceremony
	11	One-day Sitting
	14	Ryaku Fusatsu
	30	OPW Practice Period Ends
Jul	2	World Peace Ceremony
	19	Ryaku Fusatsu
	20	*Ikko Narasaki's Memorial Day
Aug	6	World Peace Ceremony
	16	Ryaku Fusatsu
Sep	3	World Peace Ceremony
	13	Ryaku Fusatsu
	16-17	Two-day Sesshin
Oct	29	*Zen Master Dogen's Parinirvana
	1	World Peace Ceremony
	11	Ryaku Fusatsu
Nov	22	One-day Sitting
	5	World Peace Ceremony
	8	Ryaku Fusatsu
Dec	3	World Peace Ceremony
	8	*Buddha's Enlightenment Day
	10	One-day Sitting
	13	Ryaku Fusatsu
	26-31	Seven-day (Rohatsu) Sesshin

A Zen Warning

from page 8

notion we have of how we could be better. How easily we bind ourselves with the perfectionist's yoke and chain of "self-improvement!"

Mumon's warning strikes at the very cause of our suffering: our attachment, our slinging, sticky mind. We may think that attachment is only about the stuff of our ordinary lives, such as money, fame, and attractiveness. Mumon shocks us into seeing the trap of being stuck on practice "stuff:" rules, regulations, silence, and watchfulness. He even speaks of addiction to Buddha and Dharma. If we are honest, isn't there a bit of the "Zen Freak" in all of us? What his warning underlines is that our problem is not the content but sticking to it. The very practice that offers freedom from suffering can also be the object of more attachment! I'll close with the conclusion of Mumon's warning:

If you go forward, you will lose the essence. If you go back, you oppose the truth. If you neither go forward nor back, you are a dead man breathing. Tell me now, what will you do?

Susan Ji-on Postal leads the Meeting House Zen Group in Rye, N.Y. She studied with Maureen Myo-on Stuart and has been practicing in the Buddhist tradition for over twenty-five years.

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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 Spring issue is **February 15th.**

NZC's Website Address is:
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nzc@aol.com

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

We are closed on Monday

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)

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