



Prairie Wind

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INTERDEPENDENCE

by Nonin Chowaney

In 1998, a large body of warm water in the Pacific Ocean called El Nino affected weather patterns all over the Western Hemisphere. There were news reports about the phenomenon all that fall and winter, and during that time, while listening to National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, I heard a meteorologist talking about another El Nino that he'd studied in 1973.

During that year, a large body of warm water lay off the coast of Peru, in an area where the water is normally quite cold. Small fish known as anchovies are usually abundant in those cold waters and are harvested by Peruvian fishermen. They are then sold to companies that grind them up and use them as the main ingredient in a meal used to feed catfish and chickens in large agricultural operations in both South and North America.

However, because of the 1973 El Nino, the anchovies moved farther north to escape the warm water. This severely affected the fishing industry in Peru. Because there were no anchovies to catch, there were none to use in fish and chicken meal, so feed companies as far away as North America were affected. They needed to find substitutes. Soybeans are one of the best, so they were in great demand. According to the economic law of supply and demand, the market price for them went up, and since a large part of the American soybean crop is sold to Japanese food processing companies, the price of *tofu*, a widely used soybean product, went up considerably in Japan.

When I heard this report on the radio, I thought, "Hmmm. Because of a warm body of water off the



Zen — Calligraphy by Nonin Chowaney

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INTERDEPENDENCE – definitions

from **The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions**:

Paticca-samuppada (Pali; Skt., *pratitya-samutpada*) A key concept in Buddhism, variously translated — e.g. ‘dependent origination’, ‘conditioned genesis’, ‘interconnected arising’, ‘causal nexus’. It states that all physical and mental manifestations which constitute individual appearances are interdependent and condition or affect one another, in a constant process of arising and ceasing to be . . . There is no Self or substance which is independent of paticca-samuppada.



from **The Shambhala Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen**:

Pratitya-samutpada Skt. (Pali, patichcha-samuppada), lit. “conditioned arising” or “interdependent arising,” often also translated “conditional nexus” or “causal nexus.” . . . The chain of conditioned arising is, together with the *anatman* [no-self] doctrine, the core teaching of all Buddhist schools. . . . The teaching of conditioned arising shows the dependent nature of the streams of physical and psychological existential phenomena conventionally conceptualized as *I, man, animal*, and so on. While the doctrine of *anatman* has the effect of breaking down individual existence into empty, essenceless components, the teaching of conditioned arising works in the direction of synthesis by showing that all phenomena stand in some relationship of conditionedness, a relationship that can be understood in terms of simultaneity as well as succession in time.

from **A Survey of Buddhism**, by Sangharakshita:

Since every object in the universe is devoid of self-nature, every object in the universe neither finds nor offers any impediment to penetrating or any impediment to being penetrated by every other object. Interpenetration, though involving loss of separateness, does not mean extinction of individuality. The idea is elucidated by means of a number of illustrations, one of the most famous of which is Indra’s Net. Indra, the king of the gods, has a wonderful net made entirely of strings of jewels. Each jewel in the net both reflects and is reflected by all the other jewels. Thus all the jewels, though participating in one another’s existence, mysteriously retain their own identity. Absolute Mind, while present in all phenomena, instead of obliterating them reveals their true significance.

from **“The Precepts and the Environment,”** by John Daido Looi:

Imagine, if you will, a universe in which all things have a mutual identity. They all have a co-dependent origination; when one thing arises, all things arise simultaneously. And everything has a mutual causality; what happens to one thing happens to the entire universe. Imagine a universe that is a self-creating, self-maintaining, and self-defining organism — a universe in which all the parts and the totality are a single entity, all of the pieces and the whole thing at once are one thing.

This description of reality is not a holistic hypothesis or an all-encompassing idealistic dream. It is your life and my life. The life of the mountain and the life of the river. The life of a blade of grass, a spiderweb, the Brooklyn Bridge. These things are not related to each other. They are not part of the same thing. They are not similar. Rather, they are *identical* to each other in every respect.

BIRTHDAY BOWS

by Tesshin Paul Lehmborg

I had yearned — not too strong a word — for the occasion to be auspicious, but it hadn't turned out that way. For three years I had been sitting zazen daily; sometimes my wife sat with me, but we were living apart at the time, so mostly I was sitting alone, and, as often happens to people in my circumstances, I had begun to feel the need to sit regularly with like-minded people.

But who were they? Equally important, where were they? I live in Marquette, a small town tucked away in the woods of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, and at least with respect to religious practice, I knew of no like-minded people. Then, by chance — in a doctor's examining room, of all places — I heard about some folks who were said to have some experience sitting. More excited than I cared to admit, even to myself, I invited them over. This was the occasion that I hoped would be auspicious, our first sitting.

Four of us gathered on that unseasonably warm March evening in our living room. We moved the furniture as best we could to provide some wall space for my two zafus and scrounged throw pillows. And then we sat. But even before people were out the door, I knew things hadn't gone well. It had been surrealistically hot in our house that evening, and I had forgotten to put out our dog, a grizzled beagle who had spent his time chuffing about, smelling everything and everyone. And all of us had been painfully polite to each other, and embarrassingly self-conscious, and I, for one, had felt shoe-horned in and foolishly insubstantial next to the radiators, end tables, and stuffed furniture in our doggy "zendo." Everything, even the furniture, seemed against us.

Were we being told something? My dog thought so. If we had missed the message, he was there to make it plain. At evening's end, just in case we had read it wrong, he had raised his leg — had I actually seen him do this? — and

directed a shot of urine at the zafu recently occupied by my doctor's wife. His aim had been perfect.

That was ten years ago this March, and Lake Superior Zendo, or something I trace back, somewhat arbitrarily, to that evening, has survived that perfectly placed shot of urine, and — so far, at least — everything else that's followed.

A lot has followed. It's easier to say what has happened during these ten years than it is to say who, or what, these things have happened to. One of the first things that happened was that we moved out of the living room, first into a small upstairs bedroom — tigers on the green wallpaper — that had to function, usually all in the same day, as zendo, bedroom, and study. We got rid of the tigers, but, a few years later, we moved again, to another house, this time to an eight-seat zendo in a finished basement. We had doubled our physical space. More important, this zendo was a zendo only, which allowed us to establish a daily practice. This move was to have been a permanent one. But permanence, given time — sometimes, given not even that — has a way of becoming impermanent. Now it appears — this is good news, not bad news — as if we may well move again.

Who is this "we?" Just as our spaces have changed, so have we ourselves changed. Of the four people who turned out on that crazy evening ten years ago, three are no longer with us. Within six months, two of them had moved from town, and the third, a mother with young children, drifted away. No one replaced those three people who left our zendo — how can one individual replace another? — but, fortunately, other people did join us, and more joined than left. Some of those who

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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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have stayed have been with us nearly the entire ten years, but there have never been

SANGHA NOTES

Our **Annual Fundraising Drive** has been very successful. We are slightly **more than even** with where we were last year and were able to spend the required \$3000 to **upgrade our water service** from the house to the street without dipping into our savings! We can now do the dishes, use the downstairs bathroom, and run a bath upstairs all at the same time! **Thanks to all for your generosity.**

Also, our **deepest thanks** to **Joe and Pat Grzenda** of Lawrence, Kansas, who have donated a car to the temple. It's a **1993 Honda Accord** with only **63,000 miles** on it, so it should give us good service for many years to come. This is a most generous gift and we are **very grateful** to Joe and Pat. **Thank you so much!**

Our **Annual Sangha Meeting** brought some changes. **Jean Bailey** was newly elected to our **Board of Directors** and **Jisen Caryl Dumaine** and **Kido Albert Lickei** were re-elected. Our Officers for the coming year are: **President — Taido Jon Kayne; Vice-President — Caryl; Secretary — Jeff Graef; and Treasurer — Albert.** **Thank you all for serving!** A complete list of Board Members appears on page three.

Jeff Graef and **Keith Hale** will be **lay-ordained** at NZC on February 27th. We congratulate them both for passing this practice milestone.

Daishin Eric McCabe, a student of **Rev. Daien Bennage** of **Mt. Equity Zendo** in Pennsylvania, has been living at the temple and practicing with us since January. He will leave in late March for a year's practice at **Tassajara Zen Monastery** in California. We welcome him to Omaha and wish him well at Tassajara!

We are looking for **interested people** to **sponsor** future issues of *Prairie Wind* by **underwriting our printing and mailing costs**, which sometimes run over **\$900 per issue**. We are printing 2000 copies now and sending it to our entire mailing list, which is approximately 1650 individuals, over half of which are in the Omaha/Council Bluffs/Lincoln area. We also send copies to nearly 100 Zen Centers all over the country and multiple copies to those Centers that request them. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, please **contact Nonin** at **(402) 551-9035**. All donations for *Prairie Wind* are **tax-deductible**.

Nonin will be continuing to travel this year to **lead workshops and retreats**. So far, he has engagements scheduled at **Zen Buddhist Temple — Ann Arbor; Zen Center of Pittsburgh; Lake Superior Zendo — Marquette, Michigan; Empty Hand Zendo — Rye, New York; and Dharma Field Meditation and Learning Center — Minneapolis, Minnesota.** Nonin will be leading retreats and workshops in **The Heart Sutra, Zen in the Kitchen, and Basic Abhidharma.** He'll also be leading hands-on **Calligraphy workshops.** If you are interested in contacting him to do a presentation or lead a retreat at your center or for your group, call him at **(402) 551-9035** or e-mail him at **nzc@aol.com.**

The **Order of the Prairie Wind**, a group started by Nonin and the priests he's ordained, will be having its **annual retreat** during the month of June at NZC. It will run **from June 1st to 30th.** If you're interested in attending all or part of this retreat, please **contact NZC by mail, phone, or e-mail.**

Nonin's calligraphy, a sample of which is on the front page of this issue of *Prairie Wind*, is now for sale. If you are interested, **contact NZC.** We are in the process of upgrading our Internet website and soon hope to make the calligraphy available there.

BUDDHA'S BIRTHDAY

We'll celebrate **Buddha's Birthday** this year with a special ceremony on **Sunday, April 9th at 10:00 a.m.** Afterwards, there'll be a **pot-luck lunch** and **birthday cake and ice-cream.** Everyone is invited to attend!

SESSHIN

There will be one sesshin at NZC this Spring, a **Two-day sesshin** on **April 22nd and 23rd.** 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 551-9035 to register and for further information.**

REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

A service dedicated to deceased Sangha members, relatives, teachers, and friends will be held on **Sunday, May 14th** before dharma talk. Either **bring photographs** of those you would like to remember or **write their names on a small card** to place on the Buddha hall altar (cards will be available at the temple). You will have an opportunity to read the names and make an offering during the service.

OTHER SPRING EVENTS

Mar 5	World Peace Ceremony Katagiri-roshi's Memorial Day Observed Group Discussion
22	Ryaku Fusatsu
Apr 2	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
19	Ryaku Fusatsu
May 7	World Peace Ceremony Group Discussion
17	Ryaku Fusatsu

Interdependence

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coast of Peru, the price of tofu rises in Japan. How interesting.” On the surface, there seems to be no connection between the two occurrences, but under closer observation, the connection becomes clear.

In Buddhism, this kind of interdependence is known as *pratityasamutpada* (in Sanskrit) or *paticca samuppada* (in Pali). Some translations of this term are “dependent arising,” “conditioned genesis,” and “interdependent co-origination.” Whatever the translation, however, the term means that everything is interdependent, or, interconnected. No thing arises, or comes together, independently. All things depend for their existence on a myriad of causes and conditions. This includes both material things, such as coffee cups, trees, books, or human beings, and non-material things, such as energy, magnetism, radio waves, or thoughts. Dependent arising is one of the major tenets of Buddhism and is a condition of existence that Shakyamuni Buddha became deeply aware of while sitting under the tree of enlightenment.

When Buddha lived in what is now India and Nepal, there were four theories of causation espoused by various religious leaders and philosophers. These theories were: (1) Things are self-caused; they bring themselves into existence. (2) Things are caused by other things; one thing brings another into existence. (3) Things are caused by a combination of themselves and another things; one thing and another thing work together to bring a third into existence. And, (4) things have no cause; they arise spontaneously. Through deep insight into the nature of reality, Buddha rejected all these theories and spoke of all things as arising out of a myriad causes and conditions.

In the following example, The Vietnamese Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh uses a piece of paper to illustrate interdependence:

If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this

sheet of paper. Without a cloud there will be no water; without water, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, you cannot make paper. So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent on the existence of a cloud. Paper and cloud are so close. Let us think of other things, like sunshine. Sunshine is very important because the forest cannot grow without sunshine, and we humans cannot grow without sunshine. So the logger needs sunshine in order to cut the tree, and the tree needs sunshine in order to be a tree. Therefore, you can see sunshine in this sheet of paper. And if you look more deeply, with the eyes of a bodhisattva, with the eyes of those who are awake, you see not only the cloud and the sunshine in it, but that everything is here; the wheat that became the bread for the logger to eat, the logger's father – everything is in this sheet of paper.

Thich Nhat Hanh concludes, “A sheet of paper is made of non-paper elements.” So, we can say that this sheet of paper is “empty.” There is nothing in the paper that is fixed and permanent, nothing, actually, that we can call “paper,” for this is only a word we use to describe the thing that provides the surface on which the words we are reading are printed. The existence of paper, then, depends on other things. If we continue to speculate, we can include many other things in the paper — the logger’s mother and father, the bowl the logger ate his breakfast out of on the morning he cut down the tree, the potter who made the bowl, the axe the logger used, the metal in the axe head, the people who sold the axe, and on and on *ad infinitum*. If we speculated long enough, longer than we probably have in this lifetime, we could include everything in the universe in this piece of paper!

This is what is meant by interdepen-

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**.

dence. All things depend on other things for their existence and, in turn, are contained in all other things.

Human beings, too, are subject to this law

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of cause and effect. We are certainly different from other beings in our physical and mental make-up, but we are put together in the same way. We, too, are “empty.” There is nothing fixed inside a human being that we can call a permanent “self,” or a “soul.” We, too, like the piece of paper, are dependent on other things for our existence. We do not exist independently from the rest of the universe but in concert with it.

According to Buddhist teaching, a human being is a mixture of the five *skandhas*, or aggregates — form, sensations, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. “Form” means our material aspect: atoms, bones, flesh, and blood. Form also means our physical shape, our body type, size, and coloring. Sense organs — eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind — are

*This being, that comes to be;
from this arising, that arises;
this being absent, that is not;
this ceasing, that ceases.*

words of the Buddha

also included under “form.” “Sensations” are pleasant, neutral, or unpleasant feelings experienced when sense organs come in contact with objects. These feelings can be sensations of cold or warmth, or unpleasant aversion to putrid smells, or great pleasure when ice cream touches the tongue. “Perceptions” means gross recognition based on contact between sense organs and objects. These perceptions can be of the blue of the sky, of male and female human beings, or of large and small shapes. “Mental Formations” means all volitional activity of the mind, things like attention, desire, anger, joy, mindfulness, pride, and shame, what we usually consider “mental activity.” “Consciousness” means the contact

between sense organ and object, such as seeing, smelling, or thinking. It also means the functioning of discriminating mind, or ego consciousness.

Human beings, then, are a coming together of different aspects of these five aggregates. Just as there is nothing in a sheet of paper that we can pull out and say, “This is paper, or essence of paper,” there is nothing inside the person writing this article that we can pull out and say, “This is Nonin, or essence of Nonin.”

How, then, does this being, Nonin, come together? Well, some of it is genetic; I’m a tall person; it runs in my family. Our genes depend on our parents, and, as we know, genes can run through families for many generations. Part of what is called “me” existed in not only my parents but

also in my grandparents on both sides, and in my great-grandparents, too. Who knows how far back these genes go? If we trace our families back twenty-five generations, we accumulate over thirty-three million ancestors. Each

generation means twenty years, so twenty-five generations means five hundred years. The numbers double each generation, so in twenty-six generations, we accumulate sixty-six million ancestors in five hundred and twenty years.

This is one way we can look at interdependence in terms of human life. However, some of what constitutes provisional being “Nonin” is not genetic, so other things have to be taken into consideration when determining what causes a person to exist. Consciousness is one of them. We say that every moment of consciousness is conditioned by a previous moment of consciousness. A moment of equanimity is conditioned by a moment of equanimity,

a moment of anger by a moment of anger. Previous moments of consciousness condition subsequent moments of consciousness, manifesting in what I call “provisional being Nonin,” the person writing this article. If we add years of parental and societal conditioning and years of perceptions, thoughts, ideas, and opinions, it becomes clearer that what we call Nonin in this moment is a result of a myriad causes and conditions, and among them, we have to include the sun, whose existence and functioning allows humans to live on this earth, and, of course, the earth’s atmosphere, and also, all the animals and plants that feed us, and on and on.

All beings, human and otherwise, and all events — in other words, all phenomena — are “dependently originated,” as one translation of *pratityasamutpada* has it. We can even go as far as to say that the existence of any phenomenon is dependent on all other phenomena.

If we observe the earth from space, it is clearly one body, yet, it, too, is subject to the law of cause and effect. It, too, is empty. There is nothing inside this globe that is fixed and permanent. The earth, like all things in the universe is made up of myriad different things, all interconnected and interdependent. The closer we come to the earth, the more we can observe the myriad things that make it up. As we get closer to each mountain, or building, or automobile, we can see the myriad things that make them up. If we look at one of the smaller things through an electron microscope, such as a human skin cell, we can see all the things that make it up — atoms, nuclei, electrons, protons, quarks, and whatever else quantum physicists have discovered lately! There’s nothing fixed or permanent there either.

If we look at the world closely, with open eyes and an open mind, we can see things more clearly. When I was living in a Japanese Zen Monastery, we took a

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trip to Mt. Aso, one of the largest active volcanoes in the world. It was not erupting at the time, so we could go right up to the edge of one of the craters and look down into it. At the bottom was a wide hole, and a deep red glow emanated from it. Things were happening down there, and from looking around up top, we could tell that things had happened up there also, and not too long ago. Huge boulders, some the size of small houses, lay next to scorched and scarred rock shelters built to protect tourists in the event of a sudden eruption. It was quite clear to me then that the earth is not a fixed, solid, permanent mass with things moving around on its outer surface. It is a swirling, living thing, a mass of animate and inanimate beings interconnected in one impermanent body.

Of course, this body we call earth is also a part of a larger body — our solar system. Our solar system is also a part of a larger body — the Milky Way galaxy — which is part of a larger body, the universe. Where does it stop? Who knows? Where does it begin? Who knows that, either? When we look inside as far as we can go, we find nothing fixed and permanent. When we look outside, it's unfixd, impermanent, and infinite. This is about all we can say. Human understanding doesn't go any further than this. Being awake means seeing things clearly, as Buddha did under the tree of Enlightenment. With Buddha's eyes, the eyes of an awakened person, we see that our existence is deeply interconnected with all the other beings in the universe and that all things exist interdependently with all other things.

LETTER FROM PRISON

January 25, 2000

Dear *Prairie Wind*,

My name is Mauricio Pieschacon. I am an inmate in a Federal Prison in Loretto, Pennsylvania.

On the first weekend of every month, Rev. Kyoki Roberts, from Zen Center of Pittsburgh, comes to visit us. This month, she came as usual and after sitting and walking meditation, we had a group discussion. This time, Kyoki said that she would stay a little longer and meet with those who wanted to speak with her one-to-one.

I had done this with her once before, when I was just getting acquainted with "all this." I didn't hesitate to raise my hand so I could speak with her again. You see, I consider the opportunity to sit face-to-face with someone like Kyoki and talk about "all this" as a great gift that no book anywhere can give us. It's a powerful experience.

All of us who practice meditation here are very grateful for every single visit that we receive from Kyoki. I wish people on the outside could understand how important it is for us to receive visits from this kind of person. She brings teachings of love and kindness to those of us willing to change our lives toward this direction.

When I talked with Kyoki, she asked me if I would like to write to *Prairie Wind* about my experience. I read the Fall 1999 newsletter that Kyoki brought in for us and it inspired me to write.

As strange as it may sound, I'm happy and grateful to be in prison, for if it weren't for this experience, I probably would have never been blessed to find out where to find the answers to what I was searching for out there. It's in me, with me, in everything. Just sitting; just being; just accepting. It's a great feeling.

Thank you and good luck!

Mauricio



Birthday Bows

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more than a handful of us, and so we keenly feel the addition or subtraction of each individual, and the zendo has waxed and waned over the years, gaining strength when a serious student appears, and losing strength, and suffering, when one leaves.

Actually, of that original group of four, none of us is left, not even me. I have only to look into the mirror, or to consider the changes in my own life, to see that old conundrum: a newer and an older person. In the last decade, I've re-married and become a father twice over, and I have been ordained a priest. These are truly sea-changes, but in a decade, all of us in our zendo — all of us everywhere, no matter our age — have experienced sea-changes. People come, people go, especially in America — even selves within us come and go. So says the mirror, and circumstance.

What has stayed during these ten years? What is it that we celebrate? What is it that's having this tenth birthday? Properly speaking, no place, no person, has stayed. Lake Superior Zendo is a bit like the old lumberjack's well loved axe. "Thirty years in the woods," says the lumberjack, marveling at the longevity and faithfulness of his axe, "and I replaced the handle only twice, and the head only once." What has stayed is not the axe, or even the lumberjack, but chopping itself. With our zendo, what has stayed are not the people or the places, but the recurrent event of zazen itself. Like the swinging of an axe, something that exists only in time, or like the rising and falling of breath, it is zazen itself, at once ever-changing and ever-changeless — and so substantial after all! — that has stayed. Zazen itself is what runs from that hot March night ten years ago right through to this morning.

Something else has stayed, too, something else framed in time: our recurrent gratitude — I know I speak for others, too, in our zendo — our recurrent gratitude for this zazen that has been practiced by the career of shifting selves

ZEN CENTER OPENS IN CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

Rev. Zuiko Redding and a group of Zen practitioners from the **Cedar Rapids/Iowa City** area have opened a Zen Center in Cedar Rapids. Meditation is held morning and evening four days a week, and instruction, retreats, and workshops are also offered periodically.

Zuiko is a longtime Zen practitioner who studied with **Tozen Akiyama** in Milwaukee and **Dainin Katagiri** in Minneapolis. She also trained with **Tsugen Narasaki** in Japan and was priest-ordained and given dharma transmission by him.

If you live in the **Iowa City/Cedar Rapids** area, or anywhere in **Southeastern Iowa**, and are interested in **authentic Soto Zen practice** with a **qualified teacher**, contact **Cedar Rapids Zen Center, PO Box 863, Cedar Rapids, IA, 52406-0863**, telephone **(319) 247-5986**.

sitting in the flux formed from our collective comings and goings.

Think of it! — ten years of practice!
Think of it! — to sit zazen! To zazen:
deep bows of gratitude! To those selves
who have sat with us: deep bows of
gratitude!

Tesshin Paul Lehmborg is a Soto Zen Priest. He was ordained by Nonin Chowaney and is a member of the Order of the Prairie Wind. He lives in

Marquette, Michigan with his wife Zhong and daughters Freya and GlenEllen. Tesshin teaches at Northern Michigan University and is resident priest at Lake Superior Zendo in Marquette.

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From the editor:

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

NZC's Website Address is:
www.geocities.com/Tokyo/temple/7228/

Our E-mail address is:
nzc@aol.com

WHAT IS RYAKU FUSATSU?

At Heartland Temple, we perform an ancient chanting and bowing ceremony called *Ryaku Fusatsu* (Jap.) once a month. I'd like to explain what that ceremony is and how we perform it here.

Ryaku Fusatsu is indeed ancient. Its roots go back to Pre-Buddhist India, to ancient Vedic lunar sacrifices performed on the nights of the new and full moon. By Buddha's time 2500 years ago, these sacrifices were no longer performed, but the new and full moon occurrences were still observed by Hindus as holy days of purification and fasting, days when the Gods came to dwell in the house. They became known as *Upavastha* (from the Sanskrit *upa*, near, and *vas*, to dwell).

Legend has it that Buddha's followers also gathered together on those days, perhaps because they didn't want to be left out! They would sit down and meditate together. Later, lay disciples, in whose homes the monks and nuns would sometimes gather, wanted some teaching, so they began to recite the rules of the *Patimokkha* discipline, the monks' and nuns' rules for everyday conduct. This developed into a confession and repentance ceremony, during which the monks and nuns would speak up if they had violated any of the rules and vow to do better in the future.

This ceremony is still performed today by Theravadan followers and is called *Uposatha* in the Pali language, a variation of the old *Upavastha*, the "near-dwelling" of the Gods on the ancient Hindu holy days. In Mahayana Buddhism, the spirit of the ceremony is preserved, but the *Patimokkha* rules are not recited because Mahayana sects have abandoned them. Instead of the confession being made to other monks or nuns, it is made directly to Buddha.

The ceremony was transmitted, with lots of changes and developments, from India through China to Japan and now has been transmitted to America as *Ryaku Fusatsu*, as is known in Soto Zen. "*Ryaku*" means "abbreviated," or "simple." This distinguishes it from a "full *fusatsu*," a complicated, elaborate event still performed in Japan once or twice a year in some large Soto Zen temples. It takes two to three hours to complete. The simpler ceremony we do here takes about forty-five minutes. "*Fusatsu*" means "to continue good practice," or, "to stop unwholesome action (karma)." The name conveys the spirit of repentance and confession present in the Theravadan *Uposatha* Ceremony.

Ryaku Fusatsu today, as performed in Soto Zen temples, includes the transmission of the *bodhisattva* (enlightened being) precepts, so it is sometimes called "The Precepts Renewal Ceremony," or "The Bodhisattva Ceremony." It includes lots of bowing and some of the elaborate, beautiful chanting common to Soto Zen in Japan but rarely heard in America.

The ceremony has a series of parts. It begins with an incense offering to all Buddhas in the ten directions. We then chant the Formless Repentance, which begins, "All the karma ever created by me . . ." After our acknowledgment of every previous action we have committed, we invoke the presence of all Buddhas, ancestors, and bodhisattvas and call up their wisdom and compassion by chanting the names of a series of their representatives, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya, Manjusri, and Zen Master Dogen, etc. Then, we chant the Four Bodhisattva Vows, which begin, "Beings are numberless, I vow to free them." After the Four Vows, the chanting leader receives wisdom water from the ceremony leader and purifies the room by sprinkling it around the perimeter. Then, the ceremony leader reads Zen Master Dogen's "Essay on Receiving and Conferring the Precepts." Participants are then asked if they will receive and maintain each precept, and the Sixteen Bodhisattva Precepts are thereby transmitted to all. *Ryaku Fusatsu* ends with all participants taking refuge in the Three Treasures — Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha — and the ceremony ends with the leader reciting a merit transfer verse, in which we offer any merit accruing from our practice to all beings. All participants then chant the closing verse, which begins, "All buddha, ten directions, three worlds . . ."

Participation in *Ryaku Fusatsu* offers us an opportunity to acknowledge all past actions (karma), to receive the precepts, and to re-dedicate ourselves to the practice of the Bodhisattva's way. We'll be performing the ceremony at NZC every month, on the Wednesday evening nearest the full moon, to conform as close as we can to the ancient tradition. All are invited to join us.

by Nonin Chowaney

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)

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