



### The Path Within The Way

The Great Sky Sesshin, jointly sponsored by the Milwaukee Zen Center and Cedar Rapids Zen Center, took place in August at Hokyoji Zen Monastery. Located in a beautiful setting of meadow and woods in southern Minnesota, Hokyoji was founded by Dainin Katagiri Roshi as a site for concentrated practice of the Way.

The 24 practitioners and 5 teachers who attended the sesshin sat many hours of zazen, held daily services, prepared and ate formal style oryoki meals. There were also daily work periods, during which we raked hay, dug trenches, spread cedar chips to discourage weeds and worked on the paths.

Hokyoji's paths had been worn into the ground by the passage of many feet. In an effort to make them both more beautiful, more serviceable and less muddy during rainy periods, the work crews spread light colored crushed stone on the paths. They became

wider and more visible, gleaming at night in lovely contrast with the surrounding grass.

Yet at first they were loose, unstable and lumpy, making walking a bit uncertain. As the days passed, I noticed that our feet were slowly tamping the stones down into a smoother, more stable walkway. Observing those lovely broad paths I began to think about what we call in Buddhism the Eightfold Noble Path and in Zen we call the Way.

The Path (Sanskrit - marga) and the Way (Chinese - tao) are not identical, but they complement one another to form a good direction for our life. The Buddha's earliest teaching was of the Eightfold Noble Path. Having first taught that we are filled with the sense that our life is unsatisfactory (dukkha), the Buddha taught that the source of this dissatisfaction derives from our clinging to self-manufactured views of how things ought to be. These unrealized desires create our sense of dukkha.

Too often we stop here, after considering the first two Noble Truths. We're tempted to think that the realization of the source of suffering is all we need to do. There is some truth to this, although understanding our delusions may not free us from them. The Buddha went on to outline two more Truths. The third is that there is a way out of our suffering, and the fourth offers us the Eightfold Noble Path as the means. The way out of suffering is to find our appropriate relationship to the world we live in.

Yet somehow, in our reluctance to take on anything concrete or difficult, we often do little more than list the eight elements of the Path. Remembering the paths at Hokyoji, I began to wonder if we should ignore really walking on a Path designed to lead us out of our unsatisfactory lives of dukkha.

The Eightfold Noble Path consists of right views, right thoughts,

right speech, right acts, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. These eight categories are, in essence, a description of the Buddhist life that leads to freedom from dukkha. This is not a progression, with one step leading to another, but rather an interwoven program for a peaceful and balanced life.

The first thing we need to understand is what "right" means. This "right" does not mean correct according to dogma or doctrine, nor rigid prescriptions for behavior. It does point us in the direction of the Buddha's teachings on impermanence, interdependence, cause and effect and no-self. If we come to understand these truths, we begin to see what views, thoughts, speech, acts, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and meditation are appropriate to each changing moment of a life of interdependence and impermanence. We understand that our life affects many

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other entities. We understand that we may have a positive or negative impact upon the whole depending upon whether we cling to self-centered delusions or see wisely and act with compassion.

The Buddha's Precepts become our guidelines for following the Eightfold Noble Path, with the Three Pure Precepts setting out our Vow: to abstain from what is unwholesome, to do what is wholesome, and to benefit all beings. Mindfulness and meditation assist us in understanding how we are to carry out our Vow. We vow to live our singular and unique life in harmony with all existence. Our zazen helps us to see each thing clearly, just as it is.

And what of the Way? We follow the Path within the Way. The word we Buddhists use to describe the Way is Tao, borrowed from the Chinese religion of Taoism. The Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism states: "The 'Tao' or 'Way' is the all-embracing matrix of the patterns by

which things happen in the world." Also, "it is an existential rather than intellectual understanding." Understanding of the Way is like a bright moon illuminating the pale stones of the Path.

For Zen Buddhists the Way is the all-encompassing, interfusing, flowing life in which each distinct entity is a reflection of the Whole. But I think that

Zen goes beyond acknowledging this Reality and suggests that to truly exist within the Way we must do more than see it; we must live it in accordance with the Eightfold Noble Path. Thus a Path to end suffering becomes a life lived within the Way. That is to say, in harmony with "things as they are."

Like the path at Hokyoji, whose stones were compacted and made smooth by our feet, the Great Way has been made smooth and broad by steps of the buddhas and ancestors. May we also walk that path on behalf of all beings and tamp down its rough places for those who come after us.

**-Tonen O'Connor**



*Great Sky Sesshin teachers (left to right) Rosan Yoshida, Zuiko Redding, Tonen O'Connor, Dokai Georgesen, Genmyo Smith*

To send help to victims  
of Hurricane Katrina:  
1-800-HELP NOW or  
[www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## Happenings

Thanks to Lise Olsen for her laundering of the zendo curtains so that they offer a fresh and clean surrounding for our zazen.

Thanks to Bob Balderson for his repair of the Center's electric lawnmower. We are also happy to report that Bob is recovering well from recent abdominal surgery to clear up an obstruction caused by chronic appendicitis.

July 20-24, Tonen attended the American Zen Teachers Association meeting hosted by the Vermont Zen Center.

July 28-August 3, Tojun attended a genzo-e study of Dôgen at the Austin Zen Center, led by Shohaku Okumura of the Sanshin Zen Community.

July 12 and 13, our Kwan-Um Zen friend Ron Kidd came up from Chicago for a short visit and Koshin Cherin of the Sanshin Zen Community spent the night with us on August 18 prior to riding out to Hokyoji with us for the sesshin.

Saturday, August 6, four members of the Hollow Bones Zendo, a Rinzai group in the Appleton area, joined us for zazen and study class. Several of these good friends also attended the Great Sky Sesshin.

August 20-27, Tonen, Tojun, Peter Johnson, Lorraine McNamara-McGraw, Lisa Marr and John Rhiel attended the Great Sky Sesshin and each participated fully: Peter and Lisa as tenzos, Lorraine as a server, Tojun as shoten, John as jisha, Tonen gave two dharma talks as well as serving as a dishwasher. We are especially grateful to Zuiko Redding who skillfully taught the practices, duties and ritual, Hôkô Karnegis who as Head Tenzo supervised the cooking of 21 meals for nearly 30 people, and Kôshin Cherin, who trained her crews to serve with speed and grace.

On September 23-25 we will welcome members of the Soto Zen Buddhist Association (SZBA) Training Committee for meetings to finalize their recommendations for a program to assist Soto priests-in-training in the U.S.

Tojun will attend a special training session on the elements of Soto services at Mt. Equity Zendo in Pennsylvania from Sept. 28 –October 9 led by Dai-En Bennage, abbess of Mt. Equity, and Kyoki Roberts of Deep Spring Temple in Pittsburgh.

October 5 Tonen departs for Japan to assist in the Mountain Seat Ceremony for Kensho Miyamae at his temple on Lake Biwa north of Kyoto. At the same time a shuso ceremony will be held for Hôko Karnegis. Tonen returns October 19.

### HOLD THE DATE

Saturday, October 1, 10:30 a.m.  
Lisa Marr and Lorraine McNamara-McGraw will receive the precepts in a lay ordination ceremony, to be followed with a potluck lunch.

Saturday, October 22  
Sunday, October 23  
The first two-day sitting of the fall. Dharma talk on Saturday. (Please note: this is NOT the usual 3rd weekend of the month due to Tonen's trip to Japan.)

## Milwaukee Zen Center – Schedule

### September

- 7 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 24 Zazen, service, informal breakfast, no study class (Soto Zen Buddhist Association committee meeting)

### October

- 5 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 22 All-day sitting (Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.)
- 23 All-day sitting

### November

- 2 Introduction to Zen 6:30 p.m.
- 19 All-day sitting (Dharma Talk, 10:20 a.m.)
- 20 All-day sitting
- 24 Closed for Thanksgiving

To see the entire 2005 Schedule and more information on All-day sitting, visit our web site at: [www.milwaukeezencenter.org](http://www.milwaukeezencenter.org)

