AUGUST 09, 2009

Lotus Zen Temple

Today I finally found myself at the Lotus Zen Temple on 19th & Ryons Streets, just one block south of South Street. The temple is in a lovely two-story arts and crafts style home. I have been intending to go for quite some time, but today I was finally successful. I arrived a few moments before ten thirty and sat with a young man named Patrick in a living room full of art, books, a piano, and a stately old organ. A few other people arrived and after a bit Fa Jian, the master of this particular temple came down and ushered us up into the second floor meditation room.

We sat in the Zen style, around the perimeter of the room, facing inward, on zafu and zabuton. I sat uncomfortably on a zafu, leaned back against the wall, and tried not to let my nagging back get the better of me. A period of sitting meditation was followed by a period of walking meditation, the daily blessing, offering incense, and a Dharma talk. Fa Jiàn is a tall, gray-haired, gray-bearded man with a soft accent and rimless glasses. Since there were a few new people that day he spoke about restlessness and meditation posture, which are good topics no matter the audience. Afterward we adjourned downstairs for tea in the cozy kitchen and the lady, who appears to live in and care-take the house, Alene, joined us. So did Ozzie, her gray faced Australian shepherd.

During meditation I sat between a young woman with a round, bright face and beautiful black hair, Kelsey, and a young man, still gangly and thin, Jeff, who had the shaved head and wore the bib (proper word?) of a committed Zen student. Afterward, Kelsey, Fa Jiàn, Lisa, Janet and I chatted on one side of the kitchen, while another gentleman practiced tai chi movements with Jeff, while two more students watched, on the other side. We spoke about language and travel and generally introduced ourselves. Kelsey is, like me, a student at the university and addicted to travel. She just returned from five weeks in Spain. Fa Jiàn teaches Latin and Greek for Lincoln Public Schools and confesses that after thirty years here he speaks English better than German. Ozzie soon learned he could count on me for a good solid scratching, no matter how much fur flew from his thick coat.

It was a good group of friendly people. A difference I notice from other sanghas I have met is that this group seemed very calm, open, and low-key. Not lax in any sense of the word, simply unfussy. In a way, they seemed very Nebraskan ...

I think I shall go back next week.

AT 1:34 PM

LABELS: LOTUS ZEN TEMPLE, MEDITATION, SANGHA, WALKING MEDITATION