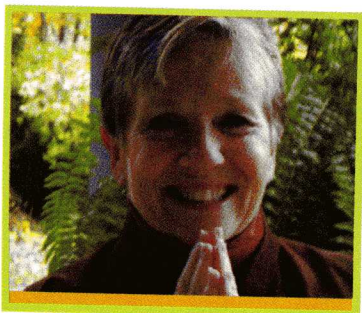




NOT EVERYDAY FAITH

Judith Toy

At the start of my Zen practice, what did I know about faith?



Our family was destroyed by the murders of three people in one night—my sister-in-law Connie and my two nephews Allen and Bobby, 16 and 14, cut down by the hatchet of a madman. Faith as I see it in Zen is rooted in experience. Faith and experience are interdependent, too. No inside and no outside. My experience at that time had been obscene, painful, heart shattering. How could I have known this tragedy would be a call to love?

Our murder was the first case involving DNA evidence in the county. It was front page, top of the evening news, and our district attorney wanted nineteen-year-old Charles Grand convicted. So

did the public. My family, too, wanted him to suffer. We wanted Charles to be forced to think long and hard every day of his life about what he had done. After stopping the trial by confessing to the crime, he received three consecutive life sentences without parole.

Distraught, I took refuge in Zen. It was then I got some relief from my grief and confusion through stopping and calming my breath. The fruits of the practice came slowly. Stilling my body/mind day after day, I inched toward the faith that led to forgiveness. This didn't happen until five years after the fact. Forgiveness came suddenly, in an unbidden way.

It was autumn, near the fifth anniversary of my family's death date, October 15. I picked up a

