Dilettante Zen Poem

The real Zen students were sitting in full lotus before dawn
wearing their black robes and rakusu[1].
I stayed up too late watching TV.
Real Zen students don't have TV's.
Eventually I wake up,
light a candle on the altar,
and kneel on my meditation bench.
A gasoline powered edger begins its serenade,
and a lawnmower joins in the chorus.

By now the real Zen students are constructing monastery buildings,
working with the dying, or reaching out to the homeless.
I drive to my wrong livelihood job,
where I'm harassed by my wrong livelihood boss.
Real Zen students call this "good training."
I call it a pain.

Real Zen students vow to return to this world of patience
for countless lifetimes to save all beings.
I wonder how I'll get through another day.

I've given up trying to be a real Zen student.
I think I'll become a dilettante instead.
If you'd like to be one too,
we meet at 7:00 most nights in the meditation hall.

芝刈り機

Jon Wesick

Jon Wesick is a regional editor of the *San Diego Poetry Annual*. He's published hundreds of poems and stories in journals such as the *Atlanta Review, Berkeley Fiction Review, Metal Scratches, Pearl, Slipstream, Space and Time, Tales of the Talisman,* and *Zahir*. The editors of *Knot Magazine* nominated his stories "The Visitor" and "A Story for the Rest of Us" for Pushcart Prizes. His poem "Meditation Instruction" won the Editor's Choice Award in the 2016 Spirit First Contest. Another poem "Bread and Circuses" won second place in the 2007 African American Writers and Artists Contest. "Richard Feynman's Commute" shared third place in the 2017 Rhysling Award's short poem category. Jon is the author of the poetry collection *Words of Power, Dances of Freedom* as well as several novels and short story collections. His most recent novel is *The Enigma Brokers*. http://jonwesick.com

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