



# Berkeley Zen Center



December 2002 Newsletter



**Sewing Buddha's Robe...** If you are interested in preparing for Jukai in 2003, sewing classes start in the last half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate. Please speak with Sojun Roshi as soon as possible and no later than January 15, 2003. A sewing teacher will contact you before your first class. Also, check the bulletin board for further announcements.



**2003 BZC Board Election...** Results are in and the newly elected members-at-large are Leslie Bartolic and Ann Kennedy. Andrea Thach was first runner-up. In addition, Greg Denny was re-elected. Many gasshos to all the candidates and to all who voted.



#### Affirmation of Welcome

Walking the path of liberation, we express our intimate connection with all beings. Welcoming diversity, here at Berkeley Zen Center the practice of

Zazen is available to people of every race, nationality, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, and physical ability. May all beings realize their true nature.

## December & January Schedule

Rohatsu Sesshin

Monday, 12-2 through Sunday, 12-8

Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial Ceremony

Tuesday, 12-3, 8:15pm

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony  
Saturday, 12-7

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 12-15, 8:30am to 12:30pm

Winter Break

Monday, 12-16 through Tuesday, 12-31

New Year's Eve Sitting and Party  
Tuesday, 12-31, 8pm - 12:15pm

Founders Ceremony  
Thursday, 1-2, 6:40pm  
Friday, 1-3, 6:40pm

One-Day Sitting  
Saturday, 1-11, 5am to 9:10pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony  
Saturday, 1-18, 9:30am

Kanzeon Sitting  
Sunday, 1-26



**All Sangha Pot Luck!...** There will be an All Sangha Potluck on **Saturday, December 14 at 6:30pm** to celebrate the holidays as well as BZC's recent paying off all outstanding property loans. Please join in. Check the community bulletin board for details.



**IMPORTANT...2003 Directories!...**  
The 2003 membership directory is being prepared. Kindly put any changes to your 2002 listing in the Office Manager's (Laurie Senauke's) mailbox on the kitchen porch.



**New Year's Eve...**Please don't hesitate to come to the New Year's Eve Sitting and Party. You can attend any portion or the entire event. Please come between periods though. Here is the schedule:

- 8:00 Zazen
- 8:35 Kinhin
- 8:45 Zazen
- 9:20 Kinhin
- 9:30 Zazen
- 10:05 Tea
- (10:13 108 Bells Begin)
- 10:30 Kinhin
- 10:40 Zazen
- 11:20 Kinhin
- 11:35 Zazen

12:10 Slow chant of Heart Sutra/End, then a celebration in the community room.



**Kidzendo... A Young People's Program...**  
Families, please join us for a special program on **Saturday, December 14,**

**starting at 9:20.** We will meet at 1933 Russell, then join the meditation in the zendo for 10 minutes, then leave for a special activity, then return to the zendo for the first part of lecture at 10:10. Childcare will be available as usual for those too young to participate. For more info, **call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.**



**Saturday Childcare**

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative. Childcare is not offered if no one's planning to come, so please call Laurie the Thursday before to let us know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.

December 7	No program
December 14	Childcare
December 21	No program
December 28	No program
January 4	Childcare
January 11	No program
January 18	Childcare
January 25	Childcare



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## Lecture by Sojun Roshi

Today is the fourth day of sesshin. To begin, I want to remind us about breathing. I know you won't forget to breathe. Whether you forget or not, you will breathe. I want to remind us to allow our breath to be deep, and to let go of tenseness when we find our breath rising up in our chest. When we inhale, our lower abdomen expands. When we exhale it contracts. This is where we should focus our attention. If you have pain in your legs and don't know what else to do, put some strength into your exhalation. In Soto Zen, we mostly follow our breath. Rinzai students put a lot of strength in the lower abdomen on the exhalation. When you don't know what else to do, rather than uncrossing your legs, you might try putting some strength in your lower abdomen when you exhale.

Student: If you don't know what to do and you don't want to uncross your legs, do you just grit your teeth and bear it?

Sojun: Instead of gritting your teeth, try letting go. You can't fight it. It's not a battle. It's a letting go. Whatever appears, let it be. There's a saying: "The cool breeze blows through the empty hall." The only approach that works is to open up and let whatever appears just to pass through.

Student: But is it better to uncross your legs than to fight to it?

Sojun: No. It's better to fight it than to uncross your legs. Otherwise, you'll never find your way. You have to go through your battles. This is sometimes called the battleground of the heart and mind. It's also been called the comfortable way. You have to go through your battles until you give up and let go.

So let your mind follow your breath. The first thing is posture. Establish your posture. Really put effort into posture and then let the mind follow the breath as the rising and falling of your lower abdomen. You can tell that you're getting tense when your breath becomes rough and shallow. Be aware of that. Realize when your shoulders are getting tense. Fear or anxiety makes us tense up. At some point we have to drop our resistance and say, "It's okay." Then we rise to a different level.

Our resistance is the problem. We usually have to go through many painful, difficult periods of zazen until we allow ourselves to let go. That's why seven days is a good opportunity, because it wears us down.

Student: I keep hoping that the pain will go away as the week goes on.

Sojun: That's the problem. That's why it doesn't go away. Anything you hope for is a problem.

Student: And I'm afraid that, as the week goes on, it's going to get worse.

Sojun: We should have a sign over the zendo door: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." Hope is resistance, hope is fighting. It's saying, "I wish it would go away. I hope it goes away." But the more we hope it goes away, the more it's right there! The more we hope it goes away, the worse it gets. Instead we should say to our fear or our pain, "Okay, you can be here with me. You can stay here. I'm sitting zazen. You're welcome to stay here too. Howdy." But if we say, "Please go away," this is what pain answers back: "Says who?"

Give up hope of anything you want. The Second Noble Truth says that wanting is the cause of our suffering. When we say, "I wish it would go away," that's the cause of our suffering. Having what we don't want is the cause of suffering. Zazen is to drop body and mind. Let go of ego. Let go of self. It's not just words. We have big strong egos, which keep us from realization.

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The important thing is to be compassionate with yourself and not to blame your surroundings, not blame the practice. Sometimes we have people come to sesshin and blame us for making them do these things. They say, "It's all your fault." But the most compassionate thing we can do is look for the problem within ourselves and, at the same time, not blame ourselves for it. When we really take on our own suffering and our own difficulty, we have compassion for everyone. We look around and see that everybody is having a hard time, and we feel compassion for their difficulty.

The suffering that we are going through is the basis of our enlightenment. I know that is not what we picture as enlightenment. We think that enlightenment will be the end of our suffering, but enlightenment abides right in the midst of it. Our suffering will bring it out. We have to get to the bottom of our suffering. We have to go down all the way to the bottom of it. Then enlightenment will spring forth.

Student: I feel like I am flunking Buddhism over and over.

Sojun: Me too. We're all in the same boat. I'm a failure. We're all failures. The main thing is not how successful you are at being perfect. I'm not talking about how to be perfect. I'm talking about how to do something completely. Each one of us does the best we can. That's the main point. If we do our best, that is already an expression of enlightenment.

Enlightenment is not at the end of the road. It's within our effort. When you have the hardest time and it seems like you are failing, that's actually pure practice. To have this difficult time and stay with it and do your utmost, that's pure practice. Suzuki Roshi used to say that the people who have the hardest time often turn out to be the most enlightened Zen masters. So you never know.

Student: When I listen to you, I think, "Someday I will have this giant letting go and everything will be great."

Sojun: Just let go, and everything will be what it will be.

Student: But aren't I just going to fall back into hoping?

Sojun: Maybe and maybe not. You are already predicting the future. You are already predicting that you'll fall back into your old ways. Just stop the whole thing! Be where you are. Just be where you are with what you have. That's all.

There will always be something missing. That's okay. It's not how much you have. It's not a matter of quantity. It's a matter of thoroughness. It means to unify your body and mind so that whatever you do includes everything. When you do one thing without ego, without self-centeredness, that's thoroughness.

Student: And the results don't make any difference?

Sojun: It's not that the results don't make any difference. It's just that we're not attached to the results. Of course results make a difference. But if it doesn't turn out according to your dream, don't be attached to that. Each one of us has our own perfection which includes all of our so-called mistakes.

Student: What about when our mistakes hurt other people?

Sojun: When you hurt somebody, you have compassion, you feel repentant. "I'm sorry." That's a form of repentance, an aspect of enlightenment. What to do when we hurt others, what to do when we hurt ourselves, and what this means in a deep sense, not just a superficial sense, these are good questions. Just acknowledge. Turn around and continue on in a careful way.

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## Four Poems

### SIX DAYS IN, DEAR DOLLY

Dancing the squirrel flips in the yellow leaves,  
somersaulting with tail erect and positive,  
no thing compromising.  
I do not recognize her. Has she ever been here before,  
cavorting in the fall afternoons?

The cat died this very time eight years ago, All Soul's Day.  
Dance and dip. Bounce and flip.  
You died five days before, Madame Antoinette, of the pretty name,  
grown into elder hood, a stern robe on your back.  
We watched you turn brave and tireless in your flight to destiny,  
determined beyond what anyone could tinker with; you were so sure.  
Flip and dip. Bounce and slip up the tree and down, rustling piles of leaves,  
yellow flying all around.

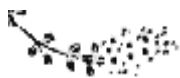
The cat stiffened in my arms at five a.m.  
Long he got, his pink coat graceless and cold,  
his pretty paws prying me no more.  
You turned yellow from natural, white and starched, your feet extended  
and your toes pointed up like dervish shoes.  
Holding them, they bore no trace of a bend.  
Six days is no time at all,  
though, some say in six days heaven and earth arose,  
all the seas and stars and sun and moon. All the animals too, all plants and trees.  
Six days and your mailbox is erased, your photos taken down, your phone disconnected;  
your car, they say, re-registered.

The cat let me carry his rod-like body into the yard  
where I set him near the squirrel play.  
In my softest pillow case, I dug him down, quiet and still,  
pouring food all around,  
and leaving a small water bowl.

(The Anglo-Saxons sent jewels too,  
when they sailed their kings away.)

With you, old friend, kind guide, tough-minded warrior of left leaves,  
what shall we send ?  
Green rakasu honoring what you knew. A poem. A Camels' pack.  
Fire up the oven. Burn the truth down. Let us sprinkle the grains around our hearts.  
Flip and bounce, the squirrel charmer skips across the ground,  
though no one's watching, all of us lifting our eyes to wherever you may be.  
But hey, is that you there, already in return? Diving and dipping  
into the stream of gold?  
Already coming to let us know  
you made it fine, and we will too?

Lois Silverstein



### JASMINE

Breath of Night Blooming Jasmine  
Don-tien\* of Sword Fern  
Returning from afar -  
To  
the  
glow  
of  
Vermillion Lanterns.

\* hara in Chinese

Miriam Queen  
Labor day Sesshin 2002

## NOT ONE, NOT TWO RAP

Oh how we love to choose  
In dualistic mode;  
To make our sweet decisions,  
Followed by second thoughts,  
Revisions and precisions.

Still, this fashion's awfully old,  
Passe, I mean, outré.  
I wouldn't be caught dead  
In merely "this or that."

The non-dual must be  
Where it's at. Just One,  
So ultimately, absolutely cool!  
But if you ask, What is It?  
You're in a sticky wicket.

Can you touch It? Taste It?  
Take a little with your tea,  
Or drink It neat  
With just a twist of lemon?  
Could you wipe away Its tear,  
Or whisper some endearment  
In Its ear?

What's really rad -  
Please don't be mad -  
Is something rather classic:  
Not me, not you,  
Yet not entirely Other.  
It's sharp, it's fresh,  
You'll know it when you see it!  
But more is not to say,  
No way.

Moffett Hall

## FOR BLAKE IN PETERBOROUGH, NEW HAMPSHIRE

Walking home tonight after snow  
nothing but the marks of deer

crossing one by one  
into a snowy hollow

The traces of their hooves disappear

into white sky, white trees  
white slope of ground between trees

Never such silence anywhere

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When you live with silence  
and the cold white page of winter

you live awhile with a cold heart

A cold heart must keep still  
It must learn the content of winter

It must stand apart  
It must not take shelter

Can you live awhile with a cold heart?

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The snowy owl will appear to you  
as it lifts out of the topmost branches

and its face in the smoky light  
will seem for a moment incandescent

as flame burning a hole through the heart

and for a moment it will recognize you  
as if you too were light

lifting, lifting out of the dark

Camille Norton

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