



# Berkeley Zen Center



January 2009 Newsletter

## **SELF-CARE: An open discussion & experiment in council process, Tuesday, January 6, 7:15-8:45 pm**

Suzuki Roshi said, "When you are you, Zen is Zen." If the function of Zen practice is to be our true self, it is not always clear exactly how to practice. We naturally mature in practice, and, at the same time, our bodies age and are vulnerable to various infirmities. The pressures of jobs, families, and other responsibilities pull at us. Showing up regularly at the zendo, sitting with effort and flexibility—these don't necessarily get easier. We might feel pressure and judgment—whether internal or external—to keep a tough schedule.

How do we keep our practice vigorous and vital, while attending to our bodies and our lives? What does "vigorous" Zen practice mean? What kind of discipline is healthy and necessary? What kind of refreshment do we offer ourselves? What does "self-care" mean? For the last several years BZC has had periodic potlucks and open discussions, a project successfully begun by Ken Knabb. In this coming year, we will continue the discussions (no potluck this time) in a format—council—that is new to Berkeley Zen Center, but widely used at other Buddhist centers and in communities and groups around the country. Council is a non-hierarchical tool for group exploration. We sit in a circle and share our thoughts and feelings as they arise in the moment, with mutual respect, and without crosstalk. The basic principles are simple: speak from the heart; listen from the heart; be spontaneous; be succinct; keep the circle's confidentiality. Alan will offer a brief instruction about council at this initial gathering. Please see the bulletin board shelf for a more detailed handout on council process. Sometimes a council has a subject — as it will with this first meeting on Self-Care; sometimes a council takes up whatever issue or question is arising just then. In either case the process is open to go as deep and as wide as people wish to take it. It is a surprising journey. Join us for it. For information, or if you have ideas for future topics, contact Hozan Alan Senauke at [alans@kushiki.org](mailto:alans@kushiki.org)



### **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.

## **B Z C S c h e d u l e**

### **January**

**New Year's Day (zendo closed)**  
1/1/2009

### **Founder's Ceremony**

Monday, 1/5, 6:20 pm  
Tuesday, 1/6, 6:40 am

### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 1/10, 9:40 am

### **Half-day Sitting**

Sunday, 1/11, 8:00 – 12 noon

### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 1/17

### **Okumura Roshi Teaching Sesshin**

Saturday, 1/24

### **February**

### **Half-day Sitting**

Sunday, 2/1

### **Founder's Ceremony**

Tuesday, 2/3, 6:20 pm  
Wednesday, 2/4, 6:40 am

### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 2/7, 9:40 am

### **Buddha's Parinirvana**

Saturday, 2/14

### **Two-day Sitting**

Saturday-Sunday, 2/14-15

### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 2/21

## Study and Practice Day with Shohaku Okamura

On Saturday January 24th Shohaku Okamura will return to BZC. This year he will lecture on Ryokan's poems "Butterfly Dreams" and "Colophon for a Painting at a Skeleton." We will have our usual Saturday program beginning at 6:00 am. We will have an informal lunch prepared by one of our tenzos in the Community Room with Shohaku-san, Sojun, and sangha members. There will be another lecture and discussion in the afternoon, followed by a few periods of zazen. The day will end at 4:45 pm. Look for the sign-up sheet early in January.

For more information please contact Karen Sundheim, [ksundheim@gmail.com](mailto:ksundheim@gmail.com).

## W E L C O M E

Welcome to new member **Simone Brumis!**

## Changing Hands

A final bow of gratitude to most recent Head Chiden, **Anke Perkert**, who moved outside the gate and through the tunnel in October. Welcome to new Co-Head Chidens **Stephanie Solar** and **Nancy Suib**.

A position we are calling Zendo Shika has been newly created, designating someone to help newer people find their way in our forms in the zendo. **Bill Milligan** will be the first person filling the position.

## Half-Day Sitting

**Sunday, January 11, 8:00 – 12:00**

BZC offers eight half-day sittings each year. Each includes five periods of zazen, kinhin, and an informal tea. A half-day sitting is a great opportunity to focus on "just zazen," and is appropriate for beginning as well as experienced sitters. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the four-hour schedule and, in support of everyone's practice, to refrain from using scented products in the zendo. Contact half-day directors Ann Kennedy, [kaimon@earthlink.net](mailto:kaimon@earthlink.net), or Stan Dewey, [standewey@comcast.net](mailto:standewey@comcast.net), with any questions.

## Saturday Childcare

Childcare of charge on zazen from then families listen to the sound system helpful for can let us you're hoping or email



is offered free Saturdays for 9:30 to 10:15, are welcome to lecture on the in the room. It's planning if you know that to attend; call Laurie

Senauke, 845-2215, or [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org).

Childcare for 8:45 Zazen Instruction and Beginner Orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

## Kidzendo

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual. From time to time we offer additional activities at kidzendo.

## Childcare Schedule

January 3	Childcare
January 10	Childcare
January 17	<b>Kidzendo</b>
January 24	Sesshin – no program
January 31	Childcare
February 7	Childcare
February 14	Sesshin – no program
February 21	<b>Kidzendo</b>
February 28	Childcare
March 7	Childcare
March 14	Childcare
March 21	Sesshin – no program
March 28	<b>Kidzendo</b>



## Mindful Practice During Sesshin

*From a lecture by Sojun Roshi*

When we walk, be aware of how your feet touch the floor. When serving a meal, be careful, when walking, to place your foot on the floor without making a sound with your heels. What does the floor feel like? When I carry the serving pot, is it too high or too low? What does it feel like to carry this pot in a natural way? When I serve someone, am I really taking the time to bow with that person, or am I just going through the motions? If you and the other person are bowing at a different rhythm it doesn't make much sense. You are missing each other. The point is to meet at the bottom of the bow for just a moment. When opening and closing the zendo door try to do so quietly. How do you do that with your undivided attention? When entering the zendo during zazen, walk quietly and slowly without disturbing the atmosphere. Even if you are late, don't rush.

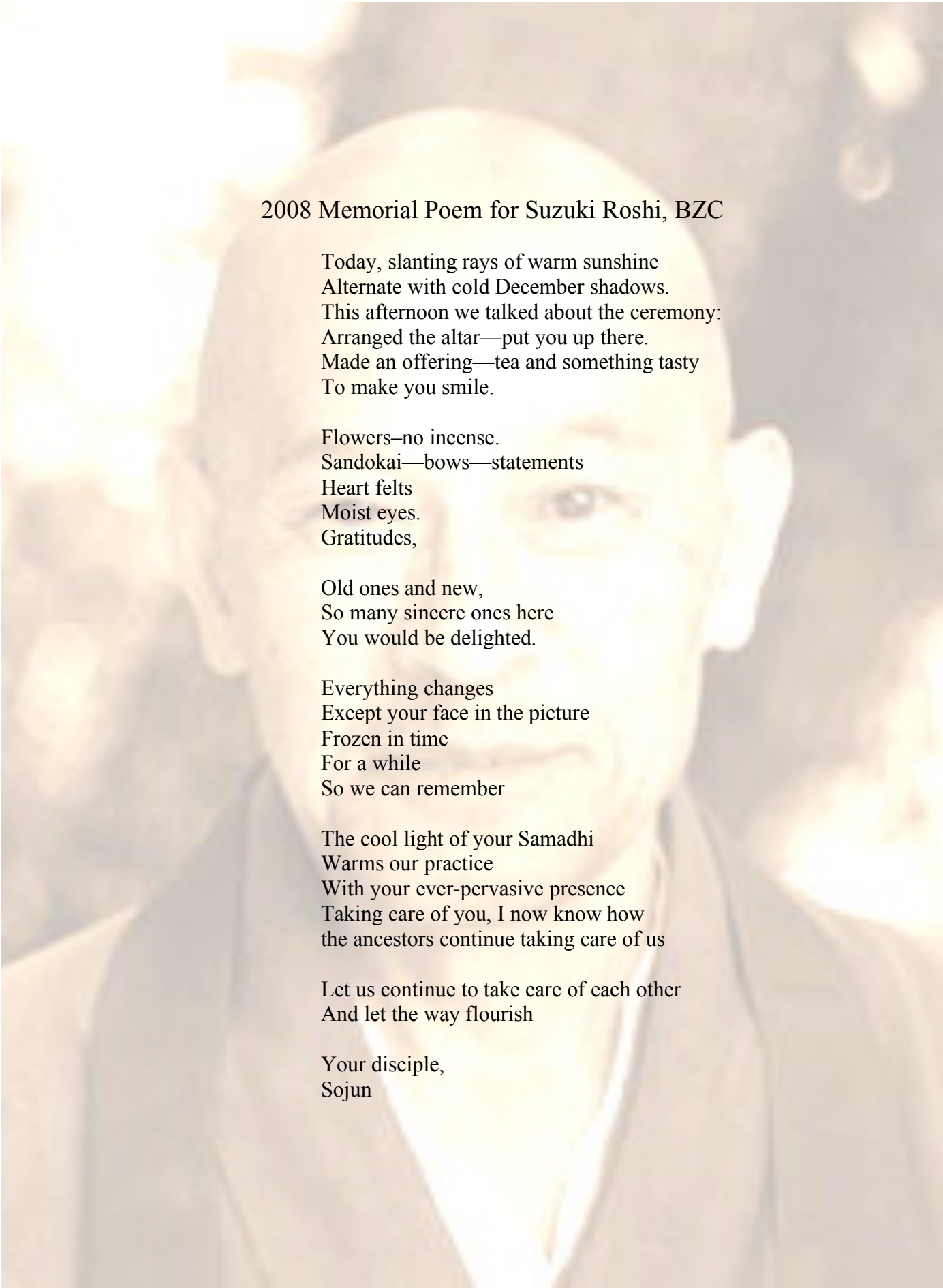
To be that attentive creates a mindful focus. When we use our eating bowls we open and close them in such a way that we don't make a sound. We should maintain the same concentration during work period, being careful not to start a conversation with someone. Sometimes when we are discussing a project we get caught up in a conversation without thinking about it or being aware of it, in the same way that thoughts come up in zazen; before we realize it we are caught up in a fantasy. So, when we become aware that our conversation is going out of bounds, we can just bow and return to silence.

When working in the kitchen, it's good to figure out a systematic way to arrange your space in order to work efficiently. Take care of the food and equipment so you don't have things piling up around you while you're working in a small or crowded space. Keep the process moving so that you don't find yourself cornered. In order to do that you have to clean up as you go, taking care of the ingredients and the tools, aware that you are also working in harmony with others. It is possible to let go of anxiety, knowing that if you pay attention, everything will come out on time.

Having this kind of concentrated absorption, we can forget ourselves in our activity. Let yourself immediately accept the entire situation, adjusting to changes without judgment or regret: "This I like. This I don't." "This is right. This is wrong." "Why did this have to happen?"

"Just to do" is how you drop yourself and merge with the activity in a selfless way. Even if you are doing something you don't like, you can still find your way within it. Keep returning to your deep, calm mind moment to moment and abide in the Samadhi of equanimity.





## 2008 Memorial Poem for Suzuki Roshi, BZC

Today, slanting rays of warm sunshine  
Alternate with cold December shadows.  
This afternoon we talked about the ceremony:  
Arranged the altar—put you up there.  
Made an offering—tea and something tasty  
To make you smile.

Flowers—no incense.  
Sandokai—bows—statements  
Heart felts  
Moist eyes.  
Gratitudes,

Old ones and new,  
So many sincere ones here  
You would be delighted.

Everything changes  
Except your face in the picture  
Frozen in time  
For a while  
So we can remember

The cool light of your Samadhi  
Warms our practice  
With your ever-pervasive presence  
Taking care of you, I now know how  
the ancestors continue taking care of us

Let us continue to take care of each other  
And let the way flourish

Your disciple,  
Sojun



# U P C O M I N G E V E N T S

## **Zendo "Spring" Cleaning**

Yes, spring cleaning in the winter. Weather permitting, we will be cleaning the zendo and airing out and sunning all of the zafus and zabutons right after Saturday program tea on January 17th from 11:30 am until approximately 3:30 pm. We are looking for eight or more volunteers to join in the care of our temple. Lunch will be provided. In case of uncooperative weather we have set aside January 31st as backup. Please sign up on the main bulletin board or by contacting Richard Beeson at (510) 508-6767 or [rabeeson@hotmail.com](mailto:rabeeson@hotmail.com).

## **CALLING ALL CHIDENS, PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE**

**Stephanie Solar** and **Nancy Suib**, co-head chidens welcome you to a new year of serving as chiden. It is a wonderful and fulfilling way to deepen your practice of mindfulness and the aesthetic of attending to the altar. A deep bow to all past and present chidens for their service. We invite you, the new chidens, and those interested in becoming a chiden, to an orientation, review of chiden procedures, and potluck luncheon on Saturday, January 17, 2009. Come for lunch at 12:30 pm, or just the orientation and review with Sojun Mel Weitsman, from 1:30 to 3:00 pm. Look for a sign up sheet on the bulletin board.

## **PANCAKES FOR OBAMA!**

**Celebrate the presidential inauguration on January 20 at BZC!** A pancake breakfast will start about 8:00 am (the actual swearing in is at 9:00 am). Whole grain blueberry pancakes and syrup will be provided; feel free to bring other edibles. We'll be either in the Community Room or in 1933 Russell. Watch the bulletin board for details, or contact Laurie ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)) or Melody ([melodyermachild@comcast.net](mailto:melodyermachild@comcast.net)).

## **Mark Your Calendar**

On Sunday, March 29th, BZC will sponsor a presentation/workshop on planned giving, to be held at the home of one of our Sangha members. More details will be forthcoming in our next newsletter. We hope that all those interested can attend!

Questions? Want to help out?  
Contact: Peter Overton, (510) 848-5239 or [peterovrtn@comcast.net](mailto:peterovrtn@comcast.net).

## **Seismic Retrofitting**

Studies have shown that proper retrofitting, also called seismic strengthening, can increase by ten times the likelihood of your home being habitable after a substantial earthquake. On Thursday Jan 24th from 7:00 to 8:30 pm in the BZC Community Room, **Dean Bradley** will give a presentation explaining in layman's terms the basics of earthquake retrofitting.

Dean's presentation will give you the information you need to look at your own home and decide what else, if anything, you can do to make it more seismically sound. Dean is not a structural engineer, however, she has been volunteering with the City of Oakland for the past two years—including meeting with engineers and retrofit companies—in their efforts to encourage people to retrofit by making documentation and information more understandable to the public.

This event is open to BZC members as well as non members. Please let Dean know if you plan to attend by contacting her at [zdbradley@hotmail.com](mailto:zdbradley@hotmail.com).

## **NEW CLASS**

### **Still Point, Turning Words**

*A course in Western Literature and the dharma*

Patrick McMahon and Lois Silverstein will teach this five-week class beginning Saturday, January 31st. In it we will read and discuss selected passages from Marcel Proust and Virginia Woolf, comparing and contrasting their expressions to related aspects of Zen practice and Buddhism, and as they stand alone as well. For a detailed course description see the "classes" link at [berkeleyzencent.er.org](http://berkeleyzencent.er.org).

Classes will be held Saturdays from 12:00 noon to 1:30 pm following the morning program and a break allowing time for lunch. The dates are January 31st, February 7th, 21st, and 28th, and March 7th. Cost for the series is \$25.00. As always, arrangements can be made for those encountering financial hardship. Sign-up is on the patio bulletin board. For questions contact class coordinator Ron Nestor, [shoppingrk@yahoo.com](mailto:shoppingrk@yahoo.com).

## **NEW DHARMA STUDY GROUPS**

BZC will offer three new ongoing dharma study groups in the next few months:

### **Platform Sutra Study Group**

Beginning in February, Hozan Alan Senauke will lead a long-term study of the Platform Sutra. As with Alan's previous group studying the Vimalakirti Sutra, the group will meet monthly, on a Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning, working through the entire sutra.

Prospective dates for 2009 will be posted in January. Since this study will go for an extended period, and form some real group connections, please think about whether you can make a strong commitment to show up.

The basic text is Wong Mou-Lam's translation (which Sojun Roshi used during his Rohatsu lectures), but the group will also compare texts

and interpretations from a number of different versions. While reading the text to understand its context and meaning, the emphasis will be on active discussion of how the Platform Sutra can deepen and expand our daily practice of Zen.

If you are interested in taking part in the group, please contact Alan at [alans@kushiki.org](mailto:alans@kushiki.org)

or watch for the sign-up sheet in January.

### **Branching Streams**

In February, Richard Haefele will begin a dharma study group. The first reading will be Suzuki Roshi's *Branching Streams*. The group will decide together about the meeting time. Those interested should contact Richard at [rdhaefele@sbcglobal.net](mailto:rdhaefele@sbcglobal.net), or watch for a sign up sheet in January.

### **Sutra Study Group**

Beginning in March, Karen Sundheim and Andrea Thach will offer a sutra study group, to meet once a month on a Wednesday evening. The group will meet off-site (probably Andrea's home in North Oakland). Please contact Karen, [ksundheim@gmail.com](mailto:ksundheim@gmail.com) or Andrea, [andrea.thach@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.thach@gmail.com) if you are interested, or watch the bulletin board for a sign up sheet.



## New Membership Dues Rate

Just a reminder that, as of the start of 2009, BZC is putting a new dues schedule in place. The suggested dues rate is \$40 per month for individual members and \$30 per quarter for friends.

BZC has had no dues increase for more than ten years. But as things in general get ever more expensive and we continue to widen the opportunities for practice, we need to bring BZC's present operating costs and resources in line with each other, and pay our bills.

\$40/month is a recommended figure for members. If you can't afford this, we welcome whatever amount you can regularly contribute. If you are able to contribute more, we are very grateful. We understand that finances are challenging for some of us these days. The point is to give according to one's ability. Thank you for your generosity and practice.



I woke up this first day of interim of no formal schedule to witness Nobuo Iwanaga tending his area of the abbot's garden outside my window. He told me *this* is his schedule (coming on Saturdays to tend the garden before zazen and lecture) which for me harkens back to Suzuki Roshi's teaching that a garden is never finished. Interim or not, here's Nobuo's continuous practice I had to capture with my camera. Thanks, Nobuo!

Photographs by Ross Blum

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