



# Berkeley Zen Center



## May 2011 Newsletter

### SPRING PRACTICE PERIOD 2011

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting starting at 5:00 am on Saturday, May 7 and last through the Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 19. Sojun Roshi invites everyone to increase their commitment to practice during this period while still minding their obligations outside the gate.

Shinko Seiwa Leslie Bartholic—Deep Lake/Clear Peaceful—will be the shuso this year, sharing the abbot's seat and setting an example for us all. Shiken Seigetsu Carol Paul—Intention Clear/Awakened Moon—will serve as benji, assisting the shuso.

There will be a Thursday night class with Sojun Roshi studying Dogen Zenji's fascicle, *Zazenshin*. For a detailed practice period schedule, see the bulletin board shelf. Practice period applications are available on the main bulletin board shelf; please fill one out and return it to the shuso's box on the community room porch by Monday, May 2.

Remember that besides signing up for practice period and turning in a registration form, you need to sign up separately for a number of the individual practice period events. See the bulletin board for these signup sheets.

#### Practice Period Events:

Opening sitting: 5/7, 5:00 am-9:10 pm

Opening/Shuso Entering Ceremony: 5/7, 4:00 pm

Shuso talks: 5/9, 5/21, and 6/4

Classes: Thursday evenings, 5/12-6/9, **except for 6/1, which will be on a Wednesday**

Bansan (tea and dharma discussion with the abbot):  
Friday, 5/13

Dinner and Skit Night: Saturday, 5/28, 6:00 pm

Shosan (dharma dialogue with the abbot): 5/20, 6/13

Lay Ordination: Saturday, 6/11, 3:00 pm

Five-day Sesshin: 6/15-19

Shuso Hossen (dharma dialogue with the shuso):  
Sunday, 6/19, 3:30 pm



#### 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

### May

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 5/1, 8:00 am-noon

#### New Member Entering Ceremony

Monday, 5/2, 6:20 am

#### Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 5/3, 6:20 pm,  
Wednesday, 5/4, 6:40 am

#### Practice Period Opens—One-day Sitting

Saturday, 5/7 (details this page)

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 5/14, 9:40 am

#### Kidzendo, Saturday, 5/21

#### Practice Period Dinner and Skit Night

Saturday, 5/28

### June

#### Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 6/2, 6:20 pm,  
Friday, 6/3, 6:40 am

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 6/5, 8:00 am-Noon

#### Lay Ordination/Zaiko Tokudo

Saturday, 6/11, 3:00 pm

#### Five-day Sesshin

Wednesday - Sunday, 6/15-19

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6/18, 9:40 am

#### Shuso Hossen, Practice Period Ends

Sunday, 6/19, 3:30 pm

#### Informal Zazen

Monday, 6/20, am

## PRACTICE PERIOD OPENING SESSHIN

The sesshin to open the Spring Practice Period will be Saturday May 7, 5 am-9:10 pm. The doshi will be Sojun Roshi. If you are participating in Practice Period and are unable to attend sesshin, you are invited to the opening ceremony, which will begin at 4 pm. Questions: contact Mary Duryee, Sesshin Director, 510-872-0507 or [maduryee@earthlink.net](mailto:maduryee@earthlink.net).

## HALF-DAY SITTING

**Sunday, June 5, 8:00 am-noon**

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. BZC asks for a \$10 donation for half-day sittings. If you have questions, contact Nina Sprecher, the June half-day director, at 510-848-3585 or [ninasprecher@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ninasprecher@sbcglobal.net).

## ZEN WOMEN’S RETREAT IN JULY

The sixth annual Zen Women’s Retreat is scheduled for July 7-10 at Empty Nest Zendo, North Fork, in the Sierra Nevada foothills between Fresno and Yosemite National Park. This year’s teachers will be Enji Angie Boissevain, Shosan Vicki Austin, and Myoan Grace Schireson. Myokaku Jane Schneider (artist/co-founder of Beginner’s Mind Zen Center) will offer calligraphy instruction. As in previous years, the retreat will offer teaching of body-friendly meditation practices to develop concentration and facilitate healing, discussion of issues facing women in Buddhist practice, and creative writing exercises to bring forth women’s distinctive spiritual qualities. This year’s retreat will also focus specifically on these open questions regarding Zen Practice: How can women inspire each other? How do we learn to express our wisdom? What is women’s way to deeper embodiment (body integration) of Zen?

The location is secluded, serene, with mountain views. There is time in the schedule for swimming, enjoying the views and gardens, walks in the hills, building new friendships and renewing old ones. This retreat has become increasingly popular, and space is limited. It would be a good idea to sign up well in advance. A flier is posted on the BZC Zen-related bulletin board outside the community room. To register, or for more information, please email [baika2@gmail.com](mailto:baika2@gmail.com), or call 510-407-7910. Information is also online at [www.emptynestzendo.org](http://www.emptynestzendo.org).



## Family Activities at BZC

**Saturday Childcare** Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturday mornings for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It’s helpful for planning if you can let us know that you’re hoping to attend; phone or e-mail 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 program for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday morning of each month (or the fourth if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet at the Senaukes’—1933 Russell—at about 9:40 for a meet and greet, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene at 1933 Russell for more activities, possibly including formal tea and one minute of meditation and/or free play, depending on the realities of the moment.

## Zazen, Discussion for Parents, Childcare Provided

**3rd Friday Evening**—6:15 pm to 8:00 pm. Check calendar for dates. A potluck dinner for parents and children in the community room, followed by a brief period of zazen and a discussion about family practice in the zendo. Childcare provided in the community room. For questions about our Friday programs, contact Marie Hopper, (510) 559-8831.

May 7	Sesshin - no program
May 14	Childcare
May 20	Family Potluck/Discussion
May 21	<b>KIDZENDO</b>
May 28	Childcare

*Note: no family programs (potlucks, kidzendo) in June, July, or August*

June 4	Childcare
June 11	Childcare
June 18	Sesshin - no program
June 25	Childcare
July 2	Childcare
July 9	Childcare
July 16	Childcare
July 23	Childcare
July 30	Childcare

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
**Third Friday of the month before each issue.**  
**June deadline: Friday, 5/20, 8 pm.**

## Zazen Is Vast Openness

A talk by Sojun Roshi

given to the Chapel Hill Zen Center, March, 1993

**Z**azen is vast openness, completely opening ourselves and accepting whatever we are experiencing.

It's nice to be in this place, on this particular spot in the universe. Somehow, all of us are together on this particular spot in the universe. It's quite a wonderful thing. I don't know how it happened. Today I want to look at Dogen Zenji's *Genjo Koan*. Near the end he says,

*"A fish swims in the ocean, and no matter how far it swims, there is no end to the water. A bird flies in the sky, and no matter how far it flies, there is no end to the sky. However, the fish and the bird have never left their elements since the beginning. When their activity is large, their field is large. When their need is small, their field is small. Thus, each of them totally covers its full range, and each of them totally expresses its realm. If the bird leaves the air, it will die at once. If the fish leaves the water, it will die at once. Know that water is life and air is life, the bird is life, and the fish is life. Life must be the bird, and life must be the fish. It is possible to illustrate this with many more analogies. Practice, enlightenment, and people are all like this."*



Here Dogen is talking about our human situation and Buddha nature. Each one of us is like a fish or a bird in the vast sky of Buddha nature, or the deep ocean of Buddha nature. He is talking about how we, each one of us, exist, as Buddha nature. He says a fish swims in the ocean, and no matter how far it swims, there is no end to the water. He is saying, Buddha nature is vast and has no special shape or form, but the fish is the form of Buddha nature. The bird is the form of Buddha nature. The fish swims in its element. The bird flies in its element. Each one of us swims and flies in his own element. Even though we feel that we don't know what Buddha nature is, or maybe we feel estranged from Buddha nature, we have never left it from the beginning. He says, *"A fish swims in the*

*ocean, and no matter how far it swims, there is no end to the water. A bird flies in the sky, and no matter how far it flies, there is no end to the sky. However, the fish and the bird have never left their elements since the beginning. When their activity is large, their field is large. When their need is small, their field is small. Thus, each of them totally covers its full range, and each of them totally expresses its realm."*

In order to experience the sky completely, when you need to go far, you go far. When you don't need to go far you don't go so far. But whether you go far or stay in a small space, you experience the whole sky, or the whole earth. *"If the bird leaves the air, it will die at once. If the fish leaves the water, it will die at once. So you should know that water is life, and air is life. The bird is life and the fish is life. Life must be the bird and life must be the fish."*

This is like the *Heart Sutra* saying, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form." You can't separate them and say, "This is my self, and this is Buddha nature." Buddha nature is my self. My self is Buddha nature. The sky is the bird, the bird is the sky. The bird can't leave the sky and the fish can't leave the water. "The bird is life, and the fish is life. Life must be the bird, and life must be the fish." There is a saying that when a bird flies across the empty sky, the bird makes the sky. Dogen says that the snow on the mountain makes the mountain.

You can illustrate it in various other ways. *"Thus, each of them totally covers its full range."* He also says, *"Wherever you stand, you don't fail to cover the ground."* In zazen we cover the entire ground. You may be on one small spot, yet this small spot that we cover is the entire ground. It is ordinary, but it is ordinary activity that covers the whole ground. (Ctd. on p. 4)

(Ctd. from p. 3) Now, he says, “If a bird or a fish tries to reach the end of its element before moving in it, this bird or this fish will not find its way or its place.” If I try to understand everything before I move, I may never get around to doing. If I feel that I need to know what zazen is before I do it, I may never do it. If I feel, “Oh, I must be a better person before I do this,” or “I must give up eating meat before I can sit zazen,” I may never get around to zazen. If I feel that I can know the limit of understanding through my thinking mind, I may never get around to experiencing my True Self. So it is okay to be a little bit stupid. If you know too much, or if you feel that you need to know, then it can create a stumbling block for the way.

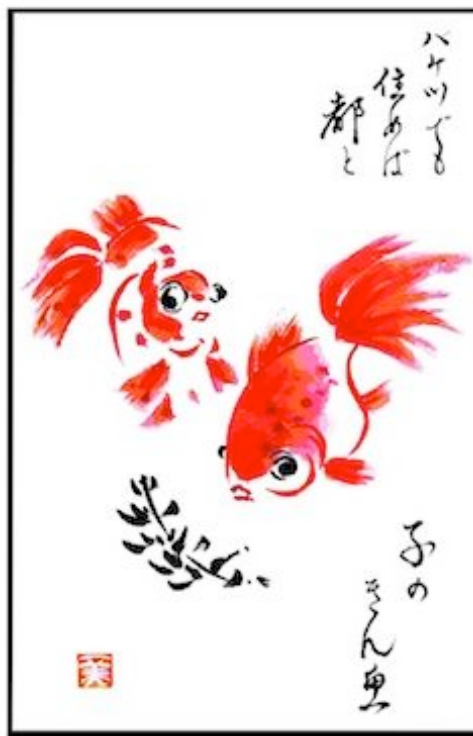
In order to practice and experience Buddha nature directly, you have to give up all of your opinions. Rational mind, thinking mind, or accumulated knowledge won't help much, and usually is a hindrance. The usual way of figuring out what to do won't help when your legs become very painful. You can't figure out how to get out of it. The more you struggle the tighter it gets. You just have to give up or let go and sink to the bottom before it all gets figured out. This is the advantage of practice. We can have enlightened practice without understanding or knowing anything about it. It's wonderful that we can do this. All we have to do is step in. There is no way you can figure it out. You just step in and start swimming. “When you find your place, right where you are, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point.” To let go right where we are, and experience the freshness of renewal on each moment, in each activity, is actualizing the fundamental point.



### Goldfish

The kids' pet goldfish  
now lives in a bucket --  
well, it's better than nothing.

Kazumi Cranney\*



\* Kazumi Cranney specializes in haiga and sumi-e painting. Haiga is a form of painting that combines three traditional Japanese arts: haiku poetry, Japanese calligraphy, and watercolor painting.

## SITTING OUTSIDE THE ZAFU

Berkeley Zen Center members who have been unable to sit on the tans (temporarily or otherwise) have been experimenting with using chairs for years. As we age, more possibilities seem to emerge. We've recently purchased some new chairs and stools which, when used properly, are wonderful aids to sitting practice. On Saturday, May 14 (after tea—announced by clappers) Alexandra Frappier will provide an introductory tour of the new furniture and give an overview covering what we've learned about sitting postures, and creative use of cushions, beyond what we normally discuss in zazen instruction.

*(Editor's note: Inside a zafu, it's too dark to read.)*

## CHANGING HANDS

A round robin of position changes as resulted in the following: **Will Fuller** has taken over maintenance of our community room, after serving as Kitchen Cleaner. **Mike McVey** has moved into the Administrative Assistant for Temple Affairs (ATA) from taking care of the community room. And **Paul Ridgeway**, after learning the newly conceived ATA position, has moved to Kitchen Cleaner. We thank all of them for their commitment and energy in supporting our practice, and their good cheer in participating in our musical rotation in which no one is left standing without a place.

And, we are also grateful to **Laurie Senauke** for stepping in to hold the Office Manager Position while at the same time revamping our member databases and training our new Office Manager, **Lisa Nelbach**.

Many thanks to all!

Coordinator  
Peter Overton

## OFFICE MANAGER REQUESTS

- The Office Manager has an email address: [bzcoffice manager@gmail.com](mailto:bzcoffice manager@gmail.com). Please use this when contacting the OM on BZC business.
- When making payments by check, ALWAYS specify what you are paying for in the note section of your check, even if you're sure we know. If noting dues, specify the time period the payment is for. If for sesshin, specify which date(s). It is fine to combine different payments on one check, but be sure to detail clearly in the note section – thank you!

## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER

Don Curry has recently joined BZC. His photo will appear on the porch bulletin board, so we can greet faces with names.

## SOUNDING BOARD

*This is one of a regular series from the BZC Board of Directors.*

Members of the board are grappling with impermanence: the decay of physical structures (our buildings) and the aging of sangha members and leaders. To competently plan for the future requires being willing to look ahead at what might happen, however difficult that may be, to discuss the implications, and to make plans that assure the ongoing well-being of the sangha and our practice.

We struggled with earthquake safety for several years. We live in earthquake country. There will be earthquakes. Yet at times we found ourselves stuck and slow in getting complete information or approving renovations. Underlying this may be fear or disbelief that our structures could somehow actually crumble. To set fundraising goals for a five-year Building Improvement Project we had to take a hard look at our buildings to see the flaws and weak spots and potential dangers that are uncomfortable to notice.

We are also planning for the future of BZC's leadership. We know that sickness, old age, and death come to us all . . . but can we be open to the inevitability of a future in which our present teachers can no longer fulfill the roles they now perform? Clearly we must be willing to take the steps now to assure that the resources needed to support leadership transition in the future will be available when they are needed. At the January board retreat we openly discussed the possibility of transition. We then were able to develop possible scenarios for the future and proceed with a Leadership Fund campaign based on sound thinking.

Like earthquakes, impermanence is a fact of our lives. But we can choose to practice with impermanence and an uncertain future. In doing so we find creative energy from all of us working together: the board, the sangha, Sojun and Hozan. And we find quiet, joyful faith in our practice, no matter the circumstances. Please feel free to respond. ~ Gerry Oliva, [olivag@fcm.uic.edu](mailto:olivag@fcm.uic.edu)

## FUNDRAISING PARTY A HUGE SUCCESS

Berkeley Zen Center kicked off its 2011 Leadership Fund drive on April 16 with a fun-filled party that celebrated our two beloved teachers, Sojun Mel Weitsman and Hozan Alan Senauke. Folks enjoyed a once-in-a-lifetime "drama combat" between our abbot and vice abbot, ending with a duet that had the audience howling with laughter. Old-time music followed as people made their way to the food table, participated in a silent auction, bought raffle tickets, and shared some good conversation. At party's end, approximately \$9,100 toward our 2011 goal of \$12,000 had been raised through the auction, raffle, and generous donations. Thanks to everyone who contributed toward making this a delightful party.



Stan Dewey with his Tanahashi. *Photo by Colleen Busch*

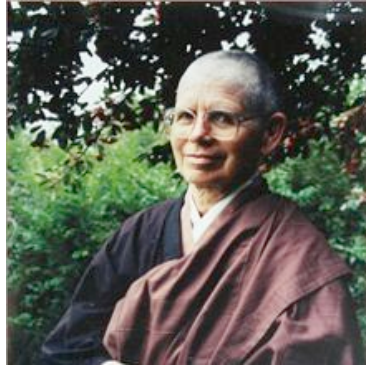


Drama Combat!

*Photo by Dean Bradley*



Ken Powelson and Jane Hirshfield. *Photo by Colleen Busch*



## Giving Precepts

(for Maylie Scott, March 29, 1935 – May 10, 2001)

Ten years have passed  
and still the staccato cadence of your voice  
lightly insists we exclude nothing from this life;  
not 9/11  
or nuclear meltdowns,  
hunger, famine  
nor hope.  
Your steady, clear-eyed confidence  
in the utter rightness of even this  
still is.

Serendipity the tenacious wrenit's song.  
I met you like this, and gave up my job the next day.  
You saw it in each of us,  
direct, quick, straight-spined bull's eye to our Truth.  
Lofted on a rock in full lotus moving through space, you dreamt and  
gave us everything that fit through an unremended pocket hole.  
Just do each thing with devotion, the granite sang.

Ten years have passed.  
The shadow of the bamboo has not stirred in the wind.  
Your message is just as fresh, and vital, and needed.  
Vastly Seen  
The Way  
Clearly Illuminated.  
Dear teacher, dear friend,  
in gratitude,  
we light your ancient lighthouse beacon  
and make it our own.

~ Yaku So Ryu Shin Andrea Thach

## Dear Maylie,

What a wonderful spring breeze  
in the month of May,  
The song of angels is in the air.

The spirit/world is clear, translucent and spacious.  
The heart is glad, sober and loving  
The eye and the heart are joined  
in an infinite embrace

Dear Maylie,  
for a while now I have heard  
your Chinese ancestry singing in your name,  
May Ling

You are and always were a May,  
a yes, a "*si se puede*." Where there is a will,  
there is a way and a Maylie. You  
carried the spirit of spring in your eyebrow.

This is why your spirit will linger  
in our will and in our practice.  
I have the envelope of your first okesa.  
Buddha's robe envelopes and holds  
the emptiness of life forms in her bosom.

An ancient path comes truly  
to surprising fruition in joy and pain  
as Buddha-nature neither appears nor  
disappears in birth  
and death,  
moment to moment

Dear Maylie,  
May you lie in your bed of truth  
passing together with all being for an eternity.  
When you passed we passed with you,  
and so will you as we continue to pass through  
the wondrous gate of the Buddha-Dharma.  
This is the passed, the passing, and the passing  
all the way through

I will always remember  
not our silly lies and sibling rivalries,  
but how the last time we served tea together,  
you graciously revealed the unity  
of the guest, the host and the host within the host  
~ Denkei Raul Moncayo

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