



# Berkeley Zen Center



## September 2011 Newsletter

### LABOR DAY WEEKEND STUDY SESSHIN

This year's Labor Day sesshin will be led by Hozen Alan Senauke, from 5:00 am on Saturday, September 3 through late afternoon on Sunday September 4. Our study topic for sesshin will be two short fascicles from Dogen's *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*—"Shoji," or "Birth and Death," and "Zenki," or "Total Dynamic Working." Translations will be available before sesshin. For information contact the sesshin director, Mary Duryee, 510-872-0507 (before 9 p.m.) or [maduryee@earthlink.net](mailto:maduryee@earthlink.net).

### BZC CAMPOUT

Don't forget this year's Berkeley Zen Center Campout on September 10-11. We've reserved a campsite in Tilden Park. We'll have a potluck dinner and possibly a short hike, as well as s'mores and songs around the campfire, followed by oatmeal and coffee/tea/cocoa in the morning. Join us—families and those without children are all welcome—and you can stay overnight or not. And if you're missing a tent or a sleeping bag, let us know, and we can find one for you. Questions? Contact Katherine at [klo999@yahoo.com](mailto:klo999@yahoo.com), and look for the sign-up on the bulletin board.

### HALF-DAY SITTING--Sunday, 9/11, 8 am-noon

BZC offers eight half-day sittings each year. Each includes five periods of zazen, kinhin (walking meditation) 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 Zen students. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the four-hour schedule. BZC requests a \$10 donation for half-day sittings. If you have questions, contact the September half-day director Nina Sprecher at 510-848-3585 or [ninasprecher@sbcglobal.net](mailto:ninasprecher@sbcglobal.net).



#### 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

### September

#### Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 9/1, 6:20 pm, Friday, 9/2, 6:40 am

#### Labor Day Weekend Sesshin

Saturday, 9/3, 5 am-9:10 pm,

Sunday, 9/4, 5 am-5 pm

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 9/10, 9:40 am

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 9/11, 8:00 am to noon

#### All-Sangha Potluck—Board Nominations

Tuesday, 9/13—dinner 6:30 pm, meeting 7:30 pm

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 9/17

#### One-day Sitting, Aspects of Practice Opens

Sunday, 9/25 – Saturday, 10/22, See article p. 2.

### October

#### Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 10/3, 6:20 pm, Tuesday, 10/4, 6:40 am

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10/8, 9:40 am

#### Beginners' Sitting

Sunday, 10/9, 5 am-5 pm

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 10/15

#### One-day Sitting, Aspects of Practice Closes

Saturday, 10/22

#### Sejiki Ceremony and Celebration

Saturday, 10/29

## ASPECTS OF PRACTICE 2011— THE HEART OF OUR FORMS

Aspects of Practice will be led by Vice-Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke and BZC senior students Leslie Bartholic, Ross Blum, Alexandra Frappier, Greg Denny, Raul Moncayo, Peter Overton, and Laurie Senauke. **We will begin with sesshin on Sunday, September 25**, and continue through the closing sitting on Saturday, October 22. As always, this is an opportunity for new and old students to study and practice together the basics of zazen, forms, and dharma here at BZC. And of course, we will share work, practice discussion, and tea.

This year we will investigate “the heart of our forms.” Lectures and classes will draw from these sources, and copies of relevant texts will be available in advance. The emphasis will be on the expression, meaning, and involvement conveyed through the formal side of our practice. What do the words in our chanting—including those in Japanese—point to? Why don't we change to a more American-style format? How do Suzuki Roshi and Sojun Roshi understand the process of evolving forms? What makes the difference between a stagnant and lively expression of our Zen forms?

We are also wondering what kind of questions you have about forms at BZC. We will have a chance to discuss as a group issues that may be on your mind concerning the meaning and expression of our forms and process. Please send an email to Hozan at [alans@kushiki.org](mailto:alans@kushiki.org) or leave a note in his box on the porch with a suggested question or topic. This will help us to focus where interest is strongest.

As fall begins, please join us for this opportunity to refresh our timeless practice. All the relevant info and sign-up sheets will be posted early in September. See you there.

## ORYOKI INSTRUCTION

Ellen Webb will be teaching oryoki as part of Aspects of Practice on Saturday, October 1, 11:30 am to 12:30 pm in the zendo. There is no sign-up. Any questions, please contact Ellen at [elweb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:elweb@sbcglobal.net).

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
**Third Friday of the month before each issue.**  
**October deadline: Friday, 9/16, 8 pm.**



## Family Activities at BZC

**Saturday Morning 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 email 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 to 8:00. 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.

*Note: family programs (potlucks, kidzendo) resume in September*

September	3	Sesshin – no program
September	10	Childcare
September	16	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
September	17	<b>KIDZENDO</b>
September	24	Childcare
October	1	Childcare
October	8	Childcare
October	14	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
October	15	<b>KIDZENDO</b>
October	22	Sesshin – no program
October	29	<b>SEJIKI Ceremony—come in costume!</b>
November	5	Childcare
November	12	Childcare
November	18	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
November	19	<b>KIDZENDO</b>
November	26	Childcare
December	3	Childcare
December	10	Sesshin—no program
December	16	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
December	17	Interim—no program
December	24	Interim—no program
December	31	Interim—no program



## *Practicing With the Limitations of Our Life*

*Sojun's Reminder, September, 2011*

When I first came to Sokoji Temple in San Francisco, I was surprised by the formality of the practice. I had never encountered anything like it before. As a matter of fact, I always tried to avoid any kind of formality. So I can understand why many newcomers are put off by it. Intuitively I knew that I had to do this, and when I experienced my teacher Suzuki Roshi's composure, his magnanimous mind and totally informal presence, I began to appreciate the limitations that the structure provided.

I came to understand that we are always practicing under various restrictions and limitations. There are rules for everything. The laws of gravity are determining every move we make. I once saw a photo of a light plane stuck nose first into a tree. The caption said, "The law of gravity is strict and unerring, and must be precisely obeyed." Gravity is pulling us down and our life force is welling us upward. The interaction and balance of these two forces control our physical body, as well as the way we think and feel. We are all living under the influence of this fundamental restriction. When we examine our life we can see that we have other restrictions and boundaries: inner restrictions, outer restrictions, mental, social, emotional, imaginary, restrictions of circumstance, time, truth and falsehood, conditioning, fear, and self-deception, to mention a few.

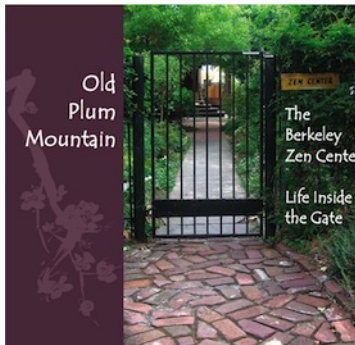
So the question is, how to find our freedom within the restrictive parameters of our life? Caught by partiality, ignorance, circumstances, emotional exaggerations, and cerebral dead ends, our freedom is compromised and our suffering increases. Top athletes need strict rules and discipline to accomplish their goals, as do scientists and artists. A painter has to be able to find complete expression on the parameters of a canvas. A musician must find complete expression using a limited number of notes. People get up in the morning and go to work on time.

Zen students, also have patterns that enable their practice. These patterns, which some see as formalities, allow access to a gate on a fence around an empty field. When the gate is open to the empty field, we can leave the false barriers aside—the conditioning, the fear, the self-deception—and return to the field of our original unbound nature, beyond form and emptiness. Within the so-called formality, we can find our perfect informal freedom. As our practice matures we are able to find that freedom in every circumstance and make it available to others as well.



## SAVE THE DATE!

The San Francisco premiere of *Old Plum Mountain: The Berkeley Zen Center, Life Inside the Gate* will be at the **San Francisco Zen Center, 300 Page Street, on Friday night,**



**September 16, at 7:30**

**pm.** Admission is free but donations will be accepted to help fund translations into foreign languages.

The film weaves a rich tapestry of Soto Zen's ancient ceremonies and rituals. It shows how the Berkeley Zen Center has created a unique practice of American Zen that has

widened its appeal around the country, helping to popularize eastern spiritual practices in the West. Told through the experiences of its members as they engage in a path of spiritual exploration, this 65-minute documentary describes how Zen practice has dramatically changed, challenged, and sustained their lives.

For more information, or to order copies of the DVD, contact: [edherzog@comcast.net](mailto:edherzog@comcast.net) or [www.oldplummountain.org](http://www.oldplummountain.org).

## FINDING PRESENCE IN CONVERSATION

At our meetings in July we decided to continue meeting on a more or less monthly basis, coordinated through an email group. Together we are exploring how to communicate in ways that can create the quality of connection with others and freedom in self-expression that we would like. Our next meeting will on Thursday, September 15 at 7:30 pm. We will meet in either the community room or the zendo. These meetings will continue in the standard BZC class format, including a fee of \$5 per session. Everyone is welcome. If you wish to join our google group, please email Peter Overton at [peterovrtn@gmail.com](mailto:peterovrtn@gmail.com).

### NEW MEMBER

Please welcome new member Alexander Seido Myozan Kantner.



## OFFICE MANAGER'S CORNER

- Reminder: For all payments to BZC, please itemize exactly what the payment covers, with amounts specified for EACH ITEM, even if you think we know what it is for. Separate payments may be combined in one check, but the amounts must be clearly specified. Many thanks for your help.

- Reminder on how to reach the Office Manager on BZC business:

- **Email:** please use the email address: [bzcofficeanager@gmail.com](mailto:bzcofficeanager@gmail.com).
- **Payments, reimbursements, valuable or sensitive information:** Mail slot in kitchen door.
- **General:** Office Manager slot on community room porch.

**NOTE:** Sesshin information sheets go in the Sesshin Director's slot, **NOT** the kitchen door, where the director does not have access.

### Notes from the Librarian

Dear Sangha,

Greetings from your librarian! I'd like to invite you to contact me with any questions or suggestions you have about the library. The best way to reach me is via email, which I've included at the end of this note. I am instituting library hours, a time when I will be available in the community room to answer questions and help you find books. Library hours will begin in September, on the first and third Tuesday of each month from 6:30-7:30 pm. Additionally, I will be available on Saturdays after lecture as often as possible.

We have recently acquired a number of interesting books, including a beautiful picture book focusing on Buddhist images at Angkor Wat in Cambodia, called *Angkor: The Serenity of Buddhism*. Check out the "Recent Acquisitions" section of the library for additional new books. If you are looking for a particular book or would like a book about a specific or general topic, please let me know and I'll do my best to direct you to what is available in our collection.

Finally, I would like to request that if you have a library book that has been checked out for more than two months, please consider returning it so that others may enjoy it. Thanks to everyone for your support and care for our library, and I hope to see you in the community room soon!

Gassho,  
Veronica Reilly  
[very23@gmail.com](mailto:very23@gmail.com)

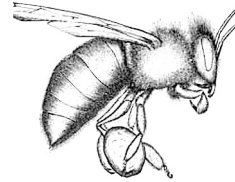
# Chanting the Lotus Sutra

by Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach

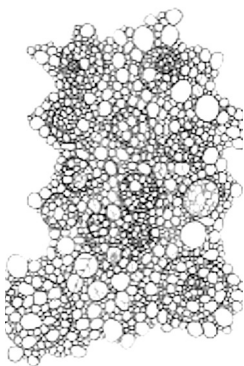
On Sunday, July 24, eleven members of the Lotus Sutra Study group, a few of whom spent the whole day, continuously chanted the entirety of the Lotus Sutra. They were joined for the day by a Nichiren practitioner who found us on the net, and over a dozen other sangha members who stayed for a little or much of the day. Much merit was gained, and lost, these things being transient. But a glimpse of Buddhahood was had by all.

## Chanting the Lotus Sutra

Inside bees hum,  
pollinating the universe.  
A light sprinkle of umdumbara flowers turns to rain.  
Loping gallop crosses boundaryless eons  
and lands of carnelian and lapis lazuli.  
Retinas and uvulas vibrate in unison  
Alongside innumerable enlightenment beings  
Springing from all directions.  
until Chapter 20.  
This voice chokes and stumbles,  
The wonderful Law's gavel crashing across ancient, rutted passageways.  
The sun sets. Light populates the late summer sky.  
Then, re-emerges among kaleidoscoping sounds  
Swollen in perfect-jeweled symphony.



## Eko to the Chanting of the Lotus Sutra



On this summer day, from early until late,  
In joyful reception of the prediction of our Buddhahood;  
In our conviction to leave the burning house and skillfully guide all beings to  
their safety;  
Revealing to each and every one the jewel hidden in her robe;  
Traveling beyond the magic city, and home again in this one day  
Joined by all the myriad of bodhisattvas-mahasattvas from across all time and  
space, risen out of the ground in jeweled stupas and appearing overhead from  
countless worlds,  
we have turned and been turned.  
With great faith in the message of the Lotus Sutra, we dedicate the merit of our  
chanting of this great teaching today to  
The well-being and freedom of all beings everywhere.  
Without doubt, they will all realize that they are the Buddha-way.

## SOUNDING BOARD

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

Over the past 18 months we've have been working to refine BZC's board nomination process. Our goal is a system that is both open and inclusive. As it now stands, in accordance with the bylaws, the board develops a list of potential candidates, starting with a wide field and narrows that down through a voting process to a final six. We seek a diversification of candidates, considering factors such as gender, age, past board experience or not, BZC residency, and skills in a variety of areas. In the April and August newsletters, we've explained the nomination process, and encouraged sangha members to make their own nominations of fellow members who would be willing candidates.

At our last meeting we agreed on a relatively new idea which is to invite all final candidates to join one of the many board committees, whether they are elected to the board or not. We believe that our candidates, nominated either by the board or by individual members, have much to offer our community. If they are willing and interested, it makes good sense to include them in our collective effort to manage and guide BZC's affairs. The important thing is taking care of our practice place.

- Ron Nestor

## CHIDENS—OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS!

Seeking new chidens to fill openings in our fall and winter schedule, dates negotiable!

Caring for the altars in the zendo, a chiden deepens personal practice while supporting the practice of all. Tasks include flower arranging, filling water bowls, caring for candles, dusting, and straightening. A chiden signs on for one week (M-F), coming each day to prepare the altars. (You may repeat once every six months if you are available.)

If you'd like to make this quiet offering to the community, please call head chiden Catharine Lucas at 526-3100 to arrange training.

Gassho!

## BZC PHOTO LIBRARY ADDITIONS

The BZC Photo Library, located on the internet at [berkeleyzencenter.shutterfly.com](http://berkeleyzencenter.shutterfly.com), has three new additions: Mountains and Rivers, Summer 2011; Workday, July 17, 2011, and the Special Workday, August 11, 2011. Several other events can also be found here. For further info regarding this site, contact Dean Bradley or Ko Blix.

## MID-YEAR FINANCIAL REPORT

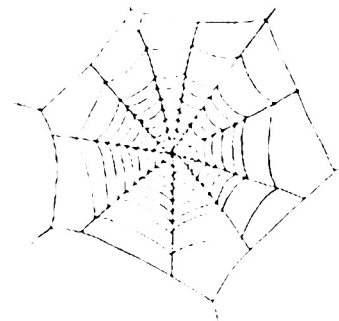
Overall, BZC is in a very healthy financial condition. We have in excess of \$132,000 in cash or other liquid assets and no significant debt. Compared to previous years, when we've had to borrow cash from reserves to cover operating expenses in the lean summer months, we're in good shape. The board will be exploring safe and wholesome investments for some of this cash in the second half of the year.

At mid-year BZC's income from all sources is very close to our budget. Expenses exceed budget somewhat, mainly due to payroll taxes and benefits. Overall, income after expenses is about \$6,600 or 11% below our projection for this time of year.

Non-member (public) support is \$7,700 over budget, mostly from two large non-cash donations.

Membership dues are \$1,100 over budget. However, member donations are lagging behind what we budgeted by about \$9,600. We could "catch up" if members increased their donations for the rest of the year.

In all areas of program expense the people who are responsible—such as the Tenzo, Head Chiden and Head Gardener—are being very disciplined in keeping costs down. Thank you for such careful use of our precious resources!



## When I learned to gassho properly

Spiders keep rebuilding their webs  
this breezy hot October.

I pass one of them,  
empty of prey,  
to the dokusan hut,

where a teacher sits  
to welcome  
a student's  
continuous mistake.

- Michael McVey





*Photo by Ross Estes Blum*

### **MEN'S SHELTER DINNER: Over 15 Years and We're Still Cooking!**

BZC has a crew that cooks and serves Friday night dinner at the Berkeley Men's Shelter twice a month, every month—and we've been doing it for over 15 years! Lance Shows heads things up on the second Friday of the month and Laurie Senauke is the tenzo on the fourth Friday. Every time they do this, they need two or three volunteers to be assistant cooks, four more people to serve the food and clean up the shelter kitchen at the end of the meal, a shopper, and someone to provide dessert. It's satisfying work, and more help is always needed. Please consider adding your name to the sign-up sheet on the BZC bulletin board. The food offerings to help the homeless are, like offerings in the zendo, an opportunity to give to something larger than oneself. For more information, contact Lance at [lanceshows@pacbel.net](mailto:lanceshows@pacbel.net), or Laurie at [alan@kushiki.org](mailto:alan@kushiki.org).



*Photo by Ross Estes Blum*

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