



# Berkeley Zen Center



February 2012 Newsletter

## WOMEN'S POTLUCK

The women of Berkeley Zen Center invite you to attend our afternoon potluck on Saturday, February 4, noon to 2:00 pm at Margret Wotkyns' house, 2929 Wheeler Street, in Berkeley, two blocks above Shattuck between Russell and Ashby. This will be our first informal get-together after our Women's All-Day Sitting Meditation in October.

As one of the attendees from our all-day event said, "We are looking to keep the momentum going from our women's sesshin, which was a gathering of great bonding and learning. We successfully created a wonderful space in which people openly expressed themselves fully, and that's no easy trick!"

To continue the process of growing our women's community, we welcome women for a delicious lunch and ever-stimulating conversation.

Please join us! Reply to one of the following people: Sue Oehser, [soehser@earthlink.net](mailto:soehser@earthlink.net) or 510-339-0243, Margret Wotkyns, [mwotkyns@comcast.net](mailto:mwotkyns@comcast.net) or 510-710-2974, or Afsaneh Michaels, [afsaneham@gmail.com](mailto:afsaneham@gmail.com) or 415-533-0491.

The sign-up sheet is now posted on the bulletin board. Let us know what you'll bring and please have food already prepared.

## ORYOKI INSTRUCTION

Ellen Webb will be giving oryoki instruction in the zendo after the Saturday program on February 11, from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. There is no sign-up. If you have questions, or need to make an appointment for another time, please contact Ellen at [elweb@sbcglobal.net](mailto:elweb@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

### February

#### Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 2/2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 2/3, 6:40 am

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 2/4, 9:40 am

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 2/5, 8:00 am–noon

#### Two-day Sesshin

Saturday-Sunday, 2/18–19

#### Buddha's Parinirvana

Saturday, 2/18

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 2/25

#### Beginners' Sitting

Sunday, 2/26

### March

#### Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 3/1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 3/2 6:40 am

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 3/4, 8:00 am–noon

#### All-Sangha Potluck—Budget Meeting

Tuesday, 3/6, 6:30 pm

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3/10, 9:40 am

#### One-day Sitting

Saturday, 3/17

#### Zazenkai (Just Sitting Day)

Sunday, March 25, 8:00 am–5:10 pm

## SOJUN DESCRIBES FEBRUARY STUDY SESSHIN—FEBRUARY 18 & 19

Suzuki Roshi was one of those teachers who in every generation make the vast complexity of Buddhist teachings available to the present generation of practitioners in a way that directly touches their lives and makes authentic practice possible.

In this sesshin class, to be held Saturday and Sunday, February 18 and 19, which alternates between zazen and study, we will explore the main points that Suzuki Roshi stressed, his manner of teaching, what he believed was relevant for us, how he related to us, and his legacy. There will be time for questions and discussion.

## HALF-DAY SITTING

**Sunday, February 5, 8:00 a.m.—12:00 noon**

Here's a chance for mid-winter calm practice! BZC offers seven 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 entire four-hour schedule. There is a \$10 donation requested for half-day sittings. If you have questions, or if you cannot sign up on the bulletin board, contact the February half-day director Stan Dewey at [standewey@comcast.net](mailto:standewey@comcast.net) or 510-528-1989. There will be another half-day sitting on March 4.

## BEGINNERS' SITTING

On Sunday, February 26, BZC will offer a beginners' sitting from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. Nyu U Ho Sho Karen Sundheim will offer instruction in the basic forms of our practice—zazen, kinhin, service—while maintaining our ground in meditation throughout the day. There will be a lecture on zazen and plenty of time for discussion.

This is a good opportunity to ask questions about our practice. Participants should bring a bag lunch, which we will eat informally in silence at midday. Newer people are particularly encouraged to take part, but we welcome longtime students who can enjoy a day of sitting and model the richness of our practice. The cost will be \$15 for the day. Please see the zendo bulletin board for a sign-up sheet and further information, or contact Karen at [ksundheim@gmail.com](mailto:ksundheim@gmail.com), or Sesshin Director Mary Duryee at [maduryee@earthlink.net](mailto:maduryee@earthlink.net).



## 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 in the community room at 9:30 for a meet and greet, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room for more activities, possibly including formal tea and one minute of meditation and/or free play, depending on the realities of the moment.

**Family Practice Email Group** To make it easier to publicize, announce and remind ourselves about family practice activities at BZC, we have a Yahoo group. We'd love to have you join this list if you have children in your life, even if you don't typically attend family practice events. We promise to only send, at most, ONE email per week, just a short reminder of upcoming events. To join, just email Laurie ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)) or Marie ([marie\\_hopper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net)).

February	4	Childcare
February	11	Childcare
February	18	Sesshin—no program
February	25	<b>Kidzendo</b>
March	3	Childcare
March	10	Childcare
March	17	Sesshin—no program
March	24	Childcare
March	31	Childcare
April	7	<b>Buddha's Birthday</b>
April	14	Childcare
April	21	Childcare
April	28	Childcare

## ALL-SANGHA POTLUCK & BUDGET MEETING Tuesday, March 6, 6:30 pm

All members are warmly invited to share potluck offerings of great food, as well as discussion and approval of the 2012 BZC budget. The budget is the treasurer's best effort to project the financial goals and realities for BZC in this new year. Your presence at this meeting makes a difference. Watch the bulletin board for more details.

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
**Third Friday of the month before each issue.**  
**March deadline: Friday, 2/17, 8:00 pm**



## ***Sojun Roshi's random train of thought***

*January, 2012*

I enjoy going to the root of words and discovering their basic meanings. For instance, the word circumstance: standing in the center of a circle and viewing the circumference. Our present circumstance is the standpoint, the spot from which we observe things. Dogen Zenji says that when we are on a boat in the ocean where no land is in sight the horizon looks only round, but that it is neither round nor square. Nevertheless, wherever we stand, our world extends in all directions from this viewing point. Seen from above, a human figure seems roundish. But we have a front and a back, and our feelers are mostly focused on what is in front. A fly can see all the way around, which enables it to be circumspect and hard to catch.

Since our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and touch are mostly (but not altogether) confined to the direction we face, it's hard to experience the full circle that surrounds our standpoint. This makes it easy to fall into partiality, to see only the tip of the iceberg and not the whole body, or to be attached to our incomplete views. Suzuki Roshi talked about the "Tambancan," the man who is carrying a board on one shoulder and can only see on one side and not the other. People fight each other to the death driven by partiality, leaving themselves open to the worst kinds of exploitation.

The introduction to the first case in the *Hekiganroku* [the *Blue Cliff Record*], "Bodhidharma and Emperor Wu," says, "When you see smoke in the distance you know there is fire. When you see horns on the other side of a fence, you know there is a cow underneath. When you pull one corner of a piece of cloth the other three follow." We can enter the gate of non-duality anywhere, anytime. When asked who he was, Bodhidharma said, "I don't know." What incredible freedom!

We enjoy climbing to the top of a mountain where we have a commanding view with no obstructions. We can stand in the center of the circle and see all the way around. Zen temples are often located on mountains and have mountain names. Those in the lowlands also have mountain names. Zen students too have mountain names. Master Yunmen, referring to his students, said, "There is one treasure. It is hidden in this mountain form." "One treasure" is each one's true name. Master Hongzhi says, "Wander into the center of the circle of wonder." I think our ancestors might say, "Step into the center of the infinite circle of zazen and let go."



## BUDDHAS PARINIRVANA

On Saturday, February 18th, please join us for a brief ceremony commemorating Shakyamuni Buddha's passage into Parinirvana (nirvana beyond nirvana) upon the death of his physical body. The ceremony will be held immediately after lecture. All are welcome to attend.

## FAMILY SITTING

### New for 2012! Save the Date!

IT-TAKES-A-SANGHA: Announcing a new concept for BZC, a one-day FAMILY SITTING, to be held October 7, for families and friends of families. A day when partners won't have to choose which one sits zazen while the other sits the children; single parents won't have to skip sesshin for lack of childcare; and best of all, children of all ages will get to experience Zen Center as a special place to be and to belong.

All are invited to join this sitting in support of family practice. Sitting and working together, our grandparent generation and the "aunts and uncles" of the sangha will connect with parents we've missed and get acquainted with the next generation.

The 9:00 am-4:00 pm schedule will allow full- or half-day sign-ups, with thirty-minute sittings (including ten minutes of zazen in one period for interested older children), plus kinhin, lecture, lunch, work period (involving children), and tea with discussion. Childcare for appropriate age groups will include activities led by sangha members, yet to be identified! Planners Marie Hopper, Laurie Senauke, and Catharine Lucas are looking for volunteers to lead art, music, story-telling, or movement activities.

We are still in the planning stages and eager for your input. E-mail questions, suggestions, or offers of help to Marie Hopper at [marie\\_hopper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net).

## CLASS FEE CHANGE

At our last meeting the board voted to convert our current two-tier system of class fees to a single fee of \$10.00 per class. In the previous system two rates were charged: a fee of \$10.00 applied to classes taught by priests who have received dharma transmission, while \$5.00 was charged for classes taught by all other teachers. The board has decided that this monetary distinction is not necessary, and that the increased amount will also help with our operating budget. Teachers and workshop leaders do have the option of presenting their classes on a donation basis if they prefer. In addition, our policy has always been to provide a discount to any student who has difficulty affording our classes. No one will be turned away for lack of funds.

- Ron Nestor, Class Coordinator

## CHANGE IN PRACTICE FORM

On Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday mornings, following the Maka Hannya Haramita Shingyo, we dedicate the merit of our practice to our ancestors, including Indian, Chinese, and Japanese ancestors, women ancestors, and then Suzuki Roshi, the founder of our lineage here in the United States. Sojun Roshi has suggested that we keep our hands in gassho throughout the dedication, so that we are showing Suzuki Roshi the same respect we show to the ancestors who came before him. So, after chanting the names of the ancestors, our hands should *remain in gassho* as the kokyō chants the dedication of merit to Suzuki Roshi.

Questions? See Zendo Manager Tamar, Hozan Sensei, or Sojun Roshi.

## BOOK TABLE CLEARANCE SALE

A select number of books will be sold at 50% off on two Saturdays, February 25 and March 3. Stop by the book table at 11:15 following lecture and check out the great selection. As usual, books can be bought with cash or check.

## DISCUSSION WITH SATURDAY LECTURERS

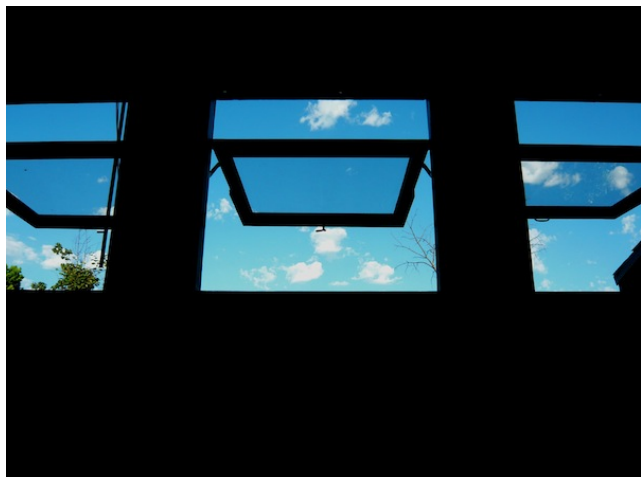
At an Open Discussion in December, a number of members expressed strong interest in meeting with the Saturday lecturer for a more informal discussion after the talk. We will be trying this out for the next few months with some speakers, to see if there is sufficient interest and energy to make this a regular part of our Saturday offering. For this to work, we need volunteers to put chairs away and lock up the zendo after the discussion, so that the Saturday Director does not need to extend his or her time at BZC after a very long morning. If you choose to stay for the discussion, please let the Saturday director know if you can help out with this. No previous experience is necessary. If you have never done this before, please see the zendo manager (Tamar), or the Saturday director.





**A sangha within a sangha:** Students of Sojun Mel Weitsman gather around him at the end of the Fall 2011 practice period at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center, co-led by Sojun and San Francisco Zen Center Central Abbot Steve Stucky (not pictured). **Back:** John Busch, Andrea Thach, Merrill Collett, Sojun Mel Weitsman, Joel Feigin, Carol Paul, Al Tribe, Greg Fain, Linda Galijan. **Front/kneeling:** Luke Iwabuchi, Colleen Busch, Gerry Oliva, Ki (Matt) Gillam.





## HOW TO CLOSE A WINDOW AND GET ENLIGHTENED!

Please close our zendo windows and turn/pull on the latch *gently*. The original latches from the building of our temple are not available locally and have been outsourced to cyberspace. The last one I found (at Omega Salvage) was used today. When we close the zendo windows the same way we close the zendo door we open to the enlightened life. Try this at home--it really works. Thanks.

Ross  
Repair & Maintenance

## OFFICE MANAGER'S CORNER

1. Tax-related letters about donations for 2011 were sent at the end of January.

2. The new 2012 BZC Directory is in the process of being assembled. If you would like to change your listing from that in 2011, or have contact information that needs to be updated, please send this to the office manager as soon as possible, by e-mail to [bzcoffice manager@gmail.com](mailto:bzcoffice manager@gmail.com), or by snail mail to 1931 Russell Street, Berkeley, CA 94703.

3. **Important Reminder:** When payments are made to BZC, please specify on your check or envelope EXACTLY what items and their amounts the payment covers.

## INVITATION TO ALL CHIDENS: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

*All old-timers, newcomers, and wanna-bes are invited to join fellow chidens after lecture on **Saturday, March 24** for a potluck lunch and an orientation/review session led by Sojun and our head chiden.*

Deep bows to the chidens, old and new, who make up our 2012 roster, and a warm welcome to anyone interested in joining our ranks. (Note: you can be a chiden even if you are a relative newcomer to BZC! There are a few spaces left, and this is a great time to sign on. Call head chiden Catharine Lucas at 510-526-3100.)

Chidening [*Ed. note: to chiden, v., intrans.*], the art and practice of caring for our altar, is a rich opportunity to deepen your practice of mindfulness and your awareness of zendo forms. Though it is a solitary practice, each chiden becomes part of an invisible network of those who share and support each other in this position. And now here's a chance to get acquainted!

We'll start around 11:30 in the community room and move to the zendo from 12:30 to 2:00 pm. Please bring a dish to share and your questions, suggestions, confusions, and smart tips for our shared work. An RSVP will be appreciated, to [cmanerlucas@earthlink.net](mailto:cmanerlucas@earthlink.net). Or watch for bulletin board sign-up.

I look forward to seeing you!

In gassho,  
Catharine Lucas  
Head Chiden

## CONSIDER THE MEN'S SHELTER DINNER!

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).



## \*What They're Saying About Us\*

By Ed Herzog

From January 3-15, *Tricycle*, the international Buddhist magazine, aired *Old Plum Mountain, The Berkeley Zen Center, Life Inside the Gate* on its website film club. Members were able to screen the documentary film and participate in an online discussion about it. The following are some of the comments about BZC that viewers posted on the *Tricycle* website after seeing the film:

"Seeing the dedication, the discipline, the...practice in such a loving environment. I really loved it."

"Oh, how lovely. I wish I lived there...it speaks to me of wanting to belong and feel...cared about."

"It's a real 'back to basics' view of practice, and how an organization based upon the dharma can actually function. The frankness of the participants in describing their practice and how very challenging it is was refreshing."

"You have made BZC sound even more vibrant and appealing! Soto-based communities are quite rare here in the UK, and there is nothing on the scale of BZC...Being true to one's roots—and your roots are so special—as well as true to the precepts, whilst keeping your heads above water, must be a constant challenge. As a group of people you are an inspiration."

"I am again inspired to be present in every moment, in every chore, in every situation. This was a lovely story about one zendo, but it reminds me that practice is right here, right now."

"The peace and the beauty inside and out of the zendo must make it a great place to meditate."

"The stories of the centre members have inspired me to take a closer look at my own practice, lose the unnecessary complexity, and slowly drench myself afresh in the teachings. A wonderful way to begin the New Year."

"What an incredible group of individuals! The serenity of the center comes through your lens."

"It feels as if Maitreya is being born today as a sangha here of which you are a part...clearly you are not filming as a neutral bystander (helicoptering in and hitting the ground running, etc.) but rather as engaged in the material—the flower and its soil—such that intimacy and genuineness radiate throughout."

"Thank you for the joys of sangha!"

To me these comments are reminders about what a unique, caring, and special practice place and sangha we have. Gasshos to all!

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how to grow into a magic garden

telescoping to buckle shoes  
at the bottom of wooden zendo steps  
i'm siphoned into a beckoning landscape  
a midget field luscious with

small plums dotted among  
clumps of wild strawberries nestled beneath  
thick snaking low-stretching limbs of  
the old lemon shrub

Alexandra Yurkovsky



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