



# Berkeley Zen Center



## May 2014 Newsletter

### Spring Practice Period

**Saturday, May 10 – Sunday June 22**

Practice period at BZC this spring begins with the Opening Ceremony on the afternoon of Saturday, May 10 and ends with the Shuso Ceremony on the afternoon of Sunday, June 22. Sojun Roshi has invited Kogen Kudo John Mogyé – *Constant Presence/Courageous Path* – to be Shuso and serve as exemplar of devoted practice for us. We invite BZC members to participate in this time of intensified practice. The full schedule of events is on the bulletin board.

To participate, please fill out a registration form on the bulletin board shelf. You must also sign up for sesshin and a number of events, even though you may have noted them in your registration form. Those sign-up sheets will be posted.

There are some requirements for participation in the practice period. These are detailed on the registration form. The spirit of this practice is expressed by Sojun Roshi in his words on the following page.



### Practice Period Events

- Opening Sitting: May 10, 5 am - 9 pm
- Opening/Shuso Entering Ceremony: May 10, 4 pm
- Shuso talks/lectures: May 12, 17, 30, and June 7
- Classes: Thursdays, May 15 - June 12, 7:15-8:45 pm
- Bansan (tea, dharma discussion with the abbot): May 16, 5:40 pm
- Dinner and Skit Night: May 31, 6 pm
- Shosan (dharma dialogue with the abbot): June 13, 5:40 pm & June 16, 5:40 am
- Lay Ordination: June 14, 3 pm
- Five-day Sesshin: June 18 to 22
- Shuso Hossen (dharma dialogue with the shuso): June 22, 3:30 pm

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

#### May

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Thursday, 5/1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 5/2, 6:40 am

#### **One-Day Sesshin, Practice Period Opens**

Saturday, 5/10

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 5/17, 9:40 am

#### **Practice Period Dinner and Skit Night**

Saturday, 5/31

#### June

#### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 6/1

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Tuesday, 6/3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 6/4, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 6/14, 9:40 am

#### **Lay Ordination / Zaike Tokudo**

Saturday, 6/14

#### **Five-Day Sesshin, End of Practice Period**

Wednesday 6/18 – Sunday 6/22

#### **Shuso Hossen**

Saturday, 6/22, 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.

## Our Approach to Practice Period



During the six weeks of practice period we have the opportunity to renew and concentrate our effort, and re-establish our practice in beginner's mind. Practice period has some minimum requirements, but within these requirements each person can create his or her own schedule. This is the nature of lay practice. Some will be able to do only the minimum, while others will be able to extend or stretch themselves much more.

It should be clearly understood that in no way is any sangha member required to participate, nor is there any pressure to do so. You should all feel free to continue to come as usual if you are not part of the practice period. When you include your zendo schedule in your calendar it incorporates zazen into the rhythm of your life as an intention rather than as a random or arbitrary activity. When we design our schedule for a limited time period, taking into consideration all of the other factors and responsibilities in our life, we have a foundation for practice. It is also necessary to honor our commitments and to be realistic about how we create our schedule.

I like to think of the spirit of practice period as the wish to do it all, and then narrowing it down to what is practical or possible, rather than simply picking and choosing pieces of it based on preference or convenience. This helps to create an edge; something to push against but not enough to be inhibiting. When we all have this attitude it creates a strong sangha feeling of mutual support and encouragement.

It is also important to manifest the spirit of zazen in our home life and work life as continuous, well-rounded practice; not just something we do on the cushion. This can also provide a good atmosphere for those who are sitting and are not in a position to practice as fully. What makes the difference are the requirements and commitments. Except for that, we (participants and non-participants) are all practicing together.

Our Spring practice period can set a tone for the whole year.  
- Sojun

## Family Activities at BZC

### Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Supervised play is offered free of charge many Saturday mornings (see schedule below) for 9:40 am zazen through lecture. Supervising is Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. If you want to use this service, contact Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or lauries AT kushiki.org by noon the Friday before.

Coverage for 8:45 am zazen instruction is offered by arrangement; contact Laurie for information.

### KidZendo

Kidzendo is a program for children three and up, offered about twice a month during the school year, usually on the 2nd and 4th Saturdays, from 9:30 to 11:15 am (check schedule below). Together, we explore meditation, mindfulness, compassion and Buddhist traditions in a kid-friendly fashion. We are developing our curriculum and experimenting with what works best for our situation, which often includes a range of ages from pre-school through late elementary. BZC members Tamar and Judy Fleischman are among those teaching. Come take part! Our program includes songs, stories, discussions, snacks, walks, and art activities. Laurie Senauke oversees the program and can answer questions and receive input.

Family practice schedule:

May 3	Supervised play
May 10	Sesshin - no program
May 17	Supervised play
May 24	<b>Kidzendo</b>
May 31	Supervised play
June 7	Supervised play
June 14	Supervised play
June 21	Sesshin - no program
June 28	Supervised play

### Family Practice E-mail Group

To make it easier to communicate about family practice activities at BZC, we have a Yahoo group. We only send, at most, ONE e-mail per week – a short reminder of upcoming events. To join, e-mail Marie at [marie\\_hopper AT sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper_AT_sbcglobal.net) or Laurie.

**Please RSVP for ALL family activities to lauries AT kushiki.org! Thank you.**

# At the Heart

When I began practice at the old Sokoji Temple in San Francisco in 1964, we were chanting the Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra in Japanese three times during service. The Sutra cards had a word-for-word translation along with the Japanese, so we had some understanding of what the Sutra was saying. But we all wanted an English version that was suitable for chanting. So in 1970, the Tassajara Director, Peter Schneider, put together a version drawn from a few existing translations, which became the basis of our present translation(s).

Many of us actually liked the chanting in Japanese for several reasons. The one syllable to a beat makes the rhythm and intensity more satisfying and powerful and the meaning seems to come through in the effort of chanting itself. The English version has so many connecting words that it tends to inhibit the flow, and sounds awkward with the mokugyo. That is why in Berkeley we chant without the mokugyo in a way that is closer to our own manner of expression and has a nice flow. This is one reason why we continue to chant the Sutra in Japanese as well as in English.

The Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra that we and Buddhists all over the world chant every day is the touchstone, the heart of the six hundred section Prajna Paramita Sutras that express the wisdom of the second turning of the wheel of Dharma giving expression to the non-dual understanding of form and emptiness of the Mahayana. In these 25 lines of the Heart Sutra, the meaning of the complete Sutra is held in a tightly compact form, like a bullion cube that when put into water releases its flavors.

The Heart Sutra is our song. We sing it every day. We may form some ideas about it, but what is it actually saying? Why do we sing it, and what is the relevance of it in our daily life?

This will be the theme of our May/June practice period. We can call it “Unpacking the Heart Sutra and enjoying its wonderful flow as a basis of practice.”

Our texts for the class will be The Tiger’s Cave: Trevor Leggett interviews Abbot Obora on the meaning of the Sutra, and Edward Conze’s commentary on the Heart Sutra. Obora gives living everyday examples of Prajna Paramita as our actual practice. Edward Conze’s analysis is more scholarly, and a good contrast to Obora. Both of these texts appeared in the early 60’s, along with the beginning of my practice, and I have grown up with them as mainstays of my study.

Joshu asked Nansen, “What is the way?” Nansen said, “Ordinary mind is the way.”

- Sojun Roshi



*Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, from shunryusuzuki.com.*

## **One-Day Sesshin Opening of Spring Practice Period Saturday, May 10, 5:00 am – 9:00 pm**

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sesshin on Saturday, May 10, from 5:00 am until



9:00 pm. All are welcome to attend. If this is your first sesshin at BZC, it is strongly recommended that you first participate in a full Saturday program and that you speak with the sesshin director. The fee is \$35 and is due by May 7. All details are on the sign-up sheet.

Our practice period Shuso entering ceremony will take place that day at 4:00 pm. All practice period participants should make it a priority to attend the entering ceremony and support the Shuso.

After you've signed up for sesshin, please complete a sesshin information form and place it in the sesshin director's box. (If you completed one previously, don't complete a new one unless information has changed.) If you have questions, contact the sesshin director, Carol Paul, caroljpaul AT yahoo.com or 510.206.5051.

## **Join the Shuso for Tea**

If you are in the Spring practice period, please plan to have tea with the Shuso on one of the following dates:

Wednesday May 14, 7 am

Thursday May 15, 7 am

Saturday May 17, noon

Monday May 19, 4:30 pm

Friday May 23, 7 am

Saturday May 24, noon

Friday May 30, 4:30 pm

Tuesday June 3, 4:30 pm

Saturday June 7, noon

Tuesday June 10, 7 am

Wednesday June 11, 4:30 pm

A sign-up sheet with information is on the patio bulletin board. You may contact the Benji, John Busch, with questions at 510.710.7183 or john AT mobu.org.

## **Half-Day Sitting**

**Sunday, June, 1 8:00 am - 12:00 noon**

Half-day sittings include five periods of zazen, kinhin (walking meditation) and an informal tea. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the entire four-hour schedule. A \$10 donation is requested. If you have questions or if you cannot sign up on the bulletin board, contact the June half-day director Greg Denny at greg AT techsperience.org or 510.559.8831.

## **Sojun Roshi's Practice Period Class**

Sojun Roshi's Heart Sutra class (see Sojun's article on page 3), will start on Thursday evening, May 15, and run for five weeks. The class begins at 7:15 and ends at 8:45. Copies of the two texts we'll be using are on the patio shelf or may be purchased online. Fee for the series is \$50 plus copy fees, which will be less than \$10 for each text, payable preferably by check at the first class. Discounts are available for those in need and can be arranged with class coordinator, Ron Nestor, at our first meeting. The class is also open to those not in the practice period but is intended as a series rather than on a drop-in basis.

## **Revival of the 20's and 30's Dharma Group**

The 20's and 30's dharma group that met regularly for a number of years is being re-activated. Sojun Mel Weitsman and Gerry Oliva will co-lead the group, developing an annual calendar of monthly meetings and more. Our aim is to cultivate a supportive environment that promotes kalyana mita, spiritual friendship, for young adults. It will provide an opportunity for members to get to know others in their age group and to support each other in bringing practice more fully into their daily lives. The initial format will be a short period of sitting, an opportunity to check in about personal dharma practice and open discussion about Saturday's lecture, an agreed-upon reading or other topics selected by the group. We hope that leadership will emerge from group members and other formats and activities will develop. Meeting dates for 2014 are: 5/24, 6/28, 7/19, 8/30, 9/27, 10/25, 11/22, 12/13. For information contact Gerry Oliva at olivag AT fcm.ucsf.edu.



## In Memory of Ann Livingstone

In my mind, Ann Livingstone definitely belongs in our lineage of stealth women ancestors. I don't mean to imply that she was a perfect person without struggles and problems. It's more that she faced who she was with dignity, and shared herself with others in a complete and authentic way. Most importantly she taught us also something about how to grow old. Her Zen practice was absolutely central to who she was and how she lived. I believe she began Zen practice when she lived in Japan who knows how long ago. Before she moved to Berkeley in 1995, she was part of a sitting group led by Betty Warren, who, along with Della Goetz and Jean Ross, was one of Suzuki Roshi's very first American Zen students. So she had certainly been practicing for over 20 years when I met her.

Ann had a deep and abiding devotion to BZC and a consistent practice schedule, which she gave up only at the very end of her life, although she made adjustments as her limitations increased. When she was still driving, she was here like clockwork on Monday mornings, Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings. She had a black zafu and zabuton neatly stowed in her studio apartment for daily sitting practice. Until the very end, she refused to let her infirmity become an excuse not to practice. She also refused to let it be an excuse not to get to BZC by herself on the bus or not to do her shopping or walk up the steep hill to the little apartment where she lived for many years.

Ann would always appear at BZC dressed immaculately, with her own personal flair. She loved bright feminine colors – reds, pinks and yellows, but I also remember a dignified beige jacket. She held her back SOOO straight, even when she was 90. She exuded the steely rigour and discipline that I have only seen



elsewhere in highly trained Tassajara monks.

I think she was trying hard, but with only minimal success, to impart some of these qualities to me. She told me many times that I should use face cream. She even bought me a jar of lotion once, but I was too lazy

to use it every day the way she told me to. This caused her to purse her lips in silent reprobation. For her, the

care of one's appearance was like a priest's care for a robe. It was not about being beautiful, it was about carrying oneself, and conducting oneself, as a person of substance in the world.

In her later years, she needed more help negotiating the activities of her daily life, but she carried herself with such dignity that people ended up feeling that it was their privilege to help her. From the moment she arrived



at BZC on Saturdays, we all almost fell over ourselves to make sure she had what she needed to be comfortable. I still remember John Busch lifting her favorite kneeling chair high over his head, as he carried it over to the zendo from the community room. Ann also inspired gracious responses outside the temple gates. She like to get her peanut butter ground freshly at the Berkeley Bowl bulk counter, even when there was plenty out on the shelf. She sent me on this errand for her once, and the instant I told the young man behind the counter who the order was for, his face brightened, and he stopped what he was doing to start up the grinder right away.

Maybe Ann inspired this kind of attentiveness and care because it was what she offered to others. She was a friend to many of us in the sangha. She got to know each of us, and I'm assuming that she made everybody feel the way she made me feel. I felt that she really noticed me, and had simple concrete ways of letting me know that I was important and that I mattered. One of my vices used to be chewing gum, and for a while, she would slip me an orange pack of citrus flavored Trident gum every Saturday as soon as she saw me. She was always so engaged and interested in what I had to say, that whenever I spent time with her, I felt like a better, more worthy person. I know she extend this attitude beyond our sangha. For many years, she was a phone volunteer at Herrick Hospital. Every week she went in to call people who were depressed or shut in and needed to be monitored. Perhaps others know more about exactly what she did, but I remember her devotion and connection to the people she called. One of her top priorities, after she recovered from a hip fracture a few years ago, was to return to this volunteer work as soon as possible. I like to think that she called with the same

concern and interest she showed to me.

I recognized that she was truly my teacher the day I went to her apartment to help her clean, the week before she moved into a senior living establishment. She was moving out of her home, and giving up quite a bit of her independence, and many treasured possessions, but that did not mean that it wasn't important to leave the apartment in good condition for the next tenant. The job she gave me was to wipe down each slat in the vertical ceiling-to-floor blinds in front of the glass sliding doors to her patio. There were thirty-five of them – I counted. This seemed to me to be above and beyond anything a landlord would require, but for some reason I did it anyway, without any argument. Then, she didn't like how I had done it, and so she wanted me to do it all over again. And so I did, almost cheerfully. As I wiped each slat, stretching to the low ceiling and then bending my knees to the floor, I recognized that something had been transmitted. There is no one else in the world who has ever inspired that kind of effort in me even once, let alone twice.

The morning after she died, I heard an unfamiliar bird trill, sweet and low, amidst the usual morning chirps. The trill filled my heart with a mix of incredible joy and sadness. After service, Ross announced that Ann had died the night before. Rest in peace Ann. Thank you so much for your practice and for your continuous teaching. - Tamar

*Read and share more memories about Ann at [www.annlivingstone.wordpress.com](http://www.annlivingstone.wordpress.com).*

## Changing Hands

Our temple is supported by many sangha members serving in a variety of practice positions. We offer our heartfelt thanks to all these people and note the following changes:

Laurie Senauke has served as BZC webmaster this past year. She has done a great job of keeping our website organized and up to date. We welcome Troy DuFrene as our new webmaster.

Sherry Smith-Williams has taken care of the dokusan hut with great devotion for more than three years. We are grateful to Judy Fleischman for taking on this role.

Marty Kovach has been our newsletter distributor for three and a half years. We've very much appreciated his efforts to get our newsletters out on time. Marie Hopper will be taking on this important position.

Stan Dewey and Nina Sprecher have led the half-day sittings for five and three years respectively. Many thanks to them both for their care and welcoming spirits to people both new and experienced who come to these sittings. Peter Overton and Greg Denny will be filling these seats and leading these sittings.



## Spring Cleaning!

Spring is here – time to empty out your closets and let go of what you no longer use or need. In this season of house-cleaning, the development committee suggests that you consider holding a garage or yard sale and donating the proceeds to BZC's Building Fund.

Do it solo or band together with dharma friends. De-clutter, recycle, and support our temple all in one afternoon!

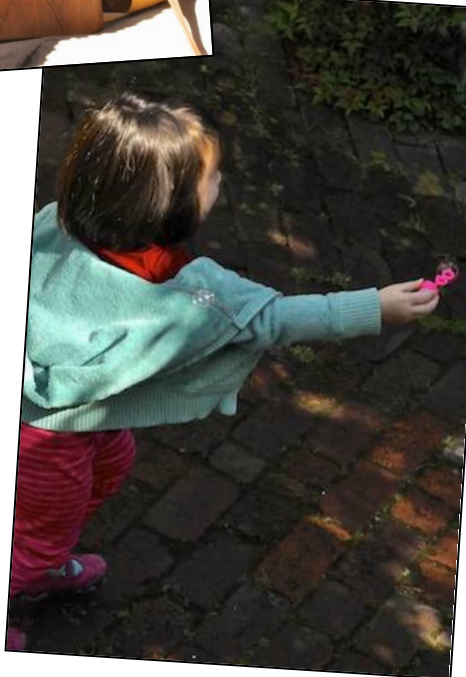
## BZC Campout - Save the date!

You are warmly invited to the annual BZC Campout, scheduled for July 26-27. We've reserved a group campsite in Tilden Park, and will meet for 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 to pass on the campfire rounds we grew up with, tell stories, and learn the latest songs from our own kids.

Families and those without children are all welcome. If you prefer not to stay for the night, come for the dinner and company. If you would like to stay but are missing a tent or sleeping bag, let us know, and we can find one for you. Contact Katherine O. at klo999 AT yahoo.com if you have questions, and look for a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in early July.

## Finding Presence in Conversation Monday, May 19th, 7:15 – 9:00 pm

This open dharma group focuses on practice in the context of everyday communication. These ongoing meetings, addressing ways we speak and listen to each other, are open to everyone, and are coordinated by Peter Overton. The upcoming meeting will be held in the BZC community room. Please NOTE: this meeting has customarily been held on Thursdays, but is moving to the third Monday evening of the month! The next is May 19, 7:15-9:00 pm. For further information contact Peter at 510.325.2342, or peterovrtn AT gmail.com.



### **BZC Photo Site**

These and other glorious and inspiring photos of Buddha's Birthday celebration and of Ki (Matt) Gillam's ordination are now on our BZC Photo Site (e-mail KoFotoFactory AT me.com if you need help). Click on their tabs and be transported to these celebrations. I won't try to convince you how wonderful they are, but seeing is believing!

- Ko Blix

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
Third Friday of the month before each issue.  
Submit to [bzcnewsletter AT gmail.com](mailto:bzcnewsletter@gmail.com).

**June deadline:**  
Friday, May 16, 8:00 pm

### **Way-Seeking Mind Talk Schedule**

- May 2, Friday 5:50 pm - Judy Bertelsen
- May 5, Monday 6:20 am - Open Discussion
- May 12, Monday 6:20 am - John Mogeey
- May 19, Monday 6:20 am - Ross Blum
- May 26, Monday 6:20 am - Memorial Day (closed)



*Does a cat have Buddhanature?*

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