



Berkeley Zen Center



December 2009 Newsletter

To the Sangha:

As this year draws to a close, I would like to express my sincere feeling of gratitude to all of you, and especially to the board of directors and our retiring president Peter Overton and treasurer John Rubin, who have worked hard and mostly unseen to keep the Zen Center operational and stable. My gratitude also extends to the practice committee, the Vice Abbot, the Tenzos, Office Manager, Coordinator, Zendo Manager, Sesshin Directors, Project Managers, Sewing Teacher, Head Gardener, Work Leaders, Head Servers, Chidens, Head Resident, Doans, Kokyos, Trainers, Senior practice instructors, Newsletter Editor, Bathroom cleaners, Dishwashers and everyone I missed, and most importantly, all of us sharing in communion our lives together in zazen.

It takes all of us working together as sangha to maintain this zendo, enabling us to sit twice daily, have sesshins, support some teachers, and maintain a high standard of maturity as our offering to the world.

Through our sincere effort, without trying to do something special, we can light up our small corner of the world. The merit of practice has a far-reaching effect beyond what we can see. Going into the new year, let us renew our intention to live each day with our Bodhisattva vows, with gratitude for our fortunate circumstances and with a compassionate attitude toward all beings. Let us do whatever we can to bring our human world together in harmonious union.

Nine Bows,
Sojun

TWO SPECIAL DECEMBER DATES

- The Annual Memorial Service for Suzuki Roshi will take place at 7:40 PM on Monday, Dec. 7, during Rohatsu, right after the 30-minute after-supper rest period.
- Short Saturday program December 5. The entire program will start with zazen instruction at 8:45 AM, followed by Bodhisattva ceremony at 9:40, lecture, tea, and cookies.



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

December

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 12/5, 9:40 AM

Rohatsu Sesshin

Sunday, 12/6 - Saturday, 12/12

Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial

Monday, 12/7, 7:40 PM

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

Saturday, 12/12, 11:15 AM

Kidzendo

No Kidzendo in December

Winter Break

Saturday, 12/19 – Thursday, 12/31

New Year's Eve Sitting and Party

Thursday, 12/31, 8:00 PM on

January

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 1/2, 9:40 AM

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 1/4, 6:20 PM

Tuesday, 1/5, 6:40 AM

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 1/10, 8:00 AM - Noon

Kidzendo

Saturday, 1/16

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 1/30, 9:40 AM

Rohatsu Sesshin

Our annual seven-day BZC Rohatsu sesshin begins on Sunday, December 6 and ends Saturday, December 12. This last sesshin of the year celebrates the practice and life of our original teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha. It's also our time to be especially inspired by the memory of our founder, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, who died during the first period of the first day of the Rohatsu sesshin at San Francisco Zen Center in December, 1971. With the efforts of both ancient and modern ancestors to guide us, we'll renew the fundamentals of practice within the traditional forms of our lineage. Buddha's Enlightenment ceremony will be on Monday evening, Dec. 7, starting at 7:40 PM. All BZC sangha members are invited to attend this ceremony.

Each day of Rohatsu starts at 5:00 AM and ends at 9:15 PM, with the exception of the last day, which ends at 3:30 PM. Everyone is encouraged to participate in the sesshin for as many days as possible, but we're (Ctd on p. 6)

WINTER INTERIM: RESTORING AND RENEWING FOR THE NEW YEAR

Winter Interim will begin with the end of afternoon zazen on Friday, December 18 and end on Saturday, January 2 with our usual Saturday program. We will **not** offer our usual Saturday program on December 19, as was posted in the original 2009 calendar.

We will offer informal zazen Monday through Friday at 5:40 AM and 5:40 PM, and on Saturdays at 6 AM for one period on days a sangha member is able to open the zendo. If you would like to do this, please sign up on the patio bulletin board or speak with Zendo Manager Leslie Bartholic if you have questions.

New Year's Eve Sitting and Celebration

Ring in 2010 at the annual New Year's Eve Sitting and Party. Attend any portion or the entire event. Please enter the zendo between periods (that is during kinhin only). New and old friends and guests are all welcome.

The schedule is:

8:00 PM Zazen	10:13 108 Bells Begin
8:35 Kinhin	10:30 Kinhin
8:45 Zazen	10:40 Zazen
9:20 Kinhin	11:20 Kinhin
9:30 Zazen	11:35 Zazen
10:05 Tea	12:10 AM Slow chant of Heart Sutra and end sitting

A celebration and potluck will follow in the community room. Watch the bulletin board for details, and to sign up to help make merry with food and to clean up.

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; contact Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or 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

December 5	Childcare
December 12	Sesshin – no program
December 19	Interim – no program
December 26	Interim – no program
January 2	Childcare
January 9	Childcare
January 16	Kidzendo
January 23	Childcare
January 30	Childcare

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION RESULTS!

On behalf of the Sangha and the Board of Directors I would like to thank everyone for their participation in our annual election process to determine new Members at Large for the Board, and to confirm the abbots and officers. I am pleased to announce that **Mary Duryee, Ron Nestor, and Christy Calame were elected as Members at Large, and that Ken Powelson will be Recording Secretary.** Warm thanks to **Tamar Enoch and Lisa Nelbach**, who also stood as candidates. **Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman, Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke, and Office Manager John Moge** were all confirmed in their respective positions.

All our officers for 2010 are new in their positions: President Gerry Oliva, Vice President Jake VanAkkeren, and Treasurer David Weinberg. - Peter Overton

CHANGING HANDS

With the end of the year, several of the officer of the temple positions will change hands. Each person who has been in one of these positions gives an extraordinary amount of time to coordinate with each other, and perform their duties, and offer themselves to the sangha each with his or her unique touch. We extend our thanks to: (Continued on p. 7)



A Lecture by Sojun Roshi

A Response to a Question

Student: One of the most important questions of my life in the past couple years has been: If my nose is vertical and my eyes are horizontal, then why Buddhism?

Sojun: That's a good question, that's exactly the question that Dogen carried with him to China. He said that if we all have Buddha-nature, if everything is Buddha-nature, why do we have to do something like practice? Why sit zazen, or do anything special, if Buddha-nature is our natural endowment? What Dogen woke up to was that although Buddha-nature is our essential nature, if we don't do something to bring it forth, it doesn't manifest as realization.

Even though electricity is everywhere, if we don't induce it, we can't make use of it. It's all around us. But we have to channel it somehow so we can use it. Once we realize our nature, everything will open to us. Since Buddha-nature is the fundamental nature of all things, we realize that all things are essentially aspects of my true self. For us humans Buddha-nature manifests as Human Nature. Even though we're born with the ability to be truly human, it doesn't necessarily follow that we will turn out to be completely realized human beings. We may manifest the characteristics of an animal, while having the outward appearance of a human. It's also true that some animals are more compassionate and loving than many humans. That's why many people prefer the company of animals. We may become a fighting demon, a hungry ghost or a hell dweller. What world do we live in? We may think that we live in the human world, but do we really know what a human being is?

What does it mean to be born, live our lives, and die, as human beings? If we look around us we may wonder. Although we think of ourselves as complete human beings, we are also evolving into being or becoming human. The theory of evolution is, I think, correct. We started out as something, and we're evolving into something, very slowly. And at the same time we are complete human beings. Each one is in a unique stage of development. We're human beings evolving into human beings; myself becoming myself. But very few of us have reached that completeness.

Although we all have Human Nature, each one of us has the Buddha-nature as well. But we don't necessarily realize that we're Buddha. We haven't become the Buddha that we are; a fully evolved human being. As Buddha-nature and Human Nature are not two things, we are both Buddhas and ordinary human beings.

So when we raise the thought of enlightenment and enter into and turn the practice, the Buddha comes forth, Human Nature and Buddha-nature merge, and an evolving *bodhisattva* is born, one who arrives with every step and never stops arriving. This is why we are drawn to practice, in faith that we are Buddha.

Dogen understood that realization stimulates practice and practice sustains realization. Eyes are horizontal and nose is vertical. A moment of practice is a moment of awakening.

CEREMONY FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

January 4, 6:20 AM (before Monday morning discussion)

Please join us for a simple ceremony being held to present new rakus to the following senior students: Ross Blum, Ron Nestor, Gerry Oliva, Baika Pratt, and Andrea Thach. These rakus were sewn as gifts on behalf of their teacher, Sojun Mel Weitsman, and Berkeley Zen Center to commemorate their time as head student, and to express our gratitude for all that they continue to offer. Catherine Cascade, recent head student for Aspects of Practice, has already received her shuso rakusu from her teacher, Hozan Alan Senauke.

Giving the head student a new rakusu in the same color as their current level of ordination is a more recent practice that has evolved over the years and is now in place at many other temples. Formerly, this usually only occurred when the shuso's teacher was not the teacher leading the practice period and the practice period teacher wished to acknowledge their time spent together with the gift of a rakusu. Our sewing teacher Jean Selkirk spearheaded bringing this tradition here to BZC.

SEWING BUDDHA'S ROBE

If you are interested in preparing for Lay Ordination next year, sewing classes start in the middle of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate.

Before the winter break (mid-December), please speak with Sojun Roshi or Hozan Sensei. After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

OPENING FOR THE PART-TIME PAID OFFICE MANAGER POSITION AT BZC STARTING IN JANUARY

Duties include bookkeeping, maintaining our membership data base, and related administrative tasks. Preferred qualifications include experience with MS ACCESS, MS EXCEL, Quickbooks Pro or other accounting software. The position requires about 10 hours a week. An additional benefit is that the Office Manager does not have to pay dues, class or sesshin fees. John Moge, our current Office Manager, is stepping down from this position early in 2010. He has agreed to stay on until March to train his replacement. A more complete announcement will be posted on the patio bulletin board. For more information contact David Weinberg, the incoming BZC Treasurer at david@stresscaring.org.

MONEY & DHARMA

By Peter Pfaelzer, Development Committee Chair

Money is a loaded issue in our sangha and in society as a whole. A Money & Dharma BZC Board sub-committee has been established to investigate the personal meaning of money and how it relates to practicing the first paramita of dana in the sangha, to clarify policies and procedures involving the exchange of money at BZC, and to promote open discussion and resolution of identified issues.

A council meeting on Money & Dharma was held on October 6, 2009. It was attended by nine people; two "younger" and seven "older" sangha members. Because of the confidentiality associated with the council process, I can't discuss specifics, but I can generally say that money represents power and self-worth in our

society, and that there is a lot of discomfort around money among sangha members.

Given the excellent communication that occurred in the meeting, I would like to propose the establishment of a Dharma & Money Group within our sangha as a forum to openly address personal money and dharma issues. The group will discuss these issues using three different modes of communication: newsletters and mailings; the BZC list serve and our own Dharma & Money electronic group; and face-to-face meetings such as councils.

I welcome your thoughts and participation. Please contact me at pfpfaelzer@gmail.com or 510-290-4753.

DUES REMINDER

We're nearly at the end of the year, and BZC dues are running considerably behind our 2009 operating budget. All sangha members and friends are encouraged to review their 2009 dues payments and bring them current, if at all possible, before year's end. As a reminder, the new dues schedule, effective January 1, 2009 (the first dues increase in over ten years), is \$40 per month for each member and \$30 per quarter for friends. Discounts are available when ability to pay the full amount during these difficult economic times is a problem. Please contact BZC Treasurer John Rubin or Office Manager John Moge, if you have questions or would like to discuss discount needs.

DEAR COMMUNITY ROOM PORCH AND KITCHEN USERS,

We are gathering everyone's comments about how the aisle-way of the kitchen and the community room porch is used, and your thoughts about what works and does not work. If you are interested in having input, contact Mary Duryee, 510-528-8223 or maduryee@earthlink.net.

There will be a walk-through discussion and meeting on Tuesday, December 1 at 4:30 PM and Friday, December 4 at 7 AM for any who would like to meet in person to discuss how this area of our facility functions.

SPECIAL EVENT: MYOAN GRACE SCHIRESON January 9, 2010

Lecture at 10:15 AM, Workshop 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Myoan Grace Schireson has just written *Zen Women: Beyond Tea-Ladies, Iron Maidens, and Macho Masters*, published by Wisdom Publications. The book is a result of over a decade's research into what women's practice has looked like in the history of Zen. A longtime student of Sojun Roshi and a practice leader at BZC, Grace is now Abbess of the Empty Nest Zendo in North Fork. Karen Sundheim had a conversation with Grace about her book:

Karen: What inspired you to write this book?

Grace: When I was ordained, I didn't know what it meant to be a female priest. I could not figure out how to imitate my male teacher. I wanted to study Zen nuns and find out what they were like. I wanted to embody practice, but I wanted to do it as a woman.

Karen: Do you think a woman's practice is different from a man's practice?

Grace: Monastic practice, as we see it in its extremes, can seem

(Ctd. on p. 6)

MONTHLY STUDY GROUP WITH SOJUN ROSHI

After the September study sesshin many students wanted to continue studying *The Precious Mirror Samadhi (Hokyo Zammai)*, the subject of Sojun's talks. Based on this interest, and also to try something new, Sojun will offer a monthly study group to begin in January, open to current Berkeley Zen Center members. He will continue with commentary and discussion on *The Precious Mirror Samadhi* and then likely branch out into other subjects. The group will run for at least a year with a minimum six-month commitment from participants. We will meet on the fourth Thursday of each month from 7:15 to 8:45 PM. Occasional schedule changes may occur.

The first class will be January 28th. A signup will be posted on the bulletin board in early January. Support for the monthly class will be on a donation basis with a suggested ballpark amount of \$10.00. Sojun asks that if we did not attend the September study sesshin we listen to the recorded sesshin lectures. The four lectures are available on the BZC website, Berkeleyzencenter.org, under the heading "audio library". The dates are September 6th and 7th. Study material will be available in January.

EIHEI DOGEN'S BENDOWA (Wholehearted Practice of the Way) with Ryushin Andrea Thach

Four weeks beginning Saturday, January 16,
12:30 to 2:00 PM

Ryushin Andrea Thach will teach a four-week class on Eihei Dogen's *Bendowa* beginning Saturday, January 16. Classes will run from 12:30 to 2:00 PM. The signup sheet will be on the bulletin board by mid-December, and the suggested text for the class is *The Wholehearted Way* by Kosho Uchiyama. The class is on a donation basis. \$20.00 for the series is a suggested starting point.

The following is an interview with Andrea and class coordinator Ron Nestor.

Ron: Andrea, can you give us a brief description of where *Bendowa* stands in relation to Dogen's other writings?

Andrea: *Bendowa* was written in 1231, and is his commentary on his very first writing, *Fukanzazengi*. The questions and answers in *Bendowa* were very likely the exchange in his first meeting with his disciple Koun Ejo. It happened not long after he was forced to leave his temple at Kenninji. There are many very basic questions that Ejo brings forward that are foundational to understanding Dogen's zen and salvific method. Kodo Uchiyama Roshi discusses *Bendowa* in an essay in the book, *Dogen Zen*, and talks about zen as religion. What he means is that zen is a practice or way of life which is available to everyone and has the potential for bringing peace and freedom from suffering. You don't need to be special, you don't need to have accomplished things for many lifetimes, you don't need to be smart or quick or have gone through the 52 different stages. But you, right here in this life and this moment, sitting on your zafu or working in the kitchen, have the capacity to know that peace and well-being. We can recognize that we are buddha nature. We don't *have* buddha nature, we don't *become* buddha nature, but we *are* buddha nature. This understanding is subtle and very deep. So *Bendowa* is really Dogen's commentary about what our zazen practice is. Where *Fukanzazengi* is a primer, *Bendowa* is more theoretical. It has a lot of where he's going in his later writing. The person who will be his disciple, who will deal

with him for the rest of his life, is coming to him and he's really establishing "this is what my teaching is about—you've come to me to see who I am—here it is."

Ron: What's the central focus of *Bendowa*?

Andrea: It's making clear the concept of jiyuyu zanmai (self-receiving and fulfilling samadhi). The class will primarily be devoted to this so I don't want to give an overly simplistic answer here, but one way of describing it might be that it's the way everything in the world is us and we're part of everything in the world. Sawaki Kodo said "it is the self making the self into the self."

Ron: You've been to a number of study sesshins on Dogen with Shohaku Okumura. How has that influenced you?

Andrea: My experience is that Okumura has a very refined and deep sense of Dogen's understanding of the interpenetration and complete unity of all beings across time and space—that within each of us we contain everything. My understanding of Dogen is shaped a lot by his understanding. He gave 39 hours of lectures on *Bendowa*. We have not had much exposure to *Bendowa* here at BZC, but it is heavily emphasized by Okumura and his teachers. Because I've been so fortunate as to be able to study with Okumura over this past decade, I have wanted to offer a class at Berkeley Zen Center on Dogen, hoping to share something of what I've learned at the Genzo-e retreats in San Francisco and Indiana.

Ron: Anything you'd like to add?

Andrea: Dogen had an enormous amount of faith. Sometimes we roll our eyes a little bit at how strident and judgmental he can seem, but the other side is that he had such a passionate belief in the good that can occur. If we really understand and do zazen with a mind that doesn't want anything, if we just give ourselves to it, peace and freedom from suffering are possible. His acerbity and seeming intolerance come in large part from his feeling that there's no sense in wasting time in this very life because, really—this is it.

COLDS AND FLU SEASON

In an effort to support each other's health, we are asking that sangha members stay home if they are ill. We are recommending following the Center for Disease Control's guidelines: please don't come to the zendo if you have fever, cough, runny nose, muscle aches, or anything you equate with viral illness. Please stay home and take care of yourself for seven days or until you have not had fever for 48 hours, whichever is longer. If you realize you are ill after you have arrived on a Saturday or sesshin day, please let the director know and go home. Some of us are not only older, but also have medical conditions which are immune-compromising, so your awareness and self-care is important to us all. Of course, some coughs and sneezes result from allergies. Please inform the sesshin director if this is the case with you. If you are uncertain, speak with the sesshin director, Gerry Oliva, or Andrea Thach. If you have questions, please contact Health and Safety Coordinator Catherine Cascade. - From Gerry and Andrea, MDs, and the Practice Committee.

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to Dean Bradley, Diane Schnapp, and their friend for quickly restoring hot water to 1931 Russell with master plumbing skill in a needed pinch. And to Dean for her definitive fix of the community room bathroom toilet handle.

WISDOM HEALING QIGONG GROUP AT BZC

Wisdom Healing (an English translation of *Zhineng*) Qigong is an extremely effective medical qigong from China. By tapping into this ancient healing technology the practitioner can obtain powerful tools for self-healing; strengthen endocrine and immune systems; reduce stress, anxiety and depression; improve sleep; improve mental clarity and focus; shift physical symptoms; and, as a result of self-healing, help other beings.

Starting on Friday, January 8, 2010, from 3-4:30 PM, Diana Lion will be offering an ongoing Wisdom Healing Qigong group at BZC. This particular qigong has been instrumental in helping Diana improve her own health. She has been leading these qigong groups since January 2009 with the authorization of her teacher, Master Mingtong Gu. She has practiced various qigongs for the past ten years. As a dharma practitioner since 1975, she has loved sitting at BZC, and welcomes the opportunity to offer this qigong practice, which complements the dharma so beautifully.

The group will organize the chi field and practice the basic forms together, as well as leave time for questions. If you cannot physically do the practices, they can be done effectively through visualization.

The group is open to people at all levels of qigong experience and health. Charge will be by donation. Please arrive on time, wear comfortable clothing, and refrain from wearing any scented products.

Please note that it is important to attend the first group meeting on January 8 for orientation, or make specific arrangements otherwise. For more information, e-mail Diana at Diana.lion@gmail.com after Dec 15, 2009.

ROHATSU (*Ctd. from p. 2*) asking participants to commit to a minimum of three days. At least two days should be consecutive. Sangha members who cannot participate during the days of Monday through Friday may join us by sitting the first and last days of the sesshin and sitting on weekday evenings from 5:40 - 9:10 PM. The sesshin fee is \$35 for an entire day and \$5 for each weekday evening. Please pay in advance, leaving checks marked "Rohatsu" in the kitchen door donation slot. The signup sheet and registration forms are posted on the outside BZC bulletin board. **Mark your name and phone number on the signup sheet and complete the registration form. Put your completed form in the sesshin director's box on the community room porch. Deadline for signup is Wednesday, December 2.** If you have questions, please contact the sesshin director, John Rubin, by phone at 510-339-7068 or e-mail at john_rubin@comcast.net. Please call the BZC shika, Alexandra Frappier, at 415-613-9210 if you plan to stay overnight at BZC during the week.

FAMILY PRACTICE

In support of our wonderful sangha members who are raising children, I would like to invite sangha parents to meet and discuss the zen practice of being parents. This would be helpful to me, and I believe there may be others who would also enjoy gathering to talk and support each other in this practice. I would like to propose two events a month in the hope that one or both might be suitable for others' schedules. Beginning in January, we would meet at noon on the first Friday of the month for a short period of sitting (perhaps 15 minutes) and then have 45 minutes for discussion. The second event would be on the third

Friday of the month, a potluck dinner after evening zazen followed by a 30- or 45-minute period of discussion. Both these events would offer childcare. (Members of the sangha interested in helping with childcare are encouraged to contact me). Initially, we would discuss what could be helpful to each participant from these meetings, but we would be open to changing the format as we go along. This would be an exploration in family practice within a practice center, a new venture, and we would define it together as we go. I invite anyone interested in this idea to contact me. ~ Marie Hopper

For Shuso Kano Kenshin Catherine Cascade

Gliding gracefully
Through crisp, twilight air
Generous Nightingale perches
In a tree on Old Plum Mountain.

Accompanied by the sound
Of a bubbling stream and
A time-challenged rooster,
She sings to her Dharma
Sisters and brothers.

Plunge in and rely
On Awakening Mind!
Friendship is All
Of the Holy Life.

Her joyful message
Touching the hearts
Of those who
Have ears to hear.

Let us now hear the Shuso!

~ Benji Zendo Shin-I Deborah Good

GRACE SCHIRESON (*Ctd. from p. 4*)

like a male sport. The warrior-side of Zen practice came to us through our male ancestors who were influenced by the samurai culture. On the interpersonal side, avoiding eye contact, for example, more natural for men, may not be as compatible with a woman's nature. Studies of infants find female babies engage in mutual eye-gazing in a way that male infants do not. The research suggests that women more actively seek and need relationship and connection. Because the practice brought to the Western Zen centers came from the male monastic settings, it may not accommodate women's needs.

Karen: Was it difficult to find detailed information about our female ancestors? How did you do it?

Grace: It was not difficult to collect information—there are many scraps, but organizing the material and not just "dumping" the data chronologically was difficult since there was no female lineage to follow. I found bits and pieces from different countries, and eventually came to realize what women's unique practice strengths were—building community and helping other women. So I organized the material according to women's particular strengths, such as founding and managing temples, and expressing practice through their work in the world. I organized the book based on these contributions, rather than presenting them as "un-male".

Karen: Since we don't have Zen literature telling our stories, what do we base our practice on?

Grace: We can't imitate the male masters the way men did without losing touch with ourselves. (*Ctd. on p. 7*)

December 2009 BZC Newsletter

SCHIRESON (*Ctd. from p. 6*) This makes it essential for women to know other women practitioners to develop their practice. Also, women need to feel safe enough to get down to our deepest self—and to express that in practice. We can't always follow the same patterns that men follow, and to find our own way we more often need to feel emotionally connected and emotionally safe.

Karen: Do you have a favorite female ancestor, or one who you consider a role model?

Grace: I am moved by the life of Ryonen Genso. She was very beautiful. She couldn't be admitted to the temple because she was man and so she took a hot iron to her face to mar her beauty. Prior to her heroic efforts to enter the Zen temple, she was forced to marry even though she wanted to be a nun. Her aspiration to practice was so strong, she left her husband and son, who was ten years old, and went to practice with a female friend in Hokyoji convent. After the friend died in the convent she was inspired by the fact of impermanence and decided her practice wasn't serious enough. So she went to a male monastery, and when refused admission there she burned her face to prove her worthiness. When the male teacher saw her face and her sincerity he admitted her to join the all-male practice. Later she received Dharma Transmission from this same teacher. She had her own temple and built schools and bridges in her community. This was a poem she wrote around the time she burned her face:

*Formerly to amuse myself at court I would burn incense;
Now to enter the Zen life I burn my own face.
The four seasons pass by naturally like this,
But I don't know who I am amidst the change.*

Early in her life she thought of body as a hindrance and wretched, but later she experienced healing as a result of her devotion to practice. She wrote this death poem to celebrate her life of practice which reveals the resolution of her tormented entry to Zen:

*In the autumn of my sixty-sixth year, I've already
lived a long time—
The intense moonlight is bright upon my face.
There's no need to discuss the principles of koan study;
Just listen carefully to the wind outside the pines and cedars.*

Karen: How do you see Western Buddhism evolving and what part do women practitioners play?

Grace: Western practice is expressing itself in ways similar to the female ancestors practice—it is not always monastic, embedded in family life and supports itself through work in the world. It's engaged Buddhism. The female ancestors found ways to take care of orphans, people with financial and medical needs, the elderly, and each other. This is a good model for developing Western practice. The monastic model is often put forward as the gold standard in classic Zen literature. While monastic practice is essential to Zen, it's not the only way Buddhism and Zen are going to develop in the west. Lay Practice is what the majority of Zen students are developing, and using the examples from the lives of female ancestors may help us to create an authentic but adaptive practice that fits our actual lives.

CHANGING HANDS (*Ctd. from p. 2*) **Raul Moncayo** will be stepping back as Co-Tenzo after Rohatsu, and passing the pots and whisks to **Gary Artim**. Engendering collaboration and encouraging a new generation of cooks, Raul's tender touch will be missed. Welcome Gary, who joins hard working **Naome Dragstedt**. Down, Manjusri!

No position has more demands for wide vision and precise care of their own and everyone's practice than that of the Zendo

Manager. Innumerable thanks to **Leslie Bartholic** who is finishing her term, for embodying the ino's role in all its macro and micro detail and for following Dogen Zenji's admonishment to the letter: "to bring joy to the sangha." **John Moge** will begin as Zendo Manager in January.

So, **John Moge** will rotate out of being co-Saturday Director with our thanks for his year in that role. We welcome **Christy Calame**, who will join continuing Saturday Director **Sue Oehser** in 2010.

Also, thank **Christy** for organizing our Saturday work this past year, and welcome **Ko Blix** to that role.

John Rubin has given inexhaustibly these past two years as Sesshin Director, and for a decade steering us in financially sunny and stormy weather as our Board Treasurer. With our great thanks, after Rohatsu, he will be taking a nice break of "just zazen," and time with Claire and family. **Jake Van Akkeren** will begin as Sesshin Director in JR's stead.

With his election to the as Board recording secretary, **Ken Powelson** will take early leave after a year and half directing our sesshin work. Thanks to Ken for his great eye to the interconnectedness of our practice with each other, and for his organization of the many bigger work projects during these last many months. We welcome **Diane Schnapp** as the new sesshin work leader.

Caring for and displaying beauty, **Gerry Oliva** originated the art coordinator role in 2002 and has catalogued, framed, and carefully tended to the beautiful scrolls and pictures around the temple grounds for seven years, rotating them in turn so we were able to experience them all. Deep bows, Gerry. **Paul Ridgway** will be bringing his creative eye to the position next.

And many thanks to **Rondi Saslow** for her welcoming and generous service as the oryoki instructor this past year plus. With Rohatsu, she passes the baton and napkins to **Ellen Webb**.

While kitchen keeper Lisa Nelbach is out with elective surgery later this month and early next year, **Dawn Farber** will be our acting kitchen keeper. Thank you, Dawn.

LECTURE BY CHIKUDO LEWIS RICHMOND

Chikudo Lewis Richmond will be giving a lecture on "Aging, Illness, and Dying as a Spiritual Practice" on Saturday, January 23, 2010. The lecture will be followed by a series of workshops on later Saturday afternoons, given by both Lew Richmond and Alexandra Frappier. The workshops are set for February 27, March 6, and March 13.

A pair of quotes from Lew Richmond:

"The spiritual practice of aging is really none other than the practice of coming to terms with radical impermanence, and turning the sorrows of that insight into the joy and contentment of living in and on each moment." And,

"One of the principles of Buddhist practice is that negative emotion—when we turn toward it rather than avert from it—itsself is the path. The apparent unpleasantness of negative emotion is somewhat illusory. The actual 'taste' of anxiety is just a sensation, like the sourness of a lemon; our conditioning and karma tell us it's *bad*, but actually it's just what it is. Like a lemon, anxiety has its uses.

"So this is 'mindfulness of dying' at a deeper, more fundamental level. A Buddhist practitioner welcomes these strong emotional states. They are our teachers. 'Hello, teacher,' we can say. 'What have you got for me today?'"

(Lew Richmond's website: <http://agingaspiritualpractice.com/>)

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