



Berkeley Zen Center



June 2011 Newsletter

LAY ORDINATION

This year's Lay Ordination ceremony— *Zaike Tokudo* — will take place on Saturday, June 11 in the zendo at 3:00 pm. Receiving lay ordination from Sojun Roshi are Maria Winston and Jeff Taylor. Hozan Alan Senauke will offer ordination to Andrew Corson. Congratulations in advance to all who have been studying and sewing diligently with our sewing teacher Jean Selkirk. Everyone is warmly encouraged to attend the ceremony and the reception afterwards. Check the zendo bulletin board for details and please sign up for preparation (tenzo assistance and setup) and cleanup. *Ed. note: See p. 5 for an explication of lay ordination.*

HALF-DAY SITTING

Sunday, June 5, 8:00 am-noon

BZC offers eight half-day sittings each year. Each includes five periods of zazen, kinhin and an informal tea. A half-day sitting is a great opportunity to focus on “just zazen,” and is appropriate for beginning as well as experienced sitters. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the four-hour schedule and, in support of everyone's practice, to refrain from using scented products in the zendo. BZC asks for a \$10 donation for half-day sittings. If you have questions, contact Nina Sprecher, the June half-day director, at 510-848-3585 or ninasprecher@sbcglobal.net.

FIVE-DAY SESSHIN

Sign-ups for the five-day sesshin June 15-19 will be available June 1. The first four days are 5:00 am-9:10 pm; the last day ends at 3:00 pm. Please sign up for at least three days, including at least two consecutive days. Sign-ups will close on June 11. The sesshin will be followed immediately by the Shuso Hossen at 3:30 pm. All participants in the practice period and in sesshin are invited. Questions: Sesshin Director Mary Duryee, maduryee@earthlink.net, (510) 872-0507.



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

June

Founder's Ceremony

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

Half-day Sitting

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

Lay Ordination/Zaike Tokudo

Saturday, 6/11, 3:00 pm

Five-day Sesshin

Wednesday-Sunday, 6/15-19

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6/18, 9:40 am

Shuso Hossen, Practice Period Ends

Sunday, 6/19, 3:30 pm

Informal Zazen

Monday, 6/20, morning

July

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 7/5, 6:20 pm
Wednesday, 7/6, 6:40 am

Zazenkai (Just Sitting Day)

Sunday, 7/10, 8:00 am-5:10 pm

Work Day

Sunday, 7/17, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

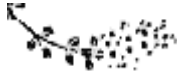
Saturday, 7/16, 9:40 am

Mountains and Rivers

Thursday-Sunday, 7/28-31

SHUSO CEREMONY

Shuso Hossen, dharma dialogue with our practice period's head student *Shinko Seiwa* Leslie Bartholic—Deep Lake/Clear Peaceful — will take place on Sunday, June 19 at 3:30 pm in the zendo, at the conclusion of the five-day sesshin and this year's practice period. All participants in the practice period and in sesshin are encouraged to attend, to ask a question of Leslie, and to bring forth the dharma together. This is always a deep and moving ceremony, the culmination of practice period and the *shuso*'s understanding. Please join us. A reception will follow.



Dear Friends of BZC,

The feature documentary of BZC, *Old Plum Mountain: Berkeley Zen Center, Life Inside the Gate*, is finished and ready for distribution. The cost of the DVD is \$20. If you want it mailed to you, the cost is \$25, which includes handling and shipping. For regular BZC goers, I am at BZC often and can give you a copy when I see you. You can let me know at edherzog@comcast.net. Checks can also be mailed to: Herzog Productions, 1012 Jones Street, Berkeley, CA 94710.

Best,
Ed Herzog

WORK DAY

Sunday, July 17
8:30 am-4:30 pm

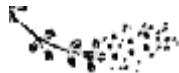
Work Day is an opportunity to take part in the many projects that pop up around BZC. It's a time when any skills you have to offer can be used to benefit our place of practice, adding to its beauty and energy.

Please join us for a half day or full day of work. Lunch and afternoon refreshments will be provided. A sign-up sheet will be available on the bulletin board at the end of June.

Thank you,
Diane Schnapp

SAVE THE DATE

Lotus Sutra Chanting in the Zendo, Sunday, 7/24, 8:00 am-4:00pm (or until we finish). Come for the full day or for one hour. More info: Karen Sundheim or Andrea Thach.



Family Activities at BZC

Saturday Childcare Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturday mornings for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; phone or e-mail Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org. Childcare for 8:45 zazen instruction and beginner orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

Kidzendo A program for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday morning of each month (or the fourth if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet at the Senaukes'—1933 Russell—at about 9:40 for a meet and greet, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene at 1933 Russell for more activities, possibly including formal tea and one minute of meditation and/or free play, depending on the realities of the moment.

Zazen, Discussion for Parents, Childcare Provided

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

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

June 4	Childcare
June 11	Childcare
June 18	Sesshin - no program
June 25	Childcare
July 2	Childcare
July 9	Childcare
July 16	Childcare
July 23	Childcare
July 30	Childcare
August 6	Childcare
August 13	Childcare
August 20	Interim – no program
August 27	Childcare

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:
Third Friday of the month before each issue.
July deadline: Friday, 6/17, 8 pm.

Zazen Is Vast Openness

*A talk by Sojun Roshi
given to the Chapel Hill Zen Center, March, 1993*

Part II

“**A**ctualizing the fundamental point” is one way to translate *Genjo Koan*. “Genjo” means actualizing in the present—something appearing right here, right now. The “ko” of “koan” means “to level,” and is the horizontal which stands for the nature of equality or Buddha nature in the sense of level, no bumps, no special characteristics, no identifiable mark. The “an” of “koan” means the vertical, the place or position of each individual dharma or “bump” on a hierarchical scale that Dogen called its “dharma position.” At any one moment, everything in the universe is in its dharma position. The point at which the vertical and horizontal meet is our dharma position.

“Dharma” with a capital “D” means the law or reality, Buddha’s teaching, the way things are as fundamental reality. Dharma with a small “d” means “things.” In a wide sense, each and every thing is a dharma. Every thing has its dharma position as an expression of Buddha nature, or emptiness, and from moment to moment that dharma position changes.

So Dharma with a capital “D” is the nature of the dharmas with a small “d,” in other words, the oneness of differentiation, and differentiations of oneness, like the title of Sekito’s *San do Kai*, like a handshake. Within undifferentiated reality, all of these dharmas are coexisting, interrelated, and moving, and we call it our life. How we maintain our phenomenal dharma position on any moment within ultimate reality manifesting right now is our practice. That’s the koan of moment-to-moment everyday life. This is how we deal with our phenomenal position within the vastness of Buddha nature.

Dogen says, “When you find your place [your dharma position], right where you are, that’s where practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point. When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs, actualizing the fundamental point; for the place, the way, is neither large nor small, neither yours nor others’. The place and the way have not been carried over from the past, nor are they merely arising now. Accordingly, in the practice-enlightenment of the Buddha way, meeting one thing, is mastering it—doing one practice is practicing completely. . . . When you find your way at this moment, practice occurs.” Our sense of time is important. I remember Suzuki Roshi saying that we live our life a little bit at a time, moment by moment. In order to practice *Genjo Koan*, we must be aware of our activity in each moment. When we sit zazen “this moment” is continuous and, at the same time, discontinuous. Our dharma position exists as just this moment’s activity. “Right now” means each moment is “right now.” There is no dividing of the moments, even though we sit, or we exist, from moment-to-moment, one breath at a time. So continuous time and discontinuous time are at the same time, but, when we sit, we are only aware of continuous time, which is called, “right now.” When we long for something else we lose our sense of the continuous time of now.

As we sit, we come up with the problem of discomfort. One of the problems that we have is the feeling that discomfort or pain is an intrusion, something to be resisted or done away with. Even though we say “this is pleasure and this is pain,” pleasure and pain don’t exist independently. Because we divide them, we feel that one is desirable and the other is not. Ours is a world of both pleasure and pain. It is not a world of pleasure only, although we would like it to be. We really wish that it was a world of pleasure only, and so we orient our life to try and make everything as pleasurable as possible, but it doesn’t work because life is both pleasure and pain, birth and death.

We would also like to ignore death. But in the same way as pleasure and pain, it is also the world of birth and death. We are born on each moment and die on each moment. This helps us to accept the equality of our coming to life and passing away on each moment in a positive light. Which is more important, inhaling or exhaling? As soon as we start to discriminate and fall to one side or the other, it is hard to maintain our dharma position and keep our practice pure. (*Ctd. on p. 4*)

(Ctd. from p. 3) Keeping our practice pure means not falling into the duality of craving for one thing and disliking the other, or, when we do fall into that duality, to get back on the track. When we sit zazen, we don't try to create some wonderful, special, desirable state of mind, and we don't try to eliminate some distasteful thing.

"Here is the place, and here the way unfolds. Right here is the place to do it, and right here is where the way unfolds. The boundary of realization is not distinct, for the realization comes forth simultaneously with the mastery of Buddha Dharma.

"Do not suppose that what you realize becomes your knowledge and is grasped by your consciousness. Although actualized immediately, the inconceivable may not be apparent. Its appearance is beyond your knowledge."

Even though we don't know everything, and don't even realize what we do realize, our practice is complete when we sit with a pure and nondiscriminating mind. So, you may not even know the complete meaning of your practice.

Dogen then gives an example:

Zen master Baoche of Mount Mayu was fanning himself. A monk approached and said, "Master, the nature of wind is permanent, and there is no place it does not reach. Why then do you fan yourself?"

"Wind" here means Buddha nature. He is saying, if Buddha nature is all-pervasive and there is no place where it is not, why are you fanning yourself? This was Dogen's question when, as a young monk, he went to China. Dogen said to himself, "If everybody has Buddha nature, if Buddha nature pervades the universe, why do we have to seek anything?" So, he went to China with this in mind: Why, if Buddha nature is everywhere, are you doing something about it? Why are you fanning yourself?

Baoche replied, "Although you understand that the nature of wind is permanent, you do not understand the meaning of its reaching everywhere." "What is the meaning of its reaching everywhere?" the monk asked again. The master just kept fanning himself. The monk bowed deeply.

What is the nature of permanent, or "all-pervading?" The master's fanning means, even though the nature of wind is all-pervading, even though Buddha nature pervades the whole universe, in order to realize what it is, we have to do something. For example, in order to get a cake, even though all the ingredients are there, you still have to put the ingredients into a bowl and mix it all up, and put it in the oven at 350 degrees for a certain length of time. Otherwise you have no cake.

Why do we practice? Why do we have to do this? Why do we sit with our legs crossed? Why do we study, if everything is right here now? Dogen's understanding of practice is that practice and realization go together. In order to experience the wind or set in motion the flow, we have to turn the wheel of practice. Therefore, Dogen says practice is not different than enlightenment, and enlightenment is not separate from practice. That is why he says that some may realize it and some may not. But as you practice, realization is there.

Then he continues:

The monk bowed deeply. The actualization of the Buddha Dharma, the vital path of its correct transmission is like this. If you say that you do not need to fan yourself because the nature of wind is permanent, and you're going to have wind without fanning, you will understand neither permanence, nor the nature of wind.

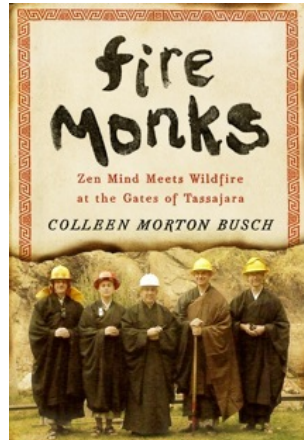
[In other words, you won't understand Buddha nature, and you will also not understand your own activity, even though you think you do.]

The nature of wind is permanent. Because of that, the wind of the Buddha's house brings forth the gold of the earth, and makes fragrant the cream of the long river.

There are many important points here, but I think the most important point is how to bring to life, our life on each moment, and, in this way, to extend zazen into our daily life by finding our dharma position on every moment within the realm of vast openness. It means not basing our activity on self-centeredness. Just simply not to be selfish. As soon as we revert to self-centered activity, we lose our dharma position. We lose our way and our place. But as long as we continue this non-self-centered activity, the way and the place open up wherever we are. Aside from this practice there is no special thing that we have to do, as our ordinary life functions as the way.

FIRE MONKS, by Colleen Busch

Many of us closely followed the fire that threatened Tassajara in 2008. Colleen Busch's book, *Fire Monks: Zen Mind Meets Wildfire at the Gates of Tassajara*, tells the behind-the-scenes story of saving Tassajara. It also presents a dynamic portrait of practice in action. Says Norman Fischer of the book: "This is an exciting and heartwarming read - exciting because wildfire is unpredictable and dangerous, and heartwarming because this is the first honest account I



have read of the simple, unadorned courage you find in American Zen communities. After all the spiritual self-help manuals and self-focused memoirs, it's good finally to hear a well-reported story of real-life spiritual grace under pressure."

Fire Monks will be published July 7 by Penguin Press. Come celebrate the book's launch on **July 14 at City Center** (300 Page St.) in San Francisco. The evening will include a talk by Abbot Steve Stucky, a screening of the trailer from a film documentary-in-progress about the fire, a reading by Colleen, and discussion. Colleen will also read on **July 21 at Mrs. Dalloway's** (2904 College Ave.) in Berkeley. And on Saturday **August 6 at BZC**, she will give a talk along with David Zimmerman, who defended Tassajara during the fire. Books will be for sale at all events, and signings will follow. For event times and a complete list of readings in the Bay Area and beyond, visit www.colleenmortonbusch.com.

Lay Ordination (*Zaike Tokudo*)

The Ceremony of Receiving the Precepts for Those Who Remain at Home

Shobogenzo "Jukai" states, "All Buddhas and Ancestors taught that receiving the precepts is the first step in the Way." Dogen Zenji also tells us that upon receiving the Buddha's precepts we immediately enter the position of all buddhas. How so? Because these wonderful precepts arise from the purity of self-nature and reveal the buddha-nature—our true nature.

The ceremony of receiving the precepts as lay followers is called *zaike tokudo* or lay ordination. According to definition, "ordain" means to invest with the functions of an office or position. In understanding Buddhist ordination, we should know that the functions we are invested with are those of a buddha. This is exactly the meaning of "upon receiving the precepts we immediately enter the position of all buddhas." To have *zaike tokudo* is to acknowledge our true nature and confirm our intent to realize it fully.

The ceremony itself consists of several significant elements to which we should give thought. First, there is the invocation in which the officiant priest invites all buddhas and bodhisattvas to be present as witnesses. The officiant acts as their representative, but we should know that actually the buddhas are our *Acariya* or preceptor, therefore, we receive the precepts directly from all buddhas.

Secondly, all who wish to receive Buddha's precepts must first purify themselves through confession and repentance in which one acknowledges past and present wrongdoing and delusion. We do this by chanting the verse of "Formless Repentance" and personally looking into our own hearts.

Having purified ourselves, we may receive the bodhisattva precepts—that is, the Three Refuges (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha), the Three Pure Precepts, and the Ten Prohibitory Precepts—a total of sixteen. The *Nirvana Sutra* states, "Although all living beings are replete with the buddha nature, they must uphold the precepts as the cause before they can perceive it." Therefore, let us give thought to the meaning of "keeping the precepts is exactly buddhahood." Until we fully understand our true nature and penetrate it thoroughly, we may understand the precepts as guidelines for daily living and a framework for Buddhist practice.

Lastly, in acknowledgment of our receiving the precepts and joining the family of Buddha, we are given a *rakusu* (small Buddhist robe which one sews according to the traditional way) and a *kechimyaku* or lineage paper upon which our Buddhist name (given on this occasion by the teacher) is written along with the names of all ancestors in the lineage from Shakyamuni Buddha to our present teacher. The red line that connects your name and all others written therein illustrates the truth that the precepts are indeed the lifeblood of all buddhas.

Receiving the precepts is an important part of Buddhist practice available to anyone regardless of mental or physical ability. It is the way by which we manifest the truth of our own buddhahood here in the world, right now.

~ Taizan Maezumi Roshi
(used with permission of Zen Center of Los Angeles)

HOW ZAZEN IS LIKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Kogon Kaion Lois Silverstein

Once before, I was alive: At P.S. 109, Queens Village, New York. I was five, six, on up to twelve. Every day, when I walked up the cement stairs into the red brick building, down the long hall with tall wooden doors on either side, stepped into a classroom lined with small wooden chairs and desks and took my place, I entered life, new and undefined. Everything was alive, untouched, and I, a fresh agent. Entering the Berkeley, California Zendo, on a chill March day, in midlife, I slid open a shoji screen, bowed, and walked across a bare, wooden floor to one of a row of black cushions, sat down, and crossed my legs. Once again, I took my place, virgin and awake.

From day one in elementary school, and in the Zendo, I followed the rules—lines, silences, bells, postures. Confining at first, but as time unfolded, liberating. Jumping-off places they became, junctures. Just as when we dive into a lake, we step onto the dock and stand for moments before the water. Our feet hug the ground. We breathe in, then, we let go and enter. Water curls and curves under our legs, around our torso, between our fingers, around our neck and head, insisting, as it does, on its own direction, whatever its source. Nothing about it is under our control, and we list into it, lift, lie back, commit. At first, I didn't understand that, although I was willing. Was that what I was doing, in school, in zazen, learning to swim?

To P.S. 109, I took the big yellow school bus. I carried my lunch box and my little book bag; only, a Kleenex, however, stuffed into my right hand, guaranteed my security. Rows of desks, bells on the hour, going to the girls' room in lines, holding hands when we were told—so much had to do with hands, then—holding each other's, raising them to talk, folding them to pay attention, washing them the minute after you ate—not talking unless you were called on, copying big letter ABCs from short black cards hanging over the chalk board onto the fat white lined paper with the sharp yellow pencil, not running into the margin, ever. Lunch was one carton of milk with a straw, and, if lucky, a cream cheese and grape jelly sandwich, sometimes smelling like rotten egg and peanut butter mixed with glue. Order, rule, and—however scary, like the clang of the hall bells—sensible and rhythmic.

To the Zendo, I walked, in pre-dawn mornings, fog or rain or clear, stepped inside, hands pressed before my heart, eyes lowered, bowed in greeting, and took my place among the dark-robed people, still and silent. The whole place stayed silent, indeed, except when it was time to chant. Then, more silence. Then, breath, going in and going out, waves of silence and breath. When the Abbot arrived and circumambulated the seated breathers, soft footsteps. Later, another small bell sounded, and everyone stood and formed twin lines, then, snaked their way along the narrow aisles in slow, deliberate steps, breath and footfall reconciled, as air and ground, fire and water.

To school, I was sent, and, although leaving the house unnerved me, learning to read and write in exchange made me ecstatic. “O brave new world that has such ... everything [sic] ... in it.” From the source of the Amazon to the duel between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr; from learning how to square dance to multiplying 12 by 42. Every day brought discovery, every turn of page and lift of pencil a new downbeat. That it guarded me from the demands to shape me according to the hem of my dress, wave of my hair, or the size of my nose, toes, ears, and teeth became incidental to the growth I experienced, like a small tree which, by the end of years 1-8, was lithe and alive. On graduation day, in my self-sewn white organdy, complete with rose corsage, I was more than ready for the next act. “Breathes there the man with soul so dead, Who never to himself hath said, This is my own, my native land!” For me that wasn't so. I knew my native land, and it had to do with all I had so far surrendered to, in the regimented but inspired years: I was a beginner, and dedicated to being so.

No one in particular sent me to the Zendo. No one took me by the hand. What I had heard and read and attended of talks and events sponsored by the Buddhist communities burgeoning in the Bay Area did not prompt me to reshape my life. And yet, there I was, sitting in half-lotus, morning after morning, chanting in Japanese, or English, long lists of teachers, prayers for well-being for those who needed them, doing soji after service, learning to eat oryoki and tasting as much of the brown rice or warm gruel from my tiny bowl as I could, wooden spoonful by spoonful, and there I was, beside another beginner sprinkling gomasio from formal cups across the thick broth or over a small mound. *(Ctd. on p.7)*

(Ctd. from p. 6)

Each morning, each retreat day I woke captained by my breath, alive, thrilled that helter-skelter wasn't the mainstay of life, though it seemed that way when I failed to be mindful. When mindful became my day, it turned out that way, even when I didn't remember. Things changed, just as they had when Mrs. Brown taught me to read and write. The more I became enveloped in such moments, the more I stepped away from the wild signals zigzagging the space around me with worry and flurry, *uddhaca-kukkuka*. Letting in, giving out, below and between the layer of doing and behaving, I felt like a tree planted and a bird flying to the nest and then away, standing on the shore and in the midst of the ebbing and flowing of waves. The little girl in the red-checked dress, the woman in the black robe, time free, in Queens or Kyoto, a mother's apple-green kitchen, a husband's arms. Day after day, month after month. For as long as I am able. Mrs. Brown said, Learn your letters and the world will follow. In the Zendo? The universe, the realm of the vast, with no break.

Posture and wind. Letters hang above a chalk-board still. We bow to them. On the cushion we dream awake. The magic of beginning. Every breath, before and after, within. Alive. In words. Silent. In praise. Beginning.

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FINDING PRESENCE IN CONVERSATION

We will be holding three workshops on successive Thursday evenings in July—7/7, 7/14, and 7/21, from 7:30 to 9:00 pm—in which we'll continue to explore compassionate listening and expression in our day-to-day lives. In the context of open and honest talk, this practice can reveal fresh meaning in teachings on mindfulness, loving kindness, and right speech.

In this series, we'll focus on how we construct our verbal interactions, slowing it all down, and will also role play some actual situations we'd like to deal with differently, or resolve in ways more to our liking. Sign-ups will appear after the June sesshin. You can contact me at 510-325-2342, peterovrtn@gmail.com, or www.speechmatters.com. - Peter Overton



Jennifer Copeland

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