



# Berkeley Zen Center



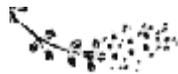
July 2012 Newsletter

## **ZAZENKAI: A DAY OF JUST SITTING**

**Sunday, July 15, 8:00 am–5:10 pm**

Priest Peter Overton will lead a silent one-day sitting. This will be an opportunity to spend a day doing nothing but zazen, kinhin, bowing and eating. We will maintain silence throughout, with the exception of bells to mark meditation periods, and chanting the refuges aloud at 5:10 pm. Participants should plan to come for the whole day. A break from 12:20-1:00 will allow time for sack lunches to be eaten in the community room or, if we're enjoying fair weather, outdoors. There will be a 10-minute period of bowing at your own pace prior to the lunch break, and we will have two periods of fast kinhin. Both of these activities can be adapted to harmonize with individual needs and abilities.

A sign-up sheet and further information will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. The fee is \$20. Please feel free to contact Peter Overton, peterovrtn@gmail.com if you have any questions.



## **OKUMURA ROSHI TEACHING RETREAT**

**Saturday, August 4, 6:00 am-4:30 pm**

Shohaku Okumura will return for his annual visit and day of teaching at Berkeley Zen Center. The first part of the day will be structured as our usual Saturday program, with a lecture by Okumura Roshi at 10:15 am, followed by a short period of zazen and buffet lunch in the community room. After a rest period, we will sit another period of zazen and then Okumura Roshi will offer 1½ hours of teaching, followed by a final period of zazen. He will be speaking on Ryokan's waka poems. Materials will be available at the retreat. The morning lecture is open to the public. The afternoon lecture is open to people who come for the teaching retreat. There will be a sign-up sheet so that the cooks might plan for meals. The fee for the day, or part of the day, is a sliding scale of \$30-50. If you have questions or cannot come to BZC to sign up, please contact the director for the day, Carol Paul at 510-206-5051 or at caroljpaul@yahoo.com.

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

### July

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

Tuesday, 7/3, 6:20 pm  
Wednesday, 7/4, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 7/7, 9:40 am

#### **Zazenkai (Just Sitting Day)**

Sunday, 7/15, 8:00 am-5:10 pm

#### **Work Day**

Sunday, 7/22, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

### August

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

Thursday, 8/2, 6:20 pm  
Friday, 8/3, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 8/4, 9:40 am

#### **Okumura Roshi Teaching Retreat**

Saturday, 8/4, 6:00 am-4:30 pm

#### **Summer Recess**

Sunday, 8/12 – Friday 8/24



#### **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.

## SOJUN ROSHI'S STUDY GROUP

July – December

Sojun Roshi has agreed to continue with his study group for the second half of the year. Both continuing and new students are welcome to sign up. Scheduling is a bit difficult because of travel plans, summer break, Aspects of Practice, and end-of-year holidays. Here is the best schedule we've been able to come up with.

July 27  
August 10  
September 28  
November 30  
December 14

All sessions are on Friday evenings at 7:15 pm, which seem to work for most people. Payment will be on a series basis only, \$10.00/class, depending on whether we schedule four or five sessions.

Our next subject is yet to be determined. The bulletin board sign-up will begin the first week of July when the subject and class material will hopefully be available. You can also email me at [nestor1@yahoo.com](mailto:nestor1@yahoo.com) to hold a spot.

Ron Nestor, Class Coordinator



## 20s and 30s DHARMA GROUP

July – December

Sojun Roshi invites students in their 20s and 30s to join him once a month for a short period of zazen and open discussion about Zen, Buddhism, the teachings, meditation, and/or your own practice. Selected Buddhist texts may also be discussed. Meetings are held in the zendo on Saturdays after lecture at 11:30 am. Upcoming dates are:

June 30                      September 22  
July 28                        October 20

Bodhidharma's emoticon  
for the 21st century

: (

-Ross Blum



## Family Activities at BZC

**Saturday Morning Childcare** Childcare for July and August will be by appointment. Please email Laurie Senauke at [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org) if you'd like to arrange free childcare on a Saturday morning for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15. After zazen, families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. Childcare for 8:45 zazen instruction and beginner orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

**Kidzendo** There is no kidzendo June – August.

**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 at [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org) or Marie at [marie\\_hopper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net).

## WORK DAY

Sunday, July 22, 8:30 am-4:30 pm

Twice a year we get together for work day. This is an opportunity for us to dedicate our time to our place of practice as a community. There are a variety of jobs around BZC that call for different skills; everyone's efforts are welcome and appreciated. If there is something in particular you would like to work on, or if you are holding on to a secret talent, this is the time to let it out.

We look forward to your joining us for a half or full day of work—lunch and yummy snacks are provided. If you have questions, please contact Diane Schnapp, [kimodi@mac.com](mailto:kimodi@mac.com).

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
Third Friday of the month before each issue.  
August deadline: Friday, July 20, 8:00 pm.

## A Brief History of Zen Abbot Succession

Thoughts from Sojun Roshi

July, 2012

In order to help our understanding of how, in a Zen practice place, an abbot or abbots are chosen, I want to present an overview of how this typically has been done and why. In most Buddhist communities an abbot or spiritual leader is the center or focal point. If the study of scripture or academics is the focal point, then an abbot or spiritual leader may or may not be necessary. A council of president and various teachers might be enough. On the other hand, although we study all of the scriptures, Zen practice is not dependent on any special scripture or curriculum of study. Dharma is transmitted personally between teacher and student or disciple, and the lineage is traced back to the founder, Shakyamuni Buddha. That is the idea.

The Tang Dynasty in China is considered the Golden Age of Zen. This was the time when the founding teachers matured their practice and attracted many disciples. Students would travel long distances to visit various teachers. When a student found the teacher he had an affinity with he would “hang up his traveling bag” and settle down there. This is how individual sanghas developed. The dharma was transmitted when the teacher felt that a disciple had the understanding and qualifications to transmit it to others deeply and correctly in their own style, without straying from the fundamental. At that time there were well known teachers who attracted many (or few) students. So the teaching temples or monasteries were formed around a teacher who was considered the abbot, and when the abbot retired or died, usually his designated successor took over as abbot (but not always).

In Zen, because it is a practice and not simply an academic education, the relationship between student and teacher is more like an apprenticeship. The teacher and students practice together in the field or garden of practice and the fruit ripens of itself. If the teacher has no one that he or she feels is qualified, then seeking outside the sangha for a successor might be necessary.

In the large monasteries in Japan the abbots are elected by committee, mainly because the abbot, an old man, is more of a figurehead, and the monks are not necessarily his personal students. They come from the family temples to experience monastic life and then return to take over the family temples, or take up a secular life style. Throughout the history of Zen in Japan and China, when the monasteries got too big and impersonal, corruption and political intrigue often led to the buying of an abbacy. In the larger monasteries in China, the emperor often appointed an abbot. During the Buddhist persecutions in China, Zen monks set up their temples in the mountains and flourished in small enclaves, while large monasteries in the cities bore the brunt of the persecutions.

I feel that our style at BZC has developed along the lines of the old Tang Dynasty teacher/abbot style, with a Japanese background and American coloring. We have a mixed bag of priests and lay practitioners, singles and doubles, live-ins and live-outs, professionals and bums, rich and poor, wise and ignorant. But when we gather here for the same reason, namely zazen, those distinctions drop away. I have often thought of this place as a one-room schoolhouse.

It is an unavoidable fact that the teacher/abbot puts his or her stamp on the practice, and together with the members, an atmosphere is created in which the practice flourishes. I have seen and experienced both the advantages and pitfalls of this style. When an abbot is selfish and egotistical, it usually turns out to be a disaster. When an abbot is selfless and generous, the dharma flourishes. In any case, the leadership must be shared so the abbot hopefully listens to the wise counsel of the elders who themselves might be teachers. When the founder is no longer present, the nature of the leadership will shift and many questions will emerge, including how the process works or should work. What are the elders’ and the sangha’s participation in the process? How much authority should the abbot have? Should there be term limits? Should there even be an abbot? From the beginning I wanted to set up the decision-making process in a democratic way. Together with the board and the elders, we have been refining that process for more than 40 years.

Right now, the board is doing their job in making sure that BZC continues in the best way possible into the 21st century. They want to make sure the transference of leadership will be smooth and acceptable. I am not writing this as a goodbye letter, but simply to help clarify the way I see it and to express my support for the board.



*Li Cheng (c. 919 - c. 967 AD)*

## **BZC CAMPOUT!**

**July 14 – 15**

You are warmly invited to the somewhat-annual Berkeley Zen Center Campout, scheduled for July 14-15. We've reserved a group campsite in nearby 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 almost definitely find one for you. Contact Katherine O. at [klo999@yahoo.com](mailto:klo999@yahoo.com) if you have questions, and look for a sign-up on the bulletin board in early July.



*Anonymous Chinese artist,  
Eastern Han Dynasty (25–220 AD)*

## **FINDING PRESENCE IN CONVERSATION**

**Thursday, July 12, 7:30 pm – 9:00 pm**

This will be the next in a series of ongoing meetings held in the community room. 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. As usual, we'll slow it all down, and role-play some actual situations we'd like to deal with differently, or resolve in ways more to our liking.

Facilitated by Peter Overton; RSVP via email to [peterovrtn@gmail.com](mailto:peterovrtn@gmail.com) or call 510-848-5239.



## **MARK YOUR CALENDARS – IT'S PARTY TIME AGAIN!**

Saturday, September 22, 11:00 am – 2:00 pm, is the date and time for the 2012 Building Improvement Program fundraising party. An article in the May newsletter outlined plans for repairing and strengthening the front of 1933 Russell, as well as additional improvements to the community room porch. This year, through the generosity and support of the sangha, we hope to add \$20,000 to the Building Improvement Fund to assure adequate funding for these two projects and others planned for the upcoming year. Come learn more about these projects, and enjoy food, drinks, music, a raffle, and a silent auction.

## **COMMUNITY ROOM SHOE RACK, PORCH**

Articles left on the community room porch, especially the bench, are considered up for grabs. The shoe rack inside the community room is meant for shoes. Please put them there, rather than on the floor, unless there is no room on the rack. Items that are not shoes should not be stored on the shoe rack. If they are found there they will be put on the top shelf until they are removed.

## **GARAGE SALE!**

Is it time to empty your closets and purge what you no longer need? Hold a garage or sidewalk sale and donate the proceeds to BZC's 2012 Building Fund. The same goes for consigning used clothing, books, or anything sold second hand. It's another way to contribute to our fundraising goals and have some fun at the same time. You can do it on your own or band together with dharma friends to hold a group garage sale at someone's house. Clean house, recycle, and support BZC all in one.

## **CHANGING HANDS**

Many thanks and much gratitude to Kate Gilpin for editing this newsletter for several years. We welcome Jennifer Taylor into this position! As Jen leaves the post of Administrative Assistant for Temple Affairs, Don Curry is stepping into her shoes, and in turn, Mike McVey will take over from Don in maintaining our community room. Much appreciation to all of you! In the meantime, Carol Paul will join John Busch as Co-Sesshin Director in September. We thank Mary Duryee for her steady practice in this position over the last two years.

## **SOUNDING BOARD**

### **A Report from Our President**

In the May newsletter Sounding Board article (“Leadership Clarity”), the board shared that BZC by-laws require board confirmation and sangha approval for the appointment of a new abbot. All board members agree that in order for us to adequately represent the sangha on this matter, we need to solicit input from all members to inform our deliberations. To facilitate this process, we will provide a series of meetings during the upcoming months that will be open to all sangha members and friends and attended by at least two board members whose primary role is to listen to what members have to say about succession. These meetings are intended for information gathering. No decisions will be made during the meetings. The point will be to listen to what everyone has to say. Afterwards the board will look at what comes out in the meetings and use that information to proceed with further discussions.

Articles in the March, April and May issues of the BZC newsletter—one by Sojun, one by Hozan, and the most recent one from the board—each looked at the issue of abbot succession at the time that Sojun Roshi is no longer abbot. Sojun has made it clear that he is not ready to step down as abbot at this time. So why are we continuing to focus attention on this issue? The board discussed this at our last meeting. We affirmed that our intent is to assure that BZC remain a healthy, vibrant spiritual institution long into the future. We trust that the sangha feels the same way. This means preparing for a smooth transition when the time arrives. We feel strongly that this requires that we be transparent and inclusive in our deliberations and plans related to succession. Through the newsletter we hope to reach as many sangha members and friends as we can, including those who are not able to be present very often.

The board also intends to consult with sanghas of other Zen centers of similar size concerning their experience with succession. Importantly, Sojun has written an article for this month’s newsletter about the history of succession in Zen communities.

Only after the board has more information and input from our sangha will we begin to formulate a more specific succession process. We hope you’ll be able to attend one of our upcoming meetings, but of course, we welcome your input in whatever way you choose to provide it. You may contact any of the current board officers and members for more information or to share your views.

- Gerry Oliva



### **PARTY AT CLEAR WATER**

**July 28, 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

Jazz, Great Food and Wine

Raffle and Door Prizes

Vallejo Zen Center is offering a jazz concert and garden party on July 28. Nick Phillips and the Jazz All Stars will play.

The event at VZC includes a raffle with the grand prize of dinner for two at Greens (you need not be present to win). Door prizes and a silent auction will fill out the afternoon. Mary Mocine will host the popular yearly event. Party tickets are \$15 and raffle tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20. Please contact Ellen Webb in June or Lisa Nelbach in July to purchase party or raffle tickets.

### **MOUNTAINS & RIVERS PHOTOS**



Many fine photos and a video of the April 2012 Mountains and Rivers Sesshin are now posted on Berkeley Zen Center’s Photo Site. Enjoy, and consider coming to the next Mountains and Rivers Sesshin, September 27-30. While you’re here, check out other events and consider adding photos of your own.

- Ko Blix.

## LAY ORDINATION

On Saturday, June 16, four members of the Berkeley Zen Center sangha received lay ordination/zaike tokudo from Hozan Senauke Sensei. This ceremony takes place once a year at BZC and is a significant rite of passage for each participant and for the whole sangha. We have the feeling that we are all together witnessing and participating as the ordinees receive Buddha's precepts. We welcome these ordinees into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha and Suzuki Roshi's family.

This year, for the first time, along with the lineage document/kechimyaku, Hozan Sensei gave each person a second document honoring our known and unknown women ancestors. The form of this document was designed by Norman Fischer, Grace Schireson, Peter Levitt, and other teachers, and was personally inscribed by Hozan.



*From left to right: Jennifer Taylor, Alexandra Frappier (ordinee jisha), Jean Selkirk (sewing teacher), Abbot Sojun Mel Weitsman, Fulani Offut, Hozan Alan Senuake (preceptor), David White, Jennifer Copeland, and Catherine Cascade (preceptor jisha).*

This year's ordinees are:

Jen Copeland – *Shōen Kannei/Luminous Garden* - Perfect Peace  
Fulani Offut – *Shishin Hongo/Lion Heart* - Original Enlightenment  
Jen Taylor – *Chōgetsu Ko-on/Morning Moon* - Authentic Voice  
David White – *Daishin Kenji/Great Faith* - Sword of Compassion  
Congratulations to all!

## CARING FOR BUDDHA'S ROBE

If you need assistance (or simply time and space) with rakusu/okesa/robe repairs, replacement, or finishing an already-started rakusu, the following dates are on the calendar. Each session is from 1:00 pm -5:00 pm. Please contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk (510-655-0820), before you attend the first time. Any changes to the schedule will be made on the bulletin board.



Material fees only apply for envelopes or new (second or replacement) rakusu, and the usual class fee applies for new rakusu, which must be started by August.

Sewing a first rakusu for lay ordination will begin in January as usual. If you are considering this, please speak with your teacher, and then also speak with the sewing teacher before the winter break begins.

Sun 8/12	Sat 10/6
Sat 8/25	Sun 10/21
Sun 9/9	Sat 11/3
Sat 9/29	Sun 11/18

## AN EASY WAY TO SUPPORT OUR TEMPLE with on-line monthly bill pay

by Ed Herzog, At-Large Board Member

If you are like me, you often forget to pay our monthly BZC membership dues. BZC doesn't send out bills and we rarely remind people with phone calls. Yet, as a board member, I have come to understand that the upkeep and operations of our wonderful and valued temple depend on the monthly dues and donations from all of us. It's also really hard to budget during the year when dues come in fits and spurts. So, what to do?

Well, here's an easy way for all of us to pay our dues and not have to think about it, write a check, or buy stamps. Sign up for the automatic bill pay system at your bank, either by going into your bank and having them set it up or by using your bank's on-line automatic bill pay function, using the option of "pay by check". You can pay monthly at any interval of your choice. You can also use this same system for one-time donations. You indicate the purpose of the payment when you are prompted to enter the purpose on the memo line as you would on any check that you write. It's easy and free both to you and to BZC.

The board will be setting up a table once a month on Saturday during tea that will contain more detailed instructions should you need help.

After you sign up, every month they will send your dues to BZC for whatever amount you specify. We get

a check every month, and you get great satisfaction from supporting our center. And it's one less thing to think about in our busy lives. Help us keep our temple going and sign up at your bank for automatic bill pay today.



*During the April 2012 workday, Carol Paul, Liz Horowitz, and Sue Oehser completed the project of making eighteen new pot holders for oryoki servers' pots. The next workday will be Sunday, July 22. Don't miss it!*

## BZC ON THE BIG SCREEN

*Old Plum Mountain, Berkeley Zen Center, Life Inside the Gate* will be shown at the Second Friday Spiritual Cinema at the Center for Spiritual Living in Morristown, New Jersey on July 13. It will also be carried on the [AwakenSpiritualFilmFestival.org](http://AwakenSpiritualFilmFestival.org) and [CSLMorristown.org](http://CSLMorristown.org) web sites.

*Berkeley Zen Center  
Sangha, 1983*



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