



# Berkeley Zen Center



November 2014 Newsletter

## Rohatsu Sesshin

**Sunday, Nov. 30 – Saturday, Dec. 6**

This year's Rohatsu sesshin, led by Sojun Mel Weitsman, begins November 30 and ends December 6. (The start of Rohatsu this year is at the end of the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.) This sesshin commemorates the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha, and all sangha members and friends are invited to attend Buddha's enlightenment ceremony on Saturday, December 6, at 11:10 am, after lecture.

Rohatsu is also a time to be inspired by the memory of our founder, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. The Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial Ceremony will be held on Monday, December 1 at 8:20 pm; everyone is invited to attend.

Each day of Rohatsu starts at 5:00 am and ends at 9:00 pm, with the exception of the final day, which ends around 5:00 pm. Everyone is encouraged to participate for as many days as possible, but participants are asked to sit for a **minimum of three consecutive full days.**

The sesshin fee is \$35 daily, **paid in advance.** (Anyone unable to pay the full amount may request a reduced fee from the sesshin director). Payment must be received by the sign-up deadline or no seat will be reserved for you. Please leave checks marked "Rohatsu" in the courtyard laundry room door slot or mail it to BZC. The sign-up sheet and registration forms (with other important sesshin information) are posted on the patio bulletin board. Please put completed forms in the sesshin director's mail slot. **The sign-up deadline is Wednesday, November 26 at 7:00 am.**

If you are unfamiliar with the oryoki style of eating in the zendo, please attend oryoki training beforehand. Training is offered every Saturday at 6:40 am if requested. An oryoki training session is also scheduled for Tuesday, November 11 at 6:30 pm after evening zazen. Please inform the oryoki instructor, Gary Artim, if you are planning to attend. You may also request a 1-on-1 training by



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

### November

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

Monday, 11/3, 6:20 pm  
Tuesday, 11/4, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 11/8, 9:40 am

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

Sunday, 11/9, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon

#### **One-Day Sesshin**

#### **Close Aspects of Practice**

Saturday, 11/15, 5:00 am – 9:00 pm

#### **Thanksgiving - Zendo Holiday**

Thursday, 11/27

#### **Rohatsu Sesshin**

Sunday, 11/30 – Saturday, 12/6

### December

#### **Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial**

Monday, 12/1

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 12/6, 9:40 am

#### **Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony**

Saturday, 12/6

#### **Winter Break**

Sunday, 12/14 – Wednesday, 12/31

#### **New Year's Eve Sitting and Party**

Wednesday, 12/31

e-mailing Gary at [gartim/@gmail.com](mailto:gartim/@gmail.com).

If you wish to stay overnight at BZC during sesshin, please contact the shika, Katy, at [bzcschika@gmail.com](mailto:bzcschika@gmail.com). If you have questions, please contact the sesshin director, Carol Paul, at 510.206.5051 or [caroljpaul@yahoo.com](mailto:caroljpaul@yahoo.com).



#### **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.

## One-Day Sesshin

### Aspects of Practice Period Closes

**Saturday, November 15, 5:00 am – 9:00 pm**

Ryushin Andrea Thach will lead a one-day sesshin on Saturday, March 15, from 5:00 am–9:00 pm to close our Aspects of Practice Period. We encourage old and new sangha members to participate. Please sign up on the patio bulletin board by Wednesday morning, November 12 after zazen. If this is your first sesshin at BZC, we recommend that you first participate in a full Saturday program and also speak with the sesshin director. The fee is \$35 and should be paid in advance (a discounted fee is possible; please speak to the director). Put checks marked “November 15 sesshin” in the mail slot in the courtyard laundry room door or mail to the BZC office manager at 1931 Russell St., Berkeley 94703. You can also use the bill pay option on your banks’ website and make the notation “October sesshin fee.”

If you have any questions, contact the sesshin director, Gerry Oliva at [sesshindirector@bzc@gmail.com](mailto:sesshindirector@bzc@gmail.com) or 510.652.7217.



## Half-Day Sitting

**Sunday, November 9, 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 September half-day director Peter Overton [Peterovrtn@gmail.com](mailto:Peterovrtn@gmail.com) or 510. 848.5239.

## Family Activities at BZC

### Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Supervised play is offered many Saturdays (schedule below) from 9:40 am zazen through lecture. Supervising is Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. To use this service, or for coverage for 8:45 am zazen instruction, contact Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org) by noon the Friday before.

### KidZendo

BZC’s Saturday program for children 3 and up is offered during the school year, typically on the fourth Saturday of each month, from 9:30 am to 11:15 am (see schedule below or online). A group of BZC members create this program, which includes songs, stories, offerings, art activities and a snack. For more information, and to RSVP, contact [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org).

### New! Theater Games

We are trying a new monthly offering suggested by sangha member Thea Gold: Theater Games – a way to be silly and free together, while cultivating creativity, body awareness, spontaneity, relaxation, expressivity, trust, laughter, and concentration. It is suitable for all ages, and for the shy as well as outgoing. Through games, storytelling, and improvisation, we will practice fully opening to each moment. It will be held typically on second Saturdays (see schedule or online) from 9:30 am to 11:15 am. To RSVP, contact [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org).

Family practice schedule:

November 1	Supervised play
November 8	<b>Theater Games</b>
November 15	Sesshin - no program
November 22	<b>Kidzendo</b>
November 29	Supervised play
December 6	Sesshin - no program
December 13	<b>Theater Games</b>
December 20	Interim
December 27	Interim

### Family Practice E-mail Group

Our Yahoo group makes it easier to communicate about family practice. We only send, at most, one event e-mail a week. To join, e-mail Marie at [marie\\_hopper@sbcglobal.net](mailto:marie_hopper@sbcglobal.net) or Laurie.

**Please RSVP for ALL family activities to [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org). Thank you!**

# Nancy McClellan / Seiu Shinshu

November 2014

Our good friend Nancy McClellan—Seiu Shinshu/Gentle Rain Deep Resolve—passed away peacefully early on the morning of October 8 at Elmwood Care Center in Berkeley. A small circle of friends and teachers were at her bedside shortly after she passed. We set up a simple altar and chanted the Heart Sutra as we circumambulated Nancy's body. We also had an opportunity to speak to her on



this occasion of transition and closed with the Pali refuges. In the zendo that morning we sounded the *densho* bell 108 times to support Nancy on her journey into the unknown.

On Friday afternoon, September 19, after helping on the grounds following a wedding at BZC, Nancy was assaulted as she went to her car, which was parked on Russell Street at the corner of Otis, right across from the Zen Center. What appears to have been an unsuccessful carjacking escalated quickly into violence. Despite the rapid response of Berkeley police and an emergency medical team, Nancy did not regain consciousness after the incident. She received wonderful care at Highland Hospital, and was

visited by many friends over the two weeks there. Her assailant was apprehended by the police shortly after the attack and remains in custody.

Anyone coming to BZC was likely to know Nancy. She was a funny and deeply creative individual, able to catch any of us, or herself, off balance at a given moment and then be able to laugh. Whether or not one knew her personally—I find it very hard to write in the past tense—all of us around BZC enjoyed the fruits of her ceaseless work in our gardens over many years. She poured her practice and passion into our grounds—planting, weeding, pruning, watering, nurturing. It was not unusual to see Nancy mowing the lawns as the dark of evening fell.



Photo by Kate Gilpin

She was also a painter (with an MFA from SF Art Institute), writer and actor, involved with improvisational theater over many years. She had a great photographic eye as well, as those who have seen her Flickr site know.

A memorial ceremony, open to all of Nancy's friends and family, will be held on December 13 at BZC. Meanwhile, all of us at BZC mourn Nancy's passing, and we struggle to understand what we might learn from this moment even as we mourn.

Gate, Gate  
Paragate,  
Parasamgate  
Bodhi Svaha!

- Hozan Alan Senauke

## Sounding Board

### The BZC Board-Resident Interface

From time to time, the board faces issues that pertain to BZC residents – for example, the board has financial responsibility in setting rents and rent increases. As the viability of attending sesshin for non-residents affects BZC's income as well as our mission to make intensive zazen practice available for lay practitioners, recently the board discussed the practice of residents opening their apartments for community use during sesshin. Sojun Roshi expressed his ideal, namely, that during sesshin all the spaces at BZC (well, except resident bedrooms!) would be available to those at sesshin. That's the ideal, and then how do we negotiate the actual circumstances with both flexibility and fairness? When the ideal and the actual conflict, how do we balance the needs of residents with those of non-residents?

The residents recently clarified the Resident Guidelines (available upon request) with regard to non-resident use of space during sesshins. Evident in this effort was the intention to find language that considered the needs of both residents and non-residents.

In an effort to keep the dialog open between the board and residents, the board recently adopted a policy that enhances communication. The head resident will now be automatically informed by the board president, and invited to attend the meeting, whenever residency-related issues are to appear on the agenda. As follow-up to this, the board also supports the idea of convening a meeting where residents and non-residents can jointly explore ways in which to further develop a harmonious environment for all sesshin attendees. The board welcomes input from the sangha on this important issue.

### BZC Event Photos

Fall 2014 work weekend, fundraising party, Karen and Nancy's wedding, and Sojun's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday party photos are now available online. Contact Ko Blix (KoFotoFactory@me.com) if you are not yet privy to our semi-private must-see-to-believe BZC photo site.

### September Fundraiser

Our recent fundraising party was quite successful. There was plenty to eat and drink, good music provided by Hozan and his band, raffle drawings, sign-ups for interesting events, BZC logo items and CD's for sale, and new this year, a photo booth. People have been generous in giving to our building fund, which will help us to begin repair and renovation work in the kitchen and bathroom in the apartment above the community room. With proceeds from the party, the building fund now needs only about \$5,000 more to meet our goal of \$25,000 for this year. Great appreciation is extended to all those people who helped make this year's fundraiser a success.



**Shukke Tokudo**

On Saturday, November 22, Deborah Good – Zendó Shin-I, or *Virtuous/Good Path True Intention* – will receive priest ordination (Shukke Tokudo) from our abbot, Sojun Roshi. The ceremony will be at 3:00 p.m. in the zendo. A simple reception will follow. Please come and give Deborah your support as she takes her vows and we celebrate her ordination.





*Photos by Ko Blix*

### Zendo Work Weekend

Have you noticed the exterior of our 32-year-old zendo lately? Gone are the big black areas of mold that obscured the natural wood grain. Gone as well is the dried, cracked, and uneven surface and areas of bare wood that had been bleached by the sun. In their place now is a smooth, well-oiled and protected expanse, showing the wood's true grain and sporting a new reddish pigment. The skin of our zendo is born again.

About thirty of us got together on a weekend in September to take on this big task. Even with many hands it wasn't light work! The place looked and sounded like a beehive, with as many as ten electric sanders buzzing together. The patio was a maze of extension cords, sandpaper, and power tools. Somehow it all worked. Each person found their place and went at it. We had sanders, oilers, wipers, cutters, excellent cooks, sweepers, messengers, etc. Sojun, with patience and precision, renewed the surface of the Abbot's entrance.

By early Sunday evening we finished as it got dark. Careful advance planning from the project management committee, along with the great energy and devotion of sangha members who had the opportunity to help, brought it to completion. There's no place like our temple home.

## Changing Hands

Barbara Warsavage has taken care of the community room these past several months. She has done a wonderful job of keeping it clean and tidy, and has provided lovely flowers from her garden for the altar. Teri Jo Tinus has graciously agreed to take over this position of caring for this hub of sangha activities.

Ken Knabb has been the director of our Mountains and Rivers sesshins for fifteen years, an extraordinary length of service. With his organizational skills, unflappable demeanor and devotion to practice, he has offered a unique event that includes zazen on the beach, hiking, studying Dogen's Mountains and Rivers Sutra, and camping, all in the beauty of Point Reyes National Seashore. After these many years, Ken is stepping aside from this position. We are deeply appreciative and grateful for the leadership he provided so graciously. We welcome Christy Calame who will be stepping into this position, as we continue to offer this one-of-a-kind experience.



about what had happened. On the one hand, we freely discuss practice issues together, and I consider many of the men to be dharma brothers and friends. On the other hand... well, I guess you can probably imagine my reservations.

As it turned out, I was spared the awkwardness of introducing the topic myself as the tragedy came up in a public discussion. Many of the men had seen TV news stories about the crime, including footage of Berkeley Zen Center, the garden that Nancy cared for so lovingly, and interviews with Sojun and Hozan.

The most common and immediate responses were some of the most sensitive and empathetic I have encountered since the crime. Most of the men had also lost friends and family members to violence. One man had been to eight funerals in the same year. They could understand the feelings of grief, rage, and helplessness that, without any warning, have overwhelmed me over and over since the evening of the crime.

The men also understood when I spoke of the new and unfamiliar fears I feel when I walk around the streets near BZC. A former gang member told me of the overwhelming anxiety he lived with every day in the neighborhood where he grew up. Because of the prevalence of violence, even the most innocent of errands became a paramilitary operation. If he wanted something to eat, he'd walk to the store in a group with five other men and two sentries.

My friend Andre sympathized with the plain incredulousness I feel whenever I realize that Nancy won't be pattering around the BZC garden ever again. He had only recently learned that his high school girlfriend, I'll call her Mary, had been killed by a carelessly driven truck as she crossed a street near her home. Like me, he was having trouble picturing his former neighborhood without her. Andre, like many of the men, identifies as



## Condolences from San Quentin

As many of you know, I practice with a Buddhist sangha, the Buddhadharma sangha, that meets inside San Quentin State Prison. Many of the inmates in our sangha are "lifers" serving indeterminate sentences for violent crimes. When we went in the Sunday after Nancy's death, I wasn't sure how or whether I would talk to them

Christian, even though he's a regular at the Buddhist sangha, I asked him if he believed that deaths like Nancy's and Mary's could be part of God's purpose.

"Well I don't know about God's purpose," he said, "but I do know that God wants me to *give* Mary's death a purpose. I've got to go out and make it mean something." Andre, also a former gang member, was one of the organizers of an institution-wide Day of Peace held at San Quentin this year.

An inmate I'll call Clarence asked me what many of the other men were probably wondering, "How does it feel to be here, now that this has happened to your friend? Are you still going to keep coming?"

Clarence was one of the first men I got to know when I started practicing at San Quentin two and a half years ago. At the time, he was just starting to meditate, so we were sangha newbies together. He was touchingly eager to change, and but also completely terrified by the prospect. Since then, he's shared the ups and downs of his practice with me and other sangha members, and it has been deeply heartwarming to be witnesses to his journey.

It's considered bad manners to ask an inmate about his "case," but, about a year after I met him, Clarence asked me to read something he had

written for a class he was taking. When I agreed, he handed me a piece of paper and walked away. That's how I learned that he was serving 41 years to life for a murder he had committed. It was another six months before we had a direct conversation about this. I found myself saying to him without any effort or second thought, "I don't care what you did, I care about who you are now."

So when he asked his question, it was easy for me to tell him that coming to San Quentin was one of the most comforting things I had done all week. It was healing to be with men who had suffered and caused suffering, and yet were searching for ways to grow, to change and to benefit others. When I see them making such choices in the dehumanizing environment of a state prison, I am inspired to at least try to do the same thing here on the outside.

I struggled to coherently express all this to Clarence as I assured him that I was definitely going to keep coming to the Buddhadharm sangha. And then I found myself saying, without any irony at all, "I hope the young man who did the crime grows up to be just like you."

We both teared up.

- Tamar

*Note: Names and some identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*



*San Quentin Day of Peace (from the San Quentin Blues Facebook page).*

### **Saturday Speakers, 10:15 am**

- Nov. 1 - Ron Nestor
- Nov. 8 - Gerry Oliva
- Nov. 15 - Ryushin Andrea Thach  
(Sesshin: Close Aspects)
- Nov. 22 - Sojun
- Nov. 29 - Sojun

### **Friday and Monday Talk Schedule**

- Nov. 3, Monday 6:20 am - Open Discussion
- Nov. 7, Friday 5:50 pm - Karen Sundheim
- Nov. 10, Monday 6:20 am - Shosan,  
Laurie Senauke
- Nov. 17, Monday 6:20 am - Linda Hess
- Nov. 24, Monday 6:20 am - Teri Jo Tinus

### **NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**

**Third Friday of the month before each  
issue. Submit items to  
bzcnewsletter@gmail.com.**

**December deadline:  
Friday, November 21, 8:00 pm**



On the day we offer you to the fire  
this is what I choose to recall:  
Your last meal was sweet,  
a cake laced with berries, your last day  
a bases-loaded, bottom of the ninth, home run for love.  
- Colleen B.

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