



# Berkeley Zen Center



November 2013 Newsletter

## Rohatsu Sesshin

This year's Rohatsu sesshin, led by Sojun Mel Weitsman, begins on Sunday, December 1 and ends Saturday, December 7. (Please note that the start of Rohatsu this year occurs 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, which will be held on Saturday, December 7, at 11:10 am, right 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 evening, December 2 at 8:20 pm, and everyone is also warmly invited to attend this ceremony.

Each day of Rohatsu starts at 5:00 am and ends at 9:00 pm, with the exception of the final day, which ends at noon. Everyone is encouraged to participate in sesshin 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 signup deadline or no seat will be reserved for you.** Please leave checks marked "Rohatsu" in the kitchen door donation slot or mail to BZC. The sign-up sheet and registration forms (along with other important sesshin information) are posted on the patio bulletin board. Please put completed forms in the sesshin director's mail slot. The **deadline for signup is Wednesday, November 27** at 7:00 am.

If you are unfamiliar with the oryoki style of eating in the zendo, please attend an oryoki training beforehand. Training is offered every Saturday morning at 6:40 am for those who request it. Special oryoki training sessions are also scheduled for two Mondays at 6:30 pm following evening zazen: October 28 and November 25. Please inform the oryoki instructor, Gary Artim, of your intention to attend either of these special trainings: 510.676.9756 or gartim AT gmail.com.

If you wish to stay overnight at BZC during sesshin, please contact the shika, Tamar, at 510.644.1928 or tlxnoch AT earthlink.net. If you have questions about this sesshin, please contact the sesshin director, John Busch, at 510.710.7183 or john AT mobu.org.

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

### November

#### **One Day Sesshin - Practice Period Closes**

Saturday, 11/2, 5:00 am – 9:05 pm

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

Monday, 11/4, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 11/5, 6:40 am

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

Sunday, 11/10, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon

#### **New Members Entering Ceremony**

Monday, 11/11, 6:40 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 11/16, 9:40 am

### December

#### **Rohatsu Sesshin**

Saturday, 12/1 – Sunday, 12/7

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

Monday, 12/2, 8:20 pm

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

Saturday, 12/7, 11:10 am

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 12/14, 9:40 am

#### **Winter Break**

Sunday, 12/15 – Tuesday, 12/31

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

Tuesday, 12/31



#### **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.

## Half-Day Sitting Sunday, November 10, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon

If you enjoy coming to sit for half a day, please join us for the last half-day sitting of the year on Sunday, November 10, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon. It includes five periods of zazen, kinhin (walking meditation), and an informal tea.

A half-day sitting is a great way to focus on “just zazen” and is appropriate for beginning as well as experienced Zen students. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the entire four-hour schedule.

A \$10 donation is requested for half-day sittings. Please refrain from wearing scented products. If you have questions or if you cannot sign up on the bulletin board, contact the November half-day director Nina Sprecher at 510.848.3585 or sprecher.nina AT gmail.com.



## New Members Entering Ceremony Monday, November 11

On Monday, November 11, we will have a brief ceremony to formally welcome new members to our temple. The ceremony will be at 6:40 am, immediately following zazen and service. The zendo manager will be contacting all those who have joined the temple since we had our last ceremony in September 2012 to invite their attendance and explain the ceremony. The ceremony is also open to any member who has not formally entered the zendo. If you became a member *before* September 2012 and would like to participate in the ceremony, please contact the zendo manager, Christy, at ccalame AT earthlink.net.



## Family Activities at BZC

### Saturday Morning Supervised Play

Supervised play is offered free of charge on many Saturday mornings (see schedule below) for 9:40 am zazen through lecture. Currently supervising is Berkeley High student Lihong Chan. We need to know by noon the Friday before if you are planning to avail yourselves of this service. Phone or e-mail Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215, or lauries AT kushiki.org.

Coverage for BZC's 8:45 am zazen instruction and beginner orientation is offered by special arrangement; contact Laurie for more information.

### KidZendo

BZC's Saturday program for children three and up usually happens twice a month during the school year, typically on the second and fourth Saturdays, from 9:30 am to 11:15 am (see exact schedule below or check online). Several BZC members are teaching in this program: BZC resident Tamar has been trained in offering a curriculum known as The Toolbox. Nancy Suib and Jin Young, longtime practitioners at BZC, have been trained in the Mindful Schools program, and Seicho Judy Fleischman has participated in children's programs in Brooklyn, NY. See details on our website. As always, RSVP if you plan to attend (lauries AT kushiki.org).

#### Family practice schedule:

November 2	Sesshin - no program
November 9	<b>Kidzendo</b>
November 16	Supervised play
November 23	<b>Kidzendo</b>
November 30	Supervised play
December 7	Sesshin – no program
December 14	<b>Kidzendo</b>
December 21	Interim – no program
December 28	Interim – no program

### Family Practice E-mail Group

To make it easier to publicize, announce and remind ourselves about family practice activities at BZC, we have a Yahoo group. We only send, at most, ONE e-mail per week—just a short reminder of upcoming events. To join, e-mail Laurie at lauries AT kushiki.org or Marie at marie\_hopper AT sbcglobal.net.

**Please—always RSVP for ALL family activities  
to lauries AT kushiki.org!**

**Thank you.**

# The Formal and the Informal

Comments from Sojun Roshi

November 2013

**T**he Formal and the informal.

It is commonly thought that Zen practice is very formal and rigid and that thinking and emotions are cut off. Formal yes. Rigid? Not really. For every activity

there are rules, directives, and procedures.

The formality of our practice allows access to our ineffable, fundamental, formless nature. What looks like narrow confinement becomes with maturity, vast freedom.

What is formal becomes informal. Submitting to the zendo forms enables an attentive student to move and sit gracefully with ease and naturalness. Over the course of our lives we develop habits and tensions in our body and mind caused by fears, resistance, defensiveness and biased views. Zendo practice can help us, through awareness, to overcome these hindrances.

Moving in the zendo with awareness of the subtle sound of our steps, the upright movement of our posture and the relation to our surroundings reflects a natural unaffected choreography. It is not a matter of getting it right or being perfect. Working in the tight space of the kitchen, attending to the various tasks, we move around each other with sharp knives and hot pots in a harmonious improvised dance, concentrated and attentive, getting out the meal on time with a calm, settled mind and relaxed body.

The life of a Zen student is mostly improvisation.

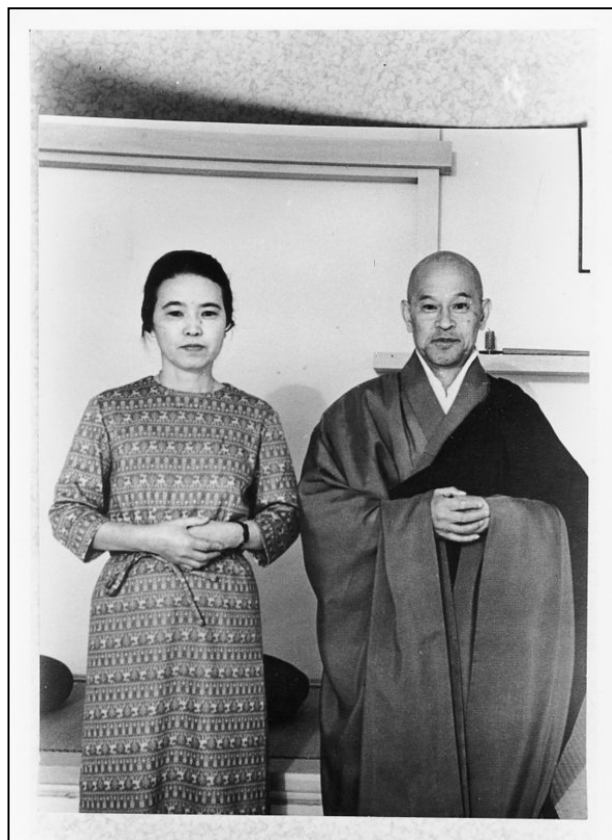
Improvisation works best within a solid structure or container. It is so in music and the arts. A well trained Zen student feels comfortable within the forms and approaches the activity with, gratitude, awareness and confidence.

There is a saying, “to sit zazen with warm feet and a cool head.” People often say, “I am a very emotional person.” It sounds very special. I have never met anyone who is not a very emotional person. The ones who don’t show their emotions are often the most emotional.

To control or not to control? To have a cool head while sitting zazen is to think the thought of zazen. The nature of thinking is to think (dream). It doesn’t make any difference what it is thinking as long as it can do its think. So who is the boss of the thinking? Feelings are both physical and emotional. Emotional feelings are mostly mental.

When we can maintain a well-balanced posture of uprightness and flexibility, our feelings tend to harmonize with our present situation. Why should we be thinking about something else or holding on to feelings that have nothing to do with the present situation? It is possible to let go for a while and allow our body/mind the freedom from the fetters of emotion/thought.

Formal and informal. They are just two sides of the same thing. My teacher said, “Even though there is no self, still there are rules.”



*Okusan and Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, c. 1962,  
from <http://shunryusuzuki.com>*



## CPR/AED Training Scheduled Saturday, November 16, 12:30 – 2:30 pm

In the past few years we have had difficulty in getting people to sign up for training as “First Responders.” First Responders are those trained in CPR/AED who regularly attend BZC daily practice and events. If you were trained previously, your certification has expired, and you need to be retrained (required every two years). New people who are interested in receiving the training are also encouraged to attend. With our aging sangha, the chance of heart trouble is not insignificant and our ability to respond could be a matter of life or death.

The BZC CPR/AED training will be held in the zendo following the Saturday program

on **November 16, 12:30 - 2:30 pm**. We invite all interested to be retrained or trained at that time. We also encourage you to reach out to others who may be interested to join the training. The recommended cost for training is \$40 each; however, the BZC Board will cover the cost for those with a true financial hardship. We would like to have at least 15 people.

If you can commit to this training, please contact Margret Wotkyns (mwotkyns AT comcast.net) or Walter Kieser (wkieser AT epsys.com) at your earliest convenience. Thank you for your support in making BZC a safe place for sangha members to practice.

**Gala Celebration!**

Join us in celebrating the release of a groundbreaking book of Buddhist women's teaching stories

**THE HIDDEN LAMP**

*A book of koans and teaching stories from twenty-five centuries of awakened women, each illuminated with a reflection by a contemporary Buddhist woman teacher*

**Saturday November 23 7 - 9 pm**

San Francisco Unitarian Universalist Church  
1187 Franklin Street (at Geary), Starr King Room

Public program followed by reception and book signing with co-editors Florence Caplow and Susan Moon, and many of the women teachers who contributed to the book, including:

Sylvia Boorstein	Zenju Earthlyn Manuel
Merle Kodo Boyd	Joanna Macy
Jane Hirshfield	Viveka Chen
Natalie Goldberg	Sandy Boucher
Bobby Rhodes	

BY DONATION

## Women's Koan Book Launch Sat., Nov. 23, 7:00 – 9:00 pm

On November 23 in San Francisco, there will be a public celebration of the release of a groundbreaking book of Buddhist women's teaching stories.

The Hidden Lamp is a collection of one hundred stories and koans about women from the time of the Buddha until the present, each illuminated with a reflection by a contemporary Buddhist woman teacher. Contributors include BZC's Laurie Senauke and Karen Sundheim.

From 7:00 – 9:00 pm on November 23rd at the San Francisco Unitarian Universalist Church (1187 Franklin Street at Geary), there will be a lively program of performance, readings, discussion, and book-signings with the co-editors Zenshin Florence Caplow and Reigetsu Susan Moon, and many of the prominent contributors, including Sylvia Boorstein, Joanna Macy, Jane Hirshfield, Natalie Goldberg, Merle Kodo Boyd, Viveka Chen, and Bobby Rhodes. The event is by donation, and books will be available for purchase.

To register (free or by donation) please visit: <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/488563>.

## **Finding Presence in Conversation** **Thursdays, Nov. 7 & 21, 7:00 - 9:00 pm**

A BZC dharma group focusing on practice in the context of everyday communication is being formed. These group meetings addressing ways we speak and listen to each other have been ongoing for a few years. Continuing these gatherings in the form of dharma group, meeting periodically over the longer term, attempts to meet the need for continuity and more concentrated practice expressed by some of the more regular attendees. The group will continue to be coordinated by Peter Overton. Initial meetings will be held in the BZC community room on Thursday evenings, 11/7 and 11/21, 7:30-9:00 pm.

Let me know if you are interested in coming, or have other questions. Thanks, Peter,  
Peterovrtn AT gmail.com, 510.325.2342.



*“Zen Monster” by Dairyu Michael Wenger*

## **Secret of the Brush** **with Dairyu Michael Wenger** **Saturday, November 23, 1:00 - 4:00 pm**

Dairyu Michael Wenger will be offering a first brush workshop at BZC after his lecture the morning of November 23. His art runs the gamut from “primitive” cave painting to the post-modern. It is influenced by traditional Asian brush work, modern painting, New Yorker cartoons—from doodles to Bizarro.

Its subjects are sports, meditation, politics, social conventions, puns... in short, everything that crosses his brush/mind. In creations of paper, brush and ink, the secret is in each stroke of the brush.



## Report from the Second Family Sesshin Sunday, October 13

On October 13, several BZC members and families gathered for our second annual family sesshin. A total of 34 people were involved. The learning curve for the adults has been steep; we simplified our schedule this time, but still included all the elements of a traditional sesshin, including zazen (more or less, depending), services of singing and bowing, mindful walking, lecture (AKA story time), formal tea in the zendo (AKA cookie time), bells, offerings—the whole nine yards. We even had some welcome relief pitching during the lunch break, simultaneously wearing out the kids and resting the adults. (Thank you! You know who you are.)

**People, history is being made, so next time, join us!**



### Sewing Buddha's Robe

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

Please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman or Hozan Alan Senauke before the sewing class begins (and preferably before the winter break).

After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

### Welcome!

BZC is happy to welcome Mary Beth Lamb as a new member. A photo is posted on the community room porch bulletin board, to help members extend her a welcome from the whole community.



## September Fundraiser a Success

A good time was had by all at our recent fundraising party. With the energizing beat of Bollywood music in the background and under a banner that proclaimed “Berkeley Zen Center - Accomplishing Nothing Since 1967,” a festive crowd participated in a raffle, signed up for sangha-led events, bid on auction items, purchased tote bags and aprons, hula hooped, had their palms read, were entertained by “Gerry and the Drop-Ins” and enjoyed good food (especially those cookies!) in what has become an annual event at BZC. This year’s intention was to raise money for the leadership fund, and when everything is totaled we expect to have made just under \$10,000. Many thanks to the all the people who contributed their time, energy and talent to make this year’s event another successful fundraising party.



**E-mail Address Style Note**

All e-mail addresses in this newsletter have had @ replaced with AT, to prevent automatic address collection. To e-mail any person listed, replace AT with @. Thank you! – Jen Taylor, bzcnewsletter AT gmail.com.

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE**  
**Third Friday of the month before each issue.**  
**Submit to bzcnewsletter AT gmail.com.**

**December deadline:**  
**Friday, November 15, 8:00 pm**

**Berkeley Zen Center**  
**1931 Russell Street**  
**Berkeley, CA 94703**