

# RING OF BONE ZENDO

SPRING 2020

WWW.RINGOFBONEZENDO.ORG

P.O. BOX 1525 NEVADA CITY, CA 95959

Cast off what has been realized.

Turn back to the subject that realizes  
to the root bottom

and resolutely go on.

~ Bassui Tokusho, Rinzai Priest, 1327-87

## BUTOH PRACTICE JAPAN SPRING 2020

I write this from Japan, where I have been for the past month and a half and have a month more planned. I came to practice and perform butoh dance. Having the opportunity to dance at this time of my life is going back to my roots; I moved to New York City for modern dance at the same time that I started Zen practice.

Butoh has its roots in underground avant-garde theater in Tokyo in the late 1950's and early 1960's, perhaps at the same time when Zen was gaining traction with westerners. Something was in the air. Butoh practice, as I have experienced it, uses many words. But the verbal expressions are worked with as seeds. We are encouraged to make our own presentations, inspired and informed by the words. No two dancers will do this the same way. Getting out of the way is key to butoh so you will often hear expressions like "detaching from the self." Sound familiar? Maybe because I value Zen practice so much, I see many similar elements in Zen and butoh.

First of all, I am just as reluctant to say what butoh is as I am to say what Zen is. Butoh is something I do, that I am drawn to, and that I find a good way to explore the practice and realization of life and death. In fact, some refer to butoh as the dance of darkness, where "dark" includes the unseen.

One similarity between Zen and butoh practice is walking practice. We begin each butoh training session—and rehearsal—by walking at a pace that is significantly slower than our kinhin, traveling about sixty feet in an hour of walking practice. This butoh walk is called "a measure walk," taken from the

- continued on page 4

## WHERE THINGS STAND

In offering "View from the Hojo" this February, I began where I'll begin this note—with gratitude. My letter of late last year about Ring of Bone finances brought a response so quick and strong that it astonished our faithful sangha bookkeeper, and her informal report to me in January registered donations totaling more than \$26,000, nearly the entire amount that we've expended in recent work to preserve and modestly improve the zendo buildings and grounds.

Some attributed this swift and wondrous replenishing of our coffers to my letter. Sure, in the most immediate sense. But my words did nothing more than tap the actual source: the pool of gratitude and care this sangha feels for the temple, its environs, and all that we've been able to do here thanks to prior generosity, hard work of various kinds, and the continuing collaboration of snow, sun, fence lizard, madrone, and many other members of the ten thousand things. The gifts were an outpouring of gratitude, begetting more gratitude in a virtuous circle that encompasses everything. We can't get too much of that.

I have no data about geographic distribution of the contributions, but I imagine the bulk of them came from those of us living too far away to come to Ring of Bone regularly except for sesshin. Comments from sesshin attendees over the years have left me no doubt about the delight and appreciation that long-distance participants feel as they observe changes here, imagine all the effort that goes into them, and enjoy the results during sesshin, and I hope the local sangha takes this influx of funds not only as relief from financial concerns but, even more, as a manifestation of our partnership, a mutuality we can all rely on. Thus the sangha functions—as a whole.

Of course that holds for the sangha of the great earth household, as current events make unmistakably and sometimes painfully clear. As I compose this note, we've closed the

zendo for an indeterminate period and cancelled sesshin due to the coronavirus pandemic. One explanation that we've been hearing for its swift spread is that the world is more tightly "networked" than in the past, but stating it that way glosses over the fact that we have created the conditions for this and other viruses to cause illness, panic, death, and disruption. The growth of our population, its concentration in vast metropolises, the degree to which we've impinged on the lives and habitats of other creatures and thus increased our exposure to microbes they carry, our frequent and rapid travel around the globe—such entirely human causes underlie the bland language of networking.

Let's get real! Long before we two-leggeds came on the scene, the ten thousand things were already in intimate communication. Our Dharma ancestors recognized this in a phrase they repeatedly used: 森羅萬象, the dense array (or fabric) of the ten thousand phenomena. One of the old Zen capping phrases reads,

*In the four quarters, the eight directions,  
slicing through obstructions,*

*the ten thousand things in dense array  
all stream forth together.*

Wild systems have always been tightly interwoven or, to put it more exactly, have never existed as divisible entities. In transmitting the new coronavirus, one wild being has simply behaved as it and others have always behaved, yielding an unprecedented result due to the ideal conditions, the novel opportunity, that our mass society offers it. So too the complex physics of climatic change are implacably playing out, another perfectly natural process we set in motion, with catastrophic consequences already for many more beings than the virus has harmed.

This suggests one way to view our situation: as resulting from failed human awareness of the dense fabric of the world, the vulnerability of its relationships,

- continued on page 2

- "Where" continued from page 1

and their inexorable operation, like it or not. Overly impressed with our power to manipulate chemical, biological, and physical realities and to turn them to human purposes, many of us lost sight of the wild world's grandeur except as an object of romantic appreciation and appropriation. The magnificence of a mountain, the beauty of a rose, the awesome intensity of a storm, the amazing feat of photosynthesis! Thus trivialized, the ten thousand things haven't received the respect, the honoring, that they deserve at all times, whether the times seem bad or good from the very limited perspective of the single species *Homo sapiens*.

In 2001, when our newsletter editors asked for a response to the terrible events of 9/11, I chose a passage in the record of Tung-shan as my point of departure:

*Once as Tung-shan was washing his bowls, he saw two birds contending over a frog. A monk who also saw this asked, "Why does it come to that?"*

*The master replied, "It's only for your benefit, Acharya."*

See? There! Call it what you will—form, emptiness, illusion, the plain fact, the Net of Indra, the dense array of the ten thousand things—but there! Call it ugly, call it vital, but that very tugging, squabbling, pecking. Wake up to that! We can't afford to continue living oblivious to it. More to the point, many things can't afford our continuing to live in the great bubble of obliviousness that we, inventive creatures that we are, have inflated around our nation and others affluent enough to rate as "advanced." It's a mortgage-on-the-future bubble that's swollen with time and that some have claimed could grow infinitely. But a bubble too large is bound to burst, and burst it has.

The sight of two birds contending over a frog is more likely to evoke sorrow than a rush of gratitude. Nor is gratitude in any usual sense our likely response to the onset of this pandemic. So forgive me if it seems heartless to propose (or even to entertain the idea) that gratitude might be an appropriate feeling for current circumstances. But yes, I thank you, droughts and wildfires. Thank you, floods, hurricanes, and heat waves. Thank you, shrinking glaciers and icecaps. Thank you, sick bees, starving bears, and climate refugees. Thank you, too, virus. I thought I was more awake than I

was. I thought I was living modestly. I'm humbled by evidence of my mistakes.

"Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down," Ezra Pound admonished his readers seventy-odd years ago. "Learn of the green world what can be thy place..." I'm not sure that he succeeded at meeting his own challenge, but seven decades later, many of us haven't even registered the need that he identified or begun to seek our proper place in the whole. Nonetheless, I find in myself a feeble, weirdly tenacious hope that we might still do so, that we might "learn of" the climate and the virus what we haven't yet learned of the green world—how to change our ways such that we truly post-moderns might conceivably fit into it rather than ruin it.

More often expressed these days is a hope that seems akin, a hope that we can achieve a "sustainable" way of life. It's a hope easy to second, but on hearing it, we should ask, sustainable for what,



*Calligraphy by Hakuin Zenji.*

*The character mo (J., ma) means "demon" and serves as the Chinese name for Māra, the Maker of Death, who tried in vain to prevent the Buddha's awakening. (Image courtesy of Norman Waddell.)*

for whom? Virtually without exception, it refers to human concerns—adequate sources of food, water, energy, shelter, etc.—so that we can go on living as we have but stop "fouling our own nest" by degrading the natural systems that furnish the "environmental services" our welfare depends on. It's a strange hope

of sustaining a ceaselessly growing human population at a cost to the rest of the world reduced enough to permit our population to ... keep growing! What else?

Sorry, folks. As much as I love you and other people, as much as I'd like our species and its greatest accomplishments to survive, I see "sustainability" as just a greenish gloss on greed. If that seems too harsh an assessment, please consider how differently individuals and governments have responded, on one hand, to the dangers of Covid-19 and, on the other, to damage attributed to our destabilization of the climate. Part of that difference undoubtedly results from the rapidity and conspicuousness of the virus's spread, as opposed to the gradual, diffuse, too often disputed effects of climate change. But much of the difference, I suspect, results from our colossal self-regard: the virus is all about us. It threatens to sicken and kill some unknown percentage of the present human population, to cause hardship to billions more people, to disrupt our economies, transportation systems, schools, athletic seasons, everything we're used to! And yes, the climate problem has snuffed other species, crashed populations of other species, hurt or maybe destroyed habitat like reefs and tundra critical to other species, but it's mainly been, like, a hassle for us so far—"inconvenient," right? Of course, those huge wildfires are scary, and I do feel kinda worried about how hot it could get for my grandkids....

Granted, I'm painting with a broad brush here. Many people, sangha members or not, are well aware of the climate crisis, have modified their habits, and are taking action, politically and otherwise, out of concern for the flourishing or survival, at least, of other beings. And of course I don't mean to suggest that we should turn a blind eye to the pandemic. But I'm impressed by the disproportionate responses that people, our governments in particular, have so far made to these phenomena. What? Shall we really dicker about details, resort to half-measures, engage in foot-dragging, and continue to trash the world while reserving our most urgent, concerted action for a virus injurious only to us? Why is it that America, almost over night, can come up with trillions of dollars to protect its health and economy in the short run but, for decades now, has nickel-and-dimed efforts to protect the

- continued on page 3

- "Where" continued from page 2

dense array of the ten thousand things far into the future?

There are many ways that the Three Treasures—practice and realization, teachings, and sangha—can serve us in these unusual and difficult times. To ground us. To promote steadiness. To relieve anxiety. To boost our sense of place and of membership in community. To refresh the experience of not knowing. To remind us that the unknown isn't an enemy. But maybe the tao is especially important now for the insight and guidance it will provide as we adjust to new realities and reorder our lives in light of the virus. When the contagion wanes, I hope gratitude will surge, not just because it's waned but also because it's helped us to see our place in the green and blue sangha a little more clearly. If we can make good on that potential, the Three Treasures will have served, as they always should, a much greater us than Homo sapiens alone.

~ Nelson Foster, March 31, 2020

HIGHLIGHTS, MEETING FOR BUSINESS & PRACTICE (SEPT. & NOV. 2019 & FEB. 2020)

- Fire warning and evacuation protocols were developed for fire season seshhin (June & October).
- Metal cubbies were ordered to replace our wooden cubbies per insurer's request.
- Discussions were held around upgrading the electrical system.
- Discussions were held around making Rohatsu a full and more formal sesshin.

~ Judyth Collin

# PRACTICING CLIMATE ACTIVISM

In 1988, James Hansen, a NASA scientist, addressed Congress and reported that he could say the earth was warming with 99% certainty and that human activity was causing it. It was a radical statement at the time, one that even many other scientists regarded skeptically. Since that time his statement has been proved absolutely true, and yet very little has been done to stop the slide toward disastrous warming.

While I was reading more and more about this through the years, there were many environmental issues that got my attention. About 10 years ago a series of conversations with an elder at the Grass Valley Friends Meeting (Quakers) led me to conclude that this issue topped all others. He, a few others, and I prepared a presentation of the likely effects on California if the average temperature rose 1.5 C. Those included coastal flooding, drought, wildfires, crop failures, and population refugees. While it got the attention of that Meeting, few people acted on the information.

Now we know that climate warming, or maybe chaos, is an existential crisis. The coronavirus pandemic is consuming most of the news and our concerns, but the other crisis is looming just behind the disease headlines. If we don't make radical changes across society and around the world in how we consume and produce energy, civilization as we know it will likely end.

When I retired in 2015 I decided that I would devote all my environmental

activism to controlling climate change. The question that frustrated me, and still does to some extent, is how to be most effective. There are dozens of campaigns now addressing different approaches and all struggle to make progress against the influence of oil company disinformation and money, and deliberate attempts by the current administration to reverse efforts from the past to address the issue. This is such a huge and encompassing problem that it's easy to throw up your hands or sink into despair.

Around five years ago I looked for a local group with which I could get active. The national campaigns for 350.org and the Climate Reality Project weren't active here in Nevada County. I joined a group called the Nevada County Climate Change Coalition (the name has since changed), which had started as a group of groups but melted away to a core of about eight people, mostly older folks like me. We primarily hosted educational events on renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, food waste, Project Drawdown, transportation, school climate education, and so on. We put on an electric car show, and still do. One member runs a summer camp for kids on climate change. Over time I saw the same faces at our events and started to feel like they weren't getting to the public at large and we weren't moving the dial much.

One component of that group's work was advising Nevada City, Grass Valley, and the county on achieving 100% renewable energy. While some progress has been made, most local governments

don't see the goal as very important, despite mandates from the state to achieve measured energy reduction targets in a few short years. It's tedious work, with research and multiple meetings.

Seeing that the educational events weren't going anywhere, I looked to something that could be decisive and was well directed. Another of the group's members and I started a chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby that is focused solely on

- continued on page 4

Calligraphy by Bob Speiser.

We have Wei Ji, two Chinese characters, ki ki in Sino-Japanese. The first means danger; the second, opportunity. Together, they mean crisis. Here we are!





- "Butoh" continued from page 1

image that you are suspended from heaven and you descend into the earth, and you exist as a "measure" in between. We are encouraged that "you" do not walk, but that "there is an impulse to walk" in front of you. Between heaven and earth, there is no "you," only the impulse to walk that moves. The eyes are kept open, head up, the eyes "do not see" but what enters is like a reflection on glass spheres (your eyeballs). We are reminded not to think, not to look in order to see, but to let it all occur on its own. It is refreshing to do this for long periods of time.

My (very limited) understanding is that this was the ground zero for the original butoh training by the founder Tatsumi Hijikata and the basis for many of the butoh movements that we learn. As I practice this "measure walk," I feel the years of kinhin that we have all shared together and remember sangha ties.

3/17/2020

Writing about butoh is sort of like trying to write about the experience of zazen. Sure, you can write about it, but actually doing zazen differs completely.

The Christian philosopher and author (of the Narnia series!), C.S. Lewis said, "Prayer doesn't change God; it changes me." When we experience "me" as including a wide range of things, maybe our practice of Zen and of butoh helps change this mad world that seems to be spinning out of control.

4/1/2020: Kanazawa, on the west coast of Japan

When I say "choreography" it warrants a description. We work from the original texts of Hijikata, which even the Japanese find opaque. It is a kind of poetry and imagery. Moe-san and I discuss the texts—he only speaks a few words of English—and then he gives me time to prepare a presentation that embodies the gist of the passage or phrase. What I present not only includes my "intuitive" discovery of what the passage may hold but can also be flavored by my personal history. He may make some comments, but for the most part, he accepts whatever movement gesture I come up with. Sometimes he laughs good-naturedly and rejects the movement with, "I don't see it." We very often work from images of paintings by Turner, Redon, Henri Michaux, Picasso, Dubuffet and others, which all came into play in the last two days.

4/11/2020

I am now in Kyoto and need to get this newsletter article off to Deirdre. For three days, a dancer friend and I have been working on a dance—just for ourselves at this point—that includes the



*These photos are from a public presentation that I did in a cemetery, in a park, and along the streets of Tokyo in late March, with a good dancer friend.*



sakura (cherry blossoms) falling, and the riverside where we rehearsed last night as the full moon was rising. Mixed with the images gleaned from the haunting Kyoto spring are deep memories of each of our personal histories. Together we are exploring our lives, in the context of seeing the cherry blossoms fall. All of this is colored by the corona news from home, and the increasing awareness here.

~ Eric Larsen

- "Climate" continued from page 3

passing national legislation that puts a fee on carbon-based fuels at the source and returns the proceeds to households as a dividend. It's an idea that, in various forms, has been embraced by conservatives as well as progressives and would make a huge down payment on the CO2 reduction challenge. The group is very, very organized with great resources and training. Nevertheless, such legislation goes nowhere with the current Congress.

At the same time I had become involved in a newly formed non-profit called California Climate and Agriculture Network that linked university scientists, farmers, other agriculture non-profits, farm extension agents, and policy-makers. The purpose was to promote and support state legislation to help farmers and ranchers transition to practices that ensure healthy soils that sequester carbon, increase water efficiency, preserve farm land, and decrease methane emissions from dairies. It had an exciting beginning and is one of the most satisfying avenues I have taken. It is really wonderful to work with other enthusiastic people to protect agriculture and also possibly reverse climate effects.

Where do I sit now? I go to too many meetings and things are still moving too slowly to save us. The pandemic threatens to derail most climate action even if the president and Senate change. There has been a fair amount of discussion in the climate community about how we could fail and what that will be like. The local sangha had a circle discussion on the topic. I, my family, our sangha, the whole world may face societal disintegration. I hold neither to hope nor to despair. I just go to the meetings or skip the ones that seem like wasted time. I do zazen a lot. I look at the plants and animals on our place more than I did before. I talk to my wife, and to my sons and granddaughter on video calls. I enjoy the weather and take measures to protect us from wildfire. I'm still here and there is work to do.

~ Reed Hamilton



**IMPORTANT NOTE from the Business and Finance Committee**

Formal sitting at the zendo is suspended until further notice. Changes will not be made to the calendar except as they come up. Emails will be sent out to announce cancellations.

## RING OF BONE ZENDO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### GENERAL INFORMATION

[1] Zazen generally occurs year-round on Wednesday nights and Sunday mornings, except during January and July. [2] Ten dates have been set aside for Meeting for the Practice of Business (MPB), but as few as six MPBs may actually occur, with the remaining dates utilized for other purposes, at the discretion of the Moderator. The expected use of each date will be announced well in advance. [3] View from the Hojo is an informal, semi-annual review of practice and teaching matters, delivered by Nelson Foster.

### FLOWERS-TO-DUST TRAINING SEASON - 2020

April 19	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
April 26	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Meeting for the Practice of Business	9:30 am – noon 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
May 1-7	Spring Mountains & Rivers Sesshin – CANCELLED		Erika Carpenter
May 3	Sunday Zazen Potluck Lunch	9:30 am – noon Noon – 1 pm	
May 10	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch Sangha Circle (Topic TBD)	9:30 am – noon Noon – 1 pm 1 pm – 4 pm	Practice and Care
May 17	Work Party for Nelson & Masa (bring sack lunch)	9 am – 4 pm	Greg Leeson
May 24	Zazenkaï	9 am – 4 pm	Suzanna Elkin
May 31	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Meeting for the Practice of Business	9:30 am – noon 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
June 7	Sunday Zazen Potluck Lunch/Work Hour	9:30 am – noon Noon – 2:00 pm	Steve Mulford
June 13-20	Seven-Day Sesshin – CANCELLATION DECISION IN MAY		Michael Keown
June 14	No Sunday Zazen		
June 21	No Sunday Zazen		
June 28	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 am – noon 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
July	Zendo closed this month		

### SEEDS-TO-SNOW TRAINING SEASON - 2020

Aug 2	Sunday Zazen Potluck Lunch/Work Hour	9:30 am – noon Noon – 2:00 pm	Steve Mulford
Aug 8-15	Summer Mountains & Rivers Sesshin (backpacking sesshin)		Eric Larsen
Aug 9	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Aug 16	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Aug 23	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch View from the Hojo	9:30 am – noon Noon – 1 pm 1 pm – 2:30 pm	
Aug 30	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30am – noon 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
Sept 6	Sunday Zazen Potluck Lunch	9:30 am – noon Noon – 1 pm	
Sept 13	Zendo Workday	9 am – 4 pm	Steve Mulford
Sep 20	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Founders Day	9:30 am – noon Noon – 3 pm	Kate Duroux
Sept 27	Sunday Zazen Sack Lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30am – noon 12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
Oct 4	Sunday Zazen Potluck Lunch/Work Hour	9:30 am – noon Noon – 2 pm	Steve Mulford

# RING OF BONE ZENDO CALENDAR (CONTINUED)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Coordinator</i>
Oct 9-14	Five-Day Sesshin		Sheelo Bohm
Oct 11	No Sunday Zazen		
Oct 18	Bald Mtn. Assn Workday	9 am – 4 pm	Sheelo Bohm
Oct 25	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack Lunch/Meeting for the Practice of Business	12:30 pm – 2:15 pm	Moderator
Nov 1	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Potluck Lunch	Noon – 1 pm	
Nov 8	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack Lunch	Noon – 1 pm	
	Sangha Circle – (Topic TBD)	1pm – 4pm	Practice and Care
Nov 15	One-Day Sesshin	9:00 am – 4 pm	Wendy Boes
Nov 22	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack Lunch	Noon – 1 pm	
	Dharma Event (Topic TBD)	1pm – 4 pm	Practice and Care
Nov 29	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack Lunch/Meeting for the Practice of Business	12:30 pm – 2:15pm	Moderator
Dec 1-8	Rohatsu Sesshin		Marsha Stone
Dec 6	No Sunday Zazen		
Dec 13	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Potluck Lunch/Work Hour	Noon – 2 pm	Steve Mulford
Dec 20	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Dec 27	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack Lunch/Meeting for the Practice of Business	12:30 pm – 2:15pm	Moderator

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## THE HANDY-DANDY ZENDO EVENT FACTOID SHEET

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Contact Name/Info</i>	<i>Fees</i>			<i>Deadline</i>
			<i>Core/Sustaining</i>	<i>Associate</i>	<i>Non-member</i>	
<b>2020</b>						
Work Party for Nelson & Masa	May 17	Greg Leeson – Suzanna Elkin –				
Zazenkai	May 24	Michael Koewn –	\$10	\$10	\$10	May 1
Seven-Day Sesshin	June 13-20	Eric Larsen –	\$220	\$280	\$330	April 13
Mts. & Rivers Sesshin	Aug. 8-15		\$270	\$330	\$380	June 17
Zendo Workday	Sep. 13	Steve Mulford – Sheelo Bohm –				
Five-Day Sesshin	Oct. 9-14	Sheelo Bohm –	\$155	\$195	\$240	Aug 9
BMA Workday	Oct. 18	Wendy Boes –				
One-Day Sesshin	Nov. 15		\$40	\$50	\$60	Oct 15
Rohatsu	Dec. 1-8	Marsha Stone –		\$155	\$195	Oct 1

# SESSHIN GUIDELINES

Please review the following information if you are interested in attending sesshin.

## SESSHIN SIGN-UP PROCEDURE

1. Heed the deadlines. Space is limited. Early submissions have priority.
2. Send a check for the full fee, your name, address, phone number, membership category, and e-mail to the coordinator. If you don't use e-mail, send a self-addressed stamped envelope.
3. Let the coordinator know if you have a special medical condition or food allergies pertinent to this sesshin.
4. Let the coordinator know if you are unfamiliar with dokusan or meal procedures.
5. If paying the full sesshin fee poses a problem, talk with the coordinator. A fee reduction may be possible.
6. If you are behind in your membership dues, please send with your deposit/fee.

## SESSHIN SIGN-UP CAUTIONS

Your check will be held for deposit until after sesshin.

You may cancel up until two weeks before sesshin and receive a full refund. If you must cancel, please do so as soon as possible to help enable another to take your place. Cancellation within two weeks of sesshin may result in the loss of 25% of your sesshin fee.

Acceptance depends on membership status and the date the coordinator receives your check and is determined at the sign-up deadline. Once accepted, the coordinator will contact you with details about the sesshin or let you know if you are on the waiting list. If you are new to Ring of Bone Zendo, contact the coordinator early so that a participant query can be sent to you, and read *Taking the Path of Zen* by Robert Aitken before you sign up.

Bring a sack supper to the work meeting before sesshin begins. Long sesshin work meetings begin at 5 PM. Weekend sesshin work meetings begin at 7 PM.

Plan to arrive early and stay until cleanup is finished after sesshin. Sangha relations are an important part of our practice. If you come from a long distance, please arrange your flight schedule to allow ample time before and after sesshin. We ask you to arrive no later than 2 PM to help with zendo cleanup and other sesshin setup tasks and to settle in and visit with others.

Post-sesshin is a very important time, especially when it follows a five or seven day sesshin. Plan extra time to unwind and help close down the zendo. Please do not plan to leave before 4 PM at the earliest.

## SESSHIN CHECKLIST

- Bag Supper
- Bowl Set
- Sleeping Bag
- Flashlight
- Slip-on Shoes
- Towel and Toilet Articles
- Dark, Solid-Colored Sitting Clothes
- Warm Clothes
- Rain Gear
- Mosquito Gear (summer)
- Tent (optional)

If you have any questions about sesshin, contact the coordinator.

## MOUNTAINS AND RIVERS SESSHIN

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin are wilderness sesshin, held each spring and summer. We usually go backpacking, but have also experimented with a river-based form. Destinations vary from year to year and season to season, depending on weather, availability of water, trail conditions, etc. We don't look for difficult circumstances, but they often find us, so it's vital to prepare physically and to be equipped for inclement weather. For the backpacking trips, it's a must to break in new boots beforehand and to minimize the weight of personal gear. Plan on carrying ten pounds of group food and supplies, more or less.

We limit M&R sesshin to fifteen people, so sign up early to make sure you get a place. On the day we gather, participants meet by 5 PM at the zendo (or at an assembly point closer to the trailhead or river put-in spot) to divvy up group food and supplies, eat our sack dinners, do some zazen, and go over the procedures for M&R sesshin. Come earlier than 5 PM for visiting time.

Sometimes we do backpacking M&R in an "easy wandering" mode, which entails fewer days walking under full packs than our standard trips. If you're only interested in one of these two modes, before signing up check with the coordinator about which sort of outing it will be. If you aren't certain whether you're up to it physically, ask what level of fitness the route will demand.

We take planning for these sesshin very seriously, aiming for places wild, relatively untraveled, and within reasonable driving range of the zendo. Usually we do a low desert, canyon, or coastal route in the spring and a high-elevation site in the summer. We make every effort to scout our routes in advance, so if you could assist in the scouting (or have destination ideas), please contact the coordinator.

## ROHATSU

The eight-day Rohatsu Sesshin commemorates the awakening of the historical Buddha. At Ring of Bone, we've always marked it as a working-person's sesshin, with weekday zazen from 4:30 to 6:30 AM, and 7 to 9 PM, including *dokusan* with Nelson Foster. Participants maintain their practice the rest of each weekday in their homes and workplaces. On the last night, we sit until midnight, and the next morning, sesshin closes with a walk to Bald Mountain and a sunrise ceremony there. Bring hats, gloves, warm footwear, rain gear, etc. in case of inclement weather. An informal breakfast and clean-up follow.

During the weekdays, Rohatsu attendance is open to all, with or without signing up. Over the weekend, however, we keep a full-time sesshin schedule, and those who wish to attend must sign up. Weekend participants usually leave after Sunday supper but are welcome to depart later (e.g., after Sunday evening or Monday morning zazen). Please work out your plans for this sesshin and specify your arrival and departure times for the weekend portion when you sign up.

We welcome people from out of the area to attend Rohatsu during the weekdays as well as on the weekend. Those who wish to stay for one or more of the weekdays, however, must either spend the time between morning and evening zazen away from the zendo, possibly at the home of a sangha member, or join group activities at the zendo (meals, additional zazen, light manual labor, etc.). When signing up from afar, be sure to indicate whether you're interested in staying for these weekday activities or will be arranging to spend those hours off-site. Just hanging out at the zendo isn't an option.

## ZAZENKAI

Zazenkai are one-day sittings that also require advance sign-up. The daily schedule is as follows:

Densho at 9:00 AM, sutras, zazen, bag lunch with sutras, silent break, zazen. Dharma assembly at 2:00 PM led by a sangha member, meadow kinhin, zazen. The Zazenkai will end at 3:50 PM with a closing ceremony followed by tea and cleanup.



## SESSHIN LEADER POOLS

Sangha members interested in a leadership position should contact the appropriate pool leader. If you are listed in a pool and your availability has changed, please advise the pool leader (named in **bold italic**).

TANTO: Judyth Collin, Kate Duroux, Allan Finlay, Reed Hamilton, Eric Larsen, Greg Leeson, Cindy Leeson, **Jenny Long**, Andrew Mason, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Jim Pyle, Masa Uehara

JIKIJITSU: Sheelo Bohm, Kate Duroux, Suzanna Elkin, Allan Finlay, Susan Finlay, **Reed Hamilton**, Michael Keown, Eric Larsen, Cindy Leeson, Greg Leeson, Jenny Long, Andrew Mason, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Jim Pyle

JISHA: Sheelo Bohm, Judyth Collin, Kate Duroux, Allan Finlay, Sue Finlay, Reed Hamilton, Eric Larsen, Cindy Leeson, **Greg Leeson**, Jenny Long, Andrew Mason, Chris Mulford, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Jim Pyle

INO: Johanna Bangeman, Judyth Collin, Kate Duroux, Anne Dutton, Susan Finlay, Eric Larsen, **Cindy Leeson**, Greg Leeson, Elizabeth Lewis, Jenny Long, Andrew Mason, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Dana Turner, Masa Uehara

TENZO: Sheelo Bohm, **Judyth Collin**, Kate Duroux, Michael Keown, Andrew Mason, Chris Mulford, Steve Mulford

SESSHIN COORDINATOR: Sheelo Bohm, Judyth Collin, Reed Hamilton, **Michael Keown**, Eric Larsen, Cindy Leeson, Greg Leeson, Steve Mulford, Jim Pyle, Masa Uehara, Jay Veazey, Lynne Westerfield

## DĀNA

Your generosity is a gift that not only supports ROBZ, but also the teacher, the Sangha, the larger Dharma community, and your own practice. You can direct your gift to a particular fund or project, such as the Teachers Fund, General Fund, Building Fund, Sangha Assistance Fund, or make a split gift. All undesignated gifts go to the general fund. Please use "THITHE.LY" for donations.

Donations to can also be mailed to:

ROBZ, PO Box 1525, Nevada City, CA 95959

We appreciate your spirit of giving!

For membership fees, send checks made out to ROBZ to Cindy Leeson. For sesshin fees, send checks made out to ROBZ to the sesshin coordinator.

## GENERAL INQUIRIES & ADDRESS CHANGES

Please send general inquiries and changes of your contact information to:

Cindy Leeson, Membership Coordinator  
P.O. Box 676, Colfax, CA 95713  
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members@ringofbonezendo.org

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Submissions of original artwork, poetry, articles, photographs or anything else that might be of interest to the sangha are appreciated. Please send any materials to:

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The deadline for the next issue will be **September 1st, 2020**

If you would like to become more involved with creating this newsletter, please write to the editor at the above email address.



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