

RING OF BONE ZENDO

SPRING 2023

WWW.RINGOFBONEZENDO.ORG

P.O. BOX 1525 NEVADA CITY, CA 95959

BEAUTIES

~ Patrick McMahon

What Buddhas are exactly, I've no idea. But Bodhisattvas seem within my grasp: on the way, not yet "there." I meet many on the way, and count myself among them. One who gives self wholeheartedly to the alleviation of anguish. The best that can be done. But the best that can be done—that the bodhisattva can do—seems far from sufficient. Look around and judge.

The anguish is overwhelming. The figure of Kwan Yin, the one who hears the cries of the world, occurs to me. But still, is that enough? I seek a bodhisattva who is akin to the family of all beings.

Kinship would be the foundation, it seems to me, of compassion, "feeling with." In the spring 2022 newsletter Reed addressed that very topic: what after all, is kinship, and how do we

experience it in our lives? A critical issue indeed, and one that has been circulating in the sangha for a while, as it becomes clear how fragmented the human family is, how far short we collectively are from realizing kinship with the even greater family of all relations. In the lead article, Jaime Hunyor addressed the question, opening with a catalog of the various denizens of the Yuba River canyon and ending with his being treated as "kin" by a flock of wild turkeys.

"It's easy enough to feel kinship with those beings... which share their positive qualities such as beauty, utility and companionship. But how do we approach our relationship with those of the 10,000 things we might categorize as negative?"

Jaime goes on to enumerate, small and large, some of those 10,000, from mosquitoes, to neighbors who might disagree with our values, to leaders who invade neighbors. Russia invading the Ukraine, not just neighbors but, literally, in many cases, family. Closer to home, our own economic system favors the interests of the few over the many, dispossessing so many of our very own



brothers and sisters, parents and children, here in our far-from united states. Later in his reflections Jaime muses that a sense of kinship with all beings, to be fully engendered, must recognize the "dark and slippery sides of existence" alongside what we define as positive.

Recently I took a night walk in my neighborhood and encountered a family of raccoons. I might say they greeted me, cautiously, maybe

not as kin, but certainly neighbor, the kind you might wish lived in some other neighborhood. Dark and slippery indeed, startling in their semi-wild presence in our so urbanized midst. Kin? Hardly. More like aliens—but who you calling alien, Human? As are the opossums and the rats. (Squirrels we allow for their amusing ways.) We watched each other from a respectful distance, and then they ambled off their way and I mine.

Musing later about the encounter, I am put in mind of a landscaping job I recently started in on. When I first walked the property I noticed a cage in a back corner, empty. The customer informed me that she was in the process

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FINDING THE WAY

~ Chris Mulford

When Reed asked me to write an article about how I came to zen practice, my initial response was to decline. I feel that my practice is a very private matter, and I don't like bringing attention to myself. But I do see this kind of sharing as a way for us to get to know each other better. So here goes.

I grew up in a small town in eastern Pennsylvania. Our family was active in the local Presbyterian church. My participation in church activities was important to me. In fact, I felt sorry for folks who weren't Presbyterians! However, as a teen and young adult I found Christianity no longer worked for me.

Fast forward to college in the mid-west, a degree in psychology and no inclination for an advanced degree, a family move to California, work as a carpenter, woodworker and house cleaner, and meeting and eventually marrying my lifelong love, Steve.

I can't really say exactly where my interest in a zen practice really began, but an experience I had on a trip to Death Valley with Steve in the mid-eighties, was pivotal. Steve brought along some psilocybin. Unlike many of my peers I never drank alcohol, and had not experimented with various mind altering drugs in college. However, I decided to give the mushrooms a try. I ate, perhaps, too much for my size, and found the experience both terrifying and mind blowing. I had a glimpse of another kind of consciousness that I found compelling.

Around the same time as my mushroom trip, I had been taking yoga classes and became interested in the philosophy behind a yoga practice. As Steve had briefly attended a zen group in Santa Cruz, I started asking him what Buddhism was about. We had a friend who told us about Ring of Bone Zendo. We started sitting at home and in the late 80s made our way to the Ring of Bone Zendo.

I came to zen practice, as most of us do,

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of trapping a family of raccoons which had been attracted to her newly installed water fountain, playing in it at night, washing their food, slaking their thirst in this dry summer. She had hired an outfit which set Have-a-Heart traps and had already taken away several members of the family, each time leaving a fresh cage. They’d already, she told me, “relocated” three or four. What a euphemism, I thought to myself. “Euthanized” more likely. But taking her at face value, relocated to where? To take a creature out of its home environment and plunk it down somewhere in the surrounding hills, isn’t showing heart, but heartlessness. Out of its web of relations, it’s not likely to last long.

But I took the project on, enough else of it appealing to me to put up with my sense of complicity. In the next weeks several more members of the family were drawn into the cage. One, large (mother?), hunkered down on the bottom, eerily seemingly serene. But when the re-locator appeared and carelessly swung the cage into the air, she scrambled, her world in sudden tumult. I asked him if she had a name. “Bye Bye,” he said, grinning. Nameless to him. Nameless to my customer. But you can believe, in some fashion well-named by her family. Another day it was a small one, a “baby,” as my customer called it. It had cried all night, “breaking my heart.” When I arrived it was trying to dig itself through the wire bottom. Now my customer was, as I got to know her, a thoughtful person, dedicated to all the right causes—gender fluidity, ethnic diversity, psychic healing, community living. Of course her heart would break! But there was this curious disconnect. With all laudable values, her overriding interest was keep the waters of her fountain clear. And for all the bodhisattva vow of carrying all beings across without limit, I was implicated in the contradiction. In order to do my work I had to take the fountain apart. No water, no raccoons for the duration of the job. My final task was to reassemble the fountain and set it running again. The sight of burbling water gave me no pleasure, and in fact spoiled the pleasure I’d had in creating this Eden. Next to it—as though it were the bait—we set up a fresh empty cage, soon, no doubt, to lure more raccoons. No way could I remove myself from this heartlessness. The futility of the effort only added to its misguidedness. The family could never

be eliminated: who knew how large a clan it drew on?

The overarching irony was the proximity of another feature in the garden, one of those ubiquitous Buddha figures that preside in urban and suburban gardens. This one, a particularly gracious specimen, stood in graceful sway, water jug hanging from her hand. The jug and the fountain connection were not lost on me, the water of the jug the self-same as the water bubbling in the fountain. Her medium of sustenance was at the same time slipping, slippery, dark. And yet, her presence in the garden seemed to suggest a fellow feeling beyond positive or negative. What kind of fellowship would that look like, what model of our kinship with all beings?

A question for which I have no clear answer, other than that I, you, and my customer, are all operating within a system we can’t stand apart from, in which we are all ignorant. We are in contradiction, working toward ends which, while they might promote beauty and camaraderie, disrupt the web of interdependence—kinship—a web for the most part invisible to us as we engage with the work. One can’t put a spade in the ground, or turn over a stone, without disturbance to what Robert Burns called the “civil union” between humans and other animals. He watches as his plow cleaves through a mouse nest and addresses it with pity:

“Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim’rous beastie.”

O what a panic’s in thy breastie. More than pity: identity, one with in mutual vulnerability.”

Here, in the dark, where the beautiful and the kind and the companionable, slip and slide with the ugly and callous and inimical, we are kin, like each other or not. Toiling away in this web, how to turn this kinship more toward creative ends than destructive? Will I forsake my craft and livelihood? Not soon. Will I be more considering as I play my part in a system that wrecks the earth, disrupts the sea, fouls the air? Surely I can lessen, but not eliminate my impact.

The large-scale change required to repair our broken family, if it’s still possible at this late date, will rest on keeping ears open to the raccoons, to the bombs falling on Ukraine, to the fires roaring in our mountains and the hurricanes raging on our coasts. Listening, as Kwan Yin, to the cries of the world. One with the family, she weeps with us all. ■

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with a load of baggage. I had a history of depression, with a dysfunctional family history of alcohol abuse and my mother’s bi-polar disorder. In addition, an experience of sexual molestation by an uncle at the age of 13 changed my life. The experience was traumatic, and was not handled well by parents and extended family. When I began practice, I had tried many years of psychotherapy, but still lived with shame and self-loathing from my adolescent experience with my uncle.

During my first years as a new zen practitioner I experienced intense feelings of sadness, grief, and loss during sesshin. I was encouraged by Nelson to let those feelings come. He said: “If you don’t let those tears out, they will poison you”.

During zazen the sadness would usually evolve into profound self-loathing. After a time, I could predict that those feeling would arise after several periods of zazen. Through my practice, I was able to become aware of this process of settling into self-loathing, and to finally realize that I could make a choice about this. That through increased awareness I could choose not to go there. Not to sink into that familiar, comfortable place of hating myself. This was a life-changing awareness for me. At the age of forty, I was finally able to get that the shame belonged not to me, but to my uncle.

I emerged from my inclination toward self-loathing during zazen, feeling that my practice had been helpful. However, I found myself questioning whether all the work I had been doing during my zazen was really legitimately zen practice. It took a number of further years of practice to be able to say yes, that was practice. Practice is about awareness.

As the years have gone by, I am so grateful for:

Being able to weep for hours in a room full of people and not having to explain myself, or have someone else attempt to make me feel better.

Knowing that the people in the room with me were also struggling with their own demons.

Working with a teacher who was not overwhelmed by my pain.

Getting so familiar with my process of sinking into self-loathing, or other strong feelings, through awareness that comes from practice.

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Through the years I find my practice helps me navigate the challenges that life has to offer. I find humor in ways that I never did in the past. I feel I walk a bit lighter on the path and feel such gratitude to all of you who practice with me. ■

LIMITLESS POISON ZENDO

~ Laura Pendell

Gone are the days when I would roll out of bed while it was still dark out, grab my zafu, maybe stop to make a small cup of tea, and sit looking at the wall in an apartment in New York City trying not to listen to the sirens, the grumbings of the subway and buses before heading off to the gym to work out for three hours. Before I moved to the Ridge in 1998 that was pretty much how my days began.

Then I moved west. My life underwent a big change and I didn't have to fight with the continual cacophony of the big city. At first I lived within a reasonable commute from ROBZ and what a joy it was to have the sangha to sit with. And then I moved to the Bay Area.

Some of you may remember back to 1999 when Dale and I were living in a small house in Oakland. There was a narrow room that

we never could figure out what it was supposed to be so we made into a zendo. As Dale wrote to Rōshi “We have a lovely zendo room in the house with a naga-Buddha that we found one night after a poetry reading we did together...it fits beautifully with our theme here: “Limitless Poison Zendo,” after Mumon’s verse.

We have a group that sits weekly—Robert Tindall, Judyth Collin, Ben Brose and his girlfriend Jen—complete with a telephone-hojo room for dokusan with Nelson.”

The zendo fit four zabutons easily and if we moved them closer we could add another two. The altar, with far more on it than the naga-Buddha, was described

by Robert Tindall as “looking like the front of a Mexican bus.” We did sit weekly and shared soup and tea afterwards. In a separate room we created a small altar next to the telephone and rang each other in and out for dokuphone. One year when Ann Dutton was visiting the Bay Area we found a piece of wood and she inscribed “Limitless Poison Zendo” on it in kanji. We hung it over the entrance to the room.

We had Rohatsu there in 2000. Several more of us gathered—Patrick you were one of the sitters—and in the morning we did kinhin through the neighborhood streets ringing a small bell every so often. Always wondered what the neighbors thought about that.

Then Dale and I moved to Penn Valley and in the barn we created a slightly larger sitting room with six zabutons. And a slightly more formal altar, although still festooned with an assortment of Buddhist statues and other magical objects. We found shoji doors that slid open to the zendo but also kept it a private space from the rest of the goings on in the barn. There’s an old stained glass window from a house in San Francisco we found at Urban Ore hanging directly over the altar. Ann’s sign still hangs directly above that. From

time to time other sitters here “in town” joined us for Wednesday night zazen, but we were never able to make it a regular thing.

Perhaps the zendo holds the hint of the scent from all those books in the library which is just off to one side of the barn. But actually, after blind testing many different sticks of incense back in the Oakland days, we settled on White Cloud. So the zendo always has that faint

scent. The windows face the meadow so it’s quiet except for bird song at certain times of year. It’s a sweet space holding 20 years of history inside its walls.

And now? I’m not going to lie. These days I sit with a ghost. Sometimes it’s almost painful to enter the zendo because of

what’s missing. Or should I say who’s missing? Other times the zendo is welcoming as if he’s there even if I can’t see him. I never know quite what to expect as I slide the shoji doors open, approach the altar, light the candle and incense, take my seat and ring the bell. ■

MOOD SWINGS

~ Patrick McMahon

(View From the Rooftop, Feb. 15, 2013)

Every morning the same. I wake from sleep and take my waking slow, with a dread sense I’ve misbehaved somehow the day before. It’s usually no, but there’s always something to regret. I’ll be in the wake of dreams that are either nightmares or perseverations on some problem with some job. The dark before dawn casts a general gloom on the prospects of another day with just a lotta’ things to do. And always, always, with the aches and stiffness of ol’ friend arthritis. (How long, O Lord, can I keep doing this?) In short, it’s my Hour of the Wolf, but at 6 a.m., rather than ‘round midnight. I get out of bed, drag a comb across my head, perform the usual ablutions, but it’s only when I put the kettle on for my morning cuppa’ tea that I begin to get a grip. And when I have my little white pill for mood swings, I begin to take heart. It’s a new day, if only pretended. Finally, when I get out of my bathrobe, don my zen outfit, meditation paraphernalia under my arm, feeling the fresh air on my face, I’m fit to face the Great Matter which renders all moods null and void.

As I climb up to my perch on the garage roof, I dare hope. Light will come, even if diffused through a low cloud cover, or smog. When I square my prayer rug at roof’s edge, center my happy face pillow on my briefcase zabuton, I’m ready to roll. Entering the great sangha of crows and squirrels (and once an opossum with babies clinging to her back), the occasional dog walker glimpsed under downcast eyes on the street below, my pretty neighbor tending her garden, a parent taking a child to the nearby day care center, I’m in the best of company.

Settling into body and mind/heart, irrepressible joy arises (sometimes.) How lucky I am to have discovered a way out of the dark paths of ignorance. The Pure Land is near. No matter what happens in the sojourn on my perch, I’m transported, or at least urged toward a day that’s by

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any standard truly blessed: good work, good friends, a town I’m familiar with and love, usually a truck that runs. And so on. Enthusiasm! How far I’ve come from the Hour of the Wolf in just a few hours. No need to pretend the day is new. It just is. A bowl of oatmeal, checking on a text from my lady, warming up the truck, tuning into the jazz station—nothing can stop me now. And when I visit one of my watering holes and have a cuppa Joe, I’m pumped!

And so it goes. ■

HOW I FOUND MY WAY TO ZEN

~ Laura Pendell

At Christmas 1989 I had a skiing accident in Jackson Hole WY and blew out my left knee. The next day I returned to New York City (where I was living full time) and a week later I had surgery to repair the ACL/MCL tears. These were the days

before out-patient knee surgeries and I was laid up at home for months, with two more surgeries during the year.

Anxious to get back into climbing shape I hired a fellow climber who had a program he called “Wholistic Fitness.” In addition to the usual strength, flexibility, cardio and nutrition he added in a meditation practice. Five minutes a day.

Those five minutes grew into ten and then fifteen and longer and I began to sit with a small group in New Paltz on Sunday mornings. By the time I’d been sitting on my own for two years, Jack Turner (who always greeted me with “How’s your practice?”) came for dinner in Jackson Hole and when he heard I’d be over in Oahu in October he suggested I call Robert Aitken Rōshi and ask to visit for tea.

Calling Palolo I found they were having a weekend sesshin for “People from the Islands.” I signed up, and the joke was that I was also from the Islands, the island of Manhattan. As it turns out Nelson was at Palolo for that sesshin. So in a matter

of one weekend I met not only Rōshi but Anne and Nelson.

I returned home and began to travel to Palolo for sesshin as often as I could. In November 1993 I completed my rakasu and formally took jukai with Rōshi.

When Rōshi retired he handed me over to Nelson, telling me that I’d be really happy at Ring of Bone because it was in the woods. My first sesshin with Nelson was a Mountain and Rivers in April 1997.

A year later I returned for Spring Mountains & Rivers – this time held in Death Valley. Dale and I met on that M&R. Several months later I moved to California and became part of ROBZ full time. It had been nine years since my ski accident.

Going back to that ski accident in 1989, which at the time I thought had ruined my life, I now know it was what set me on my path to practice. But for that accident it’s hard to know who I’d be now or where I’d be living. I like to think of it as my “happy accident.” ■

ROBZ ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BUSINESS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The meeting for the practice of business on March 26 received the financial report for 2022 from the business and finance committee. The report showed that expenditures for the year exceeded income from donations, sesshin fees, and dues and subscriptions by more than \$6000. The deficit was substantially less than the previous year but continued a trend of financial instability dating back to the last pre-COVID year.

Details of the annual report and comments during the presentation indicated that the deficit was due to cost increases, expenditures approved by the sangha for building and grounds improvements and legal expenses, and decline in the annual surplus from sesshin fees. Given that the income for 2023 is likely to be similar to 2022 while costs are expected to rise, the business and finance committee presented options for the sangha to consider that would help stabilize the zendo’s finances. These options included:

1. Seeking additional donations, either for the general fund or for specific funds, especially building, sangha assistance and childcare funds.
2. Changing the refund policy for sesshins to assure that fees are adequate to meet sesshin costs.
3. Eliminating partial sesshin fees for attendance at less than the full schedule.

Looking ahead, business and finance anticipates presenting plans to the sangha later this year, for capital improvement projects with estimated costs in four to five figures. The committee recommended in its report that such projects, if approved, be fully funded to cover the costs before the work begins.

The presentation evoked questions and comments. While there was agreement about the need to stabilize the finances, other options for doing so were offered including raising fees for membership and sesshins, and finding other sources for donations, grants, etc. Business and finance will take the input from the sangha in consideration as it further develops its recommendations and plans for capital projects this year. Discussion of options for increasing income with the goal of obtaining approval by the sangha for specific actions, will be on the agenda for the Meeting for Practice of Business the last Sunday in April.



RING OF BONE ZENDO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Note: Zazen on Wednesdays, 7-9 pm, except during Blue Sky Sesshin and immediately following the Great Cold and Golden Breeze sesshin. Zendo closed January and July.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Coordinator</i>
FLOWERS-TO-DUST TRAINING SEASON - 2023			
April 23	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Dharma Event	9:30 - noon Noon - 2:30 pm	Practice & Care
April 30	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 - noon noon - 2:15 pm	
May 6-13	Spring Mountains and Rivers Sesshin		Reed Hamilton
May 7	Sunday Zazen Potluck and work hour	9:30 - noon Noon - 2:00 pm	
May 14	Zazenkai	9:00 am - 4:30 pm	Joy Weaver
May 21	Work Party for Masa and Nelson	9:00 am - 4:00 pm	Greg Leeson
May 28	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:15 pm	
June 4	Spring Workday	9:00 am - 3:00 pm	Steve Mulford
June 10 - 17	Blue Sky Sesshin		Sue Finlay
June 11	No Sunday Zazen		
June 18	No Sunday Zazen		
June 25	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:15 pm	
July	Zendo closed this month		
SEEDS-TO-SNOW TRAINING SEASON - 2023			
August 6	Sunday Zazen Potluck and work hour	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:00 pm	
August 13	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/View from the Hojo	9:30 am - noon noon - 2:30 pm	
August 19 - 26	Summer Mountains and Rivers Sesshin		Erika Carpenter
August 20	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am - noon	
August 27	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:15 pm	
Sept 3	Sunday Zazen Potluck/Sangha Circle	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:30 pm	Practice & Care
Sept 10	Zazenkai	9:00 am - 4:30 pm	Cindy Leeson
Sept 17	Fall Workday	9:00 am - 3:00 pm	Steve Mulford
Sept 24	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:15 pm	
Oct 1	Sunday Zazen Potluck and work hour	9:30 am - noon Noon - 2:00 pm	
Oct 8	Sunday Zazen Sack lunch/Founders' Day	9:30 am - noon noon - 3:00 pm	Kate Duroux
Oct 13- 18	Golden Breeze Sesshin		Sheelo Bohm

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RING OF BONE ZENDO CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Coordinator</i>
Oct 15	No Sunday Zazen		
Oct 22	Bald Mountain Association Workday	9:00 am – 3:00 pm	Sheelo Bohm
Oct 29	Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	Noon – 2:15 pm	
Nov 5	Sunday Zazen	9:30 - noon	
	Potluck and work hour	Noon – 2:00 pm	
Nov 12	Sunday Zazen	9:30 – noon	
Nov 19	Sunday Zazen	9:30 – noon	
	Sack lunch/Dharma Event	Noon – 2:30 pm	Practice & Care
Nov 26	Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	Noon – 2:15 pm	
Dec 1 – 8	Rohatsu		Wendy Boes
Dec 3	No Sunday Zazen		
Dec 10	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Dec 17	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Dec 24	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
Dec 31	Sunday Zazen	9:30 am – noon	
	Sack lunch/Meeting for Practice of Business	noon – 2:15pm	
Jan. 2024	Zendo closed this month		

THE HANDY-DANDY ZENDO EVENT FACTOID SHEET

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Contact Name/Info</i>	<i>Core/ Sustaining</i>	<i>Associate</i>	<i>Non- member</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Spring Mountains and Rivers Sesshin	May 6-19, 2023	Reed Hamilton - 13310 Nanna's Way, Grass Valley CA 95949 530-210-4216 or reedhamilton2@gmail.com	\$270	\$330	\$380	March 6
Zazenkai	May 14	Joy Weaver - 28299 Sweetland Rd, North San Juan CA 802-349-2305 or joyweaver8@gmail.com	\$10	\$10	\$10	April 30
Masa & Nelson Work Party	May 21	Greg Leeson - PO Box 676, Colfax CA 95713 530-346-7782 or gleeson804@gmail.com				
Spring Workday	Jun 4	Steve Mulford - 13224 Red Dog Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959 916-346-6267 or smulfordca@gmail.com				
Blue Sky Sesshin	Jun 10-17	Sue Finlay - PO Box 576, North San Juan CA 95960 530-277-6247 or 1suekena@gmail.com	\$220	\$280	\$330	April 10
Summer Mountains and Rivers Sesshin	Aug 19-26	Erika Carpenter - PO Box 4660 Live Oak Ave., Oakley, CA 94561 530-941-2802 or erikacarpenter@gmail.com	\$270	\$330	\$380	June 19
(Fall) Zazenkai	Sep 10	Cindy Leeson - PO Box 676, Colfax, CA 95713 530-913-9370 or cleeson611@gmail.com	\$10	\$10	\$10	Aug 27
Fall Workday	Sep 17	Steve Mulford - 13224 Red Dog Rd, Nevada City, CA 95959 916-346-6267 or smulfordca@gmail.com				
Golden Breeze Sesshin	Oct 13-18	Sheelo Bohm - PO Box 553 North San Juan, CA 95960 530-263-6431 or sheelo.bohm@gmail.com	\$155	\$195	\$240	Aug 13
BMA Workday	Oct 22	Sheelo Bohm - PO Box 553 North San Juan, CA 95960 530-263-6431 or sheelo.bohm@gmail.com				
Rohatsu	Dec 1-8	Wendy Boes - 21802 Purdon Rd., Nevada City CA 95959 530-559-6314 or wlbcarrot@gmail.com	\$125	\$155	\$195	Oct 1

SESSHIN GUIDELINES

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

NOTE: Please be fully vaccinated at least two weeks prior to 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, Cindy Leeson, Greg Leeson, **Jenny Long**, Andrew Mason, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Jim Pyle

JIKIJITSU: Johanna Bangeman, Sheelo Bohm, Kate Duroux, Allan Finlay, Sue Finlay, Brian Ginsberg, **Reed Hamilton**, Eric Larsen, Cindy Leeson, Greg Leeson, Jenny Long, Andrew Mason, Chris Mulford, Nate Popik, Jim Pyle, Dmitry Shemetov, John Tecklin, Joy Weaver

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, Robert Tindall

INO: Judyth Collin, Kate Duroux, Anne Dutton, Sue Finlay, Brian Ginsberg, Eric Larsen, **Cindy Leeson**, Greg Leeson, Elizabeth Lewis, Jenny Long, Andrew Mason, Steve Mulford, Nate Popik, Dana Turner, Masa Uehara, Joy Weaver

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

SESSHIN COORDINATOR: Wendy Boes, Erika Carpenter, Sue Finlay, Reed Hamilton, Cindy Leeson, **Chris Mulford**, Joy Weaver

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 "tithe.ly" for donations.

Donations 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:

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NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

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:

reedhamilton2@gmail.com

The deadline for the next issue will be **October 1st, 2023**

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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