

## Unfolding Sangha

By Sensei Bodhin Kjolhede

(Editor's note: This article is reprinted by permission. It first appeared in *Zen Bow Newsletter*, a publication of the Rochester Zen Center, Spring 1988 issue.)

Over the course of two weeks recently, three Sangha members, independently of one another, expressed disappointment that the Zen Center does not have more family activities. "Our children's friends have so much they can do with their churches and synagogues. It's too bad our children can't involve themselves more with the Zen center as a religious community." The need for a more family-centered, communal expression of Zen practice has become increasingly felt by the Sangha, as it matures into the responsibilities of family like, careers, and community obligations. Hundreds of Center members who seldom, if ever, attend daily sittings or sesshins retain their membership year after year, paying dues all the while. Why? Surely not just for the community activities, which have been scarce. If they wanted nothing more than social involvements for their children or themselves,

they would have traded Center membership for membership in other groups. Rather, their karmic links to Buddhism have persisted even without their getting to the Center. Clearly, they are still attracted to the Buddha's Way and those who practice it and want to support Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

It is time for the Zen Center to open up and develop itself as a center of family and other community functions. Ours is an entirely lay Sangha, and we must accept that and make ourselves far more responsive to the needs of lay people. This is by no means a new thought at the Center; in the last couple of years we have taken some baby steps in the direction of a more widely embracing community. What is new is the full conviction that this is an idea whose time has come. Until now we have resisted the temptation to diversify out of concern that to do so would undermine the training. That fear, I believe, is no longer valid.

continued on next page



Bob Genthner, JDPSN, with Maggie and Sam

## The Adventures of Frog and Duck

By Robert Genthner, Ji Do Poep Sa Nim

"What is real?" asked Frog of the floating rubber duck. He had obviously mistaken a bath tub for a pond.

"Seriously," said Frog as Duck laughed until its little air hole blew bubbles. Frog was sitting on a face cloth he had mistaken for a lily pad.

"What kind of questions are you asking?" asked Duck. Duck was a practical sort. "You don't know the difference between a bath tub and a pond and you want to know what is real? Duck was irritated and as he swam away he had to avoid the plastic fish floating on its side.

Frog jumped in hot pursuit. "Please don't go."

Duck saw the jump out of the corner of his eye.

There was something about Frog he liked. Perhaps, it was his greenness or the warts he didn't seem to know he had, but he was likable thought Duck.

Perhaps, it was his persistence. It was hard to say, but Duck definitely liked Frog although he would never admit this to anyone, especially Frog.

"What is real?" Frog asked again, this time to himself as much as to anyone. Duck heard the question, but was losing interest. Frog was losing interest in pursuing Duck. The question seemed to be the only thing he could keep on his mind.

"What is real?" Frog sat on a bar of soap.

Duck was long gone now. Perhaps, he had joined the flock of beautiful white swans that Frog vaguely remembered hearing flying overhead.

Frog sat and sat determined—half crazy, but unable to let go. "What is real? What is real? What is real?" The question deepened.

When all of a sudden...Splash!

A voice called out, "Dad...day, could you give me a wipe?"

It wasn't long before Frog emerged soapy, wet and a little dazed. He towed off, helped his son finish, put on his shirt and tie, and went to work.



## Family and Zen?— Just Do It!

By Bruce Sturgeon

I don't know if it's simply a characteristic of the times we live in, if I'm lazy or if I am just poorly organized, but more and more I feel like there aren't enough hours in the day to get it all done.

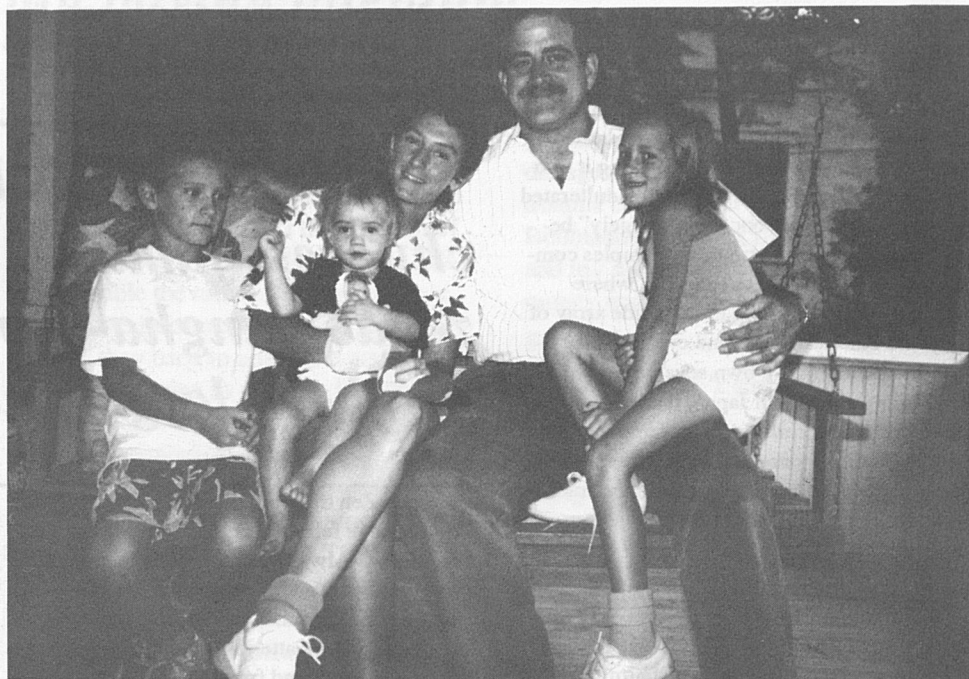
A few weeks ago, while on a plane flight to the West Coast, I was musing on my career, my family, my health, my Zen practice—What is my true direction? After reaching the usual, inevitable state of overwhelm, I decided to zone out and

preparation. Three days a week, I prepare dinner—add 1 hour, I don't skimp.

**Commuting—30 minutes.** Asheville is a small town. I know how lucky I am.

**Work—9 hours.** I know the 60 hour work week is the norm for "those who get ahead", but I'm so far behind already. Besides, I'm not as young as I used to be. Who is?

**General Time with Spouse—2 hours.** This is a broad category including



Bruce with his wife Cathy, Leon, Megan, & Michaela

read *USA Today*. There was an article which assured me that indeed, there aren't enough hours to lead a quality life; that the acceleration of time is the order of the day.

The article went on to itemize the activities composing a typical day for a typical person. I decided this might be a fruitful exercise for me to do. This is what I came up with—I might add my total time was less than the typical *USA Today* person.

**Sleep—8.0 hours.** This is first on my list because it seems that, as a relatively new father, having children is basically an experiment in sleep deprivation. What with bad dreams, drinks of water, sounds in the night, falling out of bed, changing diapers, making bottles, etc., I feel like a POW. Honestly, I would tell them what they wanted to know, if they would just ask. In fact, if I awaken for the first time since I went to bed the night before and it's morning, I have a sense of alarm that something must have happened to the kids. Usually all it means is that I was so dead to the world that I slept through my wife's getting up. So, sleep time occupies 8 hours but in truth, I don't get that much rest. Besides, all of us have tried to get more done by sleeping less. In the long run, it doesn't work.

**Zen Practice—1 hour.** This includes 15 minutes for bowing, the same for chanting and 30 minutes for sitting, settling in the right position, stretching, yawning, etc.

**Tai Chi Chuan—20 minutes.** An inherited chronic lung disorder requires my doing Tai Chi.

**Personal Grooming—45 minutes.** The basic S,S, & S plus dental care and getting dressed. Take a few minutes to take a good look at the beast in the mirror. Who am I?

**Eating—1.5 hours.** This represents three meals and a snack plus meal

scheduling, exchanging news, talking, asking ourselves how it is that people like us have three children, etc.

Let me say, that at this point, 24 hours have already been used.

**Intimacy/Sex—45 minutes.** Not necessarily what you think. This also includes hugging, kissing, snuggling and just being there for each other. Let me say that *USA Today* points out that most hugs last less than 15 seconds, and sex perhaps 10 minutes. True intimacy is difficult and most people would rather tolerate mediocre sex than have to deal with intense intimacy.

**Children—2 hours.** We have three children ages 10, 7, and two. The two hours includes about 15 minutes each one-on-one. The rest is "together" time which could be group play, sitting on the porch, watching TV, or a bedtime story.

**Kitchen Patrol and Housekeeping—1.5 hours.** Don't yell at me, I try to do my share and we have a cleaning service come once a week. Besides, I'm getting used to toys, dolls and children's clothes decorating my home.

**Errands—30 minutes.** Taking the kids to school, going to the cleaners, the post office, the filling station, etc. There's always something.

**Grocery shopping—15 minutes.** Women take longer than men, it's a fact.

**Exercise—30 minutes.** Everyone knows that you need at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise each day plus 10 minutes for a "cool down".

**Pets—10 minutes.** Through attrition we've weeded our pets and we only have fish left. They do not require as much care as pets such as cats or dogs. Of course, fish are not quite as responsive or loving, either.

continued on next page