



# Berkeley Zen Center



October 2002 Newsletter



**Welcome** new member Ada Luna.



**Segaki!!!**...Segaki is a popular Buddhist festival for appeasing the hungry ghosts. We celebrate it once every year on Halloween. (For a nice essay on the history and meaning of the ceremony, see the insert inside.)

This year's ceremony is scheduled for **Thursday, October 31<sup>st</sup>** and there will be a party in the community room right after the ceremony. Please check out the zendo bulletin board for time. Children are especially encouraged to come to both events. Come in costume if you like and bring a jack-o-lantern for the garden and noisemakers for the ceremony. Treats and beverages will be provided.

There will plenty of ways to help with the event, so check out the bulletin board for information on that too.



**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.

## October & November Schedule

Founders' Ceremony  
Thursday, 10-3, 6:20pm  
Friday, 10-4, 6:40am

One-Day Sitting  
Saturday, 10-5, 5:00am to 9:10pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony  
Saturday, 10-19, 9:30am

Half-Day Sitting  
Saturday, 10-19, noon to 4pm

One-Day Sitting  
Open Aspects of Practice  
Saturday, 10-27, 5:00am to 5:30pm

Segaki  
Thursday, 10-31

Founders' Ceremony  
Monday, 11-4, 6:20pm  
Tuesday, 11-5, 6:40am

Half-Day Sitting  
Sunday, 11-5, 8:30am to 12:30pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony  
Saturday, 11-23, 9:30am

Part-Day Sitting  
Close Aspects of Practice  
Saturday, 11-23

Thanksgiving (*zendo closed*)  
Thursday, 11-28

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**Vote!!!.....**BZC members should vote this coming month for the following positions on the BZC Board:

**Three members-at-large.** The nominees are Leslie Bartholic, Peter Carpentieri, Gregory Denny, Ann Kennedy, and Andrea Thach.

**Salaried Positions.** Finally, also confirm for another year, Sojun as Abbot, Alan Senauke as Tanto. And Laurie Senauke as Office Manager.

Poll is open October 1 through October 31. Look for the ballots and photos of all the candidates at the zendo bulletin board. And last but not least, many gasshos to outgoing members Robin Gregory and Barbara Sandidge.



**Aspects of Practice..**Aspects of Practice is a four-week period—**October 27 through November 23**—we set aside in the fall to refresh the basics of Zen and sangha practice. These weeks, led by BZC's senior students, are open to everyone practicing here. Newer students are particularly encouraged to intensify their practice by joining regular zazen, classes, individual practice discussion, and small group teas.

Details of Aspects of Practice are posted on the bulletin board, along with a signup sheet and registration form. Classes and lectures will be based on the new collection of Suzuki Roshi's talks, *Not Always So*. Participants are asked to:

- attend the opening sitting, Sunday, October 27, and the closing sitting and ceremony on Saturday afternoon, November 23;
- attend at least three sittings per week at BZC—morning or evening, including the whole Saturday program;
- take the Thursday evening class;
- meet twice (if possible) with one of the practice instructors.
- attend at least one group tea;
- participate in zazen and oryoki refreshers.

If you have any questions about Aspects of Practice, your schedule and participation please talk with Alan Senauke.



**Fran Tribe Memorial Ceremony...**On **October 12 at 2pm**, we will have a ceremony in remembrance of Fran Tribe, *Engetsu Honshu*, commemorating the fifth year of her passing. Fran and her husband Al were among the earliest members of the Berkeley Zen Center. Fran was an ordained priest and served as president as well as in many other positions. She also made a significant contribution to the development of BZC. She was one of those people whose presence inspired others. For the ceremony, people may bring poems or memories to share. The ceremony will begin in the zendo and then proceed to the Jizo garden where a stone will be placed in her memory. Please come.



**Gasshos...** We thank you for the financial support of our practice place and our teachers. Contributions from members and friends provide our very foundation. During the period of May 25, 2002 to September 3, 2002, those listed below contributed additional sums above any regular commitment.

Gregory Andreas  
Richard Beeson III  
Joseph Ling Hang Chan  
Merrill Collett  
Doug & Penny Greiner  
Richard Haefele  
Dede Hine  
Ann Kennedy  
Walter Kieser  
Anne Larsen  
Catharine Lucas  
Anne Macey  
Fred & Elena Maroth  
Fulani Offut  
John & Louise Rasmussen  
Claire & John Rubin  
Santa Cruz ZC  
Peter & Grace Schireson



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## Lecture by Sojun Roshi

### **Continuous Practice – *Why and How***

Today is the sixth day of our seven-day Rohatsu sesshin. We have been sitting zazen, doing kinhin, eating meals, cooking meals, and serving each other. Moment after moment we've been dealing with our silent dramas, dealing with our not-so-silent dramas, with our complaints and our doubts. This is continuous practice, a very concentrated time of continuous practice. During this time, two questions come up.

One is "Why?" and the other is "How?"

Sesshin is pretty difficult. It's difficult to stay in our seat, dealing with painful legs, painful mind, listening to the loop of our thoughts continually going round and round. It's sometimes difficult accepting the various emotions that come up. It's difficult just settling our self on the self, without getting caught by emotion, thought, or painful legs, without becoming attached to any nice states of mind which might occasionally appear.

The state of mind one seeks in zazen is no special state of mind. When we first read about meditation, it's very intriguing. We're lured into this activity hoping to reach nirvana. We don't understand that nirvana is the pain in our legs. Too bad!

So it's natural to look for something special to bring home. We sit here for a week and say, "What happened?" Nothing happened. It all went by in a moment. "What did I get, after seven days?" Nothing. Just painful legs. So the sesshin state of mind is no particular state of mind. What we get is...no special thing. If you got something, that might be a mistake. Be careful!

This is seven days of letting go. Seven days of dropping. Seven days of non-clinging. Seven days of not discriminating. Seven days of allowing whatever state of mind is present to be present. Seven days of not chasing away evil thoughts, not coveting good thoughts, not grasping wonderful states of mind, not rejecting painful states of mind. Just being present with whatever is present. That's all. The most difficult thing of all is just to stay in your seat.

We're always moving around. That's our life. Life doesn't stand still. We look for the next comfortable position, the next interesting thing. It's very hard to stay where we are, to stay in one place.

So we have these two questions. First, "Why do we do this?" When we start to sit, we instinctively know why. It's beyond our reasoning but somewhere, we know. Knowing knows. When we start to reason about it, we don't know anymore. We try to match our reasoning with our knowing, and it brings up this question, especially when we get into a difficult spot. It's like taking a boat ride. We know we enjoy going out in the boat, but then a big storm comes up. Pretty soon, the boat's leaning over and the sails are starting to rip; the waves are coming over the gunnels. We say, "Why did we ever do this?" But it doesn't help. The real question is: "How do I deal with this?"

"How" is the practice question. "Why?" is valid, but it's secondary to "How?" Take your life, for example. "Why was I born?" It doesn't matter! Here you are. The real question is: "How do I live in this life?" How do I deal with this situation?

When we hold this question of "How?" that's continuous practice. You can deal with "Why?" until you get tired of that and turn to "How?" "How do I do this?" That is the koan of your life.

Occasionally, someone will ask me, "How can I be a good zen student?" Invariably I say, "Just keep that question. It's a great question. Keep that question in all your activity."

How do I do what's in front of me? How do I practice, moment to moment? We're not seeking something far off. We're seeking to know, "How do I stand in this place right now? How do

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I sit in this spot right now?" Totally! This is not just about sitting zazen but about walking, eating, moving. How do I harmonize body-mind with the universe? That's our practice. When we sit, we harmonize body and mind with the universe, without discriminating, without picking and choosing. How do we harmonize the intellect with the heart? Where is the center of our being?

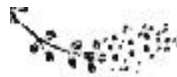
When we find our center, our heart, then the mind is under control. If the mind is not under the control of the heart, it becomes divorced from humanity. It begins to exaggerate its own importance and can become what we call "evil". Comic books are archetypal stories which represent the real battles of our time. Batman, Superman, Spiderman. In comic books, there is always an evil one with a big head. He has all the technical control at his command. The hero has spiritual strength. This battle between the head and heart is actually the battle of our time, between the forces of technology--of expanding brainpower, and the spirit struggling to bring these under control. The tensions of our time arise because technology and brainpower are easily cut off from the heart, from the solar plexus, from the vital center.

In comic books, the hero is always trying to keep it together. This same battle goes on in each one of us. How can we keep the mind, the heart and all the other satellites in harmony? When the mind is divorced from our vital center, it leads to cunning, to domination and unrest. The world is in a state of terrible unrest and getting worse all the time. Zen practice is to harmonize the mind, and keep it under control so that it can work in harmony with the heart and the rest of the body. The mind should be working for humanity, not just for its own satisfaction.

We sit up straight, harmonizing all this in one act. We don't care so much about intellectual speculation; instead we care about being grounded. Even Buddhist speculation is not so important. Buddhist philosophy is fine if you're grounded, but the first thing is to be grounded. The first order of practice is always to be grounded. When you pick up a cup of tea, pick up the cup with both hands. Drink the tea with no separation between you and the cup and the tea. The cup is not an object. The tea is not an object. There are no objects.

When we let go of everything, no one thing stands out. The center of your self is the center of everything. When we sit zazen, we bring the whole world into harmony. This is called "saving all beings." Even though people are still out there killing each other, the influence of your continuous practice has far-reaching effects which you can never know. As long as individuals are out of balance, the world will be out of balance. In order to bring the world into balance, we start with ourselves. This is our way of saving beings. This is what we've been doing all week.

Rohatsu, Day Six, 1997



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## **On Segaki**

### **Roshi Kyogen Carlson**

The name “Segaki” means “feeding the hungry ghosts,” and the festival contains a great deal of teaching about training in Buddhism. On one hand it is a time of remembering the dead and resolving our karmic connections with those who have died, but it is also a time of resolving our own internal, karmic difficulties and for letting go of the obstacles and blockages we carry around with us. The festival is said to have begun when Moggallana, a disciple of the Buddha, was plagued by dreams of his recently departed mother suffering in a world in which she could neither eat nor drink. Food would turn to fire, and water would turn to blood or pus whenever it touched her mouth. Moggallana went to the Buddha and told him of his dreams, which plagued him every night. The Buddha explained that Moggallana was seeing the suffering of his mother in the world of the gakis, or hungry ghosts. Gakis are usually depicted as having long skinny necks, with throats much too small for swallowing, and the bloated, bulging stomachs common with severe malnutrition. This imagery is a fantastic description of a spiritual state that can be seen every day, right here in the physical world of men and women. It is a condition which everyone has suffered from, to some degree or another, at some point in his or her life. On the most spiritual level, this is the state of someone who desperately wants to know the Truth, but who cannot accept the teaching. He knows that he is suffering and that religious practice will help, but he just cannot stop resisting and holding on to his personal opinions. He goes to drink, but his throat will not accept. Each time he rejects the teaching it turns to fire in his mouth. On the everyday level, this condition is that of someone who has desperate needs but, like a person with a phantom itch, can find no relief. Women who frantically cling to their children long after they are grown, and men who cannot get enough wealth and success, are everyday examples of “hungry ghosts.” In examples such as these, the problem lies in trying to satisfy an inner need for peace of mind through grasping after external things when it is really found in all-acceptance. Too often our attempts to obtain the things we want are like this.

Moggallana’s dreams were due to his deep connection with his mother, and the Buddha’s advice to him was that he make an offering to her of whatever food she could most easily accept and digest. This was to be done in a ceremony, dedicated in her name, at the time when the monks conducted their regular gathering to confess their transgressions. This is where the connection between making offerings to the dead and the cleansing of karma, personal or in connection with someone who has died, becomes apparent. Today, the tradition that started with this ceremony is continued every year in Buddhist temples by making an offering on a table far away from any statue or picture of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. For those who reject religious teaching, kindness is offered without doctrine as a truly religious act. For the Dharma to be really Dharma, it can only be offered in forms that can be accepted and truly made use of. Offerings of any type made in such a manner will naturally benefit both the recipient and the donor. This principle applies to so many situations we encounter in everyday life. Such action naturally expresses all-acceptance in a way that touches and deeply affects all concerned.

Hungry Ghosts are not the only ones to be remembered at Segaki, however. It is a time to remember all those who have died, to be thankful for their having lived, and to give thanks for the teaching their lives give to us. It is a time to let go of those who have died, to realize that their training goes on in whatever form it now takes, and that they do not need us pulling them back to this world through our attachments. By letting go of those who are now gone, we can also resolve any painful memories that can linger on to become the nucleus of a multitude of other problems. All-acceptance is still the key, for if we completely accept those who have gone on as they were, we can understand them better and offer them what they need to go on, which is, most often, our forgiveness and blessing.

*(Continued....)*

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If you apply this process to yourself, looking at your own past actions as that which must be let go of, it is easy to see the connection between Segaki and personal karmic cleansing. It becomes a time of deep, personal, spiritual renewal. In the way we are adapting Buddhist traditions to our culture, Segaki is celebrated on or near Halloween day. In western culture, Halloween, or All Souls Day, is when all the ghosts and goblins from the past come out of hiding. What better time to offer them merit and put them back to rest? The themes of death, change, and spiritual transition have for centuries in the West been remembered in the autumn, at the time of the change from light to dark, from heat to cold. Although in the Far East, Segaki is celebrated in mid-summer, within that culture it is a time similar to Halloween in ours. The summer solstice is the time of transition, just as the autumn equinox is, and they both represent a time of change; when the past can be left behind and a new beginning is possible. Segaki then, is a celebration of this on every level.

According to popular Chinese legend, Moggallana developed a deep resolve to help his mother when he saw her suffering in his visions. He traveled down to hell to try to rescue her personally. He broke the lock on the gate to hell, and because of this, all the hungry ghosts in the realm of the gakis got loose, and wandered about in the world of men. The festival was then done to satisfy the ghosts, and to convince them to return to where they needed to be. Some, through the festival, gain release. This tradition expresses that even those who do not gain release are in the process of learning something they need to learn, and that their time to advance to something else will come. In China, the seventh lunar month is the month of the dead. For this festival the ghosts are released from hell for the entire month. During this time, people pay respects to all their ancestors and make offerings to them, particularly of food. They also make offerings of entertainment, like Chinese opera, puppet shows, spectacles, and circuses; anything people think the ghosts might enjoy. The entire month becomes a huge celebration, and a time of great happiness when people feel very close to their ancestors; whether they happen to be in the realm of gakis, or elsewhere. The quality of celebration is the same as the offering of dancing and joyous music done at Obon in Japan. Rather than being grim or solemn, the whole affair is very joyous, even raucous. In China, popular legend also has it that after giving aid to his mother, Moggallana made a vow to once again enter hell. He vowed to do his own training there for the sake of those suffering in that realm. "If I do not do so, who else will?" he said. He became a Bodhisattva, an "enlightenment being" dedicated to helping others before enjoying final enlightenment himself, offering Dharma to all those suffering in the nether worlds. To this day he is greatly venerated for this act of great compassion.

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## Note From The Office Manager...

A few things you may have been wondering about. . . or not. When you make payments, it's fine (and in fact preferable from our end) if you combine more than one category, e.g., dues and sesshin, in one check; be sure to note the category on the check. However, it doesn't work to subtract a payment you owe BZC from a reimbursement request, since this doesn't leave an accurate accounting trail. When you leave a request for reimbursement, please put it on no smaller than a half-sheet - 5.5" X 8.5", or in an envelope (I will try to keep some scratch envelopes in my mail slot). Tape receipts to a larger piece of paper. I generally do check writing on Wednesday morning, so if you leave me a reimbursement request later in the week, let me know if you need it before the following Wednesday. If you'd like to receive dues reminders by email, let me know, and make sure I have your email address. Mine is [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org).

Laurie Senauke



## Note from the Tape Librarian...

The plan outlined in this year's budget to restore the tape backup system is progressing, albeit slowly. Your patience is appreciated while the library is "under construction". Here's what to expect:

Original tapes currently in circulation are temporarily pulled (Lecture #318 to present and Class C19 to present). The catalog is now up-to-date and is in the binder on the shelf with class tape sets. Please request any tape(s) that you want if they are not available by leaving a note in the Tape Librarian's mailbox. As these are backed-up they will return to circulation. (Hint: The older tapes are well-worth checking out, too.)

By early October, copies of originals will be marked "COPY". As soon as possible, lectures and classes that were backed up and have been thought to be missing will be re-duplicated. Several tapes in the last year have been mislaid en route to the library, so please see the bulletin board in case you have one of these tapes.

Finally, your comments about tapes are appreciated (quality, damaged, etc.)--please continue to make them.

Jean Selkirk



## Note From Practice Leader Mary Mocine about an upcoming event...

Rita Gross, a noted Buddhist scholar and a senior teacher in the Shambala Buddhist community founded by Chogyam Trungpa, will speak and lead a workshop on **November 8 and 9** as part of the S.F. Zen Center's Buddhism Unfolds series. Her topic is "Buddhism and Gender: Historical Precedents and Contemporary Possibilities." Particularly interested in gender studies and deep ecology, her best-known book is *Buddhism After Patriarchy* though she has also written extensively on the future of the planet.

I want to encourage everyone to participate in one or both activities. Rita makes difficult topics accessible not to mention interesting and even funny. Her scholarship, humanity and sense of humor shine through. I think it is useful for all of us -- men and women alike -- to consider the issues encompassed in her presentation. She will use texts and materials less familiar to Zen Buddhists so it should be interesting from that perspective as well.

For tickets and more information, check the S.F. Z. C. website, [www.sfzc.org](http://www.sfzc.org) or call (415) 863-3136.

Mary Mocine



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**Arcata Zen Group Visit...** Members of the Arcata Zen Group, Maylie's sangha, are coming to practice eand visit with us at BZC on the weekend of **October 11-13**. They are curious to see their "home" temple and to meet the BZC community. BZC folks are invited to a potluck social dinner and evening with Arcata folks on **Saturday, October 12 at 6pm** in the Community Room. See the bulletin board for further details.



### **Old Age, Sickness And...**

A few of us at BZC are starting to wonder how we are going to take care of each other in our old age. Some of us are taking care of aging parents and seeing how difficult it can be, and how limited the options for elder care. If you have an interest in this issue, come to a gathering for "surfacing" questions and ideas; a chance for us to find out who else has this on their mind. The meeting will be **Tuesday, November 4, in the Community Room**. For more information, call Laurie Senauke at 845-2215.



**Transitions...** Peter Overton is our new Kitchen Keeper replacing Marie Hopper

who is our new Tenzo. Gasshos to both for their practice.

Ross Blum is our new maintenance supervisor replacing Mark Boydston. Thanks to Mark for his tenure in this position and we still hope to use his "handy-man" skills when possible.



### **Saturday Childcare**

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative. Childcare is not offered if no one's planning to come, so please call Laurie the Thursday before to let us know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.

October 5	No program
October 12	Childcare
October 19	Childcare
October 26	Childcare
November 2	Childcare
November 9	Childcare
November 16	Childcare
November 23	No program
November 30	Childcare

Berkeley Zen Center  
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