



Berkeley Zen Center



February 2004 Newsletter

20s/30s Dharma Group...

On the second Sunday in January, the 20s/30s Dharma Group met for the first time: ten *zafus*, ten attendees – everything was covered from the start.

Nevertheless, we played hot potato with the speaking stick. The entire group produced a schedule and an agenda.

The group will meet on second Sundays, letting the word get out for a few months before revisiting the idea of commitment (as in a practice period-ish commitment) to the group.

At the next meeting we will sit *zazen*, read excerpts from the *Dhammapada*, have a discussion, and enjoy tea together.

We would like to thank those who came to the first meeting (some old and some new faces) and express to everyone our gratitude for your practice and friendship.

We would also like to thank *sangha* members for their encouraging words and aid in our *Dharma* endeavor.

See you soon...

Blake & Eric

For more information, contact Blake Tolbert: blakestert@yahoo.com
510.912.2350, or Eric Greene: 510.649.1653

February & March Schedule

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 2-1, 8 am to noon

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 2-3, 6:20 pm
Wednesday, 2-4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 2-7, 9:30 am

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony
Saturday, 2-14

Three-Day Sitting
Saturday – Monday, 2-14 to 2-16

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

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 3-6, 9:30 am

One-Day Sitting
Sunday, 3-14, 5 am to 5:30 pm

Kanzeon Sitting
Sunday, 3-21, 8 am to 4 pm

As Large as Life: Zen Koans for Everyday Practice...

In this four session class Zoketsu Norman Fischer will present four talks on four cases from the traditional Zen *koan* collection *Mumonkan* (Gate Without a Barrier). The emphasis will be on seeing the *koans* as useful teachings for everyday practice. Each class will include time for discussion.

Mondays- Feb 23, March 1, 8, 15.
7:30 - 9 pm

Zoketsu Norman Fischer is Senior Dharma teacher and former abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center. He is founder and teacher of the Everyday Zen Foundation (www.everydayzen.org).



Welcome New Members...

The *sangha* welcomes new BZC Members Kate Day and Scott Handleman.



Sesshin in February...

President's Day Weekend Sesshin February 14 - 16: Attendance for all three days of the February sesshin this year is required.

If you are new to sesshin practice or have questions, please contact the sesshin director, Andrea Thach: 510.420.0902.



Electronic Delivery Now Available...

You are welcome to send your e-mail address to the newsletter editor to be included on the newsletter distribution list: karuna2@mindspring.com.

Care Givers' Conspiracy...

Formerly known as *people worrying about elderly parents*, we conspire – as in *breathe together* – with potluck food and deep talk. The people you are taking care of – or worrying about – don't have to be your parents! Hopefully we will meet on Friday, March 19, 6:30 pm at 1933 1/2 Russell (home of Baika and Marian), but check the March newsletter to be sure. For more information, contact Laurie Senauke: lauries@kushiki.org, 510.845.2215.



IRS Letters...

Dues payments and donations to BZC are tax-deductible. Members whose total dues and donations in 2003 were greater than \$500 will automatically receive an acknowledgement letter. Any other members who wish to receive an acknowledgement letter, please contact the office manager, Laurie Senauke (510) 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



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.

The Old Buddha Communes With the Pillar

Master Ummon said, "The old Buddha communes with the pillar. What sort of mind is this?" He answered himself, "Clouds gather over the southern mountain. Rain falls on the northern mountain." In the zendo the wooden Buddha on the altar is facing the back wall all day long without getting tired. Human beings are not wooden Buddhas, but nevertheless they are Buddhas, and commune with one thing or another all day long. What are they doing? What does it mean *to commune with a pillar* or with a human being or with an inanimate object? A pillar is a pillar, and a Buddha is a Buddha. Why do we sit *zazen*, why do we bow? Why do we eat the way we do in the zendo? Why do we maintain the various forms of practice that we do?

Today I want to talk about bowing. What is bowing? In our everyday practice we bow quite a lot. When I first came to Zen Center, the first thing that struck me – right away – was that everyone was bowing. At first I was a little hesitant to engage in something like bowing. Nobody I knew ever did, and it was something that I had seldom done. My gut feeling, though, was that I was drawn to it – but you know – who does it? Maybe I was getting caught by something, or engaging in something that made me feel some trepidation. But everyone around me was doing it. So I did it, and actually I liked it. It felt right to bow. Once I accepted it I felt grateful for the opportunity it afforded me to express myself with deep sincerity in such a simple direct way.

I remember my teacher bowing. He didn't have any hesitation at all, and when he would bow to me, it would have felt funny not bowing to him. I felt very much at ease bowing to him. I began to realize that the act of bowing was as important as the act of sitting. That sitting and bowing are two expressions of the same thing. *Zazen* settles us in the deep fundamental stillness of the self, and bowing gives outward expression to that. I came to understand that sitting is *just sitting* and bowing is *just bowing*. Then I began to realize that the formal way of eating in the zendo is *just eating*, and it was very rarely that I had ever done that. Even though I had always just eaten, it didn't have the same quality of attention and merging.

When working with my teacher in the practice environment, the work always had a different feeling. *Zazen*, bowing, eating, and working together felt like the ancient Buddha communing with the pillar, the stones, the creek and the garbage. To understand *zazen* is to understand *bowing*. We can have a problem sometimes when we see ourselves as the subject, over against the other as the object – whether it be a pillar or a person. It is said that the foolish person sees him- or her- self as other, whereas the sage sees the other as the *one body*. But more often than not, we don't see the water for the waves. We don't see the forest for the trees. In *zazen* we allow the waves to subside so that we can be at one with the deep fundamental stillness that is water. When the waves are calm, we can see all the way to the bottom.

When we bow we don't necessarily think, "I am now bowing to that Buddha," or "I am now bowing to that pillar," or "I am now bowing to that person." We can bow with nothing at all in our mind. When we bow to the pillar, we are not bowing to an object. One day someone asked, "Do we have to bow to the *gomasio*?" *Gomasio* is the sesame salt that we use to season our cereal. We bow when we pick it up and when we put it down. Formal practice is to bow at the beginning and at the end of each activity.

Bowing is an act of merging, communion, gratitude, acknowledgement, respect, and letting go of discriminating mind so that we enter the deep ocean of complete being. So, when we bow, we may ask, "Who am I bowing to? What am I bowing to?" We can also say "Just this." When we bow to a wooden Buddha we're bowing to ourselves, and when I bow to you, I'm bowing to myself—an all-inclusive, selfless act.

Master Tung-Shan, after recognizing his true face in the stream, said "Everywhere I turn I meet myself." Of course each being has its own individual existence. The waves rise and fall. When the wave that is me rises up I say, "This is me here, and over there is you." But whether rising or sinking, we're always merging with ourselves. We are rising and sinking like the animals on the merry-go-'round. And in this undulating whorl called *samsara*, while the band plays on, we can wave to each other and smile. Although waves can be a problem we can learn how to ride them. But at the same time, we should understand the source of the waves, and we should know who we are. The purpose of our practice is to settle on *just this* as the touchstone of our lives.



CPR Training...

BZC has arranged to have a CPR class offered to interested members **Saturday, February 21 from noon to 3pm** in the Community Room. Of course, all of us hope never to confront a situation calling for this kind of intervention. Still it would be great to have some prepared Sangha members just in case. So if this interests you, please contact Greg Denny at 585-8162 or Andrea Thach at 420-0902. There is also a sign-up on the BZC bulletin board. We'd also like to know if there are any members already trained in CPR who, in case of emergency, would be willing to be "on call" when they are at BZC.



Transitions...

Baika turns over responsibilities as Work Leader to Dean Bradley.

Linda Eby turns over responsibilities as Sesshin Director to Andrea Thach.

New board members include: Peter Overton, Laurie Senauke and Andrea Thach.

Andrea Thach turns over responsibilities as the Recording Secretary to Gerry Oliva.

Gasshos to each of you for your service to the sangha...

Saturday Dishwashing...

We are implementing a new system for getting the dishes washed after breakfast on Saturdays. Instead of being assigned at work period, dishwashers now will sign up ahead of time for a specific Saturday. Dishwashing will begin immediately after breakfast so that they will be finished by the time *zazen* instruction begins. Dishwashers will rest during work period. Sign-up sheets are on the refrigerator in the kitchen. If you have any questions, please contact Mark Ray: 510.644.9521.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 am to 11:15 am. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative.

Childcare is not offered if no one is 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.

February 7	Childcare
February 14	No program
February 21	Childcare
February 28	Childcare
March 6	Childcare
March 13	Childcare
March 20	Childcare
March 27	Childcare

Documentary about BZC and Open Meeting to Discuss

Last year, the BZC board began considering a small, internal video project, paid for by BZC, to document the history of our sangha. At that time, the board approached Ed Herzog, a *sangha* member and documentary filmmaker, to see if he was interested. Ed enthusiastically said he was, and that, in fact, he would love to direct a more ambitious documentary dealing not only with BZC's history, but practice generally at BZC, current *sangha* life, and what practice at BZC might say about Buddhism in America. There was much discussion about such a project at several board meetings, including the All-Sangha meeting in September.

In response to these discussions, the Board and many *sangha* members have come to feel that Ed's vision of a documentary is a very exciting one, and that this is a project worth exploring and participating in. Several *sangha* members are currently working with Ed on different preliminary aspects of the project. However, throughout the discussions so far, several issues have been brought up as well. For instance, who will pay for the film and who will it belong to? How will the final product and the creation of it impact the *sangha*? There has especially been concern from some people about the filming of *sangha* activities.

In respect to the financial questions, the Board, with Ed's agreement, decided that the project should NOT be funded out of BZC funds and that donors should not be actively sought from within the *sangha*. Instead, responsibility for raising the funds

to pay for the film – and consequently ownership of the film – would be Ed's. However, it also seemed clear from discussions that as a consequence of the project, BZC would likely be able to acquire in some form, video materials amounting to the oral history originally desired by the Board. While the Board decided that BZC would not be funding the project, it does feel that *sangha* members should help Ed as they see fit, including helping him fundraise from outside sources.

Finally, the Board wants everyone to know that if and as this project progresses, the interests of maintaining harmony within the *sangha* will always take precedence over the needs or requests of the documentary. Accordingly, any access to BZC and BZC activities for the purposes of the project, including filming, will be coordinated through the practice committee, the board, and the Abbot. Further, an ongoing effort will be made to keep communications open in regards to the project.

On this note, an **open meeting is scheduled for Friday, 20 February, 6:30 pm** in the Community Room to discuss this project with each other and with Ed. All *sangha* members are invited. Please bring all your ideas, concerns and comments about the project. Also if you want to speak with Ed separately or beforehand, you can contact him at ehertzog@seiu250.org, 510.663.3690.

Also know that all board members are available to discuss the project.

Gasshos

During the last 4 months of 2003, the following people contributed additional sums above any regular commitment:

David Abel, Mark R.
Axelrod

Doug & Penny Greiner,
Stephen Gross

Paul Ridgway, Chris
Ritter

Enrico Baluyut, Judy
Bertelsen

Richard Haefele, Edwin
Herzog

Kokai Roberts, Sue
Roberts

Alan Block, Ross Estes
Blum

Paula Inwood,
Leavenworth Jackson

Robert Rosenbaum, Claire
& John Rubin

Steven Burkhart,
Catherine Cascade

Anne Jennings, Betty Jung

Alan & Laurie Senauke,
Lois Silverstein

Merrill Collett, Marjorie
Cox

Ann Kennedy, Walter
Kieser

Sherry Smith-Williams,
Janice Sollom-Brotherton

Gary Croner, Stan & Joyce
Cunningham

Ann Livingstone, Mildred
Lowther

Marian Spotswood, Terry
Stein

Judy Davis, Gregory
Denny

Catharine Lucas, Fred &
Elena Maroth

Karen Sundheim, Clay
Taylor

Stan Dewey, Tom
Dinwoodie

Michael May, Bill &
Connie Milligan

Andrea Thach, Rene
Thomas

Naome Dragstedt, Linda
Eby

Mary Mocine, John Moge

Fumiyo Uchiyama, Jacob
Van Akkeren and Leslie
Bartholic

Tamar Enoch, Gil
Fronsdal

Kalle Nemvalts, Gerry
Oliva

Maggie Vashel, Peggy
Waldman

William Gordon and
Sahoko Tamagawa

Peter & Susan Overton

Carol Perkins, Baika
Andrea Pratt

Richard Walker, Charles
Ware & Rondi Saslow

Bill Graves, Ann
Greenwater

Britton Pyland, John &
Louise Rasmussen

Kent Welsh, Michael
Wenger

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