



Berkeley Zen Center



July 2004 Newsletter

Welcome new member Susan Chacin.



Birthday Festivities...

for our abbot Sojun Roshi's 75th will be held on **4 July** at Tilden Park. You can join a group hike at **11:00 am**, and the potluck barbecue will start around **noon**.

The picnic site will be at Tilden Park. We will claim it that morning, so we are not absolutely sure which one it will be. A sign with balloons indicating the picnic site will be at the intersection of Wildcat Canyon Rd and South Park Drive, near the Botanic Garden. Stop by BZC for a map. Contact Mary Mocine: marymo@att.net or Laurie Senauke: lauries@kushiki.org.

Sign up with your potluck dish, and to help with set up or clean up, on the BZC Bulletin Board. Bring items for the barbecue, musical instruments, Frisbees, etc. If you can help with the loan of a volleyball net, that would be awesome.

SEE YOU THERE!



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.

July & August Schedule

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 7-3, 9:30am

Interdependence legal holiday
Zendo closed, Monday, 7-5

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 7-6, 6:20pm
Wednesday, 7-7, 6:40am

One-Day Sitting
Sunday, 7-11, 5:00am to 5:30pm

Mountains & Rivers
Friday, 7-30 through Sunday, 8-1

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 7-31, 9:30am

One-Day Sitting
Saturday, 8-7, 5:00am to 9:30pm

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 8-3, 6:20pm
Wednesday, 8-4, 6:40am

Kanzeon Sitting
Saturday, 8-22, 8:30am to 5:00pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 8-28, 9:30am

Jukai...

On 12 June Sojun lay-ordained five BZC members. In addition, Alan ordained one of his own students. Here is a list of all the ordinees and their new *dharma* names:

Sojun's students:

Honkyo Josu
Original Home Calm Center
Mary Duryee

Junki Genko
Pure Spirit Dark Radiance
Blake Tolbert

Sankei Zoho
Mountain Form Hidden Treasure
Robert Vergara

Hoto Genkan
Dharma Lamp Manifest Insight
Ed Herzog

Genko Kosei
Original Face High-spirited Nature
Francesca Genco

Alan's student:

Kokaku Juten
Solitary Crane Fills the Heavens
Brian Blix

Congratulations to all and many *gasshos* to sewing teacher Jean Selkirk.



Mountains and Rivers Sesshin...
will take place at Point Reyes **Friday through Sunday, 30 July - 1 August** .

Sojun Roshi will be leading it. It's an inspiring and invigorating combination of

hiking in silence during the day and *zazen* under the stars in the evening and early morning. Everyone is encouraged to do the full three days, but provision will also be made for people who can take part only in the Saturday-Sunday portion, or who have some physical difficulty with backpacking.

If you have any questions, contact Ken Knabb 510.527.0959 knabb@bopsecrets.org.



Tape Library

Changes in the audio recording archive system are not quite complete. This has been affecting the checkout system. Here's how to obtain the recordings you want:

Recordings up until about the end of 1998 are still available for checkout from the tape files in the library.

For recordings starting in about 1999, if you want to borrow one, or to purchase a recording of any vintage, complete a *Tape/CD Request Form* located in the Tape Librarian's mailbox and leave it in the mailbox.

Only recordings from the 2003 Five-Day Sesshin going forward are currently available as both tapes and CDs; the digitizing project of older recordings is moving forward but far from complete.

Until the catalog is updated, if you are interested in a particular tape or topic, just leave a message and the database can be searched for what you are looking for.

Tape Librarian,
Jean Selkirk

Have A Cup Of Tea...

We have decided to schedule an informal tea and discussion every **Friday afternoon before zazen from 5:00 to 5:30 p.m.** We will use either the courtyard or the Community Room depending on the weather.

This can be a time to get to know each other better for both new and more experienced students. As much of our group practice is silent, this gathering will be an opportunity to enjoy extended conversation or just listen in a casual way. We may find a balance that includes both socializing and discussion of *dharma* and practice.

Attendance is on a drop-in basis— all are welcome. We will try this for a year to see if there is sufficient interest. Ron Nestor will coordinate these tea time gatherings. The first tea will occur on **Friday, 16 July**.



Directory Change...

Please note that Sue Oehser has a new email address: soehser@earthlink.net.



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.

July 3	Childcare
July 10	Childcare
July 17	Childcare
July 24	Childcare
August 7	No program
August 14	Childcare
August 21	Childcare
August 28	Childcare

Lecture By Sojun Roshi

19 May 2001

In Buddhist meditation, paying attention to breathing is one of the most important factors. Like the blood, which runs through our veins, we take it for granted. The movement of breath is something that is going on moment by moment. We feel breath inside, but it also connects to outside. Each one of us has the experience of breath coming, going, inhaling and exhaling. This is the fundamental movement of our life. When we sit *zazen*, we pay attention to posture, and we pay attention to breath. Posture is first because posture is the fundamental structure and the ground base of this body. After we establish posture, we pay attention to our breath. *Zazen* is harmonizing of body, mind and breath – all three elements. If we've been sitting *zazen* we know about harmonizing body, mind and breath. But often we pay little attention to breathing in our daily life. When we sit in *zazen*, we let go of the business of our daily life, all the complications. At that time it is pretty easy to just pay attention to the rising and falling of the breath. But in our daily life, it is much more difficult. During *zazen*, we allow the breath to come in, and we call that inhaling, We allow the breath to leave, and that's called exhaling. We harmonize by sitting up straight and allow the breath to become more subtle. Then we begin to have a feeling of liberation, lightness, settledness, freedom, and selflessness. Simply by paying attention to the breath we can have a feeling of liberation and lucidity.

This kind of attention to breathing can be carried out through all of the activities in our daily life. When walking, to be attentive to the breath with our step. When hiking, its pretty easy because there is no other activity involved. Sometimes when you're hiking up a steep mountain, it is one breath one step. [Sound of panting]. But in our daily life, it is much more difficult to be aware of breath while sitting down at our computer. Driving a car we can find the rhythm of the breath while shifting gears, putting on the brake or stepping on the gas. To actually pay attention to breath as it flows into our activity in this way is how we carry our meditation practice into our daily life. It is one activity that is common to both *zazen* and daily life. We learn to do this in *zazen*, and then we extend it into our daily life.

Suzuki Roshi said in a talk that we should be kind with our self and feel kindly toward our breathing. We should have a warm hearted feeling towards our breath. To relate to our breath as a constant companion, not simply taking it for granted, but giving it the attention that helps us to always be in a calm state of mind. To have this awareness of breathing within our activity focuses our attention and helps us to be concentrated on what we're doing, and gives us the right kind of energy to do whatever we're doing. It's the kind of energy that's not chatter, but calm and collected – smooth energy. It creates a joyful mood. When we can keep coming back to the breath, our disposition becomes smooth and sweet, and makes it easy to smile, and to respond to circumstances rather than simply reacting. We say to breathe from down here in your *hara* (Just below the navel).

Breath in Japanese is called *ki*, in Chinese *qi*, and in Sanskrit *prana*. *Ki*, or *qi* is the place of power, strength. This place from which we breathe deeply in what feels like our abdomen, just below our navel, is called the *sea of ki*. Suzuki Roshi said it is also called *rice-paddies*, which in an Asian way of thinking, means *place of plenty*, nourishment, or contentment. When our energy comes from this place, through the breath, the whole body is completely filled with it, and we have a feeling of well being. When you hyperventilate, this can create a feeling of euphoria. Often we find ourselves breathing from our chest, which often indicates anxiety or fear, closing down or constriction. When we become calm, our breathing is down in the *hara*. When we become angry or irritated, frightened, or anxious, our breath tends to be shallow, up in our chest. So when we pay attention and allow our self to breathe deeply, the body can relax and let go of that holding on to itself. Then our state of mind becomes free. So our state of mind and our breathing are very much connected. This is why we say, "to harmonize body, mind and breath," so we can resume our natural state of mind, which is free of attachment to conditioning. In our daily life, we meet many conditions, all we have to do is read the newspaper to get our breathing up in our chest. So when you read the newspaper, let the breath go down to your *hara*, and harmonize body, mind and breath, and even though it looks like the world is going to hell, you can still have a calm mind, and you can breathe into your emotion. We can have our composure, which helps to keep us from getting lost in our feelings.

Breathing is a basically involuntary activity. It is just coming and going regardless of our desire. In *zazen* and in our daily life, we just allow the breath to flow on its own. In *zazen* we start out by letting the mind follow the breath. To let the mind follow the breath without controlling it is very difficult. Once you focus on the breath, it is very difficult to not try to control it. First we say to count the breath. That's a good way to get a handle on it. Then we just let the mind follow the breath. And then just let the breath be.

We say that we are breathing, but we are actually breathed by the universe. This is the universal activity, which is inflating and deflating the lungs. But usually we think, "I am breathing". Actually, breathing is just happening to us. This is a wonderful mystery. To inhale is to come to life, and to exhale is to let go of life. Suzuki Roshi talked about the exhale as a letting go: we put more attention on the exhale rather than the inhale. When you inhale, the body becomes excited, and when you exhale the body becomes calm. These are the two aspects of our lives: excitement and calmness, movement and rest, over and over again. On each breath is a moment of birth and death. This is how we can understand our life: it is both continuous and discontinuous.

When I was in Arcata, with our dear *dharma* sister Maylie Scott who was dying, for six days she was lying on her back, not moving, with her eyes closed. Just breathing. We would sit with her, and the only movement was her breath, which was quite audible. It was sometimes smooth, sometimes labored. She was breathing, but it was just the great activity of the universe. It was so obvious. We would do *zazen* with her, and just watch to see if it would continue, and to see if it would stop. And it just kept going on, day after day, one breath at a time. Living life just one breath at a time. I really feel sure that her great long experience of *zazen* was continuing. Just sitting still and letting the breath happen. And at the last moment, just stopping, and this wonderful feeling of release, of letting go.

This is how I think about that time, and how I think about breathing, and appreciating our breath, not just taking it for granted; harmonizing with our breath in order to allow our self to have that release moment by moment.

In the *Sutra on the Mindfulness of Breathing*, there are sixteen so-called methods of observing the breath. The last one is practicing with the breath in order to understand impermanence, in order to realize impermanence, and in order to practice letting go of body and mind, so that the whole life is lived consciously, and the whole death is lived consciously in the same manner. We tend to grab on to life and resist our death. This is normal and natural, but to live a complete life – which includes both sides and to pass from this world in a conscious, purposeful way – is possible.

I'll read you a little bit from the sutra on the full awareness of breathing. The four last methods are pretty much directed toward letting go of everything. It says: "The fifteenth method helps free us from individuality, so that we can become part of the universe. 'I am breathing in and contemplating liberation. I am breathing out and contemplating liberation.' Here, liberation is freedom from the concepts of life and death, owning and lacking, increasing and decreasing – all concepts which form the basis of desire and attachment, fear and anxiety, hatred and anger. Liberation here means freedom, or *nirvana*, which is the absence of all boundaries. The sixteenth method, like the fifteenth, aims at helping us observe, in order to shed light on giving up all desire and attachment, fear and anxiety, hatred and anger. Seeing that there is a precious jewel in our pocket, we give up every attitude of craving or coveting like one who is deprived. Seeing that we are lions, we do not long to nurse from a mother deer. Seeing that we are the sun, we give up the candle's habit of fearing that the wind will blow us out. Seeing that life has no boundaries, we give up all imprisoning divisions. We see ourselves everywhere, and we see our life everywhere. That is why we go to help all living phenomena, all living species, with a vow of a *bodhisattva*, one who has attained great awakening."

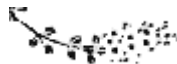
So this is Thich Nhat Han's commentary: "Giving up does not mean abandoning something in order to seek something else. It means giving up every comparison, seeing that there is nothing to be removed and nothing to be added, and that the boundary between our self and others is not real. The practitioner does not give up the human condition in order to become a Buddha. He or she seeks the Buddha in his or her very own human

condition, giving up nothing and seeking nothing. That is the meaning of *aprahnihta*, which means 'aimlessness', also translated as 'wishlessness', it is the same as 'not seeking', a concept fully developed in *Mahayana* Buddhism. Give up in order to be everything and to be completely free."

So, we can see death as losing our life, and losing something, or we can see it as gaining something, or we can see it as neither losing nor gaining, but simply expanding into the universe, our true body. So in breathing, paying attention to breath throughout every activity from here [*hara*], is our practice. Sometimes I ask a student: "Right now, where is your breath?" Mostly, the student will say, "Well, I don't know". But, you should know all the time where your breath is, where you're breathing from. There should not be any hesitation. We don't know everything, and a lot of the time in our life we're puzzled by what confronts us. When we realize that we don't know, we come down to here [*hara*], our mind comes down to here. And from here, something will appear. If you say "I don't know" and put your mind in your *hara*, in your breath, letting go of everything, something will appear. This is called *faith in your true nature*. As a Zen student, you should have faith in your true nature, and it is right there. It is right in letting go. You let go and have a free fall into your true nature, which will always rescue you.

Every year, we have a head student, the *shusso*, and at the end of the practice period, the *shusso* confronts all the students with a question and answer period called the *shusso* ceremony. The *shusso*, in order to properly answer all the students' questions, should totally forget everything that he or she knows, and simply put the mind in the *hara*, without knowing anything, and when a question comes trust the *hara*. If you don't, and if you start working up here in the head, you'll be defeated. This is what we call *don't know mind*. It is actually the mind that knows everything, but it is not you. That mind knows everything, if you just let it speak. So, when we practice with our breath in our *hara* we always have the right foundation for our activity. Even though we get lost, we don't get lost, because there's always a place to come to. This is what Suzuki Roshi meant when he said that you should always be the boss. Whatever circumstance you are in you should always be the boss. This doesn't mean that you should boss people around, it means that you know who you are and where you are, and you can respond in the appropriate manner. This is called *appropriate response*.

Today we're having a one-day sitting, so I must end on time.



For Shuso Baika Ensho Andrea Pratt

As water courses over stone
I wend my way
In spring, the plum blossoms
And so I sing my song
Seeing and being seen
In this moment we meet

Reflections from the *sangha* on the occasion of a recent memorial:

Changes as one who walks in the land toward death often
the routine is perturbed by the story of ordinary friendship between man and boy

a hello.
a story read.
a shoe tied.
a vacation recounted.
a cup of tea served.
or drunk.
the glance over glasses while writing one final prescription.

are ordinary
only when one forgets.

