



Berkeley Zen Center



September 2004 Newsletter

Fall Class...

The Diamond Sutra is one of the most important sutras for Zen practitioners, the "diamond that cuts through delusions." It answers the question, "If there are no beings, then how do *bodhisattvas* save beings?"

This four-week class will be taught by long time Zen priest Peter Overton and Laurie Senauke, on Thursday nights, 7:30 to 9:00, from 23 September to 14 October. The cost is \$20 for the series. Please sign up on the bulletin board.

Contact Peter Overton: 510.848.5239, peterovrtn@comcast.net; or Laurie Senauke: 510.845.2215.



All-Sangha Potluck, And Meeting to Nominate Board Members... Tuesday 14 September 6:30 p.m.

Please participate in this annual event. We will meet in the Community Room after *zazen*. Please bring some food to share. Check with those you wish to nominate to be sure they are able to serve on the Board. Contact: Anne Jennings, Board President: 510.525.7822, mimikatz@aol.net.



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.

September & October Schedule

Founders' Ceremony
Friday, 9-3, 6:20 pm
Saturday, 9-4, 6:40 am

Three-Day Sitting
Saturday, 9-4 through Monday, 9-6

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 9-12, 8 am to noon

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 9-25, 9:30am

Women's Sitting
Saturday, 9-26, 5 am to 5:30 pm

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 10-4, 6:20 pm
Tuesday, 10-5, 6:40 am

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 10-10, 8 am to noon

One-Day Sitting
Sunday, 10-24, 5 am to 5:30 pm

Aspects of Practice
September 24 to November 20

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

Thanks...

Thanks to Greg Denny and the folks who assisted him. They built a new patio on the west side of the Zendo.



Oryoki instruction...

for those who have their own bowls is available at Berkeley Zen Center on the fourth Saturday of the month at 11:30. Contact Jake Van Akkeren 925-933-3486 (before 9pm), jvanakkeren@comcast.net.



Friday Afternoon Teatime...

Please join us for an end-of-the-work-week teatime **prior to Friday afternoon zazen**. This is a drop-in opportunity to connect with other *sangha* members. Contact Ron Nestor: 510.834.8630.



Social Engagement Retreat...

A group of friends who are all members of BZC's socially engaged *dharma* group have organized a "swing state election *sesshin*" **18 October to 2 November** in central Oregon. We are simply a group of friends

welcoming other Buddhists to join us for three or more days during that time. We will sit *zazen*, share meals, engage in get-out-the-vote activities. Several organic farmers near Corvallis have invited us to stay on their farms. Contact: Stan Dewey, 510.528.1989, standewey@comcast.net, or Ed Herzog, 510.9811761, eherzog@seiu250.org



BZC Documentary Update...

The documentary about Berkeley Zen Center is moving ahead. So far we have videotaped Buddha's birthday celebration, and this year's *jukai* ceremony. We interviewed Doug Greiner, Charlie Ware, and Ron Nestor for the oral history portion of the film. **The next film date will be on 25 September. We will be videotaping the entire Saturday program, beginning with 6:00 AM zazen, ending with Sojun's lecture.** That afternoon we will be videotaping an interview with Sojun. Contact Ed Herzog: 510.663.3690, eherzog@seiu250.org

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

Tassajara, 1980

The following is Sojun's commentary on Case Number 51 in the Blue Cliff Record as interpreted by Suzuki Roshi. Suzuki's comments are in parentheses below.

“When Seppo was in his hermitage at Reinan, two unnamed monks visted and bowed to him (What is the bow?). When Seppo saw them coming, he pushed open the gate, jumped out and said ‘What is it?’ (Suzuki Roshi says: a question and yet an answer, do you understand the real Seppo? Tell me which it is?) The two monks said in reply, ‘What is it?’ (The two monks did not fail to respond, but Engo says: They were two old sounding boards covered by velvet. They were chalk and not cheese.) Seppo made a bow and went back to his room. (Engo says: This is not a dragon because it has no legs, but it is certainly not a snake because it has no horns. I say, what is it? Dragons and snakes in Zen terminology are enlightened beings and deluded beings.)

“The two monks later extended their travels and visited Ganto. Ganto said, ‘Where did you come from?’ (This is a good question. Ganto has already caught them with his question, but they don't understand.) the monks said, ‘We're from Reinan.’ (Be quick and give him a right answer!) Ganto said, ‘Then you must have met Seppo?’ (It is very kind of him to wait for their right answer.) The monks said, ‘Yes, we have.’ (He was not asking them yes or no, but whether they had understood the actual Seppo.)

“Ganto said, ‘What did he say to you?’ The monks related the story. Ganto said, ‘Well, what did he say after all?’ (What did he really say?) But they said, ‘He didn't say anything! He bowed and went back to his room.’ Ganto thereupon said, ‘Oh, what have I done? When I was at Tokusan's place with him I should have let him know the verse of my deathbed. If I had only told him, he would not have been thrown into such confusion.’ (Although Ganto mentioned Seppo's name, he actually meant to give the monks his own last word. Then, what is his last word?)

“The two monks stayed the summer at Ganto's monastery. At the end of the session they asked Ganto about the meaning of Seppo's unusual behavior, and what Ganto had meant by ‘How I wish that I had told Seppo my last word.’ Ganto said, ‘Why didn't you ask me before?’ The monks said, ‘Well, we thought your last word was too personal to ask about.’ Thereupon Ganto said, ‘Seppo is a fellow countryman of mine. We always went on pilgrimage together, yet we will not die together. If you want to know my last word for Seppo and for you, I will tell you what it is. It's nothing but: This is it!’

This is the *koan*.”

Sojun's commentary:

Our Zen practice is very simple and yet the focus is so easy to miss. As a matter of fact, it's so simple that sometimes we don't see what's right under our feet, or our nose. To be able to take hold of and seize this moment, and not get lost in the world, not give way to confusion and doubt; this is pretty difficult, and yet this simple practice is not so difficult if we always question, "where am I and what am I doing?"

This "what is it?" is a *koan* for each one of us. I always felt that this "what is it?" was Suzuki Roshi's unstated *koan* for us. I could sometimes hear him saying this in a casual way, but loaded with meaning. If someone pointed something out to him, he might say, "what is it?" in a similar way as Ganto to the monks. After all, what is this bow? How do we become aware of the absolute quality of our life in each moment's activity. It's maybe not so difficult to be aware of what we're doing. But to be aware of the absolute quality of our life in each activity is easy to miss. How to express Buddha-nature in the simplest acts of our life. How to express whole being, which is not just our personality. Whenever someone asked master Gutei a question, he raised one finger. When he raised one finger he was saying, 'This is it! This is it! Everything in the whole universe belongs to this one finger, and this finger belongs to the whole universe, the *Dharma-Dhatu*. The whole universe is supporting this finger.

When we say that we are doing something, such as walking, or eating, what does that really mean? What is that? In one sense, there's "Hey, leave me alone and let me enjoy my meal." But in another sense, the universe is eating potatoes with a knife and fork. *It* is a little word but it has a big meaning. *It* has no special name or object, but we can point to anything and say "This is *it*." If I point to you I can say you are *it*, depending on the situation. Yet each *it*; John, Mary, the table or the chair have their respective names, and at the same time, each one of them is *it*. So, if we say "What is 'it'?" *It* has no special name, no special form, no special characteristic. But every name, every form, every color is *It*. *What is it*. *What is it*. *What is it*. As Ganto says, the answer is always *this is it*. If we can keep our attention on *this is it*, then we have our practice. It's not that we know something, but we express right understanding. I may know what something is, yet not know that *this is it*. Even though I don't understand it, I know it. The barbarian knows it, even though he doesn't understand it.

Question: You said that after enlightenment, begins hard practice, so if this is it, what's going on before?

Sojun: We think that delusion precedes enlightenment. We tend to think in terms of before and after. Delusion is first, and we work hard to get something called enlightened. It does look like that. But enlightenment is our nature, our true nature that is always with us, and when we say "get enlightened", it's not that we actually get something. It means to bring forth light, to let go, so that light can shine forth. But, just because enlightenment is an expression of our true nature, it doesn't mean that we necessarily realize it.

So what's before realization? There is obscurity, confusion, dualistic thinking, yours and mine, right and wrong, good and bad. After enlightenment, there's confusion, right and wrong, good and bad, but it's not the same. We sometimes think that enlightenment means the reconciliation of all dualities. You and I may be angry with each other before enlightenment, and when we become enlightened we reconcile anger with serenity. But after enlightenment we may still get angry. But that anger is not the same. I remember Suzuki Roshi saying that if you love ice cream, and you pass an ice cream store you will want an ice cream cone, and you may think that when you are enlightened that desire won't come up. But when you are enlightened, and you pass the ice cream store you may still get the feeling that you want the ice cream. But you are not attached to that feeling.

Enlightenment is the beginning of our practice. Enlightenment is what motivates us toward practice. The fact that you want to practice means that the enlightenment that is always with you needs to somehow be expressed. It is usual to think that we enter practice in order to get enlightened, but enlightenment is actually driving our practice. We have a tendency to see it the other way around. "If I work real hard, I can get enlightened!" That's good, but it's enlightenment that's motivating you to work real hard to seek enlightenment. What we are all looking for is what we already have in abundance, but we don't know that until we wake up to it. And then we might say, "Now that I've awakened to it I don't have to do this troublesome practice any more." But if it's actually enlightenment that you have awakened to, you won't want to stop, because the enlightenment is within your effort, within your practice. Practice brings forth enlightenment, and enlightenment creates practice. Practice is the basis and enlightenment is its expression and extends everywhere. It's not confined to a certain place or activity. This is it. Please pass the salt.



The Continuous Practice of Local Buddhas and Contemporary Ancestors

First of occasional notings of our historical path in practice at Berkeley Zen Center.

Twenty-five years ago this month, Mel and Liz moved to Russell Street, unofficially starting practice at our current site, and shifting it from the old Dwight Way *zendo*. On Sunday, 2 September, 1979, Ron Nestor, Bill Milligan loaded the Weitsman belongings in a pick-up and brought them to our current practice home. Our first *sesshin*, held in our current community room, took place later that month, on Saturday 22. September.

The Berkeley Zendo opened at 1670 Dwight Way in February 1967, and its first official calendar, written by hand by Connie Worthen Milligan, was posted 12 years later. The last sitting and official closing ceremony took place at the old zendo attic on 30 September, 1979, and a celebratory potluck followed that evening at Russell Street.



Looking Ahead to Rohatsu...

After careful consideration, the practice committee has decided this year we will have a four day consecutive day minimum for Rohatsu., As Sojun said, more days of continuous sitting support a particularly strong, steady practice in *sesshin* that those of us who don't have the chance to sit long *sesshins* often ,or practice periods at Tassajara, would like

to experience. Comings and goings affect everyone in the *zendo*, as was noted during our recent five-day *sesshin*. We hope by giving everyone several months' notice, those of us who have commitments to clients, students or otherwise demanding jobs will have an opportunity to arrange schedules to be able to sit at least four days in their entirety. This *Rohatsu* ends with two days over a weekend, which we hope will ease making this commitment.

While some flexibility to individual exceptional circumstances may still be possible, this decision marks a shift in view about our longest *sesshin*. We will try it this year. We hope that everyone who is interested in sitting *Rohatsu* will sincerely explore their commitment and their opportunity this December.

Contact *Sesshin* Director, Andrea Thach:
510.420.0902, ananda3917@earthlink.net.



Men's Shelter Dinner...

A message from John Rubin

One of the wonderful outreach things we do at Berkeley Zen Center is to prepare and serve dinner twice-monthly at the nearby Berkeley Men's Shelter. It has a rich tradition. Maylie Scott started it. Many BZC members have participated over the years. Currently, Lance Shows takes charge of the dinner on the second Friday of each month; Claire and I handle the dinner on the fourth Friday. We serve 50 always-appreciative men at the shelter. It is hard to say who gets the most out of this. The men get a good dinner – for example, lasagne, salad, corn bread, soft drinks, ice cream, and homemade brownies or cookies. We get to talk with them, hear their stories, and show them our care and concern. These are men that for whatever reason are down on their luck. They need help. We have something to give them -- our time, energy, support, and nourishing food.

We buy most of the food at Smart & Final, and arrive at the Shelter about 5 PM. A crew of four to six *sangha* members prepares the dinner in the Shelter's kitchen. Serving time is 7 PM. The crew often has time to get a plate for themselves and join some of the men at their tables to eat and talk. When dessert is done, we get the kitchen cleaned up, and are usually ready to bow out at 8 PM. While parts of the evening can be noisy and hectic, it is also a very mindful experience. Everyone tries to work in the Shelter's kitchen much like they would if they were at BZC. It is a very good practice opportunity.

Claire and I have been doing these dinners for over five years now, and we'd like to see if someone else would enjoy taking over this really worthwhile activity on the fourth Friday of each month. It's a practice that's important for BZC to continue to sponsor and a great experience for the Sangha members who take part in it. Contact John Rubin: 510.339.7068, john_rubin@mechbank.com.

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. Contact: Laurie Senauke, 510.845.2215.

September 4	No program
September 11	Childcare
September 18	Childcare
September 25	Childcare
October 2	Childcare
October 9	Childcare
October 15	Childcare
October 23	Childcare
October 30	Childcare



**Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA 94703**

Paul's Worlds Unite!

Paul's Worlds Unite!
For his 50th Birthday Extravaganza
Saturday, Sept 11, 2004, 8pm - ?
Nexus Gallery, 2701 8th Street
(at Carleton St), Berkeley
Question? 510-524-9625

In Appreciation for 50 Continuous Years of a Most Fortunate Existence

(a flash of lightning, a bubble in a stream, a sunlit dewdrop, a waking dream),

Paul will attempt, using Unfamiliar Equipment (Ut Oh!), to create an

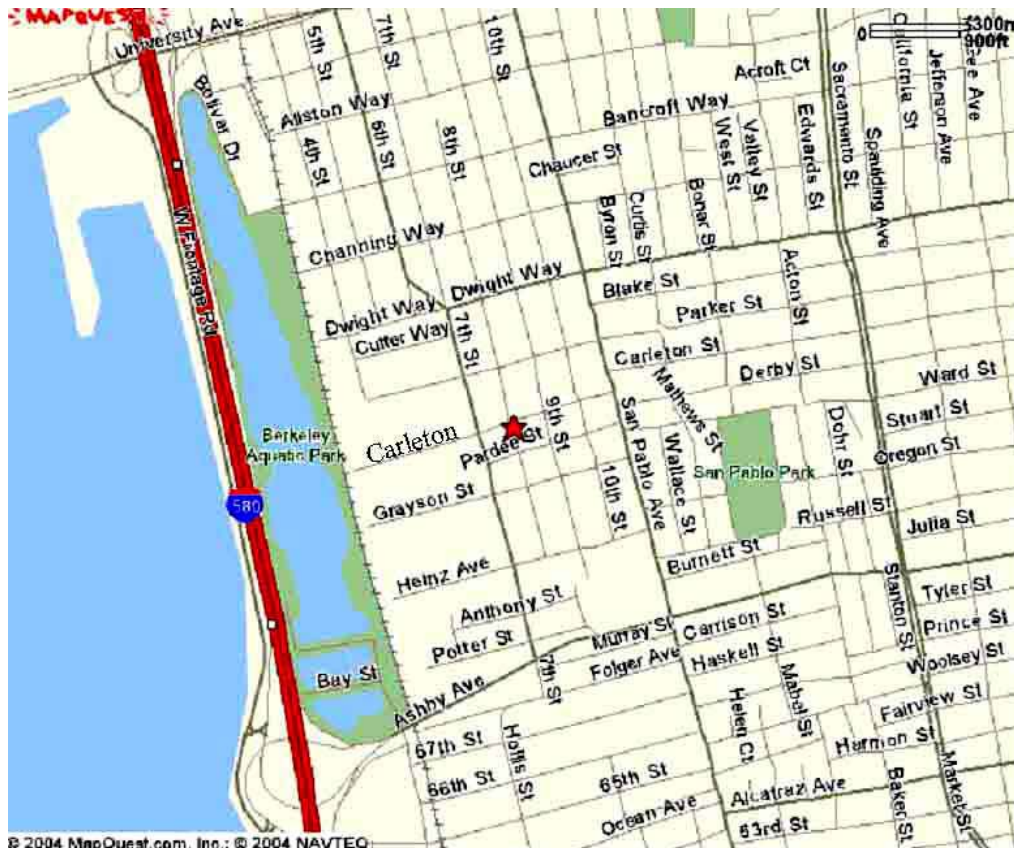
Experience of Light, Mirrors and Bubbles

set to Funk and R&B, for the merging of Myriad Disparate Worlds

(Family, Friends, S.O.'s, SCAM, BZC, BBP, TeamD, ECTM) into One!

The Hendersons will all be there, and you and your dear friends, significant others and kids are invited. Some food and drink will be provided, and feel free to BYO dancing fuel (Food &/or Drink) & to share (drivers be careful). Let that and your participation be the only presents. This is an opportunity to wear wild clothing, or come as you are, if that looks good in blacklight (of course it does).

Suggestion: bring a chair and a laser pointer (cheap at pet stores)



See You (Yea, you) There! An RSVP to plridgway@hotmail.com by Sept 9 would be helpful.