



Berkeley Zen Center



October 2004 Newsletter



Welcome new members Stephen Brady, Colleen & John Busch, Barbara Strauss, and Charles Strauss..



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 **Sunday, 31 October** 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

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 10-2, 9:30am

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

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 10-10, 8:00am to noon

One-Day Sitting
Open Aspects of Practice
Sunday, 10-24, 5:00am to 5:30pm

Segaki
Sunday, 10-31

Founders' Ceremony
Wednesday, 11-3, 6:20pm
Thursday, 11-4, 6:40am

Kanzeon Sitting
Sunday, 11-7, 8:30am to 12:30pm

One-Day Sitting
Close Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 11-20, 5:00am to 9:30pm

Thanksgiving (*zendo closed*)
Thursday, 11-25

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 11-27, 9:30am

Vote!!!.....BZC members are encouraged to vote this coming month for the following positions on the BZC Board:

Three members-at-large: The nominees are Alexandra Frappier, Marie Hopper, Walter Kieser, John Moge, Geri Oliva, and Jake Van Akkeren.

Salaried Positions: Also confirm for another year, Sojun as Abbot, Alan Senauke as Tanto. And Laurie Senauke as Office Manager. Peter Overton, Laurie Senauke and Andrea Thach will continue on the board for a second year.

Poll is open 1 October through 31 October.

Look for the ballots and photos of all the candidates at the courtyard bulletin board. Many *gasshos* to outgoing members Leslie Bartholic, Greg Denny, and Ann Kennedy.



Aspects of Practice: Zen & Our Ancestors...

Again this fall BZC is entering our Aspects of Practice period, and we invite you to join in. We offer four weeks of practice, study, and discussion – from **24 October through 20 November**. The opportunity here is for newer students and older members to make a reasonable commitment to practice regularly in the zendo, study our home traditions and forms, and refresh our practice. Over the last few years, Aspects of Practice has become a great way for newer students to root their practice. This year's focus is on our Zen ancestors, men and women who continue to shape our practice today. Practice leaders Ross Blum, Doug Greiner, Richard Haefele, Raul Moncayo, Peter Overton, Baika Pratt, Alan & Laurie Senauke will lecture on Saturdays, offer Monday morning talks, and lead a four week class on key figures in our Soto tradition. In addition there will be informal teas and regular practice discussion. Each sangha participant is strongly encouraged to meet with a practice leader at least once during Aspects. We will begin with a 5 to 5 sitting on **Sunday, 24 October**, and end with a closing sitting on

Saturday, 20 November. The Thursday evening class will be open to everyone as usual. But newer and older members are invited to take part in the whole program. Your interest, support, and encouragement can be of help to the whole *sangha*. For further details, a signup sheet, and registration forms, please look to the zendo events bulletin board. We look forward to practicing with you..

Alan Senauke



Gasshos... We thank one another for the financial support of our practice place and our teachers. Contributions from members and friends provide our very foundation. During the period of 1 May to 31 August, 2004, those listed below contributed additional sums above any regular commitment (this includes sustaining members).

Valorie Beer
Judy Bertelsen
Ross Estes Blum
Ann Bundy
Marjorie Cox
Naome Dragstedt
Mary Duryee
Gilles Eberhard
Linda Eby
Doug & Penny Greiner
Stephen Gross
Robert Hayes
Lynne Hofmann
Anne Jennings
Betty Jung
Kannon-Do
Ann Kennedy
Walter Kieser
Mildred Lowther
Catharine Lucas
Anne Macey
John Mason
Patricia Maurice
Michael May
Raul Moncayo
Gerry Oliva

Peter & Susan Overton
Carol Paul
Baika Andrea Pratt
John & Louise Rasmussen
Robert Rosenbaum
Claire & John Rubin
Richard Slettedahl
Sherry Smith-Williams
Stephanie Solar
Terry Stein
Jacob Van Akkeren
Maggie Vashel
David Weinberg



Sojun Roshi...

Will lead the Winter Practice Period at Tassajara Zen Mountain Center from **1 January to 1 April 2005**. Members of the sangha are encouraged to contact Sojun if you are interested in this intensive, three-month practice period.



Threefold Lotus Sutra

Everyone is invited to the Fourth Threefold Lotus Sutra Chanting in the Zendo on **Sunday, 14 November from 8AM until approx. 4:30PM**. The chanting is very brisk and will be continuous, though there will be three scheduled breaks. Come at anytime and join in. Light refreshments provided, or bring your bag lunch. Information will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. Contact Baika: anprtt2@aol.com, 510.548.4878



YoYo...

Please join us in a **Baby Blessing for Mateo William Young, also known as Yo Yo**, Jin Young's newly adopted son. Sunday, 10 October, 1:30pm at Clear Water Zendo in Vallejo. No presents; just presence!



Gasshos...

For serving the sangha. Recently, several individuals have taken on new positions, replacing those who served.

The position of *tenzo* will be held by two people, Alexandra Frappier and Karen Sundheim. They will replace MarieHopper.

Tamar Enoch will replace Peter Overton as assistant kitchen keeper.

Carol Paul will maintain the *dokusan* hut, replacing Alexandra Frapper.

Susan Chafee will maintain the community room, replacing Carol Paul.

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

Day One Rohatsu. *Tenzo Kyokun*. Refining Your Life. Foundations of Kitchen Practice. 29
November 1993.

Today, and over the next several days, I am going to discuss an essay by Zen Master Dogen called, *Tenzo Kyokun*. "*Tenzo Kyokun*" means "Instructions for the Zen Cook." This essay is one of the fascicles in Dogen's *Shobogenzo*. The translation I will be using comes from Uchiyama Roshi's book, *Refining Your Life: From the Zen Kitchen to Enlightenment*, edited by Tom Wright (New York, Weatherhill, 1983).

The opening lines of the *Tenzo Kyokun* go like this:

From ancient times, in communities practicing the Buddha's Way, there have been six offices established to oversee the affairs of the community. The monks holding each office are all disciples of the Buddha and they all carry out the activities of a buddha through their respective offices. Among these officers is the *tenzo*, who carries the responsibility of preparing the community's meals.

It is written in the *Chanyuan Qinggui* ["The Regulations for Zen Monasteries"], that "the function of the *tenzo* is to manage meals for the monks."

This work has always been carried out by teachers settled in the Way and by others who have aroused the *bodhisattva* spirit within themselves. Such a practice requires all your energies.

Dogen says that the work of the *tenzo*, and other officers in the monastic community, was carried out by teachers "settled in the Way." If you go to a large monastery like Eihei-ji, these officers are usually *roshis* or mature teachers. In the case of the *tenzo*, because so many people work in the kitchen with him or her as a teacher, the office is rather special. The group working with the *tenzo* in the kitchen is like a small sub-community in itself. In a monastery like Tassajara, for example, seven or eight people do the work together all day, every day, in a confined space.

When you're working in an environment like that, everyone's personal quirks come forth, and it doesn't take long before everyone knows each others' personality traits, what it is that sets someone off, which buttons to push, what to watch out for, and how to relate. Sooner or later there are squabbles. I have seen some pretty violent behavior in the kitchen at Tassajara — an entire tray of dishes getting thrown down the stairs, for instance! So, whenever I'm at Tassajara somebody will tell me about a problem they are having with someone. The *tenzo's* job is to create harmony, although sometimes the *tenzo* can be a problem.

In such a young practice like ours, we can't always find a *roshi* to be *tenzo*. Often the *tenzo* is not as mature a person as ideally we would like to have. It is, though, a great training position for someone. You have to have some maturity. The *tenzo* should be a teacher for others, as well as allowing the crew to be a teacher for the *tenzo*. It goes back and forth. But mostly when someone is asked to take the position they always rise to the occasion and do a wonderful job, and mature in the process.

Dogen stresses this in his essay. He says, "Such a practice requires exhausting all your energies." And it does. He or she works long hours and can easily get burned out.

Anyone working in the kitchen needs to find a rhythm for their work, so that they can find their ease within the work itself. This is true of all our activities. It is certainly true of *zazen*. Naturally after working we rest. But when you have a continuous activity over a long time you have to find your rest and your ease within the activity itself, otherwise you can't sustain yourself. This is the *koan* of work. It is also true of *zazen*.

When we sit *sesshin* all day, we put out a lot of effort. But we have to find our ease within that effort. Although we are totally engaged in that effort, there is at the same time a continuous letting go of tenseness and anxiety

that build up, and a letting go of thinking ahead. The practice of the *tenzo* – or anyone working in the kitchen, or sitting *zazen* – is how to be present, fully present, moment by moment, without being caught by the past or future or by some kind of emotional involvement in like and dislike.

Working in the kitchen and sitting *zazen* are not different things. When someone cooks all day for the *sangha*, this is kitchen *sesshin*. It's not just cooking. It's *just cooking*. It's not simply turning out meals, it's non-dual practice, the practice of big mind, being one with the activity.

Dogen says, "If a person entrusted with this work lacks such a spirit, then that person will endure unnecessary hardships and suffering that will have no value in their pursuit of the Way." In Working as practice the way Dogen is talking about, one still gets tired, of course, but there is a certain quality of the work that's beyond being tired or not being tired. A certain joy arises with the type of total effort Dogen has in mind here. If you see it merely as a job, you may find yourself resisting or resenting that you are not in the *zendo*.

So Dogen says, "put your awakened mind to work." How is this practice done? How do we carry out our activities without giving way to attachment and emotional entanglements?

The book from which I'm reading these passages is titled, *Refining Your Life*. It's a cookbook. But it's not a cookbook about recipes – it's a cookbook about the person who's doing the cooking. As we prepare the meals, we too are being cooked and prepared and refined. This is a most important point. Someone may be a very fine chef, but that person is not necessarily the right person to be the cook in the monastery or the practice place. The real point is whether or not one engages in this kind of activity as a refinement of one's own life. Someone may have worked in the kitchen the whole *sesshin* and not have understood that to cook the food is to cook yourself. To prepare the food is to prepare yourself. To refine the food is to refine your own practice.

This reminds me of the way Suzuki Roshi used to talk about composure. The thing he used to talk about more than anything else was finding your composure and being settled. He spoke of it as "being settled on the self." Being settled on the self is never losing composure. This is more than just having some kind of particular way of holding yourself. It means not being pulled off your place by anything – not reacting to someone's anger, not reacting to someone's emotions, or feelings, or ideas, in a way that pulls you off your place. It also means taking good care of things, and not just of yourself, and not just of the people around you, but of your whole environment.

Finding your true composure means being one with your environment. When you're working in the kitchen, for example, that's your whole world. Everything in it is your world, and how you take care of each thing and each person is important, including how you prepare the meal and how you think about it. The same is true of everything else – how a server serves the meal, and how someone then uses their *oryoki* to eat the meal. All these activities are tools for refining our life.

Dogen goes on in the text to talk next about a *tenzo's* typical day at the monastery.

The *tenzo's* day starts after the noon meal. At that time the *tenzo* convenes with the director and the assistant director and they plan the meals together for the following day. Once this is done, the *tenzo* sets about obtaining the necessary ingredients.

Once he has these [ingredients], he must handle them as carefully as if they were his own eyes. Renyong of Baoneng said, "Use the property and the possessions of the community as carefully as if they were your own eyes." The *tenzo* should handle all food he receives with respect, as if it were to be used in a meal for the emperor. Cooked and uncooked food must be handled in the same manner.

(to be continued...)



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.....)

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.



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 2	Childcare
October 9	Childcare
October 16	Childcare
October 23	Childcare
October 30	Childcare
November 6	Childcare
November 13	Childcare
November 20	Sesshin - no childcare
November 27	Childcare

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