



Berkeley Zen Center



December 2005 Newsletter

Board of Directors Elections

Many deep bows to retiring officers, President Anne Jennings and Vice-President Linda Eby, for many years of faithful effort, creativity, vision, and meeting attending!

Congratulations to re-elected board members Andrea Thach and Laurie Senauke, new board members Doug Greiner and Walter Kieser, and to new recording secretary Ken Knabb.

Continuing on the BZC board are Alexandra Frappier and Marie Hopper. We welcome two retiring board member in new roles: Peter Overton will be the new BZC President and Gerry Oliva will be the new Vice-President. John Rubin will continue as Treasurer, and all paid positions (Sojun as Abbot, Alan Senauke as Tanto, and Laurie Senauke as Office Manager) were confirmed.

BZC Board meetings are open to all, and members are welcome. The December Board meeting is scheduled for Sunday morning, December 11, 9 am, in the BZC community room. Board Meeting dates for 2006 have not yet been scheduled. Look for future Board meeting dates in the BZC newsletter. Thanks again to all current and retiring BZC officers for your years of dedicated service.

NOTE: The 2006 BZC Calendar is included in this issue. The 2006 1/2 schedule to be announced.



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.

BZC Schedule December & January

Founders' Ceremony

Monday, 12-5, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 12-6, 6:40 am

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

Saturday 12-3

Suzuki Roshi Memorial

Saturday, 12-3

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 12-17, 9:30 am

Winter Break

12-19 to 12-31 (Zendo Closed)

New Year's Eve Sitting

Saturday, 12-31, 8:00 pm

Founders' Ceremony

Tuesday, 1-3, 6:20 am

Wednesday, 1-4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 1-14, 9:30 am

One-Day Sitting

Saturday, 1-14

Half-Day Sitting

Saturday, 1-28

2006 BZC Directory

The 2006 Membership Directory is being prepared. Kindly put any changes and corrections in the Office Manager's (Laurie Senauke's) mail slot on the Community Room porch. We'll also place a draft of the directory in the CR kitchen sometime soon so you can check your listing, and make corrections directly on the draft.

Honoring Rebecca Daishin Mitsuzen

On November 13, BZC held a “Celebrating Rebecca” event in the zendo. It commenced with a receiving line where each person greeted her one-on-one and was then given a commemorative booklet. We shared stories of our life and times with Daishin Mitsuzen in the presence of her family and friends while she sat in the seat of honor right up front. A collection of her art, spanning nearly four decades, was displayed on the tan. A warm reception followed in the community room. Heartfelt thanks go to coordinators and contributors to the event: Gerry Oliva, Alexandra Frappier, Barbara Llewellyn, Leslie Bartholic, Linda Eby, Bob Yanasak, Chris Ritter, Peter Overton, Andrea Thach, and Ross Blum. If you’d like to receive an electronic version of the booklet please email Ross at: rossblum@gmail.com.

Memories of Rebecca

When I was a little girl one of my earliest memories was walking to nursery school with Mom. Just me and her, a little snippet of the day when I had her all to myself, stopping along the way to smell the roses -

Mom always encouraged my curiosity. We would identify different plants and I would give them names, like a cylindrical shaped flower with a black tip, was called the “cigarette flower” and a fuzzy red flower, was called the “bottle brush plant.” I always got to school very late, but along the way we enjoyed the journey and lived in the moment.

At some point in my early childhood, she began spending a lot of time in a strange place with bald people dressed in black robes with cloth bibs. These people were scary to me and I resented her spending so much time away from us. When mom was not away at work or at “that strange place,” she was often at home visiting with “those strange people.”

Later when I became a mother, I understood the importance of independence and spiritual growth and connection. Looking back, I think the Berkeley Zen Center, the community and practice, is what kept Mom grounded and able to cope with all of the demands of her hectic life

and ultimately enabled her to be a better parent. BZC continues to support her spiritual and personal growth, which is especially important at this time. We thank you for the moving ceremony in celebration of Rebecca and all the work that went into preparing it. It has brought us comfort to know that Mom is part of a loving and caring community, for this we are extremely grateful. With heartfelt appreciation,
Laurie, Sara, Amiko & Reiko Mayeno

From Rebecca’s Shuso Ceremony

July 1, 1991

“Shuso, why do we sit?”

“We sit to do a better job of standing up and returning to everyday life!”

On Reality:

“Children always bring us back to reality whenever we get caught in words or high ideas. To me they’re one of the biggest reality factors.”

“Shuso, tell me about clay and life.”

“When you make a pot you pay attention to the emptiness which is the form inside and the outside takes care of itself.”

“Shuso, thinking about Tozan seeing his face in the river, tell us about letting go.”

“I think when you cross a river the current can be very strong. You don’t walk across it at a right angle but with the current at the same time being careful at every step not to hurt yourself or anything else you encounter. When you’re busy getting across I think you have to let go or you don’t get to the other side.”

Daishin

Daishin Mitsuzen, Buddhist priest,
tirelessly marches with others for peace.
Tenzo Daishin, not from the East,
mindfully prepares feast after feast.
A student of Chan
she cooks a mean flan
Daishin works with clay
celebrating all children at their play
A teacher of sewing
she transmits Knowing
A Creator of Jizos
she shops for miso
She lives Genjokoan
while being the doan
Always a joker
unbeatable at scrabble and poker
A decoder of sutras
and a resource on mudras.
our Daishin

Charlie Ware

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

On Genjokoan, Part 4 Continued

When one first seeks the truth one separates oneself far from its environs. When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment. "When one first seeks the truth one separates oneself" You could say it's like, enlightenment, which is the object, and seeking, the subject, move together at the same pace, like a shadow-play. When you move, it moves. You cannot really catch it because it stays the same distance from you. So you're chasing this thing which you are actually pushing away. At Dwight Way we had a cat named Shujo who liked to go upstairs to the zendo. One time someone wanted to take the cat out of the zendo. So, he naively started chasing and grabbing for the



cat, and the far more agile cat kept a little bit ahead, enjoying the game. The cat was leading him round and round, stumbling over the cushions while the cat stayed the same distance ahead of him. It was quite a scene.

Then Dogen says, "When one has already correctly transmitted the truth to oneself, one is one's original self at that moment." What I believe Dogen is saying is, when we sit down and let it come to us, we may receive it. This is zazen, we can sit down in the midst of it, because it's always right where we are. But we must let go and be totally open. Dogen says "Let go and it fills your hands." I believe this is "dropping body and mind."

Then he says, "When riding on a boat if one watches the shore one may assume that the shore is moving. But watching the boat directly, one knows that it is the boat that moves." "Riding on a boat." A boat is like the self, and the shore is like things outside the self. It looks to us like things are moving around outside of us and we are standing still. We always assume this. We are the center and the world is moving around us. "But watching the boat directly, one knows that it is the boat that moves." Actually it's the boat and the shore that are moving, everything is moving together. There is nothing that is an absolutely fixed point. So where is the center? Is it the shore that's moving or is it the boat that's moving?

The Sixth Patriarch came upon two monks who were arguing about the flag in the wind. Is it the flag that's moving or the wind that's moving? The ancestor approached and said, "It's neither the flag nor the wind—it's your mind that's moving. There is the well-known story of the fisherman who put a mark on the side of the boat so he would know where to come back to the next day. If one examines the ten thousand dharmas with a deluded body and mind one will suppose that one's mind and nature are permanent [fixed]. But, if one practices intimately and returns to the true self, it will be clear that the ten thousand dharmas are without [a fixed] self."

There is a self, but this self is not a fixed self. As the Tibetan put it, there is no inherent self among the five skhandas. What we call a self is not the same from moment to moment. It's the same and not the same. Suzuki Roshi expressed it as, "Yes, but." The secret of Soto Zen is "yes, but." It seems like a self, but it's a self that's not a self. A thing is not a thing, therefore we call it a thing. When we name things they become real to us. There is a momentary, conditioned reality, but the fundamental reality is that things are not substantial. This is a real book, but it's real because it's impermanent, not because it's substantial. We tend to see things upside-down. It has a certain reality but it has no inherent existence and is empty as are all forms.

Dogen then says, “But if one practices intimately” Intimately most likely means intimate with reality, “and returns to the true self, it would be clear that the Ten Thousand dharmas are without a substantial [fixed] self.” Suzuki Roshi might say to not stray from Big Mind. To posit the idea that there is a fixed self or a solo individuality, or soul, is a heretical idea in Buddhism. Dogen used the example of the Srenika heresy. Srenika was a monk in Shakyamuni’s time who misinterpreted Buddhism, insisting that there is something permanent, like a soul that transmigrates from life to life. That body and mind fall away, and the soul continues to transmigrate from life to life is not a Buddhist understanding, but sometimes gets mixed up with Buddhism. This gives us the impression of a permanent self. This leads to some big questions. If there is no self, what is it that transmigrates? And if there is no soul, and no deity, where do we find our final security?

There are the three marks of existence: 1. Impermanence, 2. No self, and, 3. (some say) “Suffering.” And (some say) “Nirvana”. These are the three marks of existence according to Buddhism. Impermanence, no self, and suffering/nirvana. But suffering and Nirvana go hand-in-hand. Nirvana looks more optimistic than suffering. “Oh, nirvana, good, but what is that?” When we let go of self, when self drops away, and when we realize the entire universe as our true self, that’s Nirvana. Is nirvana an escape from suffering or the freedom we find within suffering? Can we find our security in the midst of insecurity? How do we find our security in a world that is in continuous flux?

We naturally want to find security in something fixed, something we can hang onto. We want to hang onto this body and mind (until it gets to be too much). But, we can’t do that. So we have to find our security in letting go. That is the only way. We can create stories about where we go after we die. People do. Buddhists do. I don’t blame us. I always honor those stories because people need something. It’s hard to just let go without any thoughts of where we will land. I neither affirm nor deny any story as right or wrong. But, if we can let go before we die, then we don’t have so much of a problem. If we can feel grateful that we’re already both born and dead we can live our life and be lived by life with some understanding, and enjoy it without worrying too much.

Someone once said, “There is no self in the sage. Because there is no self, there is nothing which is not the self of the sage.” Because we identify with the body and mind only, we limit our life but if we identify with life itself, there is less of a problem. Wherever we are, in whatever form, it’s okay. “The deluded person sees herself as other, the sage sees others as herself.” It is said that if you do not make mental struggle, the darkness itself becomes the self illumination of the light.”

Part 5—to be continued

On the tips of ten thousand grasses
each and every dewdrop contains
the light of the moon.
Since the beginning of time,
not a single droplet has been forgotten.
Although this is so,
some may realize it, and some
may not.

Dogen



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, 510.845.2215.



December 10	Childcare
December 17	KIDZENDO
December 24	Winter interim
December 31	Winter interim
January 7	Childcare
January 14	Sesshin - no program
January 21	Kidzendo

Sewing Buddha's Robe

If you are interested in preparing for Lay Ordination next year, sewing classes start in the last half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate.

Before the winter break (mid-December), please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman. After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact sewing teacher Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

Writers Out There?

Any writers out there? The BZC newsletter invites BZC members to submit articles, poems, items of interest, or letters to the editor. Articles should reach the newsletter no later than the 20th of the previous month for publication. Send to: ehertzog@seiu-uhw.org

Chidening - A Peaceful and Mindfulness Practice

If you are looking for a way to be of service, consider the experience of chidening. This is a great mindfulness practice of caring for our zendo altars. As we carry on the tradition of our ancestors, we are bringing beauty and harmony to our own sangha at BZC.

To learn more about or sign up for chidening, speak to Carol Paul (phone - 956-9048 or carol.paul@pmigroup.com).

Office Manager Opening

Laurie Senauke will soon be leaving her BZC Office Manager (OM) position to become the new Coordinator. At its November 20 meeting, the BZC Board decided to undertake a search process to find a new manager. Board members Andrea Thach, Gerry Oliva, and John Rubin were named to the search committee.

The OM and Abbot are the only paid positions at BZC. The salary for the OM position is \$600 per month. The job takes about 10 hours per week, according to Laurie, with some additional time around year-end.

The OM handles the BZC's day-to-day income and expenses—depositing cash and checks to our bank account, paying bills, and tracking dues, donations, sesshin and other income sources. The OM inputs income and expense items to the computer and produces regular monthly reports for the Treasurer's use. Laurie has used Quicken and MS Access as the principal OM software.

Other OM duties include keeping the BZC member database current, and overseeing print mailings and E-mail notices to members. This is considered a practice position, and attendance by the OM at weekly Practice Committee meetings is encouraged.

Any BZC member interested in the OM position can contact Andrea or John for an application and job description. We'd like to hear from applicants by Friday, December 9, for discussion at the December 11 Board meeting. For more information, contact: Andrea at (510) 420-0902 (before 9pm), e-mail andrea.thach@gmail.com; or John, (510)339-7068 home, 262-7310 work, e-mail john_rubin@mechbank.com

Save the Date! Sunday December 18
Kwan Yin Pilgrimage Tea and Slide Show at Clear Water Zendo in Vallejo.

In September Abbess Linda Ruth Cutts and Rusa Chu of Green Gulch led a pilgrimage to China dedicated to Kwan Yin (Avalokiteshvara). In China she is revered and honored in most temples along with Buddha. Some are dedicated just to her and these were the ones the group visited. Zen students Tova Green and Julia ten Eyck were among the pilgrims and they will give us a report and show slides of the trip and the many images of Kwan Yin that they saw. We'll begin with a tea reception then have the presentation.

Clear Water Zendo

607 Branciforte St. Vallejo

December 18, 2005

3-5 p.m.

For more information and directions, contact

Mary Mocine at (707) 649-1972,

marymo@att.net or see the website, www.vallejocenter.org

Path of the Bodhissatva Event

The BZC Social Engaged Dharma Group and the Buddhist Peace Fellowship invite all sangha members to attend the next Path of the Bodhissatva event, January 19, 7-9 pm, in the BZC Community Room.

Published author and BZC member Melody Ermachild-Chavez will be discussing the death penalty and drawing upon her years of experience as a private detective specializing in death row cases. Look for more details on the bulletin board.



Look at every path closely and deliberately. Try it as many times as you think necessary. Then ask yourself alone one question. This question is one that only a very old man asks. My benefactor told me about it once when I was young and my blood was too vigorous for me to understand. Now I do understand it. I will tell you what it is: "Does this path have a heart?" If it does, the path is good. If it doesn't, it is of no use.

Don Juan

Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA. 94703