



Berkeley Zen Center



June 2007 Newsletter

Mind Refresher Cakes

Sojun Talk, BZC, June 21, 1989

(continued from last month)

Deshan was meeting Lung-tan with a pre-conceived idea of him. He always had some idea in front of him about what he was seeing, rather than just seeing. Although he went to Lung-tan to help him see directly, he didn't know that that's why he was going. He thought he was going to show him something. He didn't realize he was going to Lung-tan in order to be able to see.

He stayed with Lung-tan for a while. He was humbled when he began to see who Lung-tan really was. One night he was having a long talk with Lung-tan. Lung-tan was getting a little tired, and said, "It's time for me to retire. It's very dark out there and I think you'll need some light to find your way." So he took a paper lantern, lit it and handed it to Deshan. As soon as Deshan took the candle, Lung-tan went "Whoo!" and blew out the light, and the entire world was pitch dark. Everything gone. At that point, Deshan dropped--everything--gone. New Deshan. There is something called, "pecking and tapping." When the chick is ready to come out of the shell there's a "tap-tap-tap-tap" and the mother bird goes "tap-tap-tap-tap" on the outside just at the right moment. (I don't know if this is factual.) If the mother taps too early or too late, it

continued on page 2



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 June

Practice Period Dinner/Skit Night

Saturday, 6-2

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6-2 and 6-30, 9:30 am

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 6-4, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 6-5, 6:40 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 6-10

Lay Ordination/Zaike Tokudo

Saturday, 6-16

Kidzendo

Saturday, 6-16

Five-Day Sitting

End Practice Period

Weds-Sunday, 6-20 to 6-24

Shuso Hossen

Sunday, 6-24

July

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 7-1

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 7-3, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 7-5, 6:40 am

All Sangha Potluck

Thursday, 7-5

One-Day Sitting

Saturday, 7-14

Kidzendo

Saturday, 7-21

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 7-28, 9:30 am

Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

Friday-Sunday, 7-27 to 7-29

NOTE: Monday June 25, informal zazen (am) and Wednesday, July 4, informal zazen (am and pm).

Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Greg Denny, 595-8162, or greg@techsperience.org.



Childcare Schedule

June 2	Childcare
June 9	Childcare
June 16	Kidzendo
June 23	Sesshin – no program
June 30	Childcare
July 7	Childcare – and camp-out
July 14	Sesshin – no program
July 21	Kidzendo
July 28	Childcare
August 4	Childcare
August 11	Childcare
August 18	Kidzendo
August 25	Childcare

Kidzendo

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday of each month (or the fourth Saturday if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) for a briefing on forms at about 9:45, then sojourn down to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.



Mind Refresher Cakes

continued from page 1

won't work, Lung-tan probably wasn't planning to do it. He was just handing him the light. It was a spontaneous act, and a total surprise for Deshan.

The next day, Deshan took all of his sutra commentaries and burned them, very gleefully burned them all, and felt very lib-



erated. All preconceptions had dropped from his mind. All points of view had dropped away. Any opinion had dropped away. He was just left with this clear light, which permeated the darkness. When everything became completely dark, he could see his life, which illuminated everywhere. Then Deshan left Ryutan. But later he came back, and studied with him for thirty years, refining his practice gradually.

This is a significant part of the story, because this pitch-darkness is only one side of enlightenment. To have this kind of experience is wonderful. But the other side, after this realization, is learning to live your life as a new person. So the commentators say that Deshan was a little too hasty in leaving Ryutan after his realization. He should have stuck around and not been so hasty to leave. Sometimes we have a realization, and we think, "This is it," and we leave, and lose ourself in the world, and it all kind of fritters away. Unless you cultivate after dropping, you can lose it. This kind of experience is very good, but on the other hand, it's not the end. It's only a beginning. Any kind of realization or opening experience is only a beginning for the rest of your life of practice. You can't stay in the newborn stage. So we let go and stay present in beginner's mind not trying to do something extraordinary, but realizing the extraordinariness of our ordinariness.

These folks are all in the lineage of Sekito kisen (Jap.). Dao-wu was Sekito's student, also a student of Matsu. I want to familiarize you with some of the people in this lineage. There are many good stories about them.



PEOPLE

Nine bows and many thanks to **John Rubin** (and also **Claire Rubin** – we think we may have missed the opportunity to thank her when she phased out a couple years ago) for years beyond count as one of the Head Cooks for the twice-monthly Men's Shelter Dinners; and many thanks to the intrepid **Everett Wilson** for stepping forward to take this on. Of course, the very best way to thank them both (as well as continuing Head Cook Lance Shows) is to SIGN UP TO HELP!!!!

* * *

Nine more bows to **Carol Paul** for her devotion to BZC's altars as Head Chiden, ably shepherding us through a tumultuous year where we transitioned from kerosene lamps to complicated candles and from incense to flower petals to whole flowers. Taking over for her is our newly ordained priest, **Alexandra Frappier**.

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Beaucoup thanks to **Jesy Goldhammer** for tending our bathrooms this past year, and welcome to new Bathroom Attendant, **Christy Calame**. New resident **Catherine Cascade** is taking over as Health and Safety Coordinator and as Community Room attendant; we mourn and miss our previous CR attendant, the late **Paul Winnacker**.

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If you would like to join the practice of volunteering at BZC, a good place to start is helping out with Saturday breakfast – assisting in the kitchen or with serving. Also we always need Jikidos – zendo cleaning takes an hour or two twice during one week – leave a note for Head Jikido **Shelley Brock** for training. If you've tried these positions and you'd like to take on additional responsibility, don't hesitate to contact the Coordinator, **Laurie Senauke**. There's always plenty to do around BZC.



Vice Abbot Position

By Sojun

I, Abbot Sojun, and the Board of Directors, have decided to create the position of Vice Abbot for Alan Senauke. As Vice Abbot he will share some of the responsibilities of the Abbot. These responsibilities will consist of administrative duties as well as teaching and various leadership functions, many of which Alan now performs as Tanto. The Tanto position, for the present, will remain inactive. We want to give ourselves as much space as necessary to work out which responsibilities make sense for us to share.

Eventually I will step down as Abbot. But I realize that I have been giving some confusing and unclear messages. This has been mostly because of my own lack of clarity about my future role and my relationship to the sangha after stepping down. Although it may seem rather straight forward, there are, after 40 years of this, some emotional sticking points that arise for me. Since I plan to remain here there are things such as space, protocol, and monetary support to be worked out. Understanding that there are things which we cannot anticipate, we want to take the time and be as clear as we can be.

As of now, I have no fixed date for stepping down. I will be 80 years old in two years and doubt that I would do it before then. Although I feel as healthy and active as ever, that seems like a good possible benchmark. We all want the transition to be as smooth and seamless as possible, so when that does happen we will have worked out a solution where I will assume a new position as Senior Dharma Teacher, without the responsibilities of the Abbot, which will be given over to Alan. I hope to actively continue to work with those who relate to me as their teacher, to continue to teach in various ways, and to work with people in their practice positions and support the three treasures without creating any problems. I also have a couple of books to write, plus time with my wife and our dog.

I am open to discussing this with whoever would like to.

SAVE THE DATES

Summer Sutra Class

Laurie Senauke will teach a four-week sutra class beginning on Thursday, July 12. We'll meet from 7:15 to 8:45 each Thursday evening. Unlike most of our classes you can drop in to any of the sessions or, of course, come to all of them. The cost is \$5.00/ class.

These sutras are the original teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha, transmitted for several hundred years orally before being set down in writing. This is Laurie's second summer of presenting and discussing these teachings.

Q. Laurie, why does sutra study interest you?

A. I find the Pali sutras interesting individually, but even more so in their variety; I enjoy sharing them. It's easy to overlook Zen's roots in Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching, so I think it's important to bring that out. Within the sutras there are different kinds of teaching - you have detailed conceptual frameworks, but he also uses parables and even includes the supernatural at times. There's a wide variety. His response varies according to circumstances. Often they're responses to questions that people bring, and at the end of the sutra, the person has woken up; in that way I find that they resonate with koans and Zen literature, more than we usually think. And I just like to inhabit the mind of Shakyamuni Buddha to whatever extent we can access it through these sutras. It's a very spacious mind to touch. Even though modern people can be turned off by the older style of repetition, the patriarchal images, and what can seem like prudish morality, there's a lot there to connect with.

Q. One aspect of Zen koans is their concern with non-dualism and dualism, but the sutras don't seem to present this issue in such an obvious way.

A. They can seem very dualistic. He speaks constantly about wholesome and unwholesome thoughts, words and actions, although the more you study, the more you realize that underlying these teachings is a very non-dual mind. You feel it in the way he responds to the people

he's meeting.

Q. What class format will you use?

A. We'll take one sutra per class, mostly from the Middle Length Discourses; we recite the sutra in unison and discuss it. One sutra I'm planning to use talks about the other kinds of causation besides karma. I'm still considering which other sutras we'll study.

Q. Thank you.

BZC Camp-Out Revived

On the weekend of July 7 and 8, we will have our first BZC camp out for members, families, and friends in many years. The camp-out will be held at Gillespie Youth Camp in Tilden Park, a mere 20 minute drive from BZC, and a beautiful spot close to hiking trails. We usually start in the afternoon on Saturday, have a potluck dinner and then a campfire, wake up to birds singing, and a breakfast is provided. It's all over at noon. Folks can come just for the evening or just for the morning. Look for more details as we approach the dates. For more info, talk to Laurie Senauke (lauries@kushiki.org) or Marie Hopper (deagin@california.com).

Five-Day Sesshin

The sesshin to end practice period will be Wednesday June 20 through Sunday June 24. If you plan to attend, you must sign up and complete the registration form by the courtyard bulletin board. Participants are expected to make a commitment of three consecutive days for this sesshin. If you have not yet participated in a sesshin at BZC, or if you have questions, please contact the sesshin director, Leslie Bartholic, at (925) 933-3486 (before 9 pm) or lbartholic@comcast.net





Mountains and Rivers Sesshin

Participants in this year's Mountains and Rivers Sesshin pause for a group picture after making camp in the Point Reyes headlands.

(Photo by Ko Blix)

Paul Winnacker

By Ellen Webb

Berkeley Zen Center member Paul Winnacker died on April 2, 2006. Paul was riding his bicycle in Orinda on a lovely spring day when he apparently lost consciousness, fell off his bike, and suffered a severe brain injury. Paul was 64 years old.

Though he had spent time in Japan doing graduate studies and had worked for the Japanese Consulate in San Francisco for thirty years, Paul's active practice of Zen Buddhism began after he met his wife, Tracy Apple, nine years ago. Paul and Tracy started practicing together in a sitting group in Walnut Creek and then developed an on-going relationship with teacher Reb Anderson with whom they sat several sesshins at Green Gulch Farm. They regularly attended morning sitting at BZC, and Paul became a member a little more than a year ago. He was serving as Community Room Attendant at the time of his death.

Paul's interest in both sitting and the teachings was quite special to behold. He took to the practice like "a duck to water" and never looked back. It brought him great joy, which he shared generously. It was always an inspiration to sit with him or to talk to him about practice or a recent lecture.

Lay Ordination

On Saturday June 16th at 2pm, the following members of the BZC sangha will receive Lay Ordination (Zaike Tokudo) from their teacher:

Sojun Mel Weitsman

Bud Bliss Max Erdstein

Courtney Gonzalez Kanako Harada

Jim Tomlinson

Hozan Alan Senauke

Jesy Goldhammer

The ceremony is done once a year and is an important and significant ceremony for each participant, as well as for the whole sangha. The attendance of the sangha is not only encouraging and supportive, but we have the feeling that we are all participating and witnessing as the ordinees receive Buddha's Precepts (jukai), and welcoming the ordinees into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha. Everyone is encouraged to attend the ceremony and reception afterwards. Check the zendo bulletin board for details.

The Benji Poem

By Ross Blum

Well, the practice period is about to start and with it, another Benji poem will be penned! A copy of it will be placed in the three-ring Benji binder in our library (beneath the tram window), after the closing of the practice period. I keep the original books and pass them out to the Benjis when "their" practice period begins.

Maylie Scott was our first shuso in 1989. Baika was her Benji. She composed a fine poem worthy of Maylie's spirit which filled our temple those six weeks. The following year Fran Tribe was the shuso and Nora Sugahara was the Benji during this time. I felt compelled to chronicle our Benji's creative expression and purchased a blank book to record their poems which were so evocative of the shuso they were attending and the practice period in general. Even though a year had passed, Baika was still able to repeat verbatim her poem for Maylie which she transcribed into the book and thus the tradition began. Please enjoy reading the Benji poems as well as other books in our library carefully tended by our librarian, Greta Pearson. (Ross Blum was Benji for Rebecca Mayeno in 1991.)

About Faith: from the recent class on the Hsin Shin Ming

By Andrea Thach

What is faith? Dictionary defines faith as "confident belief in the truth", "value or trusty worthiness of a person, thing, or idea", "belief in something that does not rely on logic, proof or material evidence." In Christian faith, it is belief in something outside ourselves. In Buddhism, we speak of faith that arises from our experience. In Zen, we speak of that as faith



as activity, specifically as our zazen. Faith is not a thing, as Buddha Nature not a thing, but an activity, one that co-arises

dependently. This is the faith of our practice that Seng Tsan is describing.

Within Buddhism faith there is doctrinal faith: that we will become Buddha. And ancestral faith: that we are Buddha. How do we come to know this faith? The Awakening of Mahayana Faith, an early Mahayana text, Asvaghosha describes how the mind can be inclined toward doctrinal faith. The remarkable thing is that he says that in order to begin to practice, one needs faith! How many times have you sat through achy knees on long sesshin days and wondered why you do it? We say we come to practice out of suffering, yet we probably all have had some early experience of the rightness of all things, or truth or non-self that lead us here, or gave us confidence that there was some other way to deal with our lives other than the suffering we were experiencing.

There is a story of the Buddha as a young boy. While his father attends to business in the fields, he sits under the shade of a large tree canopy, listening to the birds, watching the insects, feeling totally involved and at ease in the experience. I would imagine we could all have been that little Buddha in some moment, when the world stands still and nothing is missing. And this is so whether our natural inclination is as a "doubt type" or a "faith type."

Years ago, I was tearfully whining to Maylie about my lot in life as a loveless, single woman. She listened with brief, full attention and then

with her broad confident smile stopped me and said, "Please don't ever think anything is not exactly as it should be."

Our suffering arises from thinking that something is missing in ourselves, and we try to fill in the missing part. This sense of lack arises out of our ideas of ourselves, or our internal chatter. When the mind quiets, and these thoughts come and go, like clouds passing in the big blue sky, we know spaciousness where nothing is out of place. What is this utter rightness, or perfect balance? Can there be perfection, or to use another word, benevolence, in rain falling, in ice melting, in roadside bombs, in children starving. Perhaps benevolence



seems too soteriological. Too oriented toward the good, not neutral or dispassionate. However, it seems to me this describes Buddha activity. Since everything IS Buddha nature, and Buddha nature manifests wisdom and compassion. This appearance is beyond our knowing, beyond words and ideas, deeply recognizing the relationship, the dynamic functioning of Indra's net of co-dependent origination. Then maybe benevolence might feel to be an appropriate word.

I think this is part of what Seng Tsan means when he says, "To live in this reality is to be free from anxiety about non-perfection." If we are imperfect, then everything else must be, for we are only manifestations of our activity, intrinsically united with the activity of all other Buddha activity. Seng speaks of observing the unfolding of events and the coursing of our mind with equanimity. He says, "Equanimity is not the rejection of anything. It is knowing that putting your hand in the fire is not a profitable enterprise; knowing that a headlong pursuit of sex, fame, sleep, and fortune will only result in dismay and weariness. It allies itself with the quality of restraints in one's life that is not based on dislike or rejection but grounded in wisdom, an experience of self-knowing and a knowing of the world."

In Pali, the word is upekkha, which means balance. It is the peak of the 4 heavenly abodes, loving kindness, sympathetic joy and compassion, and those qualities are most fully manifest-

continued on next page

About Faith

continued from previous page

ed as equanimity is established.

The dictionary says equanimity is the quality of calm, even tempered, composure, a balance that arises out of trust or faith in ourselves to just be ourselves. The deep meaning of things is this natural harmony, or unfolding activity that is co-dependent arising. If our ideas are obstacles to accepting the unfolding of events, then our Buddha Mind cannot manifest itself.

It is not 'not to have preferences', for this is impossible in our human lives, but to act naturally as ourselves, without wanting an idea of some self we think we are, nor creating anyone special, just being. My dog is a good example. Dogie nature, just chasing a squirrel because she is a dog and that is what dogs do, manifesting her true nature. This true nature is Buddha Nature. No aversion, greed, or delusion, just yip! And off she goes! And squirrel manifests squirrel nature, zip up the tree.

Sheng Yen says use your mind in a natural mind, neither trying to control it nor letting it run free. Natural or authentic, means being free of ideas of who you are (or anyone else is). To walk freely and undisturbed means to lay down the personal agenda of our lives and to trust in the natural unfolding of things, and to see our selves, our lives, our Buddha Nature as part of the natural unfolding of how things are. Maylie used to say, the deeper into practice you go, the more serendipity there is.

Sunday at sesshin, Sojun was asked how we can keep the mind of a fire to our practice when our lives are not threatened by war, catastrophe, or in any immediate danger. When we let go of our agenda, what needs to be done is apparent, right before us, it is immediate. That immediacy, or present moment as informed by our Bodhisattva vows, is the ever-present fire. As Sojun said, this is Buddha mind in action. The Buddha mind in action is the mind of practice always on fire.



voices

This World Which Is Made Of Our Love For Emptiness

By Rumi

Praise to the emptiness that blanks out existence. Existence: this place made from our love for that emptiness!

Yet somehow comes emptiness,
this existence goes.

Praise to that happening, over and over!

For years I pulled my own existence out of emptiness.

Then one swoop, one swing of the arm,
that work is over.

Free of who I was, free of presence, free of dangerous fear, hope,
free of mountainous wanting.

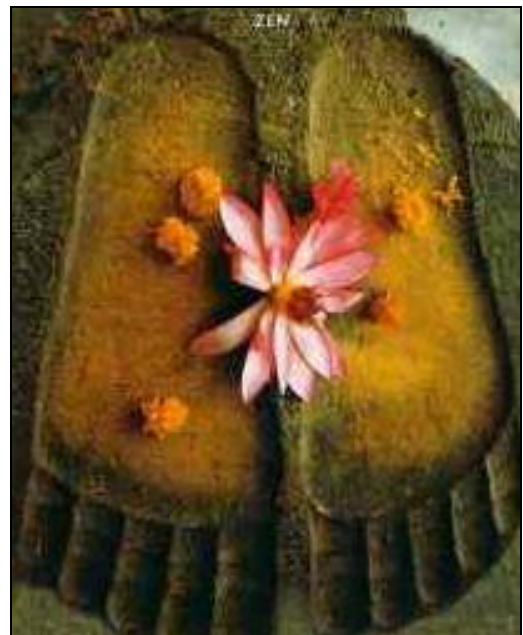
The here-and-now mountain is a tiny piece of a piece of straw
blown off into emptiness.

These words I'm saying so much begin to lose meaning: existence, emptiness, mountain,

straw: words

and what they try to say swept
out the window, down the slant of the roof.

(Submitted by Ann Livingstone)



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