



# Berkeley Zen Center



## June 2008 Newsletter

### Lay Ordination

**O**n Saturday, June 14 at 2pm, the following sangha members and friends of the Berkeley Zen Center and Empty Nest Zendo will receive Lay Ordination (Zaiko Tokudo) from their teachers:

#### Sojun Mel Weitsman

Richard Beeson  
Judy Bertelsen  
Christy Calame  
Sonia Gaemi  
Peter Pfaelzer  
Ellen Webb

#### Hozan Alan Senauke

David Corbett

#### Myoan Grace Schireson

Nancy Suib

This ceremony is held 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 are all participating with the ordinees as they receive Buddha's Precepts (jukai), and we welcome them into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha.

Everyone is warmly encouraged to attend the ceremony and the reception afterwards. Check the zendo bulletin board for details.



#### 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

#### Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 6-3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 6-4, 6:40 am

#### Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 6-8, 9:30 am

#### Lay Ordination/Zaiko Tokudo

Saturday, 6-14

#### Five-Day Sesshin/ End Practice Period

Wednesday-Sunday, 6-18 - 6-22

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6-21, 9:30 am

#### Shuso Hossen

Sunday, 6-22

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 6-28

#### July

#### Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 7-2, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 7-3, 6:40 am

#### All Sangha Potluck

Thursday, 7-3, 6:30-8:30 pm

#### Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 7-6, 9:30 am

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 7-19, 9:30 am

#### One-Day Sitting

Saturday, 7-19

#### Mountains & Rivers Sesshin

Friday-Sunday, 7-25 to 7-27

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 7-26

## Air Quality in the Zendo

We have been making efforts to clean the air in the zendo with the intention of making zazen and other activities accessible for more people. We recently learned that the air filter would have more of an effect if we had it on when people are actually in the zendo. The practice committee decided to see what it would be like to have it run continuously, day and night. Specifically, we wanted to see if there would be a difference in air quality, and if the noise of the filter would be objectionable.

For one week only, the air filter ran on the lowest setting, 24/7. The responses to this informal experiment were varied. Many people shared their ideas and opinions. The number of people not bothered by the noise was about equal to the number who were bothered by the noise. The responses were inconclusive regarding the possible improvement of the air quality for people with environmental sensitivities. There were also a great number of questions raised. This was a limited first inquiry and a beginning for further input.

The practice committee decided there was a need to form a subcommittee to gather more information about this topic. With this in mind, we would like to hear from sangha members who have difficulty with air quality in the zendo. In addition, tell us what seems to be helpful, and if you find the zendo more accessible since we stopped using incense, began running the air filter after hours, and started asking people not to use scented products (perfumes, deodorants, fabric softeners, etc.). If you did not get the opportunity to give feedback about the air filter use during zazen and lecture, and would like to do so, please let us know that, too. We will continue to share information with the sangha. Our group will not be making any decisions about policy or new procedures. The BZC board and practice committee, with input from the sangha, will make those types of decisions. Sue Oehser [soehser@earthlink.net](mailto:soehser@earthlink.net); Alan Senauke [alans@kushiki.org](mailto:alans@kushiki.org); Ron Nestor [rnestor@California.com](mailto:rnestor@California.com); Leslie Bartholic [lbartholic@comcast.net](mailto:lbartholic@comcast.net)

## 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](mailto:greg@techsperience.org).



## Childcare Schedule

June 7	Childcare
June 14	Childcare
June 21	Sesshin – no program
June 28	<b>Kidzendo</b>
July 5	Childcare
July 12	Childcare
July 19	Sesshin – no program
July 26	<b>Kidzendo</b>
August 2	Childcare
August 9	Childcare
August 16	<b>Kidzendo</b>
August 23	Childcare
August 30	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.



# The Head Gardener, From a Talk By Sojun, Chapel Hill 2004

*continued from last month*

The text says, "All day long the Head Gardener is carrying excrement and urine for fertilizing, free from self-concern, awaiting the right moment of ripening for harvesting. (Nowadays the use of excrement is frowned upon for health reasons, but I recall that in the late 60's at Tassajara, there was a 55 gallon urine drum in the men's dorm that, when full, the contents were poured into the compost.)

It is important to not force things. We can't force awakening, or realization or freedom. The continuous cycle of daily practice is called Gyoji, or Way Ring (Dokan). It is characterized by patience. Great patience; waiting for the right moment to make a move. My teacher admonished me to not get ahead or behind; going along with the rhythm of co-operation. A teacher must have patience with students. The teacher must give the student a wide field and not lose sight, but when the time is right, to set up the corral and close the gate. The relationship between teacher and student, if it is a true bond, is endless and continuous, even when



*Work leader Mary Duryee does some flower arranging during sesshin.*

*Photo by Ross Blum*

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separated for long periods of time and space.

There is a koan called, "Tapping and pecking." At the right moment the chick taps the egg from inside and the mother hen pecks from outside. Together they crack the egg and the chick pops out. I don't know if that is actually true for chickens, but it is a nice analogy.

This example of the Head Gardener as both student and teacher can be applied to any position of responsibility. When we realize our responsibility to ourselves and to each other we understand the meaning of sangha. When we sit zazen with our whole body and mind, we encourage others. Through both stillness and motion we preach the dharma. Teaching is not necessarily by word of mouth, or through lectures. Teaching is transmitted through the way one embodies the practice. This is the purpose of practicing together through association. But it's a mistake to think, "Now I am teaching." We can set a high standard for our own effort and a non-judgmental attitude toward others. In a monastic situation everyone is together for long periods of time. But this is only one side of the picture. We must realize that the entire world is our monastery, and that everything without exception is supporting our practice. When the practice wheel is turning in this way, people enter and develop faith in the dharma. I remember Suzuki Roshi saying, "When you meet a mature, enlightened person, you feel uplifted naturally." I believe that is so.



## PEOPLE

Many deep bows to **Tamar Enoch** for more than two years as our able and energetic Head Gardener, and more deep bows to **Nancy McClellan** who will be taking over for Tamar. Thank you both!

# Outside The Gate

## Practicing at Green Gulch

By Carol Paul

**H**aving recently retired, I was finally able to carve out time to spend 8 weeks at Green Gulch doing a practice period this past January. I wanted the opportunity to sink into practice in a way that is difficult when immersed in worldly things. I arranged my schedule and life such that during my visit, I didn't work on the computer, read any newspapers (except a brief glance at the headlines) or handle any personal business. This curtailed unnecessary "outside the gate" worries and problems and was so liberating.

The rigorous schedule of the monastery was my greatest ally. Simply following it required little thinking about what came next and allowed me to focus on being mindful and present. It made me appreciate the effort it takes to do lay practice at BZC. We have to set up our own structure and schedule and we are the only ones who can enforce it. This could be difficult without the support of the sangha.

A typical day's schedule during practice period included 2 periods of morning zazen starting at 5am, followed by service, breakfast, 4 1/2 hours of work, 2 hours of free time, a study hour, afternoon zazen, dinner, and two final periods of zazen ending the day at 9pm. There were also three optional classes and a weekly dharma talk.

Each morning during the first period of zazen, I vowed to live that day wholeheartedly and allow any experience or emotion to arise. Then I waited and watched my thoughts and feelings throughout the day. I expected something dark to arise—memories of actions from my past that I had buried or couldn't previously face. There were a couple of things that did merit further investigation and deeper probing. For example, the participants in the period mirrored my family in so many ways. There were seven men and three other women, just as I had seven brothers



*Kinhin at Green Gulch*

and three sisters. I "played out" old family events and did come to a deeper understanding of my family.

However overall, to my surprise what arose was overwhelming joy. This feeling stayed with me off and on throughout the practice period. One of the sustaining elements for this joy was my connection to the beauty of Green Gulch.

There is a Sufi chant that goes something like this:

Beauty before me,  
Beauty behind me,  
Beauty all around me,  
I walk the beauty way.

This chant became one of my Dharma gates, reminding me of the perfection in everything. I don't think I really understood before I went to Green Gulch the way in which everything in nature is enlightened. When I walked through the gardens I saw how each flower, tree or plant was doing exactly what it was meant to do. It was receiving whatever was given to it and produced what it was intended to—no resistance, no aversion, just being its true nature completely. Dogen opens the Mountains and Rivers Sutra saying, "Mountains and waters right now are the actualization of the ancient Buddha way. Each abiding in its phenomenal expression, realizes completeness." Green Gulch is a great place

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## The Character of Soup and the Soup of Character: Offering Hindrances to Evoke Bodhisattva Spirit, by Raul Moncayo, BZC Practice Leader

Thoughts are like waves that contain the seeds/particles of our characters: the ideas, feelings, and images that we identify with. In practice we are always working with the seeds of our character and the character of all things, both wholesome and unwholesome. So even though we may have practiced for a long time and experienced deep samadhis and



had many realizations/revelations, the seeds of unwholesome character may still be there dormant and may be activated by a

situation or someone. Or if we stop practicing formal practice, then unwholesome seeds may gain the upper hand on our consciousness and we may lose our way.

When practice is perceived and/or organized only as a meritocracy, then we also bound ourselves around the law of cause and effect. If we do something good, then we expect to be rewarded, and if we do something bad then we expect to be punished. Good karma arises together with bad karma. To practice beyond karma yet also within it, cause and effect have to arise together. A good cause is its own effect, the merit or value of the action is now. When we break the precepts then we are choosing to divide the cause and the effect, the bad will come later. When we practice with merit in mind, we are also choosing to divide the cause and the effect, the good will come later, "I will get this or that promotion, position, title, recognition, etc." The problem is that we may not like the bad that comes later and the rewards of good behavior usually don't turn out to be as good as the unity of cause and the effect in the here and now.

Sometimes we think we can escape our karma and our character problems by leaving the world and immersing ourselves in a practice place away from the dust of the world. But then the wind of Buddhism blows the diamond dust right back into our face. Karma and Samsara may manifest within the practice place or we will leave the focus and intensity of a practice

place, and the Nirvanic realm of the Buddhist world, and be unable to realize the practice in ordinary civil life. Either way and as long as we have right practice in the here and now, on a daily basis, and over a long period of time, then we can always use the problems and traits that we have as seeds of realization. Desires, difficult traits, and problems become manifestations of Buddha-nature.

A person is always a subject identified by a specific character. This is their universal particularity. They may be intelligent or foolish; in either case this can be a positive trait or a problem. The same is true with being angry or passive. If I am intelligent and don't understand the value of foolishness, then I may be dually and doubly foolish. But if I am intelligent and understand the value of foolishness, or of not being too clever, then I may be truly intelligent.

Intelligence in Sanskrit is buddhi, which is very close to bodhi (enlightenment), and bud-dha (awake). On the other hand, if I am foolish in the true sense, and not opposed to intelligence, then I indeed may be intuitively intelligent although not so intelligent in the usual sense.

This example holds true for many character traits. Whichever quality we choose, we may understand it in the same way as a potential for realization. In this way the Dharma is contained within the dharmas or the skandhas that form



the character of a particular person. Any fault is a kind of gap, hollow, or emptiness, and therefore also has a spark of bodhi or of moonlight within it. If we know what our traits, tendencies, or symptoms are, and then can turn them toward practice, they become a source of joy and realization, not only for us but for others as well.

*(To be continued)*

## *When Death Comes*

by Mary Oliver

When death comes  
like the hungry bear in autumn;  
when death comes and takes all the bright  
coins from his purse

to buy me, and snaps the purse shut;  
when death comes  
like the measles pox;

when death comes  
like an iceberg between the shoulder blades,

I want to step through the door full of curiosi-  
ty, wondering;  
what is it going to be like, that cottage of  
darkness?

And therefore I look upon everything  
as a brotherhood and a sisterhood,  
and I look upon time as no more than an idea,  
and I consider eternity as another possibility,

and I think of each life as a flower, as common  
as a field daisy, and as singular,

and each name a comfortable music in the mouth,  
tending, as all music does, toward silence,

and each body a lion of courage, and something  
precious to the earth.

When it's over, I want to say: all my life  
I was a bride married to amazement.  
I was the bridegroom, taking the world into  
my arms.

When it's over, I don't want to wonder  
if I have made of my life something particular,  
and real.

I don't want to find myself sighing and frightened,  
or full of argument.

I don't want to end up simply having visited  
this world.

*Submitted by Ann Livingstone*



*Green Gulch Practice period group picture. Carol Paul is third row from the top, far left*

## **Practicing at Green Gulch**

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to feel that!

I have been back now for about 1 1/2 months. I think about my time at Green Gulch and carry it with me as I redefine my practice at BZC. My challenge is integrating my monastic practice at Green Gulch with my lay practice at BZC. I am happy to be back in my home temple with the support of my sangha and am deeply grateful to have been able to practice at Green Gulch.

**Night Walk at Green Gulch** (written during practice period)

The myriad stars twinkle with stability.  
The banana slug and the newt make their  
steady journey down the road.

Nothing seems to waiver in this awesome  
wondrous moment.

We all merge harmoniously.

## **New Chant Card Holder**

Have you noticed the fine wooden chant card holder above the shoe rack on the zendo porch? It was made by our master craftsman, Doug Greiner. Its purpose is to hold the "Verses Used at Berkeley Zen Center," which John Moge formatted with great care. This card includes our robe chant and the chants we do before and after lectures. Many thanks to Doug and John for their contributions.

# SAVE THE DATES

## **Five Day Sesshin**

Our Spring Practice Period will end with a five-day Sesshin, starting on Wednesday, June 18, and ending on Sunday, June 22. The signup sheet and registration forms will be posted on the outside bulletin board and shelf by June 2. Attendance requirements are a minimum of three consecutive days. The Sesshin begins at 5:00 AM and ends at 9:10 PM on Wednesday through Saturday. The Sunday closing schedule starts at 5:00 AM, ends by midafternoon, and is followed by the Shuso Hossen.

The recommended daily donation for the Sesshin continues to be \$25 for dues-paying Members and Friends, and \$30 for all others. If you have any questions, please contact the Sesshin Director, John Rubin, by phone at 510-339-7068 (before 8 PM) or by E-mail at [john\\_rubin@comcast.net](mailto:john_rubin@comcast.net).

## **BZC Campout**

On the weekend of August 2nd and 3rd, we will have our annual BZC Campout for Members, Families, and Friends. The campout will be in Tilden Park, a mere 20 minute drive from BZC, at a beautiful spot close to hiking trails. We'll start in the afternoon on Saturday, have a potluck dinner and a campfire, wake up to birds singing and breakfast which is provided. It's all over at noon. Folks can come just for the evening or just for the morning as well. Details will follow closer to the time. For more info, talk to Marie Hopper ([deagin@california.com](mailto:deagin@california.com)) or Laurie Senauke ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)).

## **Summer Sutra Study: Four Parables from the Lotus Sutra**

Beginning Thursday, July 17, Laurie Senauke will teach a four-week class on the Lotus Sutra; each week we'll recite and discuss a parable from this seminal text. These parables illuminate our true relationship with Buddha. The class meets from 7:15 to 8:45 pm each Thursday evening. Unlike most of our classes, you can come to all or some of the sessions, to accommodate your summer recreation plans. The cost is \$5.00 per class.

## **Women's Retreat**

July 10-14, 3rd Annual Women's retreat with Angie Boissevain, Darlene Cohen and Grace Schireson. For more information contact Elizabeth Flora (510) 643-2996 [flora@haas.berkeley.edu](mailto:flora@haas.berkeley.edu) or [grace@emptynestzendo.org](mailto:grace@emptynestzendo.org)



*Photo by Ross Blum*

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