



Berkeley Zen Center



September 2008 Newsletter

Aspects of Practice: Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind October 19-November 15, 2008

BZC's annual Aspects of Practice period is an opportunity for newer students and older members to make a realistic commitment to practice regularly in the zendo, study our traditions and forms, and refresh our practice. Over the years, Aspects of Practice has become a great way for newer students to root their practice. The teachers this year are Ross Blum, Richard Haefele, Raul Moncayo, Ron Nestor, Gerry Oliva, Laurie Senauke, Hozan Alan Senauke (and others to be determined). We invite you to join for four weeks of practice, study, and discussion.

This year's focus is on Suzuki Roshi's classic "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind." Senior students will lecture on Saturdays, lead Monday morning discussions, and offer a four-week class. 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 am to 5:30 pm sitting on Sunday, October 19, and end with a closing sitting on Saturday, November 15. The Thursday evening class will be open to everyone as usual. For the first time we are planning to teach in small groups. Your interest, support, and encouragement can help the whole sangha.

For further details please look carefully at the zendo events bulletin board. If you have further questions, talk with Alan or email him at alans@kushiki.org.



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 September

All Sangha Potluck/Board Nominations

Tuesday, 9-2, 6:30 pm

Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 9-3, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 9-4, 6:40 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 9-7, 8:00 am-12:00

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 9-13, 9:30 am

Kidzendo

Saturday, 9-20

Womens' Sitting

Sunday, 9-21, 8:30-5:00 pm

October

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 10-2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 10-3, 6:40 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 10-5, 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10-11, 9:30 am

All Sangha Potluck

Thursday, 10-16, 6:30 pm

One-Day Sitting to Open Aspects of Practice

Sunday, 10-19

Aspects of Practice

October 19-November 15

Sejiki Ceremony and Celebration

Saturday, 10-25

Kidzendo

Saturday, 10-25

Coming of Age?

If there is enough interest, BZC will offer a Coming of Age dharma study group for youth 10 to 12 years of age, beginning this fall. The group will likely meet once a month over two years, learning meditation and studying Buddhist precepts as they play out in our daily lives. Further details will arise out of the needs of the group. Pass the word along to anyone you think might be interested. For more information or to let us know if you want to participate, contact Laurie Senauke (lauries@kushiki.org) or Susan Marvin (lai_hang@yahoo.com)

Mindful Being Class

Alexandra Frappier and Catherine Cascade, priests at BZC and long time practitioners, will teach a consecutive four-week Saturday class on mindful awareness. They will present this core spiritual practice, foundational to Buddhism, from several different perspectives. How do we really pay attention to what's happening? Why is there a problem? Is there a separate watcher? As with all of our classes we plan and encourage ample time for discussion and questioning. The first class will be September 13 from 12:00 to 1:30 pm. Cost for the series is \$20 payable at the first class. If you plan to attend all or part of the preceding Saturday schedule you might like to bring a bag lunch to eat before the class begins. Sign up on the bulletin board.

Entering Ceremony for New Members

On Monday, September 8, at 6:20 a.m., we will have a ceremony to welcome new members to the BZC sangha. Anyone who has become a member since we last held this ceremony, which was May 2007, or who has never participated in the ceremony and would like to, is invited to join us. Please contact zendo manager, Leslie Bartholic, at lbartholic@comcast.net to indicate your participation and/or to get more information.



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

September 6	Childcare
September 13	Childcare
September 20	Kidzendo
September 27	Childcare
October 4	Childcare
October 11	Childcare
October 18	Childcare
October 25	Kidzendo - Sejiki
November 1	Childcare
November 8	Childcare
November 15	Sesshin - no program
November 22	Kidzendo
November 29	Childcare
December 6	Childcare
December 13	Sesshin - no program
December 20	Kidzendo
December 27	Interim - no program

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 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 10:15. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

Reminder about Newsletters

Please do not take newsletters from the stack if you are getting it on line or in the mail.

Notes from the Board By Peter Overton, BZC Board President, August 22, 2008

The Board has been tracking the progress of several projects funded by our capital fundraising drive of last year. The zendo roof replacement was completed at substantially less than the budgeted cost. Plumbing upgrades on the ground level apartment at 1933 Russell have also been completed, though at greater cost than anticipated. The upstairs plumbing, and replacement of kitchen and bath floors and kitchen counter remain in progress, and will also cost more than budgeted. The increased costs are due, in part, to our decision to utilize "green" materials, and also because dry rot conditions discovered under the finish surfaces required correction as part of the project, thereby increasing labor costs substantially.

We have also received new information regarding the scope and costs of recommended seismic upgrades to the zendo, and the support for the enclosed space over the community room porch. Last year, consultations with a structural engineer seemed to indicate that the zendo would need some improvements to the foundation and additional sheer wall at the southwest corner of the building, and that the costs would be less than \$5,000. Upon further investigation, we realize that this conclusion was mistaken, and that in the engineer's opinion the entire zendo foundation should be replaced, along with other work to fully stabilize the structure. We have received various estimates of the cost of such a project, varying from \$55,000 to \$65,000. This expert also opined the structure underpinning the enclosed room above the community room porch was also in need of improved reinforcement. The engineer's rating of the urgency of all of this work was 7 on a scale of 1 to 10; in other words, not an emergency, but time to start considering what to do.

Upon hearing this, the Board wishes to inform the Sangha that these conditions exist. We cannot make specific recommendations regarding

how anyone should care for their own safety, nor are we confident in our own assessment of the risk posed by these conditions. Many of us choose on a daily basis to live and/or work in buildings with unknown or questionable seismic stability, but because of the quasi-public nature of our center, the Board cannot in good conscience refrain from making this information known, so that individuals can make reasonably informed choices regarding their own well-being.

In the coming months, we intend to carefully consider our options to address these issues, both in terms of project priorities, as well as how we engage with and fund them. We will keep everyone informed regarding progress and any needs for discussion and wider input. Please feel free to contact me should you want further information, or would just like to talk this over.

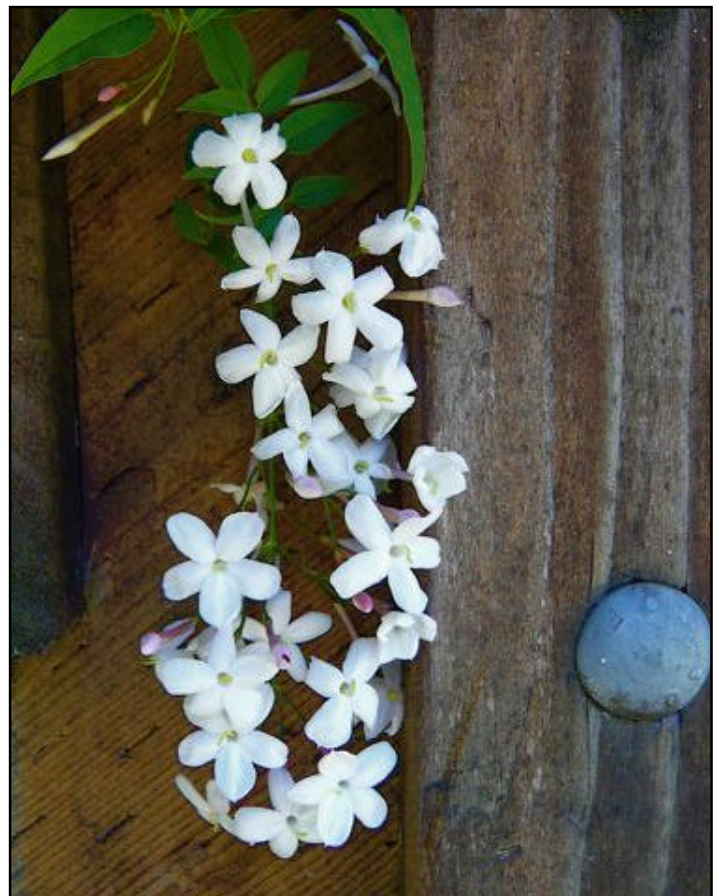



Photo by Ross Blum

Case No. 3 from the Blue Cliff Record From a Talk

By Sojun Mel Weitsman, February 2, 1985

Attention: Baso, the great teacher, was unwell. The temple's chief accountant visited him and said, "Teacher, during these recent days how is your health?" (How have you been during your illness?) Great teacher Matsu said, "Sun face Buddhas, moon face buddhas." So that was Matsu's reply: Sun faced buddhas, moon faced buddhas.



This phrase comes from a scripture. The scripture enumerates thousands of buddhas, their names and some characteristic of their life. These are the buddhas which precede the seven buddhas before Buddha. There's a whole list in this sutra. The moon faced Buddha lives only a day and a night. The characteristic of the sun faced Buddha is that the Buddha lives for 1800 years.


So Baso replied, "When we think about our human lives, there are as you know people who live long like those sun faced buddhas and there are people whose lives are short like those moon faced buddhas. It's useless to worry."

Suzuki Roshi has a short commentary: Although you are looking forward to the bliss of the teaching, you do not know that you are always in the midst of the teaching so your practice does not accord with your teacher's. Once you've realized Buddha Nature within and without, there is no special way to follow for a student or any specific suggestion to give for a teacher. When there is a problem, there is a way to go. Actually you continually go over and over the great path of the Buddha with your teacher who is always with you. Negative method and positive method, or, the first principle and the second principle, are nothing but the Great Activities of such a character. The Buddha Nature is quite personal to you and essential to all existence.

Sojun: There are many ways to interpret this case. But in the face of the length of our life, moon faced or sun faced, what will we do with our life? And how will we find satisfaction in our life, whether we have a short life or a long

life. We don't know about our life.

I was talking to someone yesterday who is aware of getting older. He said, "You know, the more I think about it, anything could happen at anytime." This person is working with dying people, who have a lot of uncertainty about their life. When we are well, we don't think about it, but as soon as something hits us we find that we're out of tune with life. Some illness or incapacity will put us in a place where life is going on around us but we feel apart from that. And it makes us feel lonely and isolated and wondering about the purpose of our life. It makes us think about things, about what we're really doing.



I was talking to someone else who has a kind of high-powered business. The person is busy all the time with people and with the mechanics of the business and accounts, things going wrong. And the person is wondering, "What is the purpose of all this? What am I doing? I could get out of it, but then what would I do. I'd just do something else. Eventually I'd be doing the same thing over and over again because of the kind of person I am." As Suzuki Roshi used to say, "We are just changing our equipment." We just change our equipment by starting something new but without changing something fundamental. He decided that he would be satisfied by limiting what he does - limiting the size and the responsibility - and just taking care of the people and taking care of his own mind. In a way it's like watching the transformation from an ordinary person into a bodhisattva.

It's easy to think that practice has some special form, but here's a situation where a person is turning the form that their life has taken into a way to practice, so that being a bodhisattva or cultivating the way becomes the most important factor in their life. In a situation like that, where it's very easy to be caught by greed and material benefit, it's remarkable to be able to hold the line. I've seen this happen before. It is common

continued on next page

PEOPLE



BZC member **Courtney Gonzalez (rt)** and **Gina Matesic** were married at Milvia Manor on Saturday July 26 in a warm, intimate ceremony with family and friends. The foundation of their 12 years of commitment to one another was acknowledged and celebrated with an exchange of vows and rings with **Rev. Ross Estes Blum** presiding. When asked where they'll be going on their honeymoon they responded, "we've been on it." Congratulations from all of us!

Sojun Talk

continued from previous page

in school, when people have a certain talent or ability and are happy within that ability or talent, like art or music, to find their place. But when they graduate all that gets lost because they're expected to go out and make money. They say, "Well, I could do this, but I'm supposed to make money." That's what's expected of a person. Not personal satisfaction or even being helpful in some way. Not personal development but materialistic values. So it really pleases me to feel that someone who is so exposed to materialistic values and could be so easily caught by them, and is right in the midst of that dynamic, could take a step back and be firmly rooted in cultivation - mindfulness of what's real - to have a view of reality and not get caught by materialistic values. It's very rare in this day and age. *(To be continued)*

September 2008 BZC Newsletter

Please welcome new residents **Eric Kaufman** and **Ken Powelson** who recently moved into 1933a. Eric comes to us via practice period/residency years at Tassajara, Green Gulch and Genjo-ji. Ken has been sitting here at BZC for a number of years now and has been seen at the book sales table and leading our work periods.

* * *

Karl Schoenberger is joining **Lisa Nelbach** and **Peter Pfaelzer** at the book table on Saturdays. Many thanks to **Ken Powelson**, who continues as co-work leader, for doing double duty these past months.

* * *

Welcome to the following new members since Spring: **David France** who previously studied with **Jisho Warner** and from whom he received jukai; **Daniel Bryant** who has been practicing here since the beginning of the year; **Tim Wilson** who practiced at SFZC since 1993; **Chad Dickson** who has practiced here since the beginning of the year; **Neil Fang** who and **Barry Waldman** who have practiced here since February; and **Jen Copeland** who has practiced here since June.



In a ceremony called the Jue-saho at the BZC zendo, **Blanche Hartman**, senior sewing teacher, received a 21-panel robe, the nyoho-e. This is the second robe of its kind sewn in the US. The project was initiated by sewing teachers to show respect and love for Blanche. She is shown here on the left bowing in her robe following the ceremony at BZC.

Photo by Ross Blum

The Air We Breathe: *Open Meeting on Air Quality in the Zendo*

At our monthly Monday morning open discussion on August 4, zendo manager Leslie Bartholic reviewed the steps we've taken so far to improve zendo and overall air quality at BZC for those with allergy and chemical sensitivities.

1. Elimination of kerosene lamps and incense.
2. No scented products in public access bathrooms or the kitchen.
3. Posted requests to refrain from scented products of all kinds if practicing in the zendo or elsewhere on the property.
4. Running a VOC (volatile organic compound) filter machine in the zendo whenever the zendo is unoccupied.

During the open discussion some of the following issues and questions arose:

After a week spent running the VOC filter full time with folks in the zendo to see if it improved air quality over part time use there was some resistance to its sound, although others were fine with it. The clean air committee has found that a silent VOC machine apparently does not yet exist. In looking into a silent allergy filter which does exist (on its low speed) the problem seems to be that it requires closed windows to be effective, impractical for our zendo when occupied.

Some present expressed a sense of loss with the absence of our traditional incense practice--the calm centering, invisible and visible reminder of waking up, expression of what can't be defined and the active aspect of fire and impermanence.

When asked what other Buddhist centers do, Alan replied that Spirit Rock and IMS have incense and scent protocols, but beyond those groups, it's unclear with no obvious sustained examples that we know of so far.

In response to a question of what seems to have been effective to date, several people with sensitivities responded that airing out zafus and zabutons to kill dust mites, and eliminating incense and kerosene have been most helpful.

The VOC filter seems to be helping although group restraint in the use of scented products

seems to be most important. In other words go to the source.

For those wondering which products are okay to wear, there is a list posted on the bulletin board.

How far should we go in accommodating those with allergic and product sensitivities?

Sojun mentioned how difficult the psychological element is to discuss and evaluate. How do we look at it without blaming the victim? Once a psychological aversion pattern is set up, it takes on great power and can be endless. It was remarked that we've mostly stopped using the wake-up stick for strictly psychological reasons related to abuse issues in our culture. A psychological cause can trigger a very real physical effect. This is complex.

VOC scents are much more difficult to minimize than is incense.

One important conclusion made was that we need a broad spectrum of viewpoints and input. We'd like this to be a sangha issue and not determined only by committee. Clean air committee members are Leslie Bartholic, Ron Nestor Sue Oehser, and Alan Senauke. Feel free to contact them with your viewpoints. Their email addresses are in the directory. The committee has an advisory function. Policy decisions are made by the board and practice committee.



SAVE THE DATES

Huston Smith on D. T. Suzuki

On Saturday afternoon, September 13, from 2 to 4:30, we are having a very special event with a very special guest: pre-eminent religious studies scholar Huston Smith.

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Huston_Smith) Smith, now retired, will join us for a showing of the film "A ZEN LIFE - D.T. Suzuki," a 77-minute documentary about Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966), one of the key influences introducing Zen Buddhism to the West. After the film we will have tea and discussion with Dr. Smith.

Gary Snyder calls D.T. Suzuki, "probably the most culturally significant Japanese person in international terms, in all of history." The film contains exclusive interviews of many people respected in their own right who knew D.T. Suzuki, including Smith, Snyder, Mihoko Okamura, Elsie Mitchell, Robert Aitken, Wm. Theodore de Bary, and rare footage of Thomas Merton, John Cage, Erich Fromm, and Suzuki himself. The DVD contains an additional 10-minutes from a hitherto unknown interview of Daisetz Suzuki by Huston Smith. For more information, contact Laurie Senauke (lauries@kushiki.org). \$5 donation; sign up on the bulletin board.

Women's Sitting

The Women's Sesshin will take place, Sunday, September 21, 8:30 to 5:00 pm. The women's Council is delighted to welcome dharma teacher Angie Bossevain to the annual Women's Sesshin.

Angie was a very close student of Kobun Chino and was teacher and director of his Center, Jikoji, in the Santa Cruz mountains. Kobun Chino called her an "enlightened housewife." She is the teacher of the Floating Zendo (San Jose). Angie will lecture in the morning, and lead a discussion in the afternoon. This will be an exciting opportunity to spend time with a highly respected teacher who will share with us her unique perspective on zen and life. For more information contact Karen Sundheim, ksundheim@gmail.com.

September 2008 BZC Newsletter

Coast Camp

Tent zipper unstuck.
Warm feet thrust in cold shoes.
Walking through darkness,
waking the dead
grass. Coyote bush howling at the waxing
moon,
while stars stare at me from light years away.
Cooking pots on the old picnic table reflect cold
and silver.
An owl watches my outline in body heat.
If I weren't so cold, I'd lie down in the wet
grass
and make up constellations with the mice,
explain how octaves descend from night to dreams,
down rodent tunnels velvety black,
rich sonatas regardless of species.
It might even save us.
Instead I'm here at the bush, excreting salt,
passing water in the dark, like the human I am,
while negative space burns images behind my
eyes.
Enormity presses around me,
unknowable, unnamable.
Tomorrow, I will explain everything in
second-hand language that means less than no
words now.
So I return to warm womb of tent
and birth a backward dream,
stars shooting in reverse,
the earth turning the opposite direction,
until it's daytime again.
Any day will do.
--Margaret Stawowy
(Mountains and Rivers Sesshin, July 2008)



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