



Berkeley Zen Center



November 2008 Newsletter

ONE-DAY SITTING— CLOSE ASPECTS OF PRACTICE

BZC's annual Aspects of Practice period closes with a one-day sitting on Saturday, November 15, from 5:00 AM to 9:15 PM. A signup sheet will be posted on the BZC outside bulletin board by the end of October. All participants in this year's Aspects of Practice are encouraged to attend. John Rubin is the director for the sitting.

ROHATSU SESSHIN

Berkeley's annual Rohatsu sesshin begins Sunday, Dec. 7th and ends Saturday, December 13th. This sesshin traditionally celebrates the practice and enlightenment of our original teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha, and it is also our time to be especially inspired by the memory of our founder, Shunryu Suzuki Roshi, who died during the second day of Rohatsu sesshin in December 1971 at San Francisco Zen Center. With the efforts of ancient and modern ancestors to inspire us, we will renew the fundamentals of practice within the traditional forms of our lineage. The annual Suzuki Roshi memorial ceremony will be held on the evening of Monday Dec. 8. Buddha's Enlightenment ceremony will be on Saturday morning, Dec. 13. All sangha members are invited to attend these ceremonies. Watch the bulletin board for times and details.

Each day of Rohatsu begins at 5 a.m. and ends at 9:10, with the exception of the last day which ends at 3:30. Everyone is encouraged to participate for as many days as possible, but we are asking participants to commit to a minimum of three days.

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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.

November

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 11/2, 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 11/3, 6:10 pm

Tuesday, 11/4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 11/15, 9:40 am

One-Day Sitting to Close Aspects of Practice

Saturday, 11/15

Kidzendo

Saturday, 11-22

Thanksgiving (zendo closed)

Thursday, 11-27

December

Rohatsu Sesshin

Sunday 12/7 to

Saturday, 12/13

Annual Suzuki Roshi Memorial

Monday, 12/8

Bodhisattva Ceremony

To be announced

Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

12/13, after lecture

Winter Interim

12/20—12/31

New Year's Eve Sitting/Celebration

12/31, 8—12 pm

New Year's Day (zendo closed)

1/1/2009

Rohatsu sesshin, continued....

At least two of the days should be consecutive. Sangha members who cannot participate during the day on weekdays may join us by sitting the first and last days of sesshin, and sitting on weekday evenings from 5:40 until 9 p.m.

The suggested donation is \$35.00 for an entire day or \$5.00 for each weekday evening. Please leave checks marked "Rohatsu" in the kitchen porch donation slot. Please pay in advance. Registration forms will be available on the bulletin board shelf when the sign-up sheet is posted. **These forms must be completed and turned in to the sesshin director by Wednesday December 3rd.** Please leave completed forms in the sesshin director's box on the community room porch. Please contact Tamar, the sesshin director, if you have questions about sesshin or about your particular situation and schedule. (Tamar's e-mail tixenoch@earthlink.net; phone 510-644-1928. Please call before 9 p.m). Please contact the BZC shika, Ross Blum (510-843-5471), if you plan to stay overnight.

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 Roshi or Hozan Sensei. After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

Winter Interim Calendar Clarification

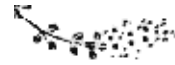
In order that we have two full weekends to renew and rest over the solistice break, our last day of formal zazen will be Friday, December 19. Break, with daily informal zazen, will begin on Saturday, December 20 and end with New Year's Eve.

DHARMA GROUP OPENING

There is an opening for one or two people who practice at BZC to join an ongoing Dharma study group, currently reading Suzuki Roshi's "Not Always So." Please call facilitator Charlie Ware: 510-658-1905.

Wondering how we do what we do?

Have you ever wondered how the practice committee works, and how decisions about our practice are made? Everyone interested in learning more is welcome to attend the Monday morning meetings, which occur at 7:15-7:45.



Finding the Cure

A monk sets out from Shogakuji Temple
To find the cure for her dis-ease
She scales mountainous sutras

Fords rivers of murky koans
Trudges through the muck of karmic hindrances
Never finding the elusive "IT"

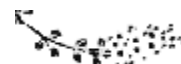
She comes upon a sign
Left by her teacher
Two arrow points meeting
Marked "This is the Way"

The path is strewn with flowers,
Blades of grass,
A shitstick,
Tea cakes,
Pebbly rice,
She sees a man who raises a single finger
A wild goose flying in circles above her
A fox basking in the sun

She stops and studies each one
Finding them all empty
All medicine and not medicine
Distinct but not separate
A dynamic interconnectedness

The road leads back to Shogakuji
Meeting her teacher
She smiles
Goes back into the Zendo
And sits
One with all the others

Gerry Oliva
June 13, 2008



The Bodhisattva Vows

Sojun Roshi

The Four Noble Truths

Beings are bound by suffering

The cause is desire based on delusion

There is a way out of suffering

Take up the Eight-fold Path

The Bodhisattva's Response

Beings are numberless,
I vow to save them

Desires are endless,
I vow to cut through them

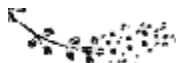
Dharma gates are boundless,
I vow to enter them

The Buddha Way is unsurpassable,
I vow to be one with it

The Bodhisattva Vows are a response to Buddha's Four Noble Truths. We vow to save all sentient beings from suffering and delusion. Who dares to take up this impossible task? If you think it is impossible, you will be defeated by skepticism. If you think you can do it, you run the risk of being pompous and inflated. Should we save all beings step by step, or all at once? Besides, who or how can we save, when there is no one to save and no one who saves? What will you do? This is the Bodhisattva's great koan.

Suggestion: Start with the one who is standing in your shoes. As the Sixth Ancestor of the Zen School says, we can begin by saving the sentient beings of our own greedy mind, our own angry mind, our own delusive mind.

I believe that the key is to offer our self to the Way, and do the work that is offered, the work of the moment. To respond to what is right in front of us, and do it in an unselfish way, with no expectation of reward or attachment to a particular result. Don't even have an idea about it. Don't think about how long it will take. Don't think that because it seems impossible you can't do it. Just take up the vow, knowing that within its total impossibility is an infinite realm of possibilities. A Bodhisattva presents the dharma to living beings. But living beings must make the effort to find their own salvation. Without falling into the view of saving self or saving others, just do the work of practicing the dharma and maintaining the sangha. Without being attached to encouraging or discouraging words, let us nourish and take care of Buddha, and open a path for Buddha's light to shine forth in the world.



MEMBER CORNER

Welcome to new member Kata Galasi.

Anke Perkert and Everett Wilson are moving out of the BZC residency but not out of BZC practice. We have benefited from their year and a half participation and support most notably in leading the work periods and caring for the altars. If you've sampled their cooking (good chance if you're reading this!) then you've been well nourished indeed. While their quiet presence, both collective and individual will be missed as residents, we will see them sitting in non-resident form soon enough.



Photo from Sejiki 2008 by Alan Senauke

Changing Hands

Three full bows of appreciation to our outgoing Head Tenzo, Paul Ridgway, who tirelessly mastered the Way of kitchen practice, behind the stove and overseeing the running of the kitchen these past two years. Down, Manjusri! And a belated thanks to Peter Carpentieri for his time as co-tenzo. We welcome our new Co-Tenzos Raul Moncayo and Naome Dragstadt.

A good bye and thanks to oryoki instructor and mother, Marie Hopper, and welcome to our new oryoki instructor, Rondi Saslow.

After close to a decade of offering the three minds of practice to newcomers on Wednesday nights, Richard Haefele is passing the leadership baton to Gerry Oliva. Deep thanks to Richard for your steady efforts, and welcome to Gerry.

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After all too short a time of his light, friendly touch and calm presence, Everett Wilson is moving outside the gate, and handing off the Saturday work leader position to Christy Calame. Thank you, Everett. And welcome Christy - thanks for your year of attentive, orderly kitchen care. The kitchen keeper position now passes to Mark Copithorne.

The Audio Archives at BZC is a treasured resource, catalogued for many uses, preserved for the future, and available to us all to hear the lectures we miss, and to know our teachers who are no longer with us. We extend a deep bow of appreciation to Jean Selkirk for her nine years of work, and countless hours and deep care that has preserved the legacy of our teachers' words for future Zen students. We also wish to thank Sherry Smith-Williams for her diligent work in transitioning the archives into the future, and welcome to Richard Haefele who will be interim Audio Archivist.

Our memorial stones and jizo altar will now be attended by Wanda Henning.

CORRECTION

Correct your member directory! Lois Silverstein's real email address is: LoisVSilversteinPhD@comcast.net.

And speaking of the member directory...

A NOTE FROM THE OFFICE MANAGER

The listing of names and addresses for the 2009 directory will soon be available for corrections. Please check it and mark any changes you will want for the 2009 directory. Please check e-mail addresses carefully as we've found typos in the last directory. Also if you don't have an e-mail address in our database and want it listed please add it; that is quickly becoming the standard for making contact with members and friends.

Re Dues: With the changes in the suggested dues and sesshin contributions this would be a good time to think about how much you can contribute towards sustaining our practice center. We do have in our database the amount people could give regularly, from the membership applications, and I think this would be a good time to update that. You can contact me at jmogey@comcast.net.

Dharma A Further Note on Dues

Last month's newsletter included a detailed notice from the board about a dues increase at BZC. We are deeply grateful to those of you who have been sustaining members and family members over the years. In fact we are grateful to all of our members and friends who support BZC with your steady donations and efforts, year in and year out.

The point of our new simplified dues schedule — \$40/month for members and \$30/quarter for friends — is to bring BZC's present needs and resources in line with each other, so we can pay our bills. We've had no increase like this for more than ten years.

This figure, \$40/month, is our recommended standard. If you can't afford this, we welcome whatever amount you can regularly contribute. That has been our policy for years, and remains so. If some of you are able to contribute more, we are very grateful. The point is to give according to one's ability. John Rubin, Alan Senauke, and John Mogeay are happy to discuss what works for you at any time.

Many of us are now facing difficulty in these troubled economic times. It is not easy to ask more of you. But BZC is entirely supported by your dues and donations. The spirit of giving is a vast unbroken circle. Your generosity turns the wheel of practice at BZC in the present and in the future.

If you have questions about this policy, or just wish to talk, please get in touch with Hozan Alan by phone or email alans@kushiki.org.



Photo by Ross Blum

What thoughts float by?

A monarch flits
through sunlight
above the trees.

Strained by the effort
required to pull down veined wings
thinner than paper

that push away the tidal pull,
the ocean of air
you swim through,

in the effort of will required
to navigate this instinctual flight,

can you imagine
being so light
that light itself is substance?

Can you be
a being tossed about
by the whim of breeze?

Do not forget, as you cling
to the milkweed pod
nodding atop a pliant stem

the letting go,
the breeze
that lifts you away

to somewhere you don't remember
outside of dream
some place

you might call home.

—Everett Wilson

October 14, 2008

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