



Berkeley Zen Center



February 2009 Newsletter

Beginner's Sesshin

On Sunday, March 1, BZC will offer a "beginner's sesshin," from 8:30 am until 4:30 pm. Hozan Alan Senauke will offer instruction in the basic forms of our practice — zazen, kinhin, service — while maintaining our ground in meditation throughout the day. Participants should bring a bag lunch, which we will eat informally in silence at midday.

Newer members are particularly encouraged to take part, but we welcome older students who can enjoy a day of sitting and model the richness of our practice. For more information contact Alan at alans@kushiki.org or Sesshin Director Carol Paul at caroljpaul@yahoo.com.

The cost will be \$15 for the day. Please see the zendo bulletin board for a signup sheet and further information.

Platform Sutra Study Group

Beginning on Sunday morning, February 22 at 10:30, Hozan Alan Senauke will lead an open-ended monthly study of the Platform Sutra. The dates are not completely worked out, but it is likely we will meet on Sunday morning or shortly after the Saturday program, for 1-1/2 hours, roughly once a month. If you are interested in being part of this group, and feel that you can make a commitment to attend regularly, please email Alan at alans@kushiki.org. Further details to follow this month.

2009 BZC Calendar

The 2009 BZC calendar included as an insert with the December newsletter had a number of inaccuracies. The correct dates can be found on our website and on the small calendar cards available on the bulletin board shelf. Changes are inevitable during the year, so please watch the website and the bulletin board. In particular, please note that the April "Just Sitting" or Zazenkai retreat day is changed from Sunday, April 5 to Sunday, April 12.



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.

B Z C S c h e d u l e

February

Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 2/1, 8:00 am-12:00 noon

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 2/3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 2/4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 2/7, 9:40 am

Oryoki Instruction

Saturday, 2/7, 11:30 am

Friday, 2/13, 4:40 pm

Buddha's Parinirvana

Saturday, 2/14

Two-day Sitting

Saturday-Sunday, 2/14-15

Zendo Holiday

Monday, 2/16, Presidents' Day

Kidzendo

Saturday, 2/21

March

Beginner's Sitting

Sunday, 3/1, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm

All-Sangha Potluck—Budget

Tuesday, 3/3, 6:30 p.m.

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 3/3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 3/4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3/7, 9:40 am

One-day Sitting

Saturday, 3/21, 5:00 am-9:10pm

FEBRUARY NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members **Simone Brumis, Kazumi Cranney, Ren Bunce, and Ron Wizelman!**

Changing Hands

Welcome to **Jason Straub**, who will be assisting **Jesy Goldhammer** (see article, p. 4) with the Men's Shelter Dinner on the fourth Friday of each month. Thank you, Jason!

If you are interested in assisting on the second Friday, please contact Andrea Thach, andrea.thach@gmail.com.

FROM THE OFFICE MANAGER:

As you probably know, the board has changed the way we look at ongoing sangha support for our practice place. The various categories of "dues" have been replaced as follows:

"We ask members to make a regular monthly contribution to support BZC. Our suggested contribution level is \$40 per month. We recognize that each person's financial circumstance is different and we are grateful for whatever contribution you can make on a regular basis."

As Office Manager, I would appreciate it if members would update me with what level of support he or she can make. I also realize that many of you do not pay monthly, some paying on an annual or semiannual basis, and some when you are able.

The best way to let me know is by email at jmogey@comcast.net or a note in the slot in the back door to the kitchen.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org.

Childcare for 8:45 Zazen Instruction and Beginner Orientation may be offered by special arrangement.

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 in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual. From time to time we offer additional activities at kidzendo.

Childcare Schedule

February 7	Childcare
February 14	Sesshin – no program
February 21	Kidzendo
February 28	Childcare
March 7	Childcare
March 14	Childcare
March 21	Sesshin – no program
March 28	Kidzendo
April 4	Buddha's Birthday
April 11	Childcare
April 18	Childcare (no Kidzendo)
April 25	Childcare



Dogen Zenji's *Zenki*: Our Vow of Practice

From a lecture by Sojun Roshi

Dogen Zenji wrote two essays: one, *Zenki*, and the other, *Shoji*, both of which deal with the problem of birth and death. For Dogen, to clarify the problem of birth and death was central to resolving the Great Matter. Zazen provides that opportunity.

While the term *Shoji* literally means birth and death, in *Zenki*, the root “Zen” means total or all-inclusive. Suzuki Roshi used the term “big mind” and said that big mind is wide enough to include everything. You should be able to include everything within your big mind. “Ki” in *Zenki* means function or dynamic activity. So *Zenki* means something like “Total Dynamic Activity.” In *Moon in a Dewdrop*, it is translated as “undivided activity,” which expresses the essence of *Zenki*: undivided non-dualistic activity. Or as Thomas Cleary titles it, *The Whole Works*, which is a nice twist on words. In the total dynamic working of undivided activity, birth and death are like the two sides of a coin, while *Zenki* is like the coin itself. It covers or includes both sides, but is free of both and free within both birth and death.

Dogen begins by saying, “in the culmination of its quest (where there is total exertion), the great way of the Buddhas is emancipation and realization.” The word “emancipation” in Japanese is *todatsu*. It means freedom from, in the sense of freedom from delusion and its associates, greed and ill-will, which is the pre-condition for nirvana. It means, within birth, leaving no trace of attachment to birth, and, within death, leaving no trace of attachment to death. It means, as the Sixth Ancestor says, to realize our essence of mind in the most common everyday activities. Freedom and non-attachment do not mean no involvement, but rather, non-self-centered interaction. As long as our actions in the world are not driven by the dynamics of “self,” but rather directed toward the welfare of the world, we can realize freedom.

Then, Dogen goes on to say, “birth emancipates birth and death emancipates death.” “Birth emancipates birth” sounds a little strange. It means that birth is no birth and death is no death. This is the basic understanding of Mahayana Buddhism. Birth is called “no-birth” and death is called “no-death.” Birth lets go of birth and death lets go of death. Birth is not something static but is renewed moment by moment. Death is also like this. This moment is this moment’s birth as well as this moment’s death. Freed from this moment we enter this moment. We enter this moment with our vow of practice, and our vow of practice is *Zenki*.



Dinner at the Men's Shelter By Jesy Goldhammer

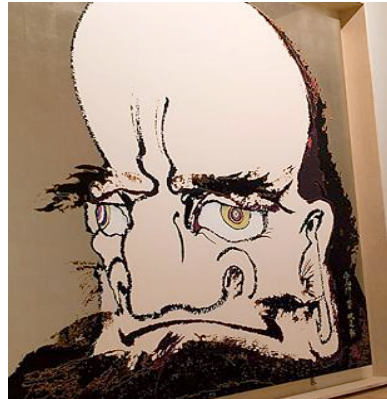
It's been said that one of the best things BZC does outside the gate is sponsor and provide dinner at the men's shelter in downtown Berkeley twice monthly. But I have to admit that for me, when I first got involved with it last year, it wasn't necessarily about serving an underserved community. I just wanted to cook and feed people. At the end of zazen one day, an announcement was made, "a cook is needed to run the men's shelter dinner the fourth Friday of the month in Berkeley." BZC runs a men's shelter dinner in Berkeley?? I inquired, and before I knew it, I was shopping for lasagna noodles and frozen hot wings at Smart and Final. I was a cook! A dream had been realized, but I soon learned that true success couldn't be done alone. I needed help.

BZC has been providing dinner at the men's shelter in the Veterans Building at 1931 Center Street in downtown Berkeley since the '90s. Lance Shows and his amazing team of volunteers, which includes Betty Jung and John and Louise Rasmussen, have been faithfully making it happen for much of that time. Along with them, there are Sojun, Bob Rosenbaum, John and Claire Rubin, Everett Wilson, and many volunteers who have kept it going. Since stepping in to run the fourth Friday dinner, I have been amazed at how much fun we have while creating a large meal that feeds about 60 people. We shop for the food, unload it, cook it, serve it, and then clean it all up. There is even a homemade choco-chip cookie bodhisattva named Christy who bakes enough cookies to feed a hungry army with a sweet tooth each Friday.

The guys at the shelter love our food and are often curious about Zen. It is not uncommon for one of them to ask, "Is Mel still the abbot there?" And when I get overwhelmed, someone may whisper to me, "Breathe," and I know this is much more than just cooking and feeding or even serving. It's a collaboration and a coming together of unlikely folks to make something

meaningful, appreciated, warm, and delicious happen.

Please come join us on the second and/or fourth Friday of each month at 1931 Center Street in downtown Berkeley. There's a little sign that says "Men's Shelter" at the driveway, and you can pull



in and park there for free. Contact us or just show up anytime between 5 and 7pm to help. Our meals typically consist of veggie and beef lasagna,

hot wings, salad, garlic bread, lemonade, and of course, cookies. For more information contact Lance Shows (second Friday) at 415-505-3512, lanceshows@pacbell.net or Jesy Goldhammer (fourth Friday) at 510-332-3084, jesica@downtoearthland.com.

Mindful Weight Normalization

Abbot Sojun will be hosting a weight normalization group based on the mindful weight control program of Weight Watchers, which is simply paying attention to the balance of the various things we eat according to a caloric standard.

When we reach and maintain our normal weight based on our body type, we realize how our weight influences everything we do both physically and mentally, and how proper weight can correct the various imbalances in our body that we didn't realize were connected.

Our first meeting will be in Sojun's office or the community room, Friday, February 6 at 4:00 pm. This may not be the final meeting time. If you are interested, just show up. If you are interested and can't come then, send an email to Sojun suggesting a time you could come, and we will try to make a time that can reasonably accommodate everyone.

Back Door Front Door: A Refreshed Look

Over the last few years, our back porch has taken on a homey back-door, storage-area look. We would like to give it a more well-organized, streamlined, and accessible "front door" look. We saw that simplifying our tea selection and setting it out in a way that is easy to maintain and pleasing to the eye added to the settled sense of our practice place. So we would like to move in that direction for the back porch, too.

A few simple things:

- * We'd like the **lost and found box** to become just that again: items left at BZC by someone who meant to keep them. We will no longer use the box for "donations;" Items left at BZC will be moved to that box and eventually donated if they aren't claimed.
- * The **bench exchange**: Many of us leave items we think dharma friends can use (like dharma books) on the bench. If you would like to leave something, please check back after about a week, and if it is still there, please recycle it yourself.

Although we may remodel the back porch as part of an earthquake retrofit eventually, in the meantime, we would like to do a low-cost redesign with at least new bulletin boards and signage. Conversations and ideas from you all about the more immediate changes are welcome. Please speak with Andrea Thach, or email her at andrea.thach@gmail.com.

RESIDENCY OPENING

BZC is accepting applications for a resident in a shared two-bedroom apartment with a woman and two South African lovebirds.

Those interested should contact the Head Resident, Ross Blum (rossblum@gmail.com) for a copy of the resident guidelines and an application.

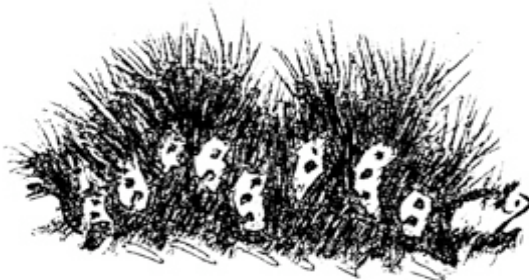
Applicants should also schedule dokusan with Sojun or Alan to discuss the possibility of residency.

With allowances for work and family obligations, residents participate fully in life at BZC, including daily zazen, the Saturday program, sesshin, and the full range of volunteer activities.

High School Reunion at BZC?

What are the odds that six people who all lived within a three-mile radius of each other in the western Chicago suburbs and went to rival high schools between 1969 and 1974 would meet practicing Zen in Berkeley? Less serendipity than that could make you a Slumdog Millionaire.

Join Barbara Strauss, Downers Grove North '72, Richard Urban, DGN '69, Andrea Thach, DGN '73, Karl Schoenberger, Hinsdale Central '69, John Busch, HC '74, and Greg Denny, DG South for corn-fed reminiscences of our dharma roots. If interested, contact Barbara at: straku@earthlink.net.



"Well, whatever it is we change into, it can't come soon enough for me."

NEW CLASS: THE FIVE HOUSES OF ZEN

At the end of March Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke will teach a five-week class on the Five Houses of Zen, focusing on the particular teachings and examples of their founding teachers. Hozan will be joined each week by a different senior practice leader who will co-present that evening's class. The Five Houses of Zen are called that now from an historical perspective, but were not considered to be separate schools or divisions of Zen at the time they flourished. Each house simply reflected the particular teaching emphasis of its founders. The Five Houses, with Chinese and Japanese pronunciation followed by their founding teachers are:

- Guiyang (Igyo) Guishan and Yangshan (771-854), (813-890)
- Linji (Rinzai) Linji (died 866)
- Caodong (Soto) Dongshan and Tozan (807-869), (840-901)
- Yunmen (Unmon) Yunmen (died 949)
- Fayan (Hogen) Fayan (885-958)

The class will be held on Thursday evenings beginning March 26th. Our text will be *The Golden Age of Zen* by John Wu, easily available.

TWO POEMS by Meghan Collins

Lists



The Three Poisons

Mostly I dwell in the house of Delusion,
but I keep a weekend place at Greed.
It's cozy there
except for the padlocked shed out back
where some little hatreds flit about inside.

Sometimes they creep between the cracks
and try to slither
under the cabin door,
so I take the broom and chase them off—
"Critters, begone!"

The Buddha was very fond of lists.
or maybe it was disciples,
eager to get things right,
who started counting on their fingers:
The Three Treasures
The Four Noble Truths
The Five Skandhas
The Six Paramitas
The Seven Factors of Enlightenment—
et cetera—
until the lists themselves become a
snare.
At such times I gratefully recall
The Dalai Lama saying:
"My religion is kindness."



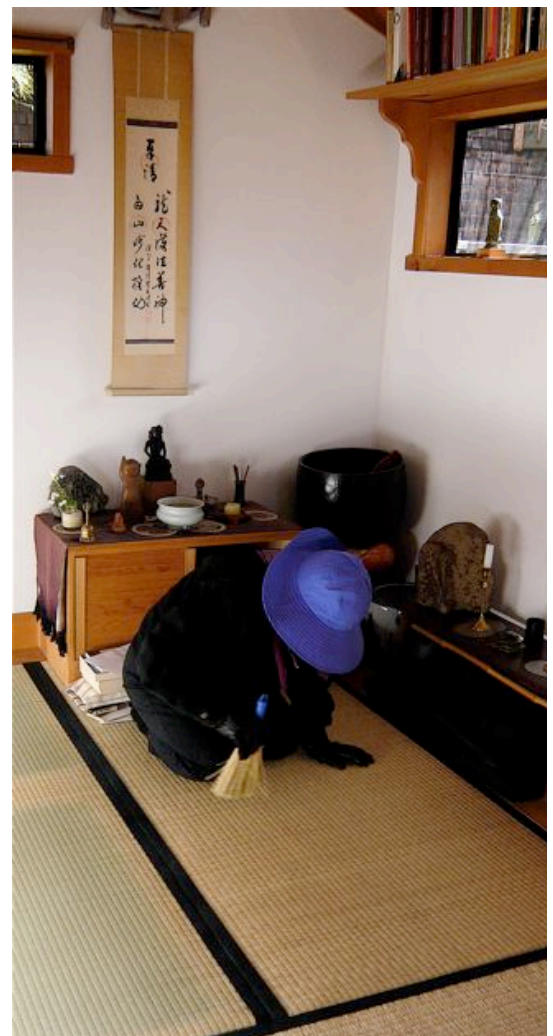


When I went to say hello to Agnes
Today while she was tending the
dokusan hut, I recalled the photo
I took on pilgrimage in Japan of
this monk begging for alms
in a train station.

The hat prevents any "self-ish"
connection between the
donor and recipient,
just as our caretaker's effort
in this simple act
of *just cleaning*.

Thank you Agnes
for attending to
Sojun Roshi's hut.

Ross Blum



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