



Berkeley Zen Center



March 2009 Newsletter

Council on Sangha and the Economy — How Is It With You?

The unfolding U.S. financial crisis is forcing many of us into difficult places. Some are losing our jobs, many are seeing savings evaporate. Too often we feel alone with these hardships. On Tuesday, March 10 at 7p.m. in the BZC community room, BZC friends can meet in council to share our feelings and experience. Alan will give basic instruction in council, a practice that is widespread in Buddhist communities across the country.

In meditation we bear witness to thoughts and feelings as they come and go in mind. In council we bear witness to each other's thoughts and feelings, as well as our own. During council we have a collective experience with its shadows and clarity. In meditation there is always the opportunity for insight into true reality. Council offers a similar opportunity. *(Continued on p. 2)*

The Five Houses of Zen — a Class

At the height of China's Tang Dynasty, one hundred fifty years after the 6th Ancestor Huineng spoke the dharma, Chan flowered as what has come to be known as the "Five Houses of Zen." The Tang Dynasty was rich in Chan masters and certainly not limited to these five schools — Guiyang (Guishan and Yangshan), Linji or Rinzai, Caodan or Soto (Dongshan and Caoshan), Yunmen, and Fayen. But each school, with its founders and disciples, has a particular "wind of the house," an approach to Zen and life that carries through to Suzuki Roshi, and all the ways in which the practice flourishes today. Studying these five houses, we can reflect on our own lives and practice. *(Continued on p. 6)*



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

March

Beginner's Sitting

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

All-Sangha Potluck—Budget

Tuesday, 3/3, 6:30 pm

Founder's Ceremony

Tuesday, 3/3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 3/4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 3/7, 9:40 am

Guest Bowl Oryoki Instruction

Saturday, 3/14, 11:30 am

Friday, 3/20, 4:40 pm

One-day Sitting

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

April

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 4/2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 4/3, 6:40 am

Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Saturday, 4/4

(See page 4 for details)

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4/11, 9:40 am

Zazenkai (Just Sitting Retreat)

Sunday, 4/12, 8:00 am-5:10 pm

Work Day Sitting

Sunday, 4/19

Mountains and Rivers

Friday-Sunday, 4/24-26

March NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome new members **Matt Gilliam** and **James Redfield**.

Sangha News

Many thanks to **Leslie Bartholic** and the many others who brought the new kokyo and doan book project to completion last month. The kokyos are especially happy to have big font and easy-to-find services!

Please welcome **Alexandra Frappier** and her two African lovebirds to the BZC residency. They'll be residing and flying in 1933a. Alexandra has a long practice history through Zen Center and we look forward to her further contributions here at Shogaku-ji.

Council on Sangha and the Economy *(Continued from p. 1)*

Its basic principles include:

1. Listening and speaking from the heart.
2. No cross-talk or interruption.
3. Using "I" statements to take responsibility for oneself.
4. Being lean or economical in your expression, leaving room for others to speak.
5. Practicing spontaneity; not rehearsing what one plans to say in advance of speaking.
6. Creating an atmosphere of safety and confidentiality.

We will not focus here on problem solving, rather on opening ourselves. But, trusting the openness of freely sharing, wherever we go will open doors. Please join us.

Sojun would like to make a request for a volunteer to transcribe lectures. Thank you for considering this



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

March 7 Childcare
March 14 Childcare
March 21 Sesshin - no program
March 28 Childcare - pageant preparations
April 4 **Buddha's Birthday Pageant! Please come!**
April 11 Childcare
April 18 **Kidzendo**
April 25 Childcare
May 2 Childcare
May 9 Childcare
May 16 **Kidzendo**
May 23 Childcare
May 30 Childcare
June 6 Childcare
June 13 Childcare
June 20 Sesshin - no program
June 27 **Kidzendo**



From a Lecture by Sojun Roshi

The true test of our practice is how we maintain our composure under trying circumstances. Ill health, abandonment, grief over loss of loved ones, failures, loss of various kinds of security, and the burden of responsibilities, to mention only what comes to mind.

When I was a young Zen student practicing with Suzuki Roshi, I went through a long painful period of learning how to sit with a calm mind, not attaching to the physical or the emotions. I have now been sitting for about forty-five years, and in that time I have experienced many trials. I remember something from those early days that was said by the late Chinese Master Hua: “Everything is a test to see what you will do.”

In 1965 Master Hua had his temple in a house on the corner of Sutter and Laguna, a block away from Sokoji Temple on Bush Street where we practiced with Suzuki Roshi. One of my friends asked Master Hua if we could sit a seven-day sesshin with him. He said, “Okay.” There were four of us who had never sat a sesshin before. It was a great ordeal. We couldn’t sit still. All day long we tried to find a comfortable position. Nothing worked. There was the wonderful smell of Chinese incense, which I can recall to this day. We ate Chinese monk-style: one meal a day at noon. That noon meal, which was prepared by a number of Chinese women whom we could hear scurrying around in the kitchen all morning, was a veritable feast eaten around a large round table. It was like a meal in heaven, with unrestrained talking and laughter. It felt like a reward for all the pain and difficulty we had been going through.

At the beginning of the sesshin, Master Hua had said that he hoped at least a few of us would get enlightened during that week. We didn’t know what he meant. But I thought it might have something to do with sitting still and not moving. Even through all the difficulty, and the fact that we couldn’t sit still, there was something about the intense effort that was deeply satisfying.

The four of us returned to Sokoji and Suzuki Roshi. I practiced hard with Suzuki Roshi for seven years under his stick and his constant refrain to sit up straight, to let go of discriminating mind, gaining mind, and self-centeredness, not to grasp or push things away. “Don’t get caught by anything,” he would always say. He also said that if you have calm mind and true composure in all circumstances, nothing can turn you over, and you will always be the “boss” wherever you are. My appreciation for this enlightened practice and the treasure of the difficulty I experienced is boundless.



Buddha's Birthday

Buddha's Birthday marks not only the birth of the Buddha but the fresh possibility of awakening to one's own life. This year our Buddha's Birthday celebration will be on Saturday, April 4, and we will do something very different from years past.

Some of you have doubtless attended Buddha's Birthday at Green Gulch, where the birth story is acted out with puppets and masks created by Annie Hallatt. Since Green Gulch has decided not to do the pageant this year, Annie has offered her talents and resources to BZC, so we have decided to try to produce this enactment (slightly scaled down) with and for our sangha and friends. It is a delightful and whimsical production for children of all ages.

Schedule:

- 7:30 Decorating the bower,
cleaning grounds, set up for play
- 8:45 Zazen instruction in the zendo
- 9:40 Zazen
- 10:15 The Birth of Shakyamuni Buddha –
A Musical Comical Drama

See the zendo bulletin board for a full schedule, and to sign up to help.

There will, of course, be a luxurious bower for the baby Buddha. Please bring flowers on Friday, April 3—carnations, iris, daisies, ranunculus, sweet william, and camellias are especially good. Leave them on the community room porch before evening zazen, or bring treasures from your garden when you come Saturday morning.

For more information regarding the bower, contact BZC Co-Head Chiden, Stephanie Solar at sdsolar@earthlink.net.

Everyone is invited to help with this production. We need actors and dancers of every age. We also can use the skills of sangha musicians. We will do some active recruiting, but if you are interested in lending a hand, call Laurie or Alan at 845-2215.

Zazenkai: A Day of Just Sitting

Sunday, April 12, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:10 p.m., will be an opportunity to spend a day doing nothing but zazen, kinhin, bowing, and

eating. We will maintain silence throughout, with the exception of bells to mark meditation periods, and chanting the Refuge aloud at 5:10 p.m.

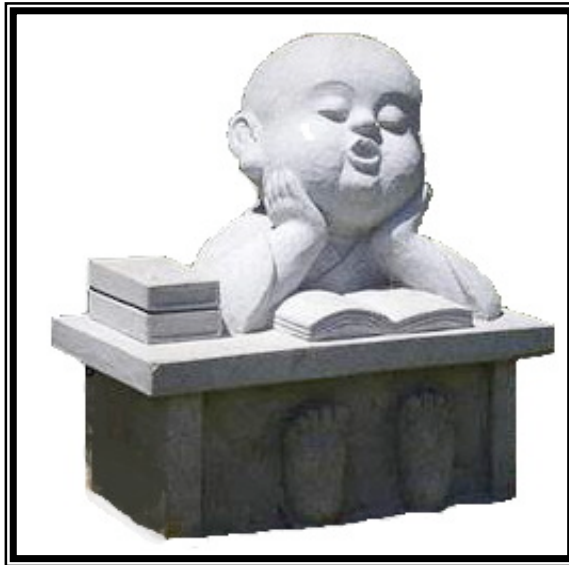
Participants are encouraged to come for the whole day, but morning or afternoon half-day registration is also an option. Please plan to come for the entire time that you commit to. A break

from 12:20-1:00 p.m. will allow time for bag lunches to be eaten in the community room or, if we're enjoying fair weather, outdoors.

Following the practice of Maylie Scott with the Arcata Zen Group, there will be a ten-minute period of bowing at your own pace prior to the lunch break, and we will have two periods of fast kinhin. Both of these activities can be adapted to harmonize with individual needs and abilities.

The zazenkai will be co-led by BZC priests Andrea Thach at andrea.thach@gmail.com, and Catherine Cascade at catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net.

Please feel free to contact them if you have any questions. A sign-up sheet and further information will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. Suggested donation for the day is \$20.



Burma Report:

Hozan Alan Senauke

Sunday, March 22, 7:00 p.m.

BZC Community Room

In the aftermath of the 2007's Saffron Revolution and the devastation of Cyclone Nargis last summer, Burma has again fallen out of the news. But political repression and the junta's police state continue to thrive, even as the people of Burma remain impoverished and driven. Nargis has left some of the most productive agriculture lands under water, hundreds of villages just gone.

Alan returned to Burma in January, where he had an opportunity to work with young Burmese cyclone relief workers, the in-country staff of the Foundation for the People of Burma. In a week-long rural retreat they meditated and prayed together, and worked on communication skills, diversity, and team building.

On Sunday evening, March 22, BZC's Socially Engaged Dharma group has invited Alan to report on this trip, show photographs, and reflect on the current political and human rights situation in Burma. Donations are gratefully accepted for Clear View Project, www.clearviewproject.org.



Total Dynamic Action!

Heeding the call to the National Day of Community Service, on January 18 seven BZC bodhisattvas took to Russell and Otis Streets to clean up, prune, and beautify the local neighborhood in response to our new president's call to think galactically and act locally. The next day, organizer Laurie Senauke and socially engaged dharma friends hosted the many for a pancake inauguration breakfast. Thank you, Laurie for inspiring us in day-to-day activity!

The Community Service Day was sufficiently inspirational that we are considering expanding it next year to include a partial day of teaching on Martin Luther King Jr's dharma and sitting on the Sunday, and a day of service on the Monday.

If you have ideas, please contact Alan, alan@kushiki.org, Laurie, lauries@kushiki.org, or Andrea, andrea.thach@gmail.com

Busyness, Buddhism, & Enneagram Habits: a Workshop With Santikaro **Sunday, April 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**

Our dhamma friend Santikaro will be visiting BZC again to explore the overlap between Buddhist practice and the Enneagram.

What is the role of busyness in our meditation and in our lives? We'll look at craving, clinging, and emotional and cognitive habits. Freed from habit-driven busyness, what would healthy "dhammic busyness" look like?

Santikaro will give some instruction from the Buddha-Dhamma and Enneagram perspectives; there should be ample time for discussion and sharing.

Lunch will be in bags—bring your own, or purchase one from the Thai temple down the street, or from Berkeley Bowl up the street.

The cost is \$50, and scholarships are available.



The Five Houses of Zen *(Ctd. from p. 1)*

Vice Abbot Hozan Alan Senauke will teach a five-week class on the pivotal Zen masters whose teachings came to be seen as the Five Houses of Zen. Hozan will co-teach four of the classes with senior practice leaders. Our text will be *The Golden Age of Zen* by John Wu.

Copies are available on the internet or from the publisher, World Wisdom, at www.worldwisdom.com. We have about ten copies for sale at about \$15.00/copy. Leave a note in class coordinator Ron Nestor's box on the community room porch if you want one. Copies of selected chapters, and an extended reading list, will also be available to the class. Classes will be from 7:15 - 8:45 p.m. Thursday

evenings beginning March 26 and ending April 23. Cost for the series is \$25.00. Please sign up on the patio bulletin board.

New Study Group

A *Shobogenzo-zuimonki* Study Group will begin Wednesday, March 25, led by Karen Sundheim and Andrea Thach.

The primary text will be the translation by Shohaku Okumura, but two other translations will also be consulted. Location will be North Oakland.

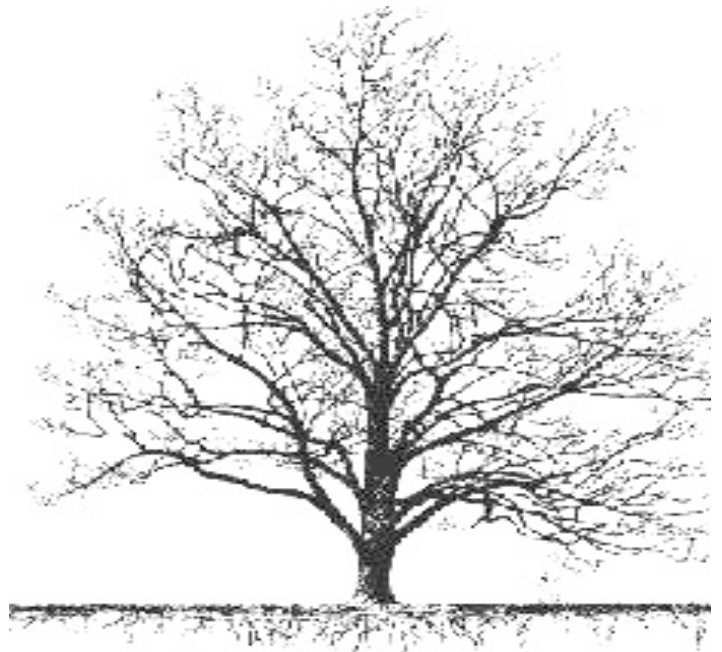
The group will meet monthly from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. For more details, contact ksundheim@gmail.com or andrea.thach@gmail.com.

The Cherry Tree

*Out of the nursery and into the garden
where it rooted and survived its first hard winter,
then a few years of freedom while it blossomed,
put out its first tentative branches, withstood
the insects and the poisons for insects,
developed strange ideas about its height
and suffered the pruning of its quirks and clutters,
its self-indulgent thrusts
and the infighting of stems at cross purposes
year after year. Each April it forgot
why it couldn't do what it had to do,
and always after blossoms, fruit, and leaf-fall,
was shown once more what simply couldn't happen.*

*Its oldest branches now, the survivors carved
by knife blades, rain, and wind, are sending shoots
straight up, blood red, into the light again.*

*David Wagoner
(with permission of the poet)*



Developing an Ikebana Eye: an introductory talk and demonstration



One offering mode is that of flowers. The first such formal expression of Buddhist devotion was made by the Chinese, who floated petals in bowls before Buddha. Gradually, in Japan, kado developed into a secular art form, which currently comprises over two thousand registered schools of ikebana.

A brief overview of the history of ikebana and a short demonstration of one of the major contemporary schools' (Sogetsu) flower arranging principles will be given by Barbara Strauss in the community room on Saturday, March 28th, from 1 to 3 p.m.

Special consideration will be given to arranging flowers in our zendo, along with practical information on flower care, equipment and techniques.

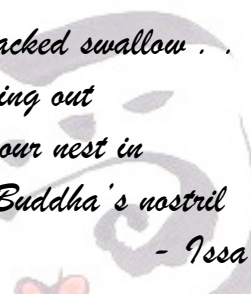
RESIDENCY OPENING

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

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.

In general, residents participate fully in life at BZC, including daily zazen, the Saturday program, sesshin, and the full range of volunteer activities.

*Ah, sacked swallow . . .
twittering out
from your nest in
great Buddha's nostril
- Issa*



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