



# Berkeley Zen Center



July 2009 Newsletter

## **Sojun's 80th Birthday Party!**

We will be celebrating Sojun Mel Weitsman's 80th Birthday at the Sequoia Lodge in Oakland on July 5 from 3:30 to 7 p.m. This event will be open to everyone in the BZC community. Don't miss this octogenarian extravaganza! Be sure to RSVP, either to Alexandra Frappier at [afrappier1@gmail.com](mailto:afrappier1@gmail.com), or to Gerry Oliva at [olivag@fcm.ucsf.edu](mailto:olivag@fcm.ucsf.edu).

## **Half-Day Sitting, Sunday, July 12**

BZC offers eight half-day sittings each year. Each includes five periods of zazen, kinhin and an informal tea. A half-day sitting is a great opportunity to focus on "just zazen" and is appropriate for beginning as well as experienced sitters. Sojun Roshi asks participants to commit to the four-hour schedule and, in support of everyone's practice, to refrain from using scented products in the zendo. Contact half-day director Ann Kennedy, [kaimon@earthlink.net](mailto:kaimon@earthlink.net), with any questions.

## **One-Day Sitting, Saturday, July 18**

This will be our only full-day sesshin in July and August. It's likely to be less crowded and therefore more spacious than the five-day end-of-practice-period sesshin just completed, and offers a wonderful way to continue our practice during the summer.

Sesshin information, signup sheets, and instructions are posted on the outside BZC bulletin board, and will be there until Wednesday, July 15. Please sign up as early as you can. If you have questions, please contact the July 18 sesshin director John Rubin at 510-339-7068, or [john\\_rubin@comcast.net](mailto:john_rubin@comcast.net).



### **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**

### **July**

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Thursday, 7/2, 6:20 p.m.  
Friday, 7/3, 6:40 a.m.

#### **Zendo Holiday**

7/4 – No Saturday Program

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 7/11, 9:40 a.m.

#### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 7/12, 8:00 a.m.-noon

#### **One-Day Sitting**

Saturday, 7/18

#### **Annual BZC Campout**

7/18-7/19 See article, p. 2

#### **Mountains & Rivers Sesshin**

Friday-Sunday, 7/24-7/26

#### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 7/25

### **August**

#### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 8/2, 8:00 a.m.-noon

#### **Founder's Ceremony**

Monday, 8/3, 6:20 p.m.  
Tuesday, 8/4, 6:40 a.m.

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 8/8, 9:40 a.m.

#### **Work Day Sitting**

Sunday, 8/9

#### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 8/15

#### **Summer Recess**

Sunday, 8/16-Sunday, 8/23

## B Z C C A M P O U T

On the weekend of July 18-19 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 then a campfire, wake up to birds singing, and a breakfast is provided. It's all over at noon Sunday. Folks can come just for the evening or just for the morning if they don't want to sleep over. Sign up on the bulletin board by July 16; we'll send you a map and whatever information you need to be able to participate. For more info, talk to Katherine Ogburn at klo999@yahoo.com or Laurie Senauke at laurie@kushiki.org.

### Mountains and Rivers Sesshin and Sojun Roshi

Our next Mountains and Rivers Sesshin will take place Friday through Sunday, July 24-26, at Point Reyes. Sojun Roshi will be leading it.

This will be the fourteenth M&R sesshin that Sojun has led. He has always carried his own backpack and would probably continue to do so, despite the fact that he is now 80 years old, except that he has had a recent leg problem. He still intends to hike in with us, but if the leg problem persists others of us will carry some or all of his gear. (This is mentioned both as a salute to Sojun and as a possible inspiration/challenge to those of you who have thus far avoided M&Rs out of fear that they were too difficult.)

Everyone is encouraged to do the full three days, but provision will also be made for people who can take part only in the Saturday-Sunday portion. All meals are provided and camping experience is not required.

Information and signup sheet will be posted on the BZC bulletin board. If you have any questions, please call Ken Knabb (527-0959) or email him at knabb@bopsecrets.org.

### Appreciation

Deep gasshos to the cooks, musicians, poets, and actors of BZC's practice period who combined their talents and efforts to produce a dinner and evening of entertainment for the whole BZC community on June 6. This is always one of the highlights of our Zen year, and 2009 was particularly outstanding. The entire sangha is still thrilled!



### Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturday mornings 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

July 4	Zendo holiday – no program
July 11	Childcare
July 18	Sesshin - no program
July 18-19	Campout – don't miss it!
July 25	<b>Kidzendo</b>
Aug 1	Childcare
Aug 8	Childcare
Aug 15	<b>Kidzendo</b>
Aug 22	Interim – no program
Aug 29	Childcare

**Sojun would like to find a volunteer to transcribe lectures. Thank you for considering this. Please contact him if you are interested in this practice.**

## *One More Thought on Metta*

*A lecture by Sojun Roshi*

**7**he *Metta Sutra* opens with a teaching: “This is what should be accomplished by the one who is wise . . .” Then it introduces a prayer: “May all beings be happy . . .” Then it offers guidance on how to do this: “Even as a parent, at the risk of one's life, watches over and protects one's only child . . .”

Many people feel that zazen assumes the role that prayer takes in other religions. Prayer takes many forms, among which are supplication to a deity, and asking for favors of one kind or another. The highest form of prayer is simply recognized as communion with no other motive.

Many people think that Buddhism is not a religion because it doesn't point to a deity. It is widely thought that Buddhism is atheistic. But a-theistic is just the other side of theistic. I think of Buddhism as non-theistic. There have been throughout the history of Buddhism, theistic tendencies in both the early and later schools. In India the Pudgalavadins posited the existence of an immortal soul, which was denied by all the other schools. Then the Mahayana came up with Vairocana, the Dharmakaya Buddha, as personifying the primal source, along with the understanding of the Buddha Nature as the all-pervasive primal reality common to all beings. The Pure Land school chants the name of Amida Buddha and offers prayers for salvation, as do other schools. But for Buddhists, none of this adds up to either a deity or a first cause.

A deity provides a focal point. It is the ultimate parent. But, even though there is no recognized deity in Buddhism, it often seems like there is. We like to say that the true human body is the whole universe: one whole being with infinite phenomenal expressions, and we stress the interconnectedness of all beings. So we direct our effort toward harmonization and right conduct because each one of us creates a positive or negative influence on our immediate surroundings and through the power of influence, on the world at large. Many Buddhists believe that there is just one soul: the vast being we call Buddha. And each one of us is a unique expression of that one soul. Our individuality is temporal, but our life of unity is universal. Therefore, when we hurt each other, we hurt ourselves, and when we help each other, we help ourselves.

In this *Metta Sutra*, or, Meditation on Metta, as it is now being called, we offer this prayer: “May all beings be happy, may they be joyous and live in safety, all living beings whether weak or strong, in high or middle or low realms of existence, small or great, visible or invisible, near or far, born or to be born, may all beings be happy.” This prayer for the happiness and well being of all is a truly religious expression. It includes all beings unconditionally. It is on the level. It is an expression of pure faith. There is a Buddhist term, *adhisthana*, which means something like the sustaining power of grace, or the assistance of the buddhas and bodhisattvas who meet us face to face through our selfless effort. Dogen uses the phrase, “Imperceptible mutual assistance.” In other words, the universe meets us and responds to our effort.

When my son was a little boy, I would read him stories about the ancient world. One was a story about the Vikings and another was about Rome. The Vikings were bloodthirsty. They would take their ships all over their world, pillaging unmercifully. The Romans were somewhat the same. They loved the Coliseum, which was an arena for all the viciousness of human nature. Then the Christians came along and changed the ancient Western world. I think it was a kind of miracle. In that way Buddhism is not different from true Christianity and other religions when they practice indiscriminate loving-kindness.

Even though Dogen Zenji says “only zazen,” without this effort it's not complete practice. “Only zazen” includes all beings. Whether sitting cross-legged on the cushion or at work in the world, if we are always abiding in Big Mind with all beings, that is “only zazen.” When we include each being as a part of our big self, even though all beings seem to exist independently, the prayer for the welfare of all beings permeates our practice as a way of life..

## ***July – New Member***

Please welcome new member **Paul Farber**.



## **SUMMER SUTRA STUDY: Dialogs from the Perfection of Wisdom**

Beginning Thursday, July 9, Laurie Senauke will teach a four-week class on the Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines. As we have been doing, we'll recite the sutra, but this year with a difference: we will split into two or more groups and recite the words of the different characters in the sutra, to really bring these conversations to life.

The class meets from 7:15 to 8:45 each Thursday evening. We'll meet in the community room most nights, though on July 23 we'll meet in the zendo. 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.

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### **2009 Benji Poem to the Shuso**

Every year during Practice Period, the *shuso*—head student for the Practice Period—has an assistant, the *benji*. Among the benji's many tasks in helping the shuso, it is traditional to write a poem to the shuso, to be read at the Shuso Ceremony that ends Practice Period.

Here is benji Zenku E-Shin Christy Calame's poem to our 2009 shuso, Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach:

#### ***For Yakuso Ryushin Andrea Thach***

*What is ordinary?  
And, hey, whose mind?  
Amidst our clattering—the body which talks  
that quick surge of fellow feeling  
daily mudfences and regret  
then, sharp,  
sighting the towhee's fine wings,  
a reminder of sitting zazen nested in bird song  
such sweetness and strange light  
soon lost again to work's endless roll call of "Who's next?"*

*The catch of it all  
how to pull it through  
just enough, that blinding, perfect eye of the needle,  
the dark side resting quietly  
within the radiance and the gentling.*

*So rise up, Dragon-hearted one.  
Foremothers, beasts, good tea cups,  
and the very air attend you.*

*Criss-crossed and jumbled  
let us touch the dark, unspoken,  
now glint and shine as one great shattered mirror.*

—Zenku E-Shin Christy Calame





## Lay Ordination

On Saturday, June 13 nine members and friends of the BZC sangha received lay ordination (*Zaike Tokudo*). This ceremony takes place once a year and is an important and significant ceremony for each participant, as well as for the whole sangha. We have the feeling that we are all participating, witnessing as the ordinees receive Buddha's Precepts, and welcoming the ordinees into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha. Congratulations to all!

### Sojun Roshi's Students

Joel Feigin  
*Kyoshin Jōku*  
Melodious Heart Continuous Offering

*Genshin Shōhō*  
Dark Forest Luminous Dharma

Deborah Good  
*Zendō Shin I*  
Virtuous Path True Intention

Veronica Reilly  
*Shōmen Myōju*  
True Face Bright Pearl

Matt Gillam  
*Junki Ninrei*  
Pure-hearted Vessel Patient Effort

### Hozan Alan Senauke's Students

Jason Straub  
*Seiki Tōgaku*  
Pure Spirit Climb the Peak

Vince Nocito  
*Myōzan Hondō*  
Luminous Mountain Original Way

Katherine Ogburn  
*Reikon Yūgen*  
Graceful Spirit Vast Source

### Shōsan Victoria Austin's Student

Catherine Galloway  
*Genro Karen*



L-R: Katherine Ogburn, Hozan Alan Senauke (Vice-Abbot/preceptor), Jason Straub, Sojun Mel Weitsman (Abbott/preceptor), Vince Nocito, Shosan Victoria Austin (preceptor), Deborah Good, Catherine Galloway, Matt Gillam (front), Joel Feigin (behind), Veronica Reilly, Tamar Enoch (preceptor jisha-behind), Denise Forest, Colleen Busch (ordinee jisha), Jean Selkirk (sewing teacher).

Profound  
Journey  
Jewel  
Lotus



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