



# Berkeley Zen Center



April 2010 Newsletter

## SPRING PRACTICE PERIOD

### A message from Sojun Roshi:

I am happy to announce that, at my request, and the approval of the senior students, Alexandra Frappier will be the Head Student (Shuso) for the Spring Practice Period that begins Saturday, May 15th and ends on Sunday, June 27, the last day of sesshin, with the Shuso Dharma-Question Ceremony. Her attendant (Benji) will be Paul Ridgway.

*Editor's note: A more detailed article including specific Practice Period events and dates will appear in the May issue of the newsletter. This April issue includes the Practice Period calendar insert.*

## ZEN PRACTICE AND THE ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

with Certified Alexander Teacher Anke Perkert  
Saturdays: April 3-24, 3:00 - 4:30 pm in the zendo

We are using our bodies to practice Zen. Understanding how our body and mind work together is crucial in developing a gentle, balanced, and lively relationship with our practice.

On four Saturdays in April, Anke Perkert, longtime Zen student and Certified Alexander Technique Teacher, will be teaching a four-week class on using the principles of the Alexander Technique in our Zen practice. (Ctd. on p. 2)

## ZAZENKAI: SILENT ONE-DAY SITTING

Sunday, April 4, 8:00 am - 5:10 pm

Maintaining silence throughout the day, the simple schedule will include only zazen, kinhin, bowing, and eating. (Ctd. on p. 2)



### 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

### April

#### Buddha's Birthday Celebration

Saturday, 4/3

#### Zazenkai (Just Sitting Retreat)

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

#### Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 4/5, 6:20 pm, Tuesday, 4/6, 6:40 am

#### Kidzendo, Saturday, 4/17

#### Work Day Sitting

Sunday, 4/18

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 4/24, 9:40 am

### May

#### Mountains & Rivers Sesshin

Saturday, 5/1-Sunday, 5/2

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 5/2, 8:00 am-Noon

#### New Member Entering Ceremony

Monday, 5/3, 6:20 am

#### Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 5/3, 6:20 pm, Tuesday, 5/4, 6:40 am

#### Practice Period Opens—One-day Sitting

Saturday, 5/15-Sunday, 6/27

#### Kidzendo, Saturday, 5/22

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 5/29, 9:40 am

#### Practice Period Dinner and Skit Night

Saturday, 5/29

## ZEN & ALEXANDER TECHNIQUE

(Ctd. from p. 1) The Alexander Technique offers a gentle, non-invasive approach to working with the physical and psychological challenges of sitting. It is known to bring about subtle yet profound changes in the way we move, think, and experience ourselves.

Emphasis is given to understanding how our body functions in relationship to our awareness and how we as individuals can make conscious choices for both body and mind. This class will give people tools not only for their sitting practice, but also for their daily lives.

April 3: Introduction to the Alexander Technique

April 10: The Structure of the Body and how we can work with it

April 17: Breathing

April 24: How to attain balance, movement, coordination and ease in stillness and activity

See the patio bulletin board for a sign-up sheet. You are encouraged to come for the entire series, but drop-ins are accepted. A teacher donation of \$10 per class is kindly requested. Please feel free to contact Anke at 925-631-1080 if you have any questions about this class. You can also visit her web site: [www.gracefulmoving.com](http://www.gracefulmoving.com).

## ZAZENKAI (Ctd. from p. 1)

Participants are asked to come for the whole day. A break from 12:20 - 1:00 will allow time for bag lunches to be eaten in the community room or, if we're enjoying fair weather, outdoors.

There will be a 10-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.

Additional information and a sign-up sheet will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. The fee is \$20.

The zazenkai will be co-led by BZC priests Andrea Thach, [andrea.thach@gmail.com](mailto:andrea.thach@gmail.com), and Catherine Cascade, [catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net](mailto:catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net). Please feel free to contact them if you have any questions.



## 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 e-mail Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto: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

April 2	Midday sitting and discussion
April 3	Buddha's Birthday
April 10	Childcare
April 16	Potluck, sitting, and discussion
April 17	KIDZENDO
April 24	Childcare
May 1	Childcare
May 7	Midday sitting and discussion
May 8	Childcare
May 15	Sesshin - no program
May 21	Potluck, sitting, and discussion
May 22	KIDZENDO
May 29	Childcare
June 4	Midday sitting and discussion
June 5	Childcare
June 12	Childcare
June 18	Potluck, sitting, and discussion
June 19	KIDZENDO
June 26	Sesshin - no program



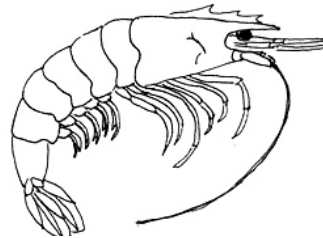
**SUBMISSION DEADLINE FOR BZC NEWSLETTER**  
is the third Friday of the month preceding each issue.  
May 2010 deadline: Friday, April 16, 8:00 PM.

## The Teaching of the Inanimate

A talk by Seishi Tetsudo Ross Estes Blum

Animate means lively, to give life to. What is the so-called inanimate, and can the inanimate teach us about life? This was Tozan Ryokai's koan—the teaching of the non-sentient.

I was in close proximity to a couple of restaurant patrons, one of whom became enlightened upon seeing dead shrimp on her plate. Her question, “What is that?!” while pointing to its eyes revealed her ignorance regarding what the now insentient menu item once was. In a former lifetime it possessed eye-consciousness—like she, and her subsequent cutting off and burying the heads in her napkin demonstrated to me that she couldn't see eating herself—her self. Sojun Roshi taught us that the food industry objectifies the animals it cages and slaughters in order to prevent the workers from truly seeing the animals' sentience and thereby their own. If they did, they wouldn't be able to perform their job. It is a more efficient way of “processing” the animals from a business point of view but the desensitization of the slaughterers, fishermen, and so on maintains a separation of self and other. When we separate from what's in front of us, we too kill life. Objectifying the enemy combatants away from their birthright as human beings creates more efficient soldiers on our side. When we objectify people they lose their sentience (and significance) to us. However, if we meet them as we meet ourselves in zazen, then even the so-called insentient will preach the dharma for us. To study the self is to forget the self [centered thinking] and to forget the self is to be enlightened by the ten thousand dharmas both sentient and not, for in that moment there is no distinction between sentience and non-sentience.



In zazen I had the experience of not quite being sentient, in that I was drowsy and inattentive to my posture and breath. When the thought arose to intend directing energy into both of these forms of our practice, I felt a surge of wakefulness, of uprightness which supported me throughout the rest of the period of zazen. When we sit upright we take in the whole universe. When we slouch, either physically or consciously, we don't. It felt as if I had breathed life or sentience into my mudra, which had died, in a manner of speaking. There was awareness and Buddha breathed. Buddha breathes for all of us when we vow to enter the dharma gates, which are right here in this mudra and on this plate.

When we see with our eyes and hear with our ears we are in the world of duality, which has a place for keeping us safe, as in not touching a hot stove and maintaining relative awareness to attend to the task at hand—the world of form. When we hear with our eyes and see with our nose we are living in the non-dual world—the world of emptiness. Conventional understanding of consciousness is turned on its head, as Dogen Zenji writes, “Seeing forms with the whole body and mind, hearing sounds with the whole body and mind, one understands them intimately.” We are receiving the ten thousand dharmas, and thus are brought back to life through the unobstructed sense faculties. When we let go of self-centered thinking we become inanimate, “dead,” and at the same time we become animate and animated as a result of achieving greater intimacy within our environment.

While riding up Milvia Street, I was awakened by the clear, crisp sound of raking. A sentient being was raking insentient leaves with an insentient rake—or was it? The teaching, “Where am I? Who am I?” filled the universe. Having just come from zazen, I was somewhat free of extraneous mental distractions, and thus more receptive to this teaching of the insentient.

At Peet's, where I work, I have a practice of gathering up stray coffee beans which have been misplaced on the counter. They normally reside in the bin or the bag, but sometimes they get "lost." Every two beans represents the shared inside of one ripe coffee cherry picked by hand far away from Berkeley. This practice I undertake of collecting insentient coffee beans connects me to the sentient farm worker and, I believe, shows respect for their handiwork. It also connects me to all the people involved in the cultivation, processing, transport, and brewing of the beverage—the soil, the machinery, the marketing, and so on. Seeing the interconnectedness of the sentient by way of paying attention to the insentient is experienced in the practice of zazen—of bringing zazen off the cushion and into the world.

A little notebook I've used to put my thoughts to paper has felt inanimate for most of the time I've possessed it. While I didn't intend to acquire it, it came my way nevertheless and now I'm its custodian. When I truly accepted my responsibility for having it in my life I discovered that it actually helps me organize my thoughts, which helped in the preparation of this talk. It has a life now and is a part of me. It breathes life back into me when I read what has been written. It is a mirror, it is my life. When we pluck a shrimp from the ocean

or a notebook from a display shelf we enter into a relationship with "it."  
How do we honor that relationship?



We don't step on the mealboard in the zendo because it's Buddha's tongue. This *upaya*, or skillful use of metaphor, brings our attention to what's in front of us. If we see things as Buddha versus non-sentient, we'll tend to have more reverence for them and with that a more mindful relationship. We will relate to them not as objects but as subjects—the subject of our life. To wake up. Homeless people are often objectified and thus become insentient to us so we don't have to relate to them. As we pass them, we feel dead as they do, through our lack of attention and respect for them. By our making eye contact, by our paying attention, they become sentient, and we enter into a relationship with them.

Hozan: Do insentient beings preach the Dharma to sentient beings? Do sentient beings preach the Dharma to insentient beings?

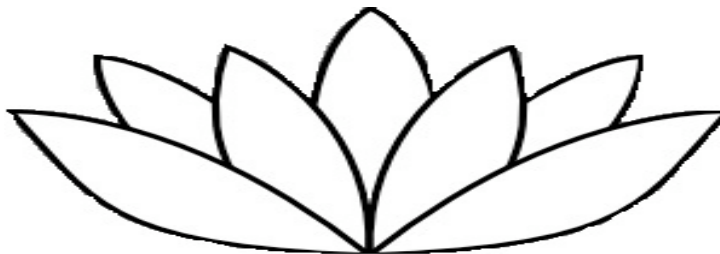
Tetsudo: What do you consider insentient?

Hozan: Things that don't breathe.

Tetsudo: Many of us have heard you play lovely music on your guitar, which is made of now insentient wood. You've spoken of the best music being played seamlessly when musicians come forward to play their part and then return to the whole—that the music really comes alive; that the wood is alive. So you tell me?

Hozan: I'm pretty clear on the first question. We're communicating back and forth, the so-called insentient and the so-called sentient.

Tetsudo: The Buddha taught sentient beings how to deal with their suffering. The insentient can take care of themselves.



## MYOAN GRACE SCHIRESON CLASS

On Saturday, May 1, from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm in the BZC zendo, Zen Abbess Myoan Grace Schireson, of Empty Nest Zendo and a Practice Leader at BZC, will be teaching from her book *Zen Women* and from Case 35 in the *Mumonkan*. The Case is “Seijo and her Soul are Separated.” This particular Case has also interested activists, psychologists and feminists, in addition to being a favorite koan of our beloved late Zen Abbess Seisho Maylie Scott. How is it we are not fooled by our own compartmentalizing and splitting our desires and responsibilities—as if they are dictated by separate beings? How do we find our true path when our obstacles are pulling us in two different directions? How do we wake up from both the dream of our longing, realistic responsibilities, and our just going along with an intolerable situation? When do we speak up, when do we bear our suffering silently? These issues and others related to finding the true Self—the real Seijo—who holds our questions, our answers and our fate in her tender hands—will be explored in one more class.

A sign-up sheet will be posted on the courtyard bulletin board. Class fee is \$20 or what you can afford.

## Mountains and Rivers Sesshins

Our next Mountains and Rivers Sesshin will take place Saturday and Sunday, May 1-2, at Point Reyes. Note that this is shorter than originally scheduled (we were unable to obtain a campsite for the preceding Friday evening).

Information and sign-up sheet will be posted on the BZC bulletin board. Sign-up deadline is Saturday, April 24. Please note that we have a new policy: M&R will be canceled if fewer than 15 people sign up.

Those of you who are interested in longer M&Rs should mark your calendar for our summer M&R, which will be four days long—Thursday-Sunday, July 29-August 1.

If you have any questions, please call Ken Knabb (527-0959) or e-mail him at [knabb@bopsecrets.or](mailto:knabb@bopsecrets.or).

## NEW MEMBER WELCOMING CEREMONY

**Monday, May 3, 6:20 am**

After the morning sitting we will have our annual ceremony for welcoming new members.

People who have become members since our last ceremony, or who have been members for a while but never participated in the ceremony, are invited to join us.

If you would like to be included, please contact the zendo manager, John Moge, at [mogey.john@gmail.com](mailto:mogey.john@gmail.com)

## BOWS TO JOHN MOGEY

A standing round of applause and thanks to **John Moge**, who has completed over four years as office manager. In that role, John has gone above and beyond, scooping up all the loose ends of various activities and positions, always saying “yes” when something was broken, replaced, mailed, bought, or found hidden in the nether reaches of the attic. The office manager position started out as mainly a bookkeeping task, and has grown over these four years to include many facets in support of our increasingly complex temple activities.

With John’s departure, we have now two people filling various aspects. Welcome **Sue Dunlap**, who will work closely with the treasurer on bookkeeping and membership-related work; and **Dave White**, who has settled into the “jack of all trades” job as administrative assistant for temple activities.

In the past four months, John has been doing double duty as both office manager and zendo manager.

We extend our deep appreciation to John for his generosity, warmth, and sincere practice.

## Changing Hands

Thanks to **Judy Bertelsen** for her service this past year as community room attendant, adding a special touch of order and cleanliness to the high-volume use of the community room. We welcome **Andrew Corson** into that position.

Many thanks, too, to our stand-in newsletter editor for the February and March editions, **Jed Appelman**. **Kate Gilpin** is again ably at the keyboard with this edition.



## BORN TO SHOP FOR THE HOMELESS?

Many thanks to Deborah Good for taking this position for the last few months. Now we are looking for a new person who would like to go on a monthly shopping spree on behalf of the Fourth Friday of the Month Men's Shelter Dinner. Laurie Senauke is the head cook, and she'd love to have a partner to do the shopping. The shopping list is clear and straightforward; shopping is done on Friday afternoon at Smart and Final in Oakland and delivered to the Men's Shelter at 5:00 pm. An indescribable amount of merit will accrue to the person who takes this on. (Just ask Deborah!). Please contact Laurie Senauke at [lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org), 510-845-2215 if you are interested.

## NEWS FROM THE BZC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Last year we discovered that many of our members had questions and felt unclear about BZC's membership dues, and also about class and sesshin fees. As a result, the Board has developed two policies which we hope will clarify the matter: the "BZC Policy on Dues, Fees, and Donations" and the "BZC Policy on Expenditures."

Developing and adopting these policies took many months of thoughtful effort involving extensive discussions among all of the Board members, Sojun, Hozan Alan Senauke, and many sangha members. Our goal was to write a policy that is very clear about the process and also expresses our community's spirit of inclusiveness. A summary is given below, and the full texts of the policies are available on the BZC website. Don't worry, each one is only a couple of pages long—please check them out sometime!

The "Policy on Dues, Fees, and Donations" describes those three terms, and establishes a framework that encourages members and friends to support BZC financially, as well as a process to gather information for budgetary planning purposes. In summary, **Dues** are the financial support that a BZC member commits to making on a monthly basis, and reflects an ongoing commitment to maintaining our practice place and supporting our teachers. Dues are our largest single source of operating income. **Fees** are charges for sesshins and classes to cover class costs, and also provide income to support our teachers. Fees are usually paid in advance or at the beginning of classes. Exceptions are made for dues and fees on the basis of financial hardship. **Donations** are an expression of dana (generosity), and are voluntary

contributions made for special purposes and needs, including major improvements to the temple buildings and expanding the Leadership Fund. Over our forty-year history donations have funded all of the major construction work, including building our zendo and making improvements to the community room and residential units. Additional improvements are planned, so the sangha continues to rely on and deeply appreciates these special donations.

The "Policy on Expenditures" describes the process of approving and making expenditures of sangha funds. Some expenses are very regular, such as taxes and insurance and salaries, but others involve some discretion on the part of those responsible, such as the tenzo, the project manager(s), the head gardener, and the sewing teacher. This policy sets limits on these discretionary expenditures, requiring consultation and approval for expenditures above \$400 and Board approval for all expenditures above \$1,000 or that exceed amounts provided in the Operating Budget.

If you have questions or comments on these policies please feel free to contact **Gerry Oliva**, President, or **David Weinberg**, Treasurer.

## SENIOR LIVING?

Two sangha members, Laurie Senauke and Susan Marvin, have been thinking for a long time about creating some kind of senior living situation for sangha members and others—anyone who might be interested. Both Laurie and Susan have cared for parents in a nursing home, and this has sparked conversations about what we would want for ourselves, and for other people we care about, as the years roll on.

Laurie and Susan are ready to gauge the level of interest in this project, and would like to call a meeting of anyone interested. The meeting will be Friday evening, April 30, at 7:15. For more information, contact Laurie ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)) or Susan ([lai\\_hang@yahoo.com](mailto:lai_hang@yahoo.com)).

If you are interested in the topic but can't make the meeting, please e-mail either of them and let them know what aspect you are interested in.

## WEEKLY TEA AT BZC

Friday afternoon drop-in tea is an ongoing event that happens every Friday at 5:00 pm. Everyone is welcome to stop by for tea, tea treats and conversation before afternoon zazen. This is a pleasant, casual way to get together with other BZC members and friends.

## RESIDENT PRACTICE

When Sojun Roshi created the resident practice at Berkeley Zen Center his vision was to give an opportunity to those wishing to commit to the intimacy of residential life, to those individuals wanting to maintain a quasi-monastic form in the world. Residency is shared by both priests and lay members.

While we all have our own unique intentions, the residents have an explicit set of guidelines and expectations to follow in support of the practice. Given the changing conditions we are all subject to, we acknowledge a “flexibility” to modify a resident’s scheduled intent. In general, the residents are expected to participate in daily zazen, including the full Saturday schedule, monthly sesshins, classes, resident dinners/meetings, sangha events such as potluck meetings and ordinations. They hold house jobs and practice positions. They “wake-up” the Buddha in the morning before zazen and secure the temple in the evening during the security nightwatch. Their apartments are made available for use during sesshin. Thus their collective presence as hosts of the temple fulfills an important function of welcoming people as they enter the practice here.

There are no openings at BZC for new residents currently, but if you have any questions concerning possible future resident practice please feel free to contact the Head Resident, Ross Blum.

## WELLBEING & MEMORIAL BINDER

We dedicate the positive energy of our practice for the benefit of all beings, and in particular to those especially close to our hearts whose names are on the Ongoing Wellbeing List and for whom we do individual wellbeing and memorial services.

The names on the Ongoing Wellbeing List are chanted at the Wednesday morning and Friday afternoon services each week as part of the *eko* (dedication of merit).

Individual wellbeing and memorial services can be scheduled as part of any morning or afternoon service when no other ceremony is planned.

To have a name placed on the Ongoing Wellbeing List, or to schedule an individual service, put a note in the zendo manager’s box or e-mail Catherine Cascade at [catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net](mailto:catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net).

If you would like to share additional information, you may add a page to the binder on the patio bulletin board shelf.

In addition to the Wellbeing section, there’s now a new section for Memorials.

Pages stay in the binder for six months unless otherwise requested.

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Rengetsu was a female Zen monk in the 19th century. She was also a prolific ceramicist and a poet. She often hand-wrote poems on everyday items she made, such as cups and teapots. Frequently, she would paint an illustration on the item which corresponded to the poem on it. On the cup shown here, Rengetsu has painted a hut and moon inside for the poem written on the bottom. Her work was very popular in her lifetime, and is still prized and cherished today. The inspiring story of her life can be read in Grace Schireson's book, *Zen Women*. —Nancy McClellan



### *Rengetsu Moon Hut Cup Poem*

*In a mountain field  
Enthralled, so enthralled  
Returning all the way home  
Accompanied by the  
Autumn moon.*

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