



# Berkeley Zen Center



May 2010 Newsletter

## SPRING PRACTICE PERIOD

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting starting at 5:00 am on Saturday, May 15 and lasting through the Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 27. Sojun Roshi invites everyone to increase their commitment to practice during this period while still minding their obligations outside the gate.

Seishi Yusho Alexandra Frappier—Clear Resolve/Courageous Life—will be the shuso this year, sharing the abbot's seat and setting an example for us all. Sanfu Kakushi Paul Ridgway—Mountain Wind/Awakening Mind—will serve as benji, assisting the shuso.

There will be a Thursday night class with Sojun Roshi, studying Dogen Zenji's key fascicle, *Genjokoan*. For a detailed practice period schedule, see the bulletin board shelf. Practice period applications are also available on the main bulletin board shelf; please fill one out and return it to the shuso's box on the community room porch by Monday, May 10.

Remember that, besides signing up for practice period and turning in a registration form, you need to sign up separately for a number of the individual practice period events. See the bulletin board for these sign-up sheets.

### Practice Period Events

Opening sitting: 5/15, 5 am-9:10 pm

Opening/Shuso Entering Ceremony: 5/15, about 11 am

Shuso talks: 5/17, 5/29, 6/4, 6/12

Classes: Thursday evenings, 7:30 pm, 5/20-6/17

Bansan (tea, dharma discussion with the abbot): Friday, 5/21

Dinner and Skit Night: Saturday, 5/29, 6:00 pm

Shosan (dharma dialogue with the abbot): 6/11, 6/21

Lay Ordination: Saturday, 6/19, 3:00 pm

Five-day Sesshin: 6/23-27

Shuso Hossen (dharma dialogue with the shuso): Sunday, 6/27



### 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

### 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

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 5/29, 9:40 am

#### **Practice Period Dinner and Skit Night**

Saturday, 5/29

### June

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

Thursday, 6/3, 6:20 pm, Friday, 6/4, 6:40 am

#### **Half-day Sitting**

Sunday, 6/6, 8:00 am-Noon

#### **Lay Ordination/Zaike Tokudo**

Saturday, 6/19, 3:00 pm

#### **Five-day Sesshin**

Wednesday - Sunday, 6/23-27

#### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 6/26, 9:40 am

#### **Shuso Hossen, Practice Period Ends**

Sunday, 6/27

## HALF-DAY SITTINGS

**Sunday, May 2, 2010, Sunday, June 6, 2010**

**8:00 AM – 12:00 NOON**

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. If you have any questions, please contact May and June’s half-day director Ann Kennedy at 510-649-9432 or kaimon@earthlink.net.

## 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.

## MAY 15 ONE-DAY SITTING

The spring practice period will begin with a one-day sitting on Saturday, May 15, from 5:00 am to 9:10 pm. All are welcome to attend, but if this is your first sesshin at BZC it is strongly recommended that you first participate in a full Saturday program, attend an oryoki instruction, and speak with the sesshin director. After you've read the sign-up information on the bulletin board and signed up for the sitting, please complete a sesshin information form. If you have already completed one, that is sufficient unless information has changed. If you have questions, contact the sesshin director, Jake Van Akkeren, by e-mail at jvanakkeren@comcast.net, by phone at 925-933-3486 (before 9:00 pm).

### NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:

Third Friday of the month preceding each issue.

June 2010 deadline: Friday, May 21, 8:00 PM



## Family Activities at BZC

**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; phone or e-mail 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 program for young ones three and up is offered on the third Saturday morning of each month (or the fourth if a sesshin is scheduled on the third). We meet at the Senaukes’—1933 Russell—at about 9:40 for a meet and greet, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene at 1933 Russell for more activities, possibly including formal tea and one minute of meditation and/or free play, depending on the realities of the moment.

## Zazen & Discussion for Parents, Childcare Provided

**1st Friday Midday**—Noon to 1 pm. Check calendar for dates. From noon to 1, childcare is offered in the community room, with zazen followed by discussion in the zendo.

**3rd Friday Evening**—6:15 pm to 8:00 pm. Check calendar for dates. A potluck dinner for parents and children in the community room, followed by a brief period of zazen and a discussion about family practice in the zendo. Childcare provided in the community room. For questions about our Friday programs, contact Marie Hopper, (510) 559-8831.

May 1	Childcare
May 7	<b>Midday sitting and discussion</b>
May 8	Childcare
May 15	Sesshin—no program
May 21	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
May 22	<b>KIDZENDO</b>
May 29	Childcare
June 4	<b>Midday sitting and discussion</b>
June 5	Childcare
June 12	Childcare
June 18	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
June 19	Childcare
June 26	Sesshin—no program



## Letting Go

*from a lecture by Sojun Mel Weitsman Roshi  
January 10, 2009*

**F**rom time to time I talk about a list of ways of letting go, and today I want to comment on it again. What does it mean to let go? As well as letting go, there must be the way of taking up. How do we hold and let go at the same time?

What is there to hold to and what is there to let go of? We talk about abiding in our essential nature. The Sixth Ancestor, Daikan Eno, talks about not straying from our essence of mind, and Suzuki Roshi talked about it as well, saying that we should always abide in our big mind in all circumstances. Observing the breath we can see that exhaling is letting go, and inhaling is taking up. As Suzuki Roshi liked to say, "More important than inhaling is exhaling," (*Laughs*) though you can't prove that. They're equal. But he put the emphasis on letting go, on emptying out. And, strangely enough, coming back to life. Exhaling, we expire, and inhaling, we inspire and resume our activity. Birth and death on the blank screen we call life.

Another way of expressing it is as wisdom and compassion. When we say essence of mind, this seems more abstract or intangible, like emptiness. We say essence of mind, and function; essence and function. Essence is the source or background, so to speak, and function is the activity. We use wisdom, or prajna, to express the function of essence of mind. And the function of wisdom is compassion.

So how do we let go, which is an act of wisdom, and at the same time hold what's necessary with compassion? In other words, how can we actually relate and help each other and ourselves through wisdom and compassion? I like to think of this as maintaining our composure. Maintaining composure is how we balance our feelings, our emotions, and our thoughts so that, although we may be upset, we can always let go and find our balance, like the Daruma doll that always come back up after you turn it over.

The next way is "To let go does not mean to stop caring. It means I can't do it for someone else." This is a subtle aspect of our teaching. Practice is something you have to do yourself and no one can do for you. Your life has to be lived by you and nobody can live your life for you.

Sometimes within our practice it looks like the teacher is not caring about the student because the teacher will not answer all the student's questions the way the student wants them answered, or take the student's side in every instance.

Sometimes people have problems with each other or want verification for themselves; they'll come to the teacher and the teacher will not agree with what they think. But that does not mean the teacher doesn't care. It looks like rejection. We do that with each other. We have some kind of disagreement with each other and it looks like we don't care. But actually, the friend or teacher is very compassionate. Suzuki Roshi said that when he was paying a lot of attention to working with one person, some others might feel neglected. But to work with one student is to work with everyone.

What is compassion? Sometimes what looks like rejection is, in actual fact, compassion. Sometimes we may criticize, but it is out of compassion. Sometimes we will not accept certain traits of a person but we don't abandon the person. We are mirrors reflecting each other, and it is up to us to see our reflection clearly. It looks like we are not caring, but actually it is compassion. Compassion is to let go and take in someone's suffering. But misguided compassion can actually be harmful. The teacher, out of compassion, will sometimes give and sometimes withhold. This is something the student must deal with. I can't give you what you want. I can only give you my support, my caring and most of all, my patience. It doesn't mean not caring; it is letting go, and helping you by not helping.

The next way is “To let go is not cutting myself off, it’s the realization that I can’t control another person.” Suzuki Roshi has a well-known statement that you should give a cow or a horse a wide field in order for them to find themselves. But it doesn’t mean the teacher is not caring about the student. Although you give the student a wide field, you always know where the student is. You are not unaware of what’s going on or what’s happening, and you’re always ready to help the student at just the right moment. On the other hand, sometimes the student needs a very narrow corral and restricted movement.

Timing is very important in dealing with a student or a friend. We say a teacher fishes with a straight hook. The fish has to hold on. You can’t control that. The fish has to want something. If the fish bites, the teacher responds. If the fish swims away, that is okay too. But the teacher responds according to the spirit of the fish. There are many stories about a teacher’s coolness. Sometimes when a student wants too much the teacher has to be a little cool. It may be felt as rejection; but it is simply teaching about space, teaching about relationship. We are all the time teaching each other how to relate. Every time we meet somebody or have an interaction we are teaching each other how to relate. So we have to be sensitive to each other’s sensibilities. I teach you how to relate to me and you teach me how to relate to you. But we don’t think that’s what we are doing; we’re just doing it.

Next is, “To let go is not to enable, but to allow, learning from natural consequences.” In other words, leaving someone to learn from their own mistakes. We see someone going off, and we want to say something, but we can’t really control them. We have to be able to contain our impulse to save. You know what’s going to happen. Boom. It’s like teaching a baby to walk; you know they are going to fall down. But you let them do that because if they don’t fall down they can’t learn to get up by themselves. So it is letting something happen to a person which you would rather not have happen, but which is in that person’s best interest. It’s difficult. We want to express our compassion and our help, but when we do that we prevent the person from learning something and actually progressing.

One controversial example is teaching someone to sit zazen. When I was learning to sit we never put any props under our knees. We’d sit with our knees up, but eventually, as we kept doing it, our knees would go down and little by little we would be able to progress in our sitting position. That’s the way we learned how to sit. Of course this does not work for everyone. But, no matter what position we take, there will be discomfort. If we don’t let it hurt we can’t go beyond it. So we have to learn how to receive pain in order to be free from it. And to be able to receive pain without attachment is zazen. Otherwise we can’t learn how to develop true composure. Making it easy is a kind of hindrance, though it looks like a help.

Next is “To let go is not to change or blame another; it’s to make the most of myself.”

During Rohatsu sesshin I recited the Sixth Ancestor’s long poem, in which he emphasizes not blaming others but rather, paying attention to your own practice. Don’t look at the faults of the world. He doesn’t mean you don’t see what is going on around you, but that, instead of trying to fix or blame others, you work on yourself. Because when we work on our own character that influences the world. Blaming others is not a good influence. But working on ourselves encourages everyone around us. Sometimes we feel that we have no effect on the world, but it is impossible not to.

This is why when we say, “Who’s a teacher?” we don’t always know who teachers are. Sometimes the teacher looks like the worst student. It’s not who knows the most. It’s the person who is sincerely dedicated to his practice, and is having a most difficult time. The person who has the most difficult time but is totally dedicated is often a wonderful teacher. People who have an easy time are not necessarily good teachers.. But we’re all good teachers because we’re all having a difficult time. (*Laughs*). Everybody has a difficult time. Staying with the practice, and staying with the difficulty, using the difficulty, that’s what makes a teacher.

Sometimes after a student who is a lay person has been shuso I’ll give her a green rakusu as a recognition of her practice—someone who has practiced a long time and is a good example. That person may ask, “What does this mean?” What it means is that unbeknownst to him, his practice is exemplary. And that’s what encourages us. That’s what makes the practice work. So, it’s not so much what you know, or how smart you are, it’s more how you express the essence of practice through your life. (*To be continued*)



## PRACTICE PERIOD CLASS

Sojun Roshi's Thursday evening practice period class series this year will be on Zen master Dogen's *Genjokoan*. Translations of the work include *Actualizing the Fundamental Point* or *The Koan of Everyday Life*. The *Genjokoan* was originally a letter from Dogen to one of his lay disciples early in his teaching career. A year before his death it was included as the first chapter in the *Shobogenzo* (Treasury of the True Dharma Eye). The *Shobogenzo* is Dogen's master work of ninety-five fascicles comprising essays originally delivered mostly as lectures to his monks. Making the *Genjokoan* the first of those fascicles shows its pivotal importance in Dogen's mind. We treat it in the same way.

The five-class series will begin Thursday, May 20th and end Thursday, June 17th. Class times are 7:15 to 8:45 pm. Class fee for the series is \$50.00, payable at the first class. Payment for individual classes based on limited attendance will not be accepted. As is always our policy, if you have difficulty affording the series cost please contact class coordinator Ron Nestor. We will gladly make arrangements for a fee reduction. Ron will be at the first class, or you can email him at [rnestor1@yahoo.com](mailto:rnestor1@yahoo.com).

Handouts for the class will be available at least one week prior to Practice Period on the bulletin board shelf. For a good introductory lecture from Sojun Roshi on the internet, go to <http://www.intrex.net/chzg/mel15.htm>. This is a talk on the *Genjokoan* he gave at Chapel Hill Zen Center in 1993.

## REFLECTIONS ON THE QUAKE: REPORT BACK FROM HAITI Sunday, May 23, 7:00 pm, in the BZC Community Room

In its ongoing series, Path of the Bodhisattva, the BZC Socially Engaged Dharma Group presents Jennifer Pantaléon, Executive Director of Zanmi Lakay, an organization dedicated to helping Haitian street children improve their lives. Jennifer traveled to Haiti several times after the earthquake and has helped provide relief through her organization. She will talk about what she witnessed, and will present a slide show. Her group also supports Haitian artisans, and she will bring beautiful, inexpensive art to sell. This event is for those in the sangha who

want to know more about the situation in Haiti and how they can help. Suggested donation: \$5.00. Contact Melody Ermachild Chavis for more information at [melodyermachild@comcast.net](mailto:melodyermachild@comcast.net).

## Thanks to Eric Kaufman

The residents and BZC sangha would like to offer Eric Kaufman a heartfelt thank-you for his time well spent here at our temple. He'll be moving out of 1929A, but not out of sight, for we're sure he will return to participate as time permits within his busy schedule as a school teacher. His quiet steady manner in handling the head dishwasher position, as well as stepping in for numerous practice opportunities, has left an inspirational mark on our way here. Thank you Eric!

## Changing Hands

Thank you and see you around to **Eric Kaufman** and **James Redfield** for staffing and maintaining our book table over the last months. Eric is moving outside the gate, but we will see him, though less often. James is moving to Seattle in the fall after spending the summer with his soon-to-be new wife in Germany. James says he has spent many happy hours at BZC. He is filled with gratitude for the warm, supportive friendships that he has formed and hopes to maintain. You can stay in touch with him at [jamesadamredfield@gmail.com](mailto:jamesadamredfield@gmail.com) or 773-343-5081.

Thanks to **Deborah Good** for stepping into the men's shelter dinner shopping on the fourth Friday these past months. Welcome to **Mike Cole**, who will be shopping that evening now.

**Catherine Galloway** turns over the care of the dokusan hut to **Linda Hess** this month. Thanks to Catherine for her care this past year.



**Baby Buddha Bower**

*Photo by Nancy Suib*

### **A Note from the Newsletter Editor**

Dear sangha members,

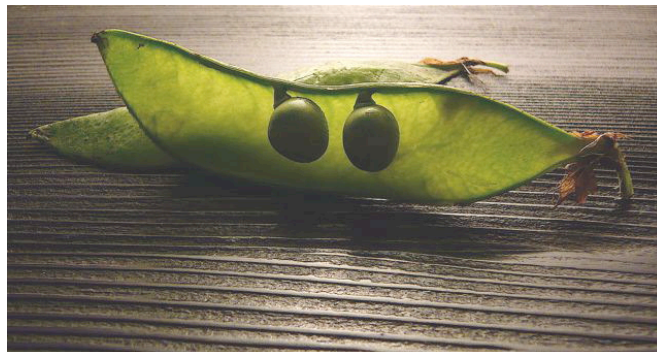
It is the goal of the BZC newsletter editor to include as many articles, notices, sangha news items, and occasional artwork of various kinds as possible, given the newsletter's scope and time constraints. We encourage you to use the newsletter.

As you know, the article submission deadline for the newsletter is the third Friday of every month. We send out an e-mail reminder a week in advance, as well as another reminder the day before the deadline. And there is a box on p. 2 of this newsletter each month with the date of the next issue's deadline. These reminders are designed to ensure that everyone is aware of the deadline. Even so, we sometimes receive items three or four days later.

The reason for the deadline is to give us some hope of fact-checking, editing, assembling, and formatting the newsletter in time to get it reviewed in time to get it proofed in time to get it to the printer in time to get it back from the printer in time to get it folded, labeled, and stamped in time to get it mailed before the first of each month. The schedule is therefore quite tight. If you cannot get your material in by the deadline, it may need to run the following month.

All newsletter submissions may be either e-mailed to the editor at [kate@wordsintoprint.com](mailto:kate@wordsintoprint.com), or left in the newsletter editor's mail slot on the back porch of the community room. Please, participate in our newsletter, use it, enjoy it, and plan ahead to get your items submitted before the deadline.

Deep gasshos to all—  
The editor



**Two in a Pod**

*Photo by Ross Blum*

### **TASSAJARA LANDSCAPE**

Like whispers thin and quick  
squirrels go,  
through long grass cross mossy  
stone.  
Barley tails!  
Swallows dip in air.  
Ten o'clock and no wind.  
This is the last urgency.  
My feet hang down this rock  
as I listen to water  
running by.

~ Lois Silverstein



*Photo by Nancy Suib*

### **Deep Boughs to Barbara Strauss**

for the informative and beautiful *Living Flowers Class* (Ikebana) on March 27.

Bows also to all the chidens who attended Sojun's review and who brought such delicious treats to the potluck luncheon.

If you are interested in becoming a chiden please contact Nancy Suib or Stephanie Solar. There are still more weeks available during the year for you to participate in this mindful practice. ~ Nancy Suib



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