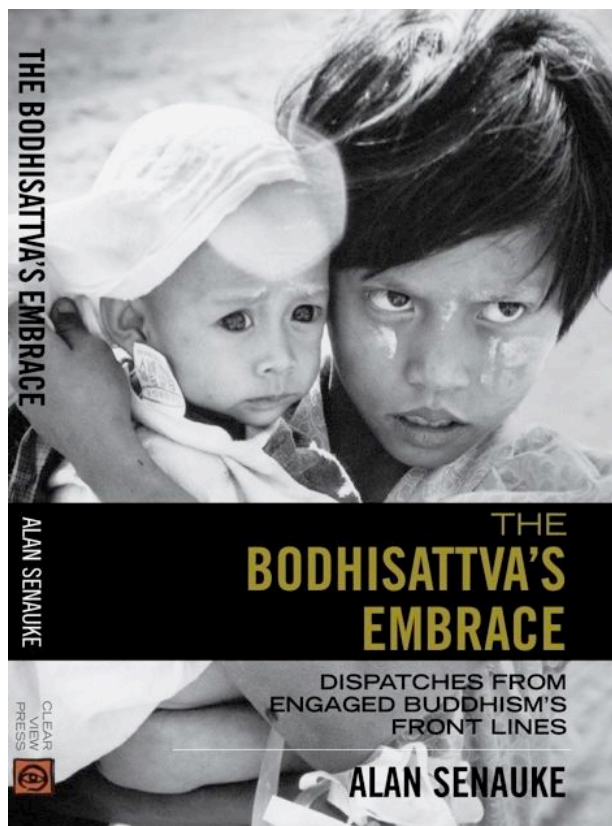




# Berkeley Zen Center



November 2010 Newsletter



Hozan Alan Senauke's book — *The Bodhisattva's Embrace: Dispatches From Engaged Buddhism's Front Lines* — came out last month from Clear View Press, the imprint Alan is creating to publish engaged Buddhist books. On page 3 of this issue is a meditation taken from the book, which is available from BZC's Saturday book table, from the website [www.clearviewproject.org](http://www.clearviewproject.org) or from Amazon.com.



#### 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

### November

#### Founder's Ceremony

Wednesday, 11/3, 6:20 pm, Thursday, 11/4, 6:40 am

#### One-day Sitting, Aspects of Practice Closes

Saturday, 11/6

#### Half-day Sitting

Sunday, 11/14, 8:00 am to noon

#### Kidzendo

Saturday, 11/20

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 11/20, 9:40 am

#### Zendo Holiday—Thanksgiving

Thursday, 11/25

### December

#### Saturday Program Begins at 9:40 am

12/4—note: zazen instruction will be at 8:45 am

#### Rohatsu Sesshin

Sunday, 12/5 - Saturday, 12/11

#### Suzuki Roshi Annual Memorial

Monday, 12/6, 8:00 PM

#### Buddha's Enlightenment Ceremony

Saturday, 12/11

#### Winter Break

Saturday, 12/18 – Friday, 12/31

#### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Friday, 12/31

#### New Year's Eve Sitting and Party

Friday, 12/31

## HALF-DAY SITTING

**Sunday, November 14, 8:00 am-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. BZC asks for a \$10 donation for half-day sittings. If you have questions, contact Stan Dewey, November half-day director, at [standewey@comcast.net](mailto:standewey@comcast.net) or 510-528-1989.

## SEWING BUDDHA'S ROBE

If you are interested in preparing for lay ordination next year, sewing classes start in the last half of January. Classes are open to those who have asked their teacher if they may participate.

Before the winter break (mid-December), please speak with Sojun Mel Weitsman or Hozan Sensei.

After you speak with your teacher, promptly contact the sewing teacher, Jean Selkirk. Check the bulletin board for further announcements.

## HEAD SERVERS

Starting in November, head servers are invited to sign up on the bulletin board to lead serving. The new head server, Marie Hopper, will not be making assignments in advance.

## Finding Presence in Conversation

We will continue the conversation we started in September on three Thursday nights in January: 1/6, 1/13, and 1/20, and return to exploring compassionate listening and expression in our day-to-day lives. I hope that we can find ways in which many of our familiar teachings—such as mindfulness, loving kindness, and right speech—can be informed by practicing them in the context of open and honest talk.

In this series, I propose to offer some specific skills in empathic listening, and then, as we did before, jump into role playing of actual situations we would like to deal with differently, or resolve in ways more to our liking.

Sign-ups will appear after Rohatsu sesshin. You can contact me at 510-325-2342 or [peterovrtn@gmail.com](mailto:peterovrtn@gmail.com)

~ Peter Overton



## 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](mailto: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.

November 5	<b>Midday sitting and discussion</b>
November 6	Sesshin – no program
November 13	Childcare
November 19	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
November 20	KIDZENDO
November 27	Childcare
December 3	<b>Midday sitting and discussion</b>
December 4	Childcare
December 11	Sesshin – no program
December 17	<b>Potluck, sitting, and discussion</b>
December 18	<b>Merry interim –</b>
December 25	<b>See you next year!</b>

**NEWSLETTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE:**  
**Third Friday of the month before each issue.**  
**December deadline: Friday, 11/17, 8 pm.**

# Mindfulness Must Be Engaged

Hozan Alan Senauke

From *The Bodhisattva's Embrace*, available from BZC's Saturday book table, [www.clearviewproject.org](http://www.clearviewproject.org) or Amazon.com

I had a broadside hanging over my desk at Buddhist Peace Fellowship in the early 1990s. It was a teaching by Thich Nhat Hanh titled "Mindfulness Must Be Engaged." Mindfulness is the key to our body, the key to our lives. But how is it engaged? Is this engagement part of our true understanding or is it something extra that is added on?

The Buddha's teaching on mindfulness invite us to be mindful of the body in the body, feelings in the feelings, breath in the breath. This means becoming aware of actions and things from within themselves. Aware that one is never truly apart from one's body, breath, feelings. In just this way we are engaged with the world, aware that we are never apart from it. There is no outside, or as an old Zen saying goes, "There is nowhere in the world to spit."

Explore this in meditation. Sit comfortably in an upright posture. Close your eyes and rest your hands lightly in your lap or on your knees. Take a deep breath in through your nose and mouth. Let the air fill your body, moving down from chest, expanding your lungs, until the breath reaches your *hara* or abdomen, a few inches below the navel. Now breathe out slowly and steadily through your mouth, following the contraction of your belly and the air as it moves through your mouth and back out into the wide world. Again, breathe in deeply through nose and mouth, then slowly breathe out. When you reach the end of this exhalation, push a little more air out of your lungs, then breathe in once more. Our usual breath leaves nearly a quarter of our lungs filled with stale air. This kind of breathing brings a refreshing change.



Photo by Alan Senauke

You can try this whenever you sit down to meditate, settling your mind and body into meditation from the start. Try it at work or before a meeting. It is a simple way to bring mind and body together, to ground your thoughts and feelings in breath. If you have some trouble on the out breath, just begin again, without any judgment and soon you will be able to feel some control over your thoughts and over the muscles that control your breath.

Feel the air as it flows in and out of your body. Each breath brings life. When the motion of breath stops, life stops. And yet the air is everywhere, completely connected like a single seamless fabric spread across the world. The air we breathe this very moment is the same air that a woman sitting next to you is breathing. It is the same air breathed by a homeless man with a begging bowl on a downtown corner. It is the air that a mother and daughter are breathing as they sit in the hospital emergency room waiting to see a doctor.

Across the bay at San Quentin prison, four thousand men live a harsh life behind steel bars. The air they breathe smells of sea and fog. I would be surprised if there is any among us whose life is not connected to a man or woman behind bars — a friend, or relative, someone we write to or visit. Only circumstances and karma find some of us here in a park and others under lock and key. At root, our lives, our breath is the same.

The same air sustains Burmese refugees along the Thai border, people whose lives are just as precious to the world as our lives. People who have offered their dharma and teachers to us. I have seen these people, shared words and meals with them. Their children are as full of fun and promise as our children, but their futures are shadowed by war and disease.

Thousands of miles from here, the vast rain forests of Brazil are lungs for the entire planet, taking in carbon dioxide, exhaling the oxygen all beings need for life. Those Amazon Basin forests are disappearing at the rate of 20 square miles per day. Each year an area of forest the size of Massachusetts falls to fires and bulldozers. We are intimately dependent on the trees of Amazonia. Even now it is generating the air we need.

I have read that each breath we take contains atoms once breathed by Christ or Buddha, by Caesar or Hitler. Maybe this is a bit of apocryphal science. But the thought is compelling nonetheless. The energy we transmute through body into action is forever conserved. The physical molecules of breath and body are conserved. Form is endlessly changing. Buddhadharma teaches this, but we confirm it in our own experience. Nothing is lost.

Mindfulness *must* be engaged because it *is* engaged. We can enjoy our breathing because countless beings are breathing and being with us. We suffer because countless beings suffer and we are not apart from them. Mindfulness is the complete awareness of interdependence. Awareness comes with responsibility — the ability to respond. No distinction of inside and outside. In this moment of silence just let us enjoy our breathing.



## SUCCESSFUL SEPTEMBER OPEN HOUSE

BZC's September 11, 2010 open house was a total success. Even the weather cooperated. The event began with a bit of history from old timers. Bill Milligan and Ron Nestor began with an historical account of our facilities, "BZC Russell Street – The Early Years." BZC Board Chair Gerry Oliva then introduced the board's "Building Improvement Program," a plan for taking care of our Russell Street practice place and raising the necessary funds. This five-year plan provides a comprehensive framework for maintenance and improvements to BZC's property. Plans are in place for two projects: remodeling the building façade of 1933 Russell; and remodeling the community porch area of 1929 Russell, to be accomplished in 2010 and 2011. Preliminary proposals have been drawn up for additional work during the following four years.

With the formal part of the program completed, people's attention turned to eating, touring the buildings, and conversation. Music from Hozan Alan Senauke, Eric Thompson, and Chad Manning provided a wonderful

background. Food from La Mediterranee, and other refreshments arranged by Tenzo Gary Artim, kept hunger at bay as people toured the buildings. The tour highlighted projects accomplished in the past as well as the upgrade and improvement projects we are planning for the future. Cost estimates in easily understood terms were prepared by Walter Kieser and Alan Block. In addition to being an excellent and informative party, the open house was a superb beginning to our fundraising efforts. More than \$12,600 has already been raised towards our goal of \$25,000 by the end of 2011. We are more than halfway there! Thanks to all who have made donations. **If you haven't already become part of this worthwhile project, please do! You can mail your checks to BZC, or simply put them into the mail slot in the kitchen door. Be sure to write "Building Improvement Program" or "BIP" on the memo line of your check.**

Thanks again to everyone who worked so hard to make the open house such a successful event.



Bill Milligan and Ron Nestor started the festivities rolling with an historical account of how our wonderful facilities were developed.



Sojun Roshi enjoys a chuckle with Michael May in Sojun's office.



Development Committee co-chair Jake Van Akkeren relaxes with Sue Dunlap and Richard Haefele during the festivities.



Eric Thompson, Chad Manning and our own Hozan Alan Senauke provided lively musical entertainment.



## SOUNDING BOARD

*This is one of a regular series of reports from the BZC Board.*

From my perspective there has been a lot of intense activity in and around BZC in the past year or so, not the least of which has been related to board actions. Indeed, there are many things to take care of to assure the safety and integrity of our structural and financial foundations. Although our intention is to assure the future of practice at BZC, I recognize that when we concentrate so much on “doing” it’s possible to lose sight of how this relates to what is really central to our practice. Questions arise: At a time when we are involved in action, where is the one who is still? In our zeal to get things done are we forgetting to be mindful of the immediate effects on the well-being of ourselves and others? Are we practicing compassion, patience, generosity? Are we aware of right speech?

The recent open house was a result of a tremendous amount of focused activity by board members, particularly the Project Management Team and the Development Committee. It was not easy to coordinate with all the participants, and there was a lot of pressure on individuals to get things done and meet our timelines. At some point however, everyone had to just “let go” so that the event could come forth.

Then the sangha could simply come together to celebrate the generosity of members who gave donations of money or labor. Sojun, Ron Nestor, and Bill Milligan reminded us of all the effort of members over the history of BZC and how we were continuing that tradition. Members contributed the enthusiasm, joy, and companionship that make this a unique and wonderful place. The “letting go” was palpable in the sense of openness provided by the tour of the buildings as well as the clarity of responses to members’ concerns and questions.

As a board we are continuing to learn from this experience about the need for mindfulness and compassion in all of our activity as we move ahead towards generating funds for structural improvement and the support of our leadership. We welcome your comments on how we can cultivate this work practice together. Please contact Gerry Oliva at [olivag.fcm.ucsf.edu](mailto:olivag.fcm.ucsf.edu) with comments and concerns.

## CARING FOR OUR PRACTICE PLACE

The improvements to the community room have been completed under the capable guidance of Project Management Committee member, Mary Duryee. Most recently a section of beautiful bamboo flooring was installed inside the doorway, enabling us to step into the community room and then remove our shoes, rather than clog up traffic in the kitchen.

Another priority project, the renovation of the community room porch, is also underway. Barbara Llewellyn, sangha member and architect, is assembling prior design efforts and helping us to move forward. We hope to significantly improve the porch layout in the coming year.

Meanwhile, we had several unexpected plumbing repair projects to contend with in 1933 Russell, across the path from the community room. These included a failed drain pipe, a punctured water line, and a leaky gas line. Stop that leaking! All are working nicely now. We’d like to gradually bring all four of our rather old buildings up to par.

For questions or suggestions on our ongoing building improvement program, contact Walter Kieser, Project Manager and Board member.



*Photo by John Rasmussen*

**Men’s shelter dinner volunteers have a blast! Come join us!**

## WARM HAND TO WARM HAND

A deep bow of thanks to **John Busch** who has been our Head Server this past year. John has brought his practice of creating harmony while serving, and has encouraged several new people to take up the practice of offering “the emptiness of the three treasures, giver, receiver and gift,” in his role. He passes the meal tray to **Marie Hopper**, whom we warmly welcome as the new Head Server. (Ctd. on p. 7)



John Mogey receives ordination. From left, Sojun Roshi, Hozan Sensei, Andrea Thach, and John Mogey.

On October 3, longtime member John Mogey was ordained as a priest here at BZC.

It was a joyous event, attended by many members and friends. The BZC residents welcome him into residency, as he will reside here with Catherine and Tamar through the end of the year.



L-R, Mary Mocine, Sojun, John Mogey, Catherine Cascade



## WARM HAND TO WARM HAND *(Ctd. from p. 5)*

Sherry Smith-Williams will join Linda Hess in caring for the dokusan hut until Linda departs to India at the end of the year. We thank both of them for their service.

A belated thanks to Ann Kennedy for her tenure as half-day co-director. We welcome Nina Sprecher, who will be joining Stan Dewey in 2011 to lead the half-day sittings. And we thank Stan for staying on as half-day co-director for another year.

## WRITING PRACTICE AND SUCCESS

Congratulations to one of BZC's fine authors, Lois Silverstein, on the recent publication of her newest writings, a book of poetry entitled *Loving is Listening to the Fine Beating of Wings*. She will be giving two readings in the Bay Area later this month. Contact Lois for more information, and stay tuned for a possible reading of her poems at BZC in the new year.

### HIDDEN PRACTICE?

As a matter of course, we often use our newsletter to acknowledge sangha members for their contributions and participation. Some people prefer that their efforts remain discreet, or at least out of the published eye, as the newsletter not only goes far and wide by snail mail, but also as a link on the BZC website. If you would prefer to have your name or picture excluded from newsletter articles, please let the coordinator, currently Andrea Thach, know. And if you are writing an article and intend to mention a sangha member by name, please check with that person before submitting your article to the editor. Thank you.



## *A few haiku from Basho*

*Moonless night...  
a powerful wind embraces  
the ancient cedars*



*This bright harvest moon  
keeps me walking all night long  
around the little pond*



*The full moon  
seven story-songs of a woman  
turning towards the sea*



*All my friends  
viewing the moon –  
an ugly bunch*

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