



Berkeley Zen Center



January 2004 Newsletter

From Alan, On Returning From Japan

Dear Friends,

As the new year approaches I am re-collecting body and mind here at home after six weeks in Japan. I am very happy to be home, while at the same time grateful for all the support on both sides of the Pacific that allowed me to take part in this practice period.

Very briefly, I went at the invitation of *Sotoshu* (with encouragement from Sojun and Laurie) to participate in a *Dendokyoshi Kenshusho*, which translates as something like *practice-training session for teachers who are transmitting the dharma (in the West)*. A mouthful! There were six of us westerners – three Americans and three Europeans – practicing as monks at *Zuioji* in southern Japan. We had four weeks of *zazen*, ceremonies, lectures, training, and work, followed by *Rohatsu Sesshin*. Our experience at *Zuioji*, with the young monks, teachers, and with the abbot Narasaki Tsugen Roshi was at once wonderful and difficult. The weather was often quite cold. We had to change in and out of robes many times a day, and often things happened very quickly with not a lot of explanation. Yet the feeling at *Zuioji* was warm and close. No one ever made us feel bad about mistakes we made, so I tried just to say yes to whatever was asked, even if it didn't always make sense.

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January & February Schedule

New Year's Day – *Zendo Closed*
Thursday, 1-1

Regular *Zendo* Schedule Resumes
Friday, 1-2, 5:40 am

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 1-5, 6:20 pm
Tuesday, 1-6, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 1-10, 9:30 am

One-Day Sitting
Saturday, 1-10, 5 am to 9:00 pm

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 2-1, 8 am to noon

Founders' Ceremony
Tuesday, 2-3, 6:20 pm
Wednesday, 2-4, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 2-7, 9:30 am

Buddha's Parinirvana Ceremony
Saturday, 2-14

Three-Day Sitting
Saturday – Monday, 2-14 to 2-16

From Alan, *continued from page 1*

After Zuioji, several of us went to Eiheiji and Sojiji – the two headquarter temples of Soto Zen – for a ceremony of recognition and acknowledgement called *Haito*. In these ceremonies we first climbed the tall founders' altars to bow to relics of Dogen, Ejo, Keizan, and other ancestors. Following that offering, each of us officiated at service, symbolically serving as chief priest of each temple. As you might imagine, this was a powerful and dreamlike experience.

I will be processing thoughts and impressions from this journey for a long time. On Saturday, 3 January I will try to share some of this with you in the lecture period. Feel free to bring your questions.

My strongest feeling throughout these weeks was (and continues to be) deep gratitude to Sojun, Suzuki Roshi, and all the Japanese teachers who brought us this endless practice. It is amazing to imagine their own discernment of what to transmit in the West and what to leave behind in Japan. How did they ever figure this out?

Warmly,
Kushiki Alan Senauke



Welcome New Friends...

The sangha welcomes new BZC Friends Bud Bliss and Stan Cunningham.

Welcome New Residents...

BZC residents and sangha warmly welcome Lauren Wholey and Eric Greene to 1933A Russell Street. Their prior years of service at Tassajara, Green Gulch (and BZC!) will be greatly appreciated here at our temple.



Bay Area Family Sangha Day

BZC families are warmly invited to join families from other Bay Area sanghas for an exciting new event sponsored by the Spirit Rock Family Program. This is an opportunity to gather in wider community to share dialogue, teachings, and experiences from senior teachers in three traditions (Zen, Vajrayana, Thervada/Vipassana). Families and extended families of all backgrounds and traditions, and children and teens of all ages, are welcome. **Sunday, 25 January** from 10:30 AM to 4:00 PM at Spirit Rock Meditation Center. See the flyer on the BZC bulletin board, or visit the website at www.spiritrock.org.



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.

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

From *Rohatsu* Lecture, 1995

To forego your own enlightenment for the sake of saving all beings is to stop thinking about whether you're ever going to get there or not. We do the work we have to do without worrying about whether we will end up in *Nirvana*. We just do what is presented to us to do. That's total freedom. Whatever's presented, just do it! Don't work for your own crossing over, just take care of what's in front of you.

Practice has two aspects. One is *to do something for your own cultivation*. The other is *to help others for their cultivation*. Both of these aspects are still in the realm of discrimination. Even clinging to the idea of *helping others before yourself* is in the realm of discrimination. Non-discrimination practice is simply to work for the benefit of the *dharma*. If you think, "I'm washing the toilet for you," that's still discriminating mind — that's ego. That's pure activity. Sweep the floor not because you're going to get it clean but because you're sweeping it. In the process the floor will get clean and that will benefit you and others. But if you think, "I'm sweeping the floor for you," or "I'm sweeping the floor for me," that's discriminating mind at work. It's clinging to the good you're doing. It's better to do good things than bad things, but it's still discrimination. We should be able to do good things without partiality.

Of course discriminating mind keeps on working. You can watch it work during *sesshin*. "I don't like the way the server is walking. How come he always serves me this way?" That's what comes up. A little thing like that becomes magnified, because our attention is very concentrated. We should realize that this is our discriminating mind looking for something to attach to. Discriminating mind, anger, lust, envy, all these things are latent in us, and all they need is an object to bring them forth. When the object appears — boom! "I don't like this," or "I hate that." When that comes up, step back and realize "this is discriminating mind," and let go of it. It is a hindrance to clarity.

Student: If you're cleaning the toilet bowls and you're just cleaning the toilet bowls, it's not a divided activity. But sometimes that kind of focus seems to encourage us to block things out. If I'm cleaning the toilet bowl and there's nothing else, that's wonderful. But if there's a kid crying in the next room, maybe it's not so good to be totally focused.

Sojun: When you're washing the toilet bowl, just wash the toilet bowl. When the sound of the child meets the ear and activates the consciousness, then discernment arises. "What kind of a cry is this? Is it a cry for help, or is the baby just crying?" You have to decide, "Shall I rescue the baby or leave the baby alone?" This takes about one one-thousandth of a second. If you're really concentrated, and your mind is open, you'll

know what that cry means. If the baby needs help you'll drop your scrubber and go and help the baby with the same attitude with which you're washing the toilet bowl and without any special idea about it. If your mind is empty you can see right away what's happening. You should not be attached to your activity. Just be your activity, then do the next thing completely, and then the next, going freely from one moment's activity to the next.

When we first practice we're motivated through our discriminating mind. We want something. We learn how to practice. We learn how to sit *zazen* and we go through whatever it is we go through. The mark of a mature zen student is letting go of practicing just for your own sake. After we practice for a couple of years and come to the zendo every day we may think "I'm getting tired of this!" There are interesting things on TV and lots of things to do at night. We don't feel like going to bed and getting up early in the morning any more. But we continue coming to *zazen*. We continue practicing because our practice is not only for ourself, but to encourage and support everyone. When I come to the zendo, I'm not coming just because I like to sit *zazen*, but because it is what I do. I just do it, without thinking whether it's good for me or not. I just do it because it's the practice that I'm committed to and it's for the benefit of the practice, not even for the benefit of others or myself, but just for the sake of the practice itself. I would never ordain someone who didn't have that attitude.

Student: Sojun, can you give me a word of encouragement? Here we are, doing our own practice, but I feel there's an overwhelming tide against us. I look around and see five billion people on this small planet polluting and consuming everything. It's not only the physical world, it's in people's hearts. There's this overwhelming greed. It just seems that what we do here, what little effort we manage is totally overwhelmed by what's going on all around us.

Sojun: When we started the Zen Center in San Francisco there was just a little old priest, his helper, some hippies, and a small cross-section of society. Everybody practiced quietly for a long time, and pretty soon people started knowing about this, and little by little it became known all around the world. Suzuki Roshi's talks are known all around the world. So many people have come in and out of Zen Center, and have crisscrossed the world spreading those seeds. No matter what country you go to, there's somebody who's heard about *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, or *zazen* and Zen Center. Somehow it has an effect. Little by little, just doing our work where we are creates a far-reaching effect. I sincerely believe that.

Student: The world is going to do what it's going to do anyway, no matter what we do. I don't think it matters whether we do it or not.

Sojun: If you think that you will or will not save the world, that's still dualistic understanding. Just do the work without worrying about the result. Of course we all

worry about the world, but if you worry that this is not going to work and the world is going to fall in on us, then you can't do it. You have to have faith in what you're doing regardless of what happens. When the tidal wave finally comes and sinks the boat, then you go down. But until that time you're working with the sails and you're working with the tiller, and you're doing your best up to the last moment without losing faith. That's the kind of attitude that's necessary in order to practice.

Student: Do you believe that the energy we create or our way of life does affect the outer world?

Sojun: Of course. Everything we do influences the world. Positive energy has positive results. Negative energy has negative results. This controversy over whether violence on TV has an effect on society – to even question that – is unbelievable! Corporations pay hundreds of thousands of dollars for one minute of advertising. Violence is on twenty-four hours a day – free advertising twenty-four hours a day. And people say, "I can't understand what's wrong with our country. Why are we having so much violence?"

Student: I think the assumption is that we are violent by nature and it's a vicarious means of satisfying that urge.

Sojun: Yes, but we don't need it. It's just that people make more money by creating that kind of scenario than they would by creating some other kind. Good things don't bring in as much money as bad things. We're so immersed in a materialistic world that many people don't understand what it's like *not* to be materialistic. We're inundated. But still we can clear a little circle in the midst of it. I think that you have to do what you have to do regardless of the way things are. This is the great challenge. Even if we know that the end is immanent we just continue. It's not a matter of being encouraged or discouraged.

Student: I'm also struck by the feelings of despair that arise with reading the newspaper or walking around, being asked for spare change, seeing mothers with children on the streets. Having something to do that you really believe in is important.

Sojun: Just doing something will make you feel connected, no matter how insignificant it seems. When you encounter someone asking for money, just give without wondering, "Are they going to use this for wine? Do they really need this? Is this just a scam?" I just give them some money – something out of my pocket. I rarely walk by someone who's asking for money without giving them something. Even the person who's got a scam has a problem. Just to be able to contribute helps to free you from the feeling of despair.

Right now the world has a certain look. The things that are going on have always been going on, but we haven't been as aware of them because they've been so distant. Now

that the world's so small, it's right in our face. It seems that everything's going to hell in a hand basket, which it is, but there's also something else coming up, something new. It's not just doom. It's black as well as white. It folds in on itself and comes out of itself. This undulation of cause and effect is continually at work. A lot of people get wiped out by it and a lot of growth comes out of it. We need to keep that in mind, otherwise we'll fall into a state of despair.

When we see these things happening we want to go out and rescue everyone. But if we give up what we bring to the world through our practice, then it will really be dark. This practice is a light in the world. For me, the most important thing is not to let that get lost.



Transitions...

After many years of service well beyond the call of duty, Catharine Lucas steps down as BZC Head Chiden. During her tenure, Catharine administered ongoing maintenance of the zendo altar, training and scheduling dozens of weekly chidens, ordering candles, incense, and other supplies. In addition, she was largely responsible for nearly every flower arrangement we enjoyed at nearly every BZC event and ceremony. Thank you so much Catharine.

Ann Kennedy assumes the Head Chiden duties, while leaving her position as BZC Head Librarian. Similarly to Catharine, and for a similarly long time, Ann administered our outstanding collection of Buddhist texts. Ordering, cataloging, and shelving books, maintenance of the BZC online and paper-card catalog, were all tasks that Ann embraced. She performed these tasks always with her usual serene and mindful care.

Kellie Hobbs takes over for Ann as Librarian and leaves her position as Saturday Co-Director. Innumerable *gasshos* to Kellie for her calm and patient practice in that position.

BZC resident Ann Greenwater becomes our new Saturday Co-Director.

Leslie Bartholic steps down as the Caretaker of the Dokusan Hut, a position which she performed with mindful care.

Alexandra Frappier becomes our new Caretaker of the Dokusan Hut.

Karen Storey is finishing her tenure as BZC Bathroom Attendant. Thank you, Karen for your hard work and conscientious attention.

Greta Pearson becomes our new Bathroom Attendant.

Carol Paul has generously agreed to oversee our community room, a previously vacant position.

Gasshos to all of these practitioners.



Documentary News...

We are starting the process of producing a documentary film about Berkeley Zen Center. The documentary will include our history, interviews with sangha members, and filming BZC activities. Specifically, we are looking for any current or historical BZC photographs/video and help in grant writing/fund raising for the film. Sangha members interested in participating in any way, or have ideas or comments about the making of the film, are invited to contact Ed Herzog (510) 663-3690, eherzog@seiu250.org



Electronic Delivery Now Available...

You are welcome to send your e-mail address to the newsletter editor to be included on the newsletter distribution list: karuna2@mindspring.com.



Chiden Meeting...

Sojun wants to meet with all chidens in the the zendo after the Saturday program on Saturday, 17 January.

Dharma Group News

Starting in January, BZC will offer a dharma group for members in their 20s and 30s. An initial meeting for the group will happen on Sunday, January 11, at 5:40 pm. For more information contact Blake Tolbert (510) 653-1217, blakekert@yahoo.com.

The Tuesday Dharma group is looking for new members. The group meets every 3rd Tuesday at 7:30 at member's houses. Contact Jim Storey if you are interested: (510) 434-9455, jamesbstorey@aol.com.



Founders' Altar...

Doug Greiner and Andrea Thach recently refinished our Suzuki Roshi altar. Our Founders' altar now glows from their careful work. Notice how lovely the altar looks in the afternoon sun. Our thanks to Doug and Andrea for their work offering in support of our practice.



IRS Letters...

Dues payments and donations to BZC are tax-deductible. Members whose total dues and donations in 2003 were greater than \$500 will automatically receive an acknowledgement letter. Any other members who wish to receive an acknowledgement letter, please contact the office manager, Laurie Senauke (510) 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



Elderly Parents?

Many of us at BZC are taking care of (or worrying about) elderly or infirm parents, either nearby or at a distance. We will have a potluck and informal gathering of those concerned with this topic, to connect, commune and conspire, on **Tuesday, 6 January**. For more information contact Laurie (510) 845-2215, lauries@kushiki.org.



Automated External Defibrillator...

The BZC Board is considering the purchase of an AED or, Automated External Defibrillator.

We currently have \$1025 in the fund. If you are interested, put a check in the community room mail slot and mark in the memo section that the contribution is for an AED.

If you have questions, please speak with board member Greg Denny or board secretary Andrea Thach.

Accepting New Students...

Mary Mocine welcomes new students into her monthly seminar on *Transformation at the Base: Fifty Verses on the Nature of Consciousness*, Thich Nhat Hanh's commentary on Vasubandu's Thirty Verses. Look for a notice on the bulletin board in January.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 am to 11:15 am. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative.

Childcare is not offered if no one is planning to come, so please call Laurie the Thursday before to let us know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie Senauke, 845-2215.

January 3	Childcare
January 10	No program
January 17	Childcare
January 24	Childcare
January 31	Childcare
February 7	Childcare
February 14	No program
February 21	Childcare
February 28	Childcare

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