



Berkeley Zen Center



October 2005 Newsletter

Welcome...

to new members Victor Tsou and Lauren Veen, and to new residents Melinda Meyer and Oscar Westesson.

Melinda comes to BZC from a year and a half at Tassajara, including Sojun Roshi's recent practice period. Prior to that she was a resident at SF City Center. Melinda's intention is to pursue her practice with Sojun and the BZC *sangha* while participating in a full time Chaplaincy residency program at Alta Bates Summit Medical Center.

Oscar comes to us from the practice at Rochester Zen Center with Roshi Bodhin Kjolhede and Sensei Amala Wrightsen. He is also beginning full-time studies at UC Berkeley as a math major. Oscar is a mountaineer, deep sea swimmer, and a serious string bass player.



Aspects of Practice...

This year's month-long Aspects of Practice begins on **Sunday, 23 October**. New and old members are encouraged to participate and to refresh our practice together in the brisk fall season. As usual, this month will be led by BZC's senior students, offering, *zazen*, lectures, classes, tea, and practice discussion.

The full details and countless places to sign up are on the main bulletin board, so have a look. If you have questions about the activities or your participation, talk to Alan Senauke alans@kushiki.org. Please join us.



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.

October & November Schedule

Founders' Ceremony
Monday, 10-3, 6:20pm
Tuesday, 10-4, 6:40am

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 10-15, 9:30am

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 10-9, 8:00am to noon

One-Day Sitting
Open Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 10-23, 5:00am to 5:30pm

Segaki
Monday, 10-31

Founders' Ceremony
Thursday, 11-4, 6:20pm
Friday, 11-5, 6:40am

Kanzeon Sitting
Sunday, 11-6, 8:45am to 4:30pm

Half-Day Sitting
Sunday, 10-9, 8:00am to noon

Bodhisattva Ceremony
Saturday, 11-19, 9:30am

One-Day Sitting
Close Aspects of Practice
Saturday, 11-19, 5:00am to 9:30pm

Thanksgiving (*zendo closed*)
Thursday, 11-24

Vote!!!.....BZC members should vote this coming month for the following positions on the BZC Board:

Members-at-large. This year we are voting for four nominees, three for two-year terms and one for a one-year term.

The nominees are Doug Greiner, Walter Kieser, Ken Knabb, John Mogey, Laurie Senauke (incumbent), Jim Storey, Andrea Thach (incumbent). (Continuing for one more year: Alexandra Frappier and Marie Hopper.)

Officers. Please confirm the following: President, Peter Overton; Vice President, Gerry Oliva; Treasurer, John Rubin (incumbent)

Salaried Positions. Finally, also confirm for another year, Sojun as Abbot, Alan Senauke as *Tanto*. And Laurie Senauke as Office Manager.

Poll is open, so be certain to vote...

15 October through 31 October. Look for the ballots and photos of all the candidates at the courtyard bulletin board.

Many gasshos to outgoing officers Anne Jennings and Linda Eby.



Segaki!!!...

Segaki is a popular Buddhist festival for appeasing the hungry ghosts. We celebrate it once every year on Halloween. (For a nice essay on the history and meaning of the ceremony, see the insert inside.)

This year's ceremony is scheduled for **Monday, 31 October** and there will be a party in the community room right after the ceremony. Please check out the zendo bulletin board for time. Children are especially encouraged to come to both events. Come in costume if you like and

bring a jack-o-lantern for the garden and noisemakers for the ceremony. Treats and beverages will be provided.



Transitions...

Replacing Ellen Doudna in the Saturday Book Store: Oscar Westesson.

Replacing Kellie Hobbs as Librarian: Paul Ridgway.

Replacing Ed Herzog as Newsletter Distributor: Anne Jennings

Replacing Jed Appelman as Newsletter Editor: Ed Herzog.

Replacing Ko Blix as Webmaster: Steven Burkhardt

Thanks to each of you for your contributions to the *sangha*.



Help Wanted For Transcription Project...

We need volunteers to help with the project to transcribe Sojun's lectures and classes from CD and tape to hard and soft copy format. The collection of CDs and tapes is an incredibly valuable resource. By completing the transcription project, we are fulfilling our responsibility as custodians of this resource and caring for the legacy of our beloved teacher. A specific immediate goal is helping Sojun with his book writing projects. Another possible goal down the line includes developing a means via the web for people to access this resource in some form.

If you have typing and simple computer skills, we need you! Contact Greg Denny, 510.595.8162, for more information.

Lecture by Sojun Roshi

On *Genjokoan*, Part 3

Dogen says, “When Buddhas are truly Buddhas, one need not be aware of being Buddha. However, one is the realized Buddha and further advances in realizing Buddha.”

Both delusion and enlightenment are aspects of Buddha Nature. Rather than eliminating delusion in order to have enlightenment, we must establish our practice within our delusion. If we wait until there is no delusion before we begin to practice, no one will be practicing. Delusion is the environment in which enlightenment flourishes. As it is said, “We live in muddy water with purity like a lotus.” The lotus grows in muddy water, but the mud does not stick. Suzuki Roshi said that our delusions are like compost. We put them around the base of the plant for nourishment.

Dogen continues: “When Buddhas are truly Buddhas, one need not be aware of being Buddha, however, one is the realized Buddha, and further advances in realizing Buddha.”

It is Buddha who is sitting *zazen*. As my old teacher said, “We are half Buddha and half ordinary being.” Because we are Buddha, we can actualize Buddha. Because we are ordinary, we can actualize ordinary. Buddha is one with me and I am one with Buddha. During *zazen* I am totally absorbed in Buddha. In daily activity Buddha is totally absorbed in me — one person sometimes called Buddha and sometimes called ordinary being. Our practice is to be Buddha-centered instead of self-centered. We just sit without thinking about it as something special.

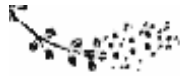
Then Dogen says, “Seeing forms with the whole body and mind, hearing sounds with the whole body and mind, one understands them intimately, yet it is not like a mirror with reflections, or like water under the moon. When one side is realized, the other is dark.”

There is no gap. Seeing sees, hearing hears, directly, without the reflex of comparative thinking. Whole body and mind is the important point here. The understanding of non-duality revolves around this point of not separating body and mind. Seeing forms with the whole body and mind means to engage totally. Dogen uses the term, *gujin*, which means thoroughness. Specifically, he’s talking about *zazen*, but he’s also talking about all of our activity — to do one thing thoroughly. He is asking us to engage in a seemingly insignificant task with the same attention, focus, and thoroughness as we would a seemingly vital and important one — this is not to be confused with becoming overly fussy and meticulous. Suzuki Roshi said. “You people have a saying, ‘To kill two birds with one stone.’ Our practice is to kill one bird with one stone.”

Then Dogen says, “It is not like a mirror with reflections, nor like water under the moon. When one side is realized, the other side is dark.”

Here he seems to be talking about birth and death. The mirror and its reflection are two things. But, he says, it's not like two things. It's like, at the time of birth there is just birth, and death is concealed. At the time of death there is just death, and birth is concealed. But they're not two things. There are two things from one point of view, but from another they are not. One does not turn into the other. It's like looking at the moon. When we see the light side of the moon we don't see the dark side. At that time you don't see the light side. But the light side is there and the dark side is there at the same time. Suzuki Roshi says that there is one thing. Sometimes we call it birth and sometimes we call it death. Because there is only one thing there is nothing to be reflected, like the moon on the water. He uses that analogy later to make a different point, saying that it is like the moon reflected in the water, but that's not a contradiction, it's a different simile.

To be continued...



On Segaki

Roshi Kyogen Carlson

The name, *Segaki*, means “feeding the hungry ghosts,” and the festival contains a great deal of teaching about training in Buddhism. On one hand it is a time of remembering the dead and resolving our karmic connections with those who have died, but it is also a time of resolving our own internal, karmic difficulties and for letting go of the obstacles and blockages we carry around with us. The festival is said to have begun when Moggallana, a disciple of the Buddha, was plagued by dreams of his recently departed mother suffering in a world in which she could neither eat nor drink. Food would turn to fire, and water would turn to blood or pus whenever it touched her mouth. Moggallana went to the Buddha and told him of his dreams, which plagued him every night. The Buddha explained that Moggallana was seeing the suffering of his mother in the world of the *gakis*, or hungry ghosts. *Gakis* are usually depicted as having long skinny necks, with throats much too small for swallowing, and the bloated, bulging stomachs common with severe malnutrition. This imagery is a fantastic description of a spiritual state that can be seen every day, right here in the physical world of men and women. It is a condition which everyone has suffered from, to some degree or another, at some point in his or her life. On the most spiritual level, this is the state of someone who desperately wants to know the Truth, but who cannot accept the teaching. He knows that he is suffering and that religious practice will help, but he just cannot stop resisting and holding on to his personal opinions. He goes to drink, but his throat will not accept. Each time he rejects the teaching it turns to fire in his mouth. On the everyday level, this condition is that of someone who has desperate needs but, like a person with a phantom itch, can find no relief. Women who frantically cling to their children long after they are grown, and men who cannot get enough wealth and success, are everyday examples of “hungry ghosts.” In examples such as these, the problem lies in trying to satisfy an inner need for peace of mind through grasping after external things when it is really found in all-acceptance. Too often our attempts to obtain the things we want are like this.

Moggallana’s dreams were due to his deep connection with his mother, and the Buddha’s advice to him was that he make an offering to her of whatever food she could most easily accept and digest. This was to be done in a ceremony, dedicated in her name, at the time when the monks conducted their regular gathering to confess their transgressions. This is where the connection between making offerings to the dead and the cleansing of karma, personal or in connection with someone who has died, becomes apparent. Today, the tradition that started with this ceremony is continued every year in Buddhist temples by making an offering on a table far away from any statue or picture of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. For those who reject religious teaching, kindness is offered without doctrine as a truly religious act. For the *Dharma* to be really *Dharma*, it can only be offered in forms that can be accepted and truly made use of. Offerings of any type made in such a manner will naturally benefit both the recipient and the donor. This principle applies to so many situations we encounter in everyday life. Such action naturally expresses all-acceptance in a way that touches and deeply affects all concerned.

Hungry ghosts are not the only ones to be remembered at *Segaki*, however. It is a time to remember all those who have died, to be thankful for their having lived, and to give thanks for the teaching their lives give to us. It is a time to let go of those who have died, to realize that their training goes on in whatever form it now takes, and that they do not need us pulling them back to this world through our attachments. By letting go of those who are now gone, we can also resolve any painful memories that can linger on to become the nucleus of a multitude of other problems. All-acceptance is still the key, for if we completely accept those who have gone on as they were, we can understand them better and offer them what they need to go on, which is, most often, our forgiveness and blessing.

(Continued.....)

If you apply this process to yourself, looking at your own past actions as that which must be let go of, it is easy to see the connection between *Segaki* and personal *karmic* cleansing. It becomes a time of deep, personal, spiritual renewal. In the way we are adapting Buddhist traditions to our culture—*Segaki* is celebrated on or near Halloween day. In western culture, Halloween, or All Souls Day, is when all the ghosts and goblins from the past come out of hiding. What better time to offer them merit and put them back to rest? The themes of death, change, and spiritual transition have for centuries in the West been remembered in the autumn, at the time of the change from light to dark, from heat to cold. Although in the Far East, *Segaki* is celebrated in mid-summer, within that culture it is a time similar to Halloween in ours. The summer solstice is the time of transition, just as the autumn equinox is, and they both represent a time of change; when the past can be left behind and a new beginning is possible. *Segaki* then, is a celebration of this on every level.

According to popular Chinese legend, Moggallana developed a deep resolve to help his mother when he saw her suffering in his visions. He traveled down to hell to try to rescue her personally. He broke the lock on the gate to hell, and because of this, all the hungry ghosts in the realm of the *gakis* got loose, and wandered about in the world of men. The festival was then done to satisfy the ghosts, and to convince them to return to where they needed to be. Some, through the festival, gain release. This tradition expresses that even those who do not gain release are in the process of learning something they need to learn, and that their time to advance to something else will come. In China, the seventh lunar month is the month of the dead. For this festival the ghosts are released from hell for the entire month. During this time, people pay respects to all their ancestors and make offerings to them, particularly of food. They also make offerings of entertainment, like Chinese opera, puppet shows, spectacles, and circuses; anything people think the ghosts might enjoy. The entire month becomes a huge celebration, and a time of great happiness when people feel very close to their ancestors; whether they happen to be in the realm of *gakis*, or elsewhere. The quality of celebration is the same as the offering of dancing and joyous music done at *Obon* in Japan. Rather than being grim or solemn, the whole affair is very joyous, even raucous. In China, popular legend also has it that after giving aid to his mother, Moggallana made a vow to once again enter hell. He vowed to do his own training there for the sake of those suffering in that realm. "If I do not do so, who else will?" he said. He became a Bodhisattva, an "enlightenment being" dedicated to helping others before enjoying final enlightenment himself, offering *Dharma* to all those suffering in the nether worlds. To this day he is greatly venerated for this act of great compassion.

Notes on the Women's Council Meeting...

A group of women met to find out what kind of structure we might want to have together (this meeting was open to all BZC women). We discussed the chant of women ancestors - the *acaryas* - our current list represents only women living around the time of Shakyamuni Buddha. At SF City Center, they have expanded the list to include more recent women; at other centers, too, there is movement to expand the list. There was general agreement among the group to try a list compiled by BZC priests Grace Schireson and Mary Mocine, which includes women from China and Japan down through the centuries. Use of the word *acarya* has also been questioned; the group discussed other possibilities: "*daiocho*", "great teacher", "*zenji*", "ancestor". The group agreed to explore this further by trying out the chant at the upcoming women's *sesshin*.

Leadership of the women's *sesshin* was the other topic on the agenda for this meeting. Since there's no formal leadership of the women at BZC, we're not sure how to make decisions about this. If we want senior priests like Mary and Grace to lead, they need to be invited, preferably several months ahead of time. But who does the inviting? The women's *sesshin* can also be a good time to hear from women who are not so commonly heard from. Again, who decides? While no decisions were made, the discussion was warm and collaborative, and we agreed to continue at the women's *sesshin* and in the coming months.



Gasshos...

We thank you for the financial support of our practice place and our teachers. Contributions from members and friends provide our very foundation. During the period of 1 May to 31 August 2005, those listed below contributed additional sums above any regular commitment (this list includes sustaining members).

Judy Bertelsen
Ross Estes Blum
Steven Burkhart
Colleen & John Busch

Peter Carpentieri
Catherine Cascade
Joseph Ling Hang Chan
Ron Cornman
Christine Cruz
Gregory Denny
Ellen Doudna
Tamar Enoch
Elizabeth Flora
Bill Graves
Doug & Penny Greiner
Paul Haller
Robert Hayes
Edwin Herzog
Lynne Hofmann
Betty Jung
Ronald Kane
Walter Kieser
Rick Levine
Ann Livingstone
Mildred Lowther
Catharine Lucas
Nora Mukai-Rosenbaum
Jeanette Northern
Gerry Oliva
Carol Paul
Carol Perkins
V. Jonathan Petrie
Bob Rosenbaum
Claire & John Rubin
Stephanie Solar
Barton Stone
Jim Storey
Andrea Thach
Jacob Van Akkeren & Leslie Bartholic
Maggie Vashel
David Weinberg



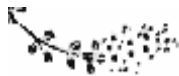
Fresh Air...

BZC is taking measures to reduce airborne particulates in the zendo, the bathrooms, kitchen and community room.

Recent changes include scent-free cleaning products, deep cleaning of zendo, *zabutons* and *zafus*, as well as the purchase of a new Aller air filter that will be running on high at all times when the zendo is not in use.

We offer many thanks to those who have contributed their time and creativity to these efforts. Special thanks go to Mary Duryee for loaning her air filter for the interim. And, many thanks go to the anonymous donor who contributed the full cost of the machine.

Be sure to address any curiosities, concerns or questions to Elizabeth Flora (flora@haas.berkeley.edu, 510.549.3887) who is developing a position at BZC that co-ordinates discussion and projects about disability, accessibility, and related issues (i.e. the new large print sutra books currently in use by the community). Elizabeth is also on the Disability Committee for the San Francisco Zen Center.



A Sangha Response to Hurricane Katrina

A few of us who wished to respond as *sangha* to help those displaced by Katrina have been checking with Buddhist centers in the South. We have decided to help the Houston Zen Center in their work supporting several families from New Orleans who are relocating there. Gaelyn Godwin, from SF City Center, is the teacher at Houston now, so we have direct connection to the work being done. If you would like to help out, please write a check to the "Houston Zen Center," and leave it in the mail slot in the community room door. Contacts: Laurie Senauke or Andrea Thach.



Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. The cost is \$5 per family. Note that the childcare schedule is tentative. Childcare is not offered if no one's 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, 510.845.2215.

October 1	Childcare
October 8	Childcare
October 15	KIDZENDO
October 22	Childcare
October 29	Childcare
November 5	Childcare
November 12	Childcare
November 19	Sesshin - no program
November 26	Childcare



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