



Berkeley Zen Center



May 2006 Newsletter

Spring Practice Period

Our annual spring practice period will begin with a one-day sesshin on Sunday, May 7 and last through the Shuso Ceremony on Sunday, June 18. Sojun Roshi invites everyone to increase their commitment to practice during this period while still minding their obligations "outside the gate."

Nyu Li Ho Sho, (Gentle Rain Dharma Blossom) Karen Sundheim will be the Shuso, or head student this year, sharing the Abbot's seat and setting an example for us all. Greta Pearson Kando Kai E (Simple Way Unfolding Wisdom) will be serving as Benji.

The theme for this practice period and the subject of the five-week class will be "The study and practice of the Heart Sutra and how it applies to each one of us personally and manifests in every aspect of our lives." Our study will center around finding examples from our daily lives. Look for sign-up sheets on the zendo bulletin board.

Practice Period Calendar

Shuso Entering Ceremony, May 7, 4:30 pm
Bansan, May 19, 5:30 pm
Shosan, June 2, 5:30 pm
Dinner and skit night, June 3, 6:30 pm
Shosan, June 5, 5:40 am
Shuso Hossen, June 18, 3:00 pm



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.

BZC Schedule

May

Founders Ceremony

Wednesday, 5-3 6:20 pm

Thursday, 5-4, 6:40 am

All Sangha Gathering

Thursday, 5-4, 6:30 pm

One-Day Sitting

Practice Period Begins

Sunday, 5-7

Ceremony in Memory of Maylie Scott

Wednesday, 5-10, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 5-13, 9:30 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 5-21

Kidszendo

Saturday, 5-27

June

Founders Ceremony

Thursday, 6-1, 6:20 pm

Friday, 6-2, 6:40 am

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 6-10, 9:30 am

Lay Ordination

Saturday, 6-10

Five-Day Sesshin

End Practice Period

Wednesday-Sunday, 6-14 through 6-18



Decorating the bower on Buddha's birthday.
(photo by Alan Senauke)

PEOPLE

Thanks and welcome to **Peter Carpentieri** for stepping up to the plate as our new Kitchen Keeper (and nine bows to **Tamar** for ably filling this role for the last two years). **Jesy Goldhammer** takes over from **Kent Welsh** as bathroom attendant. Thanks to **Marian Yu** for STILL doing the compost!

Welcome to new member **Helen Fisher**.

Note: If you have well being messages or short items of interest for the BZC newsletter "PEOPLE" column, please submit them to: eherzog@lmi.net Deadline is the 20th of the month.

Setsu Kits Available

A Setsu Kit is now available for BZC members who use a setsu with their oryoki bowls. The kit contains everything you need to replace your setsu tip and is on the sewing cart in the community room. Included are detailed instructions, unbleached muslin, scissors, thread etc. If you would like help getting started, contact Carol Paul at 596-9048, carol.paul@pmigroup.com or Gerry Oliva at 652-7217, olivag@fcm.ucsf.edu. They will be happy to assist you!

In the future we hope to have hard wood sticks for anyone who wants to use a setsu stick with oryoki bowls. We are currently looking for someone who has experience in using a band saw to make these traditional setsu sticks. If you are interested in helping with this project, you can contact Carol or Gerry.

BZC Dharma Groups

BZC sustains several dharma study groups. The idea was started by our beloved late elder Maylie Scott many years ago, to promote a more "horizontal" sharing of practice. Small groups meet regularly to study and discuss the dharma as it manifests in our lives.

Membership requirements vary, and groups often have an opening. The following is a list of the groups and contact information:

Monday Night Group

Looking for new members: Anne Jennings, mimikatz@aol.com

People of Color Dharma Group

(also Monday nights), drop in group: Victor Tsou, vytsou@yahoo.com

Tuesday Night Group

Jim Storey, jamesbstorey@aol.com

Wednesday Daytime Group

Doug Greiner, degreiner@gmail.com

Raul's Weekend Study Group

Open to new members in January

Socially Engaged Buddhism Group

(meets Sunday evening) Ed Herzog, eherzog@lmi.net

Wednesday Night "Drop-In" Study Group

Open to all new and old Zen students. Starting April 26 this groups starts a 4-week study of the Four Noble Truths, a night for each Truth. Group begins at 7:20 pm with a period of zazen and evening service followed by a study period from selected text and discussion until 9 pm. Richard Haefele (510) 524-5670.

VOICES

Talus

Anger's a gray boulder
in the heart
with hidden channels
you can breathe through.

Erik Ferry

*"Return to neutral and you're bound to enjoy
your trip wherever you go."*

Ross Blum

Sojun Mel Weitsman Talk, Sesshin 2, Day 6, Tassajara Commentary on Suzuki Roshi's Ordinary Mind and Buddha , from 'Not Always So.'

This talk of Suzuki Roshi's is labeled, "Ordinary Mind and Buddha Mind." We have ordinary mind and Buddha mind at the same time, which brings up the question, what is the meaning of 'ordinary'? He begins by saying "The point of my talk is to give you some support for your practice. There is no need to remember what I say." Often when he gave a talk he would say that you don't have to remember what I say. Just be present for the talk. But we would fall in and out of dozing. Something about the way he spoke was kind of slow, and, if a speaker leaves a lot of space between their sentences, people take the opportunity to doze. And then, at Sokoji temple, which was on Bush Street, there was always a lot of traffic going by, and when he got to the critical sentence, a truck would go by, and we missed it! After the talk it was sometimes hard to recall what he had said. But something beyond remembering was communicated.

"There's no need to remember what I say. If you stick to it, you stick to the support. A tree, when it is strong, still wants some support. But the most important thing is the tree itself, or the student, not the support." He didn't want to give too much support or too much of something, like reliance. Just enough to encourage you to find your own support. This was Suzuki Roshi's way. He could be your friend or sometimes your mother or father or Kannon, or whatever was needed, but just enough. So, his talk is just to help you but you should not hang onto the words. And not to think, oh, now I have something. You may think you have something, but it is not your own. So it becomes too convenient.

There are some teachers who like to keep their students very close. But other teachers, like Suzuki Roshi, would say that as soon as you establish a relationship with a teacher, you should leave. So he was always encouraging us to find our own way. But of course everybody stayed around. And he was very happy when a student would not be too reliant on him. I like to send my students to Tassajara so they don't become too reliant on me. I also remember he once talked about going back to Eiheiiji after a long time. When he looked at the huge cryptomeria trees he said, "Those old monks were still there." This is how he thought about his students. "I am one tree and each one of you is a tree. You should stand up by yourself. When a tree stands up by itself we call that tree a Buddha. When you practice zazen in its true sense, you are really Buddha. Sometimes we call it a tree and sometimes we call it a Buddha. Buddha, tree, and you are all names of one Buddha. So when you sit, you are independent from various beings, and you are related to various beings. When you have perfect composure in practice, you include everything, and you are not just you. You are the whole world or the whole cosmos and you are a Buddha. So when you sit, you are an ordinary human and you are also Buddha."

The understanding in Soto Zen, is that stillness within activity is the basic function of the universe. Everything in the universe is practicing zazen, and it's not simply a special practice of the Zen school. Everything is practicing zazen without knowing about Soto Zen. Activity comes out of stillness, and everything returns to stillness. We are simply participating with everything, in a very conscious way. At night time, all the activity slows down and comes to rest, and when the sun rises, the birds wake up and nature starts its dynamic activity. But the stillness is always there. The activity doesn't replace the stillness. Stillness remains the basic nature of everything. It is our understanding that we are sitting together, at one with the whole universe. It's not just 'my practice'. It's Buddha's practice. When we sit zazen, we set aside I, me, and mine and let Buddha practice. It's Buddha who is sitting zazen. We can also let Buddha take the lead in our daily (ordinary) activity.

"So you are not just you, you are the whole world, or the whole cosmos, and you are a Buddha.

continued on page 4

When you sit, you are an ordinary human, and you are also Buddha. Before you sit, you may stick to the idea that you are ordinary, so when you sit, you are not the same being as you are before you sit. Do you understand?"

"You may say that it is not possible to be both ordinary and holy. When you think this way, your understanding is one-sided. In Japanese we call someone who understands things from just one side a *tambankan*, a board-carrying person, like a carpenter or a laborer who carries a board on their shoulder so that they can see over here, but they can't see over there, because the board obscures their vision. Because you carry a big board on your shoulder, you cannot see the other side. You think you are just an ordinary human. But if you take the board off, you will understand. 'Oh, I'm Buddha too. How can I be both Buddha and ordinary human? I'm amazed!' That's enlightenment. When you experience enlightenment, you will understand things more freely. You won't mind whether people call you ordinary - 'OK, I'm ordinary' or Buddha - 'OK, I'm Buddha. How do I come to be both Buddha mind and ordinary mind? I don't know. But actually, I am.' Buddha in a true sense is not different from ordinary mind. And ordinary mind is not something apart from what is holy."

"This is a complete understanding of our self. When we practice zazen with this understanding that is true zazen. We will not be bothered by anything. Whatever you hear, whatever you see, that will be OK. To have this feeling it is necessary to become accustomed to our practice. If you keep practicing, you will naturally have this understanding and this feeling. It will not be just intellectual. You will have an actual feeling. Even though someone can explain what Buddhism is, if that person does not have the actual feeling, we cannot call that person a real Buddhist. Only when your personality is characterized by this kind of feeling, can we call you a Buddhist. The way to become characterized by this kind of understanding is to always concentrate on this point. Many koans and sayings bring out this point."

I will tell you a koan that bring out this point, which you may already know. When Josha was a young man, he studied with Nan Sen. One day he asked Nan Sen, 'What is the Way?' and Nansen said, 'Ordinary mind is the Way.' And Josha said, "Well, can I attain that?' and Nansen said, 'If you try to attain it, you stumble past. If you don't try to attain it, you fall into complacency. What will you do?' This is our koan of ordinary mind. What is ordinary mind? How can you attain ordinary mind? Shall we try to attain ordinary mind? We can't really try to attain ordinary mind because ordinary mind is always with us.

There's another koan: Daitso Chisho Buddha, sat for a hundred eons without attaining Buddha mind. Why didn't he attain Buddha mind? Because he was a non-attained Buddha. So, practice is attainment with nothing to attain. Practice is to attain what you already have. We're looking over there, and it's in our hand. It's sometimes called 'selling water by the river.' There are two ordinaries. One ordinary is called, *michi*, and the other is called, *do*. *Michi* mind and *do* mind. *Michi* mind is like relative mind or momentary mind, and *do* is continuous mind or eternal mind. What we usually consider as ordinary is *michi*, our momentary mind. Our usual activity: getting up in the morning and washing our face. But the other ordinary mind is the mind that is continuous and constant, which we don't usually pay attention to because it's the background of our activity. It's like the hum of the refrigerator: you get so used to it that you don't even hear it anymore, but when it stops, you say, 'what happened?' When we say, 'Ordinary mind is the way,' what are we talking about? How can you attain that which is always there? But because we don't recognize it, we look for it. When we sit zazen, we hear it. But we don't hear it with our ears, even though the sounds we hear are it, and the sights we see are it. We would like to be present for each moment, because each moment is it. Each moment is the Way. And what we're looking for is 'It.' Where we are is the hardest and easiest place to be. *(To be continued)*

Oryoki Instruction

Oryoki instruction will be offered on two dates during Practice Period: May 7 and May 27, both at 11:30 in the zendo. If you are new to formal meals in the zendo, or have experience but would like to refine your practice, please consider joining us. Questions? Contact Jake Van Akkeren at 925-933-3486 (before 9:00 pm) or jvanakkeren@comcast.net

All Sangha Gathering

There will be an All-Sangha Gathering Thursday, May 4, at 6:30 pm in the Community Room. Following a potluck dinner, we will go around the circle sharing personal news, announcements, or concerns about our practice and how we'd like to see it develop. Everyone is encouraged to take part. This is a rare occasion when there is no other agenda but what we ourselves create. It should be both fun and provocative, and in the process we may get to know each other a little better. If you have any questions, please contact Ken Knabb, knabb@bopsecrets.org / 527-0959.

NOTE: The BZC Newsletter invites sangha members to submit short articles, poems, or cartoons. Send to: ehertzog@lmi.net. Deadline is the 20th of the month.



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, 845-2215.



May 6	Childcare
May 13	Childcare
May 20	Childcare
May 27	Kidzendo (note date switch)
June 3	Childcare
June 10	Childcare
June 17	Sesshin – No program
June 24	Childcare
July 1	Childcare
July 8	Childcare
July 15	Kidzendo
July 22	Childcare

KIDZENDO

A talk in the zendo for young ones three and up is offered the third Saturday of each month. We meet upstairs at the Senauke's household (1933 Russell) at 9:45 for a briefing on forms, then sojourn to the zendo for the first ten minutes of lecture starting at 10:10. Afterwards, children may join the regular Saturday childcare program if they wish.

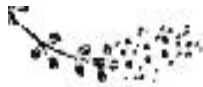


Mountains and Rivers Sesshin hikers take a breather on the trail at the Point Reyes Seashore. (photo by Ko Blix)

SAVE THE DATE

Planning for BZC's Future and Financial Needs

The BZC Board will be hosting a gathering for all sangha members on Sunday afternoon, June 25 from 2-4 pm at Gerry Oliva's home. We will be discussing BZC's future financial needs and strategizing ways of meeting them. More details will be available in the next newsletter and on the patio bulletin board in coming weeks. For more information, contact Andrea Thach, (510) 420-0902 (h) or andrea.thach@gmail.com, or Gerry Oliva, (510) 652-7217 or dyleli@itsa.ucsf.edu

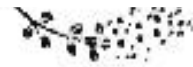


Women's Summer Retreat

A women's summer retreat will be held at Empty Nest Zendo, in the Sierra Foothills July 21st-23rd. The retreat will include zazen, training in Zen forms, a class on female Zen ancestors, and a council-style meeting to discuss issues pertinent to women's Zen practice. The retreat will include time for hiking, swimming, and resting. Accommodations will be camping style in tents or use of indoor rooms if preferred. BZC women and children are welcome, and spouses are invited as necessary for childcare.

This is a time for women to get together and share their Zen practice in a nurturing atmosphere. Everyone will help with cooking and other chores. We hope BZC women will use the time to refresh themselves in the practice and with each other, and provide an opportunity for women who can't participate in more formal style sesshin for health or family reasons to come together for practice over a weekend.

To register, please contact baika2@gmail.com or call her before 9:00pm at (925) 287-9860 or (510) 407-7910. For more information about Empty Nest Zendo you may look at www.emptynestzendo.org



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