



# Berkeley Zen Center



## September 2006 Newsletter

Dear Sangha and Friends,

I met recently with the senior students group to discuss the beginning of a new and vital time for all of us. Over the next several years I will pass on my duties as Abbot to Hozan Alan Senauke, my choice to succeed me as Abbot of the Berkeley Zen Center. Ultimately this position must be ratified by the membership and the Board, and be renewed with a vote of confidence each year. Alan has practiced with us for many years and I have full confidence in his ability to teach the Dharma, oversee the Zen Center administration, and take care of the Sangha.

Some of you have asked about my plans. My plan is to gradually shift my responsibilities to Alan, together with the practice leaders, in order to make a transition in the least disruptive way. I will continue to practice with all of you in the zendo as long as I can. Being freed up from my Abbot's duties, I will be able to work on my writing, and continue to give my attention to committed students, do training, and maintain my presence in the zendo. There are lots of details to be worked out, and more will surface as we go along. The seniors and I feel very positive about this process. We are committed to making a very thoughtful and deliberate transition that will benefit everyone. Your input is welcome.

Gassho,  
Sojun



### 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 September

### Founders Ceremony

Sunday, 9-3, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 9-5, 6:40 am

### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 9-9, 9:30 am

### Kidzendo

Saturday, 9-16

### Half-Day Sesshin

Sunday, 9-17

### Womens' Sesshin

Sunday, 9-24

## October

### Founders Ceremony

Tuesday, 10-3, 6:20 pm

Wednesday, 10-4, 6:40 am

### Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10-7, 9:30 am

### BZC Board Meeting

Sunday, 10-8, 9:00 am

### Kanzeon Sesshin

Sunday, 10-8

### Kidzendo

Saturday, 8-19

### One-Day Sesshin

Sunday, 10-22

### Sejiki

Tuesday, 10-31

**NOTE:** The BZC Newsletter invites sangha members to submit short articles or other items of interest. Send to: eherzog@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 Senauke the Thursday before to let her know if you're hoping to attend. For more information, call Laurie at 845-2215.



### SCHEDULE

September 2	Sesshin – no childcare
September 9	Childcare
September 16	Kidzendo
September 23	Childcare
September 30	Childcare
October 7	Childcare
October 14	Childcare
October 21	Kidzendo
October 28	Childcare
November 4	Childcare
November 11	Childcare
November 18	Sesshin – no program
November 25	Kidzendo
December 2	Sesshin – no program
December 9	Childcare
December 16	Kidzendo
December 23	Interim – no program
December 30	Interim – no program

### KIDZENDO

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

## Men's Shelter Dinner

Berkeley Zen Center provides dinner twice a month at the Berkeley Men's Shelter in downtown Berkeley. This was established by our dear departed elder Maylie ("devotedly do!") Scott in the early 1990s, and kept alive all these years by numerous sangha members including John Rubin, Claire Rubin, Lance Shows, Betty Jung, John Rasmussen, Louise Rasmussen, and several other stalwarts.

It's one thing to get a great idea for social service, and another to keep it going year after year. We'd love to augment the regulars with some fresh enthusiastic folks. The socially engaged dharma group has agreed to take over one dinner per quarter, and we'd like to find two more people/groups to take over one dinner per quarter (four times a year) so John can retire (and do more work around here as treasurer and work leader!). As John wrote:

*It is hard to say who gets the most out of this. The men get a good dinner — for example, lasagne, salad, corn bread, soft drinks, ice cream, and homemade brownies or cookies. We get to talk with them, hear their stories, and show them our care and concern. These are men that for whatever reason are down on their luck. They need help. We have something to give them -- our time, energy, support, and nourishing food.*

Please contact coordinator, Laurie Senauke (lauries@kushiki.org, 845-2215) if you are interested in this opportunity.

## Soji

If you come to Saturday morning zazen, and stay for breakfast, you should plan on staying for Soji, the short work period after. Eating and cleaning up go together as two sides of one practice.

And a related Soji request, from Sojun Roshi, on behalf of the weekly jikidos. They request that 2-3 people stay in the zendo during Soji after morning zazen during the week to brush off all the zabutons and fluff all the zafus. This will make the job a bit easier for those who come during the week to clean.



## Report from Women's Retreat: OM TARA TU TARE TURE SOHA

by Elizabeth Flora

Where is the edge between true compassion and compulsive giving? How do women discount themselves? What is the wholesome match between feminine characteristics and practice? How does that become unwholesome? How can practice address these questions? Thirty women, about half from BZC (the rest from SFZC, Green Gulch, Valley Heartland, Empty Nest, and LA's Beginner's Mind), convened in July for two days of classes, discussion, swimming, sewing, noshing and basking in the Sierra foothills at Myoan Grace Schireson's Empty Nest Zendo. And, the aforementioned queries are the result of the group broaching the following topics:

- Women as leaders in our Sanghas
- Women and addictions: Twelve Step Programs and Zen practice
- Formal practice: Zendo forms and waking up
- Female ancestors and convent practice: What has been gained and what has been lost as we practice with men in the West
- Family practice and wholesome selflessness
- Coming out of the shadows: Being Shuso

Bouts of spontaneous synchronized swimming, appointments with masseurs, and zero cooking responsibilities helped foster a restful and nurturing environment as we mulled what for many of us proved to be provocative issues. Of course, zazen, chanting, and services framed our inquiries into the middle way's relative and absolute. The thematic and material aspects of the weekend were guided by Grace along with Baika Pratt's extensive and generous assistance, and complimented by talks given by senior students, priest and lay-ordained teachers, and rounded out in no small way by exuberant students.

Women's feelings of being overlooked were healed by a four-hundred-year-old Green Tara, a female Buddha in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, who presided from the zendo altar. The women's sangha welcomed her return vis-à-vis an Eye Opening ceremony which was, indeed, eye-



*Thirty women's retreat practitioners convene for two days in July at Myoan Grace Schireson's Empty Nest Zendo*

opening. It's possible that our questions were "fleshed" out long ago when Tara confidently resisted the ideation that her sex would prevent her from attaining enlightenment. Thus, OM TARA TU TARE TURE SOHA is a mantra we repeated throughout the weekend to liberate us from fear and to invoke compassion.

Meanwhile, the nascent and evolving BZC Women's Council has invited Grace to lead the September 24 Women's Sesshin. And, stay awake for announcements regarding next year's women's retreat August 2-7. Both events promise to continue encouragement toward self-reflection and to the rooting out of conditioned self-defeating roles.

### **Flowers Replace Incense**

The BZC Practice Committee has decided that because a number of sangha members have severe allergic reactions to incense we will no longer be making incense offerings at the altars. We will continue to make offerings of petals, etc. The details of these offerings are being worked out. Further details will be announced in the near future.



# Sojun Mel Weitsman Tassajara Zendo Talk, 8/12/06

## 6 Prajna Paramitas

**T**onight I want to talk about how we practice Prajna Paramita. Every day we chant the Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra.:

"Avilokitesvara Bodhisattva when practicing deeply the Prajna Paramita perceived that all five skandhas in their own being are empty and was saved from all suffering. Form, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are also like this." Which points to the fact that every thing depends on everything else. Nothing exists by itself. What is this Prajna Paramita that Avilokitesvara is practicing?

Avilokitesvara's practice is our practice. So what is our everyday practice of Prajna Paramita? Paramita is a word that has two meanings, one is perfection the other is, going or gone or going beyond. At the end of the Heart Sutra is the mantra gate gate paragate parasamgate bodhi sva ha! Going, going, gone, altogether gone beyond. Going beyond implies that there is this shore and that shore. This shore is the shore of suffering and the other shore is the shore of release and liberation. So how are we going to get from the shore of self-clinging and suffering to the shore of liberation? My old teacher Susuki Roshi use to say that when you know how to live correctly on this shore you are already on the other shore. There really is no place to go.

This word Prajna means wisdom. But not wisdom in the usual sense. It is the wisdom of non-duality; the reconciliation of opposites. This is the important part. How do we practice the wisdom of the reconciliation of opposites, the duality of oneness and the oneness of duality?

There are six modes of practice; the six Paramitas, which are the practices of Prajna Paramita. We usually call them simply, the six Paramitas. But more accurately they are the six Prajna Paramitas. The word Prajna is very important here. If we only think of them as six

Paramitas we can easily fall into a dualistic self-improvement scheme, but if we keep in mind that these are six practices of Prajna that lead to liberation then we will have some understanding of how to practice the Heart Sutra. The Heart Sutra alone, simply expresses the intellectual understanding, which of course expresses the heart of the Prajna Paramita Sutras, but in order for this understanding to be realized it should be practiced. How do we do that?

The six Prajna Paramitas, as most of you know are generosity, noble conduct, patience, enthusiastic effort, meditation which is called dhyana or samadhi, and prajna itself. Prajna is the sixth one. Usually we think in terms of a linear progression. I like to think of it as a circle. Because the first one which is generosity – dana, and the last one prajna, are really the two most important ones. When they are in a circle they are side by side instead of at the two ends. Prajna, which is non-dual wisdom, permeates all of them, as does generosity. As a matter of fact, each one contains all the others, so there are 36 in actuality, and each one is based on prajna.

The first one, Dana means generosity in all of its aspects. Pure dana is giving, beyond any special purpose or attachment. Giving for the sake of giving itself. And it includes not just material gifts. Sometimes we offer a material gift to curry favor. We donate money or we give someone a present and we will look for the feedback. "Can you put my name on a plaque?" or, "did you like it?" There is generosity here but it is easily tainted. There are many levels of generosity. Pure generosity is simply giving and forgetting. We say, "The emptiness of the giver, the gift, and the one who receives." So with an empty hand I offer an empty gift to an empty receiver and pure gratitude arises. Simply giving is enough. Sometimes it is beneficial to give a

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## Sojun Mel Weitsman

### 6 Paramitas

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gift anonymously. But even if we give a gift anonymously we should be careful about pride. All of these tainted aspects are dualistic.

Ultimately the greatest gift is a free offering. For a Bodhisattva, for a zen student, the gift of dharma is most important. Dharma is freely given without any thought of return.

Throughout the year we give zazen instruction to people but never expect anything in return. We simply give the gift without any expectation because giving without expectation is an expression of our inmost nature. As a zen student, when we come to practice we bring our ego. My old teacher use to say that we are one-half ordinary being, and one-half Buddha. Sometimes Buddha and myself are cooperating. Sometimes I'm leading and sometimes Buddha is leading. There can be a lot of tension or conflict there. But when one finally comes to practice and has a realization of what that is, one can offer oneself to the practice, freely giving even though problems arise. Sometimes we resist that. But nevertheless, even though there is resistance we freely give ourself without expectations and little by little ego becomes absorbed by Buddha. Given time, Buddha leads and I follow.

When we first come to practice we of course are doing something for ourselves, but as our practice matures we realize we are also practicing for others. Both reasons are good. But there is still some taint of duality. Pure practice is simply for the sake of practice. When we practice for the sake of practice others are taken care of, and I am taken care of. Everything is included, and we let go of partiality. So maybe the main thing in generosity is impartiality, and this is how prajna permeates generosity.

*To be continued.*



# PEOPLE

Welcome to new resident, **Joshua Seldman** and new member **Paul Winnacker**.

\* \* \*

A deep gassho to **Sue Oehser**, who has been tirelessly building beautiful oryoki sets for several years now.

\* \* \*

Long time BZC members are the foundation of our community, in this case literally, as **Doug Greiner** facilitated the pouring of new cement for our driveway and sidewalk. The work was beautifully done by **Bill Milligan** and his Construction crew; Bill was the one who master-minded the lifting of 1933 ½, and the construction of two first floor apartments in that building, lo these many (25!) years ago.

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

### ***Caring for Buddha's Robe***

If you need assistance (or simply time and space) with rakusu/okesa/robe repairs, or replacement, or finishing already started rakusu, the following dates are on the calendar. Each session is from 1 to 5 pm. Please contact Jean Selkirk (510-655-0820) before you attend the first time. Any changes to the schedule will be made on the bulletin board.

Material fees only apply for envelopes or new (second or replacement) rakusu, and the usual class fee applies for new rakusu, which must be started by the end of September. Starting first rakusu for Lay Ordination will begin in January as usual. If you are considering this, please speak with your teacher then also speak with the sewing teacher before the winter break begins.

### **Sewing Dates**

**Sun 9/10; Sat 9/30;**

**Sun 10/15; Sat 10/28;**

**Sun 11/5; and Sun 11/19.**



# Retracing the Path of our Female Zen Ancestors

Upcoming Women's Sesshin September 24

By Grace Schireson

If I told you that there were a hundred Zen Masters whose teaching words had been retrieved from an obscure cave in Asia, would you be interested in these teachings? What if I also mentioned that these authentic Zen teachers lived within family contexts, not large monasteries, and had found ways to integrate Zen practice into their daily life? Sound like something that we could use? Well, all of this hypothetical teaching does exist, except for two important details: where the teachings were found, and the fact that all of the teachings of these hitherto unknown Zen Masters were women. Still interested?

For 2500 years, from the time of the Buddha, women's practice was always separated from men's, and there have been hundreds of thousands of female Buddhist practitioners. The custom of separating men and women's Zen practice continues to this day in Asia. It is only in the Western world that co-educational Zen practice exists. But what about what women taught and practiced? Did differences in emphasis develop? Did they teach women different practices than what they taught men? Is there anything that we may learn from including their teachings in our own view of how to practice? I answer YES to these three questions and also propose something more.

While we have adapted the wonderful teaching brought over by Suzuki-Roshi to fit our American culture, the practice Suzuki-Roshi brought to us was the practice he learned at Eihei-ji monastery. Eihei-ji monastery has, historically and currently, only taught men. And so it is true for Maezumi-roshi, Seung-sunim, Master Sheng-yen and other Asian founders in the West. All of these founders were trained in all male monasteries, and it is this male teaching upon which our Western Zen practice has been based. The Zen convent practices have not been integrated into our training in the West. So, I wonder, does one size fit all? Can all

women fully thrive on practices developed by men for men? What might have been lost to both male and female practitioners in the West by the absence of the Zen convent teachings? Did the convents offer anything to men and women that we might wish to reclaim for today's Western practice places? I'd like to continue looking at these questions.

On September 24, from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm, women at BZC will come together through zazen, service, lecture and discussion, to explore a sense of women-only practice. The lecture and discussion will explore the history of the convents and their variety of practices. I have been interested in deepening my connection to the Zen ancestors, and in my own personal embodiment of our practice. Through studying the female ancestors I have felt a new kinship to Zen and an authentic sense of belonging to this lineage. Through exploring their practices I wish to follow Dogen's teaching: "To study the Buddha Way is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self." The study of my self now includes study of both male and female ancestors, with the intention to more deeply enter our Zen practice with one and all. BZC women are invited to join in this opportunity to sit zazen together and retrace our lineage through the teachings of the female Zen masters and the practices of their convents.



*Grace Schireson stands next to an original calligraphy by the Abbess Ryonen Ginsan (1646-1711) at Mampukuji Temple, Japan.*

# SAVE THE DATES

## Kanzeon Sitting

The next Kanzeon sitting will be Sunday, October 8, 8:45 am-4 pm. This sitting is especially designed for those who have some difficulty with the typical sesshin schedule, but it is open to anyone. Periods of zazen are shorter so it is also a good opportunity to experiment with a more challenging posture. Attend all or part of the day. If you have particular concerns or needs, or if this will be your first day-long sitting, please contact Greg Denny, 595-8162, greg@techsperience.org. Lunch will be bag lunch, bring you own, or purchase one from the Thai temple next door or the Berkeley Bowl. Cost is \$15 for members, \$20 for non-members. Sign up on the bulletin board.

## Jikidos Needed

Twice every week, the zendo is given a thorough cleaning by sangha members who sign up for a specific week. It doesn't take long, since the space is already so clean! There's plenty of room on the sign-up sheet (back porch of Community Room). Head Jikido Shelley Brock (sybrock@earthlink.net) will be thrilled to give you a quick training. This is a wonderful way to support our temple and experience the quiet peace of the zendo. You may sign up as an individual or team up, either to work together, or to split the week.

*notes cling to blue  
dust broom, then shimmer, shaken over  
cool morning grass*

**Shelly Brock**



## Praying for Peace

We have begun dedicating our evening service on Wednesdays to world peace. We are chanting the Metta Prayer, which Maylie Scott wrote, and the En Mei Jukku, with an eko of dedication provided by Alan. May all beings know no one as an enemy. May no one suffer from war, hunger or indignity. May our mutual understanding heal the earth and ourselves.

## BZC Board of Directors Meeting

The next Berkeley Zen Center Board of Directors meeting will be held **October 1**, 9:00 am, in the community room. All sangha members are invited to attend.

## Women's Sesshin September 24

If you have any questions about the sesshin, please contact the sesshin director, Leslie Bartholic, at 925-933-3486 (before 9:00 pm) or lbartholic@comcast.net. Sign-up deadline is September 20.

## Audio Archive News

The Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi "Nothing Special" Collection of forty audio CD's are now available for check-out. Contact John Moge, our office manager. These are available to borrow for a period of one week, one per member.

If you want to browse the selection of available titles, please see the title listing in the front section of the "Nothing Special" Manual Volume I in the library. This can be found next to the "Shunryu Suzuki-Roshi Collected Transcripts."

Each of these mixed media CD's (audio plus .pdf file) has, for reading on computer, both the lecture transcript and the introduction from the manual. The introduction also contains the title listing and guide to the CD label.

Besides the listed lectures, we also have Suzuki-Roshi's June 20, 1971 "Rakusu Sewing and Okesa Sewing Sesshin" lecture. Sojun quoted from this during his June 10, 2006 lecture about sewing practice and the sewing teachers from Japan who helped begin sewing practice here in America.

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