



# Berkeley Zen Center



## July 2008 Newsletter

### New Times For Zazen Instruction

Starting July 26, zazen instruction will take place from 8:45 to 9:30 am IN THE ZENDO. Despite the challenge of changing something we have been doing for years, there are two important advantages. First, it really makes sense to teach zazen in the zendo, where it will be practiced. This also allows for a quiet venue, distant from dishwashing and other distractions in the kitchen and community room. Second, instruction will directly precede a period of zazen, so people will have a chance to try out what they have just learned.

Because of this change, there will also be some revisions to the Saturday schedule. The schedule will stay the same from 6 am through breakfast. After that, the schedule will be as follows:

- 8:45-9:30 Work period for Saturday attendees
- 9:30-9:40 Set-up for next period of zazen
- 9:40-10:05 Zazen
- 10:05-10:15 Kinhin
- 10:15-11:15 Lecture

These changes come from an ongoing discussion in our community about how to most effectively provide zazen instruction and welcome people to BZC. Still, we regard these changes as something of an experiment: We plan to try this for six months and see how it works. We welcome your comments and suggestions during this trial period! Contact Bob Rosenbaum, Ron Nestor, Mary Duryea, or Karen Sundheim if you wish to provide input.



#### 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

#### July

##### **Founder's Ceremony**

Wednesday, 7-2, 6:20 pm

Thursday, 7-3, 6:40 am

##### **All Sangha Potluck**

Thursday, 7-3, 6:30-8:30 pm

##### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 7-6, 9:30 am

##### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 7-19, 9:30 am

##### **One-Day Sitting**

Saturday, 7-19

##### **Mountains & Rivers Sesshin**

Friday-Sunday, 7-25 to 7-27

##### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 7-26

#### August **Campout**

Saturday-Sunday, 8-2 & 8-3

##### **Half-Day Sitting**

Sunday, 8-3, 9:30 am

##### **Founder's Ceremony**

Monday, 8-4, 6:20 pm

Tuesday, 8-5, 6:40 am

##### **Work Day Sitting**

Sunday, 8-10

##### **Kidzendo**

Saturday, 8-16

##### **Bodhisattva Ceremony**

Saturday, 8-16, 9:30 am

##### **Two-Day Study Sitting**

Saturday-Sunday, 8-30 & 31

# PEOPLE

BZC would like to acknowledge the recent departure of two of its residents, **Jim Tomlinson** and **Ellen Doudna**. Jim has moved to Green Gulch for a bit and will be traveling to the Indian subcontinent soon thereafter. We hope he'll drop back in from time to time. Ellen is moving just down the street on Russell. While in residence they both fulfilled the requirements and expectations of residency thus perpetuating both Suzuki Roshi and Sojun Roshi's vision of a vital lay practice center. Jim has also been our Head Jikido for the last few months. Taking over for Jim is long time BZC member **Richard Beeson**. Good luck to both Ellen and Jim and thanks to Richard for filling Jim's big shoes.

\* \* \*

Beaucoup bows to departing Work Leader **Mary Duryee**. Mary has done an incredible amount of organizing, creating binders for our buildings, and check lists of ongoing and one-time projects. She's winding up two years in this position, passing it on to **Ken Powelson**. Take a deep breath, Ken!



photo by Ross Blum

## Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays from 9:15 to 11:15. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Greg Denny, 595-8162, or [greg@techsperience.org](mailto:greg@techsperience.org).



## Childcare Schedule

July 5	Childcare
July 12	Childcare
July 19	Sesshin – no program
July 26	<b>Kidzendo</b>
August 2	Childcare and Campout
August 9	Childcare
August 16	<b>Kidzendo</b>
August 23	Childcare
August 30	Childcare

## 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 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.

## Wiping the Boards Wiping the Mind

When wiping down the meal boards at oriyo-ki, please extend your effort to the next person. Using your hand furthest from the altar will facilitate this. Thanks. *(submitted by Ross Blum)*



# Summer Sutra Study

**B**eginning Thursday, July 17, Laurie Senauke will teach a four-week class on the Lotus Sutra; each week we'll recite and discuss a parable from this seminal text. These parables illuminate our true relationship with Buddha. The class meets from 7:15 to 8:45 each Thursday evening. Unlike most of our classes, you can come to all or some of the sessions, to accommodate your summer recreation plans. The cost is \$5.00 per class. Sign up on the bulletin board as usual.

July 17 - Parable of the Burning House  
July 24 - Parable of the Return Journey  
July 31 - Parable of the Herbs  
August 7 - Parable of the Magic City

Interview with Laurie Senauke by BZC Class Coordinator Ron Nestor.

**Ron:** This is your third summer sutra class and it seems you're making a shift from the earlier period sutras to the parables within the Lotus Sutra.

**Laurie:** I had been choosing from among the Pali scriptures and now I'm tackling a Mahayana sutra. Going from the early Pali sutras to the Lotus Sutra is sort of like going from hiking on Mt. Tam to climbing Mt. Everest in one day. I'm having a little trouble with altitude sickness. The Lotus Sutra is a whole different world. It's all love and splendour. The seven parables within the sutra are great stories, all about skillful means.

**Ron:** Do you think that's the common thread that runs through the parables?

**Laurie:** Yes, they're all about skillful means. We may think that skillful means is tweaking or modifying the truth so that people can hear it, sort of a watered down version. But there's nothing BUT skillful means. Maybe that's what the sutra is saying. Responding to the cur-

rent situation appropriately- it's the expression of our practice moment to moment. So it's not like a substitute or incomplete.

**Ron:** I'll think about that.

**Laurie:** Those are the kinds of questions we'll be talking about. Another common thread is that the stories are about our relationship to Buddha. In two of the parables he's the father and we're the children. In one of them he's the rain and we're the plants and in another he's the trail guide and we're the hikers. It's like realizing ourselves in the family of Buddha - children naturally grow up to become parents.

**Ron:** It seems one reason why the sutra is so popular, particularly with the Nichiren sect is the message that we can do it or are it, even feel our capability is very limited.

**Laurie:** And that this amazing world of miracles is always available to us somehow.

**Ron:** Speaking of family, my niece who just graduated from college went on a solitary hiking retreat in the Rogue River area of Oregon. Because she has a meditation practice and interest in Buddhism, she took the Lotus Sutra as her only reading material. She was somewhat disappointed and told my sister that all it said was, "Buddha is good, Buddha is good". I just read that zen master Hakuin, when he first read the sutra, had the same kind of response. "It's all just cause and effect- so what?" Later after many years of practice and in his 40's he reread it and had a transformative experience, breaking down in tears and sobs, wrung out with gratitude and awe. He said none of his previous study or realizations could match the Lotus Sutra.

**Laurie:** I've heard that in the early days of San Francisco Zen Center, when Suzuki Roshi presented the Lotus Sutra, the students felt it was

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# Teacher Student Alchemy: Reflections From The May SPOT Training

by Ryushin Andrea Thach

**B**eginning last year, a three-year experiment in priest training in our Suzuki Roshi lineage, known as SPOT, began. Alan Senauke is one of the six teachers team teaching. Catherine, Alexandra and Andrea from BZC are three of 26 priests-in-training who are participating in SPOT (Shogaku Priest Ongoing Training). Serendipitously, the four of us recently had the pleasure of being assigned to



work together in a small group session to discuss teaching styles - both as teachers to be and as students working with teachers. It

was a very invigorating exploration for us. Here is a little window into this unique training experience in the form of our report back to the larger SPOT group. It incorporates teacher comments and our own insights, as summarized by Andrea, and represents one perspective of a very broad and rich discussion. Kirk Phillips, a student of Darlene Cohen, was also a part of our discussion group.

The teacher comes into being upon request of the student, in an agreement that is mutual, voluntary, and renewable. That renewability is reaffirmed and confirmed in every encounter. The relationship is dynamic and fluid, sometimes for a designated time, as when a teacher accepts a student for priest ordination.

Moving to different teachers is a possibility. Even in this case, the karmic relationship that is formed in the teaching relationship endures even if primary teaching relationships shift, just as family bonds cannot be undone. Some of this is spoken, but not everything. There is chemistry, a vital life affirming energy, which exists in this teacher-student union. Indeed, the teacher's main role is to see the buddha nature in each student and to affirm and help the student bring it forth. The teacher speaks to the buddha nature request in the student and hears the student requests from that place.

We felt that of the different modes of teaching - mentoring, mirroring and modeling - the last held special power. An inspiring teacher teaches

as s/he handles things, touches the door as s/he opens, sets down oryoki bowls, demonstrating the way of connection and interconnection in an instruction more precise and intimate than words. In this languageless activity, action conveys body-body connection, which transforms the student. Nothing is given, but the essential is transmitted.

While the idea of a teacher having authority generated some negative buzz among some priest candidates, we felt that the authority of the teacher is something the student gives to the teacher, and that it arises out of the horizontality of the relationship; its verticality is a result of the teacher taking a position of horizontality to the student. That is, when a teacher is authentic in her/himself and humble in interactions, having seen and become unattached to neurotic coping patterns, the student trusts and respects him/her. We each spoke of the "reverence" and "love" we have for our teachers.

Authenticity is key to a teacher being ready to teach. How does the teacher practice in his/her own difficulty? How do they conduct themselves when they are raw, in physical or emotional pain? If nothing is hidden, then the student can more easily show himself or herself fully, too.

When holding practice discussion, communication takes place through the body. A sacred space is set, in the forms of entering, bowing together, and making an offering together. The teacher is completely open with body and in mind, with the student, bringing his/her whole capacity to the meeting, seeing the buddha nature in the whole of what is happening (student, teacher, circumstances). Whatever the student brings is fully accepted as part of her/his buddha nature. The teacher monitors their own body reactions to alert her/himself to reactivity, judgment that has important information for one or both people. The teacher listens for the deeper question and responds to the student's deepest yearning.





From left to right: Linda Galijan (ordinee jisha), Jean Selkirk (sewing teacher), Christy Calame, Judy Bertelsen, Ellen Webb, Peter Pfaelzer, Sonia Gaemi, David Corbett, Sojun Mel Weitsman (Abbott/preceptor), Karen Sundheim (preceptor jisha), Richard Beeson, Hozan Alan Senauke (Vice-Abbot/preceptor), Ross Blum (preceptor jisha), Nancy Suib, Myoan Grace Schireson (preceptor).  
*(photo by Dean Bradley)*

**Lay Ordination**

On Saturday, June 14, six members of the BZC sangha received lay ordination (Zaike Tokudo). This ceremony takes place once a year and is an important and significant ceremony for each participant, as well as for the whole sangha. We have the feeling that we are all participating, witnessing, and welcoming the ordineses into the lineage of Shakyamuni Buddha as they receive Buddha's Precepts. Congratulations to all!

**Sojun Roshi's Students**

- Ellen Webb  
Maikô Kaishin  
Dancing Light Open Heart
  
- Richard Beeson  
Myoho Nindo  
Bright Peak Patient Path
  
- Sonia Gaemi  
Jitsuen Myoki  
Fruitful Garden Bright Spirit
  
- Judy Bertelsen  
Meisô I-shin  
Bright Essence Healing Heart

Peter Pfaelzer  
Henkai Gyôjun  
Wide Ocean Practice Pure-hearted

Christy Calame  
Zenkû E-Shin  
Zen Sky Wisdom Heart

**Hozan Alan Senauke's Students**

David Corbett  
Koun Shôgen  
Solitary Cloud Luminous Source

**Myoan Grace Schireson's Students**

Nancy Suib  
Mitsu Kô Myôjun  
Intimate Light Wondrous Purity



# The Character of Soup and the Soup of Character: Offering Hindrances to Evoke Bodhisattva Spirit

By Raul Moncayo, BZC Practice Leader

**B**uddhism starts with a state of confusion, or suffering, because without respecting samsara (the profane and secular worlds) we cannot discover the awakened state of nirvana. This includes having some concept or idea of either samsara or nirvana. Concepts are part of samsara and of the discriminating mind but without using them in some way it is more difficult to go beyond concepts and ideas. You may think you are beyond concepts and ideas but this rejection of concepts and ideas is yet another idea. One has to use up the concepts so that concepts give way to wisdom. Although Zen teachings regard concepts as hindrance, hindrance does not mean that it prevents anything.

There is no secret buddha nature underneath the hindrance. Buddha nature is in the hindrance itself. The hindrance is a hindrance but it is also a vehicle for the hindered. Hindrance does not hinder hindrance or what it hinders. As the Tenzo taught Dogen, there is nothing in the world that is hidden.

Chogyam Trungpa called hindrances the manure of experience. Gautama, the Buddha, gave his son the Indian name Rahul. According to many, it means hindrance. Well, our hindrances are like our children who evoke all the problematic passions in us. Just like we should have compassion and respect for our children, despite their behavior, we should also show the same respect and compassion for our hindrances. We have to gather the manure of passion and use it to fertilize the mind ground of compassion. But gathering also means conceptual study, and bringing passions to realization. We have to study and recognize our own manure and put it to use. Zen practice is a kind of left hand study of shit. Through studying shit we find a way to treat the bacterias that make us sick.



Shosan with Sojun Roshi from Seishi Tetsudo's vantage point. Jisha Sue Oehser is on the right and Richard Beeson is adjusting his glasses. (photo by Ross Blum)

## Lotus Sutra Class

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too fancy. He responded something like "Oh no it's not fancy enough! Not even close." Reality is even more amazing. (laughs)

**Ron:** Why do you think both Hakuin and Dogen and other zen ancestors were so drawn to it?

**Laurie:** There's something very ultimate about it. It's sort of like zazen. The sutra is all about how great the Lotus Sutra is, but when you get to the end it's like, what IS the sutra? Our zazen is surrounded by all this specialness - special room, special seats, special movements. We build this whole thing around zazen but in the middle of an actual period of zazen there's nothing there! (laughs) You know what I mean? Zazen is just whatever's happening.

Ron: Thank you.

# SAVE THE DATES

## **All-Sangha Gathering**

Our next All-Sangha gathering is Thursday, July 3, 6:30-8:30 p.m. in the community room. Following a potluck dinner, we have a special guest presentation from Susan Overton (wife of BZC president Peter Overton). Susan recently completed her training as an Alexander Technique instructor; she will share what she has learned about sitting cross legged with balance and ease. A number of BZC members and friends have benefited from learning about the way the Alexander Technique articulates the details of sitting posture. After her short presentation, there will be plenty of time for further discussion of sitting or any other topics that suit our fancy. Three general issues were discussed at the last gathering: (1) leadership transition, (2) communication and decision-making within the sangha, and (3) financial needs and how to meet them. But you are also welcome to express any other concerns you may have. All-Sangha gatherings are one of the ways BZC members and friends can provide more active and timely input on these and other important issues. They're also a lot of fun! We encourage everyone to attend and take part.

## **Mindfulness Class**

Alexandra Frappier, one of our priests at BZC, will teach, possibly with a copresenter, a four-week class on mindfulness on four Saturday afternoons in September. This is our first try with a Saturday class schedule. The dates will be September 13 to October 4.. The times will be 12:00-1:30 in the community room. Folks who've been at lecture or the morning schedule are welcome to bring bag lunches to eat before the class either on the patio or in the community room.

## **Women's Retreat**

Reminder: July 10-14, 3rd Annual Women's retreat with Angie Boissevain, Darlene Cohen and Grace Schireson. For more information contact Elizabeth Flora (510) 643-2996 [flora@haas.berkeley.edu](mailto:flora@haas.berkeley.edu) or [grace@emp-tynestzendo.org](mailto:grace@emp-tynestzendo.org)

## **Mountains and Rivers Sesshin**

Our next Mountains and Rivers sesshin will take place at Point Reyes, Friday through Sunday, July 25-27. Sojun Roshi will be leading it. All meals are provided and camping experience is not required. Everyone is encouraged to do the full three days, but provision will also be made for people who can take part only in the Saturday-Sunday portion. Information and sign up sheet will be posted on the BZC bulletin board. If you have any questions, please call Ken Knabb (527-0959) or email him at [knabb@bopsecrets.org](mailto:knabb@bopsecrets.org).

## **BZC Campout at Tilden Park**

On the weekend of August 2 and 3, we will have our annual BZC Campout for members, families, and friends. The campout will be in Tilden Park, a mere 20 minute drive from BZC, at a beautiful spot close to hiking trails. We'll start in the afternoon on Saturday, have a potluck dinner and then a campfire, wake up to birds singing and a breakfast is provided. It's all over at noon on Sunday. \$10 - \$20 per person sliding scale. Sign up on the main bulletin board. People who sign up will receive a map, a parking permit, and the all important secret combination number. To borrow camping equipment or more info, talk to Laurie Senauke ([lauries@kushiki.org](mailto:lauries@kushiki.org)) or Marie Hopper ([deagin@california.com](mailto:deagin@california.com)). If you're not a camper, join us for the potluck dinner, around 6:00 and indicate this on the sign up sheet. Or come for breakfast - the late great Dolly Gatozzi used to show up at breakfast with a thermos of Peet's coffee (hint, hint).

## **August Work Sesshin**

Don't miss our annual August Work Sesshin, Sunday, August 10, 8:30 am to 4:30 pm. There will be gardening, deep zendo and kitchen cleaning, special projects - in other words, something for everyone! A delicious lunch will be served, and we will be able to actually TALK to each other! Be there!

**Berkeley Zen Center**  
**1931 Russell Street**  
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