



Berkeley Zen Center



October 2008 Newsletter

Beginner's Sesshin

On **Sunday, October 5** we will offer a "beginner's sesshin," from 8:30am until 3pm. Hozan Alan Senauke will offer instruction in the basic forms of our practice — zazen, kinhin, service — while maintaining our ground in meditation throughout the day. Participants should bring a bag lunch, which we will eat informally in silence at midday.

Newer members are particularly encouraged to take part, but we welcome older students who can enjoy a day of sitting and model the richness of our practice. For more information contact Alan at alans@kushiki.org or sesshin director Catherine Cascade at catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net.

Aspects of Practice:

Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind

October 19-November 15, 2008

BZC's annual Aspects of Practice period opens with a one-day sitting on **October 19, from 5 am to 5 pm**. Sign up on the bulletin board as usual. John Rubin is the director for the sitting.

The Aspects of Practice Period is an opportunity for newer students and older members to make a realistic commitment to practice regularly in the zendo, study our traditions and forms, and refresh our practice. Over the years, Aspects of Practice has become a great way for newer students to root their practice. The teachers this year are Ross Blum, Richard Haefele, Raul Moncayo, Ron Nestor, Gerry Oliva, Laurie Senauke, Hozan Alan Senauke (and others to be determined). We invite you to join for four weeks of practice, study, and discussion. Continued on next page....



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

Founder's Ceremony

Thursday, 10-2, 6:20 pm

Friday, 10-3, 6:40 am

Beginner's Sesshin

Sunday, 10-5, 8:30 am-3:00 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 10-11, 9:40 am

All Sangha Potluck

Thursday, 10-16, 6:30 pm

One-Day Sitting to Open

Aspects of Practice

Sunday, 10-19

Aspects of Practice

October 19-November 15

Sejiki Ceremony and

Celebration/Kidzendo

Saturday, 10-25

November

Founder's Ceremony

Monday, 11-3, 6:10 pm

Tuesday, 11-4, 6:40 am

Half-Day Sitting

Sunday, 11-2, 8:00 am-12:00 pm

Bodhisattva Ceremony

Saturday, 11-15, 9:40 am

One-Day Sitting to Close

Aspects of Practice

Saturday, 11-15

Kidzendo

Saturday, 11-22

Thanksgiving (zendo closed)

Thursday, 11-27

Aspects of Practice, continued

This year's focus is on Suzuki Roshi's classic "Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind." Senior students will lecture on Saturdays, lead Monday morning discussions, and offer a four-week class. There will be informal teas and regular practice discussion. Each sangha participant is strongly encouraged to meet with a practice leader at least once during Aspects. We begin with the sitting on **October 19** and end with a **closing sitting on Saturday, November 15**. The Thursday evening class will be open to everyone as usual. For the first time we are planning to teach in small groups. Your interest, support, and encouragement can help the whole sangha. For further details please look carefully at the zendo events bulletin board. If you have further questions, talk with Alan or email him at alans@kushiki.org.

Zendo "Spring" Cleaning

Yes, Spring cleaning in the Fall. Weather permitting we will be airing and sunning all of the zafus and zabutons right after Saturday program on **October 11th, from 11:30 AM until approx. 3:30 PM**. We are looking for 8 or so volunteers to join in this care of our temple; lunch will be provided. In case of uncooperative weather we have set aside November 1st as backup. Please signup on the main bulletin board or by contacting BZC Head Jikido, Richard Beeson (at 510.508.6767 or rabeeson@hotmail.com).

Buddhist Peace Fellowship Celebration

For 30 years Buddhist Peace Fellowship has been the leading voice of socially engaged Buddhism in the West. I have been a member of BPF for twenty-five of those years, and in that time I've seen its steady, quiet, and principled leadership influence the shape of practice in America and win the respect of engaged Buddhists around the world.

On **Saturday, October 18**, here in Berkeley, BPF will celebrate our thirty years of activity. I'll be there, along with BPF's Executive Director Zenju Earthlyn Manuel, keynote speakers Thulani Davis and David Loy, our board, staff, and wide community. Please join us for a joyous anniversary and a rededication to the endless work of saving sentient beings. I'd love to see you there. Peace & Dharma, Hozan Alan Senauke

Come Celebrate Sejiki

On October 25, BZC will celebrate Sejiki, one of the most important Buddhist holidays. We commemorate it annually around our Halloween because of its association with karmic spiritual relations. Its significance is described in an excerpt by Kyogen Carlson (see page 3).

Sejiki one of the two events we celebrate which is particularly inclusive of our young people. Festivities begin with Sojun Roshi's lecture at **10:15**, followed immediately by the ceremony and celebration. We invite everyone to come in costume and bring noisemakers for invoking the spirits of the dead!

In addition, Sejiki is a universal memorial for the dead. If you would like a name read at the service, please leave it for the zendo manager.

AED/CPR Training at BZC

It's been a while since we've made training available for operation of the AED (**Automatic External Defibrillator**) device hanging in the back of the zendo. The Board has now authorized funding for 6 people to learn (or relearn) to use the AED and to do adult CPR, which is part of the process involved in using the device.

The Board identified a group of six BZC residents, sesshin directors, Saturday directors, and the office manager as comprising the pool of those "most likely to be on hand when someone keels over." Those six trainees will be Alan Senauke, Tamar Enoch, Ken Powelson, John Rubin, John Moge, and Jake VanAkkeren. Catherine Cascade and Anke Perkert are already certified.

The training will take place at BZC on **Sunday, November 2, from 12:00 to 3:30**. Participants can bring a sack lunch to eat during the class.

Other sangha members are more than welcome to attend the training, paying the \$50 fee for themselves. Everyone who completes the training will receive a certificate. If you would like to do the training—or if you are already certified in either CPR or CPR/AED and are willing to be on the list of BZC emergency responders—please contact the Health & Safety Coordinator, Catherine Cascade, at catherinecascade@sbcglobal.net.

adapted from On Segaki, by 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, 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. 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. 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, but he just cannot stop resisting and holding on to his personal opinions. On the everyday level, this condition is that of someone who has desperate needs but can find no relief. 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.

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 made in such a manner will naturally benefit both the recipient and the donor. 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. By letting go, we completely accept those who have gone on as they were, understand them better and offer them what they need to go on, which is, most often, our forgiveness and blessing.

If you apply this process to yourself, looking at your own past actions as that which must be let go of. 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. 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? 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. 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. 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.

* *In contemporary Japan, the term "segaki" can have derogatory connotations. The Soto School in Japan chose to change the name of this celebration to to Sejiki, a less pejorative term, in 2004.*

Conclusion: Case No. 3 from the Blue Cliff Record From a Talk By Sojun Mel Weitsman, February 2, 1985

Continued from the September Newsletter

Matsu (Baso) the Great teacher was unwell. The temple accountant visited him and said, "Teacher, how is your health these days (during your illness)? Matsu said, "Sun face Buddha, Moon face Buddha".

In the beginning days of the Berkeley Zen Center I was not institutionally oriented. I kept the dues money in a tin can, to be used as needed and there was no problem. We had a good time practicing. There wasn't much money but everything worked well. I didn't even keep track of how much we had or spent. The idea of incorporating made me laugh. Incorporate? A Zen Center? Have bylaws and all of that?

But eventually I saw the necessity of incorporating and I am glad that we did. But my basic attitude has pretty much remained the same. The structure and institutional framework is important but should serve a function without dominating. When the structure overshadows the practice of the members I would refer to it as "The Institution".

My attitude has been that everyone is free to come and go. If you have an affinity for this way, please stay. You may leave with our best wishes. We try to appreciate our life of one day and one night at a time, and support and encourage each other to do that. When we practice with this attitude we are guided by Buddha, bring forth the Dharma, and are supported by the Sangha. Sometimes we are strict and sometimes granting. Sometimes we have to correct, and sometimes we condone. It is necessary to correct without being caught by critical mind, and to condone without being caught by a false sense of compassion.

In this way, we settle on so-called Big Mind which is neither critical or condoning, but is critical when necessary and condoning when necessary. Settling on big mind, and without desiring too much, with faith in our true nature, we naturally trust one another and our practice. Whether we have a lot or a little, whether we live a long time or a short time, we try to live each moment completely and with gratitude, not depending on tomorrow.

My experience of Suzuki Roshi is that he could be very kind and also critical. But even when he was critical I didn't mind. As a matter of fact I appreciated it because I felt that he was not standing apart from me or rejecting me but trying to help me as an expression of great compassion; dunking me in his ocean of big mind, turning me inside out. In this way he inspired me to live fully, one moment at a time.



Welcome...

To new members Ann Weber and Chris Dahms. And to the latest addition to our childcare program, Elias Denny-Hopper, born on September 12 at 3:40pm. Eli was a healthy 8 lb 3oz. Marie, Greg and brother Sam are delighted (and tired) and all are doing well.

Changing Hands...

Many thanks to Greta Pearson who is finishing her two years as our Head Librarian this month; for the many new acquisitions during her tenure, especially of our children's section; for the lovely displays of interesting titles, and her warm hearted availability to reserve titles we were interested in. And welcome to new librarian, Britt Pyland, who brings his experience attending book shelves at Tassajara and SFZC, and his extensive knowledge of dharma writings. He welcomes questions about good reads.

Thank you to outgoing keeper of the dokusan hut, Naome Dragstedt, and welcome to new attendant, Agnes Kaji.

A special thanks to Anne Jennings, who for three years, whether rain, sleet, fog, extra thick mailings or late deadlines delivered the newsletter to us all on time. Thank you, Anne! And welcome to our new newsletter distributor, Charley Ware.

A deep bow to Marian Yu for her unassuming, steady presence as Head Dishwasher these past two years. Welcome new resident Eric Kaufman to this position.

Thank you to Wanda Henning for her special touch caring for the community room this past year. Barry Waldman is the new community room attendant.

A NOTE FROM OUR TENZO

To simplify our tea storage, purchasing and service, the PC has decided (at my request, inspired by Ross's suggestion) that BZC will stock only Peet's teas (at half price, thanks to Ross). This will include a good selection of herbal infusions and caffeinated black and green teas. Due to lack of storage space, donations of tea, though appreciated, will no longer be kept at BZC, but will be offered to the community to take home.

If you prefer, feel free to bring your favorite tea to drink during sesshin and Saturday AM breaks, but please take it home with you afterwards, unless you don't mind that it be given away.

Thanks for your attention,
Paul R

Dedication to a Fallen Oak Grove by Matt Gillam

The Oak Grove has been dear to me ever since I moved to the East Bay two years ago. I have spent countless hours practicing zazen under the canopy and sometimes in the trees themselves. I have fought for the trees, rallied for the trees, learned from the trees, and cried for them. Watching them fall was incredibly hard, but I was able to pray for them as they fell and be a presence, a witness. Thus I give this dedication, so that all beings may arise together:

Although few see with this perspective, trees are people, a form of sentient life. The trees at the Memorial Oak Grove stood in silent beauty for 100 years. Some much longer. They stood for squirrels and foxes, for birds and raccoons, for opossums and deer, insects and microbes, fungi and moss. They stood for us--our vital breath. They stood in silent compassion, as they are the Standing People.

And indeed they are worlds--whole worlds of sentience unto themselves.

I want especially to honor Yama. Old Grandmother, you taught me much more with your silent presence than any word can express. And Redwood, Safety Tree, Okidoke (ordained as Shomoku Jinso), Loth Tree, Karuna and the 40 other named and nameless Upright Bodhisattvas.

*Buddha was born under a tree
enlightened under a tree
taught amidst a grove of trees
and died underneath a tree.*

Let us honor the Oak Grove Trees' true nature.



CORRECTION

In last month's newsletter we celebrated a wedding in congratulating Courtney and Gina's recent nuptials. We inadvertently left out the presiding reverend's denomination which has been confusing for some. He is a minister in the Universal Life Church.

SAVING THE SENTIENT HARDWARE...

When the zendo windows are fully open please push up on the frame closest to you while pulling down on the hasp side. This will reduce the physical stress on that little piece of hardware which is no longer being made in that size. The R&M department thanks you.

Do you know to whom this belongs?

We are endeavoring to make space in our crowded community room, and have found clothes, tapes, a personal CD player and other items which seem to have lost their way home. Some clothing items were also left in the changing room closet many months ago. If you have left anything in the CR you want, please, take it home, or label it with your name. If you aren't sure and aren't coming over in the next several weeks, call us and ask. Unclaimed items will likely be donated.

And if you are considering making a material donation to BZC, please check with the head of the area first (eg for food, the tenzo; for books and tapes, the librarian; if you aren't sure, the coordinator). Due to space limitations, BZC is not able to accept all donations.

BZC BOARD ELECTIONS

BZC members! Voting for BZC Board Members-at-large happens during the last two weeks of October. This year we are voting to fill three two-year terms. The first runner-up will become the recording secretary.

The nominees are Richard Beeson, Courtney Gonzalez, Walter Keiser (incumbent), Bill Milligan, Carol Paul (incumbent), and Peter Pfaelzer.

Look for the ballots, photos, and more information on all the candidates at the courtyard bulletin board.

MORE BOARD NEWS

As discussed at the March 4 All-Sangha budget meeting and again at the September 2 All-Sangha potluck, the BZC Board of Directors has approved new schedules for dues and sesshin charges to take into account the rise in operating expenses that we're experiencing because of inflation and higher payroll costs.

New Dues Schedule

For over 10 years, the dues schedule has been \$30 per month for regular members, \$45 per month for regular family membership, and \$25 per quarter for friends of BZC. We've also had a sustaining member category at \$50 per month and a sustaining family membership at \$75 per month.

The new dues schedule, effective January 1, 2009, simplifies things. There are only two categories – members and friends. The new rates are \$40 per month for members and \$30 per quarter for friends. As in the past, dues can be paid monthly, quarterly, or annually. Discounts from the new dues schedule continue to be available when ability to pay the full amount is a problem. Please contact BZC Treasurer, John Rubin, or Office Manager, John Moge, to discuss possible discount arrangements.

With a tight 2008 BZC operations budget in mind, the Board asks all members and friends to review their 2008 dues payments, and, if not already completed, make sure that their annual dues are fully paid for this year. Also, it would be much appreciated if those who can afford to do so pay their dues for the final three months of this year using the new (higher) schedule.

New Sesshin Donation Schedule

The new sesshin donations schedule is effective beginning on October 19, the sitting which opens our Aspects of Practice period. The full-day suggested donation for sesshins (fully tax deductible) has been \$25 for members and \$30 for friends of BZC. The new full-day rate is \$35 for all attendees.

continued on the next page...

Sesshin Donation Schedule, continued

Beginning with the next Women's sitting (scheduled for September 27, 2009,) the suggested donation rises to \$30 per day, an increase of \$5. For half-day sittings, the donation amount goes from the current \$5 to \$10. The donation for Beginner's sittings will be \$15. Discounts from the new donations schedule are, as in the past, available as needed. Please talk with the sesshin director of the sitting you're considering to discuss possible discount plans.

If anyone has questions or comments about the new dues and sesshin schedules, please feel welcome to contact John Rubin or any of the BZC Board members (see the 2008 Membership Directory list.)

EVEN MORE BOARD NEWS, FROM THE PRESIDENT

Now that we are finishing up the major capital projects undertaken over the past year, it is time to report back to you on what's been accomplished and what we have learned. To begin with, I wish to acknowledge our project manager, John Busch, for his care and attention to many details and unexpected contingencies which arose over the summer months. Thank you, John!

The principal projects we did this year include the new entrance to the upstairs office in 1933-1/2 and the plumbing and kitchen and bath upgrades to 1933 Russell. The upstairs office entrance cost approximately \$1,500. The total cost of the upgrades at 1933 Russell was approximately \$52,000. The outcome of this project, which cost about 2-1/2 times what we had anticipated, has been (and continues to be) a learning experience. We now understand that the projects we plan to complete over the next few years will require a much greater level of planning and oversight, all the way from the conceptual stage and development of the scope of work, to the execution and completion of the job. To that end the Board is developing a set of procedures and guidelines for project management A to Z.

One thing we have learned is that our forecasts for project costs can be inaccurate. With this in mind, the following summary of future projects (over 3-4 years) and their costs is presented. Please keep in mind that these are projections and are subject to change due to inflation and rising construction costs. Along with developing a more organized approach to big projects, we want to keep everyone updated on what's coming up, and the details of how we see the issues around funding and execution of each endeavor.

Remaining major projects:

Zendo Foundation, etc.	\$55,000 to \$75,000
Community Room Porch & Seismic	\$18,000 to \$26,000
Paint (1929 Russell)	\$20,000
Paint (1933 Russell)	\$15,000

Total	\$108,000 to \$136,000
	=====

Please let me know if you would like additional details regarding any of the above. You may also contact our treasurer, John Rubin.

Warmly,
Peter Overton



July Sewing Retreat at BZC by Jean Selkirk

Over the weekend of July 11-13, many people came to BZC to complete an okesa of funzō (found cloth) for Zenkei Blanche Hartman. This okesa has 21 panels (jō), each jō made from one short and four long pieces — 105 in all. We picked this number because it has more pieces than Blanche is old to wish her long life to come. And somehow, the number "21" seems distinctively American.

Two years ago, Yuko Okumura received encouragement from her sewing teacher in Japan, Okamoto-sensei, to begin the practice of sewing funzō-e in America, making robes of found cloth. Samples, directions, and pictures of fukudenkai (robe-sewing) groups came with this request. In the summer of 2007, Yuko-san wrote Jean Selkirk: "let's make funzō-e for Blanche" and Jean said, "okay!"

With help from all the sewing teachers across the country, Yuko and Jean contacted people who might be interested in helping. Eventually the list of people grew to about 125. Thread was chosen, 75 cards in all were needed, and were sent back from Japan by Grace Schireson. Yuko, with assistance at Sanshinji, cut out all the pieces and sent out packages to the various sanghas and sewing teachers. Rick Levine calligraphed a scroll of names to accompany the okesa, showing the many people, sanghas, and teachers who helped, from as far away as Holland and Japan.

In June, people traveled to Green Gulch Farm for a week-long sewing retreat. Led by Meiya Wender and Christina Lehnerr, they finished assembling all the panels under Yuko's direction. Diane Riggs came from Ohio and shared with us (both at GGF and BZC on

June 18th) robe history, stories, and pictures of her sewing funzō-e in Japan with fukudenkai groups. She helped us realize that understanding this ancient tradition has an important role in knowing why we sew. Blanche's dream about this was now fulfilled: We sewed this kind of robe together and Diane joined us to share what she had learned.

Our last meeting was at BZC. The robe was completed, sewers gratefully supported by others who cooked and cleaned. Then the okesa was received by Blanche from Sojun. The robe's colors of blue background and green rice field pattern evoke the ocean, and Blanche tells us that receiving and wearing the robe feels like an ocean of love.



Zenkei Blanche Hartman sewing
21-jō okesa
(Alan Senauke, photographer)



Sewing retreat participants gather on zendo steps after ceremony. From left to right and front to back:
Front row: Jean Selkirk, Yuko Okumura, Zenkei Blanche Hartman, Sojun Mel Weitsman, Vicki Austin
Second row: A. Robin Orden, Mary Mocine, Gensha Lin Maslow, Judith Gilbert, Tova Green, Timothy Wicks
Third row: Colleen Crivello, Norma Fogelberg, Cynthia Gair, Connie Ayers, Kathy Early, Lisa Hoffman
Back row: Judy Dauberman, Julia Ten Eyck, Ray Crivello, Hozan Alan Senauke, Leslie Bartholic, Andrea Thach, Catherine Cascade, Cynthia Kear
 (Ren Bunce, photographer)

Saturday Childcare

Childcare is offered free of charge on Saturdays for zazen from 9:30 to 10:15, then families are welcome to listen to the lecture on the sound system in the community room. It's helpful for planning if you can let us know that you're hoping to attend; call or email Laurie Senauke, 845-2215, or lauries@kushiki.org



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 in the community room at about 9:45, then sojourn to the zendo for the first 10 minutes of lecture starting at 10:15. Afterwards, families reconvene in the community room as usual.



Childcare Schedule

- October 4 Childcare
- October 11 Childcare
- October 18 Childcare
- October 25 **Kidzendo - Sejiki**
- November 1 Childcare
- November 8 Childcare
- November 15 Sesshin – no program
- November 22 **Kidzendo**
- November 29 Childcare
- December 6 Childcare
- December 13 Sesshin – no program
- December 20 **Kidzendo**
- December 27 Interim – no program

**Berkeley Zen Center
1931 Russell Street
Berkeley, CA 94703**