

HARTFORD STREET ZEN CENTER
SPECIAL EDITION
BUCKLEY TELLS ALL

Buckley's early years by Jennifer Birkett

February 92

Buckley is born.



winter 96/ 97

Buckley, the neighborhood black cat, was adopted in November after his owner moved to Australia. Zenshin said, Buckley arrived with his dowry of carrying case, fancy litter box, and pounds of food and litter.”

winter 97/98

HSZC's Reigning Zen Cat and Dog by Peter Damien

When Gobi, my guide dog, moved to HSZC, he reverted to behavior he knew from the only other time he lived in a community. Gobi makes no distinction between us and other dogs and cats; he wants to be Alpha dog (Abbot of the Kennel). So Gobi's sitting practice is on hold until he settles down. He's not sure about the other dog in the household and Buckley (the bodhisattva cat)!

Buckley of course already had a history with Maitri and HSZC. The cat and dog get along much closer than hissing distance, partly because Buckley is a laid-back, urbane feline. But we're keeping him indoors for a while so he doesn't go to the wrong home. And I'm keeping Gobi out of Buckley's Kitty Kibble. So far: a peaceable kingdom, even though it's been reigning cats and dogs down in the zendo during zazen!

spring 98

Reigning Cats and Dogs by Peter Damien

Our Sangha is blessed (or cursed) with many pets and a service dog. Buckley (the cat) and Gobi (the service dog) peaceably continue as full time residents of 57 Hartford St., while Knight, Shunko's dog, and several stray neighborhood cats come and go.

We have a cat door on the back porch where Buckley escapes if the living space becomes too active with enthusiastic K-9s. There is, however, a bad side to the cat door; it remains wide open all the time. It is protected from the rain, which Buckley loves. When he comes home drenched to his follicles, he bathes himself in the living room, kneading the pillows into comfortable beds. While he sleeps, the neighborhood cats stray through the open door and steal Buckley's food. Once in awhile, the sounds of chewed dry food, awaken Buckley who dashes into the kitchen to defend his food.

The big yellow Labrador bounds right past Buckley these days without taking much notice. Gobi tries to swipe cat food, but he knows he isn't supposed to. Neither dog got to taste the last mouse we had, but Buckley did. He finally ate most of that unlucky sentient being he'd caught in the pantry. He was very Kosher about it, leaving the

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rear end and tail on the living room rug. The dogs thought he was silly sitting on the floor with that smug “look-what-I-dragged-in” expression on his face. “If I don’t move, those dogs won’t even see me here,” Buckley seemed to say. Gobi, the food machine, was hungry, so he had no time for that poser cat. Buckley is so wise, aloof, yet in the middle of it, emulating a monk in his black robes, sitting motionless, sometimes even facing the wall.

summer 98

Reigning Cats and Dogs by Peter Damien

Bob Ebert’s Arhat dog, Dexter, a hound/black lab mix, has joined Gobi and Buckley for weekends, a situation that Buckley at first merely tolerated. Now Buckley seems indifferent to both dogs. Dexter is still curious enough to sniff Mr. B, but Buckley just keeps still, so the dogs are not incited to chase the wise, old cat, who has begun to stretch out in all available patches of sunshine no matter where they are. Sometimes people mistake him for a black meditation cushion.

fall 98

Reigning Cats and Dogs by Peter Damien

Cats are free spirits, they tend to wander, and sometimes, sing. Buckley has discovered that he can get into the well outside the basement window in the west wall of the Zendo. He sits there and sings during morning zazen. So we have come to call the window well, “the choir loft.” We’ve also begun crediting Buckley with single “pawedly” transforming Soto Zen in America. The Late Kennett-roshi created Soto Abbeys. Buckley, in a Soto black, silky smooth robe, has created the “Soto Tabernacle Choir.”

spring 1999

Reigning Cats and Dogs by Sozan Schellin

Buckley the cat has become more relaxed and chatty. He sometimes sits through zazen in the Zendo, but once, his curiosity took over and he spent a forty minute meditation period out of reach in the area under the steps creating crashes, thumps, the screech of claws on cardboard and other cat noises that were "good for our practice!"

Dexter has decided Buckley is really just a zafu. He walks past him with no interest and Buckley pretends that he loves to be ignored. In truth, he likes attention and catnip, preferably catnip first! We may eventually need to send Buckley to the Betty Ford Clinic.

summer 99

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In the last month, Buckley finally began to defend his food against neighborhood cats. Sometimes a screech of claws racing across the kitchen floor can be heard in the Zendo,

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In the last month, Buckley the cat finally began to defend his food against neighborhood cats. Sometimes a screech of claws racing across the kitchen floor can be heard in the Zendo during Zazen, accompanied by hissing and deep feline hara growls. Dexter the hound chants whenever someone comes near the front door. He barks to announce the Eko, and then howls through whatever canine Dharani he has memorized. We all sense that these two, dressed in black, of course think they have been ordained. The salvation of all sentient beings does NOT include denying these two their fantasy lives.

fall 99

Reigning Cats and Dogs by Sozan Schellin

One sunny day in July, Buckley the cat got stoned on catnip and was witnessed rolling around in the back yard dirt. Suddenly he sat up with a cigarette butt hanging out of his mouth with a “what-are-you-laughing-about” question on his face. Most of us still want to save Buckley, even though he’s taken up tobacco.



photos by Polly Hommel and Albert Kaba

**Wishing all of you at Hartford Street
love and blessings!**

With love for 20 years of practice, Buckley the Cat