



Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

Vol. 5 Issue 2: Spring 2006

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Pine Gate is the voice of Ottawa's Pine Gate Sangha, who practice engaged Buddhism in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh. Friends of the sangha also contribute to the newsletter. Submissions are invited, articles of 500-700 words, poems and insights that reflect engaged practice and personal experience are appreciated. The Pine Gate Sangha has many leaders and the newsletter is an organic outcome of sangha insight. Effortlessly it appears.

Ian Prattis provides dharma talks and teachings that encourage practice through deep non-action, so that engaged practice (action) emerges from understanding and compassion. His wife, Carolyn, teaches a regular Qi-Gong class at Pine Gate Meditation Hall as an introduction to mindfulness practice. The Pine Gate Sangha welcomes old and new members to its regular and special activities.

The Canadian War Museum Lori Hollohan

Writing the title to this article evokes confusion in me. Canadians do not readily associate themselves with war yet our government recently spent \$136 million on a museum depicting this theme; Canada's contribution to the war machine. While war may not be separate from peace, it is not necessary to base ourselves in a culture of war to understand that peace is the more dignified alternative. The rest of my eight-member "Make Room for Peace Committee" (MRPC) in the Canadian War Museum (CWM), feel the same. In this day and age, we do not need to build a museum that houses massive paintings, which scream of the agony and brutality of war. We do not need to display graphic photos of bones after jagged steel splints have penetrated them. We do not need a museum based only on death, the loss of limbs, and the mental and physical scars that arise out of war. This one sided picture of Canadian history is not beneficial.

Some believe that the museum is necessary to honour those who died in past wars; also, so that future generations might be deterred from engagement in war. A balanced portrayal of Canadian war history would include Canada's notable interventions in peacekeeping, conflict prevention, nuclear disarmament and international development as a method of conflict deterrence. It would include the realistic alternatives to war that a large number of Canadians overseas and at home are engaged in. It would include the progress that Canada has achieved to date through these peaceful means. While there is a small section on peacekeeping and Canadians protesting the Cruise missile, the space is not sufficient to bring balance to the overall message of war as a primary means of conflict resolution.

This is the MRPC's platform. The committee has worked since March 2004 to expand the museum's mandate to equally include peace. The MRPC has gathered over 1,200 signatures and held a public meeting in Ottawa in June 2005 to raise awareness on this issue. With approximately 500,000 visitors a year, large numbers being school children, the committee is concerned about the unbalanced message that the museum is delivering. If war, the use of guns, bombs and tanks are the predominant answer to conflict, what are we teaching? If Hitler's Mercedes is displayed within its walls, then who are we glorifying? If Canada's commitment to peace is not equally depicted in the war museum, how are Canadian priorities being defined and by who?

These are the questions that we are asking. If we are not conscious of the messages that are being delivered to us, we will consume them subconsciously, and then manifest them in our actions. At the end of the 20th century, the bloodiest of all centuries in human history, we do not need reminders of the nature of blood. We need reminders of the nature of sweat required to bring about peace through peaceful means. We need museums that will challenge and inspire us to move

forward on a progressive path that encourages positive and sustainable social change.

If you would like further information on the MRPC initiative, please visit our website at: www.makeroomforpeace.org The site will also direct you to our petition. Sign on. Peace.

Writing Peace

Natalie Ward

I think peace is a topic that has been on peoples minds very heavily since the U.S. first invaded Iraq, but perhaps more so since Remembrance Day. We often sigh and wish that peace would just magically appear and that people would stop killing other people. My brother is in his first year at Saint Francis University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia and he calls to dissect Chomsky's *Necessary Illusions* with me. In between constructive, benign, and nefarious bloodbaths and U.S. foreign policy, I begin to wonder when this sort of thing became a dinner topic. When did war become something we could categorize into nice little bubbles and sort through them like cutlery? When did our media coverage, public demand (or acceptance?) and foreign policy make it alright to label the murder of people as 'constructive, benign, or nefarious'?

I wonder what happened to the Treaty of Westphalia that seemed to make so much sense to me. Limit war to men and women who are paid to do it, not innocent civilians. Now it would seem that we have gone in a completely different direction seeking "shock and awe" without checking out who we might be "shocking and awing". It all leaves a bad feeling in the pit of my stomach.



Thich Nhat Hanh says that it is not enough for us to wish for peace, nor is it enough to get rid of all weapons of all kinds. The root of war is within us and until that has been eradicated there will be no true peace. Peace is not just the absence of war. What remains in our minds, our prejudices, fears and ignorance are all breeding ground for warring sentiments. Removing the weapons will not cure our problems: removing the war from our hearts and minds will. To work for peace is to uproot war from ourselves and one organization that is doing this in the most wonderful way is Peace by Peace.

They have produced the film *Women on the Frontlines*, which I would encourage everyone out there to watch. It gives a ray of hope in what seems sometimes to be the darkest of warring times. The film follows several women who are working for peace in their society. Since men are often those who do the killing, women are the ones who find forgiveness and make peace. It reminds us that it is our responsibility to make peace: Within ourselves, our families, our communities. One small act of peace is an act against war and violence. Only people can make peace, governments cannot, especially not through force which leads to oppression and eventual uprisings. Peace can not be established through violence, only compassion, forgiveness, and understanding can bring peace: one individual at a time, one step at a time.

Thich Nhat Hanh is right, peace is so much more than just the absence of war and if we look at it this way we can see how every little thing we do can make a difference. Just because there is still war and violence does not mean we cannot start making peace now in any way we can. The world needs to be brought into balance. When you walk mindfully, walk mindfully with peace. When you speak mindfully, speak mindfully with words of peace. Although it is sometimes difficult to speak of peace when all around you is talk of war. But within this problem lies the solution. We must speak peace louder than those who speak war and violence. We need to write peace, sing it, and paint it. Peace needs to be placed in public areas for all to see, adorn the war museum to show what those veterans were fighting for – they weren't fighting for *war*, they were fighting for *peace*. Peace needs to be the nature of our youth, our future, and our history. We need to actively do peace for ourselves, those we love, and those who cannot speak, write, or sing peace for themselves.

Sangha Council: January 5, 2006

After meditation, Ian called sangha members together as a council and introduced the annual cycle of Pine Gate Sangha – Fall Study and Practice Session (September – December); Winter Study and Practice Session (January – May); Lazy Days of Summer Program (June – August). Then invited views on how best to proceed with future practice, priorities and contingencies. There was a happy consensus that the cycle of study, practice and the freedom provided by the Lazy Days of Summer was a good combination for Pine Gate Sangha. The issues talked about in detail are summarized below:

1. Sangha Guidelines Booklet

Carolyn talked about the necessity for a sangha guidelines booklet. This had emerged from a gathering she convened several months ago. The booklet would outline mandate, protocols for practice, *dana*, conflict resolution etc., and generally provide guidelines and answers for many questions. Several people expressed how much they

would have benefited had a booklet been available when they first started at Pine Gate. **Action: A team was formed to create such a document with Carolyn as convenor, including Keith & Joselyn. Rod offered his skills as a technical writer to format the final document. This is almost complete**

2. Pine Gate Newsletter

Natalie Ward, our wonderful blogging princess, has agreed to lend her talent and technical skills to the production and copy editing team of Marvin and Nadia. Demands on time for this task are quite minimal. It is interesting to note that the original production team of Keith, is now replaced by three people. Kudos to Keith and thanks to his four year spell of nurturing the newsletter!

3. Organizing Council of the Sangha

It was discussed whether the sangha needed an organizing council. The sentiment and consensus was that periodic gatherings of the sangha as a council were sufficient to provide feedback and direction, particularly as so many sangha members were willing to pitch in for anything that needed doing

4. Pine Gate Annual Retreat 2006

There was unanimous consensus that this must be made so. Last year there was no annual retreat as prior consultation with the sangha made it clear that many folk could not afford time/money for both Thay's retreat and a Pine Gate annual retreat. So following Jean-Luc Picard's prime directive – we will make it so - and the Pine Gate annual retreat happened the weekend of April 21 - 23, 2006.

5. Ecology Project

Sangha member Raphael, who also ran as a Green Party candidate in Vanier in the federal election, has agreed to seek out a hands-on ecology project to bring to the sangha's attention. It was felt that such a project would focus the sangha's attention on environmental issues in the city. It was also expressed by Joselyn that a sangha presence at City

Hall on critical ecology issues be considered an appropriate practice. All agreed.

6. Canadian War Museum Initiative

Everyone heartily endorsed the sangha's involvement in the CWM initiative led by Lori, and with on-going co-operation with the Make Room for Peace group.

7. Lazy Days of Summer Program

In June, July and August there is the Lazy Days of Summer Program. This is where sangha members literally take over all sangha activities and provide leadership. Each Thursday at 7.00pm the sangha meets as usual, beginning with sitting and walking meditation – then lift-off, as sangha members bring forward topics and practices in sync (reasonably so!) with the mandate of Pine Gate sangha. This cultivates and nurtures the seeds of leadership and responsibility within the Pine Gate community. There are many possibilities. So far Joselyn intends to facilitate an evening of chanting and meditation; Rod is contacting Rev Josette Jackson of Unity Church to give a presentation on conflict resolution and other members of the sangha are invited to fill up the program with whatever fascinates at the present time. It can be a film or book or new practice or guest speaker and so on. The Lazy Days program is always a high point for the sangha year, as so much talent emerges.

8. Pine Gate Yahoo Discussion Group

Not everyone in the sangha is aware of the existence of Pine Gate's Yahoo discussion group. The point of having a Yahoo group for the sangha and their friends is to discuss issues of practice, reflections on dharma talks and discussion groups, mindfulness for children in school, bring to folks' notice important events taking place in the City, to share the engaged practice of Pine Gate and Friends for Peace, share photos of new puppies, new initiatives and so on. In other words, it provides a vehicle for communication between sangha members and friends. It is one aspect of creating fellowship and the technology is friendly and you can opt out whenever you wish. It also encourages

the vast experience and wisdom in the sangha to be expressed and thus be available to all. If this is of interest just click on the site below and follow the instructions.

<http://ca.groups.yahoo.com/group/pinegate>

9. Pine Gate Lending Library

The lending library of books, tapes and CD's continues to be well used by sangha members. Not everyone knows about it though it is not a secret. The sangha made a commitment of attention to the detail of communicating this news to new members of the sangha.

At the conclusion of the gathering Joselyn's five year old daughter, Sandra, invited three bells so we could all enjoy tea and chocolate!!!

Dana and Donations

Carolyn Hill

Dana is a Pali word that means generosity or the act of offering. One offers *dana* to express the generosity that arises in one's heart to support the dharma. *Dana* can be offered by way of financial donation, sharing of material resources or sharing of time. Spiritual communities rely upon *dana* to support them.

Pine Gate does not have a membership or attendance fee. It does, however, encourage friends to practice the art of *dana*. *Dana* is offered in accordance with one's means and abilities. At various times Pine Gate will support a cause for the benefit of others. We are very grateful for the past generosity of practitioners for their contributions by various means of *dana*.

A suggested *dana* for evening attendance is \$5.00 if one can manage. Your donations will in turn help contribute to the costs of books, CDs, DVDs and other teaching materials which are made available for sangha members. While the dharma is offered freely, *dana*, whether by financial contribution, or the offering of cookies or tea is a practice of gratitude and generosity. Your gratitude and generosity inter-relates with the generosity of others

from which all sangha members benefit. Thank you so much for your generosity.

Discovering Pine Gate on New Year's Eve Katherine Kimbell

Early that morning there was no sign that this was to be the most meaningful New Year's Eve of my 68-year life. That morning, I had planned what I'd offer my three invited supper guests and when I'd begin in the kitchen. My guests were three much loved senior women friends. Like me, each one is finding elder wisdom through decades of experience and suffering in marriage, parenting, grandparenting, and every other task of a human life courageously faced. Why do I love them particularly? Because each one is so honest. Honest about their feelings, failures, suffering, fears and hopes. And honesty is what I need in friendship.

We were to eat together early on New Years Eve. Then the first one, Gertrude, phoned to cancel. "I really need to be quiet at home," she said. "I understand, Gertrude," I replied. Followed by Sheila too, who felt ill. "What's going on, God?" I wondered. Then third also, Margaret! "My car door's frozen shut and I can't get in." The answer was simple. I'd take the food to Margaret, which I did. Now, Margaret had previously invited me to a Buddhist New Year's Eve party, close by. "Partying with people I don't know? No thanks, Margaret," I vigorously declined. Yet as I sat while she completed her kitchen tasks, she spoke of what this evening would also include – meditation. "Buddhist meditation?" Well now, *that* was different. Margaret assured me that she and I would be welcome. "OK, Margaret. Let's go!"

I could not have imagined the impact of spending the last hours of the old year of 2005 in a Buddhist group meditation. In past years, I'd experienced traditional Christian New Year's Eve prayers, silly noisy parties, late night movies. Eventually I had settled on staying home and going quietly to bed. But this -- the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings

Recitation Ceremony – was a deeply meaningful New Year's Eve experience!

This was about awareness, reflection, gratitude, compassion, understanding – chiefly about the *awareness* quality that I'd found missing in all previous attempts to celebrate New Year's Eve. It was chiefly the *awareness* that I'd found missing in decades of Christian church practices, which I had ceased to practice in deep discouragement. I needed a praying community, which also sought awareness and consciousness of the heart. And here it was at Pine Gate Sangha on December 31, 2005. Thank you, Margaret, for bringing me to this place on this night.

For three months of the previous autumn, I'd been learning forgiveness, to let go the past, and to replace fear with love. Miracles were appearing in my life. "Aha, so forgiveness really works!" thought I. And here was I experiencing another miracle in my growth and understanding, within an Ottawa community of Buddhists on this wonderful New Year's Eve gathering in 2005

How good to have a concluding midnight party with kind people, good conversation and good food. And great humour! The prayer of The Five Contemplations, recited before we began to eat, touched me as few such blessings have. Thank you Pine Gate Sangha community and Divine Being, whatever is Your Name.

Love, Light, and Gratitude

Paul St John

Paul read his poem out at the memorable New Year's Eve gathering, written about by Katherine Kimbell above and remembered by all.

It bursts from my very Center, the Core of Who I Am,
And yet from the edges of the Universe this feeling also seems to stem;
A mixture of emotions so intense I lose control,
But the loss of this is fine by me, for surrender is the very goal;

Tears and laughter, combined as one,
Other feelings like this there are none;
Exulted to the brink of Reminiscence,
So this is what I get for my persistence,
To Know the Face of God, to Be His very Eye,
To be consumed by such gratitude for each split second of life that passes by;
Oh Great Heavenly Spirit, oh Divine Earth Mother and Father Sky,
Countless Gifts you give to help my Spirit fly so very high;
One such Gift, comes in many forms,
And this past year these forms have come in swarms;
Earth angels in the guise of friends,
I ask for love and God just sends and sends;
And from where does it emerge, oh my dear ones, it's from within,
And the catalyst for its glorious eruption is you, yes you, my dear sweet kin;
My brothers and sisters of the Heart, oh how dear to me you all are,
You shine on me, whether near or far, with the radiant light of a brand new star;
Nourishing my cells with your life,
Providing food for thought with your strife;
Reminding me with your laughter,
That right now, right here, is the ever after;
Oh the saints and sages talk of this,
This sweet and tender moment, a heart so filled with bliss;
So thankful to have known you all,
So blessed to have heard that silent call,
Of my heart which brought me to you,
And for the love that from there grew,
And birthed in me a radiant sun,
To mirror back to you just what you've done,
Which was the resurrection of life in me,
Because, as through these words I hope you see,
Life is love and life is light,
And mine for you burns so bright,
That in galaxies eons away,
There is a thing that people say,
And I think it goes something like this,
"Wow, it must be so much bliss,
To be that glowing brilliant star,

And radiate such light so far;
I'll bet that it has lots of friends,
Whom it loves dearly and to whom that light it
sends".
I wish you all a very joyful holiday season, full of
love, laughter, and gratitude.
May the new year mark a new beginning with
renewed aspirations to experience all the beauty
that life has to offer and to become everything you
know deep down that You Are.

Peace and Love from my Heart to Yours,

A Noble Wedding Lawrence Freman OSB

Fr. Lawrence is the director of the world community for Christian meditation. This excerpt is taken from his pastoral letter of December 2005.

At the wedding reception there was a procession into dinner led by the family and just before the bride and groom came the bride's sister and her female partner who helped lead the dancing. It was as natural and simple as everything else on that happy occasion where the community of family, friends and church pledge their support and share their blessings on the new union. As I watched the bride's sister share her love in the same community without fear or unease I remembered the anxiety and fear the family had gone through a few years ago before she came out.

She had become very withdrawn and depressed and her parents felt unable to help her. Then she and her sister asked for a family meeting. They sat in the living room and she gave her parents a letter to read explaining that she was a lesbian. As her father described it to me it was the greatest relief of his life that she had trusted them to know what her struggle was. Her parents embraced her immediately and assured her that their love for her was total and unconditional – for her as a whole person. They were a devout and loving Catholic family.

Before the wedding, it seems, the sister had asked if perhaps, for propriety's sake, she should bring a young man to the wedding and lead the dancing with him. But the rest of the family dismissed the idea as a falsehood that would impair the whole of that special and sacred day for them. So, what everyone knew and privately accepted anyway was publicly acknowledged and everyone - aunts, uncles and acquaintances - so it turned out, was glad to be able to celebrate without repression or fear. Would the churches and the world be so truthful and loving.

In Search of Perfection

Nasruddin was helping a company look for a new chief executive. They had tried all the top recruitment and headhunting firms in the country and in desperation turned to Nasruddin. Over dinner they started to ask him some questions about himself. Having discovered that he was not married, they asked him had he ever come close.

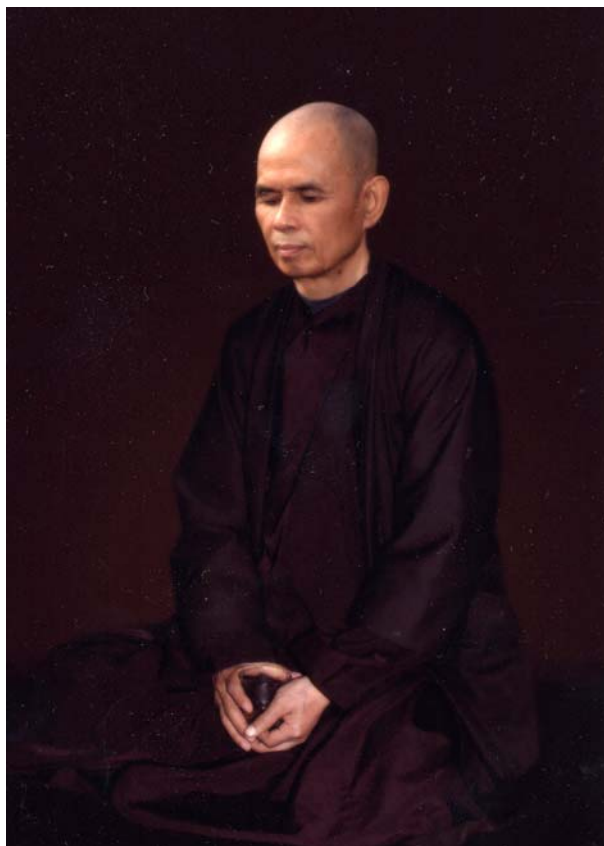
"Indeed yes." He replied. "When I was young I was very keen to marry the perfect wife. I travelled through many lands looking for her. In France I met a beautiful dancer, who was joyful and carefree, but alas had no sense of the spiritual. In Egypt I met a princess who was both beautiful and wise, but sadly we could not communicate. Then finally in India after much searching I found her. She was beautiful, wise and her charm captured the hearts of everybody she met. I felt that I had found the perfect wife.

Nasruddin paused with a long sigh. So one of the senior managers eagerly asked: "Then why did you not marry her, Nasruddin?" "Alas," sighed Nasruddin, "she was waiting for the perfect husband."

Thich Nhat Hanh**Ian Prattis**

For new readers and sangha members, here is a brief introduction to our root teacher.

Thich Nhat Hanh is my teacher - a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist Master presently based in France - who has brought Buddhist Dharma to the West in a gentle yet penetrating fashion. After being exiled from Vietnam in 1967 for his peace-based activism, he eventually established a monastery in Plum Village, France where he teaches, writes, gardens and works to help relieve the suffering of all beings. In addition to offering retreats at Plum Village, Thich Nhat Hanh travels throughout the world offering spiritual retreats based on mindfulness.



Thich Nhat Hanh, known to his students as “Thay”, meaning teacher, defies his age of eighty years as he continues to write and teach with clarity, wisdom and humour. He exudes peace and serenity and is a true reflection of his mindfulness teachings, which have inspired hundreds of thousands around the world. He is a much loved and very effective

Buddhist teacher in the west. His message is simple. Bringing peace into our own lives brings peace into our families, our communities and the world. Thich Nhat Hanh’s gift of living dharma to the modern world is the practice of mindfulness in everyday life, which elicits compassion without limit.

In keeping with the Buddha’s original teachings, Thay wanted to extend the practice of mindfulness from the monastery into society. He wanted monks and nuns to confront social problems and contribute to the relief of suffering and to the betterment of human life. Thus the separation between contemplation and social action diminishes. Thay is, however, very clear about the relationship between social activism and mindfulness. Activism alone does not have the inner resources to bring about effective social transformation. Personal transformation through mindfulness practice is the ground out of which activism emerges. For Thay, mindfulness practice precedes activism and in this way the relationship between contemplation and social action is a powerful manifestation of mindfulness in every day life. Mindfulness develops compassion but one must first look deeply into the suffering of oneself and of others to understand the causes and conditions. Looking deeply at the situation we will see clearly what we can do to help and what we must refrain from. This evolved into the form of Engaged Buddhism taught by Thich Nhat Hanh whereby he actualizes the original teachings of the Buddha to be pertinent to 21st century realities of suffering. And so Buddhism is vivified, alive and vibrant in the new millennium.

Feeling the Spiritual Path Marvin Schwartz

Based on a dharma talk given to Pinegate Sangha by Marvin aka Truly Precious Concentration

As I have walked the spiritual path, my focus has been narrowing to that of joy, happiness or more specifically fun. A basic belief that I carry is that life should be fun. When we choose to do something it should be fun. As a result, I have had

to look closely at my practices and the way I am living my life to see whether I am making choices consistent with my view.

While investigating my life and sharing with friends and listening to or reading wisdom teachers, two major things popped out. First, the teachers all talk of joy and happiness as a state to live in. They consistently talk of returning to the joy that is available to us in the moment. Second, we are surrounded by suffering and cannot seem to get out of it. The joy of the moment is fleeting. We have a general idea of why this is happening...we get caught by our thoughts. We have negative seeds. We need to water our positive seeds and be aware of our negative seeds. We can let our negative seeds go. And relax when we see our habit energy taking us back into our suffering.

Unfortunately for most of us the distance between understanding and doing is very great. From my experience to this stage in my own development, the key to moving into joy resides in a deeper understanding and awareness of habit energy. At first, my tendency was to react out of habit energy. My habit energy controlled my actions and reactions. At this stage, I was not even aware that I was not in control. Gradually, I have become aware of my patterned responses. Even, more gradually, I began to see that I could relate specific bodily sensations to the patterned response.

Realizing how my body felt and specifically where my body felt these habit energies was a major clue in understanding how this was working. I understood why the Buddha focused on the body and then moved to the emotions. He was teaching the linkages. And he taught the linkage to happiness and joy. In order to feel the joy and happiness on a continuous basis the habit energies, which water the negative seeds have to be dealt with. Recognizing the habit energies and feeling them in the body led to the next stage of seeing how the familiarity of these bodily sensations controlled my thoughts and reactions. This is not to say that I didn't feel the bodily sensations before. Rather, I had no

awareness that these sensations were actually the precursors to thoughts and actions. Feeling the body, feeling the feelings in the body allowed me to connect with the habit energies in a new way.

I began to relate these sensations to the patterns that had been with me for as long as I could remember. These memories demonstrated for me the true nature of habit energy. Habit energy is a remembered pattern that derived from a defense from a perceived threat that I then repeated in situations that were far removed from the threat. I no longer had to respond that way as long as I could feel the sensation and see the connection to the pattern. As I pay attention to the sensations and the patterns around them, my strength for not responding grows. This has opened up the space for more fun. I am not spending my time reacting to and then dealing with the reactions to the sensations. This is obviously a very abbreviated statement of a process that takes years. Thankfully we have models such as the Buddha who also spent years focusing in this way to move to a state of joy.

Impermanence

Sarah Mae Ives

Appreciating impermanence is not an easy thing to do. For this reason, the concept of impermanence was what first drew me to Buddhist writings a few years ago. How free one could be! To realize that all things are impermanent was a radical insight that I had never conceived of. I had accepted that life was inherently sad, about resisting change and surviving with that you could salvage. The human condition, or perhaps more accurately my cultural condition, can be crippling; we're often encouraged to "not let go," whether in material possessions or mental glorifications of yesterday. Further to that end, we often lack the proper tools for dealing with impermanence in a forthright manner. Today, it is one of the greatest demons that I deal with (although not the only one by far). I often long for things. And right now, I miss talking with a new family member I met over a year ago.

One of the great things about marriage, aside from meeting a wonderful partner, is joining a whole new family. For almost a year this woman and I were the best of emailing buddies. She, a wonderful writer, communicator, and teacher, with a great many insights, took me on as her favorite new emailing friend. She was often at home, checking her email as a temporary reprieve from her writing; similar to my life filled with studying texts and writing papers. She motivated me to write, told me how much potential I had, and listened to my "beginners mind." I gladly reciprocated and listened to her older, occasionally weathered (although not unwarranted) opinions. Certainly, there were a few exchanges where we tip-toed around sensitive issues, but how wonderful to share such opposite points of view and still think so highly of each other! I loved the way her thoughts spurred new ideas in my head. We had a certain chemistry and through it I grew. It was an exercise in love; as I now realize that everything is.

Throughout our relationship, we savoured the pleasure of having new and fresh support in each of our lives; perhaps support we both were unable to fulfill in exactly the same way elsewhere. We would email nearly everyday, sometimes twice or more, with the exception of a busy summer. But it was also the summer in which our relationship would sour. One evening, in the unbearable heat of July, we got sensitive, defensive and ego-centered. This lasted a few days, maybe a week - I didn't realize that was all the time I had. With some people you are free to be yourself and your mistakes don't hold as much weight; for others it can trigger many past insecurities and discomforts. I came to represent these and now there are many fears and emotional walls that are impossible for me to penetrate. This is impermanence at work; the bold reminder that nothing can be taken for granted.

Now - don't feel sorry for me - I was told that this may happen but amidst our wonderful harmony I was blinded; never thinking it really could. It did. At first I would often wonder why? How can people become so jaded and calloused by life? Easy - I see

the anger in myself and how naturally I can spew hatred at a young age. Even throughout happy times I was still on fire inside; willing to anger at the smallest disruption. Multiply this by 100 and you get many older adults who let, and even expect, anger and tension to permeate their daily lives. As Krishnamurti said: "you are the world and the world is on fire."

Now friendly reader, you may be thinking that this is a sad ending, what is the point in living in such a vulnerable state? I can only attempt to answer why. Personally, my fire has burnt out. Months ago, it turned into sadness and blame towards myself, but again, I wasn't at peace. I had to accept myself and the circumstances; I learned no one else would do it for me. Through this, I have learned about my nature and my susceptibility. Perhaps, I enjoyed our exchanges a little too much and became dependant upon her approval without realizing it. I now know that I cannot understand my true nature or that of others until I accept my own fears and insecurities; then I can be more loving, open and truthful with others and the powers that be. In the end, or for this moment in time, we are incompatible. Through sangha and constant inquiry I have learned it is not giving up; we need to know when to step away from conflict and to stop seeking complicity with others until the doors of understanding re-open. Through this, I have been able to reflect and physically meditate on the value of change and having equanimity in all situations. To do this, one must constantly embrace impermanence, and although it means that relationships end, and people die; it also means that flowers bloom, babies are born and seasons change (Thay's insight). We must not pick and choose which types of impermanence we will accept; in fact, even the "we" inside of us is constantly changing. Such is life. It is change. And to surrender oneself to change, as menacing as it can be, is a sweet surrender. To truly appreciate the glory of an ending with the same furor in which we invite an exciting change is liberating and makes one aware that only time can bring the fruits that the future will bear.

The Dharma Queen**Tricia Diduch**

Sung to the tune of Abba's "Dancing Queen." At Carolyn's birthday Tricia and her friends created a decadent chocolate birthday cake for the Dharma Queen – none other than Carolyn. Tricia donned a smart blue wig and with support from the Sisterz in the Hood gave the performance of her life as she emulated Abba.

Verse 1

Thursday night and we always know
 Pinegate Sangha's the place to go (ooo ooo ooo
 ooo)
 Meditate in silence, live in harmony
 To grow in equanimity
 She aspires to be like Thay
 Her smile's bright and her spirit's high
 Practicin' compassion, unity divine
 She sits in mindfulness
 And it's a state of bliss

Refrain:

(She is) the Dharma Queen, pure and sweet, like
 she's 17
 Dharma Queen, spreading peace, yeah it's so
 serene, ooo ooo ooo ooo
 You can chant, you've got the vibe, the Buddha's
 right there by your side,
 Feelin' free, pure and sweet, diggin' the Dharma
 Queen

Verse 2

She's filled with love and she's so aware
 Her consciousness is beyond compare
 Walking on the right path, not any one will do
 You're into the noble truths
 That's where your soul will groove...You are the...

Refrain – one more time**Seeds****Marc Beland**

Marc was inspired to compose this song after a dharma talk given by Ian at Pine Gate. It was sung at the 2005 Peace Prayer Day by Emily King with Marc accompanying on guitar.

I am here
 I am home
 As I breathe, I let go
 As I look deep inside myself, I see seeds of
 every kind;
 Planted in the soil waiting to be watered by
 the thoughts that cross my mind;
 Seeds of joy and happiness, seeds of anger
 and of pain;
 Everything I hear and everything I see, will
 nourish seeds inside of me.
 I am here
 I am home
 As I breathe, I let go
 Seeds are like clouds in the sky; they come
 they pass they go;
 What is now a tear, was once a seed that
 was planted long ago;
 If I am to walk with peace in my heart and
 freedom in my mind;
 I have to water the seeds of love and
 kindness in myself and human kind.
 I am here
 I am home
 As I breathe, I let go

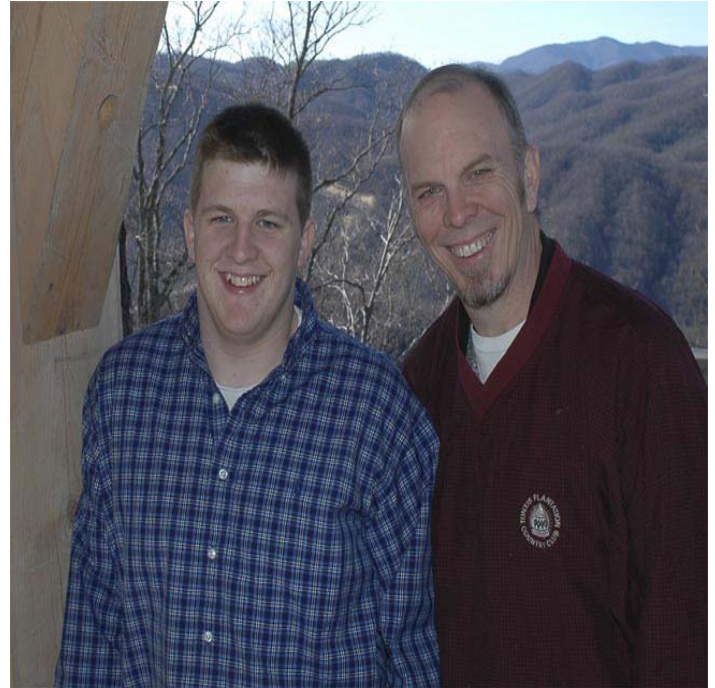
On Being a Parent**K. Tebbe Davis, Asheville, NC**

With tears streaming down my cheeks I listened as
 my 15 year old son pleaded with me for an
 explanation. "Why did it have to be this way?"
 "You didn't have to leave!" I sat in silence and
 tried to help him through the moment, but I was just
 as much at a loss for an explanation as he was. Was
 I selfish to move 800 miles away? Did I not

consider his loss, for my absence? I truly thought that I had given great consideration to these things when my new wife of 5 years and I had decided to relocate to a new home in the South. Partially to relieve her stress levels after 30 years in the human service field and my desire to live in a more artistic community surrounded by some of the most beautiful scenery in Eastern America. My son's mother was remarried now to a lovely man with 3 children of similar age as my boy. We had discussed the move a number of times over the previous year, but this emotional break down had truly taken me by surprise.

In an effort to gain clarity I called my friend and Sangha leader Judith Toy and shared my sorrow. I really missed my boy as much as he did me. That afternoon she called me and offered me a scholarship to a weekend retreat to **Southern Dharma Retreat Center**. Just show up, they are waiting for you. So the next morning I awoke early and drove through the dark and fog across mountain passes and fertile valleys then up the most harrowing single lane dirt trail for a few miles to find myself descending into the haven I would call home for the next four days.

I knew very little about **SDRC** before my arrival. It was a rustic retreat center tucked into a mountain cove in the Northwest corner of a neighboring county. I had been meditating for a number of years and had always been an active member of Sangha back in my home of Connecticut, but had never been on retreat. I have also been in recovery from Drug and Alcohol addiction for nearly 10 years, so I was familiar with transformation and self-examination. So I was entering the unknown armed with an open mind and ready to rid myself of the pain.



The first person to greet me at the retreat was Ian Prattis - he and his wife Carolyn were teaching this particular weekend. His first hug let me know that I was home. The theme of the weekend was "Buddha at the Gate." The story was a familiar one to me, but the lesson was especially poignant for this moment in my life; lessons on love and acceptance come in all forms. We were encouraged at the retreat to have an interview with Ian for any particular question we may have. I jumped at the opportunity to sit with this man who seemed so erudite and other worldly. When we sat together in the teacher's cottage I felt as though I had reached the mountaintop, and was to have my moment with the guru hermit.

I related the emotional tumult I had experienced over the past week as best I could. Ian just nodded his head and then smiled gently, as he began to tell me of his life as a Dad, I heard about the Punk Palace and his wayward son who eventually turned out to be an extraordinary young adult. I heard about his travels away from his family while he studied abroad. His guidance to me was simple - tell my son how much I love him as often as I feel it, visit him as many times as I could afford, and most important not to waver from my intentions to live a

full and active life in my new home. I continued on the retreat and enjoyed every moment. As soon as I broke from the center I got into cell phone range and phoned my son. It was the most heartfelt conversation I had ever had with him. He knew that I was at a silent retreat so had been expecting a call from me on that Sunday afternoon, I don't recall what we spoke of but do recall many tears of joy.

Now, almost two years later my son has just left to return to his mother and family in Connecticut after a visit with me. I miss him every day but he left me a note, which I found after returning from the airport. He wrote;

"Dad you are #1, I know that you are doing exactly what you were born to do, and I love you for that. I will pursue my dreams and achieve the highest honors [grades] and get into Duke, nothing will stop me. Don't stop leading the way. I love you."

Never stop telling your children that you love them, ever. Most times it is all you have to say.

Ian and Carolyn are offering another four day retreat at SDRC from September 28 – October 1, 2006. info@southerndharma.org. Maybe Tebbe and his son will one day join one another at such a retreat.

Opera Proibita

Michael McCulloch

I'm sitting here
listening to Anne Sofie Von Otter
sing Handel's Marian Cantatas
Sensual music filled with beauty,
pleasure and truth
What a gift you have given me
Handel went to Rome
as "The Saxon"
at a time when Pope Innocent X11
had banned all public entertainment
No opera and no theatre!
That's what happens when
political uprising threatens power
and a convenient excuse for

reaffirming "so called" morality
Beauty, pleasure and truth
Subversive and threatening
even today
Especially today
Without beauty,
people become numb,
accepting and passive
Without pleasure free from guilt,
people lose their taste;
how to taste; and, how to savour
Without truth,
people lose sight
of justice and of each other
Oh how revolutionary was the music
of the early 1700's
Perhaps the Popes were right
to be afraid

Michael is a songwriter and singer living in Ottawa and will be guest troubadour at the 2006 Peace Prayer Day

Cosmic Pathways Healing Fair Vivian Dickie

On Saturday 3rd June 2006 the third annual Cosmic Pathways Healing Fair will be held at the Glebe community center from 10am to 4pm. The event is a fund raiser for Friends for Peace www.friendsforpeace.ca This Ottawa based non profit organization brings together people from all walks of life who are committed to fostering peace by peaceful means. The funds raised help towards putting on events such as the annual Peace Prayer day, which happens in the fall on Saturday October 21, 2006 at Ottawa City Hall.

While the healing fair came into being as an appropriate and peaceful way to raise funds it has now taken on a life of its own, and while all the proceeds still go to Friends for Peace, Cosmic Pathways has become one of the best known showcases for the work of alternative healing practitioners in the Ottawa area. Visitors to this event can expect a delectable smorgasbord of practitioners offering 20 minute mini-treatments for

\$10. This gives one a chance to experience several sessions in modalities such as massage therapy, crystal therapy, Thai massage, chi nei tsang, reflexology, holistic counseling, shamanism, to name but a few of the delights on the menu.

There is a \$5 admission fee to the Healing Fair and for this one can browse around and see what the practitioners have to offer. The admission fee also includes participation in a short yoga or chi kung session and several mini lectures offered freely by some of the practitioners. Lunch is available on the premises at The Pantry café, which is well known for its healthy nutritious cuisine. So please mark Saturday 3rd June on your calendar and treat yourself and your friends to a day of healing opportunities, which you will thoroughly enjoy.

Heal Ourselves – Heal the World

The Cosmic Pathways Healing Fair is organized by Karen Osborne, crystal therapist: 613 729 7746 and Vivian Dickie RMT: 613 715 1257. With generous help from their friends.

Review of Pine Gate Meditations Barbara Casey

This review appeared in The Mindfulness Bell, Issue 41, Winter 2005 – 2006

The guided meditations and chants offered in this CD come from the weekly practice at Pine Gate Sangha in Ottawa, Canada. The hour long CD contains two chants, performed by Carolyn Hill and four guided meditations offered by Ian Prattis. The two chants, from the Plum Village Chanting Book are the evening chant and the incense offering (the variation that starts: “The fragrance of this incense”).

The guided meditations are each from twelve to fifteen minutes in length, making them a useful way to enjoy an extended guided meditation in solitary or in sangha. There is a meditation on the Four Brahmaviharas, one on the Five Remembrances, an Earth Meditation which helps us be in touch with

our connection to Mother Earth, and an Indian based SO HUM healing meditation that comes from Ian’s practice in India. Ian’s gentle and soothing voice and the soft background sounds of running water help to bring the hearers into a state of calmness and centredness.

Though this presentation is rooted in the tradition of Thich Nhat Hanh’s practice, it also offers new ways of exploring our spiritual connectedness. Ian encourages us to be creative in our use of these chants and meditations, and invites us to share them with family and friends.

A practical tool for Sanghas everywhere, the Pine Gate Meditations CD can be purchased by check or money order to Ian Prattis and mailed to 1252 Rideout Cr, Ottawa, Canada K2C 2X7. Costs are \$23 US including shipping, \$23.50 CDN. Or contact Ian at iprattis@cyberus.ca

SO HUM Meditation

Ian Prattis

Sit quietly for meditation, ensuring that your spine is erect. Close your eyes and relax. Do not be concerned with anything that arises – internally or externally. Do not attach any energy or contemplation to thoughts that may arise. Just be with the movement of your breath. Be aware of your breath as it moves in and out of your nostrils. Some breaths will be long, some will be short; some breaths will feel smooth and silky, others will feel more ragged. However the breath comes and goes is perfect as it is, just bring your awareness to the quality of breath on the in-breath, and to the quality of breath on the out-breath. Do this for ten breaths and feel yourself deeply relax.

Now notice that the in-breath has a different vibration to that of the out-breath, it has a different tone. Notice how the sound “SO” spontaneously arises as you breathe in, and when you breathe out the tone of the out-breath sounds like “HUM”. Just be with these tones for ten breaths as you slowly breathe in and out; “SO” on the in-breath, “HUM” on the out-breath. You can say the sounds silently

to yourself as you breathe in and out. Or sing them silently to yourself.

Once you have settled into this rhythm, notice that there is a pause between the end of the in-breath and the beginning of the out-breath. Bring your concentration to this "SPACE" between breaths. Your focus and concentration are now on:

In-breath – "SO"

Pause between breaths – "SPACE"

Out-breath – "HUM".

Relax into this rhythm and maintain your focus and concentration on "SO"- "SPACE"- "HUM". Do this for ten breaths and feel the energy of the "SPACE" phase begin to penetrate your whole body. This happens when you hold the breath inside you during the pause between breaths. As you continue to breathe with the focus on the "SO"- "SPACE"- "HUM" breathing cycle, notice how the energy during the "SPACE" phase is expanding within your entire system making your body feel lighter and lighter. Just be with this and notice how your awareness has been increased and how silence has gradually encompassed you. Just be with and enjoy this wonderful, relaxing expansiveness and silence for the duration of the ten breaths. If you are carried away by thoughts and distractions, as may happen on occasions, simply come back to the focus and concentration on breath – "SO" on the in-breath, "SPACE" between breaths, "HUM" on the out-breath, and carry on with the meditation.

Continue breathing with awareness. Now during the "SPACE" phase of the breathing cycle think of any part of your body that is in pain, disease or distress, and feel the instant flow of healing energy to that part of the body you thought of. Concentrate on:

"SO" - in-breath,

"SPACE" - think of bodily pain and distress

"HUM" - out-breath.

Only think of bodily pain during the "SPACE" phase of the cycle. Do this for ten breaths and feel the flood of healing energy to the part of your body you thought of.

Continue breathing with awareness and concentration. Now during the "SPACE" phase of the breathing cycle, think of any part of your mind that is in distress. There will be an instant flow of healing energy to that part of your mind you thought of during the mid-point of the breathing cycle. Concentrate on:

"SO" - in-breath,

"SPACE" - think of distress in your mind

"HUM" - out-breath.

Only think of distress in the mind during the "SPACE" phase of the cycle. Do this for ten breaths and feel the flood of healing energy to the area of your mind that you feel is in distress. Even if you do not feel anything, know that this flow of healing energy is taking place.

Continue breathing with awareness, concentration and insight. Now during the "SPACE" phase of the breathing cycle, think of any part of your life that is in distress. There will be an instant flow of healing energy to that part of your life you thought of during the mid-point of the breathing cycle. Concentrate on:

"SO" - in-breath,

"SPACE" - think of distress in your life

"HUM" - out-breath.

Only think of distress in your life during the "SPACE" phase of the cycle. Do this for ten breaths and whether you feel it or not, know that this flow of healing energy to the distress in your life is happening.

Continue breathing. Now during the "SPACE" phase of the cycle, think the thought, "Bring healing energy to my whole being." Do this for ten breaths.

Now relax and simply focus your awareness on "SO" on the in-breath, on "SPACE" between breaths, and on "HUM" on the out-breath. Do this for ten breaths, as this allows the energy to settle into your system. Notice how light you feel, how relieved you are from some of the distress in your body, mind and life. Feel the expansiveness of light within you and the great feeling of rest and peace

within your being. Then slowly open your eyes. As you become more familiar with this meditation you can increase the length of time for focus on body, mind and life depending on what kinds of distress you are dealing with.

This is a very powerful meditation and it works through the opening of two internal doors. The initial focus and concentration, first on breath then on the vibration of the tones, “SO”–“HUM,” opens the doorway of balance. You can in fact do this with your eyes open, in daily situations whenever you are out of sorts or caught in irritation. For instance, when you are annoyed at standing in a long shopping line, impatient with colleagues and children or angry with other frustrating situations. Just take a few minutes to focus on your breathing, and with the tones of “SO” on the in-breath, “HUM” on the out-breath. You will be amazed at how quickly you return to balance. Balance is the first door that opens in this meditation. When you feel the balance and expansiveness brought about through the “SO”-“HUM” concentration, then the second doorway is ready to open. This is the internal doorway of Healing.

As you concentrate on the “SPACE” between in-breath and out-breath, between the tones of “SO” and “HUM”, the energy door opens for healing vibrations to flood your body, then your mind and finally your life. This meditation is a highly effective tool for pain relief in all dimensions within your being. I have been able to bring it to many people who suffer from chronic physical pain in particular, and the results have been an astonishing release and relief of pain. The healing energy activated by the meditation impacts not only bodily pain, it also works on the mental and life situation distress that are often directly related to the bodily pain. The meditation opens the doorway so that healing energy is initially directed to alleviate bodily distress. The other levels of healing mind and life distress enables the individual to enter into a different kind of relationship to the bodily distress. It fosters a relationship that does not amplify the initial bodily distress with anxiety, fear,

anger or ignorance. Due to our ignorance and lack of understanding we often allow despair, hatred and anger to overwhelm us to the extent that we inflate whatever bodily distress we suffer from, rather than take the mindful steps to alleviate the suffering. The methodology of the “SO–HUM” meditation is a mindful step in the direction of healing, for it works at two levels – pain relief of bodily distress, and a new relationship with all distress - a relationship that allows our internal capacities of healing to do their work more effectively.

There is, however, another step that can be taken with this meditation. When you feel well balanced and full of love, you can extend this meditative energy beyond the confines of your being and send healing energy to the polluted planet, to warring countries, to religions and individuals in conflict and to other events that you feel require healing energy. Just proceed in the same manner as before, start at the beginning of the meditation and continue one step at a time to open the doorways of balance and healing. You can do this on your own or in the company of others.

Begin by concentrating on the qualities of in-breath and out-breath for ten breaths. Then notice the different vibrations and tones of your breathing cycle – “SO” arising on the in-breath, “HUM” arising on the out-breath. Do this for ten breaths and settle in to a deep, expansive sense of balance. Then concentrate on the “SPACE” between “SO” and “HUM”. Do this for ten breaths before thinking of where you wish to send healing energy to during the “SPACE” phase of the breathing cycle. Do this by thinking, for instance, of the planet, or conflict between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East, or of the warring parties in Iraq, or conflict between parents, friends or between yourself and some other person. Focus on the thought only during the “SPACE” phase of the breathing cycle. Continue with this concentrated focus for ten more breaths, then come back to a simple “SO”-“SPACE”–“HUM” meditation. Relax and feel totally at peace and open your eyes after a further ten breaths. Feel

the expansiveness and lightness in your being and smile to yourself with gladness.

**Pine Gate Spring Retreat: Tricia Diduch
A Time of Hope and Renewal**

The carpet of crumbled and decaying leaves from the previous fall softly gave way with each footstep as we gradually wove our way along the wooded path in the lightly falling rain. Yet, in the midst of this somewhat sombre procession, the trees held forth tiny buds and the promise of new life. Their fresh foliage cradled inside, bursting seedlings were just waiting to be born. As the old makes way for the new, so Pine Gate Sangha's annual mindfulness retreat represented a time of transformation. Participants were eager to shed old habits and share new ideas. And while it may have been raining outside for the better part of the weekend, spirits were bright and hope shone through the clouds, welcoming a time of change, renewal, growth and, most importantly, hope.

Appropriately, Dharma talks perpetuated this theme of positive transformation. The first proposed a spirituality borne of personal experience and deep knowing, as opposed to one based on empty ritual and events in the historical realm. It envisioned personal transformation through encounters with ultimate reality, or the higher consciousness within. Expanding upon that concept, the second focused on the interconnection between higher consciousness and ecology. We were offered hope that we can play a role in stemming the tide of ecological devastation. That hope lies in our ability to create positive change by raising our own consciousness through personal transformation. As we change and grow, ridding ourselves of old behaviours and habits, we invite our greater community to do so along with us, which will eventually result in a critical mass being reached. This transformation of personal consciousness is directly connected with earth consciousness and will lead to positive developments toward environmental sustainability.

Reinforcing their commitment to walking the path of mindfulness and awakening to deeper values, while loosening the grip of habit energy, four retreatants participated in the Five Mindfulness Trainings Transmission ceremony. Through receiving the transmissions, Jamie, Joe, Katherine and Kelly reminded those of us who have previously committed to the mindfulness trainings of our own progress and supported our continued efforts. As relatively new members, they openly embraced the practice and shared their desire to become catalysts for change within their community. As a third-year participant, while the retreat didn't hold the novelty of past ones, it was nonetheless pivotal. It reignited my spirit and reminded me of the positive results of the practice in my life. As I listened to the new members express their thoughts and feelings, I reflected on the inevitability and necessity of growth and evolution. Their fresh insights were inspiring and reaffirmed my commitment to personal transformation. They also reminded me just why it was I had chosen this path. These initiates were also the hope that Ian spoke of -- tangible reassurance that the trend toward mindfulness and higher consciousness is gaining momentum.

The retreat closed as it always does. Holding hands as we were all gathered in a circle, you could feel the tingling energy being passed from one person to another. I felt happy and confident, knowing that tomorrow the circle would widen, channelling new energy into the circle as it perpetually spirals upward.

Talks and Retreats with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

Friday April 21 – 23, 2006 Pine Gate
Annual Retreat: "Living Joyfully" with
Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

Contact: Carolyn Hill

Chill@TierneyStauffer.com

613 726 0881

Tuesday September 26, 2006 Public Talk

“What’s Love Got To Do With It?”

7.00pm – 9.00pm, Warren Wilson College

Ashville, NC

Contact: Ryan Boyle

rboyle@warren-wilson.edu

Thurs Sept 28 – Sunday Sept 31, 2006

Southern Dharma Retreat Center: **DYING WELL,**

LIVING WELL with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis &

Carolyn Hill, Order of Interbeing

North Carolina, USA

Contact: Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661

West Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743, USA

828 622 7112 info@southerndharma.org

www.southerndharma.org

Registration:

<http://www.southerndharma.org/registration.htm>

forms in HTML and PDF

June 2006 Schedule

Thursday June 1: Vivian – Healing Sound

Thursday June 8: Paul – Shamanism

Thursday June 15: Tricia – The Great Liberation. Part II of NFB film “The Tibetan Book of the Dead” narrated by Leonard Cohen

Thursday June 22: Emily – Usui Reiki

Thursday June 29: Carolyn – PV Retreat

Lazy Days of Summer at Pine Gate

June 2006 Program: 7.00pm – 9.00pm

At Pine Gate Meditation Hall

Bring friends – all welcome

Sessions begin with sitting and walking meditation, with a further period of sitting meditation, then the presentation and discussion. At 9.00pm the main event is tea and goodies upstairs.

The Lazy Days of Summer program provides an opportunity for sangha members to bring forward topics and practices suitable for the mandate of Pine Gate sangha, cultivating the seeds of leadership and responsibility for the community. If you have a topic for the July program, please notify Carolyn once she is back from Plum Village at the end of June.