



# Pine Gate

Newsletter of the Pine Gate Sangha

Vol. 6 Issue 1: Winter 2007

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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.

## **FAILSAFE: Gaia, Science and the Buddha Part II Ian Prattis**

*This concludes the summary of the new book recently completed. Part I can be found in the Fall 2006 edition of Pine Gate Vol 5 Issue 3 .*

## **The Buddha**

The Failsafe in Consciousness concept and its components all refer to attributes of mind. They are seeds of potential stored in our mind, buried under a general amnesia that as a global community we are just beginning to wake up from. To exponentially nurture these aspects of mind it is necessary to draw on liberating teachings about the mind. Thus I take refuge in the Buddha whose understanding of the mind came from his awakened consciousness. The Buddha’s teachings are about the mind and what to

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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

do when the mind is so overwhelmed by suffering that there seems to be no way out. To institute lucidity and compassion as the basis of action, the Buddha provides guidance with a consistent set of teachings, all derived from his first dharma talk on suffering and how to get out of suffering. In particular, I draw on the Diamond Sutra, the teachings on Consumption and the Five Mindfulness Trainings – brief summaries are provided below.

In The Diamond Sutra the Buddha taught that humans and nature are totally interconnected and that if we want to look after humans we have to look after mother earth. Just as important is that if we wish to take care of mother earth we must also take good care of ourselves. “The taking care of” is through meditation, the practice of mindfulness, the actualization of interbeing and being aware of the consequences of our actions. These aspects of meditation, mindfulness, interbeing and awareness with respect to the earth are found in many spiritual traditions, particularly aboriginal ones. Yet neglect, ignorance and exploitation of the earth are the present order of the day whatever the spiritual tradition.

Much of our present consumption fosters violence – to our body, to other people and to the planet. If we are serious about stopping violence and bringing environmental degradation to a halt, we must change our habits of consumption. Then by generating compassion, refrain from creating internal violence to our systems - and to the planetary systems we interconnect with. We consume much more than edible food. We also consume with our senses, desires and cravings. This consumption then feeds our store consciousness, which “eats” everything we put into it. If we fill it full of toxins, violence and other negative energies, then it is this accumulation in our consciousness that then drives us. On the other hand if we feed our store consciousness with mindful nutriment, then a different energy occupies the driving seat of our life, one that guides us to live a life full of

understanding, love, compassion and joy. This is the energy of mindfulness. The Buddha’s teachings about nutriment provide clear guidelines for the consequences of consumption.

The Buddha continually asserted that mindfulness is our protector. We must use it to distinguish nutriment that nourish our organism and spiritual well being, from those which do not. By eliminating toxins from our sensory diet we begin cultivating an alternative consumption based on patterns of consumption that enhance mindfulness and compassion. But we cannot see deeply into the interconnection between nutriment and consciousness until we come to a stop. That is the first meditative step before deep looking and insight help us to recognize the toxic nutriment that pollute our bodies and mind. We then cultivate the sense impression foods that nourish us in a positive and wholesome way. We resist by waking up, by knowing what to do and what to refrain from. Mindfulness and spiritual ethics of practice provide guidelines to restore our freedom.

There are three major conditions that permitted the emergence of the Mindfulness Trainings as a set of spiritual ethics so necessary for our time. The first is the awakened mind of the Buddha; the second is the great skill of the Buddha as a teacher; the third is Thich Nhat Hanh’s insightful rewording of the Five Wonderful Precepts of the Buddha. In a language that would appeal to the consciousness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Buddha’s mindfulness trainings were renewed, in tune with modern planetary, socio-economic and cultural developments. So when we study and penetrate deeply into the mindfulness trainings we touch all three conditions, in particular the awakened mind of the Buddha. At the same time we also touch our potential to be similarly awakened – another aspect of the Failsafe premise. With the Five Mindfulness Trainings the Buddha communicated in a very precise way the ethical and moral basis of practice; of how to be with ourselves, others and with the planet and society at large. There is an energy to the trainings

that comes directly from the awakened mind of the Buddha, which is continued through us. Once we grasp the extraordinary qualities and understand the power of the energy created by the mindfulness trainings then something deep and very wholesome stirs in our hearts. From this initial experience the seeds of awakening are nurtured within consciousness and distance is created between ourselves and all negative actions that can harm both us and the planet.

In the dark times facing us the Buddha's mindfulness trainings provide protection. Our world needs guidelines like these to live by. Embracing the Buddha's awakened mind in the trainings is taking refuge in the Buddha. Extending it to our society and environment is the foundation of Engaged Buddhism. This is a statement of practice and is our greatest gift to the world - the deep practice of the mindfulness trainings. This enables us to live authentic lives and be free, at the same time ensuring that a future is possible. Our practice and actualization of the mindfulness trainings in daily life defines us as true revolutionaries for the 21<sup>st</sup> century for we can transform both global terror and environmental degradation.

From my own experience, I know that as a species we must learn to meditate, or at least a critical mass of us must — otherwise the ethical imperative to shift to a new consciousness of our interconnectedness with everything will not happen. Without this shift in consciousness, we eliminate one by one all of our life support systems, and we will become totally alienated not just from ourselves, but from the Earth we live on. Our evolution and cognition are intricately interconnected with all that takes place within the wider ecosphere of our planet. Our consciousness is not separate from it, and we have to recognize this. We do this by moving to a radically different perspective, first towards ourselves and secondly to the incredibly beautiful planet we live on, and realize that the planet is changing. We have to realize that we are part of a changing web of life,

and are not the masters of the earth. We need to relate to ourselves and to the earth with a sense of wonder and humility - in a spiritual manner rather than an exploitative one. In this way our knowledge will fuel wisdom rather than create structures of dominance and destruction.

### **Peace Prayer Day with my Daughter Trish Johnson**

While we attended only in the afternoon, what a wonderful day for Peace Prayer Day! The sun was shining and the foliage outside the Jean Piggott Place shone bright as fireworks. My daughter, who'd come under extreme protest (and just perhaps the lure of the silent auction and food!) clapped next to me smiling, while just moments before her eyes had been closed, as she was caught up in the chant of 'Shalom' rendered by Snatam Kaur and her ensemble

The day was smiling with music and singing, messages of peace, moods hopeful, and energy high. All that and the company of new sangha friends also greeting us along the way, with first hugs from Joe - the perfect greeter, a gentle rock of the souce indeed!. I also snagged one bumping into Ian, returning to his MC duties from checking on the status of his bidding competition at the silent auction for a tea cup. Introducing my daughter to all of you was my gift to me on this day. That she saw her mother in fellowship with so many good people and surrounded by good and wholesome things so that she could feel the energy surrounding all of us and know that she is a part of it too.



**Snatam Kaur & Guru Ganesh with children**

She is not yet 12 years old, but already she can open her mind and chant for Peace. I consider my daughters my charges of Mother Earth, it is my humble job and my joy to try to start them out on the right path. Thank you for being on our path today and thank you all for your efforts on Peace Prayer Day for planetary care, social justice and of course peace. I look forward to participating more next year

### **Prayer for Peace for "Not Just the Few"** **Dr. Ghanem**

*The Jewish and Arabic men and women for peace presented a moving testimony at the Peace Prayer Day. Martin Luther King's "I Had a Dream" was adapted to the Middle East situation and spoken by a Jew and by a Muslim. Dr Ghanem, a Muslim doctor then recited his poem below.*

I cast my eyes, and see the people  
Then to the skies, towards the steeple  
I look up high, and see the stars  
That wink at me, and there is Mars  
That god of war, which we abhor  
For it is peace, that we stand for  
As we repeat, three times and four  
And every day, forever more

Here we gather, mother, father  
Linking our hands, firmer, harder  
So look at us, do you not see  
One human mass, big as the sea  
Made up of waves, of diverse shape  
That ebb and rise, in one landscape  
Together we live, with no escape  
Together we die, if we look agape  
And let Martians, pillage and rape

For all we leave are bags of bones  
Six foot under heavy head stones  
Whether you're Ali, or Doctor Jones  
Whether we're white or other clones  
Whether we sit on sand or thrones

Almighty God, the god of all  
Of black and white, of big and small  
Whose name we see, on every scroll  
On this fine day, of a golden fall  
In this our land, at this town hall  
I'll bend my knees, or stand up tall  
And ask of you, to hear my call  
To end the hate, and crush the wall  
To grant us peace and bless our soul

And with my verse, I say to you  
Come shake my hand, if you're a Jew  
And kiss my cheek, if you're Hindu  
Let Christians come, join the queue  
Let Muslims in, to bring their crew  
And Sikhs arrive, in turbans blue  
Let's welcome all, and atheists too  
Let's banish war, and stage a coup  
Against the racists, no matter who

Here is my wish: we must come through  
Hot bread for all, not the well-to-do  
Shelter the child, of every hue  
Shield the woman, gentle and true  
Respect for all, long overdue  
And peace for all, *not just the few!*

## Humanity

## Bruce Cockburn

*Bruce received a Peace Award for his long-term advocacy and sterling work for Unitarian Services Committee of Canada. His activism for peace and social justice worldwide is reflected in the music and songs he is famous for. This is an excerpt from his rousing Vision for Peace delivered on Peace Prayer Day 2006.*

I am grateful to Friends for Peace for this chance to celebrate the work that USC Canada does. A few months ago, I was standing at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem - the city of peace - and I was thinking: "There's never going to be any peace". Side by side with the richness of history, the richness of beliefs, stands the madness of tribalism and fear of beliefs one subscribes to, producing instant anger, fear of 'the other'. If I were God, surveying my beautifully and terribly imbalanced creation - Earth - what would I think of my pride and joy - humanity - who has taken my gift of light and potential and rendered it obscene - pathological with the technology of destruction?

Humanity. When I wrote "*If I Had A Rocket Launcher*" back in 1983. I was trying to catalogue and share how shocked I was that I was willing to kill the Guatemalan soldiers who were perpetuating atrocities on the Mayan people, among whose refuges I found myself. I was wrong of course. We use the word humanity to refer to an attitude of compassion, to refer to the study of aesthetics, of ideas, but surely we are the greatest liars. No species but ours makes war, slaughters its own, lays waste the earth, poisons the air and water it needs to live. Men, and occasionally women, will commit unspeakable acts, in the name of God, country or imperial hegemony and they'd better have reasons for these acts because they are living examples of why humanity may be a failed genetic experiment. The things that get done horrify us. Fill us with hatred and anger at the perpetrators who harm us.



**Bruce with Every Woman's Drum**

I say these things not to incite despair, but to point out what we're are up against when we campaign for a peaceful world. Our real opponent is the pathology that dwells in the human heart. That is to know that we're all broken. Nobody is holier than anybody else. It is in our brokenness, our scars, that we find common ground. Ground for compassion, love and forgiveness. It is in the light that shines through those broken places that might, if we are lucky, find the way back and our fanciful definition of ourselves can be made a reality.

We need a world where we do not have to answer to an ideologue's frightened ego. So on a planet populated, maybe dominated, by ideologues with frightened egos, we have to seek out that broken place in our hearts where the light shines through. Where we can hear the cry from the hearts of those that oppose us, and address that cry. There is nothing easy or simple about this. Whatever tools you've got; prayer, self analysis, a body to put in the way of bullets, a donation to an organization that works for social justice - use it now and use it hard. - because the time is short.

Maybe we are done as a species, but maybe not. If we want a chance at a tolerable future for our children and grandchildren, let's get on with it. I am



grateful and proud to be part of this public testament to the side of the human heart that is not pathological, the side that loves, that holds beauty higher than fear, the side that hopes. If we can find that capacity while confronting the demons in our own hearts, we do have a chance. Thank you.

## Wanting To Be Loved

**Bill Menza**

*Bill is a dharmacharya practicing in Washington D.C. This is his transcript of Thay's wonderful response during a Q & A session in the June 2006, 21 day retreat: The Breath of the Buddha in Plum Village, France.*

### Student:

I am a little embarrassed to tell you about my problem. What concerns me is the pain that I feel from wanting to share my life with someone, but not having a partner to do this with. The ache of this pain is so deep that it sometimes physically hurts. At the same time, I remind myself about how fortunate I am to have wonderful friends and family. But not having a partner makes me very sad. I don't know what to do with this feeling of loss I have. I don't know what to do with the heartache.



**Canada Sangha with Thay**

## Thay (Thich Nhat Hanh):

*This fear is always with us---that our desire to love and be loved will not be fulfilled; that we will be left lonely. Everyone of us wants to love and be loved. But we are afraid we will not have a chance to love and be loved. We need to recognize this need within ourselves. Our practice is to look deeply into this kind of fear, this kind of need. To love is to offer understanding and comfort. Yes, we do feel miserable if no-one understands us. Because when someone does not understand us, he or she can't love us. Understanding is the proof of love. You can't say he loves me, but does not understand me. This does not make sense. Without understanding love is impossible.*

*We are looking for some one who can show us that they understand and love us. Suppose there is such a person. But first we have to ask the question: whether we are capable of generating understanding and love? Are we capable of offering them what they need and what we need? This is the real important question. If we are not capable of generating understanding and love, nothing will happen. The teachings of the Buddha are to help us generate the energy of understanding and love. And if we can produce that energy we will first be able to help ourselves. And with this capacity for understanding and love we can embrace the people who are with us now. We can make them happy while at the same time we make ourselves happy. Because the energy of understanding and love is a very positive energy, which has the capacity to nourish, heal and bring happiness.*

*So the question is not whether there is understanding and love around us, but do we have the capacity to generate the energy of understanding and love. If we can, then maybe we can make everyone our partner. This is the love of the Buddha---to want everyone to be your partner. True love is like that.*

*When you love one person, it is an opportunity to embrace that person with understanding and love. But you do not stop there. Just as the Buddha did not stop with loving one person. Although he began with loving one person, he was not satisfied with that. He wanted his love to grow and embrace everyone. We can do that right now. We don't have to wait, if we can generate the energy, the capacity to understand and love. So the first question is do you have the capacity to understand and love. If you can succeed with generating this capacity, then your worry and fear about being loved and loving another person will not be there. You will feel wonderful right away. Please reflect on this. It is very important.*

**Beginning Anew****Thich Nhat Hanh**

*Beginning Anew is a weekly practice at Plum Village. It is a practice for clearing the air of any misunderstandings between individuals, for re-establishing harmony among all, and providing the basis for a new dedication.*

This is the Buddha's teaching, that the mind is a painter. The painter can paint anything, and the painter can erase everything. So if in the past you have painted something you don't like, and if you are determined not to paint it again, then you erase all of that. It depends on your mind, your consciousness. If there is light, there is enlightenment in your consciousness, there is a strong determination, and the awareness that "This is something negative, this is something harmful, this something is not beneficial, and I am determined not to allow it to happen again," and then the mind is transformed. And when the mind is transformed, liberation is already there for you and all your ancestors, and if you are still caught in that feeling of culpability, that is because you have not done the work of Beginning Anew, it means that you have not practiced looking deeply into your clumsiness, your lack of skilfulness. If you had,

then you would see that many conditions had come together for that action or that sentence to become possible. And now, with your enlightenment, with your determination, you will never allow these conditions to come together again in order to repeat the same thing. Your awareness, your enlightenment, is the element that will prevent these conditions coming together again.

When we know how to begin anew we get a lot more energy, joy and aspiration that can help us transform what is negative in us, and help us have more capacity to transform the situation around us. To be born is a form of beginning anew. And that is why we should be able to be born as a new being at every moment of our lives. There are people who may say, "I am too old to begin again." That is because they have not seen the true nature of life, of the practice of Beginning Anew. We can practice Beginning Anew at any moment of our lives.

**Ananda and the Buddha****Mary Pocock**

Ananda said:

O Venerable One, when I think carefully, it seems to me that my having good friends and being with them is equivalent to my already having passed the middle point of the Holy Path. What do you think about this view of mine?

Shakyamuni Buddha:

Ananda, that is wrong. Such a view is not correct. Ananda, our having good friends and being with them is not equivalent to our having passed the middle point of the Holy Path. Our having good friends and being with them is itself the entire Holy Path.

*Samyutta Nikaya*

**Earth Poetics****Gary Snyder**

*This is an excerpt from Gary Snyder's article in Resurgence No. 238 November/December 2006.*

A recent book on global logging and deforestation is titled "Strangely Like War." What is happening now to nature worldwide can be likened to a war against nature. Although human beings have interacted with nature – both cultivated and wild – for millennia, and sometimes destructively so, it was never quite like war. It has now become disconcertingly so, and the active defence of nature has been joined by a few artists and writers who have entered the fight on "the wild side" along with subsistence peoples, indigenous spiritual leaders, many courageous scientists, conservationists and environmentalists worldwide.

The wild is self-creating, self-maintaining, self-propagating, self-reliant, self-actualizing, and it has no self. The human ecology aspect of the ecological sciences helps us understand the role that human beings have played as members of wild nature, and how the interconnectedness of the entire planet require that we take care of this place that we live in, and which lives in us. It tells us what "sustainable" means, and that modern humans must again become members of the organic world.

What would it take? We know that science and the arts can be allies. We need far more women in politics. We need a religious view that embraces nature and does not fear science; business leaders who have spent time working in schools, factories or farms and who still write poems. We need intellectual and academic leaders who have studied both history and ecology and like to dance and cook. We need poets and novelists who pay no attention to literary critics. But what we ultimately need is human beings who love this world.

In Buddhist spiritual ecology, the first thing to give up is your ego. The ancient Vedic philosophers said that the Gods like sacrifice, but of all the sacrifices that which they most appreciate is your ego. This critical little point is the foundation of Yogic and Buddhist practice. Zen philosopher, Dogen, famously said: "We study the self to forget the self. When you forget the self you become one with the ten thousand things." (There is only one offering that is greater than ego, and that is enlightenment itself – the way of the Bodhisattva.)

**Film Review****Trish Johnson**

"The Real Dirt on Farmer John" is the best movie I've seen this year- and I watch a lot of movies! I'm a closet movie junkie as somehow they feed my own writing. This film was shown on sangha movie night to a highly appreciative gathering. I'd call this movie delightful and inspiring, calling on us all for open mindedness and reminding us not to be too quick to judge. It illustrates the simple power of the human spirit, family, our reliance on the land, and what can happen with a consistent desire to do the right thing.

It carries a message of live, let live, and prosper. It teaches a lesson of the rewards of simple truth telling, quiet mindful intolerance of lies and perseverance when a liar is at your gates, seeking to foil you when your back is turned. Enduring animosity not subtle when they burn your studio down, the one you built with your very own labor, helping friends and love. It shows that being ostracized, simply because of who you really are, is no easy fate. It shows us that the ability to 'keep on keeping on' is a gift that does not come easy and is one that not all of us are blessed with. It got to be too much for poor Uncle Harold and eventually he uses a gun to cease his own misery. A self-implosion he must have felt growing inside like a tumor, long before he pulled the trigger. Such



immense grief came with the loss of the family farm.

Yet, in spite of the deaths of his father and uncle, the decades of barrenness Farmer John endured from the very earth that he would later come to heal. John Peterson, is re-energized, farming in his flamboyant orange boa, content at play with his new young love. He teaches all of us to listen to our hearts and to trust in the good Earth to provide for us, to believe the answers will come if we travel down the road long enough armed with a pure heart. Reliance on the land, awareness of the food we eat, the symbiotic relationships of the earth-to-man, man-to-man, the power of perseverance, and the healing gaiety of love. These are the messages of Farmer John in this wonderful cinematic treat, a heart felt home movie well worth a box office price! The real dirt on John Peterson is that he always was a chosen one, he just didn't know it when his hardships were fueling his ability to overcome. Miraculously, with his overcoming, he found a recipe to heal the earth - organically. CSA farming, biodynamics, vortexed water, artistic freedom, the passion of writing are all packed into this meaningful movie.

The Real Dirt on Farmer John is that he was meant to be an inspiration to all of us. I simply want to tell everyone to watch this movie!!

## Recipes

**Tricia Diduch**

*Tricia created the menu and cooked most of the food for the OI Aspirants retreat in October 2006. Also the pumpkin primo birthday cake to celebrate Ian's birthday with the sangha. Tricia provided vocal support for the rendition of that Beatle's favorite "When I'm 64." The cake was much more appreciated than Ian's attempt to emulate Sir Paul McCartney.*

### Granola

4 cups oatmeal	1 cup wheat germ
1 cup coconut seeds	½ cup sunflower seeds
½ cup sesame seeds	dash of salt

Mix together ¼ water (hot), 1/3 cup vegetable oil and 1/3 cup honey.

Add to dry mixture and bake at 275°F, until golden brown (about 1.25 to 1.5 hours)

Add raisins, nuts or any type of dry fruit you like after cooking.

### Yogurt Cheddar Scones

1-3/4 cups all purpose flour	1 tbsp.
granulated sugar	
1 tbsp. baking powder	1 tsp. baking soda
¾ tsp. salt	¼ cup cold butter
¾ cup cheddar cheese	1 cup 1% plain yogurt

In large bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda and salt; cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in cheese. Add yogurt all at once; stir with fork to make soft, slightly sticky dough.

On lightly floured surface, knead dough gently 6 times or until smooth. Gently pat out dough to 1 in. thick round. Using 2-in. round cutter, cut out rounds. Gather up scraps and pat our dough once more; cut out rounds. Bake on ungreased baking sheet in 425°F oven for 12-15 min.

### Curried Zucchini Soup

1 tbsp. vegetable oil	1 stalk celery
5 cups chopped zucchini	2 onion,
chopped	
1 clove garlic, minced	2 tsp. curry powder
¾ tsp. salt	½ tsp.
cinnamon	
¼ tsp. pepper	1 tsp. packed brown sugar
6 cups vegetable stock	

In large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat; cook zucchini, onions, celery, garlic, curry, salt, cinnamon and pepper, stirring occasionally, for 10 min. or until softened. Sprinkle with sugar. Pour in stock and bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium; simmer for 20 min., or until veggies are very tender. In blender, purée zucchini mixture in batches, until smooth. Pour into clean saucepan; reheat but do not boil. Season with more salt and pepper to taste - Serves 8.

### **‘When I’m 64’ Birthday Cake**

½ cup butter (unsalted) softened	¾ cup
packed brown sugar	
1 tsp. vanilla	1 egg
1-1/3 cups flour	1 tsp.
baking powder	
¼ tsp. salt	2 tsp.
pumpkin pie spice	
1 cup canned packed pumpkin	½ cup
toffee chips	

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease 8 in. round baking pan.
2. Beat butter, brown sugar and vanilla with electric mixer until smooth. Add egg and beat until fluffy. Stir in remaining ingredients. Spread batter evenly in prepared pan.
3. Bake 40 to 45 min. or until toothpick inserted in centre comes out clean. Cool completely in pan on wire rack.

### **..with White Chocolate Cream Cheese Frosting**

2 tbsp. whipping cream	4 oz.
white chocolate, chopped	
6 oz. cream cheese, softened	1/3
cup powdered sugar, sifted	

1. Heat cream in small sauce pan over medium heat until almost boiling; remove from heat, add white chocolate and stir constantly until completely melted. Cool slightly.

2. Meanwhile, beat cream cheese and sugar with electric mixer about 1 minute or until fluffy. Beat in melted chocolate until smooth and pour evenly over the top of the cake.

## **Ol Aspirants Retreat**

**Nadia Nesrallah**

Tricia, Emily and I (aka Sisterz in the Hood) and Dharma Brother Joe made our way to Joe’s cottage. We drove through the dark forest with Snatam Kaur playing in the background. When we arrived, Joe got a fire going. After dark, at the end of October, surrounded by a beautiful lake and an abundance of trees, it was chilly. The Sisterz and I unpacked all of the food that Tricia lovingly prepared for the weekend. A small discovery of her preference for free-range produce was the inspiration for my first ever country song. The roaring fire slowly brought warmth to the cottage. Robert and Laurie arrived soon after. When we opened up a bag of homemade cookies for taste-testing, Ian, Carolyn and Moksha, our dharma dog, came through the door. Coincidence? I think not. I’m not sure if it was Ian’s or Moksha’s radar that tuned in at the right moment.

Before settling in for our evening meditation, we had some tea and cookies together. With hearts, hands and toes all warm, we sat together in silent meditation before heading off to bed. We observed noble silence until after breakfast the next morning. The Sisterz and I shared a room. Tricia and Emily slept in the top bunks, leaving me down below. I was on the brink of sleep when I felt something warm on my face. There was a definite presence close by. I opened my eyes and as they adjusted to the darkness, I noticed Moksha sitting up nice and tall next to the bed observing me. I gave her head a scratch before she wandered off to check on the rest of the gang.

The next morning, I got up to prepare myself for facilitating the morning meditation. At one point,

Ian decided to show Emily the view of the lake and pulled back the curtains to the deck where we got a great view indeed. Joe was outside doing his morning Qi Gong!

To begin our morning meditation, Emily led us in chanting. We meditated in silence and then listened to a Sutra reading. We ended our session with more chanting. After nurturing our spiritual sides it was time to nourish our bodies. Tricia spoiled us with a delicious and healthy breakfast that we ate together in silence. Throughout the weekend, we observed noble silence at all meals and took turns reciting the Five Contemplations, inviting the bell and facilitating sitting and walking meditation. After breakfast, we bundled up and headed outside for our working meditation.

Robert and I decided to try our hands at chopping wood. With axes in hand we took turns trying to slice the huge chunks of wood on the ground in front of us. Robert fared much better than I. Even after Laurie gave me some pointers, I still couldn't get the job done. The real woodsman among us was Ian. He picked up the axe and chopped the rest of the wood in mere minutes. Left to Robert and I, that would've taken all morning and likely part of the afternoon. Working meditation came to a close and we gathered as a group to get down to business. Joe, Robert, Laurie, Emily, Tricia and I are all aspirants for the Order of Interbeing. We have committed to studying and practising the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings. And so, with instruction and guidance from Ian and Carolyn, our first session began. We each presented our interpretation of the First Mindfulness Training based on our experience and suffering. The presentations were varied, profound and touching. They were the basis of much great discussion. Our session came to a close and we headed out for our walking meditation in the rain.

With umbrellas in hand, Joe led us around the cottage, through the forest and by the lake. Thinking back to that walk, I remember having

everyone I love with me at that time. They were all in my heart. I breathed in to send them the joy I felt being outside, surrounded by the beauty of nature. I breathed out aware of the peace and stillness in my heart. For part of the walk, I did a meditation on love. When it came time to bring love to my teacher, thoughts of my fellow aspirants entered my consciousness. I know I have much to learn from all of them and I look forward to the coming months as we explore the rest of the trainings.

We walked for an hour before returning to the cottage for lunch. Afterwards we had two hours of private time. I divided my time between napping, reading and writing the lyrics to my first country song. I read it to Tricia before dinner. It was a few days later before I had a tune for it. Before supper we learned some essential chants and songs that were in the Plum Village Chanting and Recitation Book. There was something so special about being in Joe's family cottage, knowing that Joe's family, their love, energy and hard work went into building it so many years ago. The magic of the lake and the forest, the energy of the voices, the profound way the words of these songs penetrated deeply, the moments of eye contact, smiles and understanding exchanged from across the room created a wonderful energy and strengthened the bonds between us. Our last day at the retreat was beautiful. More meditation, mindful working, eating and sharing of the Second Mindfulness Training made the day amazing. During our working meditation on Sunday, I had a lovely symbolic moment that still rests in my smile. Emily and I were raking the fall leaves to clear a path to the lake. After such an amazing weekend, studying and practising mindfulness, there was just something about clearing a path.

**Children's Voices****Pat Rambo**

*Pat Rambo (OI, Harrisburg PA) mentored with Ian for the Tiep Hien. She invited Ian to her school several years ago to offer sessions on mindfulness meditation and proceeded to organize a weekly meditation class for interested students. The testimonies below are some of the fruits of Pat's deep practice in her school.*

George:

My favourite type of meditation was the Mountain Meditation and I would like to try and do this outside next year. Coming to meditation has helped me to cope with my brother and sister instead of beating the crap out of them. Also it helps me with the week ahead and relieves my stress from school and my family. Mrs Rambo and Mrs Wells have opened my eyes to a new world.

Rich:

I believe that in a world of chaos and turmoil, there is so little time to think. You can always make judgemental decisions, solve problems, and stuff like that. But when do you notice how soft a flower is or realize how good your food tastes? Meditation has opened my senses in a way and given me the chance to enjoy the little things that bring order into the chaos. I think our time of existence is like water in a stream, because it is always flowing until it reaches a point where our negative stuff cannot go any further. I want my life to be like this, to enjoy the sweetness of the little things until there is nothing other for me to experience. Meditation has opened my mind to these things that I never thought about before. Thank you so much Mrs Rambo.

Emily:

I came to meditation to keep from breaking down and screaming in the middle of class. It gives me a "safe room: where I can just sit, relax and actually

think I can sort out my thoughts and get myself back on track and try to stay sane.

Laura:

Meditation has become my present to myself. I first came to meditation because my friend brought me, but with each week I learned that I wanted to come for myself. I'm an extremely insecure person who keeps most of my worries to myself. I have a lot of anger towards my parents as well due to multiple things, including forbidding me to see my best friend. Coming to meditation has helped me to just sit and be with myself. I don't have to think about how upsetting everything has been. Instead, I've learned to appreciate myself more. I'm not paranoid about people not liking me anymore because I'm finally myself and they can accept me that way or not. It's up to them and I'm learning not to beat myself up any more. With meditation I've also grown to be part of a group of people who I can always turn to and know I can trust. Just having that has brought me so much peace within myself. I've also been able to give myself presents like taking a walk or just sitting quietly outside and enjoying the sunshine. It has made me a much happier person.

**Poetry****Musings****Joseph Emet**

The past left us Swaziland and Ireland,  
But now we long for Peaceland.  
It left us Pakistan and Afganistan,  
But now we long for Ecostan.  
It left us flags of competing colours,  
Displaying the coats-of-arms of winners,  
But now we long for a rainbow-flag without losers,  
a graceful arc holding all beings in its embrace.  
It left us a Holy Land that is violent and sectarian,  
But now we long for the Loving-Kindness-Land,  
A Metta-Sutra-Land over the whole Earth.  
It left us traditions  
That favoured one people over another,

One gender over another,  
And one species over all others,  
But now we wish to invoke an Interbeing-  
The Protector and Friend of all beings.

That past lingers on, with its strange and deadly  
beauty-  
A mix of perfume and the stench of rotting corpses,  
Of birdsong and exploding shells;  
The present moment beckons to us  
To start over again each instant,  
Using our heart and our mind of love  
for a compass.

**Five Lessons****Roger Bygott**

Burn your books  
All will be learnt  
From your empty shelves.

Throw out your lover  
All will be learnt  
From your empty bed.

Tear down your house  
All will be learnt  
From your empty foundations.

Discard your clothes  
All will be learnt  
From your nakedness.

Let go of your body  
All will be learnt  
From your epitaph.

**No Time To Stand and Stare****W. Davies**

What is this life if, full of care  
We have no time to stand and stare.  
No time to stand beneath the boughs  
And stare as long as sheep and cows.  
No time to see, when woods we pass,

Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.  
No time to see, in broad daylight,  
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.  
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,  
And watch her feet, how they can dance.  
No time to wait till her mouth can  
Enrich that smile her eyes began.  
A poor life this if, full of care,  
We have no time to stand and stare.

**Car-less in Ottawa****Ian Prattis**

Since relinquishing my car over a year ago, radical new horizons have appeared, though there was an initial period of grief and frustration. Every time a winter green Subaru Outback drove past I would weep, especially if I was clambering over snow banks to get to a bus stop. I would often get on the wrong bus, discovering parts of the city I had no intention of visiting. I must also add that relinquishing my car was not quite as virtuous as it may seem. My car insurers refused to renew my insurance policy due to the frequent, yet small, crashes that had cost them oodles of money. The most notorious incident was when I collided with my neighbour's mini-van. I still believe he was on the wrong side of the road, but just perhaps it was I. His insubstantial mini-van crumpled and buckled while my beloved Subaru Outback had minor damage to the front fender.

My neighbour cheerfully, and without realizing the risk, got into my car and I drove both of us to the nearest police station to report the collision. The police sergeant who took our particulars was another neighbour and as I stood there looking somewhat sheepish, he put up his hand with an air of authority and said: "I don't want to hear anything from you – I will put this down as a no-fault collision." I was about to point out that "no-fault collision" was an oxymoron, when my neighbour (not the police sergeant but the one whose mini-van I had crumpled) said OK and hurried both of us out.



He had to meet his daughter at a shopping mall and asked if I would kindly drive him there. Quite a risk taker he was, given the circumstances. I happily agreed and mused that just perhaps my absence from driving would make it safer for every other car on the road, quite apart from the obvious environmental benefits. All this being said, I was not prepared for new vistas that were suddenly there when I became car-less in Ottawa.

I learned how well served my city of Ottawa was with bus and light rail services. Furthermore, had I continued driving a car I would have missed out on one of the most hilarious and refreshing bus conversations I have ever had. Riding home one evening on the 117 bus from my university to Baseline Station, I noticed a young man with a 12 pack of beer sitting opposite, staring very intently at me, obviously three sheets to the wind. Finally he blurted out: "Hey, aint you the ecology guy on TV?" To which I mildly demurred that indeed I was - not really wishing to get into a conversation with an inebriated young man. But joyfully he exclaimed: "Hey, me and the boys have a pack of beer every Monday night when we watch your show. It's cool man." I felt immediately humbled by his openness and that surprisingly I was making a difference. As was he at that moment, as he chatted away about ecology and recycling until his bus stop. He offered me a bottle of beer before leaving the bus, which of course I accepted graciously. I did not drink it, leaving it in the bus driver's bin to dispose of as he saw fit.

I had discovered that between Baseline Station and my home, there was a kilometre walk along Pinecrest Creek that constantly stunned me with its beauty. As it was a bicycle path the snow was ploughed in winter, which made walking that much easier. To have mother nature dance for me in such unexpected ways led to my often carrying a camera, with stale bread and grain for the mallard ducks that wintered there. The sunsets over the ice rimmed creek and snow covered field leading to it would take my breath away. They could not possibly be

there in the middle of a busy city!! As were red foxes, one lonely coyote, song birds, owls and the occasional pedestrian. My walking meditations between Baseline Station and home made me smile as I slowed down and hummed Pooh Bear type hums. If I had a car this wonder would have been denied to me.

I also relocated essential services close to home, finding doctors, dentists, eye specialists (and camera shops) within walking or biking distance. They had been there all the time, just waiting to be discovered. I now re-arrange appointments locally within bicycle range, rarely going downtown unless absolutely necessary. Driving a car, I could not stop to fully be with moments of stunning beauty for as long as I liked; or say hello to rabbits that boldly appeared; or leave contented ducks well fed on bread and grain murmuring their approval of the two legged who listened to what they wanted.

The bus drivers on the 117 bus route have got to know me and younger passengers offer their seats to the greybeard with the jazzy umbrella and funny black hat. Would I go back to driving a car and lose all this? Well, talk to me about an environmentally friendly Mercedes and a kind insurance broker, then perhaps we'll see.

### **Lazy Days of Summer Program**

Perhaps a new name is required for the summer program at Pine Gate as the sangha features during June, July and August are anything but "lazy." With the snow and ice settling in for the Canadian winter it is nice to think ahead to warmer days of more fun and fellowship. The summer program at Pine Gate provides an opportunity for the special interests of sangha members to find a forum for appreciation. Topics and practices are brought forward from different traditions of healing and meditation, broadening our knowledge and appreciation of different forms of mindfulness. If

you have a topic, film or book you wish to present  
please notify Carolyn Hill at  
[Chill@TierneyStauffer.com](mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com) 613 726 0881.

All sessions are on a Thursday evening at Pine Gate  
Meditation Hall from 7.00pm – 9.00pm. Each  
practice opportunity begins with sitting and walking  
meditation, with a further period of silent sitting  
meditation, then the presentation and dharma  
discussion about it. At 9.00pm the main event is tea  
and goodies upstairs or in the garden. Directions are  
below for new readers.

**Directions:** Take Queensway to Woodroffe S. exit;  
Go to Baseline Rd; RT on Baseline; RT on  
Highgate (next lights); RT on Westbury; LT on  
Rideout to 1252, home of the Pine Gate sangha. No  
reindeer grazing the lawn in summer, but new  
flowerbeds to greet you.

Contacts: [Chill@TierneyStauffer.com](mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com)  
[iprattis@cyberus.ca](mailto:iprattis@cyberus.ca) 613 726 0881

## 2007 Talks and Retreats with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis

Saturday January 7, 2007  
Day of Mindfulness with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis  
Ottawa, Ontario  
Pine Gate Meditation Hall  
10.00am – 4.00pm  
**Contact:** Carolyn Hill  
[Chill@TierneyStauffer.com](mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com) 613 726 0881

Saturday April 14 - 15, 2007  
Mindfulness Weekend  
with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis  
Orlando, Florida  
Tibet-Butler Nature Reserve  
**Contact:**  
Pam Allen [PAllen1236@aol.com](mailto:PAllen1236@aol.com)  
407 353 2000

Friday Sept 14 – Sept 16, 2007  
Pine Gate Sangha Annual Retreat  
Masham, Quebec  
with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis  
**Contact:** Carolyn Hill  
[Chill@TierneyStauffer.com](mailto:Chill@TierneyStauffer.com) 613 726 0881

Tuesday September 25, 2007  
Public Talk: “Global Warming and Buddhism”  
7.00pm – 9.00pm, Warren Wilson College  
Ashville, NC  
**Contact:** Fred Solomon  
[info@southerndharma.org](mailto:info@southerndharma.org)

Thurs Sept 27 – Sept 30, 2007  
4 Day Retreat with Dharmacharya Ian Prattis  
“Simple Steps to Empowerment”  
Southern Dharma Retreat Centre  
North Carolina, USA  
**Contact:** Southern Dharma Retreat Center, 1661  
West Rd, Hot Springs, NC 28743, USA  
828 622 7112 [info@southerndharma.org](mailto:info@southerndharma.org)  
[www.southerndharma.org](http://www.southerndharma.org)

**Registration:**  
<http://www.southerndharma.org/registration.htm>  
forms in HTML and PDF

<b>Winter Study Session of Pine Gate Sangha: January 2007 – May 2007</b>	
<b>Saturday January 6 10.00am – 4.00pm</b>	<b>Day of Mindfulness Pine Gate Meditation Hall</b>
Thursday Jan 11 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Touching the Earth Ceremony
Thursday Jan 18 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Freeing from Notions Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 8, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday Jan 25 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Be Alive, Touch Interbeing Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 10, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday Feb 1 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Be Alive, Touch Interbeing Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 10, 2006, Plum Village
<b>SATURDAY FEB 3 5.00PM – 7.00PM</b>	<b>Dharma Talk Pot Luck vegetarian supper</b>
Thursday Feb 8 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Healing the Past Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 11, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday Feb 15 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Healing the Past Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 11, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday Feb 22 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Tea Ceremony
Thursday March 1 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Sangha Council
<b>SAT MARCH 3 5.00PM – 7.00PM</b>	<b>Dharma Talk Pot Luck vegetarian supper</b>
Thursday March 8 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Practice of Interbeing Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 14, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday March 15 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Practice of Interbeing Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 14, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday March 22 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Five Mindfulness Trainings Recitation
Thursday March 29 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Enlightenment Here and Now Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 15, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday April 5 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Enlightenment Here and Now Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 15, 2006, Plum Village
<b>SAT APRIL 7 5.00pm – 7.00pm</b>	<b>Dharma Talk Pot Luck vegetarian supper</b>
Thursday April 12 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Mind Consciousness Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 16, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday April 19 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Mind Consciousness Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 16, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday April 26 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Chanting and Mindfulness Songs
Thursday May 3 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Non-Attachment to Views Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 17, 2006, Plum Village
<b>SATURDAY MAY 5 10.00am – 1.00pm</b>	<b>Spring Hike in Gatineau Park</b>
Thursday May 10 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Joyfully Together Part I Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 18, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday May 17 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Joyfully Together Part II Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 18, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday May 24 7.00pm – 9.00pm	Thich Nhat Hanh: Final Dharma Talk Breath of the Buddha retreat, June 21, 2006, Plum Village
Thursday May 31 7.00-m – 9.00pm	Beginning Anew Ceremony