

Kaihan

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Zen Center

Fall 2010



About the Kaihan

In Japanese, *kai* means to open. The *han* is the rectangular wooden board that hangs on the rear exterior of the zendo, which the joko strikes at specific times. The striking of the han to open a day, when the first hint of daylight is enough to see the lines on your hand, is called kaihan, the opening han.

The han pictured here was made from North Carolina mountain ash by Isaac Teitaku Gardiner, a North Carolina Zen Center monk, and the calligraphy on it is by Joshu Sasaki Roshi for our Center's 2007 dedication--"with a bad brush I handed him," says Sandy.

The Japanese inscription consists of the last two lines of Bodhidharma's description of Zen:

Pointing directly at the human heart,
To see one's nature and manifest Buddha.

The Chinese characters, or kanji, translated literally are:

On the right side —
point directly human heart

On the left side —
see nature manifest buddha

As for the significance of the rhythmic pattern of the strikes, Sandy says, "I suggest people discover the significance of the han's pattern by listening without using their ears, and especially not using their brains, until they can manifest and recognize their own Buddha."



From the Kaihan's New Editor

Unless you've just joined NCZC's mailing list, you should have received my mass mailing of November 12 introducing myself as the new Kaihan editor, briefly detailing my history with the Center, and soliciting material for forthcoming issues from you, our readers and fellow Zen practitioners.

The present moment--two months since I signed on for the job--finds me in the final stages of preparing the Fall 2010 issue. We're now deep into the season and only days away from the onset of winter, although the weather feels like it's here already. So I begin with self-inquiry:

How do I manifest Buddha nature when I'm editing Kaihan?

As I once told a friend in another context: I just want to be a good conduit.

Crystals From Our Teacher's Teacher

Pertinent to matters at hand, for inspiration I've lately been rereading my dog-eared copy of *Buddha is the Center of Gravity: Teisho of Joshu Sasaki Roshi at Lama Foundation* (San Cristobal, New Mexico: Lama Foundation, 1974), transcribed lectures delivered by Joshu Roshi during a Dai-Sesshin in September 1973. Much to chew on in this little volume by the teacher of our teacher. Since it's long out of print, I share a few carefully chosen crystals here:

"The first step of Zen practice...is to manifest yourself as nothingness. The second step is to throw yourself completely into life and death, good and evil, beauty and ugliness. Shakyamuni said that if you want to be free, you must not prefer only good



Sandy Stewart, Osho, and Joshu Sasaki, Roshi

or dislike evil. Well, now what about you? You are educated all your life to venerate God and reject evil. Zen education is totally different: it teaches you how to swallow God and the devil all at once. You are able to give yourself completely and make your home in a beautiful woman or in lice or in a man with a twisted nose. That is Zen practice."

"What is the study of Zen? It is the study of yourself. None of you has ever seen yourself, but you still have yourself. Everybody has self, which he affirms unconditionally. You think that your body,

which is less than five or six feet, is yourself, but you will lose your body someday. So if you depend on your body as yourself, then someday you will lose yourself. Your true self is free from everything. That self which is free from everything I call 'true self.' If you talk about freedom from the point of view of yourself, which you affirm unconditionally, you will never be free, even after 100 or 200 years."

"...you are in a context where you must affirm the human world: you must fall in love; you must earn your living by working. That means you must take responsibility for your human situation. So you must have true love. Therefore don't cheat, don't miss this day. You must know that this day is Buddha's day. This day is the day you accomplish your real life. Do your work seriously! You should take responsibility not to waste this day and to work intensely. If you can truly marry this day, then you can experience true love with any man or woman. That is the meaning of having true self or center of gravity in the human world."

"Time is contained inside of this universe, inside of this space. Human beings developed intellect and misconceived time and space as objects and hallucinated the sequence of past, present and future. If you have this mistaken concept of linear time, you can never understand what time is."

"If you continually affirm what you like and let yourself be drawn in that direction, it will be hard to keep Zen practice. To study Zen is to realize that the self that you affirm unconditionally is not perfect. The perfect self is based on the negation of the unconditionally affirmed self. When you are listening to a bird there is no self. If there is a self unconditionally affirmed by you, you cannot hear the bird. When you really listen to the bird, you give yourself completely to the bird's voice. There is no center of gravity of yourself. You manifest yourself as the bird's voice. It means that you deny yourself completely."

And on that note I'll sign off. I hear a bird calling.....

--Tom Patterson

Fall Zazenkaï, November 4-11: An On-scene Report

The following account of the Fall Zazenkaï is from Teitaku Gardiner, who participated from start to finish. He has been practicing with the NCZC for 15 years, took the precepts in 1997, and was ordained in 2002. He now lives in Port Townsend, Washington.

The Fall Zazenkaï opened on Thursday evening the fourth of November with ten sitters in the zendo. As we moved into the weekend the number swelled until on Sunday morning there were 25, including some who joined us just for the few sits and talk before lunch. Four of these were students from Wake Tech, who were working on an assignment to "do something you wouldn't normally do." By Sunday evening we were down to a handful, but then on Monday morning we got a boost from four who came to sit out the retreat. Our thanks to all who participated, and a special thanks to the six who were able to stay from beginning to end, lending continuity to a week of strong practice. It's gratifying that sitters came from all parts of the country; from southern Florida to New England and the southwest and northwest as well.

All who came contributed to a range of maintenance projects: cleaning and replacing stovepipe (will anyone miss the smell of burning newspaper?), ditch and culvert clean-outs, window washing, path light repairs, gravel hauling and spreading, weeding, mowing, kindling splitting, countertop regluing and daily bath house and zendo cleaning.

The weather was wonderful, with crisp mornings, warm afternoons and nights of stars. We were able to sit one afternoon on the kitchen deck facing into the courtyard and Joshu's oak in the garden, and kinhin down along the creek and up into the switchbacks of the long loop. And of course, many turns around the deck as the light rose and fell, morning and evening.

During the week Sandy spoke on several texts and numerous passages within them, primarily from the Mumonkan and Rinzaï Record. There was also a quick turn through the Heart Sutra on Sunday morning. As we would expect, there were many approaches taken to a number of subjects--apprehending the moments when self has disappeared and the equal moments when it reappears, expansion and contraction, the experiences of Rinzaï's four "snatchings," the active and the receptive, the ways in which Zen masters have expressed

this in encounters with questioning students, and the possibilities for placing ourselves in the dramas of the koans to deepen our understanding of the "activity of the dharma".

And, of course, the week was filled with an infinite succession of moments in which we experienced that activity. Were we noticing when we passed the condiments, swept leaves from the decks, turned over yet again in response to a snoring roommate, saw the sunlight reflected off our wash water, cursed the shoji for failing to make a morning fire, felt our teacup grow heavier as it filled with tea, chanted the sutras and dharanis before dawn, and smelled the incense of the interview room?

--Teitaku Gardiner

An Update on Building Progress

As reported in the summer issue of Kaihan, architect Giles Blunden has completed the design for a new building at NCZC to include a dining hall, additional dormitory space and a library with an indoor reading area. The next step is to obtain the necessary building permits, which will require updating of the Center's septic system. We are currently working with a septic engineer to design and obtain a permit for an enlarged septic field. In addition to accommodating our regular sitting schedule and occasional guests, the current septic field can handle four to five full-time residents; the planned enlargement would enable it accommodate up to ten full-time residents. We are concurrently redesigning the septic system and preparing to seek a new permit for it to handle the increased demands experienced during retreats.

We have completed a detailed estimate for fundraising/ building cost as follows:

\$200,000 to dry-in building and upgrade septic system

+ \$200,000 to complete building

There is currently about \$140,000 in the building fund.

We may be able to begin work in the Spring, assuming we have obtained the necessary permits, and have adequate funds to complete the building dry-in phase; once that phase is finished, the project could pause if needed while additional funds are raised.

--Matt Mashin Young

N.C. Zen Center is Represented at Campbell University Divinity Schools's Third Annual Celebration of Interfaith Collaborations

On October 7, 50 to 60 people attended the third installment of an annual luncheon held in Raleigh, celebrating collaborative efforts to educate divinity students from Campbell University in various world religions and cultures. On hand were representatives from religious traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The North Carolina Zen Center was among the local facilities represented.

Hosted by Professor George Braswell, the director of the Campbell University Divinity School's World Religions and Global Cultures Center, the luncheon at Campbell's Raleigh Law School Building provided a forum for many local spiritual leaders to become acquainted and share ideas in fostering community understanding of various faith-based perspectives.

--Tim Shindo Holmes

Editor's note: *Tim Shindo Holmes was NCZC's representative at the event.*

N.C. Zen Center Celebrates Rohatsu with All-day Sit

On Saturday, December 4, a small group celebrated Rohatsu four days early with an all-day sit at NCZC, beginning at 9 a.m. Morning and afternoon sessions of chanting, zazen, kinhin and sanzen were divided at midday by a samu period and an informal bag lunch. A light snow began to fall early during the afternoon session and continued through Sandy's dharma talk (on the opening of Chapter XVIII from The Book of Rinzai), the Kozen Daito chant and closing bows at about 4 p.m.



Upcoming Events

Winter Zazenkai - Jan. 13 supper to 16 lunch.

Spring Zazenkai - April 29 supper to May 6 lunch.

The cost for each retreat is \$45 per night. Please send a 50% deposit to reserve a seat and help with planning meals. Financial help is available. The retreat is open to all levels of experience including beginners, as well as to part-time participants, with preference given to full-timers. Please visit the Retreats page of the Center's web site for general information.

Note: For the first two days of the Spring Zazenkai we will be joined by Lama Drimed, a lineage holder in the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. He will share teachings and practices of Dzogchen, his school's approach to our pristine awareness, which Zen calls our Buddha nature. He will teach during the morning and afternoon sessions of the Spring Zazenkai's first two days.

Ring in the New Year at Sosen-Ji

The Center will host its annual Potluck Dinner at 7PM on New Year's Eve. Informal sitting runs 9PM-midnight, with 108 rings of the big gong at the turn of the year, followed by snacka and drinks. Please RSVP to info@nczencenter.org to let us know you plan to attend.

Holiday Schedule

Sosen-ji will not have formal sitting between Christmas and New Year's though all are welcome to sit informally during this period.

Sandy's Travels

Sandy will lead retreats in May at the Mountain Cloud Zen Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Upper Valley Zen Center in White River Junction, Vermont. The exact dates are yet to be determined. For more specific information in the near future see our web site and/or the web sites for the other centers (www.mountaincloud.org and www.uvzc.org).



Sarnath Buddha Replica Figurine

NOW AVAILABLE FROM THE CENTER STORE

Sarnath Buddha replica figurines

Sarnath is the Indian city near Benares (today Isipatana) where the Buddha gave his first discourse after his awakening, thus setting in motion the wheel of dharma. Sandy says the life-size relief sculpture of the Buddha at this site is the most moving representation of the Buddha that he has ever seen. The Center Store currently has a limited number of detailed miniature terra-cotta replicas of this exquisite artwork available for purchase. Each one measures 4 by 2 by 1 inches, and sells for \$20 plus \$5 postage and handling.

"The Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma: A Series of Lectures on the Development of Buddhist Philosophy," by Professor Jay L. Garfield (boxed set of two MP3 CDs)

Professor Garfield is one of today's most widely recognized Buddhist teachers and translators. During last year's Spring Zazen-kai he delivered a series of dynamic lectures exploring Buddhist thought from its beginnings through its most critical developments in India, known as the three turnings of the Wheel of the Dharma. These teachings form the

background for our Zen school. For each turning he examined one or two core sutras and one Indian sastra. These engaging and often humorous lectures demonstrate Professor Garfield's grasp of the source material's subtleties and his ability to clarify difficult points. The texts are available on our web site. A boxed set of the recorded lectures on CDs is available for \$25, plus \$5 shipping and handling. (Note: These MP3 CDs will play in most newer CD players, computers, automobile systems and MP3 players, but may not play on some older systems.)



North Carolina Zen Center

*Sosen-ji
Pittsboro, NC*

New T-Shirt Logo

Sosen-ji T-shirts

The Center has very nice t-shirts for sale. They are available in white and natural, and are 100% cotton. They are printed with the Zen Center logo, as seen here, on the front left chest with black ink, and are available in small, medium, large and extra-large. Cost is \$12 per shirt plus \$5 shipping and handling.

Each of the listed items from the Center Store can be purchased on-line, by mail, by phone or in person. For on-line purchases visit the Center's web site (www.nczencenter.org), click on the "Click and Pledge" link and follow the instructions to make a secure credit-card payment. Items can be purchased in person at the Center before or after scheduled sitting periods. Proceeds from sales go to help support the Center.

The North Carolina Zen Center is a non-profit organization. We thrive and grow through the generosity of our members and friends. Your generous donation can help the Center continue to expand and to play a vital part in our lives and the lives of others. You may donate directly to the Center in person or by mail, or you can visit the Support The Center page on our website, where you can make a donation with your credit card. All donations are tax-deductable.

The North Carolina Zen Center
390 Ironwood Road
Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312
(919) 542-7411

info@nczencenter.org
www.nczencenter.org

Kaihan is the quarterly publication of the North Carolina Zen Center.

For comments or questions concerning this newsletter or to offer material for inclusion, please contact Tom Patterson at tom41052@aol.com

If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please call or email us to let us know so we can remove you from our list.

Whenever possible we prefer to send the newsletter by email to save the postage costs. So please send us your email address. You'll also get to enjoy the photos in color!

If your address needs updating, please send us that information.

Please remember to check our website for up-to-date information about our schedule and upcoming events.

