

Kaihan

The Quarterly Newsletter of the North Carolina Zen Center
Summer 2006



The Brooks Branch Zendo is currently operating on the following schedule:

Monday — Friday mornings:

6 AM — 6:40 AM Zazen

Tuesday & Thursday followed by opportunity for interview with Sandy

Tuesday Evening:

7 PM — 8:30 PM Zazen

Thursday Evening:

7 PM — 9 PM Chanting, zazen, interviews and Dharma talk

Sunday Morning

9 AM Work practice

10 AM - Noon Chanting, zazen, interviews and Dharma talk, followed by tea

Sandy regularly attends Tuesday mornings, Thursday mornings and evenings, and Sunday mornings. Also, please note the hour of work practice before the Sunday morning session. Feel free to show up and give a hand in the many small tasks which keep the Center running smoothly.

In chapter one of the Samyutta Nikaya (The Connected Discourses of the Buddha) we read of the devas who come in the quiet of night to honor and learn from the Buddha. Here's a small sample:

At Shravasti, a deva recited this verse to the Buddha:

“Those who dwell deep in the forest,
Peaceful, leading a holy life,
Eating but a single meal a day,
Why is their complexion so serene?”

The Buddha replied,

“They do not sorrow over the past,
Nor do they hanker for the future,
They maintain themselves with what is present:
Hence their complexion is so serene.

Through hankering for the future,
Through sorrowing over the past,
Fools dry up and wither away
Like a green reed cut down.”

In case 47 of the Gateless Barrier (Mumokan), Tosotsu puts it directly and briefly:

At this moment, what is your true nature?

————— Sandy Gentei Stewart

Sandy's summer retreat at Southern Dharma Retreat Center was marked by beautiful weather, a bit warm at the beginning but cool and wet for the last few days. Ten dedicated practitioners attended, including Barbara Gordon, Casey Miller, Glenn Gilchrist and Jason Dowdle from Brooks Branch. Be Gardiner flew in from his new home near Seattle and performed the duties of Shoji, in conjunction with Barbara. Casey served as Joko and Jason served as Jiki.

Sandy taught from several collections of the earliest Buddhist sutras including the Mahaparinibanna Sutta and the Mahasattipathana Sutta from the collection known as the Samyutta Nikaya, *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha*, and several other sutras from the Majjima Nikaya, *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*. These collections, and two others, the Digha Nikaya and the Anguttara Nikaya, form the "First Basket" of the Tripitaka, the *Three Baskets*, of the teachings as preserved in the Buddhist tradition. The other two "baskets" are the Abhidhamma, a collection of commentaries and philosophical treatises concerning the sutras, and the Vinaya, the collection of rules and disciplines to be followed by the order of Buddhist monks and nuns.

The Buddha taught for 45 years after his awakening, and during his life his teachings were often repeated many times, by him and by his disciples. The sutras were originally compiled in the Pali language in the years immediately following the Buddha's death and were at first preserved orally. India had several thousand years of oral traditions at the time, and great skill at oral preservation. The sutras were first written down about 250 years after the death of the Buddha and were circulated widely through India and the island Sri Lanka.

With the rise of the Prajna Paramita teachings in the north of India about 100 BC a split formed within Indian Buddhism. Buddhists in the southern parts of India, including Ceylon, did not embrace these new teachings, and eventually their school of Buddhism became known as Theravada, or the Way of the Elders. The northern school became known as Mahayana, or Great Vehicle Buddhism, because its followers felt it was more inclusive toward lay followers. Buddhism which spread from Southern India and Ceylon through Burma and into IndoChina and Indonesia followed the Theravada tradition. Buddhism which spread from northern India to Tibet, China, Korea and Japan followed the Mahayana tradition.

While the history of Buddhism and its traditions can be a fascinating subject, it is important to remember that the many traditions all look back to the same source, the same teachings about awakening, and the same original teacher, Siddhartha Gautama, the Awakened One. The Pali Sutras form the core of all Buddhist traditions, and, as Sandy amply demonstrated in his teaching at Southern Dharma, the perceived differences between Zen and the original Buddhist teachings are mainly differences in language and presentation. The basic teachings of mindfulness, awareness, essential nature and awakening are shared by all. As Sandy has pointed out, what is most important is that one find a teacher whom one respects, and practice diligently. As Kozen Daito put it, "Ben sen! Ben Sen!" — "Work hard! Work hard!"

General Notes and Upcoming Events

As mentioned in the last Kaihan, Brad Page, who lives at the Center and who is a long-term student of Sandy, had bypass surgery in April. Brad is well on the way to recovery, and he wishes to thank everyone who offered support and kept him in their thoughts.

The Center will host the Fall Zen Weekend from October 12 to October 15. The Center offers dormitory accommodations for up to 18 participants. Suggested donation is \$25/night for the Center, to cover operating expenses. Additional dana may be made directly to Sandy for guiding the retreat and offering his services as teacher. Please contact the Center by phone or email at least two weeks before the start of the retreat if you plan to attend.

For the past decade at least, Sandy has guided a summer retreat at Southern Dharma Retreat Center in the North Carolina Mountains west of Asheville. With the completion of a large part of the retreat facilities here at Brooks Branch, enabling the NC Zen Center to comfortably host retreats, Sandy is considering the possibility of discontinuing the summer retreat at Southern Dharma. The suggestion is that the Center would host week-long retreats at Brooks Branch in the Spring and Fall, and host shorter long-weekend retreats in the summer and winter. Sandy is looking for feedback from the community on this, so please feel free to contact him or discuss it with him at the zendo.

Rumi Fest participants will return to the Center for six days at the end of September, from Sept 27 to October 3. This will be their second time renting dorm space at the Center, so evidently they found it hospitable! The Center is happy to host them and wishes them a joyful experience.

Drew Dunn is a member of the Sangha who is known to many of you. He has been a student of Sandy's for a decade, and he hosts a website called Zenandbusiness.com. Drew is bringing a business seminar to the Center from November 2 — 5. Please contact Drew at vddunn@yahoo.com for more details.



Sandy will be away from August 8 to August 30, taking a vacation trip to British Columbia.

When Sandy was in India this spring he met a young man named Kapil, who is trying to put himself through medical school. He asked Sandy if he would pass along a request to his practice community for aid to help pay for school. Here is his letter. Please contact Sandy if you wish to help out.

Dear sir or madam,

Most respectfully I beg to submit that I am a poor student. My father can not afford to meet the expenses of my education, My father is jobless, He is a simple farmer, He has not his own land, I want to complete medical course, for this please help someone to be sponsor for my education expenses, If it happens, my family situation will improve, After me there will not be any problem of paying expenses for my younger brothers,

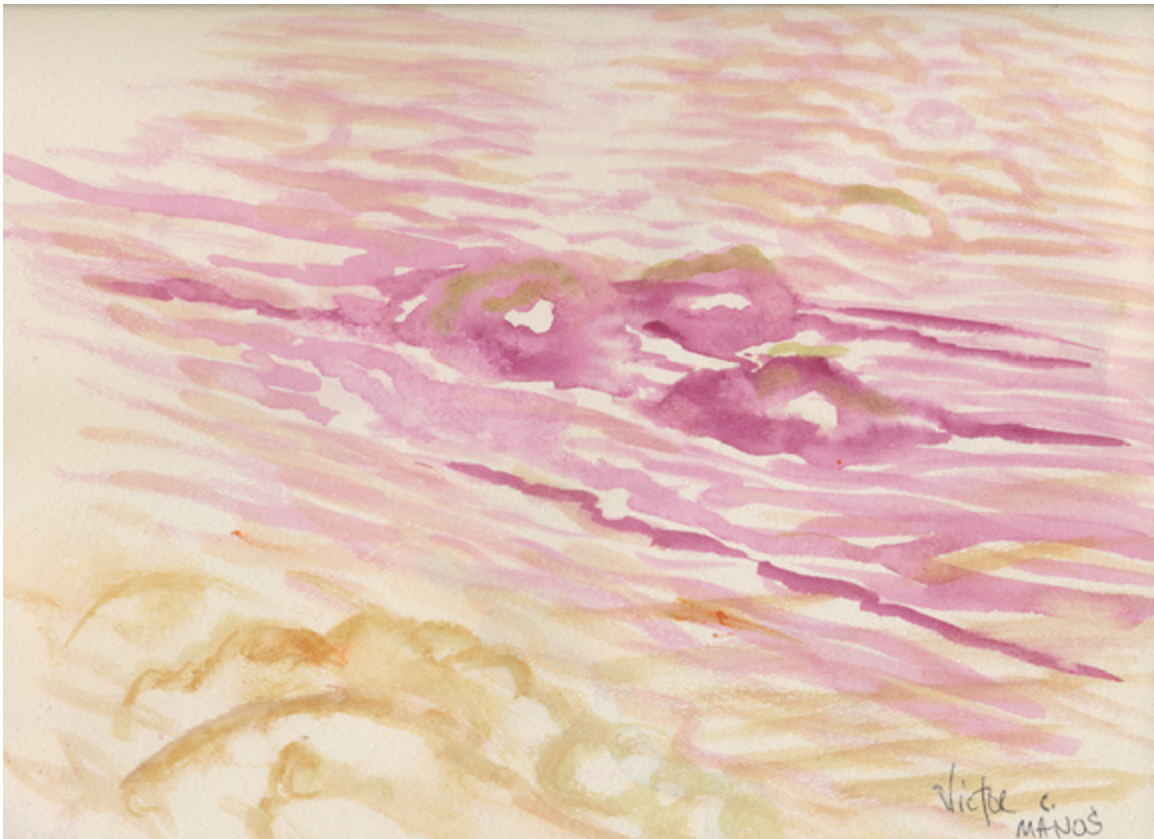
*expenses soon, ok, thank you,
kapil kumar.*

*c/o. Rajendra Yadav
Bakrour, Bodhgaya, Gaya, Bihar, India pin. 824231*

So, I hope that i will get somebody who will help me with education

*North Carolina Zen Center
Serving Zen practitioners for over 30 years*

*Kindly remember the Center in your will
Help us serve into the coming kalpa*



A view of rocks in the stream at Brooks Branch Zendo, by Victor Manos

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

Email & Web
info@nczencenter.org
www.nczencenter.org

Kaihan

The North Carolina Zen Center
390 Ironwood Road
Pittsboro, North Carolina 27312