Buddhist center actualized 40 years after contemplation

By Dr. Gordon Bermant

The Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii (HHMH) convened its 95th Legislative Assembly (Giseikai) on Feb. 9 and 10 at the Hawaii Betsuin Social Hall in Honolulu. By long-standing tradition, two BCA members attend the Giseikai as special guests of the Hawaii Kyodan, and two members from Hawaii attend our National Council Meeting. This year, BCA Vice-President Jeff Suda and I represented BCA. I want to report to the membership about the meeting and what relationships between HHHM and BCA can mean for both organizations in the future.

Some years ago the Giseikai developed a tradition of holding an informal “rap session” on the evening before the first day of the official meeting. Delegates share an informal dinner at the Betsuin Social Hall while discussing matters of general concern or interest. This year, the focus was on a strategic planning process that Mr. Alan Goto developed for the Hawaii Betsuin. Mr. Goto kindly sent a copy of his excellent PowerPoint presentation to me. I will share it with our Planning & Evaluation Committee as a supplement to the planning work done in that Committee several years ago, which led to the current BCA Mission Statement, Goals, and Strategies.

Certainly the most significant item on the agenda of this year’s Giseikai was the ratification of the appointment of Reverend Thomas Okano as the 15th Bishop of the HHHM. Reverend Okano will take his new office at the beginning of March, succeeding Bishop Chikai Yosemori. Reverend Okano served for 11 years in the office, preceded by 31 years as temple minister at Bishop Yosemori served for 11 years in the office of Makawao and Jikoen Hongwanji Missions. The Giseikai unanimously and enthusiastically passed two resolutions of appreciation for Bishop Yosemori.

I took 40 years, but Sady Hayashida finally saw his dream come true when a Buddhist learning center he designed recently opened in Berkeley.

The Jodo Shinshu Center for Buddhist Studies, a $12 million educational development center in downtown Berkeley, is now open, four decades after Hayashida’s college plans for a similar center were rejected.

“I always hoped something could happen,” said Hayashida, owner of Emeryville-based Hayashida Architects, which designed the center. “This center becoming a reality is realizing a dream I had back in the ’60s.”

In the last months of 1966, Hayashida, then 23, was a University of California, Berkeley, senior completing a bachelor’s degree in architecture.

As part of his senior project, he drafted blueprints for the Buddhist Churches of America to build a temple, classrooms, a cafeteria, recreational areas, offices and dormitories on an expansive private school site that was up for sale in North Berkeley.

He labored for an entire semester on the grand plan, using a finely sharpened pencil and thumb-sized ink stamps to show where each building would be, where each tree would take root and where the cars would park. The plan won the heath school song, his masterpiece.

And then …

“Buddhist organizations, like other charitable organizations, tend to be conservative … this was a little ahead of their time. They weren’t ready for it. I was patted on the head and told ‘great idea,’” said Hayashida, a lifelong Buddhist and a Japanese American who was born in an internment camp during World War II. “It’s too bad … they could have possibly gotten ahead of the game, financially as well.”

Hayashida rolled up his plans and went on.

But for the next 40 years he kept them in storage, most recently in the basement of his Berkeley home.

“It’s pretty beat up now,” he said this week, spreading the plan on a desk at the center and carefully ironing out the creases with his hands.

Nearly four years ago, the nonprofit Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) paid $7.4 million to buy a 35,000-square-foot building at Durant Avenue and Fulton Street from a South Bay development corporation that had cleaned up the building but never leased it.

BCA chose Hayashida’s firm over four other candidates and then got down to work, reshaping the art deco landmark by the city of Berkeley in 1983.

Built in the 1930s, the building originally housed a Buick dealership owned by Charles Howard, the owner of the famous race horse Seabiscuit.

The building later changed hands, housing the Maggini Chevrolet dealership from the late 1960s to the 1980s.

Continued on Page 6

Socho Ogui gave a keynote speech at the 2007 Liaison Conference for temples serving Japanese Americans on Feb. 10 at the Dathonzan Betsuin Zenshuji in Los Angeles.
There is no thing to make right except for my own misperception. The intent of the dharma is to change my “me” view of, and response to, the world. That there is no me, reshapes my perceptions and responses. The value of the dharma is not in how it is applied, but in how mindful I am. If I do not recognize the effects of my own prejudices then there is no dharma consciousness only endless pattern repetition. Patterns and practices that can make us happy but leave us unchanged.

We have come a long way since our American Jodo Shinshu communities were engaged with activities that served only our communities were engaged with since our American Jodo Shinshu that can make us happy but leave us unchanged. As others were invited to join in and participate in the Japanese/Japanese American culture of the temple our mission became: preserve culture, expand our presence. The dharma, still there, but so deeply embedded in culture, its character almost imperceptible. Cultural defensiveness was identified with dharma awareness.

We have changed considerably. We are more open now, more aware of the need to expand our Buddhist identity. People who are interested in Jodo Shinshu are not limited by culture. They do not have to have an appreciation for things Japanese in order to appreciate the dharma. Yet, in this new approach to sharing the dharma we are simply adopting new patterns, ignoring the intent of the dharma to transform unenlightenment into enlightenment!

Shakyamuni was not Buddha. Shinran was not Jodo Shinshu. Fortunately, for us, they accepted the responsibility of explaining what they experienced. We are fortunate that others have also conveyed the contents of the dharma. Even today many grapple with the language that can help me catch glimpses of the dharma. The explanations of Shakyamuni transforms self into non-self. If however the explanations become more important than its content we can become simply experts of explanations, experts of patterns.
YAC Retreat Reunion

By Nikki Ryu
Mountain View Buddhist Temple

YAC’s 2006 Retreat Reunion filled me with an intense inner-warmth. When I am with my dharma ‘buddhies,’ I am free to express myself knowing that I will receive neither criticism nor judgment; after only six months of friendship, it already feels as if we’ve known each other since birth. My new friends make me feel at home wherever we are; they make me never want to leave them behind.

Through this sequence of retreats, BCA YAC has proven to us that there will always be a place we can fall back on in times of self-doubt and inner-tribulation. Friendship trumps fear as apprehensions dissolve in a single hug, smile or handshake. I had nervously awaited Martin Luther King Jr. weekend. After having lived for an entire week in Sacramento with this group just six months before, I was afraid of our having drifted apart setting us up for an awkward weekend full of silence and staring at the floor. I was overjoyed to be proven wrong; we shared everything but awkward moments, instead jokes and stories consumed most of our time. Though laughter was an omnipresent element in the weekend activities, chanting practice, history classes, religion classes and reflection periods also were allotted into the schedule. I remember not wanting to leave. Boarding the plane was hard and walking away from my friends even harder. Though depressing and difficult, the ending of this weekend helped me realize that our dharma buddhies will never be forgotten and we as individuals will never forget neither the dharma nor each other. Upon returning home I felt an unfamiliar newness, I was refreshed. In the short weekend I had spent in Seattle, I had unknowingly let the stressful world that overpowers my life adrift as I embraced this opportunity to mentally escape. We walked away from this experience with hope for the future. We would see each other again; this reunion was not our last and this time we were sure of it. We would like to thank the Seattle Betsuin for their kind hospitality; BCA YAC 2006 Retreat reunion would not have been complete without their presence and support. We would like to express our deepest gratitude to all of our senseis, especially Rinban Bob Odhita, Rinban Matsubayashi, Patti Oshita and Peter Inokuni-Kim. Our relentlessly fun and always positive advisors are never to be forgotten, thank you Ms. B and Ms. G. This retreat and our friendships would never have existed or changed our lives if it weren’t for you guys.

From the Campaign Office

Submitted by Robert Noguchi

Stock Transactions

The campaign has received several stock transactions over the past few months from our broker that have no donor names associated with them. If you’ve made a stock transfer to the BCA and have not received an acknowledgement, please contact me as soon as possible with the name of the stock, amount of shares sold and the date.

BCA Grand Raffle

The BCA Grand Raffle will be held during National Council Saturday night, March 10th (at the banquet). Tickets are available at your temple or contact me at BCA Headquarters (see flyer for more details).

Campaign Newsletter

The Campaign Newsletter has been postponed until after National Council in March. If you have any interesting articles, pictures or comments about the campaign at your temple, please submit them to me as soon as possible via e-mail at robert@bcacampaign.org. Thank you.

My Gift to Campaign BCA—The 21st Century

PLEASE CUT OUT AND RETURN TO BCA HEADQUARTERS:

c/o Campaign BCA-The 21st Century, 1710 Octavia Street, San Francisco, CA 94109

Date: ____________________________

Socho Ogui:

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Thank you.

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A
s of June 1, 2006 Socho Koshin Ogui, Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America assigned me to the Buddhist Temple of Salinas and as Supervising Minister of Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple. My name is Hiroho Shindo, my wife is Mieko. We have two sons and a daughter. Our eldest son Takayuki lives in Boston and second son Alan is in Eugene, Oregon. Our daughter, Julianne is a junior at the University of Connecticut.

Prior to transferring to the BCA, I was a min-ister with the Honga Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii for over thirty years, serving at temples on the islands of Kauai and Hawaii.

I am grateful to the members of the Buddhist Temple of Salinas and Monterey Peninsula Bud- dhist Temple for welcoming my wife and I to the area and making our transition to the BCA a smooth one. I have seen how the past reveals that a successful organization is ended with an enlightened and resolute leadership who is support- ed by a committed membership.

The 2007 Buddhist Churches of America's theme "World Peace begins With Gasho," should guide us in our daily actions.

When I put my hands together before the altar, my body will become tranquil (Te wo atezu hokee egoghe yaayaroe).

When I say Onembutsu my words will become kind words (Kuchiti Onembutsu oareba hokee yaayarue).

When I listen to the Nembutsu teaching my heart and mind will naturally become clear (Oshie o kike koke oonawzuke yaayarue).

The above Jodo Shinshu verse expresses the meaning of Gasho as a guide for reflecting on our thoughts, words and actions, as we walk on this precious, unrepeatable path of life.

In studying the history of the BCA, I see a spirit of cooperation under the guidance of the Onembutsu. I believe that each member of the BCA is a pillar of the structure, and without your support, we cannot conduct any spiritual activities. It's essential that by sharing common goals and ideas, we naturally have a high regard for each member's contributions. Indeed, without common goals, the feeling of belonging or being a part of a group or organization cannot develop. How do we foster such important ideals in the sangha? I believe this begins and ends with listen- ing and living the Dharma of Gasho. By listen- ing to the Buddhist Dharma, we can truly realize and become aware that we are being embraced by Amida's Great Unlimited Wisdom and Compas- sion and be made aware of our own limited, fi- nite nature.

I look forward to working with the members and families of the BCA in rediscovering Shirin Shonin's Teachings that he shared through his family life. Let us resolve to listen to the Dharma and treat one another as people who wish to hear the Buddhist Dharma. "In aspiring for world peace, let us participate in our temple activities, and enjoy the harmony of Nembutsu teachings."

In Gasho, Shaku Hocho Shindo Buddhist Temple of Salinas

I want to you know that... I didn't get one! Maybe, I should've also worn a French beret! ... Of course, it wasn't the beret. It was Sensei's smile and demeanor. Because he was joyful within, he shined outwardly. He made others joyful, even a total stranger, like that lady. With inner peace, he inspired outer peace.

The next day, in our lives, we know people who have that inner joy, like Miyaji Sen- sei, and others who do not. I like to now talk to two young women who dealt with difficulties in life very differently.

Late last year, as my train ap- proached a station in west Tokyo, it made a sudden stop. I, like everyone, else wondered what had happened.

Then, about 5 minutes later I looked out the window, to find that the body had been placed on the side of the tracks, covered with a blanket of snow. I couldn't believe it! I could tell that it was a young woman from the shoes, which weren't cov- ered. As a parent, my first thought was, "Oh, how her parents would grieve," followed by a profound sad- ness that someone, especially so young, had to end her own life.

The second young woman was named "Christine," who was a mem-
ber of the temple that I served in Califor- nia. When I met her, she had been confined to a wheelchair for at least ten years as a result of a car acci- dent in her late teens. Christine her- self had been confined to a wheelchair for at least ten years as a result of a car acci- dent in her late teens.

One day I learned that Christine developed a severe case of depression and that she would have to be con- fined to her bed for an entire year! Feeling so sorry for her, I immediate- ly paid her a visit to cheer her up. As I entered her room, her cheerful demeanor surprised me. Then we chatted for about half an hour. Then, as I was about to leave, Christine cheerfully said to me, "Sensie, don't worry about me. I'll be just fine. I know I can't leave this bed, but I have eyes, so I can read books, watch TV and gaze out of the window. I also have ears, so I can listen to my favorite music and pro- grams on the radio. And I have a brain, so I can think and imagine about a lot of things. So, don't worry about me."

Well, the role was completely re- versed, for I left Christine more cheerfully than before I went.

Christine represents two very different responses to difficult- ies. Why did one choose suicide and Christine thrive? Of course, we can't speak for the young woman in To- kyo, but one thing is certain about Christine; she had the Dharma on her side.

Rev. Tanaka's article will continue in next month's Wheel of Dharma.

YAC National Youth Summit

By Kristyne Wada
San Mateo Buddhist Temple

The third annual BCA Youth Advocacy Committee (YAC) National Youth Summit was held on Jan. 27 at the Mountain View Buddhist Temple. Leaders from Bay Dis- trict Jr. YBA, Bay Area College YBA, Coast District YBL, Northern District (California) YBL, Northwest District (Washington) YBL, and Southern District Senior YBA gathered to discuss the future of youth activities and in- volvement in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism.

The day began with service led by Rev. Dean Koyama, minister of MVBT, and some of the delegates from the YAC Summer Youth Retreats. After service, we were able to introduce ourselves to each other and catch up with those who we had met before. Following introductions, we did what we always do – EAT!

Our first session was with Socho Ogui, who engaged in his talk about his past at the Cleveland Buddhist Tem- ple. Bishop Ogui's outlook on life is very stimulating, as he energizes and inspires us with his amusing stories and kind words.

Minister of Monterey Peninsula Buddhist Temple Hosho Shindo with his wife Mieko.

Fujimoto (San Mateo/San Jose), Kristyne Wada (San Ma- teo), Moe Hikashira (San Jose), Kyoji Onda (Mount View), and Vice-President, Tim Chu (San Francisco), were able to attend. Over the past couple of years, I have seen tremendous growth in our district and chapters, and I hope that this progress continues within all districts.

A group photo of the YAC Summit that was held Feb. 27- 28 at Mountain View Buddhist Temple. Back row (from left to right): Alan Chii (OBCB), Melissa Nishimura (OBCB), Ryan Yamaguchi (Salinas), Jimmy Styles (Palo Alto), Hishi Otto (San Mateo), Jason Kusumoto (San Jose/OBCB), Kendal Kosai (White River), Travis Suzuki (Seattle), Middle row: Megan Okumura (Mt. View), Justin Koyama (Mt. View), Nicole Kawahira (Salinas), Tim Chu (San Francisco), Bronwyn Seura (Sacramento), Noelle Rys (Mt. View), Brandon Yanari (Palo Alto), Front row: Courtney Kashigawa (Sacramento), Matt Hamazaki (Berkley), Lisa Horkawa (Palo Alto), Mina Fujimoto (San Mateo/San Jose), Kristyne Wada (San Ma- teo), Melissa Komoto (White River), Valerie Chun (White River).

Not pictured: Jimmy Styles (Palo Alto)

This was my third year attending the YAC National Youth Summit. I told my Bishop how the Buddhist teach- ings and discussions, and I try to incorporate new ideas into Bay District Jr. YBA. I especially look forward to seeing friends from other districts and meeting new people. This year, I was glad that my Co-President, Brandon Yanari (Palo Alto), and Vice President, Tim Chu (San Francisco), were able to attend. Over the past couple of years, I have seen tremendous growth in our district and chapters, and I hope that this progress continues within all districts.

Dr. Tanaka was the keynote speaker at the 13th World Buddhist Women’s Convention held on Sept. 2 in Honolulu. The following is his address speech to the convention. This article started with the February issue and will continue in several series concluding with the August issue.

 Lighting the Buddha Dharma (Monpo)
MARCH 2007 WHEEL OF DHARMA PAGE 5

60th Annual Northwest Buddhist Convention - What is a Buddhist?  

Socho Ogui with Christine Marr (left), president of the Spokane Buddhist Church, and her husband Chris Marr (right), who was recently elected to the Washington State Senate.


Three separate sessions.
Young Adult, Senior High, Middle School: 1) Hey, Don’t I Graduate from Church When I Graduate from High School? 2) How Do I Maintain My Buddhist Identity? 3) What are Buddhist Views on What’s Happening? 4) Are You Buddhist? 5) Are You Game? 6) Hands-On Buddhist Art 

In addition to our guest ministers and district ministers, lay speaker Kaki Kesteron, MA Counseling Psychology and a member of our White River temple, shared her insight into dealing with anger. In 2005, Kaki became the first person to teach Anger Management Group Therapy from a Buddhist perspective in the state of Washington.

This year we provided breakout sessions for five groups: English language adults, Japanese language adults, young adults, senior high school, and middle school. We also offered a Dharma School program and provided daycares.

An indication of the variety of topics covered during our breakout sessions is provided by the following list of session titles:


Continued on Page 6
President’s Message
Continued from Page 1
Incoming Bishop Okano’s most recent position has been as Director of the Buddhist Study Center located on the campus of the University of Hawaii. He is remembered for his devotion to service, wisdom and compassion, and a wise administrator.

Many of the issues facing the HHMH are familiar to BCA members. The center now houses the In- ternational Student House, the Buddhist Studies program, the Buddhist Studies Center, and the Buddhist Study Center. The center now houses the International Student House, the Buddhist Studies program, the Buddhist Studies Center, and the Buddhist Study Center.

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晴れて開教使い

先月ではガーディア仏教会の中心部の開教使を命じられ、この回はアイドホー・オーレンススキー本部の開教使として任命され、その認証式が二月の四回の仏教徒教大会中に行われた。先月は京都で、パキスタントならびに中野部の開教使として任命され、その認証式が二月の四回の仏教徒教大会中に行われた。
総裁さまのお言葉

仏教大学院 新キャンパスで登録

今まで建物がなく不自由であった仏教大学院も、この度バークレーデナーの浄土真宗センターに移転し、去る一月二十五日に春のセミナーズの学生の登録が行われた。

これから新しい環境のもとに、学生も学校も大きく育てほしいと願われている。

2007年度教化標語
世界平和は合掌から

2007年 2月号

バークレーデナーの空に 下り藤

サンノゼ別院会員のジミー山本氏が作ってセンターに寄付された大きな下り藤の枝条四つが新しい建物の四隅に取り付けられ、建物の外壁はすべて完成した。

生活が市街化した十数年前は、二三十年前の中学校時代から学生生活を送ってきた吉田氏は、センターにこんなに新しい建物ができてほっとした。