PRESIDENT’S COLUMN

By Dr. Gordon Bermant

Obon

Ekoji, my home temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, celebrated Obon on July 14 and 15. The religious and secular events fulfilled our aspirations for this ancient observance, also called Kange-e, “Gathering of Joy.”

In truth, over the weekend I did not think about Mogallana, his mother the hungry ghost, and the rest of the ancient history of Obon. My thoughts went back only to Ekoji’s Obon celebration in 1986. That was the day I first set foot at Ekoji and met Reverend K.T. Tsuji. Fair to say, that meeting changed my life. I have written about it elsewhere. Here I’d like to describe the 1986 celebration briefly, return to the celebration of 2007, then try to draw a couple of lessons from a comparison of the two celebrations.

1986

The Saturday celebration in 1986, just five years after the temple’s founding, was a simple affair, attended by temple members, friends, and small groups of casual observers. The Minyo dancers based in Washington D.C. led the dances dressed in their traditional costumes, no matter the stifling heat and humidity of a Virginia summer evening. Standing to the side, wearing his black robe, Reverend Tsuji invited and exhorted everyone to dance, enjoying himself as much as anyone present. Food and drink were very simple, and little if anything was for sale. This was a celebration, not a fund-raise.

Simplicity also characterized the Sunday service. Reverend Tsuji placed a large wooden display board beside the naijin, members who wished to honor their loved ones who had passed away, placed photos of them on the board. Reverend Tsuji’s dharma talk emphasized traditional themes of families, return to roots, and gratitude for all who have gone before us. That gathering, as so often at Ekoji, a wonder lot in suburban Virginia just a couple of miles from our previous temple located on a beautiful corner lot in suburban Virginia just a couple of miles from our previous temple, was, I believe, the seventh session bringing together active BCA ministers for a specially designed program. Reverends Hiroshi Abiko-San Francisco, Ron Kobata-Office of the Bishop, Akio Miyaji-Orange County, Gerald Sakamoto-San Jose, Kodo Umeru-CBL, and I, were provided with thought-provoking and practical information. This series of seminars that began three years ago started with the newest group of ministers from Japan, and then attended by groups of five to six according to tenure, will continue through to our senior colleagues. Each session provided an opportunity for ministers with similar career histories to review certain areas of the teachings and ministry, but also acquire new information on a variety of subjects for professional development and personal assistance.

This was the first time I stayed at the Jodo Shinshu Center. I asked for a smoking room with a view. The room I stayed in was nice, but no TV, phone, smoking, and no view.

It is amazing how much television influences my life. I turn on the TV when I get home, and it’s on whether anyone’s watching or not. I am old enough to remember as a child we did not have TV. But we had radios. The radio was always on even though we were not listening.

The session began with an open exchange with Socho Ogui on concerns about our respective ministries and the direction of the BCA as a whole. As you can imagine, issues pertaining to carrying out the Campaign BCA-21st Century and developing the Jodo Shinshu Center generated a lot of discussion.

Ministers Continuing Education

I was able to attend the BCA Ministers Continuing Education Seminar on June 26 – 28 at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, California. It was, I believe, the seventh session bringing together active BCA ministers for a specially designed program. Reverends Hiroshi Abiko-San Francisco, Ron Kobata-Office of the Bishop, Akio Miyaji-Orange County, Gerald Sakamoto-San Jose, Kodo Umeru-CBL, and I, were provided with thought-provoking and practical information. This series of seminars that began three years ago started with the newest group of ministers from Japan, and then attended by groups of five to six according to tenure, will continue through to our senior colleagues. Each session provided an opportunity for ministers with similar career histories to review certain areas of the teachings and ministry, but also acquire new information on a variety of subjects for professional development and personal assistance.

This was the first time I stayed at the Jodo Shinshu Center. I asked for a smoking room with a view. The room I stayed in was nice, but no TV, phone, smoking, and no view.

It is amazing how much television influences my life. I turn on the TV when I get home, and it’s on whether anyone’s watching or not. I am old enough to remember as a child we did not have TV. But we had radios. The radio was always on even though we were not listening.

The session began with an open exchange with Socho Ogui on concerns about our respective ministries and the direction of the BCA as a whole. As you can imagine, issues pertaining to carrying out the Campaign BCA-21st Century and developing the Jodo Shinshu Center generated a lot of discussion.

Continued on Page 6

40TH BCA FBWA CONFERENCE

The 40th BCA FBWA Conference is fast approaching. The Bay District BWL invite all interested groups and individuals to join them. Interesting and stimulating speakers and workshops are offered.

CONFERENCE THEME:

BUDDHISM: OPEN MIND, OPEN HEART
“HIRAKE KOKORO”

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: Rev. Yukiko Motoyoshi, (Japanese), Honpa Hongwanji, Hawaii Betusin; Rev. Patti Nakai, (English), Buddhist Temple of Chicago

DATE: October 12 – 14, 2007
PLACE: Marriott San Francisco Airport, for reservations, please give group code: FOBFOBA, tel. (800) 228-9290 or go to: www.marriotthotels.com/sfbog. Room rates: $91 plus taxes, per night.

REGISTRATION: $130/per person.

WORKSHOPS:
- Onenju Making (hands on); Karma in Daily Life; Children and Buddhism; Women and Buddhism; From the Mud Grows the Lotus, Dealing with Despair; Powerful Tools for Family Caregivers; Dana; Safe Food Handling.

TOURS:
Optional tours available on Friday, Oct. 12th:
- Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley; San Francisco City Tour.
- Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley; San Francisco City Tour.

If you have any questions or did not receive your Registration Packet, please contact Joyce Manika: jmanika@sbcglobal.net or call, telephone (510) 537-5150.
Seattle Betsuin members will mark a chapter in their memory books after this year’s Bon Odori, not only for this summer’s outstanding 75th anniversary celebration, but for the rare July drizzle that helped kick off the two-day event. This year’s festival featured a few new elements while keeping the best of the old.

One of several things that made the event special was that Washington Governor Christine Gregoire proclaimed July 21 and 22, Bon Odori Weekend in honor of the festival’s 75th anniversary. Her proclamation was read to an appreciative crowd by State Representative Tomiko Santos. A representative of the Japanese Consulate also read a congratulatory letter from Consul General Kazuo Tanaka.

In addition, two dances were premiered. The first dance, Hibiki, was composed and performed live by Rev. Koran Okahashi of Osaka. Washing- tones temples have enjoyed dancing to two other songs by Okahashi Sensei — Ai Koi Ondo and Shibata Samba — for many years.

The second dance composed and performed live is called Seattle Omoide by Karen Akada and Dennis Yamashita with lyricist/musician Byron AoYong. This quick-paced ondo makes use of the kachi-kachi and recalls the events of World War II.

Due to their popularity, her dances have been done repeatedly during the past 40 years. As a tribute to Komori Sensei’s dances have stories so they’re easy to learn and fun to do.”

During the L.A. Betsuin Obon festivities, the BCA Southern District temples recognized Mme. Miyoko Komori for her contribution to the restoration of Obon dancing to its traditional roots. Komori Sensei was presented with a Los Angeles City Certificate of Recognition by Councilwoman Jan Perry. Rev. Masao Kodani, who spearheaded the tribute, presented Komori Sensei with a gift from the Southern District.

Komori Sensei had choreographed nine Obon dances for the Southern District during the 60s and the 70s. Her unique Japanese folk-style of dance brought forth a greater number and diversity of dancers to participate in the Obon dances.

A frequent reaction to her dances is “Komori Sensei’s dances have stories so they’re easy to learn and fun to do.” Due to their popularity, her dances have been done repeatedly during the past 40 years. As a tribute to Komori Sensei, her dances were enjoyed at all the Southern District temples’ during this 2007 Obon season.

Seattle Celebrates 75th Bon Odori

Brady Kameshige—2006 Fred Nitta Scholarship Award Winner

We would like to acknowledge Brady Kameshige of the Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple as the winner of the 2006 Fred Nitta Scholarship Award. Brady is the son of Randy and Jayne Kameshige and the grandson of Isao and Mary Kameshige, all of Ontario, Oregon.

Brady is a very deserving recipient. He was one of the top academic students at Ontario High School where he also carved out a successful athletic career in football, basketball and golf. He is always helpful when at the temple. He has been a participant of the 2005 BCA High School Retreat hosted by the Sacramento Betsuin as well as the 2006 High School Retreat Hosted by the Idaho-Oregon Buddhist Temple. The Fred Nitta Scholarship offers much needed support and encouragement to our youth. The award recognizes excellence in academics, the arts, and athletics as well as participation in the activities and opportunities provided in our Shin Buddhist Traditions.

Brady currently attends the Seattle University. Congratulations Brady!

L.A. Betsuin Recognizes Sensei Komori

Councilwoman Jan Perry, Mme Miyoko Komori, Rev. Masao Kodani and Rintaro George Matsubayashi.

Dancing with the Seafair Queens & Pirates (A Puget Sound summer celebration honoring the region’s maritime history).

We gratefully acknowledge contribution to the Wheel of Dharma by the following donors:

San Fernando Valley BWA $100

The BCA Social Welfare Committee is sending a $10,000 donation to the 2007 Niigata-ken, Chuestsu-oki Earthquake Disaster Relief Fund, via the Hongwani.

The SWC will be receiving any additional contributions from BCA members through their respective temples and send them along to the Hongwani. The SWC will be conducting the annual Thanksgiving Offering Fund drive to replenish the Social Welfare Fund and be receiving any other aid requests.

Thank you.
I am writing to share with you my personal reasons for supporting Campaign BCA.

When I first received the Campaign letter, I admit that I was not deeply interested. I made a donation, but not a very large one. Then my daughter-in-law, who is neither Japanese nor a Buddhist, told me that she would like Emily, my three-year-old granddaughter, to attend Dharma school. Of course I was elated by this and it started me thinking.

I want Emily to learn all about Amida Buddha and be a strong and active Buddhist. Don’t we all want this for the next generation? That means we will need effective ministers, a strong Buddhist Education Department and stimulating programs that reach out to a larger audience. These are just a few examples of things that the Jodo Shinshu Center can provide. It is more than just a beautiful building. It holds the future of Buddhism in America.

With these thoughts in mind, I urge all of the Buddhist Women’s Associations districts, chapters, BWA members, Temple members and friends to join me in supporting Campaign BCA - The 21st Century. And yet, I did increase my donation.

Thank you,

Yukiko Otake, President
BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Associations

---

My Gift to Campaign BCA—The 21st Century

c/o Campaign BCA-The 21st Century, 2140 Durant Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94704

\[\square \text{YES! I’m enclosing is my/our special gift of:}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& ( ) \$1,500, ( ) \$3,000, ( ) \$5,000, ( ) \$10,000, \\
& ( ) \$\text{other amount over a period of } 1 \text{ to 5 years} \\
& \text{to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\square \text{YES! I would like to pledge a total of:}\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& ( ) \$1,500, ( ) \$3,000, ( ) \$5,000, ( ) \$10,000, \\
& ( ) \$\text{other amount over a period of } 1 \text{ to 5 years} \\
& \text{to Campaign BCA - The 21st Century.}
\end{align*}
\]

---

On the morning of Monday, July 9, I boarded a plane and headed down to Berkeley to attend the third BCA YAC Retreat “Threetreaters.” I had no idea what to expect, but Travis Suzuka, who went to last year’s retreat, told me that I was in for a fun filled week with numerous services. According to the sheet of attendees, everyone was around my age, but from all over the West Coast, so I was excited to meet people and make new friends.

When I arrived at the airport I was greeted by Susan Bottrari, co-chair of YAC. I also met a few fellow “threetreaters,” Brandon Yanari (Palo Alto), and Lauren Hiroshima (Orange County). It was there I was also introduced to Rev. Fumiaki Usuki of the West Los Angeles Buddhist Temple. I was then taken to the Jodo Shinshu Center where I met the rest of the threetreaters who I would be spending the next week with. I first met Marisa Sanwo (San Fernando Valley) and Keith Sawada, the other co-chair of YAC. Soon after I arrived more people began to pile into the dining room. David Fukunaga and Ken Yurihara, both from Oregon, were next followed by Lisa Horikawa (Florin), Mimi Kameshige (Idaho-Oregon), and Joe Weissbuch (Emmamij). Then Ryan Yamaguchi and Nicole Kawahira from Salinas arrived and all the threetreaters were present. I had met Brandon and Sydney Shiyomiya (Palo Alto) before in a previous visit to California with the Jr. YBA’s of Salt Lake City and Ogden, but besides them I knew nobody. I was also introduced to Rev. Kodo Umeezu, (director of the CBE), Rev. Harry Bridge (Lodi), and Rev. Dean Koyama (Mountain View). Rev. Koyama was the only person I knew well. Since I was a good friend with his son back when he was minister at the Seattle Betsuin, it was nice to see him again.

After introductions we were broken into two groups: Toban A and Toban B. I was in Toban B and I soon became friends with everyone in my group. We then made toban flags and renamed our two tobans to “What Would Socho Do?” and “Toballin.” Then we all went to sleep waiting what had to come the next day (or the same day depending on who went to sleep when).

The next day started bright and early at 8am with a service, which we came accustomed to, as we had service every morning. Waking up was probably the hardest thing to do, since we probably went to bed around 2 a.m. each morning. For the next few days we were put back in school, going to long lectures and many services. In total we probably went to about four months of services in that one week. But, even though lectures were long and tiring, and we were required to conduct service, we learned a lot about Buddhism.

During our week we took a trip up to UC Berkeley with Rev. Bridge and went to Jamba Juice, we went to visit Socho Koshin Ogu and saw the Stupa at Bud- dhist Church of San Francisco, and we met the participants of the past YAC retreats at Sacramento Betsuin. Meeting the past retreaters was really great and we had a lot of fun together, especially at Olson. It was really cool to see all of us together, years one, two and three. I met a bunch of new people and we learned a lot of things from our past retreaters — including the infamous caterpillar.

Even though our week was long and tough we still had fun, mainly at night or during those few free times we had. As a group we bonded throughout the week and really became good friends. I’m sure that most of us remember our last night together, which was arguably one of the most fun nights we had at the JSC, from practicing the caterpillar out in the hall, hanging from those metallic beams, getting those Styrofoam plates caught in the wheel of dharma chandler, or doing aerobatics and Rev. Umeezu’s horse battles in the lobby. We probably stayed up until at least 4:30 in the morning because we said goodbye to the security guard that stays till 4 a.m.

I personally got a lot out of this retreat. I learned so much about Buddhism and made some really great friends. Keith said to us on the first day that “You’ll get as much out of this retreat as you put in, so make it yours” and I think we really did get what each of us wanted. When we talked about why we came to the retreat most of us said that we wanted to learn more about Buddhism, and quite frankly we did learn a lot. I know this probably sounds corny but we learned more about ourselves and our capacities whether it be leading chanting, or ringing the kanho. I think that overall this was an amazing experience, and I’ll never forget my fellow threetreaters, and I look forward to seeing all of them at our reunion in January 08.

---

World Peace Begins With Gassho

2007 BCA Theme

YAC Retreat Report

By Jason Yokoyama, Seattle Betsuin
Born-Again Buddhist Leads Seminar at Ekoji Buddhist Temple

On March 25, Clark Strand, former Zen monk, magazine editor, and student of many religious traditions, traveled from his home in Woodstock, New York to Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Fairfax Station, Virginia, to present a day-long seminar with the theme of Born Again Buddhism. Strand challenged approximately thirty seminar participants to bring a new openness of mind and heart to understanding Jodo Shinshu in the context of world religions.

At the core of Strand’s position of Shin Buddhism are two factors. One factor is an insistence that religious realizations are profoundly subjective: their validity does not depend on describing them in ordinary language. Because of this, we should remain flexible in our understanding and use of religious terms. Although Strand did not use the well-known metaphor that distinguishes the moon from the finger that points at the moon, that metaphor reaches the same lesson. We should attend to our immediate experience rather than the symbols that evoke the experience.

The second core factor is the recognition that religions all accept some idea of a “power beyond the self.” Different descriptions of the “power” distinguish religions from each other, but those differences are not what matters according to Strand. What matters, at the heart of religious experience, is the surrender of the self to the power beyond the self. The spiritual transformation arising within an individual who commits this act of surrender is exactly “rebirth” as that term is used in traditions otherwise as diverse as Christianity and Shin Buddhism.

So to be “born again” is to abide in the consequences of making this surrender authentically.

In our tradition, Shinran said it best in the opening paragraph of the Tannisho:

Saved by him inconceivable working of Amida’s vow, I shall realize birth in the consequences of making this surrender.

And in our tradition, it is not now familiar with it. Strand suggested using several tools. I will describe three of them.

**Graft our flowers to local roots.** Strand told a story of a gardener who grew beautiful roses imported from around the world, while other local gardeners could not succeed with the foreign rose varieties. When asked for the secret of his success, the gardener showed that he had grafted the foreign varieties onto roots of the local Centennial rose. The local roots were well adapted to the nutrients in the local soil and could transmit them to the grafted plant to support a healthy organism. So it is in the importing of religions, Strand said. If we want Jodo Shinshu to expand beyond the soil of the Japanese and Japanese-American traditions, we should find a way to draw sustenance from the native religious soil of America. Strand argued that this native soil is the language and moral education of the Bible. Therefore, he concluded, we should find ways to connect Shin teachings to the language and moral lessons of the Old and New Testaments. In his judgment, this is a natural and appropriate connection.

**Use a “kalidoscope” of terms from different traditions.** In a striking exercise of expository flexibility, Strand showed how biblical and Buddhist terms could be mixed. The purpose of this exercise was to “get behind” the surface of the words (“the pointing finger,” as it were) to reach the heart of the universal religious experience (the “moon”). It was probably disconcerting to many seminar participants to hear “God,” interchanged freely with “Amida” or “Buddha,” and “pray” interchanged with “nembutsu,” as if we had already agreed that these terms were synonymous. No doubt, this is a controversial appropriation of vocabularies between diverse religious traditions. But it is much less controversial if one accepts that the experience of surrender to a power beyond the self is identical from one religion to another and that arriving at this experience is the goal of the religious journey. Each seminar participant had the opportunity to work through the significance of accepting these ideas for himself or herself.

**Participate in partially structured small group discussions without formal leaders.** Seminar participants sat in small groups to discuss their religious histories and current connections to Buddha, dharma, and sangha. No one was assigned to lead the groups, nor were the discussion topics firmly fixed. The groups took the day’s lessons to heart by trying to apply them to their own religious histories and share their experiences with other group members. The openness of communication within the groups was itself an example of how “sangha” can be experienced among dhama friends who may not know each other very well outside of the church context.

Strand’s teaching at Ekoji is an example of how new forms of teaching are arising to reach diverse audiences throughout the country. Some will find such teaching disconcerting and controversial, while for others it will open a door to further thought and wholesome participation in the life of a sangha. We need not judge; we can listen deeply, reflect, and be grateful for all such opportunities.

Gosho, Gordon Bernard

---

**BBT visit BCA monument in Colma**

On June 24, members of the Berkeley Buddhist Temple held the annual Sochoki Service at the Japanese Cemetery in Colma, California. Rev. Dr. David Matsumoto and Rev. Seishin Yamashita conducted a brief memorial service for the past BCA bishops and ministers. This year, nineteen BBT members attended. The annual Colma Ohakamairi is sponsored by the BBT and the Berkeley Buddhist Women’s Association. Following the service, the group attended the San Mateo Buddhist Temple’s bazaar. Photo by David Watanabe

---

**Evening of Chanting Workshop**

The Institute of Buddhist Studies (IBS) and the Buddhist Churches of America Center for Buddhist Education (CBE) co-sponsored a unique program entitled “An Evening of Buddhist Chanting” on June 9 at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley. This event was open to the public and was well-received by all who witnessed almost two hours of these impressive styles of chanting. Five priests and laypersons representing the three major respective ways to express their appreciation of the Dharma.

From our Jodo Shinshu tradition, Rev. Ryuho Sugii of the Hongwanji Liturgy Department demonstrated the formal rituals called ‘Goe Nembutsu Saho,’ ‘Jusei-ge Saho’ and ‘Kan Myoryoku Saho’ for the first time in the United States. Bhante Buddhawatta, representing the Theravada tradition shared their ways of praising the virtues of the Buddha. The evening event was concluded by attendees reciting Loving Kindness Sutta together.

IBS and CBE would like to thank Rev. Harry Bridge for chairing the program and members of the Buddhist Church of Oakland Buddhist Women’s Association for preparing the dinner for participants. They would also like to acknowledge the Nyingma Institute, the American Buddhist Seminary, and Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha for their participation.

---

**Ekoji Temple visit National JA Memorial in Washington, D.C.**

As a part of their annual Obon observance at the Washington, D.C. Ekoji Temple, the temple conducted a memorial service at the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in front of the engraved list of names of the Japanese American military personnel who died in World War II. This memorial service will be conducted each Obon to remember those brave Nisei soldiers and to honor their families for the sacrifices that were made on all of our behalf.
Thoughts On Obon: A Transition

Rev. Shoyo Taniguchi, Ph.D.
Resident Minister: Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church

Inter-religious Dialogue

Dr. Kenneth Tanaka was the keynote speaker at the 13th World Federation of Buddhist Women's Convention in Honolulu, HI last September. The text of his speech has been serialized beginning in the February 2007 issue.

Buddhist Poem for You

My beloved one has left, but her gentle smile has not left.
My beloved one has left, but her kind words have not left.
My beloved one has left, but her warm heart has not left.
My beloved one has left, but she always comes back to my hands of Gassho.

On the final day, we were able to meet the Pope. I shook his hand and said to him, "By coming to this gathering, I feel I want to talk even harder for peace." He then gathered and said, "Thank you." Then, she immediately responded very crisply, "HAI (Yes, Madam)!' Wow! I felt. What a powerful reply! She sounded like a Japanese elementary schoolgirl answering her teacher after being commanded to do something. On May 29, she seemed to have a minor discomfort, but could eat a small amount of fruits. When I called her later again, she had just woken up from her deep sleep. She could not speak clearly. She had often while talking. Her voice was low and feeble. I could hardly hear her. She said, "My body is becoming weaker and week-er. But, don't worry. I can still talk. Thank you, thank you, thank you." On the same day, when her doctor visited and asked how she was doing, she an- swered, "Everything is okay."

K. (NAKAM KAMO IDESU)" According to Sa- rono, this was her last word. On June 2nd, she returned to the Land of Amida. I thought she had a magnifi-cence. I was so happy, I could leave her like this. Her life was not easy. When she was 48, she lost her husband. She had al- ways been a strong Bud-dhist, but after that she be-came even more devoted in Bud-dha-Dharma. Her en-tire life began to be fully fo-cused on Buddha-Dharma.

In front of our large O-Butsudan in the Buddha-Room in our house, she used to do two hours of chanting every morning and evening. She was a book worm and read only books on Buddhism. She did O-Shosho (Handwrit-ting Buddha Sutras with a brush) whenever she had time. She visited so many temples whether in snow or in rain. She was not a reli-a- or a specialist on Bud-dhism, but attended the world religious conferences held in the Vatican two times. She did a pilgrimage to India more than once. Before she became a widow, she first was a train ticket herself since my father did everything for her. But, the power of Buddha turned her into such a powerful woman!

She lived a true Buddhist way of life much more than myself.

Sometimes after my mother became a widow, we children encouraged her to find some hobbies to participate in, to go to the-aters to see plays, to learn something new, and many others. But, each time, her answer was always only one: "All I want to learn is Bud-dha-Dharma. Buddha-Dharma is my life." By the power of Buddha-Dharma, she had a greatest life and a magnificent death. Thank you, Mother, for teaching me so much through your life and death.

Namu Amida Butsu

Rev. Taniguchi’s mother, Toshiko Tsunekawa.
President's Column Continued from Front Page

for at least a month with specific responsibilities for garden clean-up, food preparation from barbequed chicken to Spam musubi, special activities for children, publicity, public address system and recorded music, live music and dance provided by Ekoji’s splendid tango group Nen Dukko and the faithful Minyo dancers, commercial opportunities including a variety of stories selling Japanese products, silent auction, raffle, and tours of our hondo for interested first-timers. There were many bases to cover, and all were covered by talented, dedicated volunteers. This was surely a celebration; just as surely, it was a fund-raiser.

Encouraged by extensive publicity and compassionate weather, crowds appeared beyond any previous number. Parking spaces evaporated like ice cubes on the asphalt until finally, without advance permission and with fingers crossed for forgiveness, new arriv- als were directed to the huge parking lot at the nearby Baptist mega- church. A group from Seabrook Church in New Jersey arrived in matching happy coats to dance the evening away around the tradi- tional circle. And the Sakamoto family from the Watsonville tem- ple attended with friends, having combined other business in Waton- winton with a trip to Ekoji’s cele- bration. Thank you for coming! Reverend and Mrs. Shoji Honda organized two events that are sure to become traditional at Ekoji. Rev. Honda conducted a brief service early in the evening, to allow interested newcomers to experience Shinsu chanting and an opportunity for shikoku. Mrs. Honda organized the placement of memorial candles in Ekoji’s Garden of the Three Treasures. Attendees could write the name of a departed loved one on the glass candle holder. The candles were lighted after dark, and then Reverend Honda provided an ele- gant memorial chant. This touching ceremony concluded the Sat- urday celebration.

Sunday’s Obon service, with morning light flooding into the hondo through floor-to-ceiling windows and large skylight re- taining its simplicity. The wooden display board used in 1986 is still in service. Reverend Honda’s dharma message focused on the continuity of life across genera- tions. And as a special event, the sangha warmly welcomed Mrs. Tsuchi, who had “come home” to Ekoji from Foster City, California to celebrate Ekoji’s past, pres- ent, and future.

Past, Present, and Future At first glance, the 2007 Obon at Ekoji seemed disconnected from its predecessor in 1986. The location was different; the event was more complex; and the atten- dance was many times greater. Many lay volunteers who took leading roles have been mem- bers at Ekoji for only a few years. And most of them have come from outside of the Japanese American community. Their knowledge and understanding of Obon did not begin in childhood as lessons from parents, grandparents, and dharma school teachers. Their Jodo Shinsu came as a gift to them, as it had come to me, as adults.

Such transitions of lay leader- ship inevitably affect the form and content of ritual observance, particularly in locations where the Japanese American population is small. Buddhism has always adapted to local cultures, and there is no reason to think that development in America will be different.

And yet... change that is unim- posed by history and tradition can be disruptive, with a loss of important lessons. Tradition will be healthiest if it is adopted and adapted by young lay leaders, for they will be most able to blend the old with the new in ways that are attractive to their peers. At Ekoji, this emerging leadership is apparent, for example in the work of Evan Cantwell, Maya Naka- mura and Greg Nakamura, who grew up in Ekoji and are long- standing founding members. At Obon they joined other volunteers whose years at Ekoji ranged from fewer than three to twenty-six, which is the entire spectrum of the temple’s lifetime. Preparing for Obon was itself a practice: a practice of growing the strength and integri- ty of the sangha.

Continuity of lay leadership is a symptom of a healthy temple. Obon is a particularly appropriate time to reflect on such continuity. Lay people, teachers, who are always stationed in the present, to honor the past for the sake of the fu- ture.

Gazou
白蓮華

サンディエゴ仏教会 向陽裕史

私が以前お世話になっていたシーラルック仏教会には大変な狭い日本庭園があります。春に見せる桜や種々の花々、そして秋の美しい紅葉は見るものに楽しませ、幸せな気持ちにしていきます。また、庭の中には大きな池があり、そこから美しい蓮の花が顔を現わしているという何とも言えぬ空間です。

しかし、残念なことに、ある門徒さんが言われるには、甘い、多くの仏像や灯籠が池の周りに安置してあったのです。近所の悪戯っ子が夜の的な庭園内に忍び込んで、それら全てを池の中で放棄込んでやったのです。何とも残念な話ですね。そこで、それを聞いた私は、門徒さんにお説懇して、池の中を一緒に探しようにお願いしました。

後日、池の中の水を抜いてもらい、捜索を開始したのです。池の底は思ったほど泥が深く、足を何度もとられて悪戯苦戯が思いつくような作業が進みませんでした。しかし、門徒さんが懐身の安全を考えて、何とか泥の中に埋まっていた仏像や灯籠が二日間で全て拾い上げることができました。年寄りの方々が大いに喜びましたし、大仕事をやり遂げてくださった門徒さんにお感謝して、お年寄りの年齢を過ぎていますが、鬼を閉じると、今でも美しい日本庭園が明日浮かびます。

ところで、池の辺りを捜索していた時気づいたのですが、蓮の花が咲く池の底は想像以上の泥で汚れていることでした。蓮の花は池の中で育つということは何よりも法話の中でも話されておりましたし、誰もが知っていることでした。しかし、実際に池の底を見みると、なぜこれほど汚れた水中にような美しい花が咲かせることができなのか、驚かされました。全く感服の限りです。

そこで今月の蓮の花について少し戯味で思い出してみましょう。

蓮の花は仏教教典の中には数多く出ております。その中で、浄土真宗の大切にしている『願仏願覚集』の中で蓮の花は次のようになされています。「仏に、ここに仏によ

念仏者は誰かに礼を欠き、蓮の花にいきます。しかし、念仏者は蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがりな

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいません。蓮の花にあがり

念仏者は蓮の花に礼を欠き、蓮の花に生きているという深い自覚と反省があります。決して、蓮の花に欠けままではいませ
私たちは仏の子供であります

地震災害見舞い

2007年度教化標語

世界平和は合掌から

2007年 8月号

縦書きの文字列

特別企画

仏教教団の発行所

仏教教団

2007年度教化標語

世界平和は合掌から

2007年 8月号