Socho Koshin Ogui Opening Remarks from 2009 BCA National Council Meeting

G
doing work and wel-
to the 2009 BCA
ational Council Meet-
ing. As the ministers and lay
leaders of the BCA, I wish to thank
you for your dedication and lead-
ership to our organization.

As you know, beginning in
April 2011, the Hongwanji in Ja-
ping will begin a 10-month obser-
vance of the 750th Memorial for
Shinran Shonin. As part of this
historical event, we will be ob-
serving our own national 750th
Memorial Observance for Shin-an Shonin during the 2010 BCA
National Council Meeting next
in San Jose, California.

Shinran Shonin, the founder
of Jodo Shinshu Shin Buddhism
was respected as an innovator of
Buddhism for all people, includ-
ing women and ordinary people
who lived in the villages and
towns. He sought a Buddhism
that was more than just tradition.
He sought a Buddhism that was
alive.

In order to prove or make an
example of this new way of life,
Shinran Shonin officially mar-
rried, accepted fish and meat,
and lived among the ordinary
people. His revolutionary way of
life was not accepted by the traditional
Buddhist priests of his time. Be-
cause of this, his name was never
listed in the Kosozen record of
high ranking priest of that peri-
od.

Rennyo Shonin, the 8th Patri-
arch of our Jodo Shinshu school
was respected as an innovator
of our Shin Buddhism tradition dur-
ing the 15th century in Japan. Like
Shinran Shonin, he propa-
gated Shin Buddhism among the
ordinary people like farmers, fish-
ermen, merchants, and house-
wives. He strived to explain and
interpret the Shin teaching in a
simple way so that it could be un-
derstood even by the uneducated
among the people.

Both Shinran Shonin and
Rennyo Shonin did not hesitate
to change from traditional ways.
They both lived with a firm belief
that there is no progress without
change.

Today, we live in 21st century
America amidst a mixture of dif-
ferent languages, cultures and life-
styles. The question we must ask
ourselves is, “Given the diverse
make-up of the America we live in
today, what can we do to make
the teachings of Jodo Shinshu
Shin Buddhism and the Nembut-
su resonate among the people of
today’s society?” As Kaitōyō,
ministers and lay leaders, what is
it that we have to do in order for
people to realize and be able to
say, “Yes, Shin Buddhism makes
sense! It is my religion, and it is
my family’s religion.” This is the
challenge that we face.

It is very easy and comfortable
to go back to things as they were,
or to stay on the same track. Yet,
it is almost always a challenge to
move forward, changing or trying
out new things. It is also easy
to criticize or react negatively to-
wards those who seek to change
or who are bold enough to try
something new.

But like Shinran Shonin and
Rennyo Shonin have vividly
shown us through their life’s
work, I also believe that there is
no progress without change. The
challenges that we face today are
a result of what we’ve done or not
done in the past. And what we
will have to face in the future will
depend on what it is we do now.

My dream, or “THE BIG
PICTURE” that I envision for
our future is to make Jodo Shin-
shu Shin Buddhism a major reli-
gious tradition here in America.
As you well know, my motto is,
“Anzoku musaku sara de wa ogeni
to shi, shozi sekiyo wo ourezu,”
or, “...to challenge oneself to
search amidst the uncertainties of
work and life, and not be afraid to
try new things out or make mis-
takes along the way.”

As the ministers and leaders of

Continued on Page 6

What is BCA?

The Buddhist Churches of
America (BCA) is a California
nonprofit religious corporation, a
legal definition. As described in the BCA
Bylaws the National Organization is
composed of member temples and
churches, assigned ministers, affiliated
organizations, individual members, and
employees of the Buddhist Churches of
America. Individual members are defined
as all members of the member temples
and churches. So I am a member of BCA
by virtue of my membership with the
Venice Hongwanji Buddhist Temple in
Southern California. And you as a
member of one of the 60 temples/
churches in BCA are automatically an in-
dividual member of BCA. Therefore, as
stated succinctly by Dr. Gordon Ber-
mant, past BCA president, “I am BCA!”

But why do we need BCA, the
national organization? What is the
purpose of BCA?

As stated in the BCA Bylaws, the
cred that governs the operation of BCA
is “…that each member shall honor and
hold the Three Treasures: Buddha,
Dharma, and Sangha as the foundation of
their lives, and follow faithfully the
Teaching of Shinran Shonin according to
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha.” Further-
more, BCA shall instill in its mem-
bers the spiritual principles and teach-
ings of the Jodo Shinshu Buddhist Faith
as practiced by the Jodo Shinshu
Hongwanji-ha, and shall foster and guide
the development of the religion in the
United States of America.”

In 2000 the BCA National Council
(the BCA legislative body) approved the
following mission statement that sets
forth the purpose of the Buddhist
Churches of America:

To Propagate The Buddha, Dharma,
And Sangha as well as
To Propagate The Jodo Shinshu Teachings.

And in 2001 the BCA National
Council approved the following goals
to help us fulfill the intent of our mission
statement:

Shin Buddhism as a major religious
tradition in the United States
A thriving Jodo Shinshu ministry
Self Reliance
Service to the greater community
The mission statement, goals, and the
strategies that were adopted by the 2002
National Council form the BCA’s master
plan. BCA has moved forward on several
fronts since 2002. Accomplishments
include but are not limited to the
following:

• Campaign BCA – 21st Century has
received gifts totaling over $15 million
in cash and pledges
• Opened the Jodo Shinshu Center in
Berkeley, California in August 2006
• Minister’s Assistant Program
established and ongoing

What is BCA? I am BCA!
The Secret Difficulty – or the Difficult Secret? of Buddhism

Rev. Harry GyoKyoo Bridge, Buddhist Church of Oakland

I'm going to let you in on a secret – Buddhism can be very difficult and confusing. This makes sense when you realize that there are so many things to learn! Not only do we learn about the life of Shakyamuni Buddha, but there are other things as well. The history of Buddhism begins in the Indian subcontinent and spreading throughout Asia and now the world, making it that much more difficult. I could go on and on, but I will restrict myself by just mentioning the famous Buddhist lists: Three Poisons, Three Treasures, Four Noble Truths, Six Paramitas, Eightfold Path, Twelvefold Chain of Gavatt, not to mention the Thirty Seven Conditions that Contribute to Awakening! Oh, and can't forget all the technical terms in various languages such as Pali, Sanskrit, Chinese and Japanese.

Some might say that I shouldn't dwell on the negative aspects of the study of Buddhism, and to a certain extent I agree. But I also think that it is important to recognize this difficulty. I have often heard people tell me they feel guilty that they don't know enough about Buddhism. One of the most important things that I have learned as a Buddhist is that we have been going to temple for years but I feel like I don't know anything about Buddhism!” Similarly, I remember when I was a student at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. I came to become a minister, there were often times that I felt intimidated and overwhelmed by the amount of information I had to learn. Would I ever be able to learn everything I need to know? How would I know whether or not I had reached that goal? What if I couldn't?!!!

At some point, however, I realized that even my teachers and experts on Buddhism were not as knowledgeable as I thought. For example, one teacher might be an expert in one specific area, but not as knowledgeable about the finer points of Shinshu doctrine. Another could be an expert in one specific area, but not as knowledgeable as I thought. For example, one teacher might be an expert in one specific area, but not as knowledgeable about the finer points of Shinshu doctrine. Another could be someone who had been learning about Buddhism for years, but was still not as knowledgeable about Shinshu Buddhism as I thought.

The book appears as a result of cooperation among numerous individuals and groups, including of course Monshu Ohtani himself, the Hong-wanji International Center headquarter in Tokyo, the Buddhist Study Center in Honolulu, the Orange County Buddhist Church Buddhist Education Center, and the American Buddhist Association of New York City. Moreover, all BCA members have the opportunity to participate by making a contribution to ensure wide dissemination of this important expression of Monshu’s wisdom.

The Buddha’s Wish for the World – Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism

The Buddha’s Wish for the World – Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism

The Institute of Buddhist Studies, Graduate Seminar for Shin Buddhism, Buddhism Research, and the Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research both Berkeley, announced the publication of the second of three volumes titled, “Path of No Path — Contemporary Studies in Pure Land Buddhism.” This volume honors the late Dr. Roger Corless, professor emeritus of Duke University, who brought to heart the teachings of the study of Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism in particular. Dr. Richard Payne, BCA Dean and the Yehan Numata Professor for Buddhist Studies, is the editor.

The articles in the book cover a range of topics, from the practice of Pure Land to its historical transmission and its contemporary interpretation. Contributors of the book are as follows: Harvey A. Aronson, a psychotherapist in Houston, Texas; Gordon B. Berman, lecturer at University of Pennsylvania and former president of BCA; Alfred Bloom, professor emeritus of the University of Hawaii and former dean of BCA; Ruben L. Habib, southern Methodist University; Arthur Holder, graduate theological union; Charles B. Jones, the Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.; Charles B. Jones, Catholic University of America, Washington D.C.; Charles D. Orzech University of North Carolina, Greensboro; Charles S. Peribah, Utah state University; James B. Sanford, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill; Kenneth K. Tanaka, Musashino University, Tokyo; and former professor at BCA.

Optional tours to local points of interest are available on Friday, Oct. 9. The three local tours are to Gold Discovery Museum in Coloma, Cali- fornia and Tour of West Sacramento (a munuary); and Thunder Valley Casino.

Conference registration is $150 per person, $140 after July 31. Special hotel rates are available for the conference: Use hotel code: BCA Buddhism Women’s Association. Call the hotel at (916) 929-8855 or 800-222-8735 or www.sacra-

The books retail for $45 each and are available at the BCA Bookstore, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA, online at www.bcabookstore.com; or call (510) 809-1435.

The Northern California Buddhist Women’s Association invites all interested BWA members and individuals to attend the 41st BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association conference from Oct. 9 to 11, at the Doubletree Hotel in Sacramento.

Registration information is available from the executive director. A special event on Saturday, Oct. 10, will be an Hawai’i Wildflower Tour. The books retail for $45 each and are available at the BCA Bookstore, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA, online at www.bcabookstore.com; or call (510) 809-1435.

The books retail for $45 each and are available at the BCA Bookstore, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA, online at www.bcabookstore.com; or call (510) 809-1435.

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

Buddha’s Wish for the World

Monshu Koshin Ohtani’s Essays in English

The Buddha’s Wish for the World

Gomonshu Koshin Ohtani’s Essays in English

The Buddha’s Wish for the World

Asia Buddhist Women’s Association invites all interested BWA members and individuals to attend the 41st BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association conference from Oct. 9 to 11, at the Doubletree Hotel in Sacramento.

Registration information is available from the executive director. A special event on Saturday, Oct. 10, will be an Hawai’i Wildflower Tour.

The books retail for $45 each and are available at the BCA Bookstore, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA, online at www.bcabookstore.com; or call (510) 809-1435.

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

Buddha’s Wish for the World

Monshu Koshin Ohtani’s Essays in English

The Buddha’s Wish for the World

Gomonshu Koshin Ohtani’s Essays in English

The Buddha’s Wish for the World

Asia Buddhist Women’s Association invites all interested BWA members and individuals to attend the 41st BCA Federation of Buddhist Women’s Association conference from Oct. 9 to 11, at the Doubletree Hotel in Sacramento.

Registration information is available from the executive director. A special event on Saturday, Oct. 10, will be an Hawai’i Wildflower Tour.

The books retail for $45 each and are available at the BCA Bookstore, 2140 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA, online at www.bcabookstore.com; or call (510) 809-1435.

We gratefully acknowledge contributions to Wheel of Dharma by the following donors:
2nd Annual TechnoBuddha Conference at JSC Reconnecting Gen Y Buddhists (click by click)

On April 4 and 5 at the Jodo Shinshu Center in Berkeley, 45 participants attended the TechnoBuddha Conference, sponsored by the Center for Buddhist Education. It was the second annual conference targeting 21 to 39 year-olds — people who are “grown but not necessarily grown-up” and are interested in Buddhism.

This year’s theme, TechnoBuddha, focused on our generation’s experience with technology and how it might affect our experience with Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. Reverend Harry Bridge, a young minister well-versed in the advantages and disadvantages of technology-based life, was our keynote speaker. He even used his iPhone for notes! — Christine Chin and Lori Kage- hira (Read more online at www.bca-bca.org)

While the conference had a strong base in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, it also offered other elements important for our age demographic. In addition to an intro to Jodo Shinshu workshop and a workshop on talking to friends about Jodo Shinshu, participants were able to attend workshops in Self Defense, Personal Communication, and Financial Planning. Workshops were led by Reverend Seigen Yamakoa, Reverend Ken Yamada, Artie Yamashita, Cindy Rivera and Derek Seo. Each speaker generously donated their time that prepared workshops that were relevant for us. We met new friends and were able to spend time with old ones, connecting over meals we prepared in small groups and other social activities.

TechnoBuddha was a wonderful experience. We are so grateful for the chance to learn, share ideas, and take care. Thank you to everyone who helped make this year’s conference happen. And hope to see you next year!

BCA Center for Buddhist Education 2009 Program & Events Calendar

(As of April 27, 2009 — Please note changes.)

Visit www.bca-bca.org, call (510) 809-1460 or email: director@bca-bca.org for more information.

2009 BCA Youth Retreat (Sponsored by the Ministry Committee)
July 6 – 9, 2009
Hosted at the Sacramento backstage
Ages 15-18 years

My Gift to Campaign BCA—The 21st Century
mygift@bcayouth.org

May 25 – 27, JAPANESE NITAI SHONIN: NO SHINOBU TO SHINBU (Spring Buddhist Retreat) (E)
Guest speaker: Rev. Motoho Kakizoe, President of Buckfast. Donations will be sent to Featherstone’s messages for everyday living. Reservations by May 20. Arrangements for the Jodo Shinshu Center's “Guest Ministries.” Contact BCA General Office (See http://www.bca-bca.org). BCA Members: $85, General: $100. Registration deadline is May 18. For information: visit www.cbe-bca.org or call (510) 809-1460

MAY 30, The Trout: MAYBE SOMEONE'S EATING YOUR FISH (E)

JUNE 7, 2009
DR. BOB KONDO: TECHNOLOGY, SELF DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE CENTER FOR BUDDHIST EDUCATION (E)

JUNE 14, 2009
DR. HIOHIN ARAKAWA: SELF DEFENSE, PERSONAL COMMUNICATION, FINANCIAL PLANNING (E)

JUNE 16 (Thur) 12 Noon: INSPIRED BY SHINRAN SHONIN'S BIRTHDAY (E) Re- synchronized! (F) Guest Speaker: Prof. Toshikazu Kagehira (Shinbun) will be the featured speaker at the Berkeley Buddhist Temple. The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 10. Other presenters include Dr. Nobuo Haneda (Dharma Breeze), Prof. Dr. David Mactavish (emer. A life of Awakening), and Rev. Ko Bho. Umezu (Director, BCA Center for Buddhist Education). Registration: November 27, 2009. BCA Members: $9, “Take Wearing” discount $8, 10% off for paid in May. pretty and informative discussions (B), and the Rev. Harry Bridge, a young minister well-versed in the advantages and disadvantages of technology-based life, was our keynote speaker. He even used his iPhone for notes! — Christine Chin and Lori Kagehira (Read more online at www.bca-bca.org)

The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 22, 2009. Socho Koshin Ogui certified two minister’s assistants. From left to right: Rev. Dr. David Mactavish, Eddythe Shaku Montoku Vassalli, Diana Hojun Thompson, Socho Ogui, Mrs. Mayumi Ogui.

The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 22, 2009. Socho Koshin Ogui certified two minister’s assistants. From left to right: Rev. Dr. David Mactavish, Eddythe Shaku Montoku Vassalli, Diana Hojun Thompson, Socho Ogui, Mrs. Mayumi Ogui.

The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 22, 2009. Socho Koshin Ogui certified two minister’s assistants. From left to right: Rev. Dr. David Mactavish, Eddythe Shaku Montoku Vassalli, Diana Hojun Thompson, Socho Ogui, Mrs. Mayumi Ogui.

The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 22, 2009. Socho Koshin Ogui certified two minister’s assistants. From left to right: Rev. Dr. David Mactavish, Eddythe Shaku Montoku Vassalli, Diana Hojun Thompson, Socho Ogui, Mrs. Mayumi Ogui.

The Berkeley Buddhist Temple held its first Minister’s Assistant Certification Ceremony on March 22, 2009. Socho Koshin Ogui certified two minister’s assistants. From left to right: Rev. Dr. David Mactavish, Eddythe Shaku Montoku Vassalli, Diana Hojun Thompson, Socho Ogui, Mrs. Mayumi Ogui.
Awaken in Amida’s Light

One of Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin’s newest choir members, Wendie Yumori, had the honor of sharing her composition, “Awaken in Amida’s Light” performed by the Betsuin choir at the recent Dharmachakra Festival in October and that the HH-HBB’s Thanksgiving service at the end of November.

Wendie and Roy Yumori

Wendie and Roy Yumori

Wendie and Roy Yumori

friend during a Sunday service. Wendie is happy to say that this friend has recovered from his bout with cancer and is presently doing very well. In 1999, Wendie shared a three-part arrangement of her gatha with the newly-formed Family Choir of the Orange County Buddhist Church. Two years later by the OCBC Family Choir came to Hawaii to perform a three-part arrangement of the choir. The introduction Wendie’s gatha to the Hawaii Betsuin. Twelve years later while attending a Hawaii Betsuin service, Wendie was truly moved when she heard her composition and arrangement being performed by the Betsuin choir under the direction of Choir Director Misayu Saito and accompanist Francis Okano. Wendie and her husband, Roy, moved to Hawaii in October of 2006 right after they retired from their jobs on the mainland. They had previously lived in Hawaii from 1972-1992. They settled back into their home in Kanesashi that they had been renting out while living in San Diego. Roy and Wendie began attending HH-HBB Betsuin services at the end of 2006. Inspired by the presentations of the Betsuin choir during special services, following the Hana Matsuri service in 2007, Wendie approached Mrs. Saito asking to join the choir. She continues to enjoy her involvement with the choir, accompanist Masayu Saito, and Mr. Okano’s musical talents and dedication to the Betsuin choir.

From January 2009 - Hawaii Betsuin Gōjū

Bay District Tri-temple Commemoration of Shinran Shonin’s 750th Memorial

T he sangha members from the Palo Alto Buddha Temple, the Buddhist Church of San Francisco, and the San Mateo Buddhist Temple gathered as one in the Nembutsu on March 29 to commemorate the 750th Anniversary Memorial of Shinran Shonin.

This Bay District event was hosted at the Palo Alto Buddha Temple and the service included participation from all three temples: the three resident Ministers, four Minister’s Assistants and five Youth Minister’s Assistants. Insightful and inspiring dharma talks were given by Rev. William Masuda (PABT), Rev. Ron Kobata (BCSF), Rev. Ryuta Furumoto (SMBT) and Youth M.A. Sydney Shiroyama (PABT).

Immediately following the service, a tri-temple panel discussion in English was conducted in the hondo with the theme, “How has Shinran’s teaching affected my life?” We were graced by guest panelists Jack Dairiki (BCSF), Joyce Miyamoto (PABT) and Tosh Sakai (SMBT), each explaining how Jodo Shinshu has personally and uniquely shaped their lives. The breadth of experience shared by these generous temple members was deeply moving. Rev. Ryuta Furumoto led a discussion for the Japanese speaking members in PABT mini-chapel.

Following the panel discussions, everyone gathered in the social hall for a wonderful and delicious celebratory meal which was prepared in collaboration between the three temples.

A special note of appreciation is extended to Susan Bottari (event planning), Rev. Masuda (service planning), the Palo Alto Sangha (for making us all feel so welcome), and to all who participated through their attendance, collectively making this a day of remembrance and gratitude.

Namo Amida Butsu

Elaine Donlin, BCSF

one famous Japanese novelist Soekei Natsume stated in the beginning of his book: "kusa-makura (A Grass Pillow)" that: “If you are too intellectual, you will antagonize with others. If you act too emotional, you will lose yourself. If you push too much your own way, you will feel uncomfortable. How difficult it is to live in this world of people. Yet, there is no place where we can escape. If there is a place where we can escape from the pain is only the world with no people. To live in the world with no people is much harder than the world of people…" If you eliminate your blind attachments from the difficulties in the world of people, you will realize the peaceful world in gratitude. Such spiritual enlightenment will be reflected in your poem.”

When I was young, I used to enjoy reading the many writings of Soekei Natsume, who had studied English literature in England. The writing above almost became my philosophy of youth. His inspiration also guided me to understand the three characteristics of Buddhism: 1) Everything is constantly changing. 2) Everything exists interdependently (selflessly). 3) Everything does not go as one’s wishes.

A fter hearing a Hawaii Betsuin service, Mrs. Schwartz approached Mrs. Saito asking to join the choir. She continues to enjoy her involvement with the choir, and Mrs. Saito’s musical talents and dedication to the Betsuin choir.

Although the Final Separation is Certain…

one famous Japanese novelist Soekei Natsume stated in the beginning of his book: "kusa-makura (A Grass Pillow)" that: “If you are too intellectual, you will antagonize with others. If you act too emotional, you will lose yourself. If you push too much your own way, you will feel uncomfortable. How difficult it is to live in this world of people. Yet, there is no place where we can escape. If there is a place where we can escape from the pain is only the world with no people. To live in the world with no people is much harder than the world of people…" If you eliminate your blind attachments from the difficulties in the world of people, you will realize the peaceful world in gratitude. Such spiritual enlightenment will be reflected in your poem.”

When I was young, I used to enjoy reading the many writings of Soekei Natsume, who had studied English literature in England. The writing above almost became my philosophy of youth. His inspiration also guided me to understand the three characteristics of Buddhism: 1) Everything is constantly changing. 2) Everything exists interdependently (selflessly). 3) Everything does not go as one’s wishes.

Buddhism are described beautifully in the beginning of Tale of Heike that: “The sound of the bell of the Gion Temple echoes the impermanence of everything. The color of the flowers of the Sata Tree teaches the principle of changes…”

New Tanka poems of the Seattle Tanka Poets were published in The North American Poem Contest. I always enjoy reading her Tanka poems in the local Japanese newspapers.

Newspapers. Her poem was: “Although the final separation from loved one is certain, your warmth will remain in my heart forever.” I thought that her poem reflects Soekei Natsume’s philosophy of life. Her poem reflects the spiritual awakening of a peaceful world. Separation from a loved one is the truth and reality of our changing world. With such a realization, she was awakened to the eternal compassion in her heart and I felt her peace and happiness in her poem.

Dr. Kitaro Nishida, a famous philosopher in Japan, stated in his philosophical book, A Study of Good, that: “The religious demand is the demand with regard to the self, it is the demand concerning the life of the self. It is the demand wherein at the same time that our self perceives intellectually its relationality and finiteness, it joins with the absolute and infinite power, and desires, by means of this, to acquire the true life of eternity.”

Dr. Nishida reminds us that the essence of religion is the realization of the relative and finite self and we become one with the absolute, infinite, and eternal power.

Shinran Shonin taught in his Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, that people who have a finite earthly life, should be awakened to the primal vow (power) of Amida (Infinite Buddha). We become one with the compas- sion and wisdom of Amida Bud- dha. This unity with Amida Buddha’s compassion is a life of the Nembutsu, Namo Amida Butsu. Shakuyamuni Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, taught us how we can be enlightened in this world. In the world of enlightenment, we are able to find true peace and happiness in the life of the Nembutsu. Namo Amida Butsu.
The 24th Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists: Focus on Socially Engaged Buddhism

By Kenneth Tanaka
Musashino Univ., Tokyo

A sakusa is usually known as the town that symbolizes traditional Japan, but for four days, November 14–17, 2008, it became the site of the 24th conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB). Although I served on the planning committee of the symposium segment of the conference, I was not quite prepared mentally for such a large gathering of Buddhists from around the world. A total of 312 delegates from 23 countries and another 450 Japanese delegates participated at the height of its program. All in all, a total of 1,500 people participated. Virtually every major school and branches of Buddhism was represented by their respective monks, nuns, priests and/or laypeople. This conference was hosted by the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF), which is comprised of 58 major traditional denominations or their 75,000 temples and monasteries in Japan. Among them is our Nishi-Hongwanji Branch of Jodo Shinshu School. In fact, the current Chairman of the Board of JBF is Rev. Taisei Toyohara of the Hongwanji Branch. This conference was the first in 30 years and the third time (previously in 1952 and 1978) that Japan had hosted this biennial conference. The Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) is a member of World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB). The first WFB conference took place in 1955 when the WFB was founded. Today the WFB is headquartered in Bangkok, Thailand with 146 regional centers. As its parallel organization, there is the World Fellowship of Buddhist Youth (WFBY), which also held its conference in conjunction with its parent organization.

Since this was my first such conference, I had no way of evaluating this conference, but some “veterans” of these conferences pointed out that this one distinguished itself from past conferences in its clear focus on the socially engaged issues. Their assessment was supported by the fact that the theme of the conference was “Buddhist Contributions to Resolving Social Problems.”

On the 15th (the main day of the conference) a film entitled “The Economics of Happiness” was shown in place of the usual keynote speaker. This film was inspired by Ms. Helena Norberg-Hodge, the Director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture. Her film critiqued the negative consequences of globalization in favor of localization, which she argued was more in keeping with the Buddhist values and worldview.

Following the film, I moderated a panel of distinguished members who responded to the film. Besides Helena Norberg-Hodge, the panelists included Joanna Macy, an American Buddhist teacher from Berkeley, California, writer and activist engaged in issues of environmental and social justice. Another panelist was A.T. Ariyaratne, the founder and president of the well-known Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka, the world’s largest spiritually-based people’s development movement. The fourth panelist was Reiko Yuwaka, a noted music commentator and lyricist in Japan; in recent years, she has become more outspoken on such social issues as war and the environment. In the afternoon, the people were able to attend two of the seven symposia on the following social issues: Youth, Suicide, Gender Equality, Spiritual Care for the Dying, Peace, Environment, and Social Development. With 4 panels and a moderator for each symposium, a total of 35 specialists from throughout the world took part. What made the symposia distinct was the panelists were practitioners with extensive hands-on experience in their respective fields. They brought passion and commitment to their message.

The website of the Japan Federation Buddhists summarized their evaluation as follows: “We believe the success of the symposium resulted in a rare opportunity to look for new ways to make a difference as Buddhists inspired the participants to take action that would change the world beyond spiritual boundaries.”

As a side note, I could not help but take note of the fact that about 30% of the panelists and moderators came from the U.S., Europe and other non-Asian countries. It symbolized for me the extent to which Buddhism is no longer just “a religion of Asia.”

In serving as the moderator of the Environment symposium, I tried to steer the panelists away from the...
Socho’s Messages

Continued from Front Page

during that time. At first, it was hard for me to adapt to meet people and see friends. But at every Buddhist event, there was always something new that I had not learned before. I stuck with me. For example, I remember a conference in Southern California. I heard Rev. Marvin Harada say that life is like toilet pa- per, in that you are not really aware of it until you are at the end of the roll, and ever since then I have not only cherished having a full roll of toilet paper, but I also realized that I should enjoy the present life, as time is passing by quickly. I also distinctly remember at a Bay District Family Conference, Bishop Socho Ogui gave a talk using only five different words, which I later read up using as my senior quote in the high school yearbook. The talk went: “Today is not yesterday. Today is not tomorrow. Today is today.” This is the importance of the pres- ent time in the present moment, and I was surprised that such a meaningful mes- sage could be said in such a short quote. Because of meaningful messages like these at JI YBA activities, I started getting more and more into the Bud- dhist aspect. In fact, looking back at the last Fresno con- ference I went to, my favorite parts would have to be the guest speaker and workshops, which was when I met my mentor, K. I enjoyed the icebreak- ers and dances a lot more, showing my attitude to- wards YBA events did change in favor of Buddhism rather than just the conference. My senior year of high school, I was then presented to the oppor- tunity to go to the 3rd Annual Buddhist Youth Conference (YAC) Retreat. When I heard that it was go- ing to be a Buddhist Youth Minis- ter Assistant training, I was a little apprehensive, but I decided to give it a try. After a week of Buddhist education, ona- jin etiquette, and living with 11 other Buddhist youth at Jodo Shinshu Center, it turns out that the YAC Retreat (as we called it) was one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Buddhist experi- ence that I have had. I learned so much about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and am glad that I am able to assist my home temple minister, Rev. Masu- da, when called upon to ring the hand- bell on the onaji. The YAC Retreat has really helped in providing a comfortable and meaningful Shinshu Buddhism life be- tween Hawaii and the mainland. I made friends with Ha- waii YBA-ers, some interesting (and some- times) radical views on Bud- dhism by speakers such as Dr. Alfred Bloom and Dr. George Tanabe. It is an ex- perience I am glad that I made it possible. Taking a look back at my transition from an unintelligent “temple-de- facing” child to a “Buddhist temple-going” adult was quite amazing. I have really thought about what I consider the Buddhist perspective.

Socho, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Buddhist experi- ence that I have had. I learned so much about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and am glad that I am able to assist my home temple minister, Rev. Masuda, when called upon to ring the handbell on the onaji. The YAC Retreat has really helped in providing a comfortable and meaningful Shinshu Buddhism life between Hawaii and the mainland. I made friends with Hawaii YBA-ers, some interesting (and sometimes) radical views on Buddhism by speakers such as Dr. Alfred Bloom and Dr. George Tanabe. It is an experience I am glad that I made it possible. Taking a look back at my transition from an unintelligent “temple-facing” child to a “Buddhist temple-going” adult was quite amazing. I have really thought about what I consider the Buddhist perspective.

Yano Continued from Page 3

World Fellowship

Continued from Page 4

torical discussions on the Buddhist philosophy such as “interdependence.” I wanted them to speak for themselves, concretely, which is why the topic of the sym- posium was, “A Buddhist Approach to Practical Solu- tions to the Environmental Crisis.” We agreed in advance that we did not want to get caught up in the often-heard self-congratulatory talk about how Buddhism is more environmentally friendly than Christianity. As its result, I feel that we Buddhists have full confidence in our own achievements. I pointed out that the industrialized countries that have done the most environmentally in recent years are the North European countries, represented by Bjorn Bergh, whose countries Christianity is the dominant religion.

For our panel on the environment, we had two of these people previously mentioned, Karen Ne- berg-Hodge and Joanna Macy. The third member was Rev. Hidehito Ōkōchi; as a resident priest of a Jodo-shu temple in Tokyo, he shared his activities that are passed on to his pupils, which are part of the temple and other environmentally beneficial activi- ties in the neighborhood. His passion and enthusiasm was infectious.

The fourth panelist was Sorayat Ratanapoj- nard, a professor of Biology at a university in Thai- land. He expressed the urgency of our need to take serious action that is really urgent. He spoke about how to do this in the face of this overwhelming normalization. What was impressive about him was his decision to forgo his professorship to become a monk (later in 2009) in order to direct his full at- tention to environmental solutions from a Bud- dhist perspective.

Finally, Joanna Macy, whose vast experience in various ways perhaps empower people worldwide to take action, left us with the message of hope and en- couragement. She encouraged every human being to feel that he or she can do some good rooted in the spirit of “Buddha nature,” even though at times we feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the crisis be- fore us. So, as Shin Buddhism, let us all find that hope and encouragement in awakening to our intercon- nectedness with nature and all living beings, which represents immeasurable life. And it is this immeas- surable life that makes us part of what we call, Ami- da’s

Buddha’s Wish

Continued from Page 1

in the dominant religion! And it is this immeasurable life that makes us part of what we call, Amida’s

Buddha’s Wish

Continued from Page 1

isms. Indeed, the struggle for an answer is part of the essence of the human condition. It is the very fact that we struggle with the question of how to live a meaningful life.” Monshu advises us to talk about our experience, to talk about the question he poses. To aid our contemplation, he proposes a subtle answer: Our life is a gift wished into existence. Through the remaining chapters Monshu guides and challenges us with powerful questions and pro- vocative answers, including for example Parents do not exist anymore, anything the kids choose their parents and Other power does not mean counting on others. And the 36th chapter, preceding an epilogue, announces a truth basic to all Buddhism without ex- ception: Pratitya-samutpada. This is a concept that is often explained in an obscure and confusing manner, but in the end, we see that dependent causality is the source of life, consciousness, suffering, and, when comprehended, release from suffering.

Socho, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Buddhist experi- ence that I have had. I learned so much about Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and am glad that I am able to assist my home temple minister, Rev. Masuda, when called upon to ring the handbell on the onaji. The YAC Retreat has really helped in providing a comfortable and meaningful Shinshu Buddhism life between Hawaii and the mainland. I made friends with Hawaii YBA-ers, some interesting (and sometimes) radical views on Buddhism by speakers such as Dr. Alfred Bloom and Dr. George Tanabe. It is an experience I am glad that I made it possible. Taking a look back at my transition from an unintelligent “temple-facing” child to a “Buddhist temple-going” adult was quite amazing. I have really thought about what I consider the Buddhist perspective.

By Tara Mochizuki, BCF

The next time you cross the Golden Gate Bridge and see a scooter monoring along one of the highways, think—BCSF Chicken Ben- to. The oil used to fry the latest batch of chicken was donated to the Golden Gate Bridge District to fuel their fleet of bio-fuel vehicles. Our oil will be used in the experi- ment: the Golden Gate Bridge District to fuel their fleet of bio-fuel vehicles. Our oil will be used in the experiment. Even though my body may be crushed, should be returned in grati- tude. Hone wo kudite kamo, “Even though my bones may be crushed, it is better than just the social side. In fact, looking back at my transition from an unintelligent “temple-facing” child to a “Buddhist temple-going” adult was quite amazing. I have really thought about what I consider the Buddhist perspective.}
法輪

本願寺より助成金

750回遠征記念プログラムへ

競輪 聖人の七百五十回大遠征が現在各地で進行されているが、京都の本願寺では二〇一一年から翌十二年にかけて法要が盛大に行われる。また、その記念事業としていろいろなことが計画実行に移されている。その一つが、浄土真宗センターを拠点として行われている「英語通信教育」と「世界伝道育成プログラム」である。そのために、本願寺よりこのたび二百五十万円が仏教教育センターにプログラムの原資とし
て送られてきた。

英語通信教育は、現在九十六名以上の生徒が受講していて、熱心に勉強に励んでいる。八月にはセンターで顔をあわせての集中講義も行われることになっている。

また、昨年まで、京都も近隣の四箇所仏教学校育成プログラムが表に示意されている。その中には、現在日本で受講生を募集している。このプログラムは実際にアメリカで伝道の現場を見学することにより、将来海外まで

法要育成プログラムの目的は、日本の新しい伝道に従事することのできる人材を育成することである。

これらは教育センターのプログラムの一環として、桑原浄三教主が主導されて行われている。各地のリーダーやダルママスターの教師も通信教育を受講することが願われている。「本願寺と教団

がその思いを一にして、将来に向かっての擠を築いていくことは大切なものであり、ありがたいことである。」と、総長は語る。

浄土真宗レンストラン?

2009年度報徳標語

世の中安穏なれ

2009年 5月号