



## The August Program

In our March 2006 Newsletter we reported on **By the Sea**, the pocket-sized viewing stone exhibit that **Jim** and **Alice Greaves** mounted for the February GSBF Bonsai-a-thon fundraiser at the Huntington Library. The display of 36 stones was dedicated to **Elmer Uchida**, one of our founding members. For our August 23rd program, **Jim** will present a detailed review of that exhibit, covering the individual stones and broader display considerations. Members who missed the installation will see many 'new' stones, while those who saw the exhibit can have another, more intimate look. It's August, it's hot, and all the stones will transport you down **By the Sea** – so come get your feet wet!



This is another of those 5 Wednesday months. Don't miss out on the fun. Come on the 23rd and be a part of the excitement. Come on the 30th and miss everything!

## Stone of the Month

Speaking of the hot weather and the sea, let's go with that theme. Let's bring in stones, other than island, that are shore or coastal. Shore stones may include reef and sandbar stones. Let's also add another twist, bring in a "proper display", not just the stone! Bring in the *suiban* or *daiza* and the *jiban*. We all need the practice!

Also, in preparation for our Huntington Show:

If someone does not have a completed display, but seeks display advice that they, too, should bring their stone (and whatever they do have). **Jim** and **Larry** will be pleased to offer suggestions.



This small Murphys stone could be classified as either a coastal rock (*iwagata-ishi*) or a headlands stone (*misaki-ishi*).

## Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 6

*Yugen* in Japanese art implies mysterious skills that can be felt but not put into words.  
*The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?*

As I said, **Bob Watson's** mood, at that first meeting could, at best, be described as gruff. I really thought he would never come back to a second meeting, assuming there would be a second meeting. His body language clearly reflected his frustration as differing opinions surfaced that night. When he agreed to do the first official program my feeling was, "this study group might actually work" and for good reason. **Watson** was the curator of the Japanese Gardens at the Huntington Library. He was trained in Japan. He designed the meditation garden at the Huntington. He was an authority on the spiritual aspects of stone appreciation, large and small, large being his specialty. The mood at the second meeting was that of calm, as if we were at a meditation garden. **Watson** had published an article in *Bonsai Gems*, The American Bonsai Society, 1974, and much of this first program, nine years later, can be found in that text. Watson said, "The stone must say something or be something... A good *suiseki* is more suggestive than realistic, leaving the viewer to use his imagination for full enjoyment and oneness with the stone." He did, however, indicate that the bottom of a stone could be worked to fit better into a *suiban* or *daiza*, thus laying the foundation for the eternal cut-no cut debate. But he added in the article, "In addition to *suiseki* but in a separate classification we find *biseki* (beautiful stones) and *meiseki* (famous stones). *Biseki* are stones altered by man..." He added, "Some of the classifications to be looked for in seeking *suiseki* are: A distant mountain stone, stone having a vein that suggests a water fall, stone suggesting a rocky seashore, a quiet pool or water-holding rock, flower stone having inclusions resembling fallen petals, a hard rock of good form and color, stones suggesting human or animal forms, a desert butte, such as one might see in Utah, a stone calling to mind a famous landmark as Twin Peaks." This was a great start for the club. But when he added, "a coating of matte lacquer may be applied to bring up the colors of the stone", I heard a groan from someone in the audience. I wasn't sure exactly where the sound came from but later that night I invited **Toy Sato** to be our next speaker. She accepted.

Next. The real deal

Larry Ragle

### July Meeting Notes

by Linda Gill

ANNOUNCEMENTS- **Mr Uhaku Sudo** will be replacing **Mr Seiji Morimae** at the Symposium in Grantville, PA. **Mr Sudo** is **Mr Morimae's** sensei and an excellent choice. [for details, see pg 7]

Don't miss the GSBF Convention Nov 2-5 in Sacramento. [for details see pg 8]

JULY STONE OF THE MONTH - Shelter stone- *Yadori/Amayadori*

**Joseph Gaytan** had a great one. **Bruce's** stones were from Garnet Hill and Dumont Dunes. **Hanne** had 2 small shelters and a 'bus stop' (and which classification system is that?). **Joe James** showed stones from the Eel, Yuha and Murphys. He had an overhang stone (a shelter with no floor). **Akio** found one stone at **Hanne's** and the other was a great Murphys. **Barry** had a small Yuha shelter and **Larry** had a shelter or a rich man's hut - take your pick .



Hanne's elegant shelter



Joseph's dramatic shelter



Bruce's from Dumont Dunes



Larry's shelter



Bruce's from Garnet Hill



Larry's shelter or is it a rich man's hut?

### July Program Notes

by Linda Gill

**Larry Ragle** presented a program demonstrating the adaptability and completeness of the Japanese viewing stone classification system. When Aiseki Kai was founded, the goal was to learn about Japanese suiseki guidelines. It wasn't long before the question was asked, "Could stones found in the desert be suiseki?" . There are 3 types of desert stones:  
1. stones found in the desert  
2. stones that suggest a desert scene  
3. stones that are/do both

Some thought they would not fit within the traditional suiseki terms and should have their own categories. **Jim Greaves** suggested an American viewing stone classification system in the summer 1997 edition of 'Waiting to be Discovered'. But the purpose of **Larry's** program was to demonstrate that almost any worthwhile stone does, indeed, fit into the Murata-Naga Ornamental Stone Classification System.

**Larry** began his program by reminding us of two important criteria. First, **Richard Ota's** statement, "What you see is not what I see." Secondly, what one sees in a stone is based on their life experiences. Others may never see what you see. The objective classification of the stone is secondary to your perception of it. If you think your stone fits into a particular category, so be it.

Even though there are no deserts in Japan, there are Japanese stones that resemble our desert mountains and scenes. The Japanese appear to appreciate the same shapes; however, they describe them simply as landscape stones, mountains, islands or shore stones, not desert scenes. **Larry** showed several photographs of stones from Japanese magazines from the 1960s and compared them with photos of our southwest desert mountains scenes - mesas, buttes and canyons. For this reason, **Larry** is one who feels that stones from the desert that suggest desert landscapes, abstract forms, resemble classic objects, are colorful or contain patterns, fit nicely into the Murata-Naga viewing stone classifications.

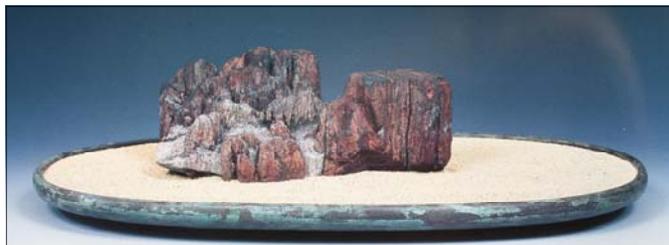
So, if you have a stone that reminds you of a desert landscape, regardless of where it was found, it is still a viewing stone in the Japanese classification system.



Near mountain, a southwest desert mesa. Photo from Nyogakuan Collection titled "Superior Slope".

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.





Southwestern scene like the Grand Canyon. This might be a *renzan gata* or mountain range shape.

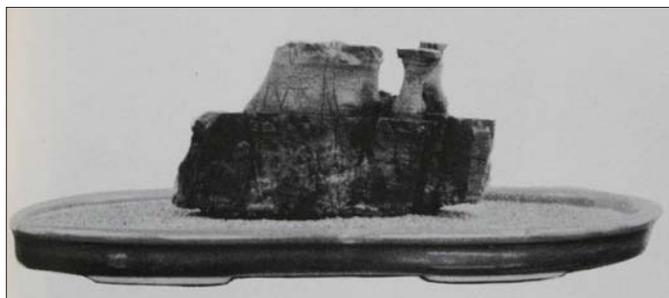
In future, perhaps we might consider show labels that leave off the classification by shape and just stick to the Japanese method of simply referencing the owner and place of origin. And speaking of our show, remember only landscapes are shown in *suiban* with sand. There are two inflexible criteria that are used to reject stones from our shows: 1.) The stone may not be soft and /or rough and 2.) The stone cannot have visible or obvious cracks or chips. Of course, the show's exhibit committee always reserves the right to exclude stones/ displays without further explanation.



Near mountain with an arch, typical of Arches National Park in Utah. Photo from Nippon Suiseki Association Annual Show Book.

As part of **Larry's** program we were challenged to bring in stones that seemed to be without classification. They were the *What is it? stones*:

**Bruce** brought a layered stone from the desert that **Larry** said could be a coastal stone. **Don Mullally's** stone was a near mountain with lakes. **Hanne** had several beautiful layered stones from the desert. **Lois's** stone had sharp broken edges that were not weathered [a leaverite] and a stone with a canyon or a near mountain or a coastal stone. **Bill** had a party 'special' that also fit no category and **Bonnie's** from the Yuha was a figure stone. **Harry's** African stone was too soft while his green stone had a great front. **Barry** had several coastal stones. **Linda's** stone could be a figure stone or a pattern stone.



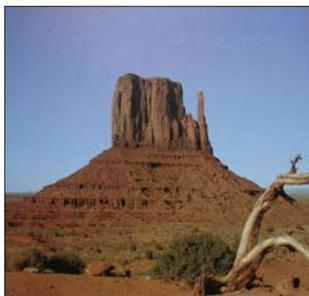
Plateau with buttes, but could be a coastal view when the tide retreats, an *isogata ishi*. Photo from *Juseki* magazine.



Barry's island or coastal stone



Desert mesa & plateau and yet, still a near mountain or *doha*.



Desert butte, see below.



Bruce' coastal stone



Hanne's object stone



Looks like the desert southwest, a near mountain scene with a prominent desert butte. See above. Photo from *Juseki* magazine.



Hanne's coastal stone and ...



the same stone as a shelter

## Ask Guy Jim

**Dear GuyJim,**

**What is your opinion on cutting to obtain a usable stone or to further enhance a stone's form?**

**M.T. Chelvez, Los Angeles**

Dear M.T.,

I doubt there will ever be a universally acceptable answer to the question of cutting. Collectors run the extremes from 'never cut' to 'never found a stone that could not be improved by cutting'. In Japan, the rejection of any cutting or working of a stone is historically the purest form of stone appreciation. The animistic origins of Shinto endow the stone with life; therefore, the act of cutting violates the 'soul' of the stone. The later overlay of Zen philosophy emphasizes the acceptance, even glorification, of the imperfect, further arguing against the practice of cutting. Given that the image and quality are relatively equal, I believe we all would agree that an uncut stone is preferable, being natural and perforce more rare – the ideal *suiseki*.

While the use of uncut stones is arguably the purest form of stone appreciation, the use of uncut stones does not necessarily mean that the aesthetic results achieved will be superior to or even as good as the results obtainable with cut stones. From the standpoint of appreciating 'stones as art', most cut stones may even have an advantage over natural examples. Cutting brings into play a different aspect of the art of stone appreciation in that the purely contemplative gives way to the creative. In China the tradition has always held that the artist starts with an inspiring bit of nature (stone) and improves upon. The scholar's stones that are the combined creation of nature and man are those most appreciated. When one embarks on cutting, the eye and hand of the artist become more prominent.

The act of studying a stone for potential cutting actually provides a huge hidden bonus: you will develop a much better understanding of that particular stone and sharpen your perception of stones in general. With experience you will see how the difference of a fraction of an inch in height or a few degrees of tilt can vastly alter the 'view' before you. You will even be forced to consider difficult decisions such as whether to cut for the smaller peak in perfect proportion or to make a larger mountain to retain more of the beautiful color or texture. There is a definite difference between immediately cutting a stone (often done for maximum image) and cutting a stone after careful consideration, perhaps over the period of months, even years.

Unquestionably, cutting is a valid approach for salvaging a great view from a stone that for reasons of size or flaws could not be otherwise displayed. Cutting, through the refinement of balance and form, may enable the creation of aesthetically superior viewing stones. On a broader level, cutting vastly increases the number of 'viewable' stones available, thus attracting new enthusiasts and spreading the pleasures of stone appreciation.

Having blessed the cutting of stones that simply cannot be used otherwise, I admonish you to make every attempt possible to refrain from cutting prematurely. Study the stone and study it again – once cut, regrets don't help!

**Dear GuyJim,**

**When discussing *suiseki*, the question of whether or not a cut stone should be considered a true *suiseki* often becomes heated. What is your opinion?**

**Cindy, Sonora**

Dear Cindy,

For me, whether or not the term *suiseki* should be applied to cut stones is largely irrelevant. Which is not to deny that I would prefer an uncut stone to a cut stone of comparable beauty. After decades of collecting in rivers and deserts I fully appreciate the rarity of fine natural stones; there is a special satisfaction whenever we succeed in mounting an exhibit of all unworked stones. So, on the personal level, I usually apply the term *suiseki* only to uncut natural landscape stones. But, some observations on your question:

Any perusal of Japanese *suiseki* publications will reveal that there are a plethora of cut stones represented. The oldest magazines detail methods of cutting and advertise stone saws, grinders, etc., so we know that cutting is certainly nothing new. I do not know the earliest date when native stones were cut for display in Japan. I have one example purported to be from the Meiji Era (1862-1912). In recent years we have been told that cut stones are not *suiseki* (A.Matsuura, 2002), are becoming acceptable as *suiseki*, but only if the bottom cut is totally disguised by carving and artificial aging ideally followed by years of natural aging (A.Matsuura, 2005) and that cut stones can only be considered as landscape *suiseki*, and only displayed in *suiban* (S.Morimae, 2004). In view of these comments and what we see published, it would seem that the degree of acceptance of cut stones as *suiseki* is still fluid in Japan as well as here.

Continued on pg 7

# CALIFORNIA DREAMING AT THE U.S. NATIONAL ARBORETUM by Kathleen Emerson-Dell

Continued from the July Issue...

Over 500 people attended the annual outdoor dinner this year at which the Friends of the National Arboretum honored the state of California. In honor of the occasion, the International Pavilion was taken over by an exhibition of Viewing Stones from California.

The following stones were part of that display.



Melba Tucker's waterfall stone



Above: Nina Ragle's plateau stone



Right: Ralph Johnson's mountain stone



International Pavilion



Exhibit entrance



Top shelf:  
 Gilbert Hildebrandt's celestial pattern stone

Middle shelf:  
 John Naka's 30,000 foot beard stone

Bottom Shelf:  
 Richard and Cheryl Manning's mountain stone



Ken McLeod's stone on the left and Toy Sato's on the right

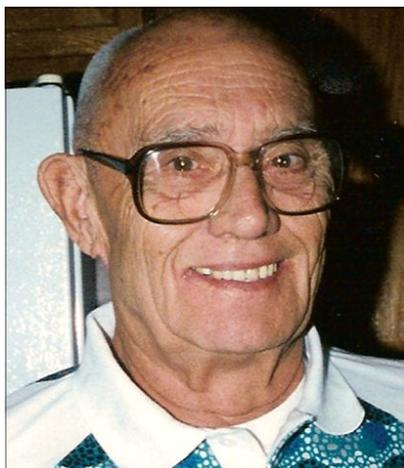


Melba Tucker's desert monument stone on the left and her pattern stone on the right

Kathleen Emerson-Dell is the new Assistant Curator for the Art and Book Collections at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the National Arboretum in Washington DC. She curates the viewing stone collection.

# MASTERS OF THE DAIZA

by Ray Yeager



Gail Middleton

**Gail Middleton** was born and raised in Los Angeles and for many years lived in Huntington Park with his wife, **Dorothy**, and finally in Hemet, a desert community located about ninety miles East of Los Angeles. **Gail** was introduced to suiseki through bonsai. In 1979 he met **Cliff Johnson** at

a **Melba Tucker** bonsai class and later, during a tour of homes to see private bonsai collections saw **Cliff's** stones. Soon the **Middleton's** were off on their first stone hunting trip.

In the company of **Cliff** and long time desert stone hunter, **Tony Thomas**, they traveled to the Saddle Peak Hills at the southern end of Death Valley west of Dumont Dunes. Returning with a carload of stones, **Gail** was anxious to try his hand at *daiza* making. He spent a day with **Cliff** at his workshop and soon finished his first *daiza*.

Everyone's first attempt is usually traumatic and **Gail's** was no exception. His *daiza* was much too thick but he had the advantage of carpentry experience and all the necessary tools, consequently his improvement was swift.

The power tools found in his workshop consisted of Dremel and die grinders, band saw and drill press, plus carbon paper and various other wood carving tools. With this Spartan collection of tools **Gail** fashioned an outstanding reputation for creating an exceptional relationship between stone and *daiza*.

The **Middleton's** soon joined California Aiseki Kai and many members took advantage of **Gail's** expertise. How many *daiza* had he made over the years? He would only say that his personal collection contained more than a hundred!

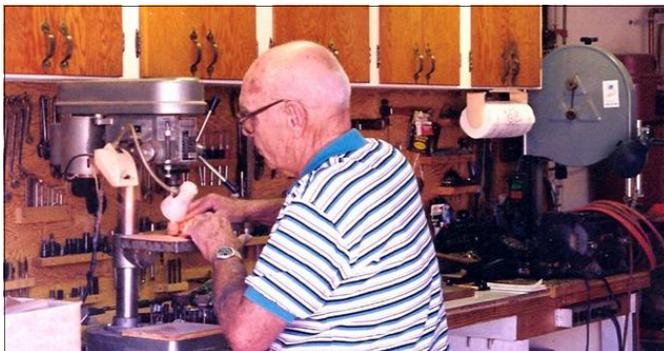
His favorite wood was walnut, both American and black. He finished his creations by sanding with 150/220/320 cloth backed paper from Switzerland and finally a wet/dry 500 with Watco oil. After drying he added another coat of Watco oil (no staining) and then added three to five coats of Watco wax and a final buff with muslin using a Dremel.

His advice for beginners was to pay particular attention to proper fit to obtain a "finished" look. Also, if possible, keep the legs at an odd number and avoid placing a leg at the center of the stone.

Because **Dorothy** loved small desert stones and had a fabulous collection of miniature suiseki and desert stones, it followed that **Gail** had to learn to create very small, delicate *daiza*. He quickly developed the distinction as arguably the best in his field.

His smallest masterpiece was one for a sinuous mountain range stone (*renzan-seki*) that measured 2 and 3/4 inches in length and a diminutive 1/8 inch wide.

The **Middleton's** have five stones with accompanying *daiza* proudly displayed in the North American Suiseki and Viewing Stone Collection at the National Arboretum in Washington, D.C. **Gail** passed away in 2002.



Gail working in his shop.



Two of Gail and Dorothy's stones in the National Viewing Stone Collection. The one on the left is only 4" wide and the one below is 5 1/4" wide.



This article has been gently reworded from a previously published one in Waiting To Be Discovered

## Coming Suiseki Events

### SAN FRANCISCO SUISEKI KAI

25th Annual Exhibit, August 19-20 Sakura Room, Radisson Miyako Hotel, 1625 Post St. SF. 10-5.

### INTERNATIONAL STONE APPRECIATION SYMPOSIUM

September 28-October 1, Holiday Inn in Grantville, PA. **Uhaku Sudo**, headmaster of the *Keido* School of display, will be the guest speaker from Japan. Aiseki Kai members will be on the program, among them, **Jim Greaves** will speak on West Coast *Suiseki*, **Hideko Metaxas** will speak on Ikebana, **Mas Nakajima** will speak on *Suiseki* Display and **Dr Tom Elias** will speak on the Mystery of Chrysanthemum Stones. **Nina** has registration forms. For additional information, contact **Glenn Reusch** 540.672.5699 or go to [www.stoneshow2006.com](http://www.stoneshow2006.com).

## ASK GUY JIM

Continued from pg 4

[I do not know whether or not it is an issue in Europe]. California Aiseki Kai long ago avoided this debate by consciously choosing to forgo the use of *suiseki* in the club's name, instead choosing *aiseki* (love stone). While the club emphasizes the merits of uncut stones, its annual show at the Huntington Library in San Marino is officially presented as an **Exhibition of Viewing Stones and *Suiseki*** to sidestep the seemingly unanswerable question you raise.

GuyJim

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for GuyJim to [jimgreaves@adelphia.net](mailto:jimgreaves@adelphia.net) or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

## Refreshments

Thanks to **Linda, Joseph Gaytan, Joe James, Sachiko & Jack, Kyra,** and **Harry** for the July treats.

August delights will be provided by **Larry & Nina, Akio** and **Janet & Phil**.



Our annual show at the Huntington is fast approaching. It is not too soon to start thinking about your displays. If you haven't already done so, make sure that you have the appropriate *daiza* or *suiban*, the correct sand and the just right *jiban*. Although some displays will not require a *jiban* since we also use risers, you never know if that will be true for your display so please be prepared. Think about a 2 or 3 piece display and what you will need. Not sure? Please ask **Jim** or **Larry**.

Likely show dates are after Christmas [Dec 27 or 28] until after New Years [Jan 2].

The members of Aiseki Kai extend heart felt condolences to John and Pat Palmer on the loss of their son, Alex.

The Nanpu Kai show will be at the Japanese American Community Cultural Center in Little Tokyo August 19-20. This bonsai show is part of the Nisei Week Celebration.

## Contact People

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## Newsletter Committee

**August Contributing Editors:** Linda Gill, Ray Yeager, Jim Greaves, Kathleen Emerson-Dell, Larry Ragle.

**Reproduction and Mailing:** Elizabeth Partch  
**Coordination/Design:** Nina Ragle

We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

**Ragle  
P.O. Box 4975  
Laguna Beach CA 92652**

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**



*Leaves no stone unturned*

*See us on the web*

**aiseikikai.com**



## Coming Events

### REDWOOD EMPIRE BONSAI SOCIETY

The 23rd Annual Bonsai Show, August 26-27, Santa Rosa Veterans Building, 1351 Maple Ave. Santa Rosa. Sat 10-5. Sun 10-4. Sales. **Kathy Shaner** demo at 1:30 each day. Door prizes and benefit drawing. Info: **Bob Shimon** 707.884.4126 or shimon@mcn.org. See rebsbonsai.org

### SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB

41st Annual Show, Sept 30-Oct 1, Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Rm, 101. San Diego. 10-5. Demos 11 & 2 each day. Sales area. Info: **Joan Berkwitz** 760.431.1014

### KOFU BONSAI KAI

Bonsai Exhibition, Oct 7-8, Fullerton Arboretum, 1900 Associated Rd at Yorba Linda Blvd, Fullerton. 10-4 both days. Demos 10:30 & 1 each day. Potluck reception and benefit drawing on Sat. 6:30-10PM. Info: Paul DeRose 714.637.4592

This is a new location! Don't miss this special event!

### CONEJO VALLEY BONSAI SOCIETY

3rd Annual Bonsai Exhibition, Oct 14-15, Resource Center, Gardens of the World, 2001 Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks. 9-4. Demos 11 & 2 in the Japanese Garden Pagoda. No sales. Info: **Nat Stein** 805.374.9668

### GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION

Convention XXIX "Bonsai by the River" Nov 2-5, Double Tree Hotel, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento. Rooms \$105. Free parking. **Masahiko Kimura**, the magician from Japan, **Kathy Shaner**, **Lindsay Shiba**. For information and registration forms, see *Golden Statements* July/August issue. Support the Federation. Join your friends for all the fun!

### CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

The 50th Anniversary Convention 2007, May 31- June 3, 2007 at the Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 1202 Harbor Blvd., Anaheim/Garden Grove. Featured demonstrator will be **Hiroshi Takeyama**, Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association. For more information, call 909.473.0099

### GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION

Convention XXX Oct 31-Nov 4, 2007 at the Bahai Resort Hotel, 998 West Mission Bay Drive, San Diego.

**CA Aiseki Kai** meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1700 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor.