



## The February Program

The 28th will be an extra special evening. **Kemin Hu**, noted author and authority on Scholars' Rocks, will be our guest speaker.

**Kemin Hu's** power point program will include:

- The Collection and Appreciation of Scholars' Rocks
- The Philosophy of Scholars' Rocks
- Judgment of Scholars' Rocks
- Type of Stones
- Positioning the Stone
- Choosing the Stand Style



Taihu stone



Lingbi stone

**This evening at the Huntington will be held in the Ahmanson Classroom at the Botanical Center, 7:30.**

**Directions:** Enter the main gate off Allen St and stay on the outer road of the parking lot until you come to the second security booth and turn right. After the turn you will see covered parking spaces on your right, park there based on availability. Once full, use the main lot. The classroom is another 100 yards past the parking area to the right of a small traffic circle.

If you have a copy of any of **Kemin Hu's** books, please bring it along. She has graciously agreed to autograph them for us.

## Don't let this be your last newsletter

Is there an "X" on your address label? That means you have forgotten to pay your dues. Please don't let this be your last newsletter.

Please send your \$8.00 (payable to Aiseki Kai) to:  
**Nina Ragle, P.O. Box 4975, Laguna Beach CA 92652.**  
 Be sure to include your email address, mailing address, and phone number.

## Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 11

*Yugen* in Japanese art implies mysterious skills that can be felt but not put into words.

*The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?*

There is no way that I could have predicted just how perfect our first year, 1983, would play out, from that near riot the first night to a fantastic group rock hunt on the Kern River on October 30<sup>th</sup>. But after the trip it looked like the year would end with a whimper.

Thanksgiving trumped the November meeting and we had no plans for December, that is, until I got a call from **Tony Thomas**. **Tony** was the "third card" of the holy trinity of desert stoners, along with **Melba Tucker** and **Cliff Johnson**. More about **Tony** later.

That day **Tony** had an offer. First, he was inviting **Nina** and me to join a group on a trip to the desert, in fact, to Lake Hill, the most sacred of all of their secret hunting grounds. The group included **Melba** and her husband, **Ned**, and **Cliff**, **Toy** and **Yuzy Sato** and a special guest from New York.

Further, if we could arrange for a club meeting between Christmas and New Years, his guest would present a program on viewing stones. The guest was **Dr. Vincent Covello**, author of *The Japanese Art of Stone Appreciation*, with co-author **Yuji Yoshimura**. The book was "in progress" at the time so we were going to get a sneak preview. One phone call to the Museum of Science and Industry and we had a meeting room. The trip to the desert was a first ever for **Nina** and me and was surreal. I'll get to that on another day.

In the January 1984 newsletter I wrote that **Dr. Covello's** program began with slides that first established the history of suiseki and slides of both Japanese and Chinese styles. Although history establishes that early (1400) Chinese stones have the same character as those we appreciate in today's Japanese collections, contemporary Chinese styles are drastically different. He completed the program by drawing a chart that compared the qualities that differentiate Japanese from Chinese styles.

What a program, what a night, what a year!

Next: **Tony Thomas** and our trip to the desert.

No meeting in Gardena this month! Go to the Huntington!

# Our Holiday Party



Alice, Jim and Kiyo mull over the merits of this raffle prize.



Marge seems quite pleased with her new piece of the green.



Richard closely examines the possibilities.



A potluck always brings out the best !



Continued on pg 7

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



## Spring Collecting Trip *by Jack Dennis*

Our Yuha collecting trip is set for **March 3-4**. We will meet at the end of Alpine Village on Alpine Blvd, east of South Grade Road. This is the site of a new shopping center (under construction). We will leave promptly at 8:00AM on Saturday the 3rd so let's get lined up and ready to go beginning at 7:45. Please be on time!

About a half hour into our trip, we will make a brief pit stop at the Buckman Springs rest area which is about 25 miles east of Alpine. This will be your last chance prior to exiting the highway into the desert. In the desert you must find your own creosote bush – not to worry the flora and fauna are used to it.

**THE PLANNED TRAIL:** We will travel east about 47 miles on Highway 8 to the Dunaway exit (about 50 minutes). We will turn south approximately ¼ mile. I will slow the caravan as we approach the turn – when all vehicles are queued we will proceed into the desert. The center of the collecting field is approximately 2 miles. There is one area approximately 1½ miles into the desert called '**the wash**' which is usually impassable for vehicles not equipped with 4 wheel drive. We will pause here to try and get as many vehicles across as possible. Those who have low slung cars cross only at their own risk. (These vehicles are not made for off-road exploring.) If you get stuck in the sand which is not uncommon we will pull you out but any damage to your vehicle is your responsibility. On some vehicles there isn't any suitable place for a tow hookup and it is possible that damage can occur to your undercarriage. In these cases it would be wise for you to park and catch a ride to the stones with someone who has room. Or wait for the trail boss to shuttle you to the rock field. If all goes well we should be collecting stones before 10 AM. This will give us 5 hours of collecting less the time it will take for you to eat your lunch. Please do not leave the caravan and travel in the desert on your own – we must stay within 25 feet of the route – there is no cross country travel in the Yuha. **Please do not move and park your vehicle out of the site of the main body of cars.** Call me (619) 659-1195 for trail information.

**FACILITIES IN ALPINE:** **Janet's Montana Café** 2506 Alpine Blvd. and the **Bread Basket** 1347 Tavern Road located in the Alpine Creek Shopping Center are suggested for breakfast. The **AYERS INN** for sleeping over is the only game in town – make your own deal. 1251 Tavern Road; phone 619.445.5800 (it fills fast on weekends). The two restaurants in the village that get the most business are the **Alpine Inn**, a steakhouse, and the **La Mediterranean**, the best restaurant in San Diego Co. (according to some). Be prepared to pay big. There

are a few others that have recently opened. A trip up and down Alpine Blvd. will reveal a few Mexican places and some Italian restaurants as well. There is one Chinese place called the **Panda Machi** – not too shabby and cheap but zip on atmosphere.

**GAS:** Alpine Blvd. about half way through town going east on your left is the **Country Station** and on the right is the **SHELL station**. They are both owned by the same guy. Be sure to leave Alpine with a full tank. We do not plan on stopping anywhere on the route for gas.

**FOOD AND DRINK:** If you want to eat, drink and be at all merry while you are collecting rocks in the desert you must bring it with you. There are no facilities in the desert. It is a good idea to bring plenty of drinking water.

**EXITING THE DESERT:** We will begin our exit out of the desert promptly at 3 P.M on Saturday. Wear a watch.

**MOTEL ACCOMODATIONS:** Sachiko and I plan to stay at the **BEST WESTERN John Jay Inn** located approximately 20 miles from the access to the desert at 2352 S. 4<sup>th</sup> St. in El Centro - (760) 337-8677.

Alternatively, you may wish to book a more modest accommodation in that famous and luxurious Motel 6 – (760) 353-6766 or (800) 466-8356. The **MOTEL 6** is located at 395 Smoketree Dr. just to the north of the Best Western. They will leave a light on for you but little else. The pool area is undergoing maintenance and is closed for the season. Reportedly, both motels book cheaper on-line. Make your own deal.

**PARTY TIME:** Bar-be-que facilities near the pool are reportedly available at the **BEST WESTERN**; weather permitting, we plan to have our usual social at or about 5:00 PM. If the weather is uncooperative (always a danger) we will execute plan B.

**Important!** You must call **Barry Josephson** at 714.544.8399 or you can email him at [bmjige@cox.net](mailto:bmjige@cox.net) to let us know if you are going on the trip. You must be a paid member of Aiseki Kai for insurance purposes to join the group.

**WEATHER:** The desert is certainly fickle but March is probably the best of months - the winter storms are usually over by then and it doesn't get really hot until mid-April. The long range forecast says fair weather through March. It is suggested that you dress in layers.



## Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

***On the internet and at conventions, we are seeing more and more jade, petrified wood, and even minerals such as malachite being sold as suiseki. Even though some examples may be beautiful, it has always been my understanding that these materials are not traditional. I have also noticed that you, yourself, have displayed jade in the past and recently accepted an example of petrified wood for our last exhibition at the Huntington Library. Are we now considering such materials for suiseki and viewing stones?***

*Myionu, Mission Hills*

Dear Myionu,

Along with your jade, petrified wood and malachite, we might as well mention the Chinese inclusion of azurite, turquoise, fossilized coral, stalactites, crystals, meteorites, and even actual roots! My understanding is in agreement with yours: none of these materials are acceptable within the practice of traditional *suiseki*, or more precisely, *san sui kei jo-seki* (landscape view stones). As far as they go, neither clearly places these materials in any given category: all but the actual non-fossilized wood could conceivably be included under the general headings of *chin-seki* (rare stones) *biseki* (beautiful, worked stones) *chusho-seki* (abstract stones) or possibly, just *kobutsu hyohon* (mineral specimens), depending upon the nature of the individual stone.

[The two translations of the Japanese Murata-Naga Stone Classification Chart that I possess don't quite jibe on the placement of *chusho-seki*, (abstract stones), one treating it as a side-branch of *suiseki* and one treating it as a separate heading outside the *suiseki* heading. We must await a definitive translation that hopefully will include a flexed-out context from the original accompanying text]. It would appear that the best examples in any category might be categorized as *meiseki* (masterpiece). In China, where approaches are more fluid, all these materials are often found under the umbrella of *gongshi*.

I'll briefly address the materials you specifically mentioned plus turquoise. I have another inquiry concerning crystals and will discuss them in the future. Hopefully, we can agree to see the coral as a mineral specimen, stalactites as natural wonders that should be left in situ, wood as wood, or all as natural *objets d'art* and leave it at that.

Regarding Jade: I cannot recall seeing a piece of jade identified as a *suiseki* in a Japanese publication. By some standards it would be considered to be too hard a mineral or, perhaps, too glossy. But whether the lack of jade *suiseki* reflects a conscious, absolute rejection or simply a lack of suitable natural jade in Japan, I cannot answer. Undoubtedly, you have seen the polished jades that are common in Chinese publications and stone shops. The few examples of North American jade



Nephrite jade mountain stone, Northern California

exhibited thus far in the California Aiseki Kai shows have been natural cobbles of nephrite that were representative of the traditional classifications. Unlike the popular carved or polished jades from Asia, the stones from California and Washington are naturally river or ocean worn and many have decomposed rinds

which impart softer textures and muted colors; some, called 'Vulcan' jade, have been exposed to great heat and exhibit incredibly deep, subtle browns and yellows. Botryoidal nephrite with its grape-like surface bumps is a



Vulcan jade mountain stone, N California

rarity found in California. Wyoming jade is found on the desert surface where it also develops a hard light colored rind. These jade 'slicks' have been virtually collected out of existence! In summary, I would argue that natural jade cobbles and boulders are suitable material for viewing stones and, when exhibiting subtle surfaces, even for consideration as *suiseki*.



A miniature mountain cut from a Wyoming jade slick



Regarding Turquoise: Turquoise would seem to offer possibilities primarily as a *biseki*. A rare cobble with a subtle natural patina could conceivably be found with a landscape form or, more probably, a pebble might suggest a figure – one only has to think of a Zuni animal fetish to see the latter possibilities. Turquoise might be more at home in the Chinese tradition, especially examples where the nodules could be read as piled-up mountains or billowing, cloud-like forms.

Regarding Petrified Wood: I do believe I have seen a few examples of petrified wood in Japanese *suseki* publications, but as these magazines, especially the older ones, often included advertisements and stones of dubious quality, I suspect that petrified wood would not be considered acceptable for traditional *suseki*. The Chinese have long appreciated petrified wood. In the *Spirit of Gongshi*, **Kemin Hu** illustrates ‘Small Elegance,’ a piece of petrified wood purported to be from the Song times. Again, in *Modern Chinese Scholars’ Rocks*, she mentions that petrified wood was first mentioned in *Stone Catalogue of Cloudy Forest (Yunlin Shipu)* of the Song dynasty. The Chinese seem to accept petrified wood in all its ramifications with traditional emphasis on un-worked natural forms (similar to some of what we find in the Yuha Desert, but generally larger) and more recent interest in brighter, polished slabs.

For acceptance in our exhibitions, I look for a more literal, realistic miniaturization of geomorphological prototypes than I would desire/require in a more traditional material. Bright color and some typical blocky cracks might be acceptable, but any sharp edges, cracks, color bands, etc. should fit the prototypical form.

You mentioned the stone in our last show; it is a good example collected by **John Palmer** from the desert in New Mexico: the color is relatively subdued and the banding generally follows a natural form; the butte-mesa form is well proportioned and although the edges



Mesa of petrified wood, by John Palmer, New Mexico

are sharp they are not recently broken; the surface has been softly etched by wind and sand – finally, the overall display forms a balanced unit reflecting *suseki* tradition, even if not material. Note, however, that to date we have never accepted a piece of polished

petrified wood, even as a *biseki* and we have rejected both landscape and animal forms because of the fractures and coarseness of the stones.

Regarding Malachite: Malachite (and/or to a lesser extent, azurite) has been prized in the East and West since ancient times. It has been included in anything from jewelry to furniture – in these cases it is almost invariably worked and polished to maximize rich colors and patterns. Specimen sized examples, whether natural or polished, are a must in any mineral collection. It seems unlikely that the Chinese stone connoisseurs were clearly differentiating between art stones and specimens – one finds examples of highly polished malachite presented in the same manner as other scholars’ rocks.



Polished malachite presented in Gongshi style

Malachite, as commonly seen, is decorative, bright, bold, and beautiful; it dazzles the eye, but in its worked form it is seldom subtle! It is most often the antithesis to *suseki*.

In *Worlds Within Worlds*, **Robert D. Mowry** does include a Chinese malachite that was finished as a rather subtle mountain form and sent to the Japanese market; the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century Japanese inscription, “Malachite Display Piece,” on the storage box suggests that it was considered suitable for use in a *tokonoma*. However, this does not indicate that it was considered to be an actual *suseki*. At least until we have a better understanding of terms, worked malachite-azurite would seem to be more properly considered as *biseki*.

Even in the case of natural malachite (including azurite and a myriad of other copper based minerals) the appellation of *suseki* may be ruled out on the basis of physical characteristics such as bright color, crystalline form, brittleness, natural glassiness, etc. Stones with these characteristics at first truly overwhelm the senses; there is visual overload.



Natural nodules of malachite form a mountain of clouds

Our Show

...continued



Marybel Balendonck



Hatsumi Kitani (Japan)



Nina Ragle (China)



Jim Barrett (Japan)



Hanne Povlsen



Ralph Johnson



Nina Ragle



Don Kruger



Ken McLeod



John Palmer



Nina Ragle



Kaz Yoneda



Jim & Alice Greaves



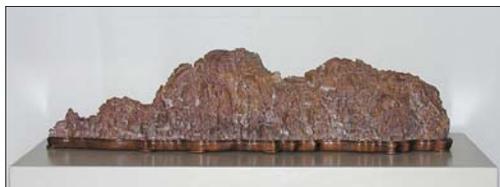
Ken McLeod



Harry Hirao



Kiyo Yoneda



Cliff Johnson

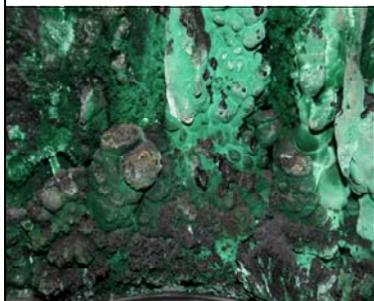


Linda Gill

GuyJim

continued from pg 5.

However, if one takes the time to let the immediate impact reside, one will find that many of the finest examples, as epitomized by *meiseki* in the **Ralph Johnson** Collection, transcend the theoretical limitations of the material, and provide true ‘views’

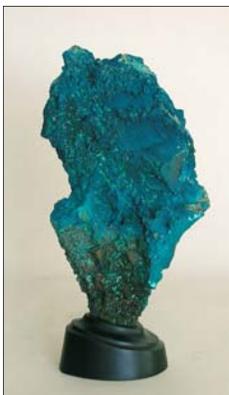


Detail of natural malachite: A glimpse of an other- worldly, inner universe

that may be contemplated and revisited, again and again. The viewer may make a connection to the Chinese worlds within worlds concepts, especially when presented with large cavities layered with fantastic, velvety crystalline forms.

So, even if *suseki* they are not, we see that with the best malachite-azurite we have traveled fully around the circle to meet at the point where the most extravagant stones come close to fulfilling many of the same contemplative and soul-soothing functions of the simple *suseki*. ... With *suseki* one may contemplate the world and maybe the universe; with malachite-azurite you may be able to contemplate heaven itself!

[Notes: When viewing the best malachite-azurite, the experience of the ‘viewing’, itself, differs from that of viewing *suseki* in that the stones tactile surfaces are visually palpable. Unfortunately, with the malachite and azurite, even more than with other stones, it is nearly impossible to photograph or even video the depth and detail of colors and forms to transmit the experience of viewing under natural conditions.



Azurite

A final observation is that there often appears to be a correlation between the stone size and its success as an object for deep contemplation versus being a simple specimen or *biseki* form. While not all larger examples of malachite-azurite are conducive to contemplation, most of those that do invite contemplation are medium to larger stones. It may just be personal, but for me there seems to be a threshold size before the stone leaves the specimen behind and invites me to explore its inner world].

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 or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

### Holiday Party

continued from pg 2.

We had a swell turn out for the holiday party. 60-70 folks brought loads of raffle items and goodies for the potluck. What a feast! We had one first timer; welcome **Mike Suzuki**. We thanked all our members for adding to the richness that is Aiseki Kai and honored those whose service has been exceptional, **Jim and Alice Greaves, Bill and Lois Hutchinson, Linda Gill, Joe James and Marge Blasingame**.

Party goers were also in for a special treat. **Ralph Johnson** provided us with gift copies of **Kemin Hu**'s latest book, "Modern Chinese Scholar's Rocks- A Guide for Collectors". Thank you, **Ralph!**

**Kemin** has agreed to autograph her books at the February meeting so bring them along.

### Refreshments

Thanks to **Everyone** who brought awesome goodies to the yummy potluck for our holiday party! The February refreshments will be provided by the club so just come and enjoy.



### Contact People

<b>Programs:</b> Larry Ragle	949.497.5626	cfsmail@cox.net
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<b>Newsletter:</b> Larry and Nina Ragle	949.497.5626	ragle@cox.net



### Newsletter Committee

**February Contributors:** Jim Greaves, Jack Dennis and Larry Ragle.

**Photo credits:** Ragle, Palmer, Yeager, Greaves

**Mailing:** Flash Partch

**Editor:** Nina Ragle

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

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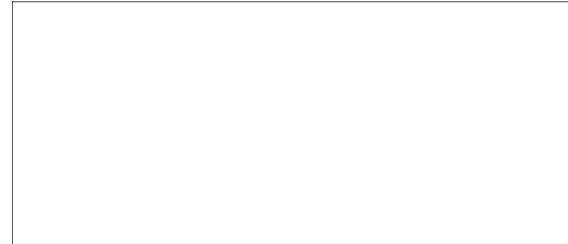
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



*Leaves no stone unturned*

See us on the web

[aiseikikai.com](http://aiseikikai.com)



If there is an "X" on your address label, you have not paid your dues. This will be your last newsletter.

## Coming Events

### BONSAI-A-THON XI

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 24 -25, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30. Repeat, it's a fundraiser. Bring donations. Early bird specials, breakfast, lunch, auctions, raffles, vendors, children and adult novice workshops. Demonstrations both days and demo material will be auctioned. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: 626.579.0420 or email: [blasmrjr@aol.com](mailto:blasmrjr@aol.com)

### SAN JOSE BETSUIN BONSAI CLUB

37th Annual Spring Exhibit, March 31-April 1, San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, 640 North Fifth St., San Jose. Sat 12-5, Sun 11-4. Benefit drawing and sales area.

### CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

The Golden Anniversary Show and Convention, May 31-June 3, Crowne Plaza Anaheim Resort, 1202 Harbor Blvd., Anaheim/Garden Grove. Featured demonstrators will be **Hiroshi Takeyama**, Chairman, Nippon Bonsai Association, and **Hirotoishi Saito**, internationally known teacher. For more information, call registrar **May McNey** 714.738.0879 or email **Lindsay Shiba** [ljshiba@juno.com](mailto:ljshiba@juno.com). Hotel reservations: 866.888.8891. For even more information see their website: [california-bonsai-society.org](http://california-bonsai-society.org).

## Harry's 90th Birthday Bash

Everyone is invited to help celebrate on March 12th at 6 PM at the Paracel Restaurant in Westminster, 15583 Brookhurst St. \$20 per person, pay at the door, cash preferred. Call Nina at 949-497-5626 or email her at [ragle@cox.net](mailto:ragle@cox.net) to reserve a seat. Please make your reservation now while you are thinking about it! This will be a special event!

*Sotsuju* ~ age 90 is the age of auspiciousness according to the old Japanese way of naming the decades of our lives. The name originates from the fact that when the Chinese character *sotsu* (soldier) is written in cursive style, it resembles the Chinese number 90. It is also known as *kameju*, *kame* meaning "turtle," because the turtle or tortoise is a symbol of longevity.



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.