



The October Program

October 25th : We plan to share what we learned from **Ohaku Sudo** at the Stone Appreciation Symposium in Pennsylvania last month. The focus will be on suiseki display according to the Keido School. **Mr Sudo** gave 3 talks and a critique so we have quite a bit to draw from. This should be very useful as we are getting ready for our annual show at the Huntington.

This will also be our last meeting of the year so please don't miss it.

It is time to think about which stones you plan to display so you can tell **Bill**. He needs to know the classification and place of origin for each stone for the labels. Each member may show up to 5 stones. **Bill** will also need to know if you are planning a *tokonoma* style table display. We are not mailing a form this year so do not wait for it to tell him what you will be showing. Deadline is Dec 6.

Stone of the Month

At this year's show we will use our *tokonoma* to display the Year of the Dog...

Please bring your best dog shaped stone (*dobutsu-seki*, animal shaped stone) to the meeting. Keep in mind that this stone will require a *daiza*. If you don't already have one, there may still be time before the show...

Perhaps yours will be the *keisho-seki* (object stone) Jim will use in our special display!

Let's improve...

If you do not have a dog shaped stone, bring in a stone display you hope to exhibit but may have questions about. This will be particularly helpful for our newer members but we can all use the opportunity to improve. Let's make sure all the displays this year are even better than last year!

Buried in a Landslide of Yugen

Part 8

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

The Many Mysteries of Suiseki. Why Aiseki Kai?

Allow me to step back in this narrative of "Why Aiseki Kai?" Yesterday I dug into the storage boxes holding all the early Aiseki Kai paper work and found the original meeting notices from 1983. Remember, if you read Part 5, that first meeting came very close to being our last, considering the vast divergence of opinions.

Bob Watson, the most vocal of the group, agreed to be our first program.

The hand written announcement of **Watson's** program was titled, "**Suiseki, Viewing Stone or Rock?**" In the first paragraph, as it turns out, I predicted what would be the destiny of our club. I wrote, "*Help us try to answer that question. Hopefully it will take many months of exciting meetings, workshops, trips and exhibitions to find the answer. Maybe we will never agree but we will have some great times along the way.*" It has all come true. We have had 200+ exciting and informative meetings and workshops, 20+ formal exhibitions, semi-annual field trips and 21 fabulous holiday parties. Yet we haven't reached unanimous agreement on the definition of a suiseki. That is why Aiseki Kai is a viewing stone club, not a suiseki 'exclusive' club. The club's official definition of suiseki conforms with **Toy Sato's**, a small natural stone suggestive of a landscape scene. (For more on that subject see Page 5.)

For our third meeting in May, **Toy Sato** continued to define the basics of suiseki. She provided handouts with drawings of every landscape shape, emphasizing the need for front, back, two appropriate sides and a flat as possible bottom.

Cliff Johnson, stone collector and *daiza* carver, was our third speaker. **Cliff**, still active in the club and very busy carving *daiza*, teamed up with **Melba Tucker** and **Tony Thomas** to clean the desert floor of ventifact, stones carved by wind blown sand. **Cliff** showed slides of western scenes and compared them to stones in his collection and then showed us how he created *daiza* from a block of wood to a piece of art.

Next: **Elmer Uchida** – a gentle and inspirational man.

Larry Ragle

September Meeting Notes by Barry Josephson

ANNOUNCEMENTS- **Richard Aguirre** announced that in January or February, L.A. County will host a one day symposium for its employees to show something different in life and it would be great to have our club have a viewing stone show at that time.

SEPTEMBER STONE OF THE MONTH - Single peak mountain stones -*koho-gata* or *koho-seki*

Bruce McGinnis showed a stone on a *daiza* from the Eel River. **Bonnie Schwartz** had a Yuha stone. **Ann Horton** showed a stone on a *daiza* with a very flat natural bottom. **Lee Roberts** showed a stone from Dumont Dunes in a *suiban*. **Hanne Povlsen** showed one that came to her by way of **Frank English**. Stones in *suiban* were also shown by **Harry Hirao** and **Mas Moriguchi**. **Don Mullally** showed an Indian Chief and 2 Japanese prints. **Bill Hutchinson** showed 2 stones on *daiza* from the Eel River. **Lois Hutchinson** showed one stone from the Eel River and one from Mojave. **Marybel Balendonck** showed 2 stones on walnut bases. **Manny Martinez** showed a stone from Glacier Bay, Alaska and **Howie Kawahara** had 3 stones from Alaska. **Larry Ragle** showed 2 Eel River single peaked stones.



Mas



Harry



Manny



Howie



Larry



Larry

Coming early to the meeting really helped **Larry** get pictures of your stones. Let's do that again in October.



Akio



Bruce



Bonnie



Hanne



Bill



Phil



Lois



Ann



Schedule of Events at the Huntington

Dec 23– set up day. Tables and backdrops will be set up beginning at 9AM. **Have your displays at the Huntington between 12-3.** ←

Dec 27– 31 show opens at 10 and closes at 4:30

Jan 1– closed for New Years

Jan 2– open 10-4:30. Take down at 4:30.

Please do not forget to sign up for security / docent duty! **Linda** is waiting to hear from you. See page 7 for the schedule. Check your calendar, select times you will be available to help and call **Linda** with the dates and times.

Bill needs to know what you plan to display so he can make the labels. Make sure you tell him the classification and place of origin for each of your stones. Limit 5. He also needs to know if you are planning a *tokonoma* style table display. **Deadline for Bill is Dec 6th.** 714.964.6973 or hutch@aisekikai.com

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



September Program Notes by Barry Josephson

The highlight of the very well attended evening was the *daiza* and *jiban* presentation by **Al Nelson**. **Al** prefaced his talk with a few quotes:

Richard Ota: *What you see is not what I see.*

John Naka: *Be as flexible as bamboo in the wind.*

Ray Yeager: *A daiza sets the stone apart, giving it authority.*

Al began by showing photos of different kinds of *daiza* illustrating the need for legs, their placement, and that the *daiza* should merely frame the stone and not overpower it. He showed how the stone and the *daiza* should compliment each other. The photos showed that Chinese tradition appreciates elaborate stands while the



The Japanese style above and an older Chinese style on the right.



Japanese prefer simple, quiet stands. He also showed photos of how a too heavy *daiza* can be reworked.

Al asked, “Why build a *daiza* when an assortment of *suiban* and sand works fine?” He reminded us that we do not display figure stones or pattern stones in *suiban*. He also said that a *daiza* can show a stone to advantage, enhancing a view similar to a beautiful painting in a wooden frame.

Al explained all the details of *daiza* making from start to finish.

Daiza can be made from bondo, or routed out in wood. **Al** favors walnut with cherry with Honduras mahogany a close second. They are semi-hard, close grained, and easy to work with and produce a beautiful long lasting finish. Oak is very opened grained and produces a poor finish. Redwood and Philippine mahogany are too soft. Basswood, **Cliff Johnson**'s favorite, is semi-soft, easy to work with, straight and tight grained, can be filled in with wood filler and needs to be painted. **Al** does not favor this wood since he likes to see the hardwood figuring show through.

He reminded us not to place the end grain in the front of the base as you will be unable to see any figuring of the wood, it will be uninteresting and it may warp.

He told us that when wood is first milled it has high water content. It is then air or kiln dried and then sent to the lumber yard for sale. It is advisable to seal the ends with latex paint to reduce cracking.

Al explained about sanding and staining. He discussed his favorite colors and said that the color of the stain should harmonize with the stone color, i.e., never use a light base with a dark colored stone.

He talked about the pros and cons of using bondo. He shared the guidelines for the height of the *daiza*, [1/5 to 1/7 of the stones height except very tall stones] and the number and placement of the legs [always at the outer ends of the base to show visual support]. He discussed the methods used with both uncut and cut stones.

If a *daiza* becomes warped, remove the finish to bare wood, place *daiza* and a dampened towel in a plastic bag and slow steam to introduce moisture back into the wood, then set the stone on a straight flat surface to dry, re-sand, stain and finish.

Al also talked about design [wall treatment] and redesign. He said that if you are unhappy with a *daiza*, most can be modified. They can be reduced in size, feet added or removed and the color can be changed.

Finally, he talked about *jiban* which are used under *suiban*, *daiza* and bonsai accent pieces. They may be built out of sheets of ¼ x 4 x 8 sheets of tempered masonite, cut to size, routed over the edges, sanded and painted. Thank you, **Al** the Gourmet Wood-man.

(For more about **Al**, see pg 6.)



Hanne works with **Al** setting her stone in florist's foam.

Following the break, members brought up small sized stones and **Al** selected 7 to be set in green florist's foam and shaped the bases and painted them black as a model for a future wooden *daiza*. **Al** was assisted by **Manny Martinez** and **Bill Hutchinson**. This was a lot of fun!



Ann & Bill paint her “*daiza*”, Hanne & **Al** define the design of her future *daiza*, Phil & Howie & Manny cut and shape the foam.

Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

It seems that many suiseki collectors become defensive when someone says that they collect rocks and proceed to emphasize that they collect stones, not rocks. What, if any, are the distinguishing differences between a rock and a stone?

Rocky Stoner

Dear Stoner ...err, Rocky,

The eye and ear of the beholder? Actually, we mostly collect boulders – an ugly fact that most *suiseki* collectors would be even quicker to deny! The rock-stone question has many answers, some conflicting because the two terms are in fact commonly interchanged. In strict geological terms the primary difference in usage is that rock most often refers to a large mass of mineral material, whereas, stone refers to disassociated, discrete pieces of that material. It is interesting to note in Chinese, “The written symbol for the word stone, which represents radical 112, comprises the character *k’ou*, depicting a fragment of rock detached or fallen from a cliff.” (C.A.S. Williams, **Outlines of Chinese Symbolism and Art Motives**, p.374).

My guess is that ‘stones’ became the accepted term for our pursuit simply because ‘*suiseki* stones’ (even if redundant) and ‘viewing stones’ are more euphonic than ‘*suiseki* rocks’ and ‘viewing rocks’. There may also be an attempt, unconsciously, or overtly, to put some distance between we sophisticated *suiseki* collectors and mere mortal rock hounds. Let’s face it, ‘stone’ is what Michelangelo turned into sculpture and architects turn into columns and facades. In these examples ‘stone’ implies a higher refinement by the hand of man. When the workmanship of man is not emphasized, as is the case in most landscape gardening, the preference is usually for the term ‘rocks’. Notable exceptions would be for ‘stone’ pathways and rivers of ‘stone’, both uses consistent with the concept of ‘stones’ as smaller, discrete units, especially those worn smooth by reductive processes.

Similar to rocks in the garden, *suiseki* stones are selected and arranged for viewing. From this perspective one might expect them to be called ‘rocks’, but their smaller size and worn forms and surfaces, both indicative of long disassociation from the parent rock, are characteristics more often attributed to ‘stones’. The term ‘viewing stones’ meets the same criteria and, interestingly, the act of cutting stones decisively adds the element of ‘the hand of man’. The ‘stone’ preference is augmented with any consideration of viewing stones and *suiseki* as an art form. [As an

interesting aside, pictographs found on the fixed walls of caves and cliffs are commonly referred to as ‘rock art’, not ‘stone art’, the latter term having the connotation of portability].

Now about collecting boulders! Regardless of common perceptions, a boulder is the standard geological term for any disassociated rock (thus a stone) that is over 10” in any given dimension. Therefore, most *suiseki* and viewing stones are technically boulders. Our remaining treasures are cobbles, the term covering the 2 –10” range. Fortunately for our egos, pebbles, another less than exciting term, range from 0.1 – 2” and only pose an affront to *mame* fanatics! For the sake of completion, the sand in our *suiban* might be either small pebbles or true ‘sand’ with grain size of less than 0.1 inch. The cloudy stuff we hopefully wash out of our sand is silt and finally clay. Now for the big question: Should our next exhibition flyer read:

California Aiseki Kai

presents

‘Cobbles and Boulders for Your Viewing Pleasure’



Guy Jim

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 Guy Jim to jimgreaves@adelphia.net or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

SUISEKI, VIEWING STONE, OR ROCK?

AN EDITORIAL BY LARRY RAGLE

I received this query last week: "I'm taking a ceramics class. We use real clay and other natural material and extreme heat and pressure to create interesting shapes, just like nature. I have created these two landscape scenes, photos 1 and 2, one a snow capped mountain with a waterfall and one that suggests a volcano. When my friends come over I burn incense in the hole at the top of the volcano so it really looks like the real thing. It looks real cool and makes the house smell nice. Can I enter them in your suiseki contest?" I'm kidding, of course, but it raises an interesting question, "Can one create a suiseki?"



To Cut or Not to Cut! That is the Question! What is the Meaning of Natural? These were the issues at our first organizational meeting in 1983. After a heated chaotic evening we all agreed on just one thing, all of our collections were indeed, rocks. Beyond that, things were left up in the air, and that's hard to do when you are dealing with rocks.

Bob Watson's position that night was close to what he had written in 1974 in his article in the *International Bonsai Digest*, "The bottom of the stone may be cut or ground for better seating in a wooden stand or tray. Good suiseki are produced by nature and nature's handiwork should not be destroyed or altered." All that in one paragraph in that order! Confused?

Toy and Yuzy Sato's definition of suiseki, and for that matter every other author on the subject, every lecturer and to my knowledge, every collector of suiseki use exactly the same descriptive terms. Suiseki are natural stones that are suggestive of landscape scenes. They all use two key phrases, natural stones and landscape scenes in their descriptions. Nevertheless, other than the **Sato's**, most of these authorities seem to agree that it is permissible to cut a natural stone into pieces. Is this a natural process? Or is this manipulation?

I cut lots of stones in a rush to have a variety of styles and had dozens more, intending to cut them in my first 13 years of collecting stones. I saw examples of cut stones in shows. If someone else was doing it, it must be alright, I thought. But I stopped cutting stones in 1982.

Nina and I were hosting our first meeting of Nan Pu Kai, a bonsai club. As a new member I was supposed to

show off my trees but it was raining heavily. Instead I brought in a large Eel River stone and promptly marked it with chalk down the midline to form two potential mountain ranges, a twofer. I caught it from all sides of the living room. **Mas Moriguchi, Richard Ota, Ben Oki, Harry Hirao** and **John Naka** all pleading for the spirit of the stone. I didn't understand exactly what that meant but it was clear to me that they really meant it. "No cuts!" And I haven't cut a stone since that day. I've thought of it. But out of respect for my friends, I kicked the habit.

You can do it, too, you just stop looking for stones that have to be cut. When you are only looking for an 'as is' stone it is amazing how your point of view changes and how rewarding it is when you find a true suiseki.

Within a few months we met the **Sato's** and **Toy** gave her first presentation. It was then that I realized what my bonsai friends meant by the spirit of the stone. This art form that I love is Japanese, not American, not Californian or any other "ese" or "ian".

It has been 24 years since I had that attitude changing encounter with the Nan Pu Kai members who vehemently opposed cutting stones. Over the years, the respect I had for my friend's beliefs has grown to include a deep respect for the stone, and it has taken the writing of this article for me to fully recognize that growth.

It's Wabi - Sabi not Wabi - Sawi. The truth is, most people cut stones because it is easier to carve a *daiza* when the stone has a totally flat bottom as suggested by all those "authors" I mentioned above. As a club, we don't forbid cutting stones and we don't exclude stones from our shows because they are cut. However, we encourage our members on field or buying trips to look for stones that don't have to be cut.

The Primary Reason for Not Cutting Stones. Our understanding of this art form is that suiseki are suggestive of a landscape scene, not necessarily explicit. There should be some level of mystery, hence the use of *yugen* in the description of suiseki. Cutting the stone tends to remove any mystery.

The Secondary Reason for not cutting stones. It becomes a man-made creation. It is reconstruction. It is not natural. Natural means not produced or changed, not altered, treated or disguised. Natural landscape scene stones are rare. Suiseki are difficult to find. It takes perseverance. But rarity is part of the charm and refined elegance of a suiseki. For **Nina**, that is what takes her breath away.

Continued on pg 7

MASTERS OF THE DAIZA

by Ray Yeager



Al Nelson

Returning from the field after a weekend of stone hunting your keepers now require TLC that includes careful cleaning, a place in your collection and eventually thoughts concerning a *daiza*. Our club, since its inception, has been fortunate to have two expert *daiza* makers in **Cliff Johnson** and **Gail Middleton**. They were very generous in sharing

stone and then the use of a pattern copying pantograph and router to transfer the mold image of the stone to the wood. His favorite woods are black walnut, cherry and Honduras mahogany in that order. He uses cherry for bonsai tables.

A *suiban* can be used to display a stone and you see many stones displayed this way at our Huntington show. But your best stones should have their own *daiza*. The Chinese began the practice of displaying prized objects using a wooden pedestal, many millennia ago. By the 17th century it was common practice to display stones on wood stands. They felt that in doing so it would set the stone apart, giving it authority.

their years of experience with anyone who was interested and gave a number of club demonstrations. But we didn't have a hands on workshop environment available where one could use the best equipment and receive personalized instruction until **Al Nelson** appeared on the scene.

Al grew up in the Bay area of northern California and, at the age of 12, became interested in woodworking. His vocation was a pattern maker for the casting industry and later a salesman. **Al** got hooked on bonsai in the mid 70's while attending a bonsai show at the Museum of Science and Industry where he met **John Naka** and soon began taking bonsai instruction from **John, Harry Hirao** and **Ernie Kuo**.

Al became interested in suiseki in 1996 when **Melba Tucker** asked him to make a *daiza* for one of her stones and joined California Aiseki Kai the following year. **Al** was already making bonsai stands with **John Naka** as his adviser and mentor. **Naka** suggested that **Al** begin teaching, something **John** continually encouraged his students to do. Another one of **Naka's** inspiring quotes was "If you want to learn something, teach it".

Al had years of experience as a pattern maker, he had a fully equipped wood workshop so in 1997 (**Al** retired in 1995) he began accepting people to come to his home and learn the art of making *daiza*. **Al** enjoys working with his clients, listening to suggestions, learning together to make the best possible *daiza* for the stone. He has had over forty eight individuals participate in his workshop over the years. To insure that he has sufficient time for each student he allows a maximum of six for each class. Classes are from 9:00 to 3:00, one day a week. It takes anywhere from eight to twenty five hours to finish a *daiza* depending on size and difficulty.

His specialty is making *daiza* for natural, uncut stones. This requires the use of "Bondo" to cast a mold of the



Harley Newman



Barry Josephson



Howie Kawahara



Manny Martinez



Al, Barry, Manny, Bruce Pickford and Harley hard at work making dust.



Please use this form as a reminder of the days and times for which you have volunteered.

Security/Docent Schedule

Our show at the Huntington is just around the corner! **Linda** is looking for folks to sign up as docents/security for our show. Naturally, anyone showing is expected to participate but all members are welcome. Please let her know **all** the times you will be available.

| Date | Time | Time | Other Hours |
|--------|------|------|-------------|
| Dec 27 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |
| Dec 28 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |
| Dec 29 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |
| Dec 30 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |
| Dec 31 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |
| Jan 2 | 10-1 | 1-4 | |

Linda can be reached at **818.833.9883** or email her at **bigredlinda@earthlink.net** or tell her at the October meeting.

We need you so check your calendars and select your days and times. Tell Linda when you can work if the listed times are not convenient.

Linda said, "Please volunteer. It's a great chance to see wonderful stones, get to know your fellow stone lovers better and maybe even learn something."

Continued from pg 5

Take heart: Don't throw away your cut stones. I classify my cut stones as *biseki*, since *biseki* are beautiful stones that may be altered.

Nina and I believe the same degree of respect for the stone applies to all other classifications of stone as well, such as object and pattern stones. It breaks our hearts to see a stone that has been cut across the bottom just to avoid carving a form fitting *daiza*.



Here are 2 examples of stones that should never have been cut.

Aiseki Kai conforms to the Murata- Naga Classification system for "Ornamental Viewing Stones" in their book "*Introduction to the Hobby of Suiseki*". In that system there are five major groups of viewing stones, *suiseki* (landscapes), *chusho suiseki* (abstract), *biseki* (beautiful), *chinseki* (rare) and *newa ishi* (garden).

We encourage your input.

Refreshments

Thanks to **Joseph Gaytan, Al Nelson, Hannah Povlsen, Harry Hirao and Bonnie and Charlie Schwartz** for September's gourmet treats.



For October the goodies will be provided by **Howie Kawahara, Sandy & Barry Josephson, and the Ragles.**

Al Nelson's woodworking classes:

You are invited to attend class on Thursdays from 9-3 at a cost of \$10 per class after a \$10 start up fee. No tools are needed to start and it will take about 6 lessons to complete a base.

If you prefer, Al can make a base for your stone at a cost of \$30 an hour, less 20% for club members, estimates available. 949.854.2681

Contact People

| | | |
|---|--------------|-------------------------|
| Programs: Larry Ragle | 949.497.5626 | cfsmail@cox.net |
| Treasury/Membership: Nina Ragle | 949.497.5626 | ragle@cox.net |
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| Historian: Ray Yeager | 760.365.7897 | ryeager890@aol.com |
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Newsletter Committee

October Contributing Editors: Barry Josephson, Jim Greaves, Ray Yeager, and Larry Ragle.

Reproduction and Mailing: Elizabeth Partch
Coordination/Design: 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!

**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

GOLDEN STATE BONSAI FEDERATION

Convention XXIX "Bonsai by the River" Nov 2-5, Double Tree Hotel, 2001 Point West Way, Sacramento. **Masahiko Kimura, Kathy Shaner, Lindsay Shiba.** For further information, see *Golden Statements*.

DESCANSO BONSAI SOCIETY

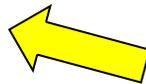
We are all invited to their November 21st meeting at 7:30 in Van de Kamp Hall, Descanso Gardens, LaCanada Flintridge, to hear **Marco Invernizzi** of Italy. **Marco** will also conduct a \$25 workshop from 2-5 on the 21st in classroom B. For further information, please contact **Marcus Juniel** at 818.790.0525 or email: marcus_juniel@msn.com

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. Please continue to support the Southern California Bonsai and Suiseki Collection. Contact **Marge Blasingame** for information: 626.579.0420 or email: blasmrjr@aol.com

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



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.