



The September Program

September 27th will be a night to remember. Master wizard woodworking wonder, **Al Nelson**, will discuss *daiza* building for uncut and cut stones as well as how to modify an existing base. You are invited to bring a small baseball size uncut stone and if you are lucky, it may be selected along with four or five others to have a base made for it during the meeting. How is that for an attention grabber? **Al** will also show you how to build your own *jiban* for show time. Don't miss this meeting!

Al has been a professional woodworker for 50 years and teaches *daiza* construction at his home shop in Irvine.

Stone of the Month

Let's get back to basics. It may be near or it may be far but it will be a single peak mountain, *koho-gata* or *koho-seki*. **Covello** and **Yoshimura** state that, "Ideally, the steepness of the front and back sides of the stone will be different." What we are looking for is an asymmetrical shape. This can be a fun category so we hope for lots of participation. Please bring your stone in a *daiza* or *suiban*.

We will attempt to photograph these stones before the meeting starts to ensure better pictures. Come at 6:45 if you can. We will have a full program so getting an early start will be good.

Note the asymmetrical shape of this single peak near mountain. In this case, the sand represents the earth's surface, not water.



Buried in a Landslide of Yugen Part 7

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

Our second speaker was **Toy Sato**. She is an authority on stones and minerals in general, and *suiseki* in particular. **Toy**, and her husband **Yuzy**, have been members and strong supporters of Aiseki Kai since day one. *Suiseki* got her attention in 1966, while a member of a local mineral and stone club. She served as president of the California Federation of Mineralogical Societies (1970-1971), leading 137 clubs. Her interest in stones as art has been the motive for countless trips to Japan, primarily to study the art of viewing stones. During the early trips the **Sato's** were taught the "rigid guidelines of the art of *suiseki*" by the masters of *suiseki* and *kikka seki*- chrysanthemum stones. Wanting to expose others to this art, **Toy** began giving programs across the country and eventually organized tours to Japan, exclusively so others could study with these stone masters.

The theme of her presentation that night, "Strictly Natural", in itself was definitive and the material she offered, answered almost all of my questions regarding the definition of *suiseki*. Personally, and I know to other beginners in the room, **Toy's** presentation changed almost every aspect of how we would appreciate and respect viewing stones.

Toy began by using photographs of her collection emphasizing that the word, *suiseki*, describes a narrow classification of all the stones appreciated as art in Japan and elsewhere in Asia. A *suiseki* is a stone "as found", natural in every aspect. *Suiseki* are dense stones, relatively small, seldom longer than 14" and easy to carry in one hand. Larger stones of similar beauty, shape and quality are considered by her *sensei* as *niwa ishi* or garden stones, even when displayed in a similar manner in *daiza* or *suiban*. Wow, this was a major change in what most of us thought were *suiseki*. I had thought all my stones were *suiseki*. Further, worked stones such as *kikka seki* -chrysanthemum stones or cut stone were classified as *biseki*- beautiful stones or *chin seki*- rare stones. She said the shape of a *suiseki* evokes a feeling of a landscape scene such as mountain, island, waterfall or almost any natural rock formation, large or small.

August Meeting Notes *by Linda Gill*

ANNOUNCEMENTS- The Aiseki Kai show will be Dec. 27th thru January 2 - closed January 1. Set up will be Saturday, Dec. 23, starting at 9AM. Y'all come and help! Stones should arrive from noon to 3PM. Please bring your plants also, just for placement; they will go home with you and come back early on the opening day. Everything goes home the evening of January 2nd.

Each person who displays a stone is expected to donate some time for security and everyone is welcome. Get a 2-fer! Work and see the show at the same time!!! The sign up sheet for security will be in the October newsletter and may be turned in at the October meeting. **Linda Gill** will be in charge of security duty.

The Kofu Bonsai Kai Show is in a new location - the Fullerton Arboretum. [see Coming Events, pg 8]

The Korean Stone Show will be at the LA Arboretum on October 7 & 8. [see pg 6]

AUGUST STONE OF THE MONTH - Coastal and ocean related stones in a display, but no islands.

Jim Greaves showed a coastal stone that was not displayed in the By The Sea Show. **Linda Gill** had a sand bar stone and a coastal stone. **Joe James** brought a large variety of shore, coastal and reef stones from the Truckee River and the Yuha. **Sharon Sommerfeld** showed coastal & island stones. **Phil Chang & Janet Shimizu's** had a huge embedded image stone from the Eel River with a wave and a fish on it. **Akio Okumoto** found his coastal stones at our annual holiday party. **Al Nelson's** coastal stone with a tide line was from Cherry Cove on Catalina Island. **Marge Blasingame** brought her sandbar stone from Garnet Hill and a nice tunnel stone and a red coral reef stone from Dumont Dunes. **Lois Hutchinson's** Lake Hill stone was an island with waves and she showed two others from Dumont Dunes. **Nina's** black coastal stone from the Eel River could be viewed in a variety of orientations. **Larry** brought a flat reef stone, a yellow shore stone and he showed **Nina's** tide pool stone from the Kern. **Joseph Gaytan** had a large, smooth gray coastal stone.



Linda's sandbar stone from the Yuha Desert,



Joe's Truckee River stone. The center holds water.



Akio's coastal stone.



Al's coastal stone from Catalina Island.



Jim's shore stone is displayed in wet sand which gently slopes to reflect the coastal setting.

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





Nina's coastal stone



Larry's shore stone



Close up of Larry's stone



Close up of Marge's stone



Marge's coastal arch



Lois' shore stone with waves is from Lake Hill.

August Program Notes

by Linda Gill

By The Sea

Jim Greaves' program was inspired by the display **Alice** and he put on for the 2006 Bonsai-a-thon at the Huntington. The room he had to use presented several challenges - it was small, had several unmovable display cases and many distracting windows. Despite the obstacles, **Jim** put on a masterful display using viewing stones that relate to the ocean. Since the coastal stone category is often a catch-all in *suiseki* **Jim's** goal was to present stones that looked good and to display as many as possible in *suiban* because they were water related. Using *suiban* exacerbated the space problem so to eliminate visual clutter, he decided to use risers and omit *jibans*. The show was dedicated to **Elmer Uchida**.

Jim presented slides that illustrated the different types of coastal stones including a cape stone - *misaki ishi*; island stone - *shimagata ishi*; coastal rock - *iwagata ishi*; head cover stone - *kaburi iwa* and a *suimon* - water passage or coastal arch. The latter two classifications were defined by **Ben Nanjo**.

In one display case he set up sea-related object stones (*keisho-seki*) including an animal stone - *dobutsu-seki* - representing an otter, a fish - *uogata ishi*, and a bird - *torigata ishi* and embedded image stones (*monyo ishi*) including a crab and waterfowl. In the second case he displayed a boat stone - *funagata ishi* - and a small display stand with coastal, boat and fish stones suggesting a scene 'Off Newfoundland'.

He had a set of wave stones - *nama ishi* - most of which were also *monyo ishi* - stones with patterns of waves, usually in white. One was a low sand bar stone - *hirasu ishi* - with breaking waves. Several stones represented islands - *shimagata ishi*. Examples of a reef stone - *araiso ishi*, a sun pattern stone - *higata ishi*, and a rock shelter - *amayadori ishi* were also presented. One set of stones displayed the colors that can be found along the coast. Color stones are *shikisai seki*. In a few examples **Jim** used an accessory figure with these stones to give a first time viewer a better sense of scale.

The last slide was the hit of the show, however. **Jim** and **Alice** joining crowbars. The big day was August 20. **CONGRATULATIONS JIM & ALICE!!!** [see pg 5 for details]

We got the jump on **Bill Hutchinson's** 80th birthday which is September 2nd and closed **Jim's** program with a round of singing to the birthday boy. He seemed delighted by the large cake.



Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

To date most viewing stones collected in North America have been cut at or very close to their desired baseline. Over the past few years we have been told that the cut should be below the desired finished level. How do we determine how much beneath the finished baseline the cut should be made?

Ima Cutter, North of the Valley

Dear Ima,

Before proceeding let us review terms: the baseline is the visible edge of the stone as it is displayed – for simplicity I will herein refer to it as the sightline; the cut line will be anywhere from immediately below to significantly below the sightline. The proverbial ‘one simple cut’ for mounting is no longer so simple! I know of no precise answer or formula. First you must determine whom you are trying to please: yourself or advocates of a particular viewpoint? What are you trying to achieve? If your concern is simply with the aesthetics of your stone as displayed, whether in *suiban* or *daiza*, the quantity and condition of the stone below the visible baseline is largely irrelevant.

The simplest approach to cutting is to just leave the minimal bit of stone below the sightline that is sufficiently deep to set the stone in a manner in which the actual cut edge is not distracting. Arguably this is the most transparent, honest approach. [Yes, I have seen older Japanese stones cut in this manner]. In practice, such cuts very close to the sightline often result in a truncated appearance. (Perhaps because the stone often has been severely truncated by the cut?) However, in many cases the problem is not with the cut itself, but with the ‘completion’ of the display: the mass and depth of *suiban* or *daiza*.

While proper display may obviate some of the ‘cut’ feeling, it is also possible to improve appearances by making the cut further below the desired sightline and rounding the sharp edge. Such a cut can be 1/8” to considerable depth depending on the size of the stone and to what degree you want the rounded edge to be visible. If the rounded edge is to be partially visible, you will actually be establishing your final sightline a bit lower. Some exposed rounding can be very effective in mitigating the abrupt angle of the cut edge and lend a subtle, but pleasing natural touch. Even if the rounded edge is not intended to be visible in the final display, a minimally rounded edge will often sit better within the lip of a *daiza* and is less likely to chip.

If you desire to be *au curreant* with Japanese practice by going a step further and artificially shaping, texturing, and aging the entire bottom of the stone to imitate a natural appearance in or out of *daiza* or *suiban*, then considerable additional depth may be required to allow for a realistic shaping in keeping with the character of your particular stone. Along with the allowance of extra depth, you may also want to consider intentionally cutting and/or breaking the bottom from two or more directions to get a quick start on creating your artificial ‘natural’ appearance.

Once you decide on a straight cut or rounded edges, as mentioned above, you need only enough material below the sightline to securely set the stone. If the stone is to be placed in a *suiban* one may actually need only enough extra so the stone does not appear to sit on the surface. For example, desert mountain stones cut with little excess stone below the baseline are often effectively shown in ultra-shallow *suiban* where the container of sand represents the flat desert floor. More often, one wishes to retain the suggestion that a natural bottom is hidden within the *daiza* or beneath the sand. In that case it is desirable to use a *suiban* or *daiza* that is deep enough to accommodate the proportion of hidden stone that might reasonably be expected if the stone were not cut. Remember that when a *daiza* is made too shallow with respect to the stone, the *daiza* will appear insubstantial and weak and the stone’s cut will be emphasized. Similarly, a too shallow *suiban* may emphasize the cut nature of a stone, whereas, a deeper *suiban* may reduce a truncated look. Finally, if the stone is very tall or imbalanced, one might be wise to reserve a substantial ‘foot’ of one’s stone beneath the sightline to help stabilize the stone within the deeper *suiban* or *daiza*.

Dear Guy Jim,

In the face of the widening availability of ‘suiseki’ in the form of cut stones, it appears that like it or not, cut stones are, in fact, being accepted as suiseki. The debate seems to be switching to whether or not the cut edges should be rounded under and whether the bottom must be artificially worked so as to appear naturally aged. Your thoughts?

Ann H., San Marino

Dear Ann,

In spite of the popular usage of the term *suiseki* to include cut stones, let me stay on the record as

personally reserving the term strictly for natural landscape stones – this has also been a guiding principle at *California Aiseki Kai*. Now to your question: "Why enhance the edges and/or bottom of a cut stone?" Obviously the goal is to artificially make the stone appear more natural and closer to the traditional ideal *suiseki*. This might be done in a sincere desire to recover the sense of an inviolate naturalness for spiritual reasons (which might strike us as inherently hypocritical) or to improve the stone's aesthetics.

It has to be acknowledged that a cut stone with softened edges can be less disconcerting than an obvious slab edge cut from a large stone. Thus rounding ('breaking') the cut edge would seem to be largely acceptable ... although it may beg the issues as to whether or not and how much an edge may have been 'cheated' to improve the stone's sightline contour. One may further suggest naturalness by purposefully cutting or breaking off sections of the bottom and edges in an irregular manner before final dressing. A *daiza* can then be created to follow the more natural appearing, irregular, albeit artificial, contour. Perhaps the one thing we can all agree on with a cleanly cut stone is that the base contours are original and that what you have remaining of the stone has been honestly formed by nature. Ironically, extensive working can lead to an unintended consequence: viewers may become overly distracted by their effort to determine whether the stone has been manipulated or not, an activity not conducive to contemplation and meditation. The better the reworking, the further the inquiring viewer will be removed from a spontaneous appreciation of the natural quality of the stone.

An indirect possibility for enhancing the cut edges and bottom of the stone, in particular, the creation of a deceptive, aged 'natural' bottom, is that it does exhibit both the skill of the artisan and at least a sense of respect to the stone in that time was taken to 'heal' the affront of cutting. With regards to the craft involved one can perceive the possibility of an authentic spiritual bonding between artisan and a stone worked in the hand for endless hours.

The least savory and perhaps most obvious reason for dressing and aging a cut stone is to increase its monetary value. Whether the work is done in a blatant attempt to deceive a purchaser or simply the by-product of one of the more benign reasons for cutting, the dressed stone is likely to bring a higher price. What does all this mean? You will have to weigh, integrate or discard these and perhaps other approaches to cutting to find your personal point of comfort; your view of what makes stones enjoyable must trump! For me, there is a continuum of appraisal in which any

stone may be evaluated and appreciated within its category: cut, altered or uncut.

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

California Aiseki Kai Special Bulletin:

GREAVES AND ARBAUGH LOCK CROWBARS!



On August 20th, **Alice Arbaugh** and **Jim Greaves** finally locked crowbars! Theirs is a relationship that has truly been built on a strong foundation of rocks! **Jim** says that on their second date he took **Alice** stone collecting at Garnet Hill. It was around 100 degrees and the wind was so strong you couldn't fall over. After brief instructions on what to look for he turned her loose. As he watched her blissfully examining stones on the steep south slope, **Jim** knew he, himself, had found a treasure. **Alice**, on the other hand was a bit hesitant to get too involved with this guy, **Jim**. After a partnership of 18 years – all reportedly rocky – they finally decided that keeping track of who found which stone was too much trouble ... "We just thought it seemed easier to get married than sort them out!"



Jim & Alice on the Kern with lanterns they built from stones nearby. These lanterns are still in their yard, see above. Photo by Dorothy Middleton, 1988

NATURAL VIEWING STONE EXHIBITION

SOOSUK KOREAN STONE APPRECIATION



For centuries, Asian scholars have contemplated naturally formed stones for creative inspiration and meditation. In recent decades, the practice of stone appreciation has

developed into an international art form. Traditionally, these viewing stones represent mountains with clouds, figures, animals and abstract patterns. This *soosuk* exhibit consists of water-polished and wind-blasted stones from rivers, beaches and deserts in North America, including a few examples from Korea. The stones are elegantly presented in formal display. In each stone, the viewer will discover a peaceful place in which his imagination might roam.



Soosuk is translated verbally as ‘water stone’, a Chinese / Japanese concept of erosion, but Koreans tend to write out this phrase with similar sounding yet different characters that mean

‘longevity stone’, honoring qualities of endurance.

We are all invited to the Korean American *Soosuk* Club of Southern California’s 14th Annual Natural Viewing Stone Exhibition at the L.A. County Arboretum & Botanic Garden in Ayres Hall which is at 301 North Baldwin Ave. in Arcadia. It will be held on Saturday and Sunday, October 7 & 8, from 9 to 4:30.

Don Kruger notes that unless the back gate is open, visitors have to pay an entrance fee at the arboretum. Adults - \$7; Seniors (62) and Students with ID - \$5; kiddies \$2.50



Coming Suiseki Events

KOREAN AMERICAN SOOSUK CLUB of SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA October 7 & 8, 9-4:30. See page 6.

INTERNATIONAL STONE APPRECIATION SYMPOSIUM September 28-October 1, Holiday Inn in Grantville, PA. **Seiji Morimae**, Director, Nippon *Suiseki* Association, 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. For additional information, contact **Glenn Reusch** 540.672.5699 or go to www.stoneshow2006.com.

Aiseki Kai Show dates are set. We will run from Dec 27th-Jan 2 and we will be closed on Jan 1st.

Set up day is Dec 23 so please have your displays at the Huntington between 12 and 3 on that day. There will be details and further reminders but it is hoped that you will mark your calendars now!

Refreshments

This month's gustatory delights included Bill's birthday cake and other sweets provided by **Joe & Arlene, Janet & Phil, Akio, Larry & Nina, Marge, and Joseph**. Thank you all.

September's surprises will be brought by **Bonnie & Charlie Schwartz, Joseph Gaytan and Hanne Povlsen**.



Buried in a Landslide ...

Continued from pg 1

Black stones are preferred and all white stones are taboo, white being the color associated with death in Japan. The stone's patina ideally is smooth to the touch and there can be no unhealed cracks or chips.

Regarding display, Toy emphasized that the Japanese masters taught her never to use a white *suiban* or white sand. She demonstrated by showing us beige colored sand as preferred by her *sensei*. She added that all *suiseki* should have a carved *daiza* made to fit exactly to the uncut bottom of the stone. The *daiza* Toy brought with her were either from Japan or were made by **Yuzy**. (Note: On our first visit to the **Sato's** in 1982, **Yuzy** introduced me to the "router re-creator".) All of their *daiza* were fine grained wood, carved and sanded very thin and stained dark.

Toy made it clear that *suiseki* as defined by her Japanese *sensei* are very rare items. She summed up her presentation with this thought, "If you find one masterpiece *suiseki* a year you are lucky. Rarity is what makes a *suiseki* of great artistic value".

Almost everything Toy revealed that night in 1983 was new information for most of the audience. It would become Aiseki Kai's standard for describing *suiseki*. Further, it opened our eyes to the fact that the Japanese cherish many styles of beautiful stones and have an elaborate classification system equating all types of viewing stones. For some in the room, it was tough to accept and for others, this point of view would fuel a seemingly unending debate.

This was the first of many presentations by Toy and as a result I now believe that the value of natural stones is in their beauty and rarity while the value in a worked stone is in its beauty and the labor it took to create it.

Next month: **Vincent Covello** visits our club

Larry Ragle

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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



Coming Events

SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB

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

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

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. **Masahiko Kimura, Kathy Shaner, Lindsay Shiba.** For further information, see *Golden Statements*.

BONSAI-A-THON XI

GSBF Collection at the Huntington Fundraiser, Feb 24-24, Huntington Botanical Gardens, 1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino. 7:30-4:30. Bring donations. 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

And for something different, try this:

KOI POND GARDEN TOUR

Explore 7 ponds and gardens in the Inland Empire, Sept 24, 10-4. Tickets \$8. For information, call Kelly 909.885.2503 or Gene 951.272.4450. On-line info: inlandkoisociety.org



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.