



September Program

Jack Dennis said that, “he will project a slide presentation titled: An Introductory Critique, Overview and Synopsis of the book of renowned Japanese Suiseki, *Meihin Taikan* (A general view of Master pieces) authored by Messrs. **Arishige Matsuura** and **Kin-ichi Yoshimura**, published by Kodansha in 1988. The book features 236 renowned stones, including the poetically described ‘Floating Bridge of Dreams’ stone, the ‘Eternal Pine Mountain’ stone, ‘Ideal Goddess of Mercy’ stone, and ‘Sitting Zen Monk’ stone. Selected stones from the parade of superstars will be characterized and the story of each stone that contributes to its renown will be recognized as time in the program will permit ... **Jack's** concluding remarks will state his view of the value of this book to our continued growth, understanding and appreciation of this ancient art.” Join us on September 22.



ALERT: September has 5 Wednesdays. Come on the 22nd and you will be rewarded with a room full of friends discussing your favorite subject.

Stone of the Month

Jack will bring his stone poetically described as "Bridge in the American Dream" as it may or may not relate to Emperor **Go-Daigo's** "Floating Bridge of Dreams" stone. Thus, **Jack** recommends that the stone of the month be a stone or two that you wish to relate its 'poetic name/description' or would like assistance in coining one. [ED Note: Time may only allow for one.]

Remembering John Naka

John Naka was one of the key players in the creation of California Aiseki Kai. If you are new to the club and know nothing of bonsai, a cousin of suiseki so to speak, **John Naka** is an authentic legend, unveiling these “mystic” art forms to non-Japanese.

Born in Colorado in 1914, but raised in Japan, he learned the basics of bonsai, suiseki and proverbs from his grandfather. After graduation from high school, he studied the design of Japanese gardens, that is the spatial relationship of trees, stones and open space and attended art schools learning drawing and painting in water colors and oils. On the verge of a career as an artist, in 1935, his father insisted that he return to Colorado. First and foremost, a war seemed inevitable and he was of draft age. Second, his older brother needed help running the farm back in Colorado. He found a new friend there, one **Harry Hirao**, also a farmer. They became avid fishermen but both admit never paying attention to the rocks in the streams.

After years of crop failure due to freezing ice storms the **Nakas** moved to LA where **John** opened a landscaping business. **Harry** had a similar experience and moved to Orange County, opening a landscape service. Within a few months **John** met some bonsai enthusiasts and, remembering his grandfather’s teaching, devoted all of his free time to creating little trees. By 1950 **John** and some of his close friends created the California Bonsai Society and held public shows featuring bonsai and suiseki.

One day the science teacher of **John's** oldest son led him on a field trip to an area where twisted trees, junipers, covered the hillside. **John** shared this place, Jawbone Canyon, with his friend **Harry** and the masterpieces found new homes. In 1961, another young man, **Richard Ota**, with a similar background, took **John** and **Harry** on a field trip to the Kern River. Yes, the rest is history.



1914-2004

August Meeting Notes *by Linda Gill*

Announcements: **Toy Sato** and **Wil** from Japan will be at the suiseki symposium in Pennsylvania. **Toy** will be the speaker replacing Mr. **Garcia** of Spain. It's not too late to sign up. Info on page 8.

We settled on a date for our Yuha collecting trip: November 13-14. Save the dates!

New member: **Mari Suzuki**. She grows cactus and likes stones with holes in them. Welcome to Aiseki Kai.

Stone of the month- (flower stones or stones that might look nice with flowers); All stone measurements are in inches; width x height x depth.

Yuha trip planned for November 13-14. Joe James will lead us into the desert. Please review the March 2010 newsletter, pg 3, col. 2 and refer to the February 2008 newsletter, pg 3 as well. Both are available on our website. ~Details next month~

Get ready for our 21st Anniversary Exhibit at the Huntington: Dec 26 - Jan 2, 10:30-4:30, closed on Jan 1st. Set up: Dec 22-23.



Tom Elias 9 x 9 x 5



8.5 x 5 x 4



2.5 x 4 x 3



Bill and Lois Hutchinson 4 x 6 x 3



3.5 x 5 x 2



Joseph Gaytan 9 x 7 x 3



Bruce McGinnis 6 x 4 x 2



6 x 6 x 3



4 x 5 x 2.5



Buzz Barry 5 x 5 x 2.5



Larry Ragle's huts: 7 x 6 x 4



5 x 4.5 x 4

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



August Program Notes

by Linda Gill

Ann Horton on Ikebana:

Ikebana, the Japanese way of arranging flowers, is a centuries old tradition of expressing respect and love for natural beauty. Several thousand ikebana schools have established themselves in Japan and elsewhere. The school that **Ann** follows, *Ikenobo*, is recognized in Japan as the oldest tradition of flower arranging.

As context, **Ann** illustrated the appreciation of natural beauty with several pictures of Japanese gardens taken in the fall. Every Japanese garden has three components: plants, stones and water or the representation of water. All three of these are referenced in an Ikebana arrangement. The arrangement should be alive and rhythmic and echo nature.

Going back several thousand years, Shinto believers used tree materials to attract the gods to temporary shrines, since wood and other tree materials represent shelter for the Gods.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan in the 6th and 7th centuries. It originated in China and moved to Korea and then to Japan. Where Shinto shrines were temporary and had no priests, Buddhists brought permanent shrines with resident priests. As offerings to Buddha, the Chinese had used parts of plants and flowers. The Japanese used whole stems that were initially arranged symmetrically.

The Heian Period, 794 - 1192AD, saw a flowering of artistic pursuits in a politically stable era that fostered intellectual endeavors. Displays were primarily elegant and refined. Whole stems were used to symbolize the union of heaven & earth. Gradually flower arrangements came out of the temple and into the palaces and into some homes. The Tale of Genji, written in the 11th century, refers to the art of flower arranging and there are also some records from the Kamakura Period: 1192 – 1333, which saw the rise of the samurai and the shogunates,

The *Shoin* style of architecture developed in the Muromachi Period, 1333 - 1573. There were large public displays of flowers in the formal style - *Tate Hana* - and in the informal style - *Nageire*.

In 1472, **Ikenobo Senjun** wrote a set of rules for various arrangements and in 1479 the Shogun **Yoshimasa** declared that thereafter the master of Ikenobo would be known as the founder of Ikebana. (The name *Ikenobo* refers to the 'priest who lived by the pond.' He had been sent on embassy to China in the 7th century and returned as a priest and as the one who arranged flower offerings.)

The Momoyama Period, 1573 -1615, saw further evolution of the *Shoin* style with associated bold and

complex displays. During this period, there were increasingly divergent views of beauty and the way it should be shown. One story demonstrates the gravity of the dispute. During the reign and under the patronage of the Shogun **Hideoshi**, **Sen no Rikyu** developed a specific tea ceremony, with an emphasis on simplicity. He also developed ways of arranging flowers that were meant to show only that which is essential. Thus, **Sen no Rikyu** favored *Soan*, which urged simplicity and restraint while **Hideoshi** favored *Shoin* which favored the bold display. The dispute became so acrimonious that **Hideoshi** ordered **Sen-no-Rykyu** to commit ritual suicide.

Forms of Ikebana

Rikka is a formal arrangement, descended from *Tate Hana* and perfected in the 15th and 16th centuries. There are 93 pictures of formal arrangements that have come from that era. **Ann** showed one done by **Ikenobo Senke** in 1635 (at right). *Rikka* represents an entire natural landscape with mountains, rivers, villages, paths and ponds and there are strict rules dictating its construction. There are nine major points (a point is something distinct, that has its own special place in the arrangement) and many subsidiary points. Wire and other artificial means can be used to manipulate materials. Ikebana is a live arrangement incorporating such major characteristics as: harmony, balance, rhythm, contrast, proportion and transition. There are many other characteristics expressed in the flowers. Both unity and divergence express life.

Currently, *Rikka* has two forms; the classic form is *Shofutai* (below left), while *Shimputai* (below right) was only introduced in 1999. *Shimputai* means fresh wind. It



Rikka by Senke in 1635



continued on page 6

Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,
In your book you refer to the lack of a “visual point of entry” when discussing certain stones. Would you please explain this concept?

Ralph Bischof, Hainesport, NJ

Dear Ralph,

First let me acknowledge that the idea is so familiar to me that I never thought to explain my use of the term and that my photo references are indeed quite ambiguous. Please note that this explanation will use my own simplistic descriptive terms; for a detailed presentation of many related Japanese terms please refer to *Unkon Fu* (Soul of Stone) by **Ben Nanjo** (pgs 15-17).

One of the Japanese criteria that marks a good stone is that the ends of the stone curve towards and embrace the viewer (a concave frontal footprint). Some Japanese have expressed the desire that even the peak itself should tip slightly forward similar to the approach in bonsai. This enveloping form pulls or invites the viewer into interaction with the stone (below). For my purposes, I have coined the word ‘*embrasure*’ to



The *daiza* for this mountain stone with slight embrasure is signed “Higaki” and believed to have been collected in Northern California in the 1970’s or earlier. It offers multiple points of entry. [Any information on the collector would be appreciated.] (cut)



Kern River Stone, Elmer Uchida (AVSRC). This mountain invites the viewer on every level, having nice embrasure with an obvious point of entry into the valley in the center below the peak. Note that the peak also tips slightly forward. (cut)

identify the phenomenon of an enveloping, inviting form. The effect and importance of the presence or lack of embrasure will ultimately be subjective. Much will depend upon the type/classification of stone in question. Embrasure is not of much importance with color, pattern, and figure stones. It is largely of concern when dealing with landscape stones and, here, we are less concerned with ambiguous *suiseki* forms than with more naturalistic landscape stones. Even then, we are not generally concerned with stones representing relatively small features such as a coastal rock. We are concerned with those stones presenting ‘realistic’ images of mountains and grander ‘views’. Note that although the presence of embrasure might remain technically desirable and enhancing, when mountain views are truly distant, embrasure is not necessary for our acceptance of a view as ‘natural’.

When viewing a truly representational landscape stone, I believe most Western viewers seek a direct, objective recognition over or before subjective musings. Such apprehension of the stone may relate to a referential image, even one only ‘seen’ in photographs, or to their own experience. Beyond seeing a mountain, one seeks routes to penetrate it or climb towards its summit (above). When viewing a distant range one instinctively looks for the lowest point or gap denoting a potential pass through the mountains



‘The Last Pass Before Home’, Eel River. This stone envelops one slightly while the lowest point invites us towards the pass between peaks. (cut)

(above). Step and slope stones by definition draw you upwards. With island stones we subconsciously focus on coves that might provide shelter. Because a cove is inherent in the characterization of island stones, one is more apt to get embrasure with an island form (see next page, top). For our present purpose, I am primarily focused on stones that represent nearer views of





An Eel River Island Stone embracing us and providing an anchorage. Cliff Johnson (AVSRC) (cut)

stones where one becomes aware of details, especially those along the lower portion of the stone. When foreground details are present, I believe we instinctively, subconsciously, begin to seek a 'point of entry' where mountains – we, the viewer, can get a foothold and start our imaginary journey into the landscape presented by the stone.

Here note that this concept of 'a visual point of entry' is personal, not one I have heard or seen expressed by Japanese practitioners of *suiseki*. The Chinese have long reflected upon journeys within their stones – both of a personal and cosmic nature, but seldom, if ever, have I encountered such an approach in what information has been available from Japan. Again, let me emphasize that within the Japanese practice of *suiseki* there may be neither need nor place for such a literal interaction as visually traveling across, up or through the stone and thus, no concern for 'a point of entry'. Regardless, the concept of a 'point of entry' may prove useful and rewarding in the appreciation of more realistically representational landscape stones.

Unfortunately, because stones tend to round as they tumble, many, if not most stones, lack embrasure and, if anything, are more likely to have one or both ends curving back or running away from the viewer. With much chagrin, I find that less than 1% of our landscape stones have true embrasure and these are almost all the result of creative cutting, not natural formations! The idea of a visual point of entry may be seen as an extension of the concept of an inviting embrasure, and further, as an approach that circumvents or ameliorates the lack of embrasure in our many stones with broader bellies or retreating hips. Such stones may still have a low inviting opening/pathway that will visually invite exploration, enabling one to land safely on the shore of a cliff fringed island or ascend a mountain ravine. In rare cases, even a stone having well-curved ends may present a confrontational wall of steep, vertical edges or shoulders that create a visual barrier to 'getting into the stone'. If no point of entry exists along the baseline, perhaps the foreground may



El Portal', Trinity River, Ken McLeod (AVSRC) The ends of this stone embrace us and the canyon is recessed providing, as its title suggests, a perfect 'point of entry'. (cut)

be simply and literally overlooked! The concept of a 'point of entry' is just that, a working concept – one that may provide you with another approach to increase your appreciation of your more naturalistic appearing landscape viewing stones. There are no hard and fast rules, you might even be able to leap the foreboding barrier cliffs 'in a single bound' and begin your journey at a point of entry part way up the mountain. Some may slip into the boots of a mountain climber in a high ravine or, what the hell, drop in by helicopter and ski down that virgin slope! But no one is likely to top **Don Kruger**, who has been known to approach coastal rocks from the perspective of one surfacing from a scuba dive!

Anyway, it all beats television!

GuyJim

* * *

And for our pleasure, *GuyJim's* Suibanics...

tanseki – Stone Hunting. The classic group *tanseki* trip consists of breakfast, waiting for stragglers, driving, unloading gear, a brief search for stones, a leisurely lunch, another cursory search for stones, loading gear, driving back to the motel for happy hour and a pot-luck buffet — Great fun for all!

tan-seki – Light brown stones that are seldom of suitable quality for *suiseki*; they are often absorbent and may darken to a passable appearance when wet or oiled. Tan colored ventifacts are an exception in that their hard, polished surfaces are often well suited for use as scenic desert viewing stones.

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

August Program Notes *continued from page 3*



Ann's shoka shimputai

is simpler and emphasizes grace and flow.

In contrast, the *Shoka* form has three major points: *Shin* = truth/man, *Soe* = heaven/woman, and *Tai* = earth/child. It is created in a straight line; the *shin* is placed first, the *soe* goes behind and the *tai* is at the bottom, in front. The materials should be displayed as they would grow in nature. Both *Rikka* and *Shoka* are meant to be viewed from the front. In

1977, the current headmaster articulated a *shimputai* form for *shoka*, relaxing some of the rules and leading to simpler and more economic use of materials.

The classic arrangements have specific rules that emphasize characteristics which create an overall impression. In this, there is a definite connection with stone appreciation, where we look for form, proportion and meaning.

Ann showed two pictures of the forms of the modern *nageire* and *moribana* (see below). Each arrangement appeared in one of the tokonoma in the Japanese house at the Huntington Library and Gardens.



Ann's moribana in the Huntington's tokonoma

The 20th century saw the introduction of freestyle. As the name implies, it is a much more relaxed form and emphasizes artistic expression. It utilizes a greater variety of containers to hold the materials. You could use a stone, a cleft in a branch, a modern vase, nearly anything. There is still a discipline, emphasizing life although a freestyle may contain man-made materials. Still, the arranger should be mindful of tradition and must pay attention to weight, color, growth, form and lines that leave and return. The plants may touch the container which they may not do in a more formal arrangement.

Ann showed several pictures demonstrating her construction of a large freestyle at the Japanese American National Museum (see above).



Ann also brought three displays; (above) two were freestyle and one was a *Shoka Shimputai*. The *Shoka* and one of the freestyle arrangements used the same plant materials differently to demonstrate the dissimilar styles and their impacts. Both of them contained *Aspidistra*, zinnia and grass. The third display contained asparagus fern, red hot poker pods, a tall blade leaf in a stone container and two bamboo stalks laid on the table to anchor the arrangement. And for all the *suiseki* enthusiasts, there is one style of *Ikebana* that uses a stone to represent the land in a divided *Shoka* arrangement.

Thanks, **Ann**, for an informative talk.

Freestyle with Yuha stone



Group Suiseki Show

Rick and Mimi Stiles sent a couple of show highlights from the Puget Sound Bonsai Association Suiseki Interest Group Exhibit on August 22 at the Pacific Rim Bonsai Collection on Federal Way in Washington. **Rick** made the *daiza*. The superior quality of these stones makes **Larry** and me want to travel north again. Thank you for sharing!



“High Ridge” Distant Mountain Stone (Toyama-ishi). Collected by Mimi Stiles, Stillaguamish River System, Washington State, 2010 49cm x 13cm x 22cm (in inches: 19.3 x 5.1 x 8.6) Rosewood *daiza*.



“Twins” Double-peaked Mountain Stone (Soho-seki). Collected by Rick Stiles, North Fork Teanaway River, Washington State, 2009 24cm x 10cm x 11cm (in inches: 9.4 x 3.9 x 4.3) Black walnut *daiza*.



Young visitors learn about suiseki

* * *

Remembering John Naka *continued from page 1*

I met **John Naka** in 1966 and began bonsai lessons. At my second lesson I brought a potted elm that also contained a stone I had found on the Russian River. **John** was quick to say, “Take it out! The stones came first, before trees. The tree should be growing over the rock or the rock should be shown on its own.” That was my introduction to suiseki.

A few years later, **John** introduced me to **Harry Hirao** and that led to the founding of KoFu Bonsai Kai in 1976. When **Nina** and I expressed an interest in studying suiseki, **John** was quick to say make it an extension of CBS, offering a place to meet, the Museum of Science and Industry. By that time I had been collecting stones for many years (the quality of which improved several magnitudes when I discovered **Harry’s** secret sites).

John invited Aiseki Kai members to display stones at the CBS annual show until an earthquake left both clubs homeless. It is unlikely that there would be California Aiseki Kai without **John’s** patronage and encouragement.

Larry Ragle

California Aiseki Kai meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1670 W. 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

Contact People

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Programs: Larry Ragle | 949.497.5626 |
| Treasury/Membership: Nina Ragle | 949.497.5626 |
| Annual Exhibit: Jim Greaves | 310.452.3680 |
| Exhibit Set Up: Marge Blasingame | 626.579.0420 |
| Refreshments: Lois Hutchinson | 714.964.6973 |
| Historian: Ray Yeager | 760.365.7897 |
| Webmail: Bill Hutchinson | 714.964.6973 |
| Newsletter: Larry and Nina Ragle | 949.497.5626 |



| |
|---------------------------|
| cfsmail@cox.net |
| ragle@cox.net |
| jimgreaves@roadrunner.com |
| margeblasingame@att.net |
| wlhutch@verizon.net |
| ryeager890@aol.com |
| hutch@aisekikai.com |
| ragle@cox.net |

Newsletter Committee

September Contributors: Linda Gill, Jim Greaves and Larry Ragle.
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!

Ragle
P.O. Box 4975
Laguna Beach CA 92652

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Leaves no stone unturned

See our website:

aisekikai.com



Coming Events

SAN DIEGO BONSAI CLUB

45th Annual Fall Show, Sept 25-26, Balboa Park, Casa Del Prado, Rm 101, San Diego. 10-5 Demos. Sales area. For more info: **Maria Barbosa** 619.606.6523 or email: bonsaigarden@earthlink.net

CONEJO VALLEY BONSAI SOCIETY

7th Annual Bonsai Exhibition, October 2-3, Resource Center, Gardens of the World, 2001 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Thousand Oaks. 9-4 both days. Demos in the Bandstand 11 & 2,. Free. Info: **Ken Fuentes** 805.495.7480. Website: cvbs-bonsai.org

INTERNATIONAL STONE APPRECIATION SYMPOSIUM

September 30 - October 3 at the Harrisburg-Hershey Holiday Inn, Grantville, PA. **Seiji Morimae, Toy Sato, Kemin Hu, Peter Warren** and **Larry Ragle**. Exhibits, workshops, critiques, vendors, auction. For more information: email **Glenn Reusch** at stoneshow2010@aol.com or call 540.672.5699

GSBF CONVENTION XXXIII

“New Face of Bonsai”, Santa Clara, Santa Clara Marriott, October 28 –31. See Ryan Neil, Peter Warren & Mike Hagedorn
Info at: gsbfconvention.com/index.htm



~ Stone Sales ~

Ken McLeod will join us on September 22
He will have great new stones for sale
~ Come early ~



Refreshments

Thank you **Wanda Matjas, Joseph Gaytan, Ann Horton, Harry Hirao** and the **Ragle's** for the August appetite appeasers. Yummy.



Always check Golden Statements Magazine
Calendar section for additional coming events

September snacks will be provided by **Mari Suzuki, Marge Blasingame** and **Joseph Gaytan**.