

Only By Embracing...

Office of Buddhist Education Newsletter

January 2006 Volume 2 Issue 1

Embraced by the Vow... In Harmony



Theme & Slogan for 2006:

“Chowa” (harmony) means “that which is properly arranged and well balanced”*. True harmony is when various individuals with distinctive qualities gather and contribute their good attributes and everyone recognizes and accepts the good attributes of each other.

As stated in the Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai publication, *Mutually Sustaining Life*, “a world in which true harmony exists is the world of the Buddha, the Pure Land. In *The Smaller Sutra on Amida-yus*, the Pure Land is described in this way:

The lotus flowers in the lakes, large as chariot wheels, are blue-colored with blue splendor, yellow-colored with yellow splendor, red-colored with red splendor, white-colored with white splendor, and they are most exquisite and purely fragrant.”

This is the world in which we do not self-centeredly say that my color is the best color. This is the world that accepts all and “true harmony” is where there is the most exquisite and pure fragrance. True harmony begins from recognizing, understanding, and accepting the differences and uniqueness of all.

in the second volume of the *Larger Sukhavativyuha Sutra (The Sutra of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, Jpn. *Daimuryojukyo*), this important teaching is shared:

All people in the world, parents and children, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, other family members, and extended family members should respect and love each other and should

not hate and envy each other. They should share their possessions with each other, without being greedy, always speak gently, and live harmoniously without hurting each other. (Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai publication, *Encountering the Buddha*).

Shakyamuni Buddha expressed the uniqueness and differences of all in comparison to the wind and storm whipping through a garden and disrupting harmony. However, harmony is possible when one is aware of one’s folly as one looks within and gains inner awareness or “right view” of one’s self. Through this awareness, one can live by transforming one’s view to respect everyone’s uniqueness and diversity.

By sharing the Nembutsu path, Shinran Shonin makes each one aware of the inner joy in the embrace of Amida’s Wisdom Light and Compassionate Life. This path is shared with all regardless of who they are, what their livelihood is, or how they live their daily life. Through this sharing, the followers of the teaching are able to live with the differences and uniqueness in Harmony.

Those who are embraced by the vow of Amida Buddha live in harmony because they are awakened to the reality of the Nembutsu. The illusion of self (discrimination) is dispelled by truth (that which is real and true) through awareness (realization). The utterance of thought is expressed by Namo Amida Butsu, the Embrace. Thus, we are **EMBRACED BY THE VOW: IN HARMONY.**

*excerpt from Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai, *Mutually Sustaining Life*.



Have a Happy New Year!!



The Commission on Buddhist Education met 3 times during the 2005 calendar year. The Commission's focus for 2005-2006 (Dharma School Year) is to be more accessible and visible and create an information link with Dharma schools and other temple groups. Technology (such as a forum) will be used for dialog and sharing.

Beginning 2006, the Commissioners will meet once in March, 2006 and will have two teleconferences. Reverend Irene Nakamoto will visit each district to conduct workshop/training as requested (with district commissioners and

Dharma school teachers).

The Chairperson of the Commission will be: Kathi Takakuwa (Honolulu District), Vice-Chairperson: Reverend Shindo Nishiyama of Jikoen and Kailua Hongwanji, and Propagation Program Grant Chairperson: Wanda Costa (Kauai District). Commissioners are:

Kathi Takakuwa and Reverend Shindo Nishiyama Honolulu
 Mas Nishimoto and Reverend Mari Sengoku Oahu
 Wanda Costa and Reverend Mary David Kauai
 Wayne Nishida and Reverend Shinkai Murakami Maui
 Hilo
 Kona

Special mahalo to Mrs. Betty Takeoka (Kona and Mr. Glenn Tomori (Hilo) who have fulfilled their term as Commissioners. We, also, thank Reverend Koho Takata and Reverend Bruce Nakamura for being our chairperson and vice chairperson respectively. Reverend Takata will continue to be on the Commission as Executive Secretary. Reverend Nakamura has now moved to Hilo Betsuin.

The Dharma School Teachers Committee asks everyone to support their focus for 2005-2006!

1. To enrich the study of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism through "staff development" sessions (scheduled study classes, talk story, visitations, etc.) to gain deeper personal/individual awareness. Through this effort teachers will identify what is important for students.
2. To recite the "Golden Chain of Love" (without written paper).
3. To Say aspirations or words of thanksgiving.

Members are: Wayne Yoshioka (Honolulu), Carolyn Uchiyama (Oahu), Sarah Date (Kauai), Wayne Nishida (Maui), and Jane Iida (Hawaii).

Dharma School Calendar of Themes for the Year...

MONTH	MAJOR SERVICES	THEMES	ACTIVITIES
JANUARY	New Year's Day* Hoonko	Remembering Tradition Renewal, Transformation	
FEBRUARY	Nirvana Day Keirokai	Enlightenment	Youth Retreat Dharma School - Shave Ice
MARCH	Founder's Day* O-higan	Seasons, Harmony 6 Paramitas	Trip to Kokee - Outdoor Service Veterinarian - Animals Y.E.S.S. Camp
APRIL	Hanamatsuri Eshinni Day	Birth, Life is Precious	Hanamido Decorating Elephant
MAY	Children's Day* Mother's Day* Gotan-E Birth of Tradition		Appreciation of Mother's Mother's Day Breakfast Mother's Day Rose
JUNE	O-bon Father's Day*	Transitions, Passages of Life, Family Relationships	Ohaka Clean up
JULY	O-bon	Living and Dead Community (Public)	Reconnect with Grandparents
AUGUST	O-bon		
SEPTEMBER	Grandparent's Day	Learning Together, New Beginnings, Aspirations, Interdependence	Youth Retreat Junior Y.E.S.S. Camp
OCTOBER	Eitaikyo	Sangha Appreciation	Family Ties, Family Tree
NOVEMBER	Veteran's Day* Thanksgiving Day*	Gratitude, Gratefulness	Canned Good Drive Project Dana
DECEMBER	Bodhi Day New Year's Eve*	Enlightenment, Reflection on the year, Renewal, Family Celebration, Serving Others	Pounding Mochi

*other services



Excerpt from the Wahiawa Hongwanji Newsletter



Written by Reverend Kevin Kuniyuki - Wahiawa Hongwanji Newsletter November 2005 -

Recently, a new book entitled *Beads, Boys and the Buddha* was released. It is a collection of stories written by Wendy Miyake, whose parents are members of the Mililani Hongwanji. The setting for the stories is contemporary Hawaii, so locations such as Longs, City Mill, and Ah Fook appear in abundance giving me as a local reader a comfortable and nostalgic feeling. As a Buddhist minister, I appreciate Wendy's examination of the Japanese-American Buddhist experience.

In the following quote from one of the stories called "Remembering Koizumi." Wendy writes about Marguerite who is dealing with her attachments and fear of loss. Throughout the story there is a cute ongoing interaction between granddaughter and grandfather in which the grandfather wishes the still single granddaughter to hurry up and bear his first great-grandchild. This story captures the spirit of the Shin Buddhist belief that loved ones who have passed away have become Buddha and remain in our hearts and minds. We pick up the story at its end after the grandfather passed away:

Two days later Koizumi peacefully passed into the Pure Land.

Marguerite touched the gravestone that was laid down in the graveyard for her grandfather. It was warm as if it were just baked in the oven. Riku rested his body on the stone. She smiled at the thought of Koizumi's face when she brought Francine's son into his presence. He was so happy. She was sure he would live longer.

She closed her eyes and breathed in deeply one last time. If her imagination was all she had left of him, then she owed it to herself and her grandfather to try again. And this time, he appeared right in front of her, floating above the gravestone on a bed of white orchids.

"Grandpa!"

"Hello, Marguerite."

"Grandpa," she murmured, "why'd you have to leave so soon?"

"Marguerite, I was ninety-five. I wanted to go already. All my friends are here."

"But I'm here—on earth." Marguerite's lower lip began to quiver.

Koizumi looked gently into his granddaughter's eyes. "I know. But your son needs you."

"He's not my—"

"I know, Marguerite. I know. Do you know why I wanted you to have a child?" She shrugged her shoulders. "I wanted you, not me, to have someone to love so you wouldn't be lonely anymore, so you would learn to love with all your heart."

"But the baby would grow up and grow old and then—"

"Marguerite, now is the time for you to grow up. You don't have to be afraid to live your life any longer. You don't have to be afraid of death. Death is nothing more than a change of form and every time you imagine me I will be right here with you. Trust your imagination."

"But I want you to be here for real," she pouted.

"I am here. I see you and you see me. This is what the Buddha means by impermanence. That things change. Death is the great change. If you accept it, life is so much more because you don't dwell on what doesn't change. You live. So live, Marguerite."

With that, Koizumi disappeared. Marguerite opened her eyes. The sun was shining on the mountains like a cosmic beam, the wind picked up and dipped the gravestone flowers as if they were in a passionate embrace. She closed her eyes again—just to be sure. And there was her grandfather floating before her.

Riku pawed at her knees. She opened her eyes and saw the Siberian Husky pup gazing up at her as if he had found a refuge from the rough sea. Marguerite smiled. The world did look more vibrant, colorful, and alive. It was as if she were seeing it for the first time, as if she had been reborn.

"Yes, I see you, Riku."

She picked him up and they both looked at her grandfather's gravestone again. She smiled, her heart full of love. "Goodbye—for now, Jiji," she whispered and turned to walk toward the car. In the end, she realized Koizumi hadn't lied. He *was* immortal. Part of him would always be inside of her and that gem she'd pass along to her real son one day or at least to her new dog, Riku.

If you are interested in the book please call the office at 622-4320—we will be taking orders for the book, which costs \$13.95.



A Book Review by Dr. William J. Bonk



Shin Buddhism 24/7: Experiences on the Jodo Shinshu Path. Henry A, Tanaka. Published in Honolulu, Hawaii, September 2005, ISBN: 1-887289-33 -x, pp.116. Cover art and chapter illustration by Sarah Corry.

This short tome of 116 pages, of text divided into ten chapters, a preface, and epilogue and a glossary of key terms, brings a life of change into clear focus. It is brief, each chapter averaging but seven pages of text, yet it is explicit in its approach, and Rev. Tanaka's writing is unpretentious and skillful. I found this book both a fascinating and informative delight. The subtitle tells it all for it is truly the author's "experiences on a Jodo Shinshu path." It is his personal journey from a devout Christian to an active Buddhist minister, from a reader of the bible and a believer in a god of reward and punishment, to one that strives for positive karma through wisdom and compassion, yet realizes he is but a bonbu that requires the utterance of the Nembutsu with shinjin. This book is also a compendium of Shin Buddhism by a convert that became a Shinshu minister. It indeed is the story of his spiritual journey through life.

Once on a sabbatical in Japan I went with Dr. Toshikazu Arai Jojuji, a thousand year old temple in the west of Kyoto, to visit with Rev. Tokuso Sakakibara and to learn from him. In talking about his own life Rev. Sakakibara mentioned his experiences fighting as a soldier in China, and in an offhanded way said, "to really know requires a traumatic experience, a suffering experience." I've come to know that suffering is part of life. But if suffering is part of life, why? What purpose does it provide? The more I think about it the more I've come to the conclusion that if one only experiences joy and happiness, and is immune to suffering, there is no balance in life, nothing to shake one's self free of only pleasure, joy and a self-serving life. To really experience happiness and compassion requires empathy for others that suffer, are sick, and have pain. To really know what they experience is to experience these things ourselves. As Rev. Sakakibara said, suffering is known when one experiences it oneself, when one has that traumatic shock, and life becomes "whole." Certainly Sakyamuni went through this experience and so did Shinran, both at an early stage of their lives. We all must be ever grateful for their stress and trauma. So too did Rev. Tanaka experience sorrow and suffering through his life. Divorce, conversion, the death of relatives and more recently the tragic death of his wife, all provided sadness and sorrow, yet he persevered through the changes that impacted on his life.

In reading this book I find I am very thankful for Rev. Henry Tanaka's writing of his changing life. I was especially taken by his humility and his sincerity in his discussion of his beliefs for it is not easy to discuss one's conversion. One must be a humble person to convert, or even question such basic beliefs that one has abided by for some years and that molded oneself to a set of beliefs. Conversion is not an idle change of mind, a minor ad-

justment of thought. For a devout, knowledgeable member of a Christian church to give up his long-standing beliefs and convictions and to change those convictions to a new, drastically dissimilar, faith requires honesty and integrity. It is a revolution of one's very belief system. It is the ultimate of a personal civil war within the totality of an individual's tenets and thinking, and the process that one goes through must be traumatic. I say this because no one that hasn't gone through the process can really understand the toll it exerts on the person's psyche. Here I am not talking of a change of view, a restructuring of a former system to something slightly different, an adjustment. Rather I am referring to a change that is basic, complete, a shaking up of the old so as to eliminate it, and a taking on of the new so as to accept it completely. This cannot be done overnight or during a short period of time, for it cannot be superficial and it cannot be lacking in depth. I am also not referring to the adoption of a belief system through the customary learning process. This is merely becoming cognizant of something from a previous unaware state. This is the enculturation process that we all go through as we learn our basic cultural traditions. Converting or conversion as I see it requires change from A to B, from this to that, from this basic systems, and an exchange from one to the other. This is drastic and this is why it takes time and requires such profound personal adjustment.

Rev. Henry Tanaka takes us through that difficult transition, from Christian to Buddhist, and in doing so he shows clearly the knowledge and faith mutations that transformed this very perceptive individual to a Buddhist minister. For those born, raised, and secure on one faith that they have always professed, it may be difficult to fathom the unwritten, psychological processes that he must have sensed in going through this change. Nevertheless this is truly a remarkable story of a devout man. Henry Tanaka required both wisdom and compassion in his life in order to exist and to allow conversion to take place. Once his karma started him on the path toward the Pure Land there was no turning back. With his foot in the river of change he is sure to cross to the other shore.

Lastly, I want to point out that this volume is the second of two such publications that have been published this year, both of which are concerned with Jodo Shinshu conversion by their respective authors. The other printed piece is Ruth Tabrah's *Just Live! On Becoming Buddhist*. Over the years during the spread of Buddhism throughout Asia and to the eastern doors of Europe conversion undoubtedly has transformed many individuals and societies to the religion of peace. Yet the psychological impact on human beings expressed through biographical or autobiographical writings show a scarcity of presence. Presently, with Buddhism showing great strides in its spread throughout the western world I would only hope that more such writing takes place.



Upcoming Events and Activities



- January 1 - New Year's Day (Shusho-E)
- January 14 - Federation of Jr. YBAs State Council Meeting
- January 16 - Shinran Shonin Memorial Day (Hoonko)
- February 2 - Board of Director's Meeting
- February 3-4 -94th Legislative Assembly (Giseikai)
- February 12 - Fujinkai Dana Day
- March 2 - Hongwanji Day
- March 21 - Buddhist Dedication Day (Spring Ohigan)
- March 27-29 - Y.E.S.S. Camp XXIII "One LOVE..."



Y.E.S.S. Camp XXIII

"One LOVE..."

March 27-29, 2005

Camp Kokokahi,
Kaneohe, Oahu





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