

Remembering Reverend Shojo Honda

By Gail Kitahara Kondo

As the news of Reverend Honda's passing sunk in, I fondly recalled the many years the Kitahara-Kondo family called Reverend Honda our Sensei and our friend. For over a half century and spanning three generations of our family, Sensei Honda profoundly touched our lives. As we traveled down life's path together for a while, we shared many joys, as well as sorrows. For this, I am grateful. So many cherished memories, so many years, where to begin?

It was back in the late 50s when Reverend and June Honda started the Washington, DC, Sangha to keep the flame of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism burning in the metro area. A small but devoted group of sangha members, including my parents, Jim and Evy Kitahara, would meet regularly at the Honda residence in Arlington, Virginia. A service, a Dharma talk, and an opportunity to spend time with the Honda's endured for many years; it was a special time for my parents, who would faithfully drive the long distance from Maryland to Virginia.

I was a teenager back in the early 1960s, when I first called Reverend Honda, Sensei. Our small group of YBAers—Jack and Sachi Matsumoto, Ann and Ai-

leen Fukuda, Joyce and Ruby Ushiro, Harvey Iwata and Richard Kinoshita—would meet periodically in the basement of Mrs. Yaeko Matsumoto's family home. As he did with the Washington DC Sangha group, Sensei would conduct service and offer insightful Dharma talks, resulting in lively discussions. Sensei was always the patient and wise teacher, guiding us to the heart of the talk and allowing us to arrive at our own conclusions. Reverend Honda's storied knowledge of Shin Buddhism, sprinkled with his bits of humor,



made a lasting impression on all of us. As we grew older, life took us in many directions—college, marriage, work, babies [Sensei and June welcomed son Tamon in 1965]—and our YBA eventually disbanded. I would, on occasion, accompany my parents to the Honda's for their regular gatherings.

It was always nice to catch up with the Honda's, see little Tamon become a young man, and to listen to the Buddha-Dharma.

When Norm and I married in 1971, Ekoji did not exist. So, we defaulted to a Baptist temple in Maryland for the official ceremony and reception. For our

Continued on page 4.

In this issue:

Sangha News and Events

BCA Voices

Buddhist and Jodo Shinshu Symbols

Page 2

Page 3

Page 6

Ekoji President's Message

Dana List

Page 7

Page 8

Sangha News and Events

May and Future Events

May 2 (Saturday)

- 10:00 AM – 4:30 PM: Spring Seminar with Reverend Earl Ikeda

May 3 (Shotsuki Sunday)

- 9:00 AM: Sangha Clean-up of Hondo
- 9:30 AM: Dharma School Clean-up of Tsuji Center
- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 (Sangha Hall)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Service
- 11:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service (Guest Speaker: Reverend Earl Ikeda, New York Buddhist Church)

May 10 (Sunday)

- Reverend Rye at Midwest Buddhist Temple (05/06-05/10)
- 9:00 AM: Religious Committee Meeting (Boardroom)
- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 (Sangha Hall)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Service
- 11:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service

May 16 (Saturday)

Note: Spring Fling cancelled

- 10:00 AM: Oasaji Service (Hondo)
- 11:00 AM: MAP Onaijin Set-up for Gotan-E

May 17 (Sunday – GOTAN-E Shinran Shonin's Birthday):

- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 (Sangha Hall)
- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 201 (Hondo)
- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Classes
- 11:00 AM: Joint Gotan-E Service

May 20 (Wednesday)

- 7:30 PM: Takoma Park Dharma Exchange

May 24 Sunday)

- No Dharma School
- 10:00 AM: Buddhism 101 - Crossing Over (Sangha Hall)
- 11:00 AM: Regular Service
- 12:30 PM: Board Meeting (Boardroom)

May 31 (Sunday)

- 10:00 AM: Dharma School Brunch for Parents
- 11:00 AM: Joint Service
- 12:00 PM: All-Sangha Meeting and Lunch

June 5 (Saturday)

- 5:45 PM: YBA Meeting (Sangha Hall)

June 14: Last Day of Dharma School

June 27: LGBT Seminar at New York Buddhist Church

July 11: Bon Odori

July 12: O Bon Service

September 13: Seminar by Dr. Ken Tanaka, author of Oceans

In-kind Donations and Thanks

Thank you to the following individuals who donated their time and skills to help out the temple:

A special thank you to our Vietnamese families who prepared and served a beautiful and delicious traditional Tet luncheon!

- A special thank you to our volunteers who helped setup the temple for and greet the Vietnamese Buddhists on their pilgrimage on Sunday, April 11th.
- Kalavinka Editor: Andrea Walter
- Office Management: Jane Blechman
- Wisteria Lane, Library and Three Treasures Garden: Heidi Forrest
- Temple Supplies: Nora Nagatani
- Onaijin Set-Up and Clean-Up: Minister's Assistants and Heidi Forrest under the leadership of Erick Ishii and Rob Fike
- Dharma Talk Recordings: Michael Galvin and Frank Swithers
- Hondo and Tsuji Center Clean-Up: Dharma School Students, Nen Daiko and all our Sangha members who show up to clean up! A special shout-out to Bob Shimokaji who shows up early every Sunday to clean-up.
- After-service refreshments: Thank you to all who contributed refreshments, prepared coffee and tea and cleaned up afterward! We need volunteers to bring refreshments and help clean up afterward. Our sign-up sheet is in the foyer.
- Thank you to those who volunteered to be service leaders, rang the kanzo, played the piano, and helped collect dana.

My apologies if we missed any names. We are, indeed, fortunate to have so many volunteers assisting with

Continued on page 5.

BCA Voices - Shinshu Sangha

By Rev. Gerald Sakamoto

The ministers of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA) have important lessons to share with us. Through this column, we would like to share many of those lessons with the readers of the Kalavinka. The following article is by Reverend Gerald Sakamoto, which appeared in the February 2015 newsletter of the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin, The Dharma.

Enlightenment is not the goal of Buddhism. To become Buddha is not the goal of Buddhism. Enlightenment and being Buddha are the characteristics of things as they are. To think of enlightenment as the goal would be like taking a prescription without knowing what it is for. Shakyamuni was not trying to make things more difficult, Shakyamuni shared how to resolve the difficulties we cause and experience. Those difficulties result from my inability to see things just as they are, without prejudice, without preference.

At the core of the Buddhadharmā is an approach to address and resolve the difficulties we cause and experience. We do not have to continue to experience difficulties; difficulties that result from the value I place on my preferences and prejudices. I value how I see the world often to the exclusion of other views and practices. To begin to acknowledge this behavior and to cultivate the mind that engages the world free of prejudice is the purpose of the Buddhadharmā.

When we think about the future of our temple, I think most of us would hope for a vibrant, active and growing Sangha. We might imagine a Hondo filled with our family, friends and newcomers, everyone gathered to be a part of something that is interesting, fun and meaningful. We might think of activities that provide services and benefits to our community; helping our community to become a more fair and compassionate place where everyone can feel they belong.

If we can imagine such a Sangha we need to ask ourselves how we might get there.

As we consider the attributes of that future Sangha we can characterize these attributes as positive. These attributes are characteristics that we value...friendship, kindness, community. These characteristics, however, can be found in other places as well. The Bird Nest monk said, "Do no evil deed and engage in

deeds of kindness." Even Rodney King said, "People, I just want to say, you know, can we all get along? Can we stop making it, making it horrible for the older people and the kids?" While we think about the attributes of our Sangha we should think about what makes us a Jodo Shinshu community. It seems obvious but without Jodo Shinshu there is no Jodo Shinshu Sangha.

Jodo Shinshu like enlightenment or Buddha, can be just words that describe attributes that we value. These descriptions are not the source of what we value. Rather what we value is the source of the description. When you look at a picture of a banana, the picture will not make you full. Eating a banana will fill your stomach. If we want a flourishing Jodo Shinshu Sangha we need to begin with where the Buddhadharmā begins.

Jodo Shinshu is Buddhism. It too is concerned with the resolution of difficulties. However, where other forms of Buddhism prescribe practices that cultivate the mind that sees things as they are, Jodo Shinshu does not. Regardless of which Buddhism we prescribe to, we begin at the same point as a being experiencing difficulties. No difficulties, no need for the Buddhadharmā.

Shakyamuni Buddha taught the way out of difficulties to many people in many different ways. We're familiar with the

stories of Mokuren, Queen Vaidehi, Mahakayapa, Kisagotami, Malunkyaputta (Had to google this. He is the main character in the Parable of the Poisoned Arrow). There have been many teachers who have elaborated and worked to clarify for others what Shakyamuni taught. Shinran identified seven teachers who were of special importance in his appreciation of the Buddhadharmā.

Shinran realized, and this is what defines Jodo Shinshu, his inability to cultivate the mind that sees things as they are. He left Mt. Hiei, a center of Buddhist studies and practice, after twenty years of diligent practice. Some cast this decision in a positive light saying it was not failure and characterize this as a positive step in a new direction. I think Shinran's realization that he lacked absolutely, any ability to

Continued on page 6



Remembering Rev. Honda

Continued from page 1.

close friends and family, another more informal reception was held at my family home. There amidst the majestic oak trees and the colorful azaleas in my dad's backyard garden, Reverend Honda, resplendent in white robes, performed our second more intimate ceremony for the day, a Buddhist one. Flash forward a generation to 2003, when Reverend Honda performed another Buddhist wedding ceremony for our daughter Tracy's wedding. This time, the ceremony was a bit more formal, held in the then recently-built Hondo of the Temple of the Gift of Light, the Ekoji Buddhist Temple. At this special time in our lives, it was so meaningful to have Sensei preside at both our wedding and our daughter's wedding.

But, life is change and with the joys of life come sad times as well. For my dad's passing in 1992 and my mom's in 2001, we asked Reverend Honda to conduct



both services. It was a comfort that my parents' dear friend offered their final nembutsu. Throughout the good times and the sad times, Sensei was our spiritual anchor.

With the establishment of the Ekoji Buddhist Temple in Springfield and ultimately here in Fairfax Station, we

were able to once again reconnect with Reverend and Mrs. Honda. When Reverend Kenryu Tsuji, former BCA Bishop and Ekoji's founding and long-time resident minister, retired and moved to California, Reverend Honda stepped in to fill the ministerial void. From 2000-2009 when Sensei served as the Temple's non-resident volunteer minister, the Temple truly benefitted from Reverend Honda's devotion to spreading the Buddha-Dharma; as with the Tsuji's, the Honda's were a package deal. And, when Norm served a term as Temple president during that decade, Sensei and June would always be available to provide invaluable guidance and support to Temple programs and activities. On Saturdays, the Hondas would artfully arrange the flowers and fruits to properly prepare the onajjin for Sunday's service. Together, the Hondas enriched

the Sangha with their presence and their immeasurable contributions to Temple life. Helping to grow Ekoji, the Temple Board and the Sangha will be forever grateful for the Honda's true dedication and tireless energy devoted to running the temple. It was refreshing to hear Sensei's Dharma talks again and to see another generation of Dharma School and Sangha members enjoy his wonderful lessons of the Dharma and, on special occasions, his special kamishibai presentations.



After our recent trips to Japan, we would visit with sensei, bringing him a special Kyoto or Osaka confection we discovered along our travels. The best value for food and other trinkets is to shop in Osaka, a tip he shared with us on many occasions since he would travel that route so many times in his youth and on his trips back to his family temple. We would talk at length about the beauty of the sakura in the spring and the matsu in the fall. Sensei proudly stated he had the best view at Greenspring, enjoying the changing seasons from the comfort of his living room.

Last November, Sensei asked us to drive him to the Volvo dealer to pick up his car left for servicing. Eschewing the beltway and freeway, Sensei expertly guided us through the local surface streets of Springfield and Annandale into Falls Church. Always the teacher, Sensei trumped the GPS and we learned a new route; we didn't miss a turn with his spot-on navigation. As we helped Sensei out of the car, we were ready to accompany him inside to ensure everything went well. Instead, he profusely thanked us for the ride, waved us off and he sauntered off with his cane. No doubt he would make it back to Greenspring just fine. That would be the last time I would see Sensei.

With the recent publication of his children's book, *Stories for Wisdom*, yet another generation of our family has been touched by Sensei. For our grandsons' recent Xmas, Reverend specially autographed a copy of his book, with an inscription to Tracy, "to keep the Jodo Shinshu tradition alive as hearing good stories benefits one's character." She is trying to follow his advice as the boys regularly attend Dharma School at the Gardena Buddhist Church in L.A. Their favor-

Continued on page 5

Remembering Rev. Honda

Continued from page 4.

ite story from the book is the Hungry Donkey. While the boys laughed at the donkey's indecisiveness, they came to realize the animal's own foolish actions ultimately doomed him. Like Reverend Honda the teacher, the story is simple, straight forward storytelling, getting to the heart of the matter in an entertaining and insightful manner. A special book from a special person. Our family will treasure it.

Like a thousand stars light the sky, Sensei Honda has illuminated our lives with his special humor,

his warm and caring spirit, and his ceaseless devotion to propagating the Buddha-Dharma. The time we spent together traveling on the journey of life will be forever cherished. We are grateful



for this lifetime of special memories. As one journey ends, yet another in the Pure Land, reuniting with your beloved June, begins. As Sensei would say, Namaste.

Sangha News and Events

Continued from page 2.

Temple activities. Laverne Imori

Sangha Member News

The Ekoji Buddhist Temple offers its deep sympathy and condolences to the family of **Mr. Norikazu Ken Otake** of Fredericksburg, VA, who passed away on March 21, 2015. Mr. Otake had an illustrious career in marine photography and editorial writing. Over his career, he served as Editor-in-Chief of *Diving World*, *Sail*, and Continental Airlines's in-flight magazine *Islands*. During his service, a common theme was his love for his family, his love of the ocean, and his love for cooking and eating. Mr. Otake is survived by his mother, Shizue Otake of Tokyo, his wife Setsuko, his daughter Kathleen Renfro and her husband Phil, his daughter Rika Judd and her husband Whit, and his daughter Sayaka of Tokyo. Mr. Otake also has three grandsons, Colie, Caleb, and Curtis. Service for Mr. Otake was held at Ekoji on April 1, with Rev. Kurt Rye officiating. Namo Amida Butsu.

The Ekoji Buddhist Temple extends its deepest sympathies and condolences to the family of **Mr. Kenichi Kuwabara** of Maryland who passed away on February 23, 2015. Mr. Kuwabara was born in Salt Lake City, Utah. His family moved to California where he attended the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA). When the United States entered World War II, he moved to Denver, Colorado. Mr. Kuwabara served in World War II as a member of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS). After the War, he returned to Colorado to complete his education at the University of Denver. After graduation, he moved

to the Washington, DC, area to work as an economist with the U.S. Department of Commerce. Mr. Kuwabara is survived by his wife, Rose, three children, two grandchildren, a sister, and four nephews. On April 11, a memorial service was held for Mr. Kuwabara at Ekoji; the Rev. Kurt Rye officiated. Ekoji has lost a dear friend and long-time supporter. In gassho.

Please submit news such as special honors or awards, weddings, births, graduations, etc., to Laverne Imori at limori@comcast.net, so we can share with the Sangha.

Seeking Dharma School Teaching Volunteers

Ekoji's Children's Dharma School is seeking volunteers to help teach our weekly classes. Those interested need not have a background in Buddhism or in teaching--we just need people who are willing to learn along with the students, have a sense of curiosity and creativity, and enjoy working with kids and young adults. Many of our teachers did not start teaching with ready experience and knowledge, and we often read, research, and prep a week or two in advance to stay a step ahead of our classes. We also have a number of substantive and activity resources available to our teaching team.

Most classes are taught by two teachers to help maintain classroom discipline and share the workload. Serving as a Dharma School teacher is time-consuming, but it is also incredibly rewarding to help guide our youngest sangha members as we learn more about the Dharma together. If you are interested in volun-

Continued on page 7

Voices from the BCA

Continued from page 3.

cultivate the mind that sees things as they are, was essential to his appreciation of the Vow of Amida. His lack of ability to do what was necessary to cultivate this mind led him away from traditional practices. Acknowledging his lack of ability did not deny that others may have the skills, it was simply clear to him that he lacked what was necessary to resolve the difficulties of his experience.

In the Second Chapter of the Tannisho, Yuien recalls the words of Shinran, "... But if you can imagine in me some special knowledge of a path to birth other than the Nembutsu or of scriptural writings that teach it, you are greatly mistaken. If that is the case, since there are many eminent scholars in the southern capital of Nara or on Mount Hiei to the north, you would do better to meet with them and inquire fully about the essentials for birth." (CWS p. 662) This conversation took place late in Shinran's life, after exile in Echigo,

decades in the Kanto region, after his return to Kyoto in 1234 when he was 61 years old.

At the core of Jodo Shinshu is the acknowledgment of my absolute inability to resolve the difficulties I cause and experience, and the absolute assurance of Amida to resolve those difficulties. That assurance allows me to look more openly at myself. This is the beginning of seeing things as they are. This relationship of acknowledging my inabilities and Amida's assurance is the heart of Shinshu's life of gratitude. This is the beginning and life of a Shinshu Sangha.

As we live our life in gratitude, sometimes as we look more openly, we catch glimpses of kindness, hope, compassion. In Shoshinge, Shinran writes, "When foolish beings of delusion and defilement awaken Shinjin, they realize that birth and death is itself nirvana." (CWS p. 72) Namo Amida Butsu

Buddhist and Jodo Shinshu Symbols - The Lotus Flower

The lotus is an often-used symbol in Buddhism. The lotus grows with its roots anchored in mire. Its stem rises through the murky water and its blossoms bloom in full glory above the water, pure and unaffected by the defilement which surrounds it.

Unlike other plants, the lotus flower in bloom already has fully developed seeds at its base – that is to say the flowers and seeds develop simultaneously. This is likened to the Dharma and awakening, which also arise simultaneously.

In the Pure Land tradition, the lotus flower is associated with sentient beings and the offering of lotus flowers to the Buddha is symbolic of abandon-



ing one's imagined nature and returning to one's true nature. (*Jodo Shinshu—A Guide*, Hongwanji, 2004, pp. 140.)

Namo Amida Butsu

Ekoji President's Message - It Takes a Sangha

By: Laverne Shidou Imori

There's a familiar saying: "It takes a village to raise a child." This month, I'd like to paraphrase that adage to: "It takes a Sangha to sustain the Dharma" and address issues that face those of who are trying to maintain and grow our temple as a comfortable place to hear and share the Buddha Dharma.

At the All-Sangha Annual Meeting last November, you voted unanimously to support activities and efforts that will contribute to the growth of Ekoji's membership in order to remain in our current physical location. We need to grow to at least 200 members to meet that goal. As of April, we were just shy of 70 members. It's obvious we have quite a challenge

ahead of us.

The Board and other temple leaders are working with Reverend Rye to put together a plan that we hope will help us achieve our goals. We'd like to invite you to a follow-up meeting on Sunday, May 31st at noon in the Sangha Hall. A light lunch will be served.

We will share with you the activities we have planned and invite you to participate. We're excited and energized about religious programs and events, but need your help! We will have a calendar of events, sign-up sheets and an opportunity to meet old and new Sangha members. Please come. Gassho, Laverne

Sangha News and Events

Continued from page 5.

teering, please contact Maya Horio at ekojidharmaschool@gmail.com.

Buddhism 101

The dates for the Buddhism 101 classes are as follows: April 19, 26, and May 3, 10, 17, July 19, 26, and August 2, 9, 16, September 13, 20, 27, and October 4, 11, and November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.

2015 Eastern Buddhist League Conference

The theme for the Eastern Buddhist League Conference is "I Go to the Sangha for Guidance," and it will be held September 4-6, 2015, in Cleveland, Ohio.

Please join us in Cleveland for the 2015 Eastern Buddhist League Conference, where you will gather with friends from Ekoji Buddhist Temple, Midwest Buddhist Temple, Twin Cities Buddhist Association, New York Buddhist Church, Seabrook (NJ) Buddhist Temple, Toronto Buddhist Church, and your EBL host, Cleveland Buddhist Temple.

This year's theme, "I Go to the Sangha for Guidance," is a familiar phrase to us. It's something we have repeated often – and yet, what does it mean for us and others today? The traditional Shin sangha in America, strongly Japanese, has evolved into a community more diverse, but still strong and flourishing. This year's theme explores how traditional and mod-

ern sanghas can combine in expression of the same message. In doing so, we will consider questions about the role and purpose of the sangha in the world. How can the sangha communicate to others the peace and joy of leading a Shin life? How do we put books on the shelf? What is effective outreach? How do we make and keep the teaching relevant to all people coming to us "as they are"?

This event will bring together friends from the temples and others who are interested in learning more about Shin Buddhism and how to better incorporate it into our lives and our communities.

We are extremely pleased to announce that author and scholar Jeff Wilson will be with us over the weekend. Jeff will deliver the keynote address and will also participate in the workshops. Jeff has written numerous books and articles on the development of Buddhism in America, including several works on the place of Shin Buddhism. He is contributing editor for Tricycle magazine and author of the books *Buddhism of the Heart*, *Dixie Dharma*, and *Mindful America*.

Beginning in mid-April, more information and online registration will be available on the conference website at ebl2015.weebly.com.

Ekoji Dana List - April 2015

Ajit and Samantha Silva
Allen Thomson
Andrew Barden
Art Politano
Bob Shimokaji
Bud Uyeda
Burt and Nancy Motonaga
Corinne Fukayama
Curtis Rothrock
Dharma School
Diem Huyen Vuong
Frank Swithers
Jane Blechman
John Sutch
Lani Pham & Pierre Karen
Leigh Colbert-Martin
Lisa and Greg Nakamura
Mark LaWall
Mary Okamoto
Matthew Barrett
Michelle Amano
Nen Daiko Open House
Norm and Gail Kondo
Peter Golemboski

Quynh Hoa Hoang-Viet Tour
Rebecca Perry and William Nelson
Reiko and Hisao Matsumoto
Ron and Nora Nagatani
Sam Fugitt
Sara May
Sarah Barlow
Shigeko Walton
Stuart Ott
Terence and Sara May
Terri Hamill
Thomas Griffin
Tida Rask
Tomoko and W.Donald Smith
William Robertson
Yuko and Toshiaki Keicho

Memory Dana
Ann Geffen In Memory of Rev. Shojo Honda

Kalavinka

Managing Editor: Andrea A. Walter

Assistant Editors: Rev. Kurt Rye,
Ken Nakamura, Laverne Imori

Sangha members and community businesses can publish **advertisements in Kalavinka**. Please contact us for information!

Kalavinka is published by the Ekoji Buddhist Temple, 6500 Lake Haven Lane, Fairfax Station, VA 22039, (703) 239-0500
www.ekoji.org

Join us at Ekoji!

Adult Service: Sundays at 11 a.m.

Meditation: Thursdays at 8 p.m.

Yoga: Mondays at 7:30 p.m.

Children's Dharma School (Sept. through June):
10 a.m. family service and 11 a.m. classes

Consult the Ekoji website for the complete event calendar at www.ekoji.org.



EKOJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS