



# The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

# BULLETIN

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Volume 68 Number 2 November 2011 (2555 B.E.)

## Scheduled Events

Call 773-334-4661 or visit  
www.budtempchi.org

## Regular Sunday Services

### **Dharma Sunday School**

Sundays 11am, Nov. 13 and 27

### **Religious Services**

Sundays at 11am – Noon, in English

### **Monthly Memorial Service**

Shotsuki Hoyo, Sunday, Nov. 6,  
11am in English, 1pm in Japanese

## Special Observances/Events

**Ho-on-ko Seminar** – Saturday Nov. 26; Sunday Nov. 27 Special Ho-on-ko Service, Monday Nov. 28, follow-up discussion. (See articles.)

## Buddhist Studies/Practices

**Discussion Group** – Open to All,  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sundays, 12:30pm to 2pm

**Introduction to Buddhism** – Call temple to confirm dates and time

**Meditation Sessions** – 9am Sundays

**Sutra Study Class** – 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays,  
Open to All, 12:30pm to 2pm

**Study Class** – Wednesdays, 7pm

## Activities

**Asoka Society Meeting** – 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Saturdays, 1pm

**Calligraphy** – Japanese brush  
writing class 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays, 7pm

**Crafts Class** – 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturdays,  
10am to noon, open to all (call temple for confirmation)

**Fencing** – Introduction to Kendo,  
Dojo sessions, Tuesdays, 8pm to 10pm at Bethany United Church (call Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187)

**Japanese Language Class** –  
Saturdays, 10am to noon, children or adults, call 773-334-4661 to register

**Japanese Swordsmanship** – Iaido,  
Mondays 7pm to 9pm

**Middle Way Meeting** – 1<sup>st</sup> Sundays,  
noon

**Taiko Drums** – BTC Kokyo Taiko  
Drum Troupe, Fridays, 7pm to 9pm

## **Shinran's Experience of the Pure Land**

For many people just starting to explore Buddhism, the burning question is “How can I attain enlightenment?” If someone is eager to get enlightened sooner rather than later, they reject Jodo Shinshu because it seems to say enlightenment is possible only after one dies and is reborn in some realm called the Pure Land. Actually Shinran Shonin, whose 750<sup>th</sup>



Rev. Patti  
Nakai

memorial, Ho-on-ko, we are commemorating this month, was no different from the newcomer first setting foot in our temple – he wanted to become enlightened in this life as surely and swiftly as possible.

Shinran spent twenty years at the Mt. Hiei monastery doing all the right things a monk was supposed to do to become enlightened but found he was making very little progress. The big stumbling block was getting rid of those darn defilements. How can a person become egoless when thoughts of anger, desire and stupidity keep arising? There had to be a way, Shinran believed, because there were historical records and present-day claims of priests who were enlightened and totally free of ego as Shakyamuni had been from the moment he arose from sitting under the Bodhi tree.

When Shinran encountered Honen Shonin, he felt something in Honen's being that was more powerful than any written description of enlightenment. Here was a man who had given up his high status as a learned priest on Mt. Hiei to share the Buddhist teachings with the people of the city. According to what Shinran learned on Mt. Hiei, those laymen and women from various social classes, including known criminals, had no chance of being enlightened in their lifetimes. But Honen accepted them all, seeing them all as being one step away from Buddhahood. Honen himself said he couldn't be considered “enlightened” because he was so full of defilement, having 84,000 deluded thoughts a day. But Shinran could see that Honen was shining with a light of selfless wisdom and compassion. Shinran must have wondered what was going on if it wasn't enlightenment.

Would we call it “enlightenment” what Shinran saw in Honen and what people would later see in Shinran? In the Pure Land teachings, enlightenment can occur only when one is born in the Pure Land, so could we say teachers like Honen and Shinran were born in the Pure Land while

*(Continued on Page 6)*

**Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of**

**Mr. Martin Takashi Hoover**

**Please see Temple News for details**

## THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE OF CHICAGO

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### Feedback & Submissions

Comments, corrections, questions, and suggestions are encouraged. Submitted material will be reviewed for suitability and space availability. Anonymous submissions will not be published, but author's names may be withheld from publication upon request. Deadline is the first Friday of the month.  
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## TEMPLE NEWS SEPTEMBER 2011

- ❖ 09/04 No service – EBL Seminar was held at New York Buddhist Church.
- ❖ 09/10 The Fall Quarter of the Japanese Language School began.
- ❖ 09/11 Shotsuki Hoyo (Monthly Memorial Service) was observed. Rev. Ashikaga delivered Dharma message both in English and Japanese.
- ❖ 09/17 Asoka Society's monthly meeting was held. \* \* \* Rev. Ashikaga conducted memorial service of the late Martin Hoover who passed away on September 13 at the Hoover home in Niles, Illinois.
- ❖ 09/18 Fall O-Higan Special Service was held. Rev. Patti Nakai delivered Dharma message in English and Rev. Ashikaga spoke in Japanese. O-Higan special luncheon was prepared by Etsuko and Yasuo Mizuuchi and served by the September O-Higan group.
- ❖ 09/23 October issue of the Temple Bulletin was mailed.
- ❖ 09/24 The Funeral/Memorial service for the late Martin Takashi Hoover was conducted at the Temple. The late Mr. Hoover, 61, passed away on September 13, 2011 in Jackson, Michigan. He is survived by mother Suzanne Hoover, wife Naomi Hoover, daughters, Kara Lenox, Kristy Dillon, Traci Aldridge, and brother Art Hoover.
- ❖ 09/25 Regular Sunday Service together with Ti-Sarana Ceremony was observed. Justin Woodward was the lay speaker, and Rev. Ashikaga conducted Ti-Sarana ceremony for Rodel de Ocampo who received his Dharma name and certificate.

## THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

**Understanding the Nembutsu  
through recognizing the  
Paramitas in others.  
Send in your recognitions!**

- ❖ Sunday Service Participants: Rev. Ashikaga, Rev. Nakai, Bill Bohlman, Rodel de Ocampo, Glenn, Maris and Mieko Fujiura, Janet Lipner, Elaine Siegel, Justin Woodward, Mrs. Hisayo Ashikaga, our pianist.
- ❖ Sunday Refreshments: Noreen Enkoji, Jane Ike, Haru Ito, Anna Nagata, the September O-Higan Group.
- ❖ Temple Bulletin Mailing: Rev. Ashikaga, Dennis Chan, Antoinette d'Vencets, Noreen Enkoji, Evelyn Inamine, Haru Ito, Rev. Patti, Gary Nakai, Mary Shimomura, Tommi, and Tak Tomiyama.
- ❖ Taking care of the Temple inside and out: Tomio Tademoto
- ❖ Cleaning the entire Temple every week: Harky Tademoto
- ❖ Manning the Temple office every Thursday: Tak Tomiyama
- ❖ Emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal: Adam Kellman, April Kellman, Shawn Lyte, Rev. Patti Nakai

## Dharma School Bright Dawn Field Trip

By Yulian

To get to Bright Dawn Homespread, we drove our car. We had everything in the trunk that we needed, so we were prepared. But the long drive was worth it. We (Mom, Dad, my younger sister and I) would all be staying at Bright Dawn Home Spread for two nights! I was so excited when we finally arrived. We would be staying with our Dharma School classmates: Bea and her family and Anna with her sister and dad. Two nights!

When we went in, we were greeted by Bea's

family. Anna wasn't there yet. After waiting awhile, we sat down to dinner. It was my family's turn to make dinner: PASTA!! One of my favorites!!! The meal was very good. After dinner, Anna wasn't here yet) we did some meditation with Mr. Brandon. It was very nice and calming. Mr. Brandon is a very nice leader, by the way. Then it was time to catch a few Zs. My sister and I got to sleep with Bea. YAY! It had been a fun day and we needed our rest. It was nice to sleep with Bea, I thought, and then I slept.

The next morning I woke up bright and early.

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## Ho-On-Ko

November is the month of Ho-on-ko in our tradition. Ho-on-ko is the memorial of Shinran Shonin, who is the founder of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. After Shinran passed away on November 28, 1262 at the age of ninety, his followers, who received the great teaching of Nembutsu, gathered together at the grave site, paid their respects, and made the promise to continue without interruption the *shinjin*, or absolute awakening. This gathering became Ho-on-ko, the gathering to express appreciation for Shinran.

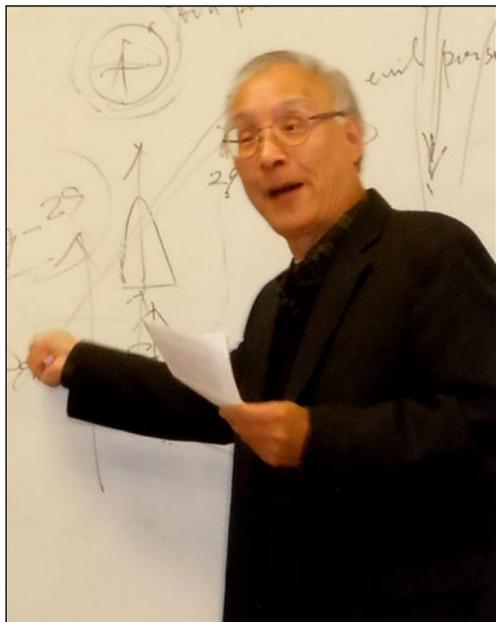


Rev. Yukei  
Ashikaga

In later years, at the end of November, the number of followers who came to pay their respects at the Shinran's grave multiplied. They all wanted to meet the teacher in their hearts and minds. Those who could not visit the teacher's grave in Kyoto observed memorial services of Shinran at their local places where they enshrined a copy of Shinran's figure. This is the beginning of local temples starting Ho-on-ko service to express their appreciation of receiving the teaching all year long.

Shinran never expected to be worshipped by the people. Once he was asked, "Where shall we erect your grave after you are gone?" Shinran answered, "I am not worthy to be respected by people. Therefore, throw my body in the Kamo river and feed it to fish."

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago is observing Ho-on-ko special service on Sunday, November 27, 2011 with Dr. Nobuo



Haneda of the Maida Center of Buddhism in Berkeley, California as guest speaker. Dr. Haneda will also conduct a special seminar on Saturday, November 26. A continuing session will convene Monday morning on the 26<sup>th</sup>. Let us all encounter Shinran Shonin as founder of our tradition at this Ho-on-ko service. In gassho.

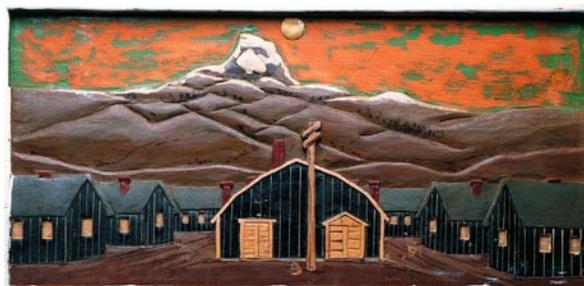
Dr. Haneda lecturing at BTC in 2010. The founder of the Maida Center will be making his Ho-on-ko visit to The Buddhist Temple of Chicago on November 26-28, 2011. BTC is honored to welcome the esteemed teacher back to Chicago.

Photo by Dennis Chan.

## The Art of Gaman: Field Trip & Temple Member Presentation

The Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center is featuring a special exhibition entitled *The Art of Gaman: Arts and Crafts from the Japanese American Internment Camps, 1942-1946*. "Gaman" means to "bear the seemingly unbearable with dignity and patience." The exhibit showcases more than 120 tools, toys, arts, jewelry, and crafts made by Japanese-Americans in the U.S. internment camps during World War II.

On Sunday, November 6, after services, the Middle Way will be visiting the museum, located at 9603 Woods Drive in Skokie. Adult admission is \$12.00 and senior admission (65+) is \$8.00. There is no group rate. Attendees plan to carpool and go to dinner in the vicinity afterwards. If you are able to offer a ride or if you need a ride, please contact Ruth and let her know at [fabbianti@sbcglobal.net](mailto:fabbianti@sbcglobal.net) by October 30 so that the Middle Way can coordinate. Everyone is welcome.



Artwork created by a Japanese American internee at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, depicting tarpaper-covered barracks that stood in the shadow of the mountain. Collection of the Japanese American Museum of San José. From "Art of Gaman" by Delphine Hirasuna, © 2005, Ten Speed. Photo by Terry Heffernan.

On November 13, from 1pm to 4pm, BTC temple member Michio Iwao will demonstrate the process for carving and painting bird pins, a craft he learned while interned at Gila River, Arizona. Admission to the presentation is free with payment of general admission. Making a reservation at 847-967-4889 is recommended.

The *Art of Gaman* exhibit will run through January 15, 2012. More information available at [www.IH HolocaustMuseum.org](http://www.IH HolocaustMuseum.org).

## Smoking in Berkeley

By Ruth Abbinanti

Reflections on the Maida Center 2011 Summer Retreat: The Importance of “Listening” in Shin Buddhism. Introduction to Shinran Shonin’s Kyogyoshinsho conducted by Dr. Nobuo Haneda and Rev. Patti Nakai

I sit at the keyboard surrounded by handouts and notes from the Maida Center retreat, overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of the material. My refuge is the concept of listening-smoking (*sruti-vasana*). Imagine a raw salmon hanging in a smoker. As the smoke swirls around and throughout the smoker, the fish slowly changes. When we encounter Buddha’s teachings we are like the salmon -- becoming something different without conscious action. Throughout the weekend of the retreat I was smoked with esoteric knowledge, parables, sleep deprivation, and social conversations, all laid upon a foundation of knowledge from Rev. Patti’s sutra classes on *The Larger Sutra*. Please enter my smoker.

Shinran subtitled the *Kyogyoshinsho* “Collected (heard by) Shinran” *i.e.*, sharing what he heard from teachers he encountered. The following opening reading from the seminar encompasses the concepts we spent the weekend trying to grasp with greater understanding:

*It is difficult to meet a true teacher.  
And difficult for him to instruct.  
It is difficult to hear the teaching well,  
And more difficult still to understand (shin) the teaching.*

*More difficult even than understanding (shin) the [84,000] teaching of Shakyamuni’s lifetime  
Is appreciation (shingyo) of the all-encompassing Aspiration (or Vow).*

*The [Larger] Sutra teaches us that the appreciation of the Aspiration is the most difficult of all difficulties.*

*It says, “Nothing surpasses this difficulty.”*

[Translated by Dr. Haneda, cf. *Collected works of Shinran*, p. 344.]

Shin is the only branch of Buddhism that says listening alone is the only thing necessary for our practice. We must hear and understand the meaning of Namu Amidabutsu.

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## The Haiku Corner: The Journal of a Weather-Exposed Skeleton

by Elaine Siegel

This is the first in a four-part series of commentaries on the haikai travelogue, or “*haibun*” of Matsuo Bashō (1644-94), *The Journal of a Weather-exposed Skeleton* (*Nozarashi kikō*). The brilliant *haibun* form combines both prose commentary and haiku poetry. The *Nozarashi* is the first of Bashō’s travel *haibun*.

### Part I--Lost: Between Heaven and Earth

In the *Nozarashi*, Bashō recounts his daring travels in 1684-85 from his home in Edo, to his childhood home in Ueno, and back again. Aging, and in less-than-robust health, Bashō faced a long, perilous journey in rough terrain, through the treacherous weather of autumn and winter. He set off in the autumn of 1684, with the fear that this trip might be his last:

*...I left my dilapidated hut on the riverside. The autumn wind was blowing with an unaccountably chilling sound.*

Weatherbeaten skeleton  
Haunting my mind, how the wind  
Pierces my body!<sup>1</sup>

Soon after he begins his journey, Bashō does, indeed, come face to face with death:

*On a road along the Fuji River we came upon an abandoned child, about two years of age and crying pathetically. Apparently, its parents, finding the waves of this floating world as uncontrollable as the turbulent rapids of the river, had decided to leave it there until its life vanished like a dewdrop. The child seemed like a tiny bush-clover blossom that would fall at any time tonight or tomorrow, as soon as an autumn gust blew. I tossed out some food from my sleeve pocket as I passed by.*

Those who have heard a monkey’s cry:  
How about this abandoned child  
In the autumn wind?<sup>2</sup>

This horrifying scene has provoked much controversy and intense criticism of Bashō. How could he just walk away? How heartless, pitching food at the doomed child. Why didn’t Bashō do something about it?

In this journal entry, Bashō grapples with the moral dilemma that confronts him, as will be discussed in Part II of this series. Our understanding of the passage, however, is obscured by our misapprehension of the haikai tradition.

*This article will be continued in next month’s bulletin.*

<sup>1</sup> Nozarashi wo/ kokoro ni kaze no/ shimu mi kana. Trans. Makoto Ueda, *Bashō and his Interpreters: Selected Hokku with Commentary* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press), p. 100.

<sup>2</sup> Saru wo kiku/hito sutego ni aki/ no kaze ikani. Trans. Ueda, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

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## A Year in the Company of a Bald-Headed Fool

The year 2011 marks the 750<sup>th</sup> year since the passing of Shinran Shonin, and this was the year that great plans were made in advance to observe this every-50-year-event (*Goen-ki*) across Jodo Shinshu temples world-wide. At such intervals, each such observance – with its grand celebratory themes linked to Shinran’s teachings – is characterized as an event of a lifetime. This would be even truer at the headquarter temples in Kyoto, Japan, were it not for the massive devastation still impacting the people of Japan in their struggle towards normalcy. Naturally, a nation-wide celebration could not be executed in good conscience while there continues to be so much suffering.

For BTC, not coming under the jurisdiction of Honganji, we find ourselves somewhat removed from the structured observances encouraged or otherwise dictated by these temple headquarters. However, along with all Jodo Shinshu temples, BTC, through its able ministers, annually observes Shinran Shonin’s memorial at Ho-on-ko around the time of Thanksgiving Day weekend. It has been a tradition at BTC to invite world-class teachers to conduct a seminar on Saturday followed by speaking during Ho-on-ko service on Sunday. By popular demand, special seminar sessions spill over to Monday, for those fortunate to be able to attend.

But, returning to the observance of the 750<sup>th</sup> memorial, we should use the next full year to study and integrate into our lives the history, teachings, and teaching lineage significance of the one who is credited with establishing Shin Buddhism. There is ample material to cram into a year’s time, and even with this diligence it would be just an overview.

*(Continued on Page 7, right column)*



Photos by Dave Leshuk, Diana Schoendorff, and Bob Scheele

## ... Bright Dawn Field Trip *(Continued from Page 2)*

Bea was still sleeping but my sister was awake. When Bea woke up and dressed, we went down stairs to have breakfast. SURPRISE! Anna, her dad, and her little sister were here! All of us ate a yummy breakfast and then we went to explore the barn. We played hide and seek there. I was nervous when it was my turn to be it, because the barn was big and, to be honest, I was a teeny bit scared. It felt good when I found Anna, though; I had company. Bea's mom joined us and played a game similar to hide and seek. It's where one person hides and everybody else tries to find them. But, since we had to split up, if you found the hidden person, you had to hide along with them. After playing, we all went back to the house for meditation.

Today we would be taking a hike in the meadows. It was fun to look at nature, and we recited some phrases that Mr Brandon told us to repeat. We came back to lunch and then just hung out around the house. I was still thinking about the wonderful time in the meadows that I had when the call came for dinner. It was Bea's family's turn to make dinner. To my great surprise, we had pasta again! I wasn't complaining, though. After dinner (yes there is more fun :D) we toasted marshmallows over a fire outside. Bea played her violin. Anna and I loved the music. When it was time for bed, I thought about how fun the day had been. Too bad that I had to leave tomorrow.

Sadly, today was the day to leave. We had a good-bye ceremony where we put a rock in a rock garden. I was very sad to go, but I was sure I will never forget this wonderful trip.

So that is the story of my trip to Bright Dawn. I hope you enjoyed it!



## ... Shinran's Experience of the Pure Land

(Continued from Page 1)

still alive?

At the recent International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies conference there was a panel discussing Japanese papers on the topic "birth in the Pure Land." I could not attend it because it was at the same time as the session where I was giving my paper, but recently I got around to reading some of the papers of that panel. (All the conference papers are available on-line, so if you're interested, I can e-mail you the link.)

In one paper, Kazumaro Tsukamoto of the Nishi Honganji Research Center detailed passages from Shinran's writings where he uses the word *ojo* (literally "go and be born," but it has come to indicate "birth in the Pure Land"). Rev. Tsukamoto argues that though some of the passages could be interpreted various ways, there is no definite proof that Shinran believed "birth in the Pure Land" is possible in this lifetime.

Rev. Tsukamoto cites Shinran's letters where he talks of "birth in the Pure Land" referring to the afterlife. But I know it is common for many Japanese Buddhists to use *ojo* as a colloquial expression for "going to a better place" and meeting up in "the sweet by-and-by." Nobuo Haneda (our speaker for the Ho-on-ko seminar) is very insistent on the idea that "birth in the Pure Land" refers to this life, but even he makes references to the afterlife in casual conversation. (One example: An elderly doctor who treated his wife died before he could send them his bill, so Dr. Haneda says that Tomoko has to pay up when she meets the doctor in the Pure Land.)

From most of Shinran's writings for the public, though, it does sound like he believes that he himself will be born in the Pure Land only at death because there is no way for him to be enlightened in this life. What Shinran learned from Honen is that the ego eagerly grasps on to religious medals of achievement. Honen caused a stir in the aristocratic Buddhist institutions when he said he had no *bodhicitta*, Buddha-mind or nature. The high-ranking priests of the day said it was preposterous for someone to say they're on the path to Buddhahood if they haven't aroused their own innate Buddha-nature.

But Honen countered that he was no longer concerned about reaching for "my" enlightenment because he was already included in the enlightenment attained many ages ago by our spiritual ancestor (archetype) Dharmakara. All he needed to do was be reminded of that fact by reciting and hearing the name that Dharmakara gave himself: "Namu Amida Butsu," the one who has let go of all self-enhancing efforts so he can join in oneness with all beings just as they are.

(Continued in next column)

Merely to believe that I am enlightened as a particular individual is proof of my ego asserting its sense of superiority over other beings. If I look only at my physical being, I see how selfishly it operates – if I'm hungry, if I need to use the bathroom, or if I see someone sexually appealing, I'll knock over any and everyone who gets in my way. So Shinran believed as long as I have this body, not to mention my wayward mind, there's no way I can claim to be free of ego-self. Therefore, only in the moment of death can I be free of this defilement-creating body.

But in knowing that he and all other beings are just one step away from ultimate enlightenment, Shinran can't help but feel like this world is not only easier to bear, but he comes to notice more and more of it is a preview of the flowing ease of the Pure Land. When people observe how his face is so full of joy and gratitude and how he accepts everyone so heartily as his friend (even those who try to do him in), they see him as someone who acts as if he were already in the Pure Land.

In the papers from the panel on "birth in the Pure Land," I didn't find anyone quoting the verse that Dr. Haneda often uses to support the idea that birth in the Pure Land can be in this life. That verse is from the *Jogai wasan*, a set of nine verses not included in any of the three recognized collections of Shinran's poems (*jo-gai* means "collection-outside"), and there is some debate on whether those verses were actually written by Shinran. But Dr. Haneda and many scholars feel this verse reflects Shinran's experience of the Pure Land in this life.

Ever since I have listened to the Vow [of Dharmakara] to transcend the world,

I cannot help wondering if we are ordinary beings in samsara [realm of suffering].

Although my defiled body with passions has not changed,

My mind plays in the Pure Land.

As beginners we are so anxious to find the "magic bullet" to get us quickly to enlightenment, but for those of us experiencing the ego-generated roadblocks and potholes on the path of Buddha-Dharma, it is worth our while to devote time to listening to Shinran and the many great teachers of the nembutsu. It took Shinran several years (some might say decades) for the teachings he received from Honen to really sink in and be clearly relevant to his day-to-day experiences. The least we can do is spend a few hours at the annual Ho-on-ko seminar, the weekly services and study classes to help each other listen to and learn the teachings of true transcendence.

### ... Smoking in Berkeley

*(Continued from Page 4)*

We all need a teacher to be our mirror for self-examination. The teacher must be a good listener and not talk at us. Too many conversations are alternating monologues with no understanding of the other's point of view.

There are two worlds: the world of suffering (with words) and the world of ultimate truth (beyond words). The dualistic thinking of these two worlds is needed to manage daily living, but we incorrectly think our personal experiences (upside-down thinking) will help us to find the Pure Land. Shakyamuni left the realm of Nirvana to return to our ordinary world where he used words (the only means available) to explain the Dharma to us.

Shinran's examination of vows in the Larger Sutra help us find our way. The three vows describe three stages. The 19<sup>th</sup> vow describes the first stage, the stage of the Falsely Settled. These are Ethical Persons who perform meritorious acts believing that this is the path to the Pure Land. "I have something good in me so I can overcome evil." The 20<sup>th</sup> vow describes the second stage, the Stage of the Unsettled. These are Religious Persons questioning the value of 19<sup>th</sup> vow actions and moving toward being listeners rather than thinkers – a move toward self-reflection. The 18<sup>th</sup> vow describes the third stage, the Stage of the Truly Settled. This is the realm of listeners. The Stage of the Truly Settled are the Ordinary Persons or Shinjin Persons who truly hear.

This *hearing* (understanding) is the essence of Shinran's teaching. It is the hearing, not the saying, of the nembutsu that takes us to the Stage of the Truly Settled. The nembutsu is not a ritual or prayer to get us to the Pure Land. The Pure Land is a state of mind/being where we are grateful for all aspects of our daily existence while being aware of both the cause and the cure of suffering.

The week after Dr. Haneda's seminar at the Jodo Shinshu Center (Buddhist Churches of America), I attended "Waking Up to the Dharma," an early morning meditative session hosted by the Center. Each morning we chanted in Nishi Honganji style, a style far different from how we chant at BTC, which follows the Higashi Honganji style. The chanting styles differ because when the Honganji denomination split into West (Nishi) and East (Higashi) after 1600, Nishi adapted the current "Chinese" tonal style of chanting, while Higashi

*(Continued in next column)*

preserved the Japanese folk-music based style of chanting. (Thanks to Rev. Patti Nakai for this explanation.) This was followed by a Dharma talk or discussion and Tai Chi. Then we were offered breakfast and a chance to talk to the four ministers who lead the sessions as well as the other participants. After smoking my head for three days, these sessions were a perfect cool-down. It was interesting to hear about the experiences and thoughts of the other participants.

After my dharma morning I rode the BART to San Francisco to be a tourist. Each night I returned to the very quiet center to my plain room (no TV) where I digested the day's sights and events. I imagined what it was like to be a student at the Center or to go on a retreat and live with my own thoughts without external distractions. Self-examination!?! I started to see lessons everywhere.

Now I'm back in the "real world" of daily life and looking forward to the sutra classes and the other activities of the sangha to support my efforts to remember to listen.

### ... The Company of a Bald-Headed Fool

*(Continued from Page 5)*

But an overview is just what we need to satisfy many questions lingering among our membership, questions such "Who are we?" and "What is Jodo Shinshu as presented in the distinctly American context by our founding minister, Gyomay M. Kubose?" Our ministers are up to the task, and this would be BTC's way of observing the 750<sup>th</sup> memorial. And just imagine, gently in a year's time, Dharma talk by Dharma talk, we will all come to understand the life and teachings of Shinran Shonin and why he exalted the seven Pure Land Masters before him – the seven masters who, by his account, most clearly interpreted the teachings of Shakyamuni.

This year we are so fortunate to welcome again Dr. Nobuo Haneda as our Ho-on-ko guest speaker and seminar presenter. What better way to kick off BTC's observance of Shinran Shonin's 750<sup>th</sup> memorial? See you there!

So just who is the Bald-Headed Fool? (*I am not bald.*) That's what we will learn this coming year.

Gassho,  
Gary T. Nakai,  
*President*