Dharma Friends from Coast to Coast

For two weekends in a row my husband and I attended Buddhist gatherings out of town. August 27-28, we and six people from our temple attended the World Dobo Gathering (Higashi Honganji’s international convention) near Los Angeles and then September 2-4, we and three members attended the annual Eastern Buddhist League conference hosted by the Seabrook Buddhist Temple in New Jersey.

The two gatherings were very different. The Dobo had three hundred people from Japan, Brazil and the U.S. staying at the luxurious Universal City Hilton, while EBL had about seventy people from Toronto and the Twin Cities on down to Washington, D.C and we met in a very rural area. But if there’s one thing they had in common, it is their significance for our temple and its members.

While it’s refreshing to have speakers visit us from afar, I feel it’s important for our temple members who are able to travel to be a part of these out-of-town gatherings. The Buddha teaches us that life is continually changing, sometimes in unexpected ways, so if we become too insistent that things have to be as we expect from past experience, we’re setting ourselves up for frustration.

A Celebration & A Farewell

On Sunday, October 9, we will celebrate our temple’s 72nd anniversary. This year’s celebration will be bittersweet as we will also be bidding farewell to Reverend and Mrs. Ashikaga. After fifty-seven years of service to BTC, they will return to Japan to enjoy their retirement.

Reverend Ashikaga is an integral part of the history of BTC. Arriving in 1959 as a student, he officially became an assistant minister in 1961. Twenty years later, upon Rev. Saito’s departure, Rev. Ashikaga assumed the role of head minister. For over fifty years he served as head minister until his retirement in 2013. His steady leadership and compassion provided comfort for many in their time of suffering; his life experiences and understanding of the Dharma helped us all to a deeper understanding of the teachings. Even in retirement he continued to serve BTC, officiating Sunday services on the occasions that Rev. Patti was out of town and assisting whenever Rev. Patti had a scheduling conflict.

Another area to which he devoted his time and energy was Japanese Language School. Together with Mrs. Ashikaga, they provided students throughout the years the opportunity to learn Japanese, some of them becoming quite proficient. Probably the
BTC Events & Activities: OCTOBER 2016

- All events are free, held at the Temple (unless otherwise noted), and open to the public.
- See Calendar on page 8 for specific dates.
- Up-to-date details and last-minute changes are available on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/budtempchi

>>>> Special Temple Services & Events <<<<

- Oct. 2—Shotsuki Hoyo/Monthly Memorial Service (in English), 11 am.
- Oct. 9—Temple Anniversary/Rev. Ashikaga Farewell Luncheon, 11 am/12:30 pm.
- Oct. 15-16—Open House Chicago, see times page 7
- Oct. 22—Spaghetti Night, doors open 5 pm.
- Oct. 23—Children’s Halloween Party, 12:30 pm.

Regular Temple Services

- Regular Religious Service (in English)—Sundays, 11 am.
- Lay Speaker Service—3rd Sunday every month, 11 am.

Temple Meetings & Community Service

- Bulletin mailing—2nd to last Friday every month, 10 am; volunteers welcome. This month: October 21. Bulletin submissions—Deadline for notices and articles: every month, 6 pm, the Thursday 15 days prior to mailing. This month: October 6.
- Temple Board Meeting—Once a month, Sunday, 12:30 pm. This month: October 30.
- Upaya Group (volunteer work)—Once a month. Email Candy Minx candyminx@hotmail.com for current activities.

Meditation & Buddhist Education

- Buddhism Study Class—Wednesdays, 7-8:30 pm. No previous Buddhism study required.
- Dharma School (children’s Sunday school)—2nd and 4th Sun. every month, 11 am. This month: October 9 and 23.

Have fun! Find an interest! Get involved!

MISSION STATEMENT

Founded in 1944 as an administratively independent temple, The Buddhist Temple of Chicago aspires to the following:

- To present and explore the Three Treasures of Buddhism – the Buddha (teacher), the Dharma (teachings), and the Sangha (community).
- To be guided and inspired by the historical Buddha, Gautama Shakyamuni, and the teachers who have followed – Shinran Shonin, Manshi Kiyozawa, and Haya Akegarasu.
- To present the Buddha-Dharma in a language and manner relevant and understandable in contemporary America.
- To welcome all who seek the Dharma without any exceptions.
- To be a positive presence in our local community working to enhance the vitality of our neighborhood.
- To honor and continue the traditions of our founding members.
- To always live the Nembutsu – Namu Amida Butsu.

Introduction to Buddhism—4-week class held periodically. Email Reverend Nakai at rev.eshin.patti23@gmail.com.
- Meditation (formal sitting)—Sundays, 9 am; Thursdays, 7:30 pm.
- Sutra Study Class—2nd or 3rd Sun. every month, 12:30–2 pm. This month: Oct. 2. No previous Buddhism study required

Social & Cultural Activities

- Asoka Society (refreshment service, social club— outings, etc.)—3rd Sat. every month, 1 pm. This month: Oct. 15.
- Iaido (Japanese Swordsmanship)—Mondays, 7-9 pm.
- Kendo (Japanese Fencing)—Tuesdays, 8-10 pm, Bethany United Church. Call Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187 for information.
- Movie Night—One Tues. night a month. This month: Oct. 25, Vertigo; see page 4.
- Taiko (BTC Kokyo Taiko Drum Troupe)—Adults, Fridays, 7-9 pm. Email kokyotaiko@yahoo.com to confirm. Children, 1st, 3rd and 5th Sun. every month, 11 am. Email sanghaacomod@yahoo.com for appointments.
- Ukulele Club—Tuesdays, 1-3:00 pm.

BTC BULLETIN

Team Darryl Shishido (Editor), Rev. Patti Nakai, Ann Yi, Ruth Abbinanti, Nancie Epperson

Feedback & Submissions Comments, corrections, questions and suggestions are welcome. Submission of material is encouraged—articles, essays, reviews, photos, poetry, news, announcements, drawings, etc. Submissions are reviewed for suitability and space availability. Anonymous submissions will not be published, but author’s names may be withheld from publication upon request.

Contact E-mail BTCbulletedtr@hotmail.com or speak with anyone on the BTC Bulletin Team

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Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends of: Henry K. Ichida

8/02 – 8/11 Four Bon Odori practices were held, Tuesdays and Thursdays.
8/07 August memorial service. *** Shoshinge class met. *** No Japanese service.
8/10 Movie Night.
8/11 Rev. Nakai conducted memorial service for the late Mr. Henry Ichida at Morizzo Funeral Home, Hoffman Estates. Mr. Ichida is survived by wife Barbara.
8/13 Bon Odori.
8/14 Obon service followed by luncheon hosted by Asoka Society. Twelve Hatsubon families of 31 people attended service.
8/16 Rev. Nakai attended the monthly Uptown clergy luncheon.
8/18 Rev. Nakai and Nancy Epperson attended the Buddhist Council of the Midwest meeting at Soka Gakkai International center.
8/20 Asoka Society met.
8/21 Koso-ki (memorial for Haya Akegarasu) service. *** Sutra study class met.
8/26-28 Rev. Nakai and seven temple members attended the World Dobo Gathering in Universal City, CA. 8/28 Lay speaker Sunday service. Ed Horiuchi was the speaker. *** Board of directors met.

You are cordially invited:

**SPAGHETTI NIGHT**

Dine in warm candlelight with homemade spaghetti, garden salad, artisanal bread and dessert—plus Italian-American musical ambiance and friendly conversation!

**Tickets:** $15 at door, $10 in advance—Pre-Sale Order Form in this issue of The BTC Bulletin.

Family, friends and coworkers—all are welcome!
**Saturday—October 22. Doors open 5 PM.**

BTC Fundraiser/Social

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

- Sunday Service Participants: Karen Baier, Lynnell Long, Tom Corbett, Helene Rom, Nancy Epperson, Ann Yi, Bill Bohlman, Carl Scroggins, Tom Lane, Ed Horiuchi
- Music/Accompanists: Mrs. Ashikaga, Drea Gallaga
- Audio Controls: Tom Corbett, Wendy and Jacob Fawcett, Gary T. Nakai
- Sunday Service Refreshments: Noreen Enkoji, Haru Ito, Ruby Tsuji, Mike Kudo Sr. and Jr., April Kellman, Elaine Siegel, Asoka, Upaya
- Bon Odori Teachers: Gwen Kato, Karen Kanemoto, Naomi Mounce, Linda Tademoto, Joyce Miyata, Miriam Solon, Rev. Patti Nakai
- Bon Odori Drummers: Miriam Solon, John Sagami
- Bon Odori Refreshment Crew: Jerry & Jane Morishige, Peggy Waters, Mounce Family, Fumi Kuwada, Mike Kudo Sr. and Jr., April Kellman
- Bulletin Mailing: Antoinette D’Vencets, Lane Kometani, Ruby Tsuji, Dennis Chan, Alice Murata, Sue Balsam, Tom Lane, Mary Shimomura, Haru Ito, Noreen Enkoji, Ed Horiuchi
- Cleaning Temple washrooms: Anonymous
- Taking care of the Temple inside and out: Tomio Tademoto
- Maintaining and updating the Temple computer: John Kelly, Gary T. Nakai
- Maintaining and updating the Temple website: Ann Yi
- Emptying the trash bins, filling them with new bags and putting them out for disposal: Sue Balsam, Adam Kellman, Candy Minx, Ruby Tsuji, Nancy Epperson
- Cleaning Hondo and Nokotsudo: Michael Yasukawa
- Administrative Office Volunteers: Ruth Abbinanti, Darryl Shishido, Ruby Tsuji, Nancy Epperson, Tom Lane, Helene Rom

Our apologies to anyone we have failed to include on this list.

Buddhist Temple of Chicago
72nd Anniversary Luncheon & Reverend and Mrs. Yukei Ashikaga Farewell Party
After regular Sunday service—October 9, 2016, 12 noon.

Everyone is invited—R.S.V.P. by October 3rd.
Vipassanā Romance  
By Candy Minx

Years ago as a teenager, I wanted to get more serious about meditation so I would participate in many meditation retreats. A few of us would rent vans and share driving and hotel rooms to make the journey more economical. During the days up to departure it was not uncommon for a more experienced associate to talk to the aspirants about the dangers of a Vipassanā Romance, also known as a “meditation crush.” I would wave my hands and say “Ah, pshaw, we’ll be fine.” Of course it came to pass that I would see many a crash site of broken hearts after a meditation crush went wrong. The cautionary tale from elders maintains that in a setting relieved of the burdens of mundane responsibilities, in order to spend the days of the retreat in rigorous meditation, eating vegetarian, exercising, relaxing and sharing intense philosophical challenges, one’s boundaries may drop. The practitioner may spend time talking about one’s emotions—the ego—stories of the heart while “looking deeply into another person’s soul.” This is terrific, right? What’s so bad about that? The problem is we are separated from the demands of the real world. Vipassanā in Sanskrit means insight into the true nature of reality, particularly three marks of existence: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and suffering. Try mixing those three things with physical and emotional love of another person and, well, all hell might break loose. Considering the idea of a meditation crush is one of many reasons why I think Vertigo is such a great movie for Buddhists. Vertigo is on the Best-movie-lists of dozens of film directors. I have facilitated workshops on the movie’s insights into gender; however, the movie’s great accomplishment to me is approaching the movie with a Buddhist framework.

Alfred Hitchcock’s protagonists are often older and single, and the male leading characters tend to be commitment-phobic. Hitchcock’s leading-roles always seem to have a character flaw. James Stewart in Vertigo is all of Hitchcock’s heroes wrapped into one. He is older, single, and has a lady friend who seems to be a perfect match for him as he flirts with her. Dialogue portrays her stuck in the friend-zone. Police are always featured in Hitchcock films and I think represent what we would call “the ego.” James Stewart is a retired police detective who decides to “do nothing.” The mystery in Hitchcock represents knowing the truth, what we Buddhists call enlightenment. In Hitchcock movies the protagonists have not found love or motivations to act, but through the pursuit of truth, by solving a (murder) mystery, they find healing of their own psychological blocks and are able to love. This all happens in Vertigo but with tragic outcomes.

Falling is a literal problem and a metaphor in the movie Vertigo. Thousands of years ago when humans, like our primate cousins, lived in trees we had reason for a fear of falling. That fear of falling is still relevant in our instincts and life today. When we are out-of-balance our fear of falling might manifest in other ways. We use some poetic adages that hint at that fear, which is a fear of death. We say “falling in love” and “falling asleep.” Physiologically, those sensations of letting go in love or letting go in sleep are a sort of falling. In distress we won’t be able to let go and fall asleep or in love. The primordial fear of falling is also relevant to meditation practice or Buddhism. In order to meditate or feel compassion we must let go of our attachment to our thoughts and ego. In an ego-centric society, letting go of the ego may produce a sense of falling or losing control. Stewart’s character has a fear of falling.

James Stewart falls in love with a woman involved in an elaborate ruse. Stewart’s sense of love is dependent on specific acts and settings, a little like a “meditation crush.” His emotions are being controlled by lies, deception and masques. There are then two worlds at odds for Stewart’s character, the world of a con game contrasted with his discontent with the actual world. After the mystery of the crime is revealed he is left with the real world...except Stewart’s character doesn’t want to leave the ruse and he becomes attached to the fantasy world by controlling appearances. Stewart problem is he desires peace and to do nothing yet the only way to control either of those is through death.

Vertigo portrays the individual as a controlling force and also suggests society as a controlling force, both of which block compassion (relationships). In the ever-challenging Vertigo the horror is Stewart finding out his sense of self is built on a fantasy. What happens if we feel we can only be lovable if we fit into a constructed system or if we find we might be a person who is a product of false beliefs? That can be scary and the ego is afraid to let go of those false beliefs. It can be dizzying to learn that identity is unstable. Vertigo suggests that identity is created by relationships.

Movie Night!  
OCTOBER 25, 6:30 pm

Admission free; everyone invited. Refreshments served; guests are welcome to bring snacks and share.
Memories
by Ed Horiuchi

Shortly after I was married at the BTC in 1962, I attended a series of evening classes about Buddhism conducted by Reverend Kubose, the founder of our temple. At this class Reverend Kubose emphasized that Buddhism is not about a belief in a Supreme Being, or Heaven, or Hell, or a belief in the concept of a Soul. He said that Buddhism was about Here and Now. “But you do keep on living” he said; “You keep on living in the memories of your family, in the memories of your loved ones, in the memories of your friends, and in the memories of people with whom you have had an impact.”

So recently I began thinking about these words, that you live on “in the memories of people with whom you’ve had an impact.” So I have three stories to tell:

When I was in high school I used to work after school at a small office supply company in the Loop. I worked there for a few years and as high school graduation approached I began to think about my future. I knew that my father wanted all of the boys in the family to go to college but of course he had no money and neither did I. I wasn’t sure that I had the perseverance even the ability to go on to college. I considered going to De Vry Technical School and becoming a TV technician, a job which was in great demand in the early 50’s. I talked to my office manager, John McKenzie, about my dilemma about trying to decide my future. John sat down with me for over an hour and discussed my alternatives and convinced me that I did have the perseverance and ability to go on to college. I did follow John’s advice and eventually did graduate nine years later.

You know, at some point in your life when you look back, you might think about people with whom you’ve had an impact and wish that you could thank that person for how your life was impacted. Too often the passing of years make it impossible. One day my wife and my two young daughters were walking in Oak Park on a hot July day and we decided to stop by an ice cream shop. We entered the shop, and there sitting at a table was John McKenzie whom I hadn’t seen since my high school years. The impact on my life by John so many years ago came flooding back to me and I was able to walk up to John, introduce my family to him and tell him thank you for the advice he gave me which led to a successful career. So I’ll never forget John McKenzie. He will always be in my memories.

About 15 years ago when I was getting ready for retirement I received an email from someone named Mike Fitzgerald. I thought back to the past and remembered Mike as that bright, young engineer I had hired right out of the Illinois Institute of Technology. Mike was smart and a good engineer. He worked for my company for about three or four years, then left the company for greener pastures and I never saw him again. Well, 30 years had passed when I received an email from Mike starting out, “Hey Ed, I hear you’re retiring.” I was astounded to have received this email from Mike and wondered how he knew I was retiring. It turns out we both worked for Bell Labs once, except he worked in Naperville while I worked in Phoenix, and our paths never crossed. I figured he might have seen my name in the company bulletin and looked up my email address in the company directory.

Mike’s email goes on to congratulate me on my retirement and announced he was taking early retirement. Mike said he had had a pretty successful career and was able to take early retirement. He felt his success was due to what he had learned from me right out of school—things like a structured approach to electrical design, a systematic approach to problem solving, setting goals, exceeding expectations, and on and on. So he wanted to take this occasion to thank me for the impact I had had on his life and career. I was really taken aback he would remember me after 30 years. I hadn’t realized I had such an impact on him. Mike closed his email saying that he is no longer that skinny young kid that I hired so many years ago and that he had lately been going on several cruises and couldn’t stop eating. So he explained he had become a pretty big guy.

So I’ll always remember Mike Fitzgerald as someone whose life I had impacted. Mike Fitzgerald will always be part of my memories.

A little over five years ago, my wife of 48-1/2 years died suddenly due to complications from cancer. I was devastated. I didn’t know what to do. I had no direction in my life. I was like a ship without a rudder, just floating in the sea of life. I would break out in tears when hearing some comment or listening to a song we liked. So one day I called Reverend Ashikaga and asked if I could come down to the BTC and talk to him. “Sure,” he said. “Come on over.” So I went to BTC and sat down with Rev. Ashikaga and we talked for several hours. We repeated these visits every week for several months, sometimes twice a week. Each time I came down we would share a Jimmy John’s sandwich and he always had a cup of tea. We talked about my life. We talked about his life. And we talked about Buddhism . . . a lot. I mean, who was this Shakyamuni guy, anyway? I started to read books on Buddhism recommended by Rev Ashikaga. I probably read most of the books in the glass cases in the common area. I read some of them more than once. After each book I would discuss it with Rev Ashikaga. Slowly, the clouds began to lift above my head. I started to feel better and began to think about setting new goals. About setting a new direction for my life. Some things in life you never get over but you go on anyway.

So I’ll always remember Reverend Ashikaga and the Buddhist Temple of Chicago. They will always be part of my memories because they were there when I needed them the most.
October Kumihimo Workshops

If you’ve wanted to learn about the art of braiding, here’s your chance. There will be two kumihimo workshops at the Temple – Saturday, October 15 and Saturday, October 29 from 9 am to 12 noon. No previous Kumihimo experience is necessary. We will learn about various braid styles and color combinations that are possible using the traditional 8-warp braid. Experienced braiders can also learn different ways to finish off a braid.

The first session project will be a 2- or 3- color braid that can be used as a necklace with pendant, or as an eyeglass cord.

The second session project will involve beads. Beginners can make a simple beaded bracelet. Experienced braiders will learn how to vary the size and shape of beads to add texture to a bracelet.

The Kumihimo toolkit (disk, bobbins, counterweight, glue) costs $11 and can be purchased at the workshop if you don’t already have one. Cost of materials for a project is $10 to $15 depending on the materials chosen, but includes refreshments!

Contact Nancey Epperson (naepperson14@gmail.com) for information or to sign up.

BON ODORI  August 13, 2016
(photos courtesy of Alice Murata)
these Jodo Shinshu gatherings there is a certain level of familiarity in the chanting and songs, but we find ourselves outside our comfort zone when we witness and participate in ritual practices different from our own temple’s.

And it’s a good thing to experience that variance from what we thought was the norm. It helps us to understand the approach of the historical Buddha and all the developments of Buddhism through several Asian countries – the approach that acknowledges, “one size does NOT fit all.” I hope those of you who attended Dobo got a chance to talk to the other U.S. delegates and discover how different Higashi temples are in Hawaii as opposed to the mainland, in Berkeley as opposed to Southern California. People and communities are different – for example, those who attend services at the Los Angeles temple in Little Tokyo tend to be more traditionally minded than the families in suburban West Covina.

At the annual EBL conference, our temple members are exposed to the Nishi Honganji approach to Jodo Shinshu. While their chants (with different names) sound pretty much the same as ours, you will hear more mention of technical terms such as shinjin and hongan. This year’s keynote speaker, Dr. Kenneth Tanaka, although he spoke of the standard Nishi concept of going to the Pure Land after one’s physical death, had an innovative way of looking at the attainment of shinjin as a dynamic “awakening to wisdom” rather than the usual passive “heart of entrusting” in his reading of Shinran’s teachings. Also at EBL conferences going back to the 1960s (or earlier), the East Coast and Midwest temples have been in discussions about making Jodo Shinshu more accessible to those not of Japanese descent, the topic that has united us long before the West Coast and Hawaii temples even thought about it.

In the months ahead you will be hearing from the temple members who attended either the Dobo or EBL. I hope all of you will consider attending these kinds of events in the future (Dobo is held every 3–4 years and next year’s EBL is being hosted by the Midwest Buddhist Temple). For almost all of our temple’s seventy-two year history, these gatherings have been a benefit to us and also have given us the chance to benefit others. We listen to and discuss the Dharma together with people from other states and countries and we share our experiences and ideas about how temples conduct their services, outreach activities, communications etc.

Those of you who’ve attended these events are also ambassadors who let people know they are welcome at BTC as our Dharma friends if they visit or move to Chicago. Of all the reputations a temple can have, what is better than being known as the place that welcomes all seekers from near and far to listen to the Dharma with us?

most famous of his students was David Spector, a well known TV personality in Japan.

Rev. Ashikaga’s departure signals a major shift for BTC. Other than the early years of the temple, BTC has always had more than one minister. In the 1990’s we were privileged to have four ministers. Now, with Rev. Ashikaga’s departure, only Rev. Patti is here to serve the temple. As we celebrate our 72nd anniversary, we find ourselves back where we began.

In the early days of BTC, Rev. Gyomay provided the spiritual guidance, but it was the dedicated members who made BTC a success. Doing whatever they could, whenever they could, these early members were the backbone of the temple. A minister can only do so much; the rest is up to the members. Office help, temple maintenance, assisting with services, these are all areas where the Sangha is essential.

Just as the early members allowed BTC to survive, today’s members must insure that BTC continues to thrive. As we bid farewell to Rev. Ashikaga and celebrate our 72nd anniversary, let us rededicate ourselves to making BTC a place where the Dharma comes to life.

Open House Chicago: October 15-16

This year for the first time, The Buddhist Temple of Chicago is part of “Open House Chicago,” a weekend showcasing Chicago buildings organized by the Chicago Architecture Foundation. Saturday and Sunday, October 15 and 16, the public can visit nearly two hundred buildings in the city and Evanston, free of charge, with special “behind the scenes” tours. See openhousechicago.org for a full list of locations.

We will showcase our temple on October 15 from 9am to 12 noon, then 3pm to 5pm (closed to the public during the Asoka Society meeting) and on October 16 from 1pm to 5pm. Plenty of volunteers are needed at all times to be greeters (collect visitor data for the Chicago Architecture Foundation), docents (to give 10-15 minute tours of our hondo) and hosts (to monitor the premises and answer the FAQ “where’s the restroom?”). If you would like to be a part of this event, please contact Rev. Patti at the temple phone number or email: rev. eshin.patti23@gmail.com
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See Temple Events & Activities Guide on page 2 for details on events. Events may be canceled or moved after press time due to unforeseen circumstances. Check www.facebook.com/budtempchi for the most up-to-date changes.