



Eulogy for John Y. Naka

Larry Ragle

The following was delivered, by NBF Board member Larry Ragle, as part of the May 25, 2004 funeral service for John Yoshio Naka at the Higashi Honganji Buddhist Temple in Los Angeles.

John Naka often said, "If you want to learn bonsai, teach." And teach he did—in most states in North America and around the world, on every continent except Antarctica.

Fred Ballard, the first president of the National Bonsai Foundation proclaimed John "the Patron Saint of Bonsai." John was no saint. *Just ask Alice.*

But I don't think Fred meant that as a demotion, by the way.

To John's students, he will forever be a god—with a small "g." If you knew John for reasons other than bonsai, you may not know the extent of the universal love for John Naka. He lived by the golden rule. John had a way of making everyone feel special. His deepest belief was that the art of bonsai was not meant to be like a secret society. Rather, the love of bonsai was universal, meant for all people—not a few, not just the rich, but anyone who had the desire to learn.

John's sons told me about the time he returned from a trip to Spain where he did some teaching. He told them how much he enjoyed his time in Spain, particularly since one of his students took him collecting trees from the mountains. Who would take a visitor out to collect a native tree, they asked? If they hadn't asked, they would never have known that that person was Juan Carlos, the King of Spain.

Although John's fame grew over the years, it didn't change his approach to teaching. He



Photo: Ann Erb

John Yoshio Naka (1914–2004)

was a superstar who was always accessible. As I said before, he gave the same attention and respect to all students, new or experienced, one with a \$5 nursery plant or one who paid \$5,000 for a masterpiece. No student ever left his workshops feeling neglected or embarrassed.

Maybe I should qualify that. As I said before, John was no saint. He did show anger from time to time in the presence of his long-time students. Or perhaps it was frustration. *Just ask Marybel.*

He did expect you to see the big picture—not just the tree, but also the appearance of the

soil and the characteristics and condition of the pot: the whole package. As I said, John was the consummate communicator. If he couldn't say it, he'd draw it. If he couldn't draw it, he'd wire it. If he couldn't wire it, he'd cut it off!

Mention a *tanuki* and he would turn red. At the thought of one of his club members making a *tanuki*, he'd yell, "I'll kick 'em out." And that was no joke. I saw him do it.

John did have a great sense of humor and always laughed the

loudest at his own jokes. His jokes were terrible, but often had a lesson. His favorite was the one where he warned you about the proper sequence of things—for example, wrapping your sandwich in tissue paper before hiking in the mountains and the future use of that paper. He'd break up every time he told that one.

John's humor and his air of authenticity still troubles one of his nieces. When she was six, he informed her, without a wink, "All rocks go 'poop' once a year." She still wonders. *Just ask Eileen.*

John's travels and students took a lot of his time away from his family. But the love of family was never missing. Alice and John made sure the boys received a college education. His family loved him, as he loved his family. But he did show anger, or maybe it was frustration, from time to time. *Just ask the boys.*

The boys all agree: John was a great father—fair, firm, and strict. When John believed one of them had been bad, however, the boys stuck together. No snitching, no finger pointing. Just three quick "I didn't do it." John would get furious at their innocent looks. But he respected their unity. Once, he showed them how easy it was to snap a single chopstick and then demonstrated that he could not break three chopsticks held tightly

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Two Haikus for John Y. Naka

John Naka—
protector of his spirit
thousands of bonsai
Vaughn Banting

Impish smile, sparkling eyes
quick wit expressed in talent
bonsai's ambassador
Jerrold L. McNey



Photo: Cesar Portocarrero

Museum Tokonoma on May 20th

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President's Letter



John Naka's death on May 19th was an indelible reminder of how precious our time is with our teachers and other special people in our lives. As Jack

Sustic notes in the Curator's Corner in this issue, John had for many years made annual visits to the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum to give gentle pointers to the staff and volunteers, and these were highpoints of the year. In a forest monastery in Burma, there is a wooden sign nailed to a tree that says it all: "Today is worth two tomorrows."

John brought an infectious love of bonsai to tens of thousands of people around the world. Many of those touched by his encouragement helped to build the Museum's John Y. Naka North American Pavilion, dedicated in 1990, which will be a lasting legacy to this beloved teacher. Moreover, as Larry Ragle recalls in his moving Eulogy, John had a standard prescription for those who really wanted to learn bonsai: teach others. Imagine what a difference it would make if everyone of us who learned so much from John would now act on this advice.

We are putting the finishing touches on the John Naka Sketchbook—a compilation of the sketches that John drew for

his students in many workshops around the world, each sketch representing John's "vision for the future of the tree." In praising this book, Saburo Kato's Foreward says that these drawings "are full of [John's] delicate and subtle love of bonsai that only John can express." I thank Jack Billet and Cheryl Manning for their extraordinary efforts in collecting the sketches and editing the text for this publication which I know you will all enjoy.

The 5th World Bonsai Convention, to be held on May 28–31, 2005 in Washington, D.C., will be a unique opportunity to salute John Naka. It will open with a special tribute by the World Bonsai Friendship Federation to two of the great patrons of bonsai, John Naka and Saburo Kato.

Finally, the National Bonsai Foundation, on behalf of all of its members, extends to Alice Naka and the Naka family our profound condolences. At the same time, we celebrate and welcome the presence of John's grandson Mike within the Museum community. With the generosity of spirit that we have always associated with John Naka, Alice and the family have made NBF and National Bonsai & Penjing Museum beneficiaries of contributions given in honor of this wonderful man. We are grateful indeed.

Felix

John Y. Naka Memorial Fund

John Y. Naka was a true and precious friend of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Alice Naka and the Naka family have asked that contributions in memory of John be made to the National Bonsai Foundation to promote the art of bonsai and to enhance the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum as a living memorial to him and to his life.

Contributions to this fund can be sent to the National Bonsai Foundation in the enclosed envelope. On behalf of Mrs. Naka and the Naka family, we thank you.

National Bonsai & Penjing Library Report

By Robin Everly

During this past year, I am proud to say that many things have been accomplished in the management of the bonsai special collection that is located in the Bonsai Museum library in the International Pavilion. These achievements could not have been realized without the assistance of two very dedicated volunteers.

Akiko Sprague, who volunteers in both the library and Museum, brings her Japanese translation skills to every project we do. Since many of the books in this collection are only written in Japanese, the collection could not be managed without Akiko's language skills. For over two years, she has assisted with an inventory of all the books in this collection. This inventory was completed at the end of 2003 and at that time the library had 650 books and exhibit catalogs, with 135 books having two or more copies on the shelves.

Since March 2004, **Kathleen Dougherty**, a retired senior cataloger from the National Agricultural Library (NAL), has been providing in-house original cataloging for this collection. This has resulted in incorporating more bonsai and related arts books into the AGRICOLA (AGRICultural OnLine Access)

Catalog—NAL's bibliographic database of agricultural literature. These records can be reached on-line at <http://agricola.nal.usda.gov>



Photo: Jackson Tanner

Librarian Robin Everly and Volunteer Akiko Sprague

and since NAL has recently upgraded this catalog to a format that is more accessible, I highly recommend it to you.

In May of this year, the Washington Rare Book Society (WRBS), comprised of rare book librarians, professionals and collectors in the rare book trade, visited the library. On this occasion **Dr. Thomas Elias** gave a talk on our rare bonsai books and the Asian book-

making process (1700–1900) and how that differed from the printing process in the West during the same period. WRBS members also viewed a selection of classic works from the collection, including *Bijutsu Bonsai* (1882), *The Secret of Growing Bonsai* (1903), the first issue of the *Kokofu-ten* exhibit catalog (1934), and auction books from the early 1900s. These works were also on display during the National Bonsai Foundation Board meeting later in the month.

Recent acquisitions to the library include the three volume set, *Encyclopedia of Bonsai*, published by the Nippon Bonsai Association, and 48 additional issues of *Bonsai Magazine*, written and published by Norio Kobayashi from 1921 to 1967. This brings our current holdings of this important periodical to 180 issues with issues dating back to 1925. In future *NBF Bulletins*, I hope to “bring the library” to NBF members by featuring exceptional acquisitions.

Please contact me if you would like to use the collection, need help with a reference question or have a problem searching the AGRICOLA catalog to find bonsai books. You can reach me by phone at (202) 245-4538 or email everlyr@ars.usda.gov. If you would like to visit the library, please contact me and we can set up an appointment. Library hours are Tuesdays through Fridays, 9:30 am to 4:00 pm.

New Board Members

Six new members have been added to the National Bonsai Foundation Board of Directors in 2003/2004. Here are brief descriptions of their backgrounds and the resources that they bring to NBF in our support of the Museum.

Karin Albert's expertise is in penjing. A native of Germany, she now resides in Athens, Georgia. Ms. Albert spent five years in China teaching English and learning Chinese. Later she was a co-founder of Lotus International, an American importer of horticultural and gift items from Asia. She has researched the historical and cultural roots of the penjing art form as well as translated books on this subject. In May of this year, she was a speaker at the *Symposium on Chinese Penjing* (see related story p. 5) and participated in her first NBF Board Meeting.

A past President of Bonsai Clubs International and the Potomac Bonsai Association **Mary Bloomer** has ties to both the local Washington community and the international bonsai community, though she now resides in Arizona. Her association with NBF extends back many years to when she chaired

the very first fundraising event that was held to support the Museum. The text of *Timeless Trees: The U.S. National Bonsai Collection* was written by Mrs. Bloomer, and her husband, Peter, was the photographer for this volume. She is currently the Southwest Regional editor for the on-line Newsletter of the North American Bonsai Federation and joined the NBF Board in 2003.

A resident of Pennsylvania, **Dennis Donald** has been involved in bonsai for over thirty years. He is the past President of the Brandywine Bonsai Society and former Chairman of the Delaware Valley Bonsai Study Group. A lecturer and demonstrator at bonsai shows, he was a part of the study group that met annually with John Naka at the Rosade Bonsai Studio. He now works on the bonsai volunteer staff at Longwood Gardens and joined the NBF Board in 2004.

Cynthia Helms, a prominent Washingtonian, joined the NBF Board in 2003. She is the author of several books based on her international experiences as the wife of an American ambassador, and she has served previously on the board of directors of the Friends of the National Arboretum and the Freer Gallery of Art of the Smithsonian Institution. Mrs. Helms brings to the NBF

Board an ardent and broad interest in both gardens and the Asian arts.

Glenn Reusch came onto the NBF Board in 2003. He is an active member of the Northern Virginia Bonsai Society and the Central Virginia Bonsai Society and a founding member of the Potomac Viewing Stone Group, an affiliate of the Potomac Bonsai Association. He was an organizer of the 2002 International Stone Appreciation Symposium and is also working on the 2004 gathering of that group. He is a Co-Chair of the Fifth World Bonsai Convention to be held in Washington D.C. in 2005.

Elected to the NBF Board in 2004, **Deborah Rose's** educational background is in the area of public health and she has two masters and a doctorate in that field. Dr. Rose is currently employed by the federal government in the area of health statistics. However, her appreciation for bonsai has deep roots because of family interest in the art dating back over 40 years. Working in Washington, D.C. and living in suburban Maryland, Dr. Rose is a frequent visitor to the Arboretum and the bonsai and penjing collections where she has been a volunteer. Her esteem for the Museum contributed to her decision to become a financial benefactor of the courtyard project.

EULOGY FOR JOHN NAKA

(Continued from page 1)

together, a lesson his grandfather had taught him years earlier using twigs. Then he'd spank all three. But the boys quickly learned that it was the second to get spanked who got the worst of it. *Just ask Bob.*

John worked six days a week. He would work on his bonsai before going to work, come home, spank the boys, work on his bonsai, eat dinner, and work some more on his bonsai until bedtime. But every Saturday night, John would take the family to the movies at the Reveille Theater. There was always a triple feature of cowboy movies, his favorite. Their Saturday night routine was so set that the parking lot attendant at the theater always reserved a space for their car.

Speaking of their car, one of the boys took John's brand new 1956 Chevrolet Bel Aire, lowered the rear end, drove to Tijuana, replaced the new upholstery with tuck-and-roll seat covers, removed the automatic transmission, and installed a drag racer's clutch, all in one day. Alice couldn't push the clutch in. John was not happy. *Just ask Richard.*

On Sundays, he would take the boys fishing, to the lake made by the San Gabriel River Dam. Richard didn't care for fishing, and

according to Gene and Bob, neither did John. But he wanted them to learn to fish and to appreciate the out-of-doors. On one occasion while casting, the pole and reel came out of one boy's hands and landed in the lake several feet below the big rock where they were standing. John saw what happened and without hesitation dove in and retrieved the rig. John was a hero. *Just ask Gene.*

On one fishing trip, they were skunked. Refusing to be beaten, John took the boys to a trout farm where you pay by the pound. The fish were hungry—very hungry—and John paid through the nose. *Just ask Alice.*

Richard did learn to love the out-of-doors by playing golf—a game, he told me, for which his father saw no purpose. In addition to his sons, the most important relationship in John's life was with Alice. They were married for nearly 69 years. We all know John's many achievements would not have been possible without the constant support, work, and encouragement of Alice.

We all know that John had a sweet tooth. He even liked tomato sundaes. Alice said he also had a cat's tongue. He was often with his bonsai at meal time. He developed a taste for cold food. Alice never complained. Well?

When asked about *Goshin*, John often referred to the eleven trees in *Goshin* as rep-

resenting his eleven grandchildren at the time it was donated to the people of the United States. I take liberty with John's explanation. I see *Goshin* as a living portrait representing the Naka Nation. I suggest that the stability and strength of the pot represents all the history of John's and Alice's ancestors. The roots (only partially visible), the soil, and the constant nurturing and care represent John and Alice and their sons and daughters-in-law who hold the family together. The tree's trunks are the grandchildren and the branches represent all of the great-grandchildren and future generations of Nakas.

On a personal note: I feel honored to have been asked to talk tonight. Nina and I shared many happy hours with John and Alice. Alice, you will always remain close to our hearts. John shared all of his proverbs and their interpretations with Nina. That experience provided us insight into his world.

When John was 82, we hiked, along with Jerry McNey, the entire Bristle Cone Pine Trail, 4.5 miles at 12,000 foot elevation. The head ranger listed John in their record book as the oldest person to complete the hike.

We will all cherish every minute we spent with John and we will miss him.

Just ask me.

Elegant Eleagnus

By Cheryl Manning

At the NBF Board meeting last year, **John Naka** mentioned that he would like to donate one more tree to the John Y. Naka North American Pavilion at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. This tree would be given in honor of his grandson **Mike Naka**. John had learned to love bonsai from his grandfather, and now Mike was learning the same thing from *his* grandfather.



Eleagnus in Bonsai Techniques I

When **Marybel Balendonck** sat down to help John and Mike choose which tree from John's collection would go to the Museum, two very special trees stood out from the rest: an Eleagnus and a Montezuma Cypress. Then Mike decided that he wanted *both* trees to go to the Museum. A few months ago, I interviewed John about the histories of these trees in anticipation of their departure for Washington, D.C. In this article, I am sharing his recollections of the Eleagnus and then in the Winter 2004 issue I will do the same for the Cypress.

In the late 1950s one of John's favorite places to go bonsai collecting was in the abandoned gardens of vacated homes before these were bulldozed to make way for the Golden State Freeway. Another bonsai—the “purloined pomegranate” (profiled in the Summer 2003 issue) was also collected in that neighborhood. Once again on this trip John's friend **Ichio Koga** accompanied him in search of a masterpiece. Teamed together they worked to dig up the trees including the Eleagnus. But only one person could take this beauty home. To decide who that would be, John spit in his palm, slapped the spit with his index and middle fingers of his other hand, and noted the direction of the flying spit. (Alice Naka confirms that this was always John's preferred method of resolving a dilemma.) The spit was flying

John's way that day, and for the next forty-four years he enjoyed this masterpiece.

John loved this tree. The trunk was substantial with a nice arrangement of branches. The interesting leaves were unlike any others in his garden, and their proportion in size to the trunk was appealing. John also



Eleagnus in Bonsai Techniques II

appreciated the fragrant flowers and the small berries. He immediately saw the future shape of this tree and knew that it would be one of his favorites.

This Eleagnus was featured in both of John's books on bonsai. In *Bonsai Tech-*
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ELEGANT ELEAGNUS

(Continued from page 4)

niques I, it was planted in an oval, green-glazed, antique pot. Then as the tree developed, it outgrew the original container. So in *Bonsai Techniques II*, John showed how the tree was moved into a larger pot. That dark gray, unglazed, quince-flower-shaped pot was a perfect fit for the tree—at least for a while.

Years later, John wasn't satisfied with merely changing the pot. He decided the tree needed a whole new look, so he turned it around and made the back the front and repotted it. The new pot was a white, crackle-ware, rectangular pot with interesting feet. As John pointed out, the current pot doesn't have to be the only pot. "Just like our clothes," said John, "you may get tired of what you're wearing and want to change the style or color. So maybe you even go back to the original pot." John loved to tell everyone that this tree had "two fronts and no back." He could display it one way, and then turn it around the next time for an entirely different look.



John Naka's grandson Mike with bust of John and Eleagnus on May 20, 2004.

In April of this year, I took the two trees to my home to get them ready to ship to the Museum. Then on May 3rd, John and Marybel came over to look at the trees one last time before they made their journey east. At the end of May, when we were going to attend the NBF Board meeting in Washington, we would see the trees in their

new home and Mike would accompany us for his first visit to the Museum. John had planned to make that trip with us and he was thrilled with the prospect of introducing his grandson to the Museum. Yet it was not to be. John was hospitalized one week before our trip. Nevertheless, Alice Naka insisted that Mike make the trip, saying: "That's what grandpa would have wanted." It was during our flight to Washington, D.C. on May 19 that John passed away. The anticipated celebration of this new donation was now filled with sadness at the death of our dear friend John.

When we arrived at the Museum the next morning the Eleagnus was displayed in the North American Pavilion next to the bust of John and with a memorial bouquet of flowers. The display brought tears to our eyes. A visiting child asked his mother about the pretty flowers. She said, "I think that this man has just died; how sad."

How sad indeed. Although John is no longer with us, he leaves behind for us, not only his masterpiece trees, but also a precious legacy of knowledge, laughter, and friendship.

Ancient Art of Penjing Explored and Celebrated

By James J. Hughes

On May 21–23, 2004, the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum hosted its first symposium dedicated solely to the art of penjing. Co-sponsored by the National Bonsai Foundation and the U.S. National Arboretum, this event focused on the ancient origins of Chinese penjing and the cultural traditions in which it flourished. Respected writers and presenters from the United States and China lectured and led demonstrations throughout the weekend.

Providing a valuable background for the symposium registrants, Chinese scholars **Edwin Morris** and **Karin Albert** lectured and illustrated, through slides presentations, the historical, philosophical, political, and religious milieu in China as this art form developed.

Felix Laughlin, President of NBF, and **Jim Hughes**, assistant curator at the Museum, reviewed the historical development of the current penjing collection and its primary donor, **Mr. Yee Sun Wu**. Special tribute was extended to Mr. Wu as he celebrates in 2004 the centennial anniversary of his birth.

Jack Sustic, curator of the Museum, gave a presentation on the challenges of training the Museum trees in the penjing traditions, since Museum staff and volunteers have all been trained in the Japanese bonsai traditions. An open discussion followed his presentation

when several trees from the permanent penjing collection were critiqued and pruned.

The featured speaker was **Hu Yun Hua**, former Director of the Penjing Research Center at the Shanghai Botanical Garden. He was assisted by **Cheng Xiao Hua**, a penjing specialist, also from the Shanghai Botanical Garden. They lead several demonstrations during the three-day event. On Friday, May 21, a penjing landscape of eleven Chinese elms was assembled by Mr. Hu on a five-foot oval marble tray using "Turtle Shell Rock" imported from China. On the last day of the symposium, Mr. Cheng styled a large, informal upright, Japanese white pine.

One of the highlights of the weekend was Mr. Hu's lecture on "The Seven Groups of Opponent Factors in Penjing-Making". They can be summarized as follows:

- Ingenuity (artificial improvement) and Nature (original beauty)
- Appearance (formal exterior) and Expressiveness (inner spirit)
- Implication (suggested or imagined) and Opening (straight forward)
- Principal (main feature) and Accompaniment (minor features)
- Changeableness (variation) and Unity
- Movability (movement) and Balance
- Proportion and Exaggeration

These components exist on a spectrum with one sometimes preferred to another, as in the case of ingenuity and nature. Here, the original beauty of the penjing is enhanced by artificial improvement, but the creation should not look artificial. In other cases, the components may have equal importance and must be balanced. For example, with changeableness and unity, there is unity in the style of the tree but within that that style there are variations.

Autographed copies of Mr. Hu's latest book were imported for the symposium. The book has excellent photos that are representative of penjing from various regions within mainland China. Almost every participant bought a copy and many bought several.

One of the Museum's local bonsai enthusiasts, **Yenchin Huang**, a member of the Baltimore Bonsai Club, provided excellent translation throughout the weekend. His work, which he volunteered, made a great contribution to the success of the weekend.

Dr. William Tai, consultant and former professor at the University of Maryland, moderated the symposium and acted as a valuable liaison between the symposium registrants and our featured guests.



Curator's Corner

By Jack Sustic

Greetings to all! We have been very busy here at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

At this juncture I think that the Museum's future has, in many ways, never seemed brighter. New acquisitions of trees, stones and artifacts continue to improve the Museum's collections. We are always working to offer new exhibits like the *Reflections of Bonsai in Woodblock Prints* display this summer and the month-long celebration of the chrysanthemum in October, which will feature chrysanthemum viewing stones, Ikebana arrangements and a special bonsai mum exhibit. Our educational programs remain very popular and well attended.

These are just a few of the highlights. Also please be sure to read Jim Hughes' article on the recent Penjing Symposium and Michael James' article on the shohin exhibit of Dorie Froning and Jack Billet's bonsai which describe other activities of this past spring.

As most of you are aware the Fifth World Bonsai Convention (5th WBC) will be held here in Washington at the Hilton Washington, on May 28–31, 2005. This title for this convention is: *Bringing the World Together Through Bonsai*. I think it will be doing just that because it features 23 speakers and 21 workshop leaders from 6 continents. You may be asking yourself: why is Jack Sustic

writing about the 5th WBC? Well, it is because, I am now a co-chair of the convention. How did I get to be co-chair, you ask? That's a subject for another article and maybe also a visit to my doctor!

With less than a year to go, all of us involved in the planning are working very hard and are also very excited by the program for this meeting. The opening ceremonies will feature a tribute to John Naka and Saburo Kato, recognizing their amazing contributions to this wonderful art. During the convention there will be exhibits displaying hundreds of bonsai, viewing stones, and containers. And, there will also be a huge sales area with vendors from around the world. Raffles and auctions will be held every day, and the Museum will host a great evening banquet here at the Arboretum on Sunday, May 30. The Museum is a magical place in the evening so this is going to be a very unique affair.

As a member of NBF you know that the Museum is a place of wonder; therefore, I hope that you will join us here in Washington so that you too will be a part of this grand event. There are several ways to get more information on the 5th WBC. You can log onto www.bonsai-wbff.org/wbc5/main.htm or you can contact me at susticj@usna.ars.usda.gov or Glenn Reusch, my co-chair, at ghreusch@aol.com.

Finally, as you all know, the bonsai world lost one of its brightest lights in May. What you may not know is that John used to come to the Museum every year and share with the



Photo: Shawn Theew

Jack Sustic

staff and volunteers his talent, wisdom and humor. John's relationship to the Museum was very, very special so now is an especially poignant time for all of us here. His annual visits were the highlight of each year. What I remember so clearly is that we would put five or six trees in a circle in the Yoshimura Center and John would stand in the center holding a long bamboo stick and point it at each tree and then tell us what needed to be done to make it better. It was bonsai in the round by a Master Teacher!

I.... we will all miss you, John.

First Ever All Shohin Bonsai Exhibit

Michael James

This past April the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum displayed more than 60 shohin from the collections of two NBF Board members, Doris (Dorie) Froning and Jack Billet, in the Special Exhibits Wing of the Mary E. Mrose International Pavilion. Both of these artists studied with bonsai master John Naka and they have each published articles in numerous bonsai publications and delivered lectures throughout the United States. This was the first time that the Museum held an all shohin show.



Photo: Michael James

Jack Billet with some of his shohin.

Most shohin are smaller than a branch of a larger bonsai. Nevertheless, they still possess all the majestic feeling of an aged tree. The Shohin Bonsai Exhibit was a spectacle in detail and for that reason, the people who brought their spectacles were glad that they did! Some of the shohin were more than thirty years old yet less than 8 inches tall. The ceramic pots and wooden display stands, which were also diminutive in size, were ornately decorated with carefully placed rivets and hand-carved moldings, as if they were created specifically for the trees they held. Many of the shohin were also accompanied by miniature scrolls, bonsai tools, animal figurines, viewing stones, and accent plants. There were even two formal tokonomas that were way too small for displaying an average-size bonsai. Traditionally, a tokonoma is a room used for formal display of bonsai in a Japanese home, but the ones in this exhibit were closer in size to a room in a dollhouse.

The exhibit, which was on display from May 1 through May 9, coincided with the Potomac Bonsai Association Spring Show and the combination of these bonsai events

brought crowds of visitors to the Museum. The exhibit culminated with a well attended lecture by Mrs. Froning in the Museum's Yuji Yoshimura Center. She was warmly received by the crowd which included many of her family and friends, as well as her co exhibitor,



Photo: Michael James

Dorie Froning and shohin

Mr. Billet. If you missed this event, you can still see two of Dorie's shohin that are permanently displayed in the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum's North American Pavilion.

The National Bonsai Foundation thanks the **Bay Area Shohin of California** for their financial contribution to this exhibit.

Museum Events

- An exhibit, *Reflections of Bonsai in Woodblock Prints*, was on display in the Special Exhibits Wing from July 1–August 1, 2004. The prints exhibited were drawn from both the Museum's own collection as well as private collections with representations from the Edo Era (1603–1687), the Meiji Era (1868–1912) and some from the Modern Era. The Museum and the event received fine publicity for this unusual artistic focus on bonsai. Attendance was outstanding for the exhibit and evaluation forms gave high praise for the display.
- Selections from the Museum's Viewing Stone Collection will be on display in the Special Exhibits Wing from August 14–29.
- The **Lancaster Bonsai Club** will display trees from member's collections from September 11th through the 19th. On the 19th a club member will give a demonstration in the Yuji Yoshimura Center at 1:00.
- There are also demonstrations conducted by Museum Volunteers in the Yuji Yoshimura Center from 1:00–2:30 on August 21 and 22 and September 4 and 12. Registration is not required!
- On Sunday September 26th and Sunday October 3rd at 1:00 a two-part class in

Bonsai Basics taught by Museum staff will educate novice bonsai artists in the fundamentals of bonsai art. The registration



Woodblock Print Exhibit Poster

fee is \$95 (NBF and FONA members \$60) and it covers all materials, including a plant to take home. See below for registration information.

- There will be a workshop on Sunday October 10 at 1:00 *Overwintering Your Bonsai*. The cost is \$12 (\$9 For NBF and FONA members). See below for registration information.
- October is **Mumtober** at the Museum! Events will include a *Chrysanthemum Viewing Stone* exhibit from October 1st through the 13th; a Sogetsu exhibit featuring chrysanthemums from October 15th until the 21st; and finally from October 23rd through the 31st there will be a chrysanthemum bonsai exhibit featuring the bonsai artistry of long-time Museum volunteer and former NBF Board Member, **David Garvin**.
- The annual *Fall Foliage Exhibit* will be on display beginning on November 6th and extending through the 14th.



To register for Museum events, please send a check and registration information to:

U.S. National Arboretum
3501 New York Avenue N.E.
Washington D.C. 20002
Attention: Event Registration/EVSU

Museum Notes

- In February, on a visit to Japan, **Felix B. Laughlin** presented to the Nippon Bonsai Association a gift contribution from the National Bonsai Foundation Board of Directors and other friends in memory of **Kazuya Morita** who died in September 2003.



Kazuya Morita

- A tree from the collection of former Museum Assistant Curator, **Dan Chiplis**, has been accessioned for the North American Collection. The tree, a Chinese

Hackberry (*Celtis sinensis*) is informal upright in style, is 32 inches tall and has been in training for thirty years. It will be on display in the John Y. Naka Pavilion beginning in August.

- Throughout the warm weather months many school groups visit the Museum. In



Young visitors at work

May of this year, students of the Oneness Family School in Chevy Chase, Maryland came and spent an entire morning studying all the collections and then depicting their impressions in words and drawings.

- If you haven't been able to visit the Museum lately, you can take a "Virtual Tour" of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum by visiting the U.S. National Arboretum website. There is a "tour"

which leads the guest from pavilion to pavilion with photos at each stop or you can just visit a particular pavilion or collection. The web address is: www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/collections/VirtualTours/BonsaiVirtualTour.html or there is a link from the NBF website: www.bonsai-nbf.org

Enjoy!

- There have been a number of staff changes in the Museum.
 - Assistant Curator for Artifacts and Archive Collections, **Jackson Tanner**, left the staff in March to return to the Smithsonian Institution.
 - **Michael James**, an intern last summer at the Museum, has come back to temporarily assume the position vacated by Mr. Tanner. A search for a permanent staff person will be conducted in September.
 - Michael is very proud of his daughter **Annabella James**, born this past April soon after his return to the Museum. He says: "She is still too small to work on bonsai, but she has a good eye."
 - The gardener for the Museum grounds is **Christy Hilberg**.

Volunteer Janet Lanman

In 1965 I was fortunate enough to be able to accompany my husband Jonathan to Japan when he was a visiting professor at a medical school in Tokyo for a few months. At one point in our sojourn there we were able to hike in the Japanese Alps. Along the trail at a small wayside tea house I saw a wondrous miniature jewel of nature. Of course it was a bonsai! From then on I glimpsed other bonsai on balconies and in tiny courtyards. I was hypnotized.

When we returned to Connecticut I kept seeing these horticultural poems in my mind. Then I read in the *New York Times* that a Japanese artist named **Yuji Yoshimura** would be giving a bonsai lecture at the Brooklyn Botanical Garden. *I had to go and I did!*

For several years thereafter I was oh so lucky to have the opportunity to study with Yuji at his studio in Tarrytown, NY and there to become friends with **Marion Gyllenswan**, **Jerry Stowell**, and **Muriel Leeds** among others. Bonsai became a major thing in my life.

In the early days Yuji was a stern teacher. With time, as his English improved, he became a bit more mellow. But it was not until Jonathan and I moved to Washington, D.C. that Yuji and I became "true friends."

Soon after the move to Washington I was lucky enough to be accepted as a volunteer

at the U.S. National Arboretum after having been approved by the Director, **Dr. John Creech**. Then I had more good fortune as I was able to work under the Curator, **Bob**



Janet Lanman with her "favorite tree"

Drechsler, and with another volunteer, **Ruth Lamanna**, on the trees that were the original gift from Japan, which at that time were still in quarantine in Beltsville, Maryland. But what a thrill for me!

Ever since then I have been privileged to work as a volunteer at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, trying all the while to carry out the curator's instructions and learning from each one of them.

If a visitor asks which is my favorite tree my answer, of course, is: "The one I am working on!"

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Cesar Portocarrero
NBF Treasurer
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Washington, D.C. 20002

An envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

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