



NBF BULLETIN

News for
contributors and
friends of
The National Bonsai
Foundation

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Volume IX, Number 2

NEW GIFTS FROM JAPAN

When President Clinton was in Tokyo on November 18th and 19th, Prime Minister Obuchi presented him with wonderful gifts of two bonsai and a suiseki to commemorate the President's visit to Japan. If you saw the film clips of Prime Minister Obuchi greeting President Clinton at Akasaka Palace, you would have seen the spectacular gifts in the background.

One of the bonsai is a spruce, *Picea juzoensis* Carr, which is 250 years old and stands 34 inches high. This is quite a special bonsai, as it was collected by Mr. Saburo Kato, Chairman of the Nippon Bonsai Association, and his father in the 1930s on Kunashiri Island (occupied since 1945 by the Russians). It has been trained as a bonsai for over 50 years. This bonsai was a gift from Prime Minister Obuchi. A photograph is shown to the right.



The other bonsai is a trident maple, *Acer buergerianum*. It is a root-over-rock style planting that is 80 years old and stands two feet high. This was a gift from Mr. Bunbei Hara, President of the Nippon Bonsai Association.

The suiseki is a tiger stone from the Seta River. This suiseki is a gift from Mr. Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, a former Prime Minister.

Dr. Tom Elias and his staff at the U.S. National Arboretum are organizing the transportation of these new masterpieces to the United States and planning for the quarantine of the two bonsai.

These are exceptional additions to the Japanese Collection at the Museum. We are deeply indebted to Mr. Kato for his enormous generosity and his critical role in arranging for these gifts to be made.

NBF Website Unveiling

By Chris Cochrane

In early 1999, NBF will bring greater visibility to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum by opening a website at <<http://www.bonsai-nbf.org>>. The NBF site will display pictures of bonsai, pensai, penjing and suiseki in the Museum's collections, and will provide details on these masterpieces that have never been available to Internet browsers or to most Museum visitors. Due to the size of the collections and their diversity, the site should draw

serious attention from those interested in exploring the similarities and divergence in the styling of artistic potted trees from a variety of cultures. The site also will include articles on the Museum and on the significance of its collections which have previously been published by NBF in limited editions by talented observers such as Frederic Ballard and Vincent Covello.

The hard work and great generosity of many individuals contributed to the establishment of the Museum collections, its

pavilions and gardens. The NBF website will relate these accomplishments and explain why several major features of the Museum have been dedicated to exceptional individuals in the bonsai and viewing-stone communities.

NBF will be opening this website before completing a large project of photographic documentation of the collections. To accomplish this, it has been necessary to gather existing photo collections of the Museum's material dating as far

(Continued on page 3)



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President's Letter



This issue of the *Bulletin* announces wonderful new gifts from Japan and the progress we have made on NBF's exciting new website. It also recounts the beauty and emotion of the Museum's June 24 tribute to the late Yuji Yoshimura.

As to our website, NBF director Chris Cochrane has been working with our webmaster Craig Hunt to develop a fantastic new website for the Foundation, which will supplement the U.S. National Arboretum's website. By the time you receive this issue of the *Bulletin*, the website will be mostly completed. It has a wealth of information about the Museum, which will be highly educational for people around the world. We are indebted to Craig Hunt for the enormous effort he has put into this project, which is much more than he bargained for at the beginning. This website offers our Museum the opportunity to

reach a whole new audience on the subject of bonsai and related topics.

As you will see in the article on page 4 in this issue, the June 24 celebration of Yuji Yoshimura's life at the National Arboretum was quite an event. We have now raised \$166,840 towards our goal of \$500,000 for the Yuji Yoshimura Fund.

At Vaughn Banting's suggestion, I would like to ask you to encourage your local bonsai clubs to make it one of their principal goals for 1999 to hold a fundraising event in memory of Yuji Yoshimura, with the proceeds to go to the Yoshimura Fund. As Vaughn has said on many occasions, if we could simply harness the power of our local bonsai clubs, we could achieve almost anything. Bill Valavanis proved that this is true, with his tremendously successful auction of Yuji memorabilia on May 16, 1998 in Rochester, New York. That event, hosted by the Bonsai Society of Upstate New York, raised about \$7,150 for the Yoshimura Fund.

Annual Appeal to our Friends

Thanks to your past support, the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum is not only a reality, it is now the most popular attraction at the U.S. National Arboretum. As the number of visitors to our Museum increases, NBF must assure ongoing support to help run this Museum as a world-class institution.

So, at the same time I am thanking you for your past generosity, I must again ask you to consider an

annual giving plan. As year end approaches, please send your tax-deductible gift to NBF. An envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Also, if you have not already done so, please give serious consideration to executing a codicil to your will which would provide a bequest to NBF.

As we have found from our past success, if we all pull together, we can make a big difference. Please continue your support of the National Bonsai Foundation.

Felix B. Laughlin

Sale of Dr. Bill Clark's Collection

On October 24, NBF and the U.S. National Arboretum hosted a sale of exquisite bonsai from the collection of the late Dr. Bill Clark of Nashville, Tennessee. Before his death, Dr. Clark asked his wife Joan to sell his bonsai collection and give the proceeds to the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum.

Dr. Clark was a past president of the American Bonsai Society; co-founded the Nashville Bonsai Society; received the Ben Oki Award in 1993; and went to Japan four times to study the art of bonsai. He was one of the bonsai artists featured in "Outstanding American Bonsai" by Randy T. Clark (Timber Press 1989). Randy observed: "Dr. Bill Clark is a self-taught bonsai artist who developed his interest after viewing the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Bonsai Collection while living in New York in 1960. He has a particular fondness for maples, sweet plum and serissa, although his collection contains a wide variety of material. He is particularly adept at growing material from seed or cuttings and special-

ized in in-ground development to permit trunk enhancement."

Dr. Clark was a neurologist whose interests outside of medicine were far-ranging: bonsai, horticulture, orchids, woodworking, train sets, wine and beer making, pottery, miniatures, painting, classical guitar, spelunking (*caving*), the English language and puns, bee-keeping, oriental art, and *archeology*.

More than 50 bonsai were sold at this special event, and two of Dr. Clark's trees were kept to be displayed in the Museum. Joan Clark, with the assistance of members of the Nashville Bonsai Society, prepared the trees for the sale, and she then transported them to the Arboretum. Beginning at 7:00 a.m. on the day of the sale, a committee priced each tree in a range from \$25 to \$425. The sale opened at 10:00 a.m. By 10:30 a.m., all of the trees

had been sold, and about \$7,500 had been raised for the Museum. *Subsequent* sales in Nashville brought in another \$1,200.

The photograph below shows Joan Clark and Warren Hill looking at two of Dr. Clark's trees.



NBF Website Unveiling

(Continued from page 1)

back as the original 1976 Bicentennial gift from the Nippon Bonsai Association to the people of the United States. The publishing rights to these photos were variously owned by NBF, the National Arboretum, and by original photographers. To ensure the intellectual property concerns of every party involved, NBF has decided to protect the photos from downloading and reprinting. NBF's site

loads fast and displays the detail of original photographs yet defies copying to a remote printer or file. All text files, however, are easily downloaded, including lengthy articles which browsers may prefer to print or read off-line.

The site will be maintained with continuing updates. As detailed information is available, graphics of collection material will be supplemented with data on the size of material, age of styling, the donor, the poetic name, where collected, etc. As additional

pictures, Museum events or website articles are posted, browsers will be cued as to "What's New."

NBF's website will be distinguished for fast loading and easy browsing. Thanks to an excellent web service provider (<<http://www.pair.com>>) and simple design, all pages load quickly. The emphasis in site development has been on content rather than technological bells and whistles, and browsing the considerable content is accomplished simply.

National Bonsai Museum

Most Frequently Visited Feature of U.S. National Arboretum

By Dr. Thomas S. Elias

A survey of visitors to the U.S. National Arboretum was conducted between June 1997 and June 1998. The results, based upon 1,422 surveys returned, provided valuable data concerning our visitors. It was exciting for us to learn that the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum was the most frequently visited garden or collection in the Arboretum. Forty-three percent of all visitors said they viewed the bonsai collection. The National Herb Garden and Capitol Columns ran a close second and third with 41% and 40%.

This news is gratifying to all of us who have supported the National Bonsai Foundation's efforts to raise significant funds for this Museum over the last ten years.

Last year, the Arboretum received 473,622 visitors. Approximately 203,650 of them toured the facilities and viewed the bonsai collections. Assuming the rate of visitors has been steady, we can infer that nearly two million people have seen our bonsai during the last ten years. Clearly, our Museum is having a significant impact on the visitors and is helping to build support and interest in the art and science of bonsai in the United States and other countries.

The survey also showed that approximately three-fifths of the visitors are female and that 53% of the visitors are between 35 and 54 years of age. It was somewhat surprising to learn that 77% of the visitors are college graduates and that 41% of them have a graduate degree. The Arboretum was delighted to learn that about 23% of our visitors represented minorities.

Evening Honoring Yuji Yoshimura

A Tribute to His Artistry

By Janet Lanman

On June 24, 1998, NBF and the National Arboretum hosted an evening program in honor of the late Yuji Yoshimura. The reception in the courtyard of the National Bonsai and Penjing Museum was graced with a gentle June breeze. Friends, students and admirers of Yuji strolled through the gardens and pavilions, but were particularly drawn to the Yoshimura-inspired exhibit of bonsai and viewing stones displayed in the Mary E. Mrose International Pavilion. A photograph of the exhibit, which was organized by William N. Valavanis, is shown below.

The tokonoma featured a twin-trunk *Lagerstroemia indica* which was created from a cutting from Yuji's father, Toshiji Yoshimura, in Tokyo and was imported to the United States in 1958. It was donated to the National Bonsai

Foundation in 1989 by Yuji. The accessory waterpool viewing stone had been acquired by Mr. Yoshimura before he turned 20.

Two of the trees in the exhibit are part of the permanent North American Collection and were donated by Muriel Leeds. One is an informal upright *Pinus thunbergii* var. *corticososa*. This tree was created from a 1964 graft done by Yuji in 1964. The other is a cascade-style *Euonymus alatus* imported from Japan by Yuji in 1940.

Other exhibited trees belong to Pat Coen from Tulsa, Oklahoma; Bernard Gastrich, Pound Ridge, New York; Helen Hasselries, Forest Hills, New York; Janet Lanman, Bethesda, Maryland; Eudelia Smith, Larchmont, New York; Phylis Wishnick, Scarsdale, New York; and William Valavanis, Rochester, New York.

The viewing stones are owned by Pat Coen, Arthur Skolnick



from Toronto, Canada, William Valavanis and Phylis Wishnick.

The guests strolled through the cryptomeria glade up to the Administration Building for the formal program. After a welcome from Dr. Elias, Director of the National Arboretum, memorial remarks were presented by some of Yuji's friends. The first speaker was Yoko Said, Yuji's daughter. She gave thanks for the Yoshimura Fund in honor of her father. "I wish you could have seen my father's face when he read a letter from Mr. Laughlin about the starting of the Yoshimura Fund. He was very moved and very honored."

Jerald Stowell was the next speaker. "I met Mr. Yoshimura on November 8, 1959 at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden in his classes on 'The Japanese Art of Miniature Trees and Landscapes.' I was so overwhelmed by him, and his book became my bible. He was very formal yet very generous with his knowledge, but when questioned 'why' a technique or procedure was done this way, he would answer, 'My way.' I remember one occasion when I had spent hours wiring a tree, and Mr. Yoshimura came over to look. In a very formal manner, he stated, 'Mr. Stowell, NO GOOD, DO OVER!' I was crushed. I did it over."

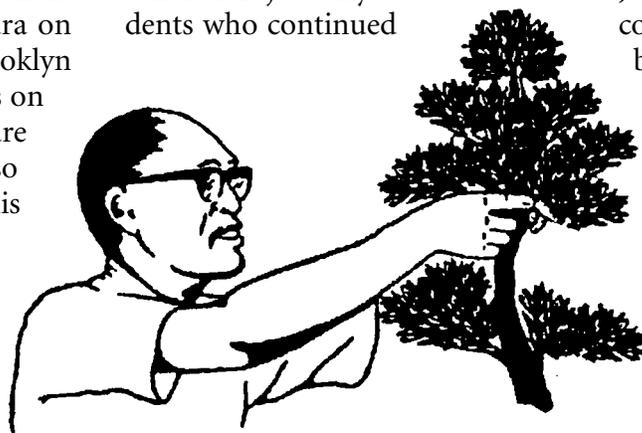
"Yuji gave his help and guidance to a group of his students who organized the Bonsai Society of Greater New York. He helped us to produce the *Bonsai Bulletin*. He made time to edit the material, making sure that the information was technically and horticulturally correct."

"Our paths crossed again here in Washington while I was serving on the Board of the National

Bonsai Foundation. At one of the meetings he came and sat down beside me, his formal demeanor was gone, the relationship had changed, the 'teacher' and the 'student' became 'friends.' It was a privilege to know Yuji Yoshimura."

Chase Rosade spoke of the early years when Yuji first came to the United States. He recalled the inception of the National Bonsai Foundation, and assisting Muriel Leeds, the first major donor to the National Bonsai Foundation, in moving her collection (sold at auction at the National Arboretum in 1988) of bonsai to D.C.

Vaughn Banting was another of Yuji's early students who continued



to study with him over the years: "I, like so many others investigating the art of bonsai in the late fifties and early sixties, sooner or later came across a book called 'Miniature Trees and Landscapes.' It was the first substantial English-language book on bonsai; and it nailed down, (for Westerners,) the truths of our new-found interest, and for many of us turned that interest into a passion."

"Here was a book that cut through the vagueness and mystique that, until its publishing, had surrounded this new and inscrutable art form from the East. Here was a man who would be the bridge between two diverse cultures and provide the mechanism

for bonsai, 'this chamber music of horticulture,' to take root in the United States. He was a serious teacher who let a lighter side peek through more frequently as he got older. At a BCI convention in Florida, a bunch of us were out around a small hotel pool, late after the banquet. There was Yuji, out there showing us how many push ups he could do."

Yuji was passionate about bonsai and almost equally passionate about viewing stones, as reflected in the first book in English on the subject, coauthored with Vincent T. Covello, published in 1984. He had some fine stones, both Japanese and American, in his own collection. In recent years he had become a mentor and friend of

Pat Coen from Oklahoma who has become a recognized viewing stone authority. Pat spoke eloquently of the knowledge and encouragement given to him by Yuji in his own hunt for appropriate stones and the art of their display.

Yuji's "home" bonsai society was Yama Ki. He helped get it started, came up with the name, and was its primary advisor. Bernard Gastrich, President of Yama Ki, spoke about how Yuji introduced bonsai in the eastern United States: "Yuji Yoshimura gave us too much of his time and talent. Now let us continue the educational mission of our master and friend."

Dr. John Creech, (Director of the U.S. National Arboretum at the time he and Yuji spoke of having a bonsai exhibit at the Arboretum), could not be present for this tribute. However, he was represented by Arthur Joura, Bonsai Curator at the North

(Continued on page 6)

Evening Honoring Yuji Yoshimura

(Continued from page 5)

Carolina Arboretum, who read Dr. Creech's remarks. Dr. Creech recalled "the time when Yuji did a demonstration which involved drastic pruning. Someone in the audience cried out 'Horrors, he's killed the plant!' But of course he hadn't. Indeed, he had demonstrated the artistry and vision that made him our most outstanding bonsai master!"

After the individual remarks, Bill Valavanis presented an historical tribute illustrated with slides of scenes of varied periods in Yuji's eventful life.

A beautiful and fitting climax to the evening was the opportunity to stroll through the Bonsai Museum in the dark of night, the paths and gardens lit with softly-glowing lanterns. Yuji would have approved.

Library Needs

Your help is needed to make the library in our National Bonsai and Penjing Museum the finest library on the subject of bonsai and related art forms in North America. We have excellent coverage of most if not all of the more recent books published on the subject. However, we are missing some critical early publications which we would eventually like to add to the collections. Currently, we are searching for original publications of the following books:

- Koehn, Alfred. 1932. "Japanese Tray Landscapes". Lotus Court Publications. Peking. 52 pages. (In English.)
- Koehn, Alfred. 1952. "Bonkei. Japanese Tray Landscapes". Tokyo. 35 pp.
- Nozaki, S. 1940. "Dwarf Trees (Bonsai)". The Sanseido

Company, Ltd. Tokyo & Osaka, 74 pp.

Please contact Felix Laughlin at (202) 862-1040 (or e-mail him at <felix_laughlin@deweyballantine.com>) if you would like to donate one or more of these publications or know where we can obtain them.

We are also seeking original copies of turn-of-the-century bonsai auction catalogs for sales held in the United States, England and Europe. These are rare but contain important information about the introduction of bonsai and penjing to the western world.

Finally, we are seeking a set of the fine quarterly journal, *Bonsai Autoctono*, published in Spanish in Valencia, Spain. The Museum would be happy to receive a donation of a complete or partial set of this journal.

**THE
NATIONAL
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