The Las Vegas trip group stop to pose after the Saturday Slots Tournament before scattering to their various secret activities. Remember, “What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas…”

“In Japan, August is the month we traditionally observe Obon… but August is also a time for Japanese to reflect on the tragedy of war. August 6th is the day that the atomic bomb was dropped in Hiroshima city. 70,000 died immediately from the bomb. And another 70,000 died from radiation within four months.

Three days later another atomic bomb was detonated over Nagasaki severely destroying the city. Approx. 40% of the city was instantly annihilated. It is estimated around 80,000 people were killed instantly.

Sixty nine years have passed since then, and every year on this day, many people – those who had survived the bomb and families who had lost their loved ones, and those who had heard of the experiences of the devastation that would carry it on to the next generation – gather together to attend the Peace Memorial Ceremony held in both cities and wish for world peace.

As I think back about my first visit to Hiroshima, I always remember my visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum with my father. It is this experience that became my focal point whenever I think about wars. I was in the fourth grade and had little idea about what happened in Hiroshima. Honestly speaking, I do not remember how I really felt and what I thought; yet, since then, August 6th has become a special day for me. And as I reflect upon this date, I wonder if all those men, women and children who perished on August 6th, died in vain. Have we learned any thing from this horrific episode in history?

Several years ago, I found a book entitled “Yunagi no Machi, Sakura no Kuni (Town of Evening Calm, Country of Cherry Blossom)” which also asks me quietly, yet very deeply, what war is. The book written by Fumiyo Kouno is only a hundred and three pages long. The first story of a trilogy is set in Hiroshima city ten years after it experienced the tragedy of the atomic bomb. It is difficult for many people to imagine from its cover in pastel that this book is dealing with the atomic bomb or the war. It depicts the ordinary aspects of one woman’s life, whose name is Minami Hirano, and her communication with her mother and friends. However, underneath such peaceful and quiet ordinary days, she always hides the feeling of guilt for surviving and being alive. In her mind she says:

Everyone in this town is being unnatural.
No one talks about “it” because no one understands why it happened.
The only thing we know is that although someone wished us dead, we survived.
And the most terrible thing is that, since then, I sometimes see myself as a person who should have died.

She seems to speak for those who survived the atomic bomb in Hiroshima. Not only Minami, but many of the other survivors were searching for reasons of how they were able to survive, and they know for sure that “being a good person” was not the reason. In Minami’s words, she was the one who “neglected to help the many people who were dying,” “stepped over the deceased without any
2014 Youth Hoshidan Report

Everything Old is New Again:
My Trip to Japan
Leo Kowalski

I knew I was in Japan the moment I stepped out of the Kansai International Airport. The sensation of being inactive but yet still sweating, the glow of brightly-colored neon signs, and the abundance of lush greenery were all familiar signs of a country that has been a part of my life since childhood. Despite my previous experience there, I feel like I have gained a deeper understanding of Japan, and Shin Buddhism, because of my recent trip with the Higashi Honganji youth group. I am now hoping I can apply some of that understanding, and the core values that spring from it, to my daily life here in the United States.

When I was younger I was always a little bothered by the descriptions of Japan I heard from American visitors. Comments from recently returned travelers would usually praise the politeness of the Japanese people, the cleanliness of the streets, the affordability and deliciousness of the food, the efficiency of the transportation, etc. While these were all valid statements, I felt like such verbal depictions often romanticized the country, glossing over some of the more difficult aspects of Japanese culture, particularly the difficulty of assimilating into Japanese society.

Growing up I had firsthand experience with this difficulty when I spent summers with my aunt in Japan due to my physical appearance as a half-white individual. My aunt lives in a countryside farming area. Most of the rural residents there lack experience interacting with people who don’t physically look Japanese. This meant that I often stood out when I went out in public. Japanese children often pointed me out to their parents and stared. People were usually shocked when I spoke to them in Japanese, when they were often trying to reply in broken English. This type of behavior irked me when I was younger because I felt that people were judging me right off the bat. It sometimes even angered me that people would view me as a “gaijin” (a term that means foreigner in Japanese) based on my appearance, even though I had spent years immersed in Japanese culture and dedicated time to learning the language.

I realize now that my hasty irritation at the judgments from Japanese people was a form of judgment in itself. My tendency to quickly label certain reactions from individuals as “bad” was simply contributing to my own self-created and self-perpetuating discontent. On this particular trip to Japan, I made an effort to avoid feelings of displeasure whenever I was spoken to in English and tried to suspend my ego. I tried to ascribe a little less importance to my own judgments of others in day

Please see EVERYTHING, con’t on pg. 8
Fall Ohigan
The Fall Ohigan Service will be held on September 14 at 4:30 p.m. Joining us, as our special speaker, will be Rev. Fred Brenion. Please join us for another stimulating message from our Rev. Fred and stay for the complimentary otoki dinner following the service.

Welcome Gathering for Rev. Miyoshi’s Parents
There will be a potluck lunch on Sunday, September 7, after Shotsuki Service organized by Toban A to welcome Rev. Miyoshi’s parents who will be visiting L.A. from Japan. We encourage all our Sangha members to come out to welcome the Rev. Akira and Rev. Etsuko Miyoshi to West Covina and give Rev. Nobuko Miyoshi our show of support!

Oldies Dance XLIX
“Aging Like Fine Wine, Oldies XLIX(49)” will be held on Saturday, September 27. It’s our 49th Oldies with Steve Kikuchi & High Resolution providing favorite hits from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s. The dance begins at 8:00 p.m. and will end at 12:00 a.m. with lots of dancing and fun in between. Presale tickets are $15 or $18 at the door. For info and song requests, call Joanie at (626) 300-8947 or Lillian at (626) 780-9866. Your Toban chairs will contact you about work shifts and assignments. Plan to come by the center about 6 p.m. to help with the set-up. Donations are welcome for raffle prizes and drinks. Sign-up sheets for drinks will be at the Sunday service.

The Study Class
The Study Class will meet on September 9 and 23 at 10:00 a.m. Discussions will continue to focus on the Shoshin-ge. The class meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. For more information, please contact Rev. Miyoshi at (626) 689-1040.

Akimatsuri
The ESGVJCC Akimatsuri will be on Saturday, October 4, from 12:00-8:00 p.m. and WCBT will be in charge of the Teriyaki Barbecue. Sign-up sheet will be out for your signatures at upcoming services so please find a time when you can help.
We’d like to see everyone come out and support the Temple and the Center.

Halloween
Our annual Halloween party will follow the Sunday Service on October 26. There will be fun and games and prizes so get in the Halloween spirit and come dressed in your favorite costumes. There will be refreshments for everyone so join us in the fun!

Kiku Crafts & Food Fair
WCBT will sponsor our 6th Annual Kiku Crafts & Food Fair on Sunday, November 2, from 10a.m.–3p.m. Asian inspired crafts, clothing, jewelry, giftware, unique wood items and lots of delicious food will be offered. Each vendor will be handling their own sales and not all take credit cards so come prepared. WCBT members are welcomed to shop early from 9:30 a.m. Come for some holiday shopping. Stay for the fun and food!
For more information or if you can help, please contact Hisako Koga 909-626-6131 or hskoga@gmail.com.

GATEWAY Staff
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West Covina Buddhist Temple Mission Statement:
In the spirit of universal brotherhood, West Covina Buddhist Temple provides the opportunity for all to listen to and share the Teachings of the Buddha in order that we may awaken to our true selves, living our lives fully and dynamically.
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(626) 689-1040
Website: www.livingdharma.org
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SEPTEMBER
Dean Hata, Marc-Mitchell Miyashiro, Callen & Kimberley Kitaura, Stephanie Jitosho, Lindsay Ogino, Ted Kato, Cathy Nakano, Roy Takemura, Kevin Kuwahara, Brian Takahashi, Andrea Lespron, Leanne Komada, Erika Oshiro, Mei-Ling Chen, Edward Chen, Bob Stack

Richard and Ruby enjoying some Lappert’s ice cream , at the California Hotel in Las Vegas, way past their bedtime.
hesitation,” and “coldly selected a dead woman in good condition in order to steal her shoes.” In this sense, although most of the survivors had thought of themselves as being good and decent people before the tragedy, the atomic bomb revealed to them what kind of people they really were. Facing their true self, they could not help but think, “Why could such a terrible person like me survive?” “Why did they have to die; why not me?” or “Just as they were not supposed to die, I might not have been supposed to survive…..”

As a result, in the story, Minami does not think that she deserves to be happy and tries to refuse any happiness. She reminds me of a woman who was interviewed at the Peace Memorial Ceremony in Hiroshima. She said with tears, “Every time I have white rice, I feel so guilty, so bad…I do not deserve to have this…” It is hard to imagine how much their feelings of guilt cause them to suffer. For them, being alive itself…turns to tremendous anguish.

Buddhism teaches us how precious our existence is and wishes us to realize the importance and meaning of our birth and the fact we are alive at this moment. On the other hand, war deprives us of rejoicing for being alive and makes us lose the meaning of our birth. In other words, the cruelty of war is not only about killing thousands of people with only one bomb in one second, but it also robs the survivors of the joy of living and makes them negate the preciousness of their own lives. To make matters worse, it affects them in this way throughout the rest of their lives.

Moreover, under the circumstances of war, we are forced to face the fundamental fact of our existence that we often shield ourselves from. It is undeniable that our lives are maintained through the sacrifices of other lives. It is the unchangeable truth of our existence, no matter when or where we are—whether we are struggling in war or enjoying a good life in a peaceful society. In our daily lives, however, this is not recognized as painful truth. For example, when we eat, we could thank the innumerable lives that become the food to support our lives, and we may show our gratitude by putting our hands together. However, we hardly feel painfully guilty about taking their lives, or apologizing with tears to those animals or plants.

In war, on the other hand, the truth strikes us in the harshest way. Once one realizes the truth of one’s existence, “gratitude” or “appreciation” is not enough any more, and the person would be burdened with deep sorrow and afflictions towards both one’s own life and the life of others.

Reflecting on Shinran Shonin, his time was also in war and turbulence. People struggled to survive one day at a time. Shinran Shonin was also the one who faced this severe truth of human existence, and therefore, to seek the reason why we were born and why we are living now became the foremost issue throughout his life.

In the story, Minami finally decides to seek the meaning of her life, the reason why she should survive. A man who cares for her and whom she also cares for tells her, “Thank you for being alive,” …his words warmly encompass her and her life, and gives her the strength to keep walking towards her quest. Shinran Shonin realized that encountering the Dharma was the reason why he was born in this world and was alive at every single moment. Once realizing the meaning of his birth and life, simultaneously, through the history of Buddhism, he was able to encounter his teachers and many other people who also faced the truth of our existence and sought the meaning of life through their lives. This encountering enabled Shinran Shonin to become aware of the preciousness of his own life. One of his hymns expresses this encountering as follows;

When we say “Namu Amida Butsu,”
The countless Buddhas throughout the ten quarters,
Surrounding us a hundredfold, a thousandfold,
Rejoice in and protect us.

I truly believe that this is Shinran Shonin’s expression of both surprise and inspiration when he received the words, “Thank you for being alive!” from people who share the same issues about birth and life of human beings and of all lives which led him to continue to listen to the Dharma.
Dear Members and Friends:

Please join us on Sunday, September 14, 2014, from 4:30 PM for the AUTUMN OHIGAN SERVICE. Our guest speaker will be Rev. Frederick Brenion, an associate minister of North America District.

Otoki will be served after the service by Toban A.

合掌

Nobuko Miyoshi, Minister  
John Martinez, President
West Covina Buddhist Temple presents

Aging Like Fine Wine, Oldies XLIX (49)!

Saturday, September 27, 2014

Same ol’ same ol’ for the rest, but remember it is from 8 to midnite

At the ESGV Japanese Community Center
Tickets: $15 presale, $18 at the door
Music by High Resolution
Drinks available, must be 21 or over
Dressy Casual
For tickets and/or information
Call or Text:
Joanie: (626)300-8947
Lillian: (626)780-9866
or email: wfescrow@aol.com

WCBT/ESGVJCC
1203 West Puente Ave
West Covina

NO HEELS on the dance floor unless ballroom dance shoes.
生まれたことの意味を見失わせ、生きることの喜びを奪うものといえるかもしれません。戦争の残酷さは一発の爆弾で一瞬のうちに何万人もの人の命を奪うことと同時に、生き残った人々から生きている喜びを奪い続け、自己のかけがえのない尊さを自ら否定させ続けるということにあるのではないか。

さらに、戦争は最も見たくない人間の存在の事実を突きつけます。つまり、私たちは他のいのちを犠牲にして生きる身であるという事実です。普段の生活ではそのことが痛みを伴う事実として頷かれることはほとんどありません。例えば、食べ物を口にするとき、食べ物となってくれたいのちに対してありがとうと手を合わせ感謝することはあっても、そのいのちに対して申し訳ないと心が痛み、涙を流すということはないのではないでしょうか。戦争の世の中においても、平和な社会においても、私たちは自分のいのちをつなぐために他のいのちを日々犠牲にしているという事実に変わりはありません。しかしそれを心に持ったままに立ち上がり、歩き始めようとしたきっかけは、思いを寄せせる人からの「生き続けてくれて、ありがとう」という言葉でした。そして、親鸞聖人は仏法に出逢うことをそこで生れた世の中で生まれた意義であると頷かれました。その託された使命に目覚めた時、同時に聖人は同じ課題を背負い生ききた祖師方、その他幾多の人々と出逢うことができたのです。そしてその出逢いが、聖人に生きているということの不思議と尊さを目覚めたといえるのではないでしょうか。親鸞聖人がお書きになった『浄土和讃』の中に次のような和讃があります。

南無阿弥陀仏をとなえるば
十方無量の諸仏は
百重千重囲繞して
よろこびまもりたまうなり

これは同じ課題を背負って生きた人々、そして自分を支えてくれているあらゆるいのちからの「生き続けてくれて、ありがとう」という声を確かに聴いた親鸞聖人の驚きと感動を表した詩ではないかと思うのです。

LAS VEGAS TRIP 2014
FRANK TANJI

WCBT went on their annual Las Vegas fundraiser weekend trip on August 8-10. We had 39 people having a great time gambling, shopping, eating and sleeping. Maybe not much sleeping. We played some games on the trip to Las Vegas like Bingo, Las Vegas trivia questions and a new Horse Racing game. Yes, there was a horse race on the bus in case you missed it.
EVERYTHING, con’t from pg. 2
to day life, and worked at being mindful of when I did make such judgments. It seemed my earlier Buddhist teachings at the West Covina Temple finally started to sink in, and I was much happier for it.

In addition to the above realization, the visit to the Honzan opened my eyes and impacted me strongly. Being in the mother Temple helped me realize the vast distance that Shin Buddhist teachings have traveled to come into my life. I think that being able to access massive amounts of information with the click of a mouse in modern life can sometimes cause one to forget about all the individuals that dedicated their lives to spreading certain knowledge. During the confirmation ceremony, I felt the presence of many years of history contained in a singular location and felt honored to be a small part of the continuing larger Higashi Honganji tradition.

Seeing Reverend Ken Kawawata in Hawaii was the closing part of the trip and I was grateful that I was able to see him again. He was surprised at my growth in height and change in appearance; to me he looked the same as he always had. Reverend Ken took us to the temple in Hawaii and delivered a Dharma talk that induced nostalgia. It made me reflect on the years I spent as a child listening and maturing to his talks. While back then I often lost focus on his words and indulged in daydreaming as a restless adolescent, Reverend Ken was always somebody who I felt truly embodied and lived what he spoke about. It felt unfortunate that we couldn’t have spent more time with him, but I was very glad that I was able to see him again.

Overall the trip was very meaningful and granted me newfound insights. I feel that the visit to Japan transformed me and shaped my thinking in ways that my human words cannot properly express on this page. I can say now that I feel more appreciative of the teachings and experiences I had as a child, both at the West Covina Buddhist Temple and spending summers with my aunt in Japan. I am grateful to our sangha here, and in Japan, for giving me the opportunity to go on this journey and will attempt to be more mindful every day and live in accordance to the teachings I have received.
「生きとまってくれてありがとう」
見義信香

8月6日は広島、9日は長崎に原子弹が落とされた日です。今年はその日から69年目を数えます。毎年のこの日には平和祈念式典が営まれ、実際に体験された方、ご家族を失った方、そして、この日を語り継がれ、受け継いでいく世代の人々が共に平和への願いを新たにする日であります。

私が初めて広島を訪れたのはたしか小学校4年生の頃だったと思います。父に連れてられ、私はほとんどなんの予備知識もないまま平和記念資料館に足を踏み入れました。正直そのときの私がなにを感じ、どう思ったかはっきりと思い出すことはできません。しかしながらそれ以降八月六日は、この日にそしてその他のあらゆる戦争という名の下においていのちを奪われ死んでいった中で、自分が今生き延びているということへの後悔、そして、自分を生き延びていることの幸せに目覚めることを願うのが仏教の教えと言えます。

そして、今回は同じように「戦争とはなにか」ということを静かに深く問いかける作品を皆さんにご紹介したいと思います。「夕凪の街 桜の国」（こうの史代著、2004年双葉社）というこの作品はあたがたを入れてもわずか103頁というごく短いマンガです。淡いパステル調の表紙からは、これが戦争や原爆という重いテーマを扱っていると想像するのは難しいでしょう。しかし、この物語の舞台は原子爆弾が落とされた広島で、平野皆実という女性が主人公となり、彼女の静かな日常が描かれています。しかし、その日常は、多くの人がいのちを奪われ死んでいった中で、自分が生き延びているということへの後悔、そして、自分を生き延びていることの幸せに目覚めることを願うのが仏教の教えと言えます。

彼女の声はあの日広島で生き残った人々の声でもあるように思えます。「いい人間」だっただけ生き残ったのではなく、これは他の誰でもなく自分が一番よく分かっているということでしょう。皆実の言葉を借りれば彼女は「何人見殺しにしたか分からない」人間であり、「死体を平気でまたいで歩き」「腐っていないおばさんを冷静に選んで下駄を盗んで履く」人間でした。原爆によってもいなかった自分自身の姿を見せつけられた人々は自問し続けます。「なぜこんな私が生き残ったのか」「なぜ私ではなくあの人が死ななければならなかったのか」と。

生きているという事実に重い罪悪感を抱く人の気持ち、そして、あの人が死ぬべき人間ではなかったのではいないだろうかという思いを抱き続けて生きる人の苦しみはどれほどのものでしょうか。皆実は自分自身にした自分のことみを痛めつつ存在し、この心の中で述懐する次のような下りがあります。

ぜんたいこの街の人は、不自然だ。
誰もあの事を言わない。
まだにわけがわからないのだ。
わかるのは「死ねばいい」と誰かに思われたということ。
思われたのに生き延びているということ。
そして、しばしば怖いのは、あの人が死ぬべき人間ではなかったように、私は生き延命すべき人間ではなかったのではないかという思いを抱え続けて生きる人の苦しみはどれほどのものでしょう。皆実は自分自身にした自分のことみを痛めつつ存在し、この心の中で述懐する次のような下りがあります。

人生に自分がなくなってしまったこと。
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September
4 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
7 8:30 am Board Meeting
7 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
9 10:00 am Study Class
14 4:30 pm Ohigan Service
21 10:00 am Sunday Service
23 10:00 am Study Class
27 8:00 pm Oldies Dance
28 10:00 am Sunday Service

October
2 7:30 pm Howakai Japanese Service
4 12-8 pm Akimatsuri
5 8:30 am Board Meeting
5 10:00 am Shotsuki Service
12 10:00 am Sunday Service
14 10:00 am Study Class
19 10:00 am Sunday Service
26 10:00 am Sunday Service/Halloween Party

2014年9月行事予定
4日 午後7時半 法話会
7日 午前8時半 理事会
7日 午前10時 祥月法要
14日 午後4時半 秋季彼岸法要
21日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
27日 午後8時 オールディーズダンス
28日 午前10時 日曜礼拝

10月行事予定
2日 午後7時半 法話会
4日 正午一 午後8時 秋祭り
5日 午前8時半 理事会
5日 午前10時 祥月法要
12日 午前10時 日曜礼拝
19日 午前10時 日曜礼拝

当たり前と思っていたことが
有り難いと気づかされる
撫尾巨津子