Hoonko Hoshidan Tour: Tears for Fears and Moments of Reflection

Tanya Kato
WCBT Member

During the last week of November 2019, I traveled to Kyoto, Japan for the Hoonko Hoshidan tour. I was very excited for this trip since it was going to be my first visit to Japan.

Reverend Tomoyuki Hasegawa led our group. The other North America District participants were Anna Hightower, Penny Murata, and Shigeo Nagayama, representing the Higashi Honganji temples of Berkeley, Los Angeles, and Newport Beach, respectively.

The day before we started the retreat, we visited the Honzan to pay our respects. When we arrived at the Founder’s Hall Gate, I was in disbelief. I was not expecting the gate to be so big. I was a bit awed struck as we passed underneath it. A few days later, as part of our cleaning duties during our stay at the Dobo Retreat Center, we got to climb the steep stairs up to the top of the gate where statues of Ananda, Shakyamuni, and the Bodhisattva Maitreya are housed.

After passing under the Founder’s Hall Gate, I was in further awe seeing the Goei-do, or the Founder’s Hall and walking up its steps. I had looked at pictures of it online, but nothing I saw online prepared me for the sheer size of the building. It made me think about all of the people who contributed to the construction of the building and the other structures on the grounds.

On the morning that we began our stay at the retreat center, Ray and Fay Uyema, Akiko Tapp, Susan Littoral, Douglas and Jean Crosier and Daniel Abramowicz, of the Hawaii District, along with Reverend Koen Kikuchi, who led their group, met us in the lobby of the Hotel San Crane and we walked to the Honzan together.

After the first day at the retreat center, I had many doubts running through my mind. I questioned whether I was dedicated enough to be on the tour, representing the West Covina sangha. I doubted my ability to comprehend Dr. Michael Conway’s lectures. I especially doubted my decision to go through the Kikyoshiki confirmation ceremony. I began thinking that I should have waited to make the decision to go through...

Please see HOSHIDAN, con't on page 6
Happy Year of the Rat!

According to Chinese Astrology, people born in the year of the rat are charming, clever, optimistic, sensitive, and kind. They are also rather stingy, sometimes lacking in courage, and may not be great leaders!

The Dharma School Staff will be instructing our students about the parts of the obutsudan and their respective meanings. There will be worksheets provided to reinforce what they are learning. The lessons will culminate with an activity during which the children will construct their own obutsudan.

February is a busy month! Our yearly retreat in San Luis Obispo will happen during Presidents’ weekend—the 14th through the 16th. Lessons for children will be included.
The pet memorial service will be on February 23. Please let Sensei or me know if you have lost a pet during the past year. We would like to honor them.

Hope you will be able to attend our annual retreat!

Gassho,
Claire Hansen

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To All Past and Current WCBT Members, Families and Friends

SAVE THE DATE

SANGHA REUNION & FAMILY FUN DAY

Join us for a day

Full of Fun, Food and Good Times

Sunday, May 17, 2020

10am - 2pm

Murata Farms
400 La Vista Ave.

Somis, CA 93066

(Near Camarillo Premium Outlets)

Temple may be chartering a bus from ESGVJCC to Murata Farms

More information to come
The Study Class
The Study Class will meet on February 11 and 25 at 10:00 a.m.. Discussions will be based on selected topics that vary from week to week. The class usually meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. For more information, please contact Rev. Miyoshi at (626) 689-1040.

Family Retreat
Our annual Family Retreat will be held this year on February 14-16, at the beautiful San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple. Join us as Rev. Ken Yamada speaks on “Namu Amida Butsu, Here and Now.” Be part of another great weekend with stimulating discussions, quality time with sangha friends and as always, too much food, all set in the serene and scenic setting of the Central Coast. The fee for adults is $45, $20 for students, and includes meals and available temple lodging.

Pet Memorial Service
A special service will be held on February 23 at 10:00 a.m. to remember our animal friends. Everyone who has lost a pet is invited to pay tribute to them on this special day.

Cherry Blossom Festival
The 202 West Covina Cherry Blossom Festival will be on Saturday, March 21, from 12:00-6:00 PM and will be held at the West Covina Civic Center. The Temple will not have a booth but ESGVJCC will need help setting up and breaking down after the festival. Please come out to support the Center.

Spring Ohigan Service
Spring Ohigan will be observed on March 22 at 4:30 PM. Rev. Frederick Brenion will be our special guest speaker so please join Rev. Fred and us for this special service and stay for the complimentary otoki dinner following the service.

Oldies Dance LXV (65)
“Oldies LXV (65), Let’s Dance and Thrive!” will be held on Saturday, March 28. It’s our 65th Oldies with Steve Kikuchi & High Resolution providing favorite hits from the 60’s, 70’s and 80’s. Please note the new hours. The dance will begin at 7:00 PM and end at 11:00 PM with lots of dancing and fun in between. The earlier hours, although giving us less time to set up, will make it easier for the members who come to help clean-up after the dance.

Presale tickets are $20 or $25 at the door. For info and song requests, contact Joanie at (626) 300-8947, joaniekmartinez@gmail.com or Lillian at (626) 780-9866, lilnish77@gmail.com. Your Toban chairs will contact you about work shifts and assignments. Plan to come to the Center by 4:30 PM to help with the set-up and at 11:00 PM to help clean-up since we may not have help available to us. Donations are welcome for raffle prizes and drinks. Sign-up sheets for drinks will be at our Sunday service.

“Save the Date”
Mark your calendar for WCBT Fun Day on Sunday, May 17, 2020. We invite all past and current WCBT members, families and friends to join us for a day of fun, food and good times as we spend the day at Murata Farms in Somis (near Camarillo Premium Outlets). The Temple may be chartering a bus from ESGVJCC to Murata Farms so stay tuned for more updates in the next Gateway.
Buddhist Quiz: Today's Quiz is about the Buddhist altar.

1. The image to the left of the Central altar is ________.
2. The image to the right of the Central altar is ________.
3. Amitabha is the symbol of ________ and ________.
4. The two pillars of Buddhism are ________ and ________.


Temple members enjoyed WCBT's annual January Shotsuki Sashimi lunch with sake toasts and delicious zenzai to round out the deliciious meal.
WEST COVINA BUDDHIST TEMPLE PRESENTS

OLDIES LXV(65)!
LET'S DANCE AND THRIVE!!

Saturday, March 28, 2020
7pm to 11pm

At the ESGV Japanese Community Center
Tickets: $20 presale, $25 at the door
Music by guest HIGH RESOLUTION
Drinks available, must be 21 or over
Dressy Casual

For tickets and/or information Call or Text:
Joanie: (626) 300-8947 (calls only)
Lillian: (626) 780-9866
or email: lilnish77@gmail.com or joaniekmartinez@gmail.com

NO HEELS
for Ladies.
HOSHIDAN, cont'd from pg. 1

the ceremony until after I returned from the Hoshidan tour. I slightly panicked and thought that maybe I had made the decision too hastily, but then I thought that I would probably regret not taking this once in a lifetime opportunity.

While many people talked about the Bando-bushi leading up to the trip, what made an impression on me was the gagaku, or court music at the Hoshidan service. While I wished that I could see the individuals playing the instruments, this is what made the service memorable for me. The sounds transported me back in time, it had me thinking of all the generations that came before me and generated a thread to my Japanese ancestry.

During the Kikyoshiki ceremony, I was fortunate to sit next to Doug and Jean from the Kaneohe temple. A moment that I will treasure from the ceremony is when the three of us shared a sheet of paper with the words to Shinshu Shuka. I felt connected with them as we sat in front of Shinran’s statue in the Goei-do reading from the same piece of paper. I later heard similar sentiments from Doug and Jean about sharing the experience together, as well as their own doubts going through the confirmation ceremony. Although I was feeling more confident with my decision to go through the ceremony when the time came, it was nice to know that I was not the only one feeling the same way.

At the end of our stay at the Honzan, we met with the Overseas District Abbot Choyu Otani and his son, Yul Otani. I really appreciated their candor and frankness. As with the other ministers that I interacted with during the retreat, it reminded me that they too, are going through this journey of life, as we all are. Like other teachers that I have had in my life, especially during grade school, it’s sometimes surprising for me to hear that ministers have lives beyond their ministerial duties and temples, such as my grade school teachers have lives outside of the classroom. They, too, experience challenges and strained relationships; they are not exempt from the difficulties of life. The more I hear about their own struggles, I think of how any of us could easily be in the same position or find ourselves in similar situations. We may be more connected by our shared experiences than we may know.

Some of my most emotional times on the trip were the hours that I would wake up between 3am and 5am at the Hotel San Crane. I would cry thinking about various life events and the difficult relationship with my late grandmother. One afternoon, I was in my hotel room and the thought of my mortality hit me. Intellectually, I know that I am going to die one day, but the realization that my time is limited and that I am only here for a temporary span of time really struck me. I remember walking downstairs to the lobby of the hotel where Fay, from the Hawaii Betsuin, saw my face. She thought that it was from not feeling well, but my puffy face was from the tears confronting my mortality and thinking that when my time comes, that’s it. When Fay asked about my wellbeing, I mis-spoke and said that it was because of the realization of my immortality. I then quickly corrected myself and said that it was because of the realization of my mortality. I started thinking later, however, that there is an immortal aspect of myself that will continue even after I am gone as a result of my time spent as a living being.

Even though I had only been formally introduced to Reverend Hasegawa fairly recently and had not had much interaction with him prior to the Hoshidan trip, I could see that he took his role as a minister very seriously and I was moved by his chanting when he participated in West Covina’s Hoonko service before we left for Japan. Because of this, I asked if he would be willing to officiate with Reverend Miyoshi at my funeral when the time comes. He said yes. He then asked if I could put my request in writing. Even though I have voiced my wishes to include Reverend Hasegawa in co-officiating, to my mom and my friend, Josefine, I hope this newsletter article will suffice in stating my wishes.

The Homyo or dharma name Reverend Miyoshi chose for me is Shaku-ni Mon-etsu. Shaku-ni meaning disciple of the Buddha, mon meaning to hear, and etsu meaning joy, thus one who experiences joy in hearing [the teachings]. As I walked with Susan, of the Hilo temple, on our last day of the retreat, she told me that she could see the joy in me.

As I reflect back on my trip, I recall a time when I was a child that I told my uncle that I didn’t want to be Japanese because I was different from the other children and that I was teased for being Asian. I just remember him becoming angry with me for saying such a thing. After returning from the Hoshidan tour, my appreciation for my Japanese heritage has deepened and grown. For without it, I do not know how I would have encountered the teachings.

In closing, I would like to thank Reverend Miyoshi, the West Covina sangha, the North America District, and the Los Angeles Betsuin for their support and words of encouragement. I would also like to thank the Honzan and the ministers and staff that made our stay and learning experience possible.
共有することで人はこれほどまでに強い結びつきを感じることができるのかと驚きました。この旅行の期間中最も感情的なことは早朝の3時から5時、ホテルでのことです。これまでの人生で起こった色々なことや関係が良好ではなかった今は亡き祖母とのことを思い出し、泣きたくなったのです。またある日の午後、ホテルの部屋で一人でいた時いきなり自分が死ぬべき身であるという事実に打ちのめされました。いつか死ぬということは、もちろん頭では知っておりましたが、この時まで実感として感じたことはありませんでした。自分の時間が限られていること、ここにこうして存在するのはほんの束の間であることに気づいたのです。ホテルのロビーに降りるとハワイ別院からの参加者のフェイがいました。私の顔を見て最初は気分が悪いのかと思ったようですが、涙で腫らした目を見てそうではないことに気づきました。私はフェイに自分の感情を伝えました。彼女と言葉を交わすことで、自分の有限性についての考えを整理していくようになりました。今、限りのある時間で肉体としての私がいなくなったとしても、何か伝わり続けるものがあるのではないか、と感じています。

今回の奉仕団で初めて長谷川先生と親しくお話することができました。僧侶としてのお仕事に真摯に向かっておられる姿に感銘を受けました。先生の声明の素晴らしさに感動しました。先生の声明になった私は、今回仲良くなれたことからこんなお願いをしました。自分のお葬式の時には見義先生と一緒に行ってほしいと。長谷川先生は承諾してくださいました。寺報に載せることで私のこの遺言を親しい人に知ってもらうことでしょう。

私が選んでいただいた法名は「釋尼聞悦」です。仏法を聞くことを悦ぶ身となってほしいという願いが込められていると聞かせてもらいました。最終日に隣を歩いていたヒロからの参加者スーザンが、私の顔に喜びが表れている、と言ってくれたことが嬉しかったです。

報恩講奉仕団を終えて、私は昔叔父に言ったことを思い出しました。日本人に生まれてきたんですかなかった。そうすればみんなと同じでアジア人だからととかわれることもなかったのに、と言ったのです。叔父が心も怒ったのを覚えています。今は日本人の血が流れていることに対する感謝の気持ちが自分の中に深く広がっているのを感じています。日系アメリカ人として生まれたからこそ教えに出逢うことができたからです。

最後にこのかけがえのない経験ができよう尽力してくださった見義先生をはじめ、ウェストコヴィナの皆さん、監督部の方々、そしてロサンゼルス別院に心から感謝します。また本山のスタッフの方々、僧侶の皆さんのおかげでこの度の滞在が思い出深く、学びの多い時間となったことに深くお礼申し上げます。
Quote of the Month
I don’t want to be the next Michael Jordan,
I only want to be Kobe Bryant.
-Kobe Bryant
報恩講奉仕団 – 不安の涙と内省の時
カトウ・ターニャ

11月の最終週、私は報恩講奉仕団に参加するために京都に向かいました。初めての日本にとてもワクワクしていました。

ツアーやの引率は長谷川智行先生でした。今回北米開教区から参加したのはバークレーのハイ タワー・アナさん、別院の村田ペニーさん、ニューポートビーチの永山繁雄さんと私の4名でした。

奉仕団の前日に真宗本廟に参拝しました。御影堂門の前に立って信じられない思いでした。これほど大きな門だとは思っていなかったです。門をくぐるのが畏れ多く、団の日程中に掃除の時間がありました。その時は急な階段を登ってその門の中に入ることができました。上層には釈迦如来、弥勒菩薩、阿難尊者の三尊の立像が安置されていました。

御影堂門を抜けて目にした御影堂にはさらには息を飲ましました。ネット検索で御影堂の写真は見ていました。でも実物のスケールをその写真から感じることはできませんでした。この荘厳な建物は私にその建設に携わった多くの人の努力と熱意の深さを感じさせました。

奉仕団参加初日の朝にはハワイのグループと合流しました。引率は菊地香円先生、参加者はレイさん、フェイさん、あきこさん、スーツさん、ダグラスさん、ジェーンさん、そしてダニエルさんの7名です。ホテルのロビーで集合して徒歩で同朋会館に向かいました。

初日の日程が終わり、心の中に色々な不安が湧き上がりました。自分自身がウェストコビナの代表としてこの奉仕団に参加するのに相応しい人間だったのだろうか、という不安です。また講師の講義の内容を理解する能力が自分には十分じゃないような気もしました。特に心配になったのは帰敬式受式のことです。時期尚早だったのではないか、奉仕団から戻って熟考してからでもよかったのではないか、と思い始めました。不安のあまり少しパニックになりました。でもずっと考えていくと、もし今回受けてなかったら、それはそれで一生に一度の機会を逃したと後悔したかもしれない、と思うようになりました。

有名な坂東曲を間近で見られることが奉仕団参加のハイライトの一つです。同時に私は感動させられたのは雅楽の音色でした。法要より荘厳なものにしているそれぞれの奏者をもっと近くで見られたら、と思いましした。雅楽の調べは私を通かに連れて行ってくれました。私が生まれるずっと前の人々であり、日本人をルーツにもつ私について訓練を受けていました。

帰敬式ではカネオヘ東本願寺のダグとジーンの隣に座りまして。そして真宗宗歌の歌詞を一緒に見ました。親鸞聖人の御真影の前に座り、歌詞が書かれた紙と一緒に見え、彼らと私の間のつながりを感じました。彼らも同じ気持ちだったことを後から聞きました。さらには、彼らも私の同じように帰敬式を受けることに不安を感じていたということも知りました。帰敬式の時間が近づくにつれ、受式を決めるに自信がもてるようになっていました。それでも、同じ気持ちの人がいたことに救われた思いがしたのも実事です。

奉仕団の最終日には大谷暢裕開教司とそのご子息裕さんと一緒にお会いすることができました。お二人の率直さと親しみやすさにとても感激しました。今回多くの僧侶の方々と接する機会にも恵まれました。その中で気づいたことは彼らもまた私たちと同じように様々な悩みを抱えながら生きているということです。小学校の時、先生にも普通の生活があることなどほとんど想像できませんでした。同じように僧侶の方々にもじもじの外に生活があるということは今まではあまり考えませんでした。彼らも悩んだり人間関係に苦労する私たちと同じ人間で、生きることの苦しみの免除者ではありませんでした。今回僧侶の方々からも自身の苦しみや悩みを共有していただくことができ、その痛みを（「奉仕団」7ページに続く）
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**February 2020**

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<td>Shotsuki Service</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Howakai Japanese Service</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10:00 am</td>
<td>Sunday Service</td>
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<td>11</td>
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**March**

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**2020年2月行事予定**

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<td>祥月法要</td>
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**3月行事予定**

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<td>春季彼岸法要</td>
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**信頼というものは若返るものである。**

死ぬ準備ではない。

安田理深