International Scholarly Symposium Achieves Goals

Over 135 bonsai and viewing stone enthusiasts gathered at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., on May 17, 18 and 19, 2002, for the first International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones. The Symposium, which was generously funded by a long-time benefactor of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, Mary E. Mrose, had been postponed from the original October 2001 meeting date due to the tragedies of September 11. Despite this delay, all of the speakers and demonstrators were able to participate and the registration exceeded expectations. An international flavor was brought to the event with contingents from Italy and Canada, as well as Japan.

The stated purpose of the Symposium was to provide an in-depth view of the history and development of the art and science of bonsai, suiseki and related art forms. Evaluations submitted at the end of the Symposium and subsequent published reports indicated that this event not only achieved this goal, but also contributed to providing an international scholarly perspective on the development of bonsai and viewing stones.

(Continued on page 5)

The History of “Gimpo”

By Cheryl Manning

Nurseries are often the first place a bonsai aficionado will look for material. John Naka spent many hours stalking his local nurseries’ “back 40” stock: the overgrown, neglected trees that had been sitting around the nursery for a while. On one such trip in 1950, he spotted several Blue Atlas cedar in five-gallon containers. They were grafted onto deodor cedar, and most of them sported ugly grafting lines where the different cedars were joined. But one tree’s graft was so low that it was nearly invisible. It wasn’t the nicest looking tree of the group, but it was only $2.50 so John took it home to see what he could do with it.

First, the tree was placed in the ground. When trees are field-grown, the increase in size is accelerated, more branches will develop, and scars will heal faster. But to develop the quality of hidden beauty (Shibui), the tree needs to grow more slowly in a pot. This is also the time to do detail work and

(Continued on page 3)

Kato Stroll Garden Dedicated

On Friday, May 17, 2002, the first day of the International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones, the Japanese Stroll Garden at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum was formally dedicated to the family of Saburo Kato in a naming ceremony conducted by Arboretum Director, Thomas S. Elias, and will now be known as the Kato Stroll Garden. Mr. Kato and his wife Yayoi, accompanied by their grandson Haruhiko, were present for this historic event.

Saburo Kato, the third generation owner of the famous Mansei-en bonsai nursery in Omiya, Japan is world renowned, not only as a bonsai master but also as an ambassador for the power of bonsai to act as a transforming agent on behalf of international peace. In this role he was the founder of the World Bonsai Friendship Fed-

(Continued on page 4)
President’s Letter

The age-old connection between bonsai and viewing stones (or suiseki) is becoming much more apparent to us in the West, as more of us take up the pleasures of collecting viewing stones and displaying them with or without bonsai. Once smitten by the allure of either bonsai or viewing stones, it is difficult to avoid the temptation to pursue the other, sooner or later.

NBF board members have been instrumental in the popularization of viewing stones in the United States, particularly Jim Hayes, Larry Ragle and the late Melba Tucker. The recent gifts by the Japanese collector Kenichi Aguchi, the Italian collector Luciana Queirolo Garbini and David Garvin of truly outstanding viewing stones to the Museum’s National Viewing Stone Collection greatly enhanced the quality of the Collection.

The International Scholarly Symposium held in May at the U.S. National Arboretum, the first in a series sponsored by Mary Mrose, provided an in-depth exploration of the history and development of bonsai and viewing stones. Saturday was devoted entirely to bonsai while Sunday looked entirely to viewing stones. As reported in the cover story of this issue, the Symposium was a tremendous success, providing a seductive invitation to enjoy both art forms.

Shortly after the Symposium, I traveled to Japan in the company of Tom Elias, the Director of the National Arboretum, and his wife Hiromi Nakaoji. Our objectives included further strengthening the ties between the Museum and the bonsai and suiseki leaders in Japan. We also discussed preparations for the World Bonsai Friendship Federation’s 5th World Bonsai Convention to be held in Washington, D.C. in 2005. We were gratified to see how supportive the Japanese are of the Museum as an international center for both bonsai and suiseki, and how enthusiastic they are about the 2005 convention.

In Tokyo, we visited Saburo Kato and Arishige Matsuura. Mr. Matsuura, the Chairman of the Nippon Suiseki Association and a principal speaker during the Symposium in May, has said that bonsai and suiseki are like the two wheels of a bicycle. Both he and Mr. Kato, the founder of WBFF in whose honor the Kato Stroll Garden was dedicated during the May Symposium, believe that these two art forms foster international friendship.

We also visited Uhaku Sudo at Chikufu-en, about an hour and a half outside of Tokyo. Mr. Sudo is a master of the Keido School, which teaches the art of displaying bonsai and suiseki. In a tranquil room with two tokonomas, one exhibiting a bonsai and the other a suiseki, and a stone floor still wet from its morning wash, Mr. Sudo explained his view of wabi and sabi as related to bonsai and suiseki. He said that wabi refers to the border between life and death, as illustrated by an ancient Shim-paku juniper sculpted with more dead wood than live bark—a living object making the transition between life and death. Sabi, which he noted is a closely related concept, is represented by a suiseki—a lifeless object that is imbued with spirit by its admiring owner. Perhaps we can invite Mr. Sudo to share more about Keido with us at a future Scholarly Symposium.

Both bonsai and viewing stones allow us to discover the beauty of nature; displayed together, they can intensify the experience. Curator Jack Sustic and Assistant Curator Jackson Tanner will undoubtedly be mounting exhibits in the future to demonstrate the power of this magical marriage.

Thank you for supporting the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

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Three new Suiseki come to the Museum

By Jack Sustic

The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum received a gift of three suiseki from Japan in November 2001. The suiseki are a donation from Kenichi Aguchi, consultant to the Japanese Suiseki Association. In May, participants in the International Scholarly Symposium had the opportunity to view these stones, along with La Bella, the gift of Luciana Queirolo Garbini that was profiled in the Winter 2001 issue of the NBF Bulletin, as well as the Chinese penjing given by longtime Museum benefactor, David Garvin. These suiseki and the penjing will continue to be on display in the Administration Building during the Museum’s Courtyard renovation project.

The stones from Mr. Aguchi are:

**Abegawa-Takiishi**—This Waterfall Stone was collected about 30 years ago from the Abegawa River in Skizrioka Prefecture. This suiseki is one of Mr. Aguchi’s most treasured stones. Indeed, when Mr. Aguchi decided to donate it to the Museum, newspapers in Nagano reported the news. The newspaper shows Mr. Aguchi sitting in his home holding the stone in his lap. This stone evokes rugged strength and presence, making it easy to see why it was so valued by Mr. Aguchi.

**Setagawa-Ishi**—This distant-view mountain stone was collected in the Seta River which was famous for having very hard, high quality stones and thus had been a popular site for stone collectors. However, a dam was built, flooding many of the better collecting sites. Because of this, the stone is even more cherished and valuable. Mr. Aguchi purchased this stone about 20 years ago. The texture and relief of this stone gives me a wonderful opportunity for an aspiring bonsai artist to work with highly skilled professionals in the best museum of its kind in the world.

**Naraigawa-Ishi**—This near-view mountain stone was collected some 30 years ago in the Narai River that runs from Mount Hodaka in the Japanese Alps. Highly valued by Mr. Aguchi, this stone was donated with a beautiful suiban. This is another visually impressive stone that we are very fortunate to have in our collection.

Mr. Aguchi will be 90 years old this year and enjoys bonsai, brush painting as well as suiseki. These three beautiful stones were some of his most beloved pieces and we thank him profoundly for the gift.

It is donations like all of these stones that make the Museum such a unique place.

Auction Raises $7,000 for Internship

Despite unseasonably chilly temperatures for May in Washington D.C. and a heavy rain during the day, a festive banquet and awards ceremony took place on Saturday evening during the International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones. The final event of the day was a fundraising auction which raised over $7,000 for an internship in the Museum.

The auction, which closed the dinner program, offered over 30 items from benefactors and NBF board members for bidding by Symposium participants. NBF board member, Chris Yeapanis, was the auctioneer for this fundraiser. While Arboretum staff were elated with the $7,000 raised during the auction, this falls far short of the $23,000 needed for a 10-month internship in the Museum.

If adequate funding is raised for the internship, the intern will work from February through November with Curator Jack Sustic and other Museum staff, studying and learning all the aspects of running the Museum. This is a wonderful opportunity for an aspiring bonsai artist to work with highly skilled professionals in the best museum of its kind in the world.

If you would like to provide financial support to train a bonsai master of the future, please indicate on your check (see separate box) that your contribution is for the “National Bonsai & Penjing Museum Internship Fund.” We will let subscribers know in the next NBF Bulletin how much money has been raised for the funding of this program.

GIMPO HISTORY

(Continued from page 1)

focus on the refinement of the branches. For about twenty years, this Blue Atlas cedar moved between the ground and a container. Eventually, when John was satisfied with its size, the tree found a permanent home in a pot.

John loved the silvery-blue foliage of the cedar. And he thought the powerful branches gave the impression of the fabulous wings of a super bird. Therefore, Gimpo—Japanese for “Silver Phoenix”—seemed the perfect name for such a majestic tree. A bonsai master from Japan complimented the tree, stating that he had never seen such a clear, nice five-needle pine in his life. When informed that this was a cedar and not a pine, the bonsai master offered that in every category the Blue Atlas cedar was superior to the five-needle pine.

The tree had two potential fronts, but on one side there was a big scar where a large branch had been removed. For many years, the front of the tree was chosen to hide the scar in the back. But eventually John decided that the back must become the front. His reasoning: “a scar will heal, but a bad front will never heal.”
A Word from the Curator

By Jack Sustic

We all tend to get busy with our lives, our minds filled with thoughts of e-mails, meetings, deadlines and the like. There are occasions when I walk into one of the pavilions of the Museum with so much on my mind that I fail to take the time to appreciate the trees.

The other day, however, I was walking through the Japanese Pavilion and out of the corner of my eye a bonsai grabbed my attention. It was stunning! So much so that I pulled a bench over and sat down across from it. I’m not quite sure how long I was there, maybe 10 minutes, 15 minutes, maybe more…. I was captivated and taken to a place like nowhere else in this world. From around the corner a little voice said, “Mama, mama come look at this tree,” and I was suddenly back in the world. Nevertheless, I continued sitting there, reflecting on this beautiful tree, thankful for this opportunity to realize once again how powerful the spirit of bonsai can be.

I encourage you to come and spend time with the bonsai. Forget for awhile the last meeting or what’s next on your “to do” list and enjoy these masterpieces. Life is short and these trees are too precious not to enjoy them more. They deserve it and so do you!

The tree that so captivated me, Acer palmatum (Japanese maple) was donated by the late Japanese Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi. Received in 1999, it remained in quarantine for two years prior to arriving at its new home here at the Museum.

As if being an amazing bonsai 365 days a year isn’t enough, its brilliant red fall coloring is something you will never forget. I’m looking forward to featuring this tree during the Fall Foliage Exhibit (Saturday, November 2 through Sunday, November 10, 2002).
SCHOLARLY SYMPOSIUM
(Continued from page 1)

a foundation for further study by both scholars and practitioners.

The event began on Friday afternoon in the Arboretum auditorium which, for this special occasion, was decorated with four lovely original watercolors of plants from the Museum’s collections, by international artist Bonnie Robert Harrison. The program began with a demonstration by NBF board member and bonsai author, Jer-ald Stowell, who recreated a pre-bonsai tray landscape “Kasuga Gongen Kenkie” from 1309 A.D. in the Kamakura Period. A late afternoon ceremony and reception honored the Saburo Kato family with the dedication of the Kato Stroll Garden at the Museum. (See separate story.)

On Saturday, the talks focused on the historical development of bonsai in Japan and the west with its antecedent relationship to Chinese penjing. Hideo Marushima, a Japanese authority on the connections between penjing and bonsai and the author of numerous studies on this subject, gave an overview of the background and meaning of bonsai in Japan. This talk set the stage for that of Arboretum Director, Dr. Thomas S. Elias, who traced how bonsai was introduced into western culture. He was followed by Dr. Peter Del Tredici, of the Arnold Arboretum, who described the 1913 origins of one of the first American collections of bonsai which is still extant, that of diplomat, Larz Anderson.

In the afternoon, international bonsai artist and teacher, William Valavanis, also an NBF board member, discussed the historical development of tray landscapes. The day’s sessions closed with the creation of a forest planting—a modern tray landscape, by Warren Hill, former Curator of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

A reception and banquet dinner, followed by a lively auction (see separate story), brought the day to a festive conclusion. During the banquet, the honored guests from Japan and Italy were recognized and the bonds of international friendship celebrated. Awards of appreciation were presented to Symposium speakers and a special plaque was given to Hiromi Nakaooji, wife of Director Elias, for her outstanding volunteer work during the Symposium in translating for the Japanese speakers and guests. Plaques of gratitude were also bestowed on the recent donors to the Museum of viewing stones, Kenichi Aguchi, David Garvin and Luciana Quierolo Garbini. The final award of the evening went to Ron Lang, winner of the first prize in the non-traditional category, who was present as the Second North American Bonsai Pot Competition winners were announced.

The Sunday sessions were dedicated to an exploration of viewing stones—the complementary art form to bonsai. Once again Hideo Marushima provided the participants with a historical overview of the topic. He was followed by Robert Mowry, Curator of the Asian Arts Department at the John G. Fogg Art Museum at Harvard University, who lectured on the origins and history of scholar’s rocks, the Chinese precedent for viewing stones. Larry Ragle, also an NBF board member and a leading suiseki authority, brought the focus into an American context by depicting how viewing stone appreciation has developed in California. This day ended with a two-part presentation by Arishige Matsuura, Chairperson of the Nippon Suiseki Association, who first gave a lecture and demonstration on Japanese suiseki and then followed this with a critique of specially selected North American stones.

The publication of a Proceedings of the 2002 International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones is underway. Information on how to obtain a copy will be printed in a future NBF Bulletin and on the NBF website.

Courtyard Construction Update

Work continues to move forward on the renovation of the Maria Vanzant Upper Courtyard of the Museum and the addition of a new Grow-Out Area adjacent to it. However, the construction has moved at a much slower pace than had been forecast originally.

The date now set to have the Upper Courtyard open and accessible to all visitors to the Museum will be mid-September of this year. As construction continues, the Japanese and North American Pavilions will remain open, while the Chinese and International Pavilions, which are part of the construction zone, will be closed.

Despite this delay in reopening, we think you will be very pleased with how the Courtyard will look and feel. Besides being fully accessible, it will have more places for sitting and enjoying the space and a new fountain with plinths for the display of bonsai. In addition, the interior of the International Pavilion is being changed so that it is more welcoming to both first time visitors and to the many who return again and again.

Once the Upper Courtyard is complete, attention will turn to the Lower Courtyard. Work on this area may begin late this year.
Fifth World Bonsai Convention 2005
By Glenn Reusch

The 5th World Bonsai Convention will be held May 28–31, 2005 in Washington D.C. at the Washington Hilton Hotel. The host for this undertaking is the North American Bonsai Federation (NABF). The NABF is one of the nine regional groups which comprise the World Bonsai Friendship Federation (WBFF) whose main objective is promoting world peace, friendship and goodwill through bonsai. WBFF was originally founded in 1989 by Saburo Kato, with help from John Naka and many others. Previous World Bonsai Conventions were held in Tokyo (1989), Orlando (1993), Seoul (1997) and Munich (2001.) The National Bonsai Foundation, along with the Potomac Bonsai Association and the U.S. National Arboretum, are the three major convention sponsors. Several other organizations are also supporting this world event in significant ways.

Chris Yeapanis and I have been selected Co-chairs and we have nearly completed the selection of the committee chairs. This is an exciting opportunity to draw on the bonsai talents of the local community and their organizational ability to stage an event of this magnitude. Efforts are also being made to select bonsai masters from each of the nine WBFF regions of the world to demonstrate their skills and to teach workshops. It is our hope that this meeting will draw bonsai enthusiasts from all over the globe to celebrate peace through bonsai.

We are especially excited with the choice of the Washington Hilton. This hotel was designed specifically for conventions, and we think that the layout of the space will work splendidly for the 5th WBC. A very large banquet and demonstration hall, flanked by expansive exhibit halls, with large workshop rooms and a huge vendor area, are all conveniently located in adjacent areas on the same floor. This will be a conventioneer’s dream!

Bonsai today is much more than just a mere hobby. We believe that this event, with the work of all the involved organizations, will clearly show that the bonsai community worldwide is committed to peace through the art of bonsai. We look forward to keeping you posted on a regular basis as the planning progresses for this unique convention.

Jackson Tanner Appointed Curator of Art and Book Collections

The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum is pleased to introduce G. Jackson Tanner as the newest member of the Museum’s permanent staff. Jackson is the first ever Curator of the Museum’s Art and Book Collections.

Jackson hails from Beaufort, South Carolina, where he participated in that state’s Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities program. He went on to study Fine Arts at the Art Institute of Chicago before transferring to the University of Illinois at Chicago where he finished his BFA. More recently he studied object conservation at The George Washington University.

After graduation, Jackson worked as a free-lance artist in Chicago for about three years before moving to the Washington D.C. area. Before joining the Museum’s staff, Jackson was a Supervisory Museum Specialist with the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History.

He says that the Arboretum was one of the many stops he made to local attractions during his first year in the area. “I remember standing in front of the forest planting of Bald Cypress in the Museum’s Courtyard and saying to myself: ‘It would be really nice to work here’ and now I do!”

One of the great things that Jackson enjoys about being on staff is that it allows him to do so many different things in the daily operation of the Museum. “Everything I can think of related to the operation of a world-class institution is part of my responsibilities at the Museum. This is such a wonderful opportunity for someone in the museum world.”

Jackson looks forward to the expansion of the Museum’s facilities to accommodate its growing art and book collections. He hopes to help define where we are going and what we dream of becoming. Some of his immediate goals are establishing clear and concise Museum policies for collections management as well as installing new collections management database software. He would also like to gain eventual accreditation for the Museum through the American Association of Museums.

Jackson’s wife, Laura, is on the staff of the Environmental Protection Agency and is currently working on homeland security policies. They have two children Nicholas, 12 and Kira, 10, who joined the family from Kazakhstan in April 2000. We are delighted to have Jackson with us. Welcome!
Annual Dues will be Required in 2003

From its inception in 1982, the National Bonsai Foundation has relied on the generosity of its benefactors to support the expansion and programs of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. During this period, NBF reached out and included in its community of friends each and every person interested in the Museum, whether or not he or she contributed annual financial support to NBF. The NBF Board of Directors believed that, as the Museum was establishing itself as an international center of bonsai and related art forms, it was more important for information concerning the Museum’s activities to be disseminated broadly than for annual dues to be required from all recipients of that information.

Today NBF’s mailing list has grown to over 4,000 people whom we consider Museum supporters. While many supporters generously respond to NBF’s annual fundraising drives, others continue to receive the NBF Bulletin and other mailings without providing any financial support to NBF. At the same time, the costs of publishing and mailing the NBF Bulletin have risen substantially over the years, and NBF can no longer sustain a mailing list of this magnitude without some annual financial support from every NBF member.

Therefore, at the NBF Annual Board meeting in May, the Board of Director’s voted unanimously to require a minimum level of annual dues in order to be an NBF member. Having annual dues will enable NBF to better support the Museum and it will also defray the rising costs of the NBF Bulletin. As a result, both the Museum and NBF’s members will be better served.

Annual dues, at a minimum level per person, will become a requirement for membership in NBF in 2003. As we move in that direction, we ask your help in assessing how we can better involve you in making the Museum the best museum of its kind in the world. We also wish to know what your expectations will be as a dues-paying member of the National Bonsai Foundation. To that end, we ask you to complete the enclosed post card survey and return it to us with your comments.

In the Winter Bulletin, we will set forth the various categories and benefits of membership. We thank everyone who has contributed to our efforts on behalf of the Museum over the last 20 years and we welcome your continued support in the future for the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

Thank you!

Pot Competition Winners

The final judging of the Second North American Bonsai Pot Competition took place on Wednesday, May 15, 2002. The judges were Warren Hill, former Curator of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum; Janet Lanman, pot connoisseur and NBF board member; and Kenneth Trapp, Curator of the Renwick Gallery of Art. They readily acknowledged their difficulty selecting the winners.

The prizes were announced at the banquet on Sunday, May 18, 2002, during the International Scholarly Symposium on Bonsai and Viewing Stones. Photos of the winning and finalist pots are posted on the NBF website: www.bonsai-nbf.org

Traditional Category
First Prize—$1,000
Bob Galick
Girard, Ohio

Second Prize—$500
April Grigsby
Delray Beach, Florida

Third Prize—$250
Michael Hagedorn
Oracle, Arizona

Non-Traditional Category
First Prize—$1,000
Ron Lang
Baltimore, Maryland

Second Prize—$500
Michael Hagedorn
Oracle, Arizona

Third Prize—$250
Joseph Price
St. Louis, Missouri

First Place, Traditional

First Place, Non-Traditional
John Naka Holiday Card

An original watercolor and haiku by bonsai master, John Naka, rendered as a holiday card, is now available to NBF supporters. The cards are available either with a holiday greeting, “Peace and Goodwill to All,” or without a message. The back inscription reads: “John Y. Naka, the beloved and revered Japanese-American bonsai master, painted this watercolor entitled ‘Peaceful Dreams’ and composed the accompanying haiku in 2001. The painting is John’s tribute to the ‘great silent teachers’—the ancient trees of the North American mountains—which inspire his bonsai artistry.”

The cards will be available in September or October, but please order early as supplies are limited. Ten cards with envelopes are $12.50. Please see sales order form insert.

Visit NBF’s Website:
www.bonsai-nbf.org

To support NBF, please mail your contribution with your name and address to:

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Under the snow blanket
Peaceful dreams and quiet worlds
Spring is tomorrow

card design by Lia Marta