A Great Collection Just Got Better!
by Dr. Thomas S. Elias

The outstanding Japanese Collection of bonsai in the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum at the U.S. National Arboretum contains the finest display of Japanese style bonsai in any Western country. However, within a two-week period in late winter, two separate shipments of new bonsai specimens arrived in Washington, D.C. These latest gifts add further depth and diversity to the Japanese collection.

In late March 2000, the collection was enhanced with the arrival of seven large satsuki azaleas. They were a gift from the Japan Satsuki Association to the Arboretum. Discussions about a possible gift began two years ago when I met with Mr. Hirosumi Ichihara, Chairman of the Association, who was visiting the Museum. While it was agreed upon, the plants could not be received until needed renovations to the Japanese Pavilion were completed. The renovation was completed last year and plans were made for shipping the plants to Washington, D.C., on a direct flight from Tokyo to Dulles International Airport. The seven bonsai arrived bare rooted and were taken to an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Facility in Beltsville, Maryland. Following a detailed inspection, the plants were released to the Arboretum. They were immediately placed into pots that had been shipped with the plants. Each of the plants has produced new leaves and appears to have survived the shipping process.

Six of the plants are finished bonsai while one of them is an unfinished azalea with a beautiful broad tapering trunk. This bonsai will be kept in an unfinished state until next spring when members of the Japan Satsuki Association come to Washington, D.C., to present a lecture and demonstration on the styling of Satsuki azalea bonsai. Watch for a later announcement concerning the precise time and date for this event. This indeed will be a rare opportunity to see and interact with the leaders of the Japan Satsuki Association. In addition to the demonstration, a special ceremony will take place to acknowledge each of the seven donors.

The seven plants are on temporary exhibit, except for the unfinished plant, in a protected and shaded area of the Chinese Pavilion in order to help them become established in their new environment.

(Continued on page 4)

Gifts of Chinese Scholar’s Rocks
By Chris Cochrane

Rarely does the Museum receive items that establish a new category for the Museum Collections. Rarer still are stones of such exceptional merit that every viewing stone enthusiast who visits the Museum has been awed by their quality. Such are the three stones recently donated by Ms. Kemin Hu of Newton, Massachusetts. They are the Museum’s first Chinese scholar’s rocks.

The three Chinese scholar’s rocks chosen for the Museum are extraordinarily fine representations of their aesthetic. Two are classic in form; the third is a very rare evocative form.

Taihu Stone

Kemin’s father was a noted scholar, penjing artist and gongshi (“respect” + “stone”) collector in China. Kemin carries on her father’s tradition of gongshi by purchasing rare stones in China for resale to Western collectors.

The three Chinese scholar’s rocks chosen for the Museum are extraordinarily fine representations of their aesthetic. Two are classic in form; the third is a very rare evocative form.
Those of us involved with the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum were greatly saddened by former Prime Minister Obuchi’s sudden illness earlier this spring, and by his death on Saturday, May 14. Through his personal interest and diplomatic gifts, he brought the arts of bonsai and viewing stones to the attention of millions of people around the world, as reported in the Winter 1998 and Fall 1999 issues of the NBF Bulletin.

During the last few months, your Museum has obtained important new acquisitions, as reported in several articles in this issue. With its collections constantly improving, the Museum’s reputation and popularity are also steadily growing. The Museum is blessed with old friends and new friends. Among our oldest friends are Mr. Saburo Kato and the other directors of the Nippon Bonsai Association. They planted the seed for the Museum with their 1976 Bicentennial Gift and, with unequalled steadfastness, have nurtured the Museum along ever since.

Among our new friends is Ms. Kemin Hu, an expert on Chinese scholar’s rocks whose gifts to the Museum fill a gap in its National Viewing Stone Collection. We look forward to greeting Ms. Hu at a special reception at the Museum planned for August 11, 2000, which will highlight the rare beauty of scholar’s stones. See “Gifts of Chinese Scholar’s Rocks” on p.1 of this issue.

On behalf of the Foundation, I would like to welcome to the board our newest directors elected at the annual meeting in April: Dr. Roger Case (NM), Dr. Greg Cloyd (OH), Dr. Allan Hills (CO), Ms. Cheryl Manning (CA) and Mr. Rob Moak (AL). I would also like to thank the following former directors for their outstanding service on the NBF board: Mr. Bruce Baker (MI) and Mrs. Bonny Martin (TN).

Visitor Comments

Ben Mackey of Alexandria writes:

“The Bonsai Museum is incredible!! We live in the Washington, D.C., area and have been to many of the “National” exhibits and museums. This ranks as among the best if not the best. From the moment you walk in to the last exhibit, this Museum is extremely well done and public friendly. Hats off to whomever is in charge. Keep it up!!”

Thank you, Mr. Mackey, for making everyone feel so good.

Please come again soon.

Correction to the Bulletin

In thanking the Museum’s volunteers in the last issue of the Bulletin, we inadvertently omitted Cesar Portocarrero. The Foundation is deeply grateful for the dedicated efforts of Cesar and the other volunteers who help to make the Museum a world-class bonsai center.
NBF Gifts of Appreciation to Japanese Leaders

In February of this year, a number of the Foundation’s directors traveled at their own expense to Japan, accompanied by Dr. Tom Elias, to meet with Saburo Kato and the directors of the Nippon Bonsai Association and to attend the 74th Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition in Tokyo. As a momento of the Foundation’s appreciation for the Nippon Bonsai Association’s extraordinary support of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum, the Foundation presented each NBA official with a crystal vase etched with the Museum’s logo.

In addition, American viewing stones were presented to Prime Minister Obuchi, Mr. Kato and Arishige Matsuura. The stone presented to Mr. Obuchi had been collected by Larry Ragle in the Stil laguamish River in Washington State; the stone given to Mr. Kato had been collected by Marybel Balendonck in the Eel River in California; and the stone given to Mr. Matsuura had been collected by Jim Hayes, also in the Eel River. Mr. Matsuura’s stone was presented with a suiban made by American potter Sara Rayner, which was donated by Larry Ragle.

Tom Elias, who made the presentation to Mr. Obuchi, said that the Prime Minister seemed very pleased to receive another American stone. As reported in the Summer 1999 issue of the NBF Bulletin, last year President Clinton had given Prime Minister Obuchi an Eel River stone collected and donated by Jim Hayes.

The stones for Messrs. Kato and Matsuura were presented to them at a dinner hosted by the Nippon Bonsai Association. Mr. Kato, who as NBA Chairman has been a fervent supporter of the Museum, smiled broadly as he received his viewing stone and thanked Marybel Balendonck for giving it to him. Mr. Matsuura, Chairman of the Nippon Suiseki Association, admired his new stone by carefully placing it on a bed of sand in his new suiban.

Vaughn Banting Gift of Bald Cypress

by Marybel Balendonck

There will be a wonderful new addition to the North American Collection of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum! It is a bald cypress styled by Vaughn Banting to reflect the flat-top growth pattern of the mature bald cypress as seen in nature. This pattern represents a true American bunjin style, whereas many of the bunjin styles we are familiar with are reminiscent of natural growth patterns of conifers seen in China and Japan.

As Vaughn has pointed out in several interesting articles in various bonsai publications, the bald cypress in its immature phase has the appearance of a typical formal upright tree. However, as the tree matures, it assumes a distinct, tall flat-top appearance.

Now our North American Collection will have examples of both styles: the formal upright bald cypress donated by Guy Guidry in 1990; and Vaughn’s bunjin, which incidentally will be the only bunjin-style bonsai in the North American Collection at this time.

Thank you, thank you, Vaughn, for this most handsome addition to our Collection.
Collecting Naka Drawings
by Chris Cochrane

At this year’s annual NBF board meeting, the board approved a suggestion to have copies of John Naka’s drawings collected for the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. Over the years, John has drawn hundreds of these “future images” of bonsai in training, and many of his students have kept them as prized possessions.

By assembling these drawings in one place, any number of options present themselves including possible publication of material that would be a rich resource for bonsai design. At the very least, having the drawings at the Museum would establish a great collection for researchers.

To accomplish the task, board director Jack Billet has volunteered to collect data by mail. Jack has asked for contributors to make photocopies of their original drawings sized to fit on a standard size sheet of typing paper (8½” x 11’’), so that the drawings can be maintained in a relatively generous size but not so large as to be unwieldy.

For reference purposes, Jack proposes that the original owner of the drawing, and when and where drawn, be identified. Identifying the bonsai material by genus, species, and cultivar would also help categorize the drawings. For “place,” please note both the bonsai event and the city. Add a note that either confirms or denies permission for the Museum to publish (either in print or in Internet form) a copy of the drawing that you provide.

Thus, an accompanying data sheet might read:

| ORIGINAL OWNER: | John Doe |
| DATE DRAWN: | 5/1/1984 |
| PLACE: | Golden State Convention workshop; Fresno, California, USA |
| SPECIES, et al.: | Dwarf Black Spruce—picea abies ‘Pumila Nigra’ |
| PERMISSION TO PUBLISH in print or internet format: | Yes |
| OWNER’S PERMISSION & DATE: | Mr. Jack Billet, Director, Japan Satsuki Association, 505 DuPont Road, Wilmington, DE 19807 |

A mailed photocopy is the preferred format for collecting the drawings. As an alternative to photocopying, a drawing may be scanned in GRAYSCALE and .JPG and forwarded to Chris Cochrane at the e-mail address sashai@erols.com. Thank you for your contributions to this effort.

A GREAT COLLECTION JUST GOT BETTER

The seven satsuki bonsai received are:

1. Korin (65 cm high, 32 cm around)
   - Donor: Mr. Hirosumi Ichihara
   - Chairman, Japan Satsuki Association

2. Gyoten (58 cm high, 26 cm around)
   - Donor: Mr. Shogo Watanabe
   - Deputy Chairman, Japan Satsuki Association

3. Kozan (57 cm high, 35 cm around)
   - Donor: Mr. Masao Inoue
   - Deputy Chairman, Japan Satsuki Association

4. Kaho (57 cm high, 38 cm around)
   - Donor: Mr. Takeo Toyota
   - Executive Director, Japan Satsuki Association

5. Nikko (51 cm high, 42 cm around) unfinished
   - Donor: Mr. Kenji Shibuya
   - Managing Director, Japan Satsuki Association

6. Nikko (51 cm high, 42 cm across)
   - Donor: Mr. Masayuki Nakamura
   - Managing Director, Japan Satsuki Association

7. Kunpu (94 cm high, 30 cm around)
   - Donor: Mr. Toshikane Kondo
   - Director, Japan Satsuki Association

We are indeed grateful to the Japan Satsuki Association and to the seven officers of this organization for their generous gift of the seven large azaleas. These plants will become the showcase specimens in our annual spring bonsai exhibition of flowering azaleas.

The second wonderful gift of three bonsai came from Mr. Susumu Nakamura of Yokahama, Japan. Mr. Nakamura is known for making bonsai from new and seldom used species of trees and shrubs. He has donated a 70-year-old, informal upright specimen of Camellia harianna (Kantsubaki); a beautiful 80-year-old Eurya emarginata (Hamahisakake), a species seldom seen as a bonsai; and a smaller 27-year-old Jasminum odoratissimum (Kisokei). These are species of bonsai not previously represented in the Japanese Collection at the Museum.

Mr. Nakamura, a Director of the Nippon Bonsai Association, has been lecturing and demonstrating bonsai techniques in the United States and other countries for over 20 years. He has the distinction of having taught in the Chicago area almost yearly for nearly 20 years; and has worked closely with the Midwest Bonsai Society to establish a collection at the Chicago Botanical Garden.

Mrs. Elizabeth Ley, head of the Arboretum’s Garden Unit, and I have worked with Mr. Nakamura and the Chicago Botanical Garden to arrange for the importation of 23 trees—20 for Chicago and three for the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.

Plan to come and see these new additions to the Japanese Collection and, above all, to attend the ceremony, lecture and demonstration in Spring 2001. This will be the first in a series of major events to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum.
**NBF Website Update**

by Chris Cochrane

On April 28, 1999, NBF launched its website. As promised, the site was easy to browse with quick linkages. It has provided browsers an opportunity to learn about developments at the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum and keeps browsers informed about Museum programs and challenges.

In the past year, the site has also efficiently distributed information on news events of special interest to the bonsai and viewing stone community. Timely news has included pictures and commentary on President and Mrs. Clinton’s gifts of bonsai and suiseki to Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi. The site has uploaded copies of NBF Bulletins for web browsers to read and review. Notices of funding support for the Museum—including details regarding the Melba Tucker bonsai auction and Museum memorial funds honoring H. William Merritt and Melba Tucker—have been posted.

The NBF website now hosts the Internet’s viewing stone mail list—a relatively small yet increasingly informed group of avid enthusiasts. The site hosts continually updated hotlink lists to numerous bonsai-related sites on the web. This link <http://www.bonsai-nbf.org/links/index.htm> is for many bonsai enthusiasts a one-stop shop for browsing all areas of bonsai interest throughout the English-speaking Internet world. These referenced sites are categorized to include: clubs and club directories, organizations and events, public collections, nurseries and suppliers, stolen bonsai, enthusiasts’ home pages, information on bonsai, magazines/books/software, Asian gardens, information on trees/bamboo, and viewing stones/suiseki/Chinese scholar’s rocks.

In the coming year, the site will be enhanced as new photos of collection items are produced and released for uploading on the site. Additionally, NBF has committed to creating the North American portion of the World Bonsai Guide. This will allow browsers to choose a region of interest within North America and find every bonsai-related site available for browsing in that geographical area. It will be an especially important site to prepare bonsai enthusiasts for traveling to new areas. Australia, Asia and Europe already have versions of the World Bonsai Guide available, and NBF’s site will coordinate and host this for the far larger Internet community in North America.

As the NBF site has rolled out, visitor hits to the site have increased dramatically. Those hits almost doubled shortly after the webmaster loaded his first Uniform Resource Locator list (the hotlink to other sites) on the NBF website in November 1999. Additional hotlink lists were added in January 2000, the number of hits doubled again and is approaching a third doubling. This growth in website traffic is phenomenal.

The Foundation is gratified by feedback from visitors to the Museum. Many now report that they have been encouraged to visit the Museum by first seeing the NBF website. The best is yet to come! As the Museum releases new photos, we will be able to take virtual tours of the Museum’s collections. And, there will be the added benefit of amassed data on individual bonsai and viewing stones to enhance our understanding and appreciation of the collections.

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**John’s Been Bronzed**

by Cheryl Manning

Each spring, John Naka looks forward to spending a few days with his friends (people and bonsai) at the National Arboretum. This year, the weather gods were smiling down on him as the temperature climbed to the unseasonably mild 70s. So, wearing short sleeves and a smile, John began his visit in the usual fashion: taking a guided tour of the Museum with Warren Hill. Clearly pleased with how well all the trees looked, John had little more to say to Warren than “great job!”

John not only checked on the trees he worked on last year, but looked for a couple of good candidates for the Naka touch this visit. One of his choices, Goshin, was a repeat performer, having spent time in the workshop last year and picked once again for more tweaking this year. Another Naka tree caught John’s attention, but not in a “hi, I’m glad to see you” kind of way. John was alarmed when he spotted his cascading live oak missing most of its leaves. But upon closer inspection, he saw that it was healthy and budding out all over. John was relieved to see that the tree was fine—and amused to see an evergreen oak (at least in Los Angeles) change its tune to become deciduous.

Before heading into the workshop to get a little dirt beneath his fingernails, John spent a few moments enjoying the formal display of bonsai and suiseki on exhibit in the Mary M rose Pavilion. He commented that the quality of the Museum’s trees and their display rival much of what he’s seen in Japan. Posing next to his huge blue atlas cedar on display, John recalled that this tree began its life with him as a one-gallon,

(Continued on page 6)
A classically-contoured, vertical, black Lingbi stone suggests overhanging cliff faces on a soaring top-heavy peak. It could be interpreted to represent the humanly unattainable mountain realm where the Immortals of Chinese mythology reside. The Immortals can only reach these heights by riding on the backs of cranes.

The large vertical Taihu (from “Lake Tai”) Chinese scholar rock is the classic vertical “fabulous rock” form which is abstract in design and intentionally heavy at its top to suggest precipitous balance. As with most valued Taihu stones, this one is substantially perforated with sizable channels running along its surface and holes running entirely through it. Kemin chose this particular stone because it has primarily naturally weathered holes rather than having been carved by man—a form favored by Chinese collectors.

Kemin’s third gift is a landscape-style Chinese scholar’s rock that is more horizontal than vertical in orientation. This stone depicts a large depression to accommodate a lake found at the foot of a precipice. It is exceptional in that the depression is naturally formed, not carved, from the stone.

The horizontal orientation also represents a format for displaying Chinese stones that became popular in the 18th century.

The stands accompanying these Chinese scholar’s rocks are works of art themselves. Though modern, the stands for the first two stones follow the style of the classical stands of Northern China. The stand for the third stone best displays its horizontal orientation. All are produced from a fine, cabinet-grade hardwood and are naturally finished.

A reception to honor Kemin and welcome her to the Museum’s community is tentatively scheduled for 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. on Friday, August 11. Her reception will coincide with the August opening of the Museum’s viewing stone exhibit in the Special Exhibits’ Wing. Kemin has offered to greet visitors to the new exhibit on Saturday, August 12. Her expertise, as well as her ease in introducing stones to new enthusiasts, assures that this will be a productive day at the Museum.

JOHN’S BEEN BRONZED
(Continued from page 5)

$2.95 purchase. Look what a little money, a few years, and a lot of love and attention can do!

At this year’s annual board meeting, a highlight of the day was the unveiling of the completed bronze bust of John Naka that will eventually greet visitors at the entrance of the North American Pavilion. Bonnie Kobert flew in from Brazil to present her creation to John and the other board members. Last year, she made the same trip, but with the wet clay model she’d created from pictures. After seeing John in the flesh, she played with the clay and made some fine adjustments to make the copy look even more like the real thing. Her hard work paid off because the resemblance is uncanny. The National Bonsai Foundation funded the casting of the bust in bronze.

Fortunately, John is more animated and funnier than his bust. He loaned his glasses to the bust and was amazed to see that they fit. Posing next to his likeness, John remarked that the bust now needed a buzzcut to match his new hairstyle. Through all the humor, it was clear how touched and honored John was at this loving and generous gesture by Bonnie and the Foundation.

On the final afternoon of John’s trip, a storm approached. The temperature dropped more than 20 degrees in one hour, the winds picked up, and it began to rain. So it was time to pack up for an early morning flight. John was unprepared for the winter wonderland of white that greeted him as he exited the hotel. He was dressed for Southern California and felt the chill as the weather gods bid him farewell. But even the poor weather conditions couldn’t dampen his spirits. As he sat on the plane waiting for the wings to be de-iced, John was making plans for his next visit.
A museum is more than just a collection of objects on display. It must also serve as a center for information, research, and instruction. The National Bonsai & Penjing Museum certainly has quality specimens on display, conducts classes and demonstrations, and has a growing library. This past winter has been a banner period for the library. Ann McIntire, Librarian Technician at the Arboretum, has been working to catalog a backlog of new additions. Thus far, she has cataloged and processed 22 new bonsai books, and is in the process of completing work on 46 new ikebana books donated by Museum volunteer William Stufflebeam. She also inventoried eight boxes of donated books and journals.

While it is important to have the current books and journals published on the subject of bonsai and related art forms, it is equally important for the Museum’s library to acquire as complete a collection of the early literature in Japanese and Chinese relating to bonsai and penjing as is possible. While this will not be an easy task, a major step was taken this winter toward achieving this goal. During a visit to Japan in February, I began acquiring many important publications for the library.

Included in the acquisitions were three All Japan Bonsaikai Photobooks of bonsai exhibitions held in 1929, 1930, and 1931. These photobooks—published by Norio Kobayashi—documented the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th exhibitions staged by the Tokyo Bonsai Club. These exhibits preceded the Kokufu Bonsai Exhibitions which did not start until 1934. These give an excellent indication of the styles, size, and species used in bonsai during this time period.

These were supplemented with the purchase of three early Kokufu Bonsai Exhibition books. These heavily illustrated works featuring black and white photographs of the bonsai displayed also included a description of the event in Japanese. The 5th, 13th and 22nd exhibition books—also published by Kobayashi—will be cataloged and added to the library’s collections. In addition, another important Kobayashi work was acquired. This was a two-volume set, Bonsai Masterpieces, published in 1938 and 1939. This work documents what was considered to be some of the finest bonsai in Japan at that time.

Kobayashi’s Bonsai Masterpieces

Norio Kobayashi was the writer, editor, and publisher of the important journal Bonsai Magazine, which he published from 1923 until 1967. This was likely the most important journal on bonsai in Japan during this time. Eighty-five issues of Bonsai Magazine were acquired for the library and, hopefully, additional issues will be obtained so that the Museum has a complete collection of these important works.

A collection of a dozen privately published auction catalogs was another of the acquisitions. They were published largely in the early and mid-1900’s and represented plants, pots, display tables, and sometimes even scrolls that private collectors were willing to offer for sale.

I was also able to obtain a copy of Saburo Kato’s book Ezo Spruce. Forest and Stone-Clasping Bonsai. Many bonsai specialists consider this rare little volume to be one of the most important works on tray landscapes ever published. (See the article on Mr. Kato’s book on p. 8 of this issue.)

These works greatly enhance the depth of published works in the Museum’s library. If you have issues of Bonsai Magazine or other early serial publications in Japanese or early books in Japanese or Chinese on bonsai and related art forms that you wish to donate to the Museum, please notify Warren Hill or me at the National Arboretum. You can play an important role in helping us build the finest collection of literature relating to bonsai in the Western world.

Plans for the Courtyard

Much progress is being made on the plans to complete the Courtyard of the National Bonsai & Penjing Museum. The architectural firm of Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia, which has been retained by the U.S. National Arboretum, is in the process of completing drawings for the various sections of the new Courtyard. These sections will then be completed in stages.

Construction of the first phase, which will include the Upper Courtyard to be named in memory of the late Maria Vanzant, could begin as early as this fall. Howard Vanzant has generously contributed funds for the Maria Vanzant Upper Courtyard. We also hope to include in the first phase the Grow-Out Area, which an anonymous donor has agreed to assist in funding. The Grow-Out Area is badly needed by the curators as a rotation area for the bonsai and penjing. If all goes well, the Maria Vanzant Upper Courtyard and the Grow-Out Area could be completed by next spring.

In the next stage, the plans call for the construction of the H. William Merritt Entrance to the Japanese Pavilion and the Melba Tucker Arbor-Demonstration Area. Through generous donations in memory of William Merritt and Melba Tucker, the Foundation has raised over $60,000 for both areas so far.
Republication of Saburo Kato’s Classic Book on Forest and Stone-Clasping Bonsai

Almost 40 years ago Saburo Kato authored the classic book entitled *Ezo Spruce, Forest and Stone-Clasping Bonsai*. The book’s many line drawings give the reader clear instructions, particularly of the various ways in which to place multiple trees in a group or forest setting. John Naka recently said that he gained enormous insights from Mr. Kato’s book. Mr. Kato is well-known around the world for his stunning forest plantings, but unfortunately his book is out of print and almost impossible to obtain.

The Foundation has obtained Mr. Kato’s permission to republish this important work in English. Mr. Kato has generously donated an autographed copy of the book to the Museum for its library, along with copies of his original line drawings. The Foundation is currently having the text translated into English and exploring various publication options.

Bonsai lovers around the world should be most pleased to have access to the wealth of information in Mr. Kato’s wonderful book.

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**Categories of Membership**

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