



明澄庵会

MYO CHO AN KAI NEWSLETTER

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MYO CHO AN GROUP ATTENDS SOTAN 350TH MEMORIAL CHAKAI IN KYOTO

(Editor's note: Special thanks to Hiroko Tsuda for her detailed journal of the trip, which was the basis for this article.)



Sensei Ward and Patrick Couch in Kyoto.

In November, Sensei Ward and several Myo Cho An members traveled to Kyoto, Japan to attend the 350th memorial service and commemorative tea gathering for Sen Sotan, held on November 19. Sen Sotan was the grandson of Rikyu, the first in the Sen family lineage of Chado. Patrick Couch, Patricia Payne, Shoko Takegoshi, and Hiroko Tsuda were the fortunate students who participated in the trip.

There were five venues for the tea gathering, each at a different temple within the Daitokuji grounds. About 50 guests attended each Chakai. Every temple garden was unique and exquisitely groomed for the occasion. Beautiful fall colors were reflected in the maple trees and other garden plantings.

As the wife of California Waki president Larry Payne, Patricia Payne represented the group at the memorial service at the Jukoin Temple. The others in the group attended the Robun-seki (koicha) at Hoshun'in Temple, and then proceeded to the Konnichan seki (koicha) at Soken'in. Later the entire group went to Jikimon-seki (usucha) at Koto'in.

Following lunch, the Myochoan group attended the Omatsu Museum-seki (usucha) at Sangen'in, and closed the day with the Gyotei-seki (usucha) at Obai'in. That evening, they participated in a welcome dinner for overseas guests hosted by Hounsai Daisosho at the Kyoto Brighton Hotel, where Daisosho gave a beautiful welcome speech and mingled with the guests.

Sensei Ward had also arranged for the group to visit Urasenke Headquarters on Wednesday, November 21st. Upon their arrival, tea was served. Afterwards, the group viewed the commemoration exhibit "Sotan." In the afternoon, Gretchen Mittwer, editor of *Chado Urasenke Quarterly*, met the group to take them on a tour of the Headquarters. She told many fascinating stories about the building and the gardens. There is a tsukubai in the inner garden made of stone given to Rikyu from Hideyoshi. It is said that Hideyoshi offered his sleeve, but Rikyu requested the stone in its place.

Each of the Urasenke rooms is unique and has a special purpose. In the Ume-no-I, or "Plum Well," the fresh water is prepared that is used for making tea in the Konnichian tea rooms. The Japanese Government has designated the Urasenke historical tearooms and garden an important cultural property.



Sensei Ward with (left to right) Hiroko Tsuda, Patricia Payne and Shoko Takegoshi in Kyoto.

MYO CHO AN GROUP ATTENDS SOTAN MEMORIAL CHAKAI (continued)

The spirit of the trip is best captured in the following memories, written by some of the participants:

"... A highlight of the trip was meeting Hounsai Daisosho. His warmth and caring is so evident in everything he does. While I was waiting for our group to arrive, Daisosho happened to be walking in my direction. He came over to ask how I was enjoying the events and to chat for a short time. I could see him reaching out to all those he passed.

We all had an opportunity to enjoy a delightful dinner with Daisosho in attendance. Once again he made himself very accessible to everyone. He showed us another talent when he stood in front of the entire group and sang. It is easy to see that with his wonderful spirit, he is spreading 'peace through a bowl of tea' around the world."

- Patricia Payne

"The water of Urasenke is still pure after thousands of years, still drawn from covered wells by hand. Collected fresh each morning, it is poured through simple metal filters and placed in heavy kettles nestled on charcoal fires to boil.

Let the day begin with a bowl of tea served by the master. His movements are comfortable and relaxed. Kind to the bone, he greets old friends and new as one.

Have a sweet, he says, have a bowl of tea. Sit with me a while ...

So completely embraced by the master's lifetime of tea, each guest feels wanted and cared for here. His compassion and concern is real and true for each.

I want to be like him some day, all outside myself and full of selfless service to others. Let me practice with the bowl and whisk and pure water. Perhaps one day I too, will offer peace in a bowl of tea."

- Patrick Couch

"... Being in Konnichian-seki at Soken'in was the finest moment. I was surprised and delighted to be sitting in the same tea room as Hounsai Daisosho and Zabolai Oiemoto. I couldn't believe my eyes ... Having preconceived ideas that everything would be austere in the tea gathering, I was amazed how Hounsai Daisosho made the guest feel so welcome with his friendly comments and gestures. He is definitely a cultural ambassador of good will, who sincerely advocates 'peacefulness through a bowl of tea' internationally. Zabolai Oiemoto was the hanto and explained the Ojiku and described the utensils that were used. What an honor it was to be an invited guest to this elegant setting and to be able to share the koicha with other guests ... This experience will be counted as the most memorable cultural experience that I have ever participated in."

- Hiroko Tsuda ■

2007 JOYAGAMA AT MYO CHO AN

On December 30, 2007, the members of Myochoan Kai and their families gathered to celebrate Joyagama, the last tea of the year and a time to enjoy memories of the year and bid it farewell. This Joyagama celebration was special because two longtime members of Myo Cho An returned for the festivities. Steve Vilter came from Alaska and Roger Rapp returned from Spain.

For the first temae, Hiroko Tsuda was teishu in Honseki, assisted by Kyoko Hata as hanto. Steve Vilter was the first guest. Hiroko's daughter and grandson were also guests. Emi Matsumoto, a friend of Noriko's from Los Angeles was second teishu. Emi's teacher in Los Angeles, Mrs. Crackson, is a longtime friend of Sensei Ward.



Sensei Ward and guests at Joyagama.

2007 JOYAGAMA (continued)

Patrick Couch, Kyoko Hata, Soshin (Katie) Nitta, Shoko Takegoshi and Sori (Noriko) Nagato also hosted tea for the occasion.

Following tea, the guests gathered at Sensei Ward's home for the traditional Joyagama meal, which includes toshikoshi soba, the long, thin buckwheat noodles that are said to bring longevity and good health and connect you from the past year to the new year. Everyone enjoyed the evening through their common bond in Chado, feeling grateful for the gifts of 2007 and looking forward to a joyful 2008. ■

NEW YEAR'S CHAKAI RINGS IN 2008

Patricia Payne prepares tea at Tatezome-No-Shiki

Sensei Ward and her students hosted about 20 guests for Tatezome-No-Shiki, the traditional New Year's Chakai, on January 27th.

The tokonoma in Honseki was set in the customary way for New Year's, with the traditional kagura suzu (stand with bells), musubi-yanagi (looped willow branches) and take-futaegiri (bamboo vase) with a camellia flower.

As is her custom, Sensei Ward prepared koicha for her students as a way of thanking them for their support over the past year. Soshin (Katie) Nitta served as hanto, and Sosei Ono was the first guest.

Guests then moved into the Daime-seki and the Ryurei-seki for usucha. Shoko Takegoshi was the teishu in the Ryurei, assisted by Patrick Couch as hanto. In the Daime-seki, Soshin (Katie) Nitta was the teishu and Yoskiko Johnson was hanto. In Honseki, Patricia Payne hosted tea, assisted by Soshin (Katie) Nitta.

Sensei Ward then hosted the guests in her home for a traditional new year's meal. As always, the event was a delightful way to begin the New Year. ■



Shoko Takegoshi hosts tea in Ryurei.

A HAPPY REUNION

During Sensei Ward's trip to Kyoto in November, she was pleased to have a happy reunion with several of her former students who have returned to Japan. Pictured in the front row, from left to right are: Naoko Yano, Sensei Ward, and Atsuko Yoshida. Hiroko Kudo and Miyoko Kishi are pictured in the back row. Yuko Suzuki, Takako Takagi, and Yumiko Sekine were unable to attend. When the group lived in California, their husbands were all employed by NEC, and they all studied tea with Sensei Ward. They call themselves a "branch group of Myochoan," and whenever Sensei Ward travels to Japan, she goes to Tokyo to visit with them. ■

RIKYU HONORED AT RIKYU-KI CHAKAI

The traditional tokonoma setting for Rikyu-ki

set that includes an incense burner, a vase, and a candle holder – completed the setting.

Patricia Payne was teishu in Honseki and prepared usucha, assisted by Shoko Takegoshi as hanto. Sensei Ward was the first guest. Sweets and thin tea were served to all guests.

Following tea, Sensei Ward and her students served a traditional light Japanese meal at Sensei Ward's home. The small size of the group was very conducive to a warm and friendly gathering, which was enjoyed by all. ■

*"To those who wait only for flowers,
Show them a sprig of new grass amid the snow,
In a mountain village."*

This quotation from Fujiwara no Ietaka on the invitation to Rikyu-ki chakai set the tone for the event, which was held on March 15, 2008 at Myochoan. This chakai honors Sen no Rikyu, the first Grand Master of the Urasenke, on the anniversary of his death.

The tokonoma in Honseki was set in the traditional way for Rikyu-ki. The hanging scroll, done by Koyasan Sanpoin Kusanagi Zenko Daisojo, showed the Japanese character for "flower." A statue of Rikyu and the sangusoku -- a three-piece



Guests enjoy Tenshin at Rikyu-ki Chakai.

WELCOME TO THE WORLD

There are two new additions to the "Myochoan family"! On December 28th, 2007, Nobuko Clark gave birth to a son, Brennan Sean Clark. Brennan weighed 6 pounds, 2 ounces and was 19 inches tall. Michiko Nakata had a daughter, Kanon Nakata, on March 3, 2008. Kanon weighed 5 pounds, 4 ounces and was 17 inches tall. It is said that babies light up the world with new possibilities, and these two certainly do! Our warmest congratulations and wishes for happiness to the Clark family and the Nakata family. ■

SHINKO USHIJIMA VISITS FROM THE NETHERLANDS

At the end of April, Mrs. Shinko Ushijima and her husband visited this area from their home in the Netherlands. When she lived nearby, Shinko studied tea with Sensei Ward, and while she was visiting, she took the opportunity to take some lessons at Myochoan from Sensei Ward and re-connect with several other students. Shinko is still a member of Myochoan, and if you would like to write to her, you can get her current address from Sensei Ward. Shinko would be delighted to hear from you! ■



**"Holding a bowl of tea whisked to a fine froth,
Such a simple thing, yet filled with a spirit
That reaches back more than a thousand years."**



UPCOMING EVENTS

July 19 – 20: Dr. Glenn Webb will give a Zen seminar at Mychoan. The subject of the seminar will be "Happiness is Putting Others First," an idea that is central to tea. The seminar is based on the Buddhist notion that we are on this earth for one reason, which is to overcome the barriers separating self and other. A detailed announcement will be sent out in June.

September 20: Youth Group tea and barbeque pot luck dinner for Myochoan members and their families.

Third Week in August: Sensei Ward will be in Washington D.C. with her husband for a Marine Corps Helicopter Combat Veterans Reunion. ■

BECOME A MEMBER OF MYO CHO AN KAI

Myo Cho An Kai is Sensei Ward's organization, dedicated to practicing and promoting awareness of Urasenke Chado. Members have the opportunity to take lessons in Chado from Sensei Ward and to participate in tea gatherings and other activities throughout the year. Members also receive the Myo Cho An Kai newsletter. To become a member, please contact Sensei Ward (916-663-3436). ■

A gentle reminder ... if you have not yet paid your dues of \$20 for 2008, please do so now.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

We welcome your contributions to the Myo Cho An Kai newsletter, edited by Elizabeth Parker. Please contact Sensei Ward if you would like to write an article for the newsletter or have other items of interest to our readers. ■

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