

The Buddhist Temple of Chicago

BULLETIN

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Volume 67 Number 8 **May 2011** (2555 B.E.)

Scheduled Events

(call 773-334-4661 or see www.budtempchi.org)

Dharma Sunday School - Sunday 11:AM - 12:00pm for May: 8th and 22nd

Religious Services

Sunday at 11:00AM - 12:00PM in English Sunday at 1:00PM - 2:00PM in Japanese (only on day of Monthly Memorial)

Monthly Memorial Service - Shotsuki Hoyo, 1st Sunday of each month, except where noted.

Buddhist Studies/Practices

Discussion Group - Open to All, Sangha Q & A, 2nd Sundays, 12:30PM - 2:00PM

Introduction to Buddhism - call temple to confirm dates and time

Meditation Sessions - Sundays 9:00AM - 10:15AM, (no Thursday evenings until late October) - use parking lot entrance.

Sutra Study Class - 3rd Sundays, Open to All, 12:30PM - 2:00PM

Weekly Study Class - Wednesdays, 7:00PM - 8:30PM

Special Observances/Events

Tanjo-e - Sunday the 22nd, celebration of Shinran Shonin's birthday

Activities

Asoka Society - 3rd Saturdays, 1:00PM

Calligraphy - Japanese brush writing class 1st & 3rd Tuesdays 7:00PM

Crafts Class - 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 10:00AM - 12:00PM, Open to All (call temple for confirmation)

Fencing - Introduction to Kendo, Dojo sessions, Tuesdays, 8:00PM - 10:00PM at Bethany United Church (Bob Kumaki, 847-853-1187)

Japanese Language Instruction - Saturdays, 10:00AM - 12:00PM, children and adult classes, call 773-334-4661 to register

Japanese Swordsmanship - Iaido, Mondays 7:00PM - 9:00PM

Taiko Drumming - BTC Kokyo Taiko Drum Troupe, Fridays, 7:00PM - 9:00PM

Taiko Drumming - Isshin Daiko Group, Saturdays 7:00PM - 9:00PM, call for appointment

There is a Way

By Rev. Yukei Ashikaga

At 2:46 pm, March 11, the giant earthquake occurred on the Pacific coast of northeastern Japan, and just after that, a tsunami attacked the same area. This earthquake registered magnitude 9.0 on the Richter scale, the largest one in Japan. Many structures were destroyed completely, including buildings, houses, factories and bridges. Then the tsunami followed, making it an unprecedented disaster. The wave measuring 45 feet in height swept away the coastal villages and flowed inland by several kilometers causing wide damage. The total number of dead and missing person is estimated at over 28,000 people and the actual number may be much higher.

In addition, the nuclear plants on the coast of Fukushima prefecture were severely affected by the earthquake and tsunami. The power plants' controls were breached and radioactivity began to leak to the outside. The Japanese government ordered people in the surrounding 60-mile radius to evacuate to shelters. More than 500,000 people had to move to refugee centers due to the earthquake, tsunami and radiation leak. Even now there are many places with power outages and neither water nor gasoline is readily available. Many people lost the peacefulness of their ordinary life in the blink of an eye. We here in the U.S. cannot imagine their tremendous suffering at this time.

When Japan lost the war in 1945, the soldiers and people who were working overseas in China, Korea and south Asian countries came home. However, there were not enough living quarters in the cities because of the destruction from air raids and particularly from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In an area roughly the size of California, Japan had a population about a third of America's. The government of Japan had no power to support the people, so each of us had to find a way to survive. Many became involved with the black market in order to obtain food for their families. Having no foresight into such a situation, we just tried to live day by day. However, we all humbly accepted this situation and never lost hope. Years later, Japan got through this post-war misery and revitalized to become a leading industrial nation.

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Our deepest sympathy to the family and friends
of:

Mr. Masao Nojiri

(Please see Temple News for details)

TEMPLE NEWS

March, 2010

03/05 The 49th Day Memorial Service of the Late Kinji Sugano was conducted at the Temple.

03/06 Shotsuki Hoyo (Monthly Memorial Service) was observed. Rev. Ashikaga delivered Dharma message both in the morning English Service and afternoon Japanese Service.

03/11 The First Year Memorial Service of the late Kenneth Shindo was conducted at the Temple.

03/12 The 7th year Memorial Service of the late Kaneyoshi Sugimura was conducted at the Temple.

03/13 Rev. Gyoko Saito's Memorial Service was observed. Rev. Ashikaga gave a talk to Dharma School children, and Rev. Patti Nakai gave Dharma talk to the general congregation.

03/16 Ms. Susan Tybon, the new Chief Executive Officer of JASC, paid her official visit to Rev. Ashikaga.

03/18 The April issue of the BTC Bulletin was mailed.

03/19 Japanese Language School had an Annual Speech Program, after which the students and their parents enjoyed the party of school year end. * * * Asoka Society met. * * * The Funeral/Memorial Service for Masao Nojiri was conducted. The Late Mr. Nojiri, 91, passed away on March 6, 2011. He is survived by sons Steve (Vickie) Nojiri and Gerald

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The Buddhist Temple of Chicago Bulletin

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1151 W. Leland Avenue

Chicago, IL 60640-5043

Phone: 773-334-4661, Fax: 773-334-4726

www.budtempchi.org

Rev. Yukei Ashikaga, Head Minister,

Rev. Patti Nakai, Associate Minister

Gary T. Nakai, President

Edited and produced by Gary T. Nakai, Rev. Patti Nakai, Ruby Tsuji

Contributors: Rev. Ashikaga, R. Adams, Dennis Chan, Louise Kasanuki, Dave Leshuk, Gary Nakai, Rev. Patti Nakai, Harky Tademoto

Editor's Note: Comments, corrections, questions,

suggestions are encouraged. Submitted material will be reviewed for suitability and availability of space.

Anonymous submissions will not be published, but authors names may be withheld from publication upon request.

Deadline: first Friday of the month.

btcbuledtr@hotmail.com

SAVE THE DATE – July 31, 2011

By Dennis Chan

All Temple members, their families and friends are invited to Temple on this Sunday. After our regular service, we will have our annual picnic. Temple will provide hot dogs, chips, watermelon and beverages. If you wish to contribute a dish, you are welcome to do so – Ruby Tsuji will supervise the kitchen and welcomes all that can help her. If you have any ideas or suggestions to contribute, you can drop a note to Dennis Chan in his mail slot (VP Temple Relations) or leave a message @ 773-465-6422. We look forward to seeing all of you for a wonderful lunch and having fun with our activities and prizes.

- "Way" from page 1 -

Now people in other countries are admiring and praising the Japanese for their resilient nature and do not doubt that Japan will get over this trial and revitalize. I have read the following comment recently published in a Japanese newspaper: An old man at a refugee shelter said with a sigh, "What will Japan do in the future?" Then a high school boy responded, "No problem. Japan will absolutely recover when we of the younger generation grow up."

This story reminds me of my own life after the war in 1948 when I started to work for the U.S. Military's occupation team in Kokura. However, after working for three months, I went to see the section manager by the name of Major Holloway and told him that I wanted to quit. He asked me why and I said, "I want to go to college." Striking the table with his right hand, the Major said, "Good! Your country lost the war but young people like you should rebuild the country. In order to rebuild the country, you should go to school and study hard. Where are you going to attend school?"

"I am going to Kyoto to study Buddhism," I replied. Then, he said, "I have a friend by the name of Major Harrison in Kyoto. If you want a part-time job, go to see him." So saying, he wrote a short note of recommendation and gave it to me. Because of this kind note of recommendation I was able to get a part-time job with the U.S. military occupation team in Kyoto while I studied at Otani University.

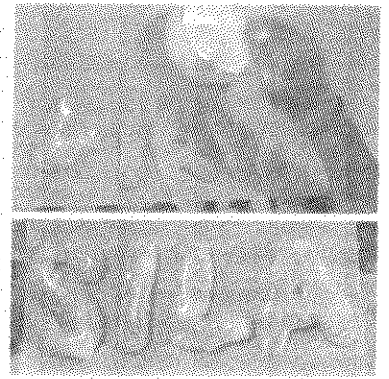
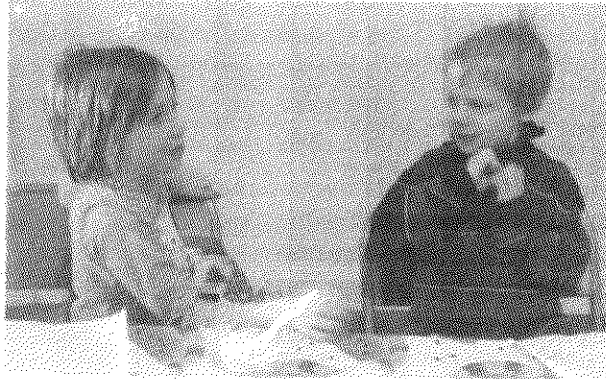
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Photos and coverage of
Hanamatsuri 2011
will be in the next month's bulletin

BTC Children's Dharma School News

By Dave Leshuk

As you know, we're spending all this year studying the six paramitas. At a recent class, parent Diana Schoendorff baked cookie letters and led the students in unscrambling them into each of the paramitas. Then the kids frosted the cookies and brought them over to the temple to share as refreshments.



On Sunday, March 27, the Dharma School went on a field trip to the annual Maple Syrup Festival at the North Park Village Nature Center. The children saw maple sap being collected and boiled down to make maple syrup. They also walked the trails and listened to a live bluegrass band. It was cold, but everyone had a good time.



Karma: My Bad, Not Theirs

by Rev. Patti Nakai

After every major disaster, there are people quoted in the media saying that the deaths and destruction were divine punishment for something that country did. In the wake of the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan, the remarks of the Tokyo prefecture governor, Shintaro Ishihara, saying that the disaster was “punishment from heaven for the greed of the Japanese” were widely publicized. But if the divine powers have any logic at all, why would they punish the farmers and fishermen of a rural area of Japan for the greedy decisions made by the politicians and corporate kings in Tokyo?

I remember hearing Rev. Gyomay Kubose refuting the belief in what Japanese people call *bachi* (divine punishment). *Bachi* is not so different from the popular Western interpretation of “karma” that you are rewarded for good deeds (e.g. tip jar labeled “good karma” at the coffee shop) and will suffer misfortune for doing bad deeds. Rev. Kubose brought up the historical example of the wartime incarceration of Japanese Americans. Rev. Kubose himself and all the founding members of our temple knew there was nothing they specifically did that justified the punishment of being taken from their West Coast homes and placed into guarded camps in desolate inland areas. Rev. Kubose pointed out that karma must be seen in the wide view: things happen because of myriad causes and conditions, not just from what one person does.

Any one event is the result of the thoughts, words and actions of uncountable beings from the unrecorded past to the present day, so most of the causes and conditions are beyond our direct control and knowledge. Historians will agree that individual Japanese Americans did nothing to warrant the denial of their civil rights, but the whole relocation tragedy was a result of economic forces and the fostering of racial prejudice for decades before Pearl Harbor.

On an intellectual level, we all know that much of the world’s events are beyond our complete control, but emotionally we cling to the delusion that we can persuade the divine powers to make things the way we want them and keep them that way. When we dismiss others’ misfortunes as “they brought it on themselves,” we are claiming that our current well-being is due to our doing all the right things. Does Japan have such a monopoly on greed (mistreatment of sea mammals, war atrocities, etc) that it deserved a catastrophic tsunami while other countries that seldom experience earthquakes are so morally pure?

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Whenever Shinran discussed karma, he kept the focus on himself. It is not for me to analyze other people’s histories of karmic actions because I can see just a small part of their lives. And even in looking at those who seem to publicly commit destructive acts, Shinran reminds us of the possibility that they may be bodhisattvas in disguise, acting out the role of villains to lead us to deeper awakening.

The only karma I can talk about as “bad karma” is my own, as Shinran demonstrated by his example. Only I know the many destructive and neglectful things I’ve done and only I know if my seemingly “good” deeds are tainted by selfish motives (including the desire to “feel good” about myself). However my life is not the result of only my karmic actions, but my birth and upbringing were the result of the karmic actions of my parents and teachers and all the factors acting on them. Those factors could be considered “bad” in the short-run if they led to my committing a bad action, but in the long-run those factors could be considered good if I learn from my mistake (and Shinran would say, it’s all good when it leads to our spiritual awakening).

A person affected by a natural disaster did not do anything morally bad (like kick a dog) to bring on the disaster. Disasters happen for a number of long-developing environmental reasons that scientists can point out even though they cannot predict exactly where and when the disaster will occur. Where we happen to be at a particular moment might be a decision we made or was made for us, but in most cases it was not made with the expectation of a natural disaster. We should understand that an earthquake or a hurricane is not something sent by some entity to punish certain people for doing the wrong things. What we learn from the Buddhist teachings of interdependence and conditional arising is that at any moment any of us could be caught in the tragic circumstances of a natural or man-made disaster, no matter how much we did to prepare for or prevent it from happening.

In Buddhism we don’t have the luxury of feeling “our group” is so morally superior that it deserves protection and everyone else has to suffer from destructive events. Instead we become aware of our utter vulnerability to all that has resulted from causes and conditions throughout history and across geography. When something so awful happens like the earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan, we should see the victims and survivors as fellow human beings who for many, many reasons, ended up in the wrong place at the wrong time. The next disaster could hit any of us wherever we happened to be.

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Two Perspectives of Appreciation

During the past month or so, most any conversation at the temple reflected the ongoing concern for the plight of the people of Japan. To be sure, Japan's economy, its means of production, transportation system and its utilities have all been grossly compromised but the lives of its people have been tragically altered beyond description. The loss of lives in the tens of thousands and the effects of the escaping radiation from the crippled nuclear power plants collectively produce new heights in mental anxieties amongst its people, in a land already stigmatized by the presence of atomic power. We who regularly use the Internet can't help but be aware of the outpouring of empathy in all forms from around the globe. Touching messages of hope and praise of Japan's resiliency against all odds, past and present, are familiar subjects. One such post I found being passed around I believe summarizes quite eloquently the observations made by the rest of the world. The article was un-credited as I found it, and I repeat it here as I find it gives one a feeling of discovering a teaching of appreciation behind it all:

Ten things to learn from Japan . . .

1. THE CALM

Not a single visual of chest-beating or wild grief. Sorrow itself has been elevated.

2. THE DIGNITY

Disciplined queues for water and groceries. Not a rough word or a crude gesture.

3. THE ABILITY

The incredible architects, for instance. Buildings swayed but didn't fall.

4. THE GRACE

People bought only what they needed for the present, so everybody could get something.

5. THE ORDER

No looting in shops. No honking and no overtaking on the roads. Just understanding.

6. THE SACRIFICE

Fifty workers stayed back to pump sea water in the N-reactors. How will they ever be repaid?

7. THE TENDERNESS

Restaurants cut prices. An unguarded ATM is left alone. The strong cared for the weak.

8. THE TRAINING

The old and the children, everyone knew exactly what to do. And they did just that.

9. THE MEDIA

They showed magnificent restraint in the bulletins. No silly reporters. Only calm reportage.

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10. THE CONSCIENCE

When the power went off in a store, people put things back on the shelves and left quietly.

After decades of service, Yutaka "Bob" Oshita has retired from the board of directors as of March. Mr. Oshita has been a prominent leader at BTC and one of the movers and shakers amongst the doers at our temple, most recently during the building of our new temple building. Mr. Oshita was kept current in temple business and actively participated in decisions of the board. But he himself knew that there comes a time when responsibilities must be passed on to the next crop of leaders who would take their turn carrying the banner of service to BTC. Mr. Oshita as a past temple president, served on the Advisory Board in addition to his stellar services with the board of directors, and chairman of temple renovation studies and new temple construction. His reputation as a professional engineer and his demonstrated love for BTC brought credibility to all of the proceedings, planning sessions, and oversight committees that he was involved with. Please join me in wishing Mr. Oshita all the best in his "retirement" as an active temple leader.

Gary T. Nakai

President

The Light Shining Through Rev. Saito

By R. Adams

[Note: This is another follow-up to the articles published in previous bulletins. Here Roger Adams speaks specifically about his teacher, Rev. Gyoko Saito. When I worked with Rev. Saito in Los Angeles, I also noticed he seldom said "Namu Amida Butsu" in his Dharma talks or in speaking at the study weekly group. However, somehow you felt his whole talk and his demeanor was the nembutsu.—PN, ed.]

All sincere students of Buddhism look for a focal point. It could be a teacher, or a teaching that particularly struck them, or a book. But whatever it is that inspires them to move forward in their spiritual life, it will be the means for further exploration and investigation.

For me, it was the teacher's life in its totality that both inspired me and awakened my mind. But it is exceedingly rare for me to have met such a one that ultimately allowed me to focus my whole attention, as he exposed us to the Buddha Dharma that we needed in order to proceed forward. Also, he introduced me to so many important teachers and their teachings in the weekly study group and whenever I had a chance to meet with him or listen to his talks. So there is a very large background of material directly and indirectly related to Buddhism that he presented to us that really engaged our understanding.

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Earthquake Experience & Lucky Day – A Long One.....

The following is a letter from family friend Louise Hisa Kasanuki, living in Japan, that I wanted to share with our Sangha, with her permission. Harky Tademoto

Friday, March 11, 2011

Dear Haruko and Tomio,

I thought I would let you know that Seiichi and I are fine after the big Earthquake in Japan. What a huge earthquake (8.8) in the Sendai area! In addition, the tsunami are very bad along many coasts of Japan. A teacher friend and I were on our way to buy washi paper in downtown Tokyo. We were walking to the train station by the base when the big earthquake hit. It was one of the longest and strongest earthquakes that I have ever felt. We heard metal shutters rattle loudly and we didn't know what it was. Suddenly everything started moving and swaying. It was a strange and helpless feeling. A Japanese lady came toward us and wanted to stay with us. We tried to find a clear place so nothing would fall on us. We kind of stood in the middle of the street for quite some time until it stopped. It sure was scary. Nothing seemed to happen so we continued to the train station when we realized that all the trains were stopped for 2-3 hours so we never got on the train and headed home.

We stopped at the post office and saw a few teachers from our school who had been working at school when the earthquake happened. One 3rd grade teacher's room in the Media Center building had cracks on the wall from the earthquake. The principal was doing a check of all the buildings.

As I entered our tower, several people were walking down the stairs since the elevators weren't working. They said they were told to leave the tower for several hours to make sure there weren't any after shocks which may cause damage. A teacher I knew said he was getting some warmer clothes, underwear and some blankets in case his family could not get back in. I did the same and picked up passports and other things. I couldn't get a hold of Seiichi right away because of the problems with the phone lines being jammed, but was able to get him after trying a number of times.

For us, it was a lucky day...Lucky that the earthquake didn't hit in our area. Lucky that my friend and I didn't get on the train BEFORE the earthquake struck. We could have been stuck on the train, OR stranded in Tokyo because we wouldn't have been able to get back to Yokota since the JR trains were not running that night. Lucky that Seiichi went to see his mother early around 1:00pm, or he would have been stuck in the

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Tokyo traffic, since all the expressways were closed and everyone got out of work early. We were lucky that we had little damage in our tower apartment. In our apartment, a tall basket of artificial flowers on the getabako fell over, half of my kokeshi dolls fell over and were scattered, and two small cabinet doors on the chadansu fell out. One of the teachers we saw at the post office said they live on the 9th floor tower and many pictures on the wall fell off! Lots of damage. Luckily, all our pictures stayed up.

Earlier, there were at least 12 United an American Airlines planes diverted to Yokota, but no one could get off because there is no customs here for commercial flights. Seiichi just said that Narita and Haneda airports opened up. I saw on T.V. that people in downtown Tokyo were walking for hours trying to get home. Buses were the only public transportation, so the bus lines had hundreds of people waiting. Others have no way to get home, and cannot find hotels or places to stay because they are all full. What a mess!

That's the update for now. Hope all is going well for you and spring will be arriving in Chicago soon!

Mata ne.....Love, Hisa

- "Karma" from page 4 -

Whether those who are suffering in the aftermath of a disaster are in Haiti or Indonesia, in Louisiana or Iran, they could just as well be you and me. If we were in their situation we would want help with our need for food, clothing and shelter and for support in intangible ways (rebuilding social communities and opportunities to encounter the arts, entertainment and spiritual guidance). There is no personal reward for helping others in Buddhism but such acts can be seen as expressions of the awareness of the dynamic oneness of life – that I am just sharing what I happen to have now with those who happen to be in need at the moment; in the next moment it could be me in need and someone else sharing their temporary abundance.

As more and more stories come out of the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami and the ongoing danger of radiation leaks from the nuclear power plants, we see that the people in northeastern Japan are sharing with us the poignant lessons that help point us towards awakening to the reality of interdependent and constantly changing lives. We could label the triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami and radiation) as "bad" in the short-run but the stories about and told by the people of northeastern Japan will in the long-run become a part of our understanding of the working of Dharma in the contemporary world.

Tsunami Relief Collection Update

The Members and Friends (Sangha) of BTC have as of this writing, donated \$5895 to the relief effort being organized by the North American District office of Higashi Honganji (Kantoku-bu). For BTC to channel its donations in this manner simplifies our giving through a related Buddhist organization that knows best how to disperse the funds locally. The collections amount will be forwarded to Kantoku-bu from time to time, identified only as from the Members and Friends of The Buddhist Temple of Chicago.

The relief donations continue to be collected. If you wish to participate in this manner for this relief effort, please send your donation in check form made out to The Buddhist Temple of Chicago, marked for Tsunami Relief. You may also deposit your donation in the so-marked collection box at the temple.

- "Temple News" continued from page 2 -

(Georgianne) Nojiri, and sisters Evelyn Inamine, Betty Uyekawa, Phyllis Nagai, Mitzi Okamura, Sumiko Taniguchi, and brothers George and Isamu Nojiri.

03/20 O-Higan Special Service was observed. Rev. Ashikaga spoke both in English and Japanese. After the service everyone enjoyed the refreshments prepared and served by Asoka Society.

03/26 Rev. Ashikaga attended the 25th Annual Japanese Language Speech Contest held at the Information Center of the Consulate General of Japan.

03/27 "Gyomay-Ki", the Special Memorial Service of Rev. Gyomay Kubose was observed. Rev. Patti Nakai delivered message. * * * Temple Board of Directors met.

03/29 Edward Horiuchi and his daughter Linda visited Temple to make funeral arrangements for the late Yasuko Horiuchi, who passed away on March 28.

- "Way" from page 2 -

"If there is a will, there is a way," they say. I really hope that the young people amongst the survivors of the tragic earthquake and tsunami study hard with public assistance and rebuild the country to be the strong nation it was before.

In conclusion, I would like to show my profound respect for all those who are making efforts in the relief operations in Japan. I would also like to express my deep gratitude for those who have sent donations to the relief fund collection at BTC. Your contribution will be forwarded to the Relief Fund established by the Higashi Honganji in Kyoto, Japan. The fund will be distributed to help rebuild the temples that have been damaged and to be shared with the members who have suffered major losses. All of the funds collected will be given to help the victims of this disaster. Namu Amida Butsu.

Tanjo-E – Sunday, May 22

Normally we observe Tanjo-E, the celebration of Shinran Shonin's birthday, in conjunction with Hatsu Mairi (children's "first visit"). This year in anticipation of the 750th memorial events for Shinran Shonin in May taking place in Japan, we had scheduled Hatsu Mairi in April. However, the trip to Kyoto for our temple's delegation had to be cancelled due to the recent disaster in northeastern Japan.

- "Light" from page 5 -

However, now when I look back over those years, I see that his main focus was on the nembutsu. This was, of course, coming directly from his own teacher, Rev. Haya Akegarasu, but ultimately it went far beyond that, even so far as the spacious skies that included everyone and everything that he came across. He once quoted a friend who said, "We can live without the world, but we cannot live without the nembutsu."

Yet, he never taught the nembutsu. Never once did I see him go to the blackboard and explain it to us in the Thursday evening discussion group. Nor was any of it explained by his teacher Rev. Akegarasu in the articles we were translating at the time. He mentioned it in a few of his articles, such as in the above quote, for example. But despite hardly mentioning it, he was all about the nembutsu—I would say, the embodiment of it. He seemed to bow [Namu] internally, and at times very formally and devotedly. As such, he didn't need to speak of it because it was "in his bones," so to speak—so he never preached it.

For instance, he never started our sessions with a nembutsu and never finished it with a nembutsu as is the usual practice. As a result, we never got a stereotypical understanding of one of the most important features of [Jodo] Shinshu Buddhism. Also, he would never merely go along with a pedagogic instructional method of explaining the nembutsu, or kill it by merely formalizing it. And that goes along with his whole approach to the Buddha Dharma itself.

As students we were never indoctrinated with the notion that in order to understand Buddhism, we would have to acquire knowledge about it in terms of head knowledge. Thus he never taught college-style Buddhism. He wanted us to get the essence of Buddhism primarily through our own feeling.

We think, therefore we are ignorant. So often our thinking leads to dualistic concepts and ideas far removed from our organic life. So while his main focus was on the nembutsu, he didn't teach it. How then did I perceive it? I could feel it. This is the whole point. For feeling is all.