# LOS ANGELES BETSUIN

No. 469

**November-December 2021** 

#### **RIMBAN'S MESSAGE**

## EITAIKYO PERPETUAL MEMORIAL FUND AND EITAIKYO MEMORIAL SERVICE



Rimban William Briones In November, many of our BCA Jodo Shinshu Temples observe their annual Eitaikyo Memorial Service. Eitaikyo literally means the *"perpetual chanting of sutras"*. The word "Eitaikyo" is a contraction of the more formal term *Ei-tai doku-kyo.* <u>Ei</u> (永) means eternal. It is com-

posed of the Chinese Characters for a river with many tributaries that flow on and on. <u>Tai</u> ( 代) means generations. <u>Doku</u> (読) means to read or chant. <u>Kyo</u> (経) means sutras or the words of the Buddha. So the meaning of Eitaikyo is to chant the sutras on behalf of our loved ones for generations and generations to come.

As of late, there has been some confusion, amongst our members as to who the <u>Eitaikyo</u> <u>Memorial Services</u> are held for. To begin, the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, as with many BCA temples established a special <u>Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund</u> to ensure the continuation of the teachings of the Buddha-Dharma within their temples by providing their temple with financial security for the long term.

The Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund is a restricted endowment fund. The interest gained on the principle can only be used specifically for religious purposes such as purchasing candles, incense, religious articles and even ceremonial robes for our ministers. The principle can only be used in an emergency, however it must be repaid as soon as possible.

This fund was established and continues to be

supported by the donations made in memory of deceased members of the family, relatives or friends. When a family makes a donation to the Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund, your loved ones name is placed into one of two Eitaikyo books that are placed in the altar. The Eitaikyo book is much like a daily calendar with the names of the deceased, their homyo (Buddhist dharma name) and ingo (posthumous Buddhist title) recorded on the month and day of the day of their passing. Then every morning at 9:00 am when we do service, we turn to the day's date and chant a sutra for those names on that day. As long as the Los Angeles Betsuin is in existence, memorial services like this will continue. This ensures a perpetual service for the deceased even when there is no one left in the family to observe a Buddhist service.

To encourage and give families an opportunity to attend a Eitaikyo Memorial Service for their loved ones, the Betsuin in March of 2016, began conducting Eitaikyo Monthly Memorial Services (Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo.) Services are held on the second Sunday of the month, at 1:00 PM for all those individuals listed in the Eitaikyo Memorial Book on their memorial month. Letters are sent out a month in advance as a reminder to attend your loved ones Eitaikyo Monthly Memorial Service. We also list the names in the JIHO, in hopes that a relative or friend might attend, who might not have otherwise known of the service. Unfortunately, since April of 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have suspended in-person services and are doing services virtually. In spite of not meeting in-person, we hope you will take this opportunity to show your appreciation to your loved one and to listen to the Buddha-Dharma.

(continued on page 3)

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## **SELFLESS ACTION**

#### by Rev. Hibiki Murakami



Rev. Hibiki Murakami

How is it when you play a character in a play? Do you have a memory of having played a role even if it was being a "tree?" When you play your role, you are actually "not" there. By becoming the character, the character should take over. As a performer on a stage, you need to read and memorize a script and take direction from the director. To give a good performance, you need lose yourself to make your character "come alive."

Making a character "come alive" is what the basis of Japan's cultural phenomenon, *kosupure*/cosplay is about. The costume player or "cosplayer" is a performer who dresses to represent a Japanese animation (*anime*) or graphic novel (*manga*) character. *Otaku* are those who are enthusiasts of *anime* or *manga*. Through cosplaying, participants emulate their favorite *anime/manga* characters. Sometimes in their efforts to assume the identity of their character, the cos-

player transforms into a real life *manga* character. A couple of years ago, I participated in *Niconico Chokaigi*,

which is famously known as one of the biggest Japanese pop culture exhibitions. I attended a *Niconico* event as part of the Techno *Hoyo* (phenomenon created by Rev. Gyosen Asakura of Japan who uses techno music and lighting during Buddhist rituals) presentation. *Niconico* is like a Japanese school festival. A school festival is an annual event at Japanese high schools where students present a performance about Japanese history or culture for the public. Many adults from amateur to businesses, and even a kabuki party, entertain audience by participating in the event.

Such events as *Niconico* is quite paradoxical. How bewildering it is when you see you some Buddhist monks and *anime* cosplayers side-by-side at the same event? Those dressed in Japanese *anime* costumes stood out for me. I had often seen cosplayers being interviewed on TV but until the *Niconico* event, I had never seen any cosplayers in person. At the event, I realized to what degree these cosplayers can transform into their characters.

There were throngs of cosplayers at *Niconico*. Some of them were precise in impersonating their *anime* characters and their movement, as well as the meticulous details of the costumes. I almost believed, "These characters popped out of a *manga*." I felt as if I was walking along side some *anime* characters. Though I rationally knew it

was all make-believe, I was totally absorbed in the world of cosplay. Perhaps, it was because they were able to completely lose themselves in their character.

We can work on cosplaying, to acting a role, or even chanting a sutra. When we devote ourselves to something, what we do can emerge on its own. For example, if a movie star is able to play a role really well, completely outside of his own character, then even



Cosplayers



Techno Hoyo

after the actor passes away, the character, such as the Black Panther, still exists even without the actor. The image of the character remains visible in this world.

So why immerse yourself? I guess it is to act selflessly. There are some phrases in Japanese expressions: Totally immerse yourself in something without thinking and lose yourself in the act. This "something" is filled with anything but me, just selflessness.

Immerse yourself in the Nembutsu.



(Rimban - continued from page 1)

Another source of confusion about our Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund is the relationship it has to the *ingo*, the posthumous Buddhist title.

Historically in Japan the *ingo* was conferred to members of the nobility as posthumous titles. During the Tokugawa Period (1605-1868), the *ingo* was given to priests and lay supporters of a temple. Within Nishi Hongwanji, only the mother temple in Kyoto could issue *ingo* to only those who dedicated themselves to temple service. In the case of the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), the resident minister and/or the board of directors could petition the bishop of BCA, that their board president or deserving member receive *ingo*. Only then the bishop would petition *honzan* (mother temple in Kyoto) and then *honzan* would bestow *ingo* to that person. That was the case for all Nishi temples in the US, including Los Angeles Betsuin.

However, during the Great Depression (1929-1939), our temple was in dire straits and in need of financial assistance. Our temple asked *honzan* for help. Unfortunately, Japan was going through their own financial hardships and was unable to assist financially. So instead, after receiving Betsuin status in 1931, *honzan* gave Rimban the privilege to confer *ingo* to members that made a substantial contribution to the Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund. Still, today, the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple is the only temple, besides the mother temple in Japan that can issue *ingo*. Since that time, Betsuin has been able to secure a strong financial foundation due to generous donations made to the Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial Fund.

As we conduct and participate in our Annual and/or Monthly Eitaikyo Perpetual Memorial service let us acknowledge the fact we are able to enjoy the benefits of the lives of those who have passed before us. For it is through their dedication that our temple continues. Most importantly, it is through their transmission of the teachings, that we are able to hear the dharma today. To truly acknowledge this fact and express our gratitude is a true manifestation of the "perpetual chanting of sutras"

Because, the purpose of the Eitaikyo Memorial Fund is to ensure that a memorial service be conducted in perpetuity in memory of your loved one, a substantial donation is requested to have your loved ones name placed into the Eitaikyo book. If you would like to make a donation to the Eitaikyo Fund in memory of your loved one or perhaps arrange Eitaikyo for yourself, or have any questions, please contact the office or please consult with Rimban Briones.

Please join us for the Eitaikyo Memorial Service, November 21 at 10:00 AM. Rev. George Matsubayashi will be our

## **BETSUIN COVID-19 NEWS**

At the October board of directors meeting, the "green light" was given to resume in-person services at the Betsuin beginning at the Sunday service on October 17th.

<u>Proof of vaccination</u> or a negative COVID test taken 3 days prior will be required.

Masks are required at all times.

If you are not in a family unit, please physically distance at least six (6) feet.

Temple volunteers will be collecting names and phone numbers for contact tracing. The information collected will be for contact tracing only and will be destroyed three weeks following the service.

For those who wish to continue to participate virtually. Contact the temple to get Zoom information:

info@nishihongwanji-la.org

or call 213-680-9130

## 2021 MEMBERSHIP

## DRIVE

Valid from January 1 through December 31, 2021

#### \$250 FOR EACH ADULT FAMILY MEMBER

CHECKS ARE PAYABLE TO: L.A. HOMPA HONGWANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE

Payments may be made in full or by installments throughout the year of **2021** 



guest speaker in both English and Japanese. As of this writing, Rev. Matsubayashi's dharma messages will be virtual, however, there is a likelihood that we may allow inperson participation. Please contact the office for more information.

namo amida butsu

## **BETSUIN JIHO**

## BETSUIN BOARD PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



#### Greetings,

2021 went by quickly. Or maybe my age is really showing. It was stressful and not how I wanted activities to take place.

I hope that 2022 will better than this year. But, I don't want just a little better, I want A LOT better. My desires are showing, aren't they? Don't get me wrong, I appreciate that we were able to do a little more – personally and at the temple. But I had hoped

Pam Tabata

we would have been able to see one another in person more than we did — working with everyone and enjoying each other's company.

I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to preside over LA Betsuin. As you know, I attended this temple my entire life. Many ministers have passed through our doors. Prior to the pandemic, I was able to attend national meetings and see those same ministers. I feel so lucky to have sat with them, talk about their families, joke around and even sometimes have a beer.

Thank you for another special year and my hope is that we can see each other in person.

In gassho



## "WE" IS GREATER THAN "I": WHY I GOT VACCINATED

by Rev. Blayne Higa

Rev. Blayne Higa is the resident minister of the Kona Hongwanji Buddhist Temple on the island of Hawaii. He has given permission to publish his article in the Betsuin Jiho.

Shakyamuni Buddha has often been considered a great physician or healer. He observed, diagnosed, prescribed treatment, and offered a cure for our spiritual suffering. His Four Noble Truths offer a cure for our inherent illness which is caused by attachments and desires. The Buddha's four-part remedy 1) Diagnosed there is suffering in life; 2) Observed the cause of suffering; 3) Discovered suffering can be cured, and 4) Offered a plan of treatment. Following the Path he shared leads to wholeness and healing. This is why we gratefully take refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha for the lasting relief they bring.

A basic principle of Buddhism is that we should always be mindful of the health of the community. We are guided to see ourselves as part of a larger whole because what we do affects others. This is a recognition of the interdependent nature of our existence and how we are mutually dependent on each other for survival.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a lesson in this fundamental truth. Taking personal action by wearing a mask in public, keeping at least six feet away from others, washing or sanitizing our hands frequently has proven to be effective in reducing the spread of the virus. Being vigilant about these precautions is not only about our self-benefit but more importantly about benefiting others. This is why we have done everything we can to care for each other as a Sangha because we will only get through this crisis together. "We" is greater than "I".

It is in this spirit of mutual care and responsibility that I was personally glad to receive the COVID-19 vaccination. For over a year, I have had limited contact with family and loved ones out of concern for their safety. We have all made sacrifices for the welfare of those we love. For me, taking the vaccine is about love, care, and concern for others. The vaccine has given me hope that I can be together with my family safely again.

The pandemic has tested the power and effectiveness of the Dharma working in our lives. Relying on the Buddha's teachings we have been able to face the challenges of the past year with kindness, compassion, and grace. Just like

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## **DID YOU KNOW?**

by Eiko Masuyama



The Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, formerly located at 119 North Central Avenue was built in 1925, next to the Koyasan Daishi Church. The Koyasan Daishi Church moved to that location in 1920 from an Elysian Park location, planting a Moreton Bay Fig tree in front of the temple. The tree continues to stand, even after their temple was de-

molished, and is called the Aoyama

Eiko Masuyama

Tree, named after Rev. Shutai Aoyama of Toyama, founder of Los Angeles area Koyasan Daishi Church (established in 1912). In 1940, Koyasan built a new temple at 392 East First Street, where it stands today, nestled behind Bunka-do store in Little Tokyo.

After the temple was demolished and after the end of World War II, the lot became Tom Kudow's Parking Lot. This is the location of the first post war two-day Obon Carnival, sponsored by the Los Angeles YBA on July 19-20, 1947, "attracting approximately 10,000 people." The lot held 25 booths "artistically decorated in individual color schemes" with responsibilities delegated to various groups of the Buddhist Church. The organizations represented were Fujinkai (BWA), West Los Angeles YBA, Senshin YBA and the Jr. and Sr. YBAs. Dr. Ryo Munekata, Bill Kitayama, and Sam Kuratomi, carnival chairmen, expressed their gratitude to the public for their patronage and to all who contributed wholeheartedly towards the success of the affair. "Financial chairmen, June Tokuyama and Frank Suyenaga, have reported a gross income of about \$2,000." Due to its success, the YBA recommended future Obon carnivals and started planning accordingly.

Memories of Arlene Kudo Nakamura, daughter of Tom Kudow:

"I don't remember too much about the parking lot. It was actually next door to Nishi Hongwanji Church on Central down the street from the LAPD. I can't remember the name of the lot but Dad didn't own it. He leased the lot so when the police department (LAPD) wanted the lot back he had no choice but to give it up."

"We were all so young. I didn't know the parking lot was as big as it was. We ran around it all the time. We went into Nishi Hongwanji where we learned a lot about its nooks and crannies. It was a fun and safer time. We knew how to get to Far East Café through a window at Nishi!" Memories of **Dianne Kudow Odagawa**, cousin of Arlene Kudow Nakamura and daughter of **Yukio and Alice Kudow**:

"I have a picture taken in the lot with my mother. I was about 1½ or 2, wearing a gingham skirt, which she probably made. My dad, Yukio, and another brother, Isao (younger brothers of Tom Kudow) used to help at the parking lot. I guess that's why I was there."



\* \* \* \* \*

The City of Los Angeles took over the parking lot next door to Nishi and made it into a LAPD

Dianne Yukiye Kudo carried North Central Avenue with loading docks of warehouses across the street. Photo courtesy of Dianne Odagawa.

garage with the Aoyama Tree still growing in front, making havoc with the concrete sidewalk. Eventually, the lot became a parking lot again until, in 2005, part of the lot became an extension of the old Nishi (city owned from 1969), now leased by the Japanese American National Museum, a modern addition, the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy.

#### "Nishi Betsuin Museum Fund, " Betsuin Jiho, November 1, 1992

After many years of planning and restorative work to the old Betsuin temple building, the Japanese American National Museum opened their doors in April of this year. We, as members of the Betsuin, share their pride, dedication and joy for their achievement in giving us this wonderful legacy. We are certainly grateful to them for choosing our old temple as their museum site. We are pleased to be part of this legacy in our donation to their commemorative wall.

The Nishi Betsuin Museum Fund was started in 1990, and 119 donors, individuals as well as temple organizations, gave to this fund. Our pledge of \$10,000.00 now has a balance of \$3,500.00. Your donation towards this fund will be greatly appreciated.

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## **52 YEARS AGO**



#### Junior YBA and Advisors, 1969

[Note: Some individuals could not be identified and, therefore, skipped.] <u>Row 1 (left to right)</u>: Lloyd Kaneko Glen Honda, Kenji Oda, Gail Yamamoto, Janet Shimizu, X, Sharlene Otani, Dean Nagamoto, Gary Miyatake, Douglas Sera <u>Row 2</u>: Shig Sugimoto, X, X, Lori Mizuno, Rev J. Doami, Rimban R. Masuoka, Clyde Iwata, Deborah Yamamoto, Irene Watanabe, Teri Jean Miyakawa, Toshiye Nagata <u>Row 3</u>: Arlene Sadamoto, Tomoko Okita, X, Suzy Furuto, Keiko Oda, Linda Waki, X, Cheryl Sugimoto, Faith Sakaniwa, Amy Miyakawa, Masaye Miyamoto, Diane Tanaka, Setsuko Iwata, Mits Sakaniwa

#### (KNOW? continued from page 5)

I wish to thank all the donors for their generous contribution. I hope all donors will take pride in being part of the legacy dedicated in memory to the *Issei* pioneers of the Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple.

Cherry Okimoto, Chairperson

#### \* \* \* \* \*

#### David Nakamoto to Lead Junior YBA Betsuin Jiho, November 3, 1972

The Betsuin Junior Young Buddhist Association has a brand new cabinet this year to be headed by President **David Nakamoto**; Vice President, **Pamela Takata**; Recording Secretary, **Janice Uyeda**; Corresponding Secretary, Joyce Miyasaki and Kathy Masuda; Treasurer, Susan Minato; Religious Chairman, Lane Ochi; Historian, Sharlene Nakasato; Boys' Athletic Chairman, Mark Oune; Girls' Athletic Chairman, Cheryl Okino; Parliamentarian, Russell Waki and Advisors, Mrs. Shiz Oki and Reverend George Matsubayashi.

Many thanks to the past year's cabinet headed by Russell Waki. They were Vice President, **Debbie Oki**; Recording Secretary, **Robbie Kushi**; Corresponding Secretary, **Sandy Fu-natsu** and **Sharon Kaneko**; Treasurer, **Sharlene Otani**; Religious Chairman, **Fujie Ota**; Boys' Athletic Chairman, **Dean Hara**; Parliamentarian, **Susan** 

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## BETSUIN ACTIVITIES AS VIEWED VIA ZOOM

Due to COVID-19 and its resurgence with the Delta variant, the Betsuin services and study classes have continued via Zoom. photos by Koichi Sayano



Rimban Briones at the Fall Ohigan service.



*Rev. Murakami's Japanese language study class pictured on Zoom in attendance by Seibi and Moruko Okita.* 



Rimban Briones and Rev. Murakami during the Eshinni-Kakushinni Memorial service.



Captured Zoom photo of Rev. Murakami's study class.

#### (KNOW? continued from page 6)

Yoshizaki; Historian, Koji Kanemoto; Advisors, Mrs. Shiz Oki and Reverend George Matsubayashi.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hot off the press: Nishi Jr YBA was awarded the Religious Award (former Dharma Award) trophy at their Virtual Southern District Jr YBA Conference, hosted by Arizona over the Labor Day weekend. Under the leadership of co-presidents Jenna Otohira, Michelle Itomura, and Bradley



Dharma Award Trophy awarded to Nishi Jr YBA for year 2021

**Tashiro** and religious chairperson, **Sami Hayashi** for year 2021, our young people received this award. They also received the trophy last year, 2020, under the leadership of Bradley Tashiro, president, and Sami Hayashi, religious chairperson.

Congratulations!!! Their advisors are **Terri Itomura** and **Michi Chavez.** Thank you ladies!!!



## BRINGING BACK THE PAST — 15 YEARS AGO

The following article was published in the May-June 2006 issue of the Betsuin Jiho.

Astronaut Onizuka 21st Memorial by Elaine Fukumoto



the Betsuin. Onizuka, a Jodo Shinshu Japanese-American who grew up in Hawaii, perished in the tragic explosion of the Space Shuttle Challenger in January 1986.

The 20th year (Buddhist

21st year) memorial service

for the late astronaut, Elli-

son Onizuka was held at

Ellison Shoji Onizuka NASA Astronaut

In attendance at the memorial service was the widow, **Lorna Onizuka**, along with the younger of their two

daughters, Darien. Also in attendance were the astronauts that accompanied Onizuka during his first space mission of the Space Shuttle Discovery a year earlier. They were: Commander Ken Mattingly, pilot Loren Shriver, fellow mission specialist James Buchli, and payload specialist Gary E. Payton.

What touched and impressed the many who attended the service was the presence of the Nishi Center Child Devel-

opment Center's 3-6 year olds. Their voices rang clearly during the *sutra* chanting, they all came forward to oshoko along with the sangha, and they sat properly during the hour-long service. Mrs. Onizuka, during her heartfelt message, made note of the Nishi Center students' presence.

Subsequent to the memorial service, attendees convened at the Onizua Memorial Monument on Onizuka Street in Little Tokyo for a floral tribute.



Lorna Onizuka (front center), daughter Darien (to her right), brother-in-law Claude Onizuka (2nd to her left). The service was conducted by (I-r) Rev. Harold Oda, Rev. William Briones, and Rimban George Matsubayashi

#### (Higa- continued from page 4)

the Buddha, scientists and healthcare professionals have offered us a proven remedy. The COVID-19 vaccine is a scientific advancement that promotes health and wellbeing and is good for both the individual and the community.

Just a few days ago, exactly two weeks and one day after my second dose, I was finally able to hug my mom and dad for the first time in over a year. That is powerful medicine indeed.

I am profoundly grateful for the Buddha's teaching that is the medicine for my spiritual illness. I'm also thankful for the vaccine that is the key to saving lives and controlling this pandemic. Let's all continue to do our part to stop the spread of COVID. Our actions truly make a difference.

Namo Amida Butsu.

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Los Angeles Hompa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple

## BETSUIN CALENDAR OF EVENTS

#### **NOVEMBER**

- **07** Regular Service 10:00 am General Sokai Meeting
- 14 Regular Service 10:00 am Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 21 Eitaikyo Service 10:00 am
- 25-26 Thanksgiving Holiday (Betsuin closed)
- 28 Regular Service 10:00 am

#### **DECEMBER**

- 05 Regular Service 10:00 am
- 12 Bodhi Day Service 10:00 am Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm
- 19 Oseibo Service 10:00 am
- 24-25 Holiday (Betsuin closed)
- 31 Joya-e (Year-End Service) 6:00 pm

#### **JANUARY**

- 01 Shusho-e (New Year Service) 10:00 am
- 02 Holiday (Betsuin Closed)
- 09 Regular Service 10:00 am Eitaikyo Shotsuki Hoyo 1:00 pm

Hybrid services have been implemented as of October 17th. In-person attendance is now permitted (see "News" on page 3) and Zoom attendance will also be available.

For Zoom information, contact the temple:

213-680-9130 or

#### info@nishihongwanji-la.org



### **IN MEMORIAM**

The *Nishi Betsuin* extends its deepest condolences to the families of the following members who have recently passed away. May the family members find solace and comfort in the *Nembutsu*.

--Namo Amida Butsu

#### July 2021

- 10 Roger Mitsuo Chikuami
- 12 Sachiko Nakada
- 16 Yukiye Margie Kawamoto
- 19 Takaji Teramoto
- 28 Terumi Bob Nakamoto
- August 2021
- 25 Isao Hatakeyama
- 26 Yoshito Matsumoto

#### September 2021

- 5 Stanly Takayuki Nakao
- 7 Kiyoko Hiller

## **Betsuin Jiho**

Editor-in-Chief: Rimban William Briones English Editor: Elaine Fukumoto Japanese Editor: Rev. Hibiki Murakami Photos: Glen Tao



CONTACTLESS DRIVE THRU PICKUP TUESDAY, 12.07.21, 12:00PM-3:00PM THURSDAY, 12.09.21, 3:00PM-6:00PM SATURDAY, 12.11.21, 12:00PM-3:00PM

FOR MORE INFORMATION: NISHIBWA@GMAIL.COM