

SHUMEI'S ENGLISH LANGUAGE BI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

SHUMEI

VOL. 270 JULY/AUGUST 2007



IN BRAZIL:

A Natural Agriculture Report
Sensei Alan Imai

**THE CRESTONE CENTER
IS FIVE YEARS OLD**

What Our Neighbors Say about Us

CONNECTEDNESS

Matthew Crowley

A LONG-AWAITED GIFT

Jane Imai

SHUMEI MAGAZINE is the English language publication of the Shumei Family for the international Shumei community. Our purpose is to inform through the presentation and discussion of Meishusama's teachings, and by being a forum for the voices of Shumei's members and friends.

OUR PURPOSE: Shumei America is a spiritual organization comprised of people from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds who transform their lives and the lives of others by focusing Divine Light.

We provide an environment for spiritual growth by practicing Jyorei as a purification of the spirit, appreciating art and beauty, and promoting Natural Agriculture.

ABOUT THE COVER: This issue's cover photograph was taken by Misono staff photographer Masanao Iwata at the candlelight peace vigil held as part of Shumei's Crestone Center's fifth anniversary. Stories concerning the anniversary begin on page 6. All the images used for those stories were taken by Mr. Iwata.

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Excerpts from Meishusama's Teachings on Kannon's Way

This is the tenth installment of excerpts from the “Kannon’s Way” teachings of Shumei’s founder, Mokichi Okada, and the fourth to appear in SHUMEI Magazine in 2007. The three writings that follow are entitled “Roundness,” “Helping Others,” and “Delight in Seeing People Live with Joy and Satisfaction.” They date from 1935, 1951, and 1953 respectively. The texts of these teachings were translated and edited by Atsushi Fujimaki and Roy Gibbon for use in SHUMEI Magazine.

Roundness

The Chinese character for ‘balls’ can be changed to mean ‘principle’ merely by moving the mark placed on the right side of the character up to the top. This gives me the impression that the character for ‘balls’ is meaningful and precious. The fundamental nature of Izunome¹ is completely free and adaptable, and can be compared to the movement of a ball that can roll in any direction without restriction. Even a highly refined spirit such as a kami,² if it has not attained roundness and still has corners, cannot be trusted or relied upon. It is highly important to be round. If an object is round in shape, it can easily roll in any direction and thus adapt to any circumstance or condition.



The Chinese character for ‘balls’ above the character meaning ‘principle.’

The spirit of Kannon unfolds divine teachings in this manner. It often manifests its power in unconventionally humorous ways. This spirit truly moves us to laughter. In line with this, the closer one gets to Kannon’s Way, the rounder one’s character becomes. To successfully adapt to a variety of situations, you have to get along with many different types of people no matter who they are. It is never a good idea to express anger outwardly. The tendency to lash out aggressively at others is caused by the

corners within you, and Kannon’s Way cannot be mastered without getting rid of those corners and rounding out your soul.

1. The spirit of Kannon is referred to as ‘Izunome,’ the point at which the spirit of water intersects with that of fire. The term denotes following an unbiased, middle path: a moderate course of action that is neither *shojo* nor *daijo*, but a combination of both, depending on the circumstances.

2. Often translated as ‘god’ or ‘gods,’ the word’s meaning is much broader. Within the Shinto tradition a *kami* can be a divinity, a mythological character, a living force, a spirit, or anything that resembles the divine or inspires awe. The word also includes the meaning of ‘God,’ as represented in monotheist religions. Often *kami* are treated reverentially and are thought to interact with human beings. The word is both singular and plural.

Tearfulness is also never recommended. This is why I am encouraging you to create comical poems and to share them with others. An environment where you can enjoy things with cheerful laughter, and where you can make others laugh in the same way, will naturally lead to a heavenly state. In this way, laughter contributes to the resolution of disputes and to the creation of a peace-loving atmosphere. And to establish peace on earth, it is necessary to eradicate conflicts. (August 5, 1935)

Helping Others

Whenever people ask for something, and if it is within reason, I cannot help but offer my hands in assistance. When I see people suffering from some cause for which they are not responsible, it is extremely difficult for me to keep myself still. Likewise, I can hardly control my anger over wrongs done in society, and make my best effort to solve them. In line with alleviating people’s sufferings as much as I can, I have been voicing my opinions about the basic defects of medical science and sending warnings to people who believe medicine is the only resort for treating sickness. My efforts to give support, relief, and hope to people might well be described as a kind of hobby through which I derive enjoyment. It is my essential nature to care for people and to work to make them happy. In addition to this, since my heart clearly mirrors other people’s thoughts and feelings, when I listen to them expressing their pains and worries, it feels as though their troubles were mine. (August 15, 1951)

Delight in Seeing People Living with Joy and Satisfaction

While I am busily preoccupied with my work, people around me, including my wife, are often having fun by themselves, and paying no attention to me. If the same thing happens within a typical household in our society, the husband, feeling somewhat irritated, might scold his family members for not being considerate of his situation. In this sort of case, however, my response is completely different. There is no need for me to care about whether or not my family pays attention to me. When I see people having fun and doing well, I feel very pleasant, even while simultaneously struggling with my own work. In line with this, even during those times when I am extremely busy and am dealing with difficult problems, I do not feel overwhelmed by the situation at all. This is not because I treat the situation as part of my spiritual training, but simply because I take it as a matter of earning a living. Similarly, to work on other people’s problems is, for me, an enjoyable pastime. I feel that way because I delight in seeing people live with joy and satisfaction. (April 25, 1953)

In Brazil: A Natural Agriculture Report

Sensei Alan Imai (USA)

Sensei Alan Imai, a familiar figure to Shumei members in America, serves as International Programs Director of the Shumei Natural Agriculture Network, and as Executive Director of the Shumei International Institute in Crestone, Colorado. The following is drawn from a presentation given at the Monthly Sampai of February 2007 at the Shumei International Institute's Center at Crestone, Colorado. The text has been edited for use in SHUMEI Magazine.

“Nature is constantly progressing, climbing upward and renewing itself without a moment's pause. Man should look at this reality and learn from this eternal truth. See how the human population of the world increases year by year. Year by year, more land is claimed for mankind. Means of transport, buildings, machines—all are advancing, none are regressing. Grass and trees grow higher and higher, reaching for the sky. Not a single one grows downwards. All nature progresses onward and upwards in this way. Look at this reality. Man should learn from this eternal truth. I myself am striving with all my heart for progress and elevation from last year to this, from this month to next. However, this progress is not just a matter of material improvement in job or business or social status. That would be no more than a shallow-rooted and unstable kind of thing, a vanity of vanities. We must improve and elevate our souls. That is, the elevation you must achieve is an elevation of character. With this concern in mind, you must take one step at a time on a long road, and pile new self on old. Of course you must not be impatient. It takes a long time, but you are certain to become fine people. Indeed, the determination itself is enough to make anyone a fine person. The certain result of this is that you will be trusted by everyone and will become successful, happy, and fortunate.”

— Mokichi Okada,
“The Teachings of Meishusama,” page 161.

I just returned from Brazil and would like to share with you something about the beginning of Shumei Natural Agriculture¹ activities there. This was my third trip to Brazil, and I had two purposes in mind for this trip: to participate in the opening of a Natural Agriculture coffee field, and to inspect potential locations for a possible Japanese and Brazilian youth camping program.

In January of 2005, I went to Brazil with thoughts of possibly starting Natural Agriculture activities there. On that first trip, I visited a couple of organic farms and a coffee plantation. While there, I also met people who were active in the field of organic agriculture. Before I left Brazil, Yasu Hirakawa, a Shumei representative in Sao Paulo, gave me a small booklet written in Japanese about ‘fair trade’ coffee, which I promptly forgot about, until later. Afterward, I visited Zambia with Seiji Okada, who now is the director of the Shumei Natural Agriculture Department. On that trip, he brought up the subject of serving coffee in the Miho Museum.² Visitors come to the museum from all over the world, and some of them enjoy coffee. Seiji suggested that if we serve coffee at the museum, we should only serve ‘fair trade’ coffee. At this point, the forgotten book popped back into my head, and I proceeded to share with him the information I had learned from it.

That is what triggered my second visit to Brazil in January of 2006. Mr. Okada and I visited an organic coffee farm named “Jacaranda.” The founder of this farm, Carlos Franco, had by then passed away, but his wife, Francisca, and their sons had succeeded him in running the farm. During our meeting, we located a field where they had not

used any fertilizers. We made a guaranteed commitment to buy the coffee from that field, no matter the amount, at a price that would be sustainable for their farm. They in turn agreed to grow that coffee using only Natural Agriculture principles. This agreement was the beginning of our Natural Agriculture coffee project in Brazil.

The Jacaranda Farm is about a five-hour journey from Sao Paulo. We were told that, so far, it had rained every day, so we procured a four-wheel drive vehicle for the trip. Despite this, we still could not get through the heavy mud, and needed help when our vehicle got stuck. We were told that the rain is good for growing coffee. Mrs. Franco warmly welcomed us when we arrived. The Franco family takes very good care of the farm workers they employ at the farm. In return, the farmers want to stay on, and many have worked for the family for three generations. During this visit, we were able to share the principles of Natural Agriculture with them, and tell them of Shumei's international activities.

Our new Natural Agriculture coffee field had previously been used to grow bananas. There were still many trees growing there. Banana trees provide a lot of organic matter. Most importantly, they provide potassium, which is critical for good quality coffee. But the problem with potassium is that water washes it away easily, and the roots of the coffee plant are very shallow. The banana trees help to bring potassium from deep within the soil up to the surface. Carlos Franco's grandson, Cassio, presently manages the farm. On my second visit, Cassio took us into this dense banana field. Farmers were working very hard to clear the field and plant baby coffee plants. The banana trees will be continually thinned as the coffee plants mature. One happy memory of this visit was all of us planting coffee bushes together. I hope my coffee plants will grow big and strong. The theme of Cassio's PhD thesis is the relationship between trees and organic coffee plants. In about three years our coffee field will be ready for harvest.

Next to the Jacaranda Farm are many conventional coffee plantations. We stopped

1. Natural Agriculture is a spiritually based horticultural practice created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada. The essence of the Natural Agriculture approach is having reverence for nature and cultivating the food crops in a manner close to how plants thrive in a natural setting.

2. The museum designed by I.M. Pei in the Shigaraki Mountains of Japan to house the Shumei Art Collection, which contains antiquities from throughout Eurasia and ancient Egypt, all of which were chosen primarily for their inherent beauty. For more information in English concerning the Miho Museum, please visit www.miho.or.jp/english/.

at one field that was being prepared for planting. The field had been cleared; there were no trees at all, and only weeds grew there. I was told that the next step in conventional coffee cultivation would be to spray chemical herbicides before planting the seedlings. Some people would look at these fields and say that the view is beautiful, but to me the sight of these treeless, weedy plots of land illustrates the huge difference between the barren conventional coffee field and a Natural Agriculture field with many banana trees. As mentioned before, the root systems of coffee plants are very shallow, so in the conventional method a lot of chemical fertilizers have to be used to nourish the short roots. Our Natural Agriculture coffee plants already get all the nutrients they need naturally from the trees that grow alongside them.

Brazil is the largest coffee grower in the world. The southern region of the state of Minas Gerais grows more coffee than all of Columbia, which is really the second largest coffee producing country, though it's often considered to be the center of world coffee production. It is in Minas Gerais that our Natural Agriculture coffee field is located. Our first coffee supply was harvested between June and July of 2006. After the harvest, our coffee was allowed to cure for about six months before being shipped to Japan. Coffee is stored in huge, one-ton bags, and after the best of the harvest is selected, it is shipped to Japan and the rest of the world from the port of Santos, as Natural Agriculture coffee. We visited a large storage facility where all the local coffee farmers bring their produce. We took a five-kilogram sample of our first batch of Natural Agriculture coffee back to Japan with us to taste.

There is a city named Itatinga, a two and one-half hour drive east of Sao Paulo. In this city, a lot of emphasis is put on improving the environment. Throughout Brazil, the government has instituted a policy that trees should be planted every ninety feet on both sides of rivers, wherever possible, to help maintain and improve water quality. Some cities are more active than others in this government-backed program. Itatinga is amongst those cities that have made a real commitment to clean water.

We met a gentleman in Itatinga named Harry, who works for Educo Brazil. Harry is

organizing a Japanese and Brazilian youth camping program for this coming fall. He shared with us his vision of introducing Natural Agriculture in the city, and also introduced us to a fellow named Rui, who is responsible for the city tree-planting program. Rui is very interested in practicing agriculture and has a deep respect for nature. He came to Itatinga to learn about biodynamic agriculture, and began working for the city in their tree-planting project. He took us to his farm and told us that he believes in learning from nature. Rui has an amazing nursery where he is growing eighty different local varieties of trees. He believes that healthy nature includes many different kinds of plants growing together.

We saw a lot of weeds growing under the tables and in between Rui's seedlings and vegetables. He believes it is important from the plants' earliest stages to let them learn from the environment they are in. After he transplants his vegetables, he allows them to grow among the weeds—unless the weeds create some kind of damage to the vegetables. For three months, he studies each vegetable field and the weeds to see what kinds of weeds appear. He told us, "If I see all different kinds of weeds growing, I know nature and the soil are healthy." This is a perfect example of learning from nature.

Rui has also planted many trees. When he first came to his garden site there were no trees at all. The only trees visible were tall trees across the river, so he planted many tall and short trees and vegetables in between the weeds. He explained that the kinds of trees he plants in the first, second, and third stage depends on the character of the trees and the environment. In his involvement with the city tree project, he is planting a lot of seedlings along the rivers that run around the city. He learned that, most importantly, after the trees are planted, they need to be watered and given care. All of this requires time, energy, and an ongoing commitment from many people in order for the seedlings to survive and for the program to be successful. He encouraged local people to join in this project by inviting them to come to his farm and become familiar with his agricultural method of learning from nature, so that many of them would then be ready to grow their own gardens near their homes and along the river. The land itself belongs

to the city, but the local people can use it to grow their own vegetables. In return, they take care of the trees that grow in their vegetable gardens.

There is little green to be found in the city neighborhoods where most people live. Now, with the green rivers project, the people can come and grow vegetables and trees together, and spend time in nature. As the trees grow larger, nature takes care of them, and the need for manpower is greatly reduced. An incredible amount of land is available and open for the planting of trees and vegetables within ninety feet on either bank of the rivers. Rui and Harry suggested that Shumei send someone to set aside an area for Natural Agriculture and develop a



Sensei Alan Imai plants a coffee seedling at the Jacaranda Farm in Brazil.

demonstration farm. We could hold workshops and teach local people about Natural Agriculture. People would then be able to practice Natural Agriculture in their own gardens. Rui's method of agriculture is very similar to Natural Agriculture, and the city of Itatinga is promoting his project. The city's population is 14,000, a manageable number to communicate with, yet not too small to serve as a good model. It is very important that local people are involved right from the start. I think the project is a wonderful opportunity to share Natural

Agriculture with people in Brazil. We hope to send someone from Shumei to begin this project in the near future.

Near Itatinga there is a research station where eucalyptus and pine trees were planted by the forestry department of Sao Paulo University. Vast areas in Brazil have been used for the cultivation of eucalyptus trees for the production of pulp and paper products. There is a big argument taking place between pulp producing companies and environmental organizations. Big corporations claim that they are helping to solve environmental problems, such as global warming, by planting trees that remove carbon dioxide from the air and help to make food, water, and solar energy through photosynthesis. The environmentalists argue that eucalyptus trees grow too quickly, absorb huge amounts of water, and are drying up many rivers and lakes. Large cultivated stands of eucalyptus trees are also a very difficult environment for birds, insects, and other animals to live in. These planned eucalyptus forests are referred to as “green deserts” by environmentalists.

The research station has more than two hundred thousand hectares of land, most of which is still in a natural state. The research station has classrooms, conference rooms, and dormitories where students and researchers stay. There is a beautiful nature trail for students to explore. Visitors and staff have even reported seeing wild jaguars, demonstrating that this is still a healthy ecosystem with plenty of wildlife left to observe. This facility is available, and it is where we plan to hold our first Japanese and Brazilian youth camping program.

What began as a Natural Agriculture coffee project in Brazil has now blossomed to include a youth program, which is scheduled in the fall. Our next step will be Natural Agriculture vegetables and trees growing side by side, contributing towards environmental protection and sustainability in the near future. As Meishusama stressed in the above teaching, we must work to improve and elevate our souls, our moral character, “from last year to this, from this month to next.” We hope Natural Agriculture activities in Brazil will also grow every year. So, please keep our activities in Brazil in your prayers.

THE CRESTONE CENTER IS FIVE YEARS OLD

The following three stories concern the fifth anniversary of the Shumei International Institute's Center at Crestone, Colorado, which took place in May of this year.

Love for Others

Lisa Cyriacks (USA)

Lisa Cyriacks, a freelance writer and resident of Crestone, has participated in activities at the Shumei International Institute headquarters since the Center's opening five years ago. The following first appeared in the June edition of the Crestone Eagle and is reprinted with that publication's permission.

To accord with the will of God, become a person whose heart yearns for the happiness of others.

If you love the world and help people, God will protect you wherever you go.

My heart brightens when I reflect upon how wholly devoted I am to working for man and the world.

— Meishusama, “Miakarishu”
(A Collection of Light), page 88.

The Shumei International Institute's Crestone Center marked its fifth year this May. As part of the festive celebration, representatives of most of the spiritual centers in Crestone came forth to share their songs, poems, readings, stories, and prayers. Recurring themes included the commitment necessary to develop harmony, living true to oneself, and the ability we all have to extend ourselves in wishing for others' happiness. As Meishusama, Shumei's founder, once said, “We wish to bring harmony to all mankind and to make the whole world into one family.”

The Special Evening Sampai¹ for World Peace was scheduled to coordinate with other Shumei Centers around the world at 6 p.m. The Crestone Kaminari Taiko (Kaminari means ‘thunder’ in Japanese), taiko master

1. Sampai is a special time or place set aside for honoring God with reverence and gratitude.

Koji Nakamura, Japanese-American singer Madi Sato, and the Crestone Community Chorus performed a wide variety of music throughout the early evening. During the closing candlelight ceremony, Jillian Klarl and guitarist Steve Storm led the audience in a chant, “Praises for the World.”

Originally, Shumei was attracted to Crestone by the location's natural beauty and the spiritual energy of the place. The keynote speaker, Mr. Ichio Ogura, spoke to this subject by focusing on the existence of the special bonds between the material, spiritual, and human worlds, using the Miho Museum as a primary example. Shumei built the Miho Museum ten years ago to house a very special collection of art that was gathered under the guidance of Mrs. Mihoko Koyama, Shumei's first president. Mr. Ogura spoke of Mrs. Koyama's exceptional sense of aesthetics, her eye for beauty in gathering together the exceptional and unique collection housed in the Miho Museum.

The selection of art objects in the Miho Collection was not based on scholastic principles, or a particular historical period, or an artistic style. Instead, the collection was guided by the aesthetic sense of Mihoko Koyama. Mr. Ogura observed that the primary characterization of the Miho collection was ‘light.’ The vision of the artist, what he or she is trying to express, and the philosophy of the collector merge to create a brighter light and brighter energy. Those viewing the art can absorb this special light, and through this absorption change themselves, and the world around them.

It is part of Shumei's philosophy that through beauty we are guided to truth and virtue. Mr. Ogura spoke of the correlations between the ancient traditions of Shinto and Native American beliefs. These parallels include the belief that the nature all around us has its own soul; each rock, each tree has a soul. If we believe that, we can also believe that the planet earth has its own being, its own soul. Just as the artist, when portraying something in nature, can connect with that object, in that mysterious way we also can make beauty a part of ourselves and live that beauty every day.

Shumei's Crestone Center is located in a sacred place. It is one of Shumei's three universal centers, denoting the three great elements of the universe. The Crestone Center



Guests are greeted as they make their way to the Crestone sanctuary.

represents Earth; Misono,² Shumei's headquarters, represents Fire; and Kishima Island³ represents Water. What is learned of beauty at each of these Centers can be the source of extraordinary betterment for the world.

Art and beauty have the power to nourish and refine the soul. Not only do they bring pleasure, but they also can profoundly move the heart and mind. Beauty fosters a deeper appreciation of life and all creation. Art can put humankind in touch with the best qualities of human nature. It is for this reason that Shumei encourages the integration of art and beauty into daily life.

Shumei's anniversary event brought the inspiration of beauty into many lives—music, poems, stories, gardens, and visual arts. What we learned about appreciating our connectedness to each other, to art, to nature, and to our planet, is that all is beautiful.

World Citizenship Unity in Diversity

Matthew Crowley (USA)

Matthew Crowley has been a resident of Crestone since January of 2004. In April of 2005, he came to work for the Shumei

International Institute as its Operation Manager. Eight months after assuming that position, he became a Shumei member. These days Matthew can be found doing all kinds of responsible things for Shumei in Crestone, Colorado, where he continues to live and write.

This is the first of two articles Matthew has written for this edition of SHUMEI Magazine.

The first time I read the expression “Unity in Diversity” was on a small sign on the front of a Congregational Church in Connecticut, near where I lived at the time. I could say it was at a rather dark time in my life, but even that darkness had a purpose to serve. This darkness, at the time, left me feeling that I had nowhere to turn but to God. Looking at the little sign and those three simple words led me to consider, for the first time in my life, that to be united, or to be ‘one’ with God, or with each other, did not mean that we all had to be the same—but rather that it was, in fact, our individual colors, shapes, sizes, tastes, languages, cultures, and traditions that make the world as beautiful as it is. This year those words became part of the theme, or at least the slogan, for the Shumei International Institute's fifth anniversary celebration. Those three powerful words—“Unity in Diversity”—have been imprinted on several hundred tee shirts that have already traveled around the world, but more importantly, the words are now emblazoned on our hearts and minds as well.

Perhaps a tradition is being born here. This is the third year I have had the pleasure of being involved with the Shumei International

Institute's¹ anniversary as a staff person in Crestone. This is also the third article I have written for the Shumei magazine—not my idea, but I am very grateful. Each year I have the same challenge; I feel in some ways too close to the event to be able to write an overview of the activities. It is my job to ‘hold the door,’ so to speak: to do my part to insure that events are unfolding smoothly for the benefit and enjoyment of our guests. Because of other responsibilities, I am unable sometimes to be at some activities when they take place. This year Lisa Cyriaks, a friend of Shumei and frequent contributor and writer for our local Crestone paper, wrote a short article that provides more of an overview, a kind of big picture of the events as they unfolded. I will here attempt instead to share a few thoughts and stories that seem meaningful from my perspective, that of the proverbial chicken running around with his head cut off!

Writing is my creative outlet and an important part of my function in life, as was revealed to me more than ten years ago. For this to have so naturally become interwoven into my career is simply beautiful for me. This article, the Paul Winter album story, and another about my recent trip to Japan for Grand Sampai, although appearing as separate articles, are all inextricably linked. They were all really unfolding congruently, and to be truthful, this one- to two-month period of my life has been a swirl.

Everywhere I went, I kept hearing of the benchmarks that have been reached within our organization: a tenth anniversary of the Miho Museum, a fifth anniversary for the Shumei International Institute, Shumei being granted NGO status, and many others. I heard Kaicho-Sensei², at her address following Grand Sampai in Misono, announce plans to build the Miho Institute of Aesthetics for the education of our next generations, a huge and significant step into the future. Between the words, everywhere I went I also sensed a certain feeling of imminence and expectancy for the mysterious enfoldment of what the next years would bring, as if these are all simply cornerstones, part of a foundation for what Meishusama foresaw.

2. Misono is Shumei's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in Shigaraki, Japan. The name ‘Misono’ means ‘Sacred Garden.’

3. Kishima is an island in the Inland Sea of Japan, and one of Shumei's major Centers. The island is used as a retreat, a summer camp for children, and for the practice and research of Natural Agriculture.

1. The Shumei International Institute is a nonprofit organization that provides an environment for spiritual growth through interfaith activities, the practice of Natural Agriculture, and art and cultural events.

2. ‘Kaicho-Sensei’ is an honorific name used when referring to Ms Hiroko Koyama, the president of the Shumei organization.

It may seem a bit odd, but a real high point during the Crestone fifth anniversary was immediately after Kaicho–Sensei led a special Saturday evening Sampai for world peace. We had been challenged by thunderstorms, which are common in Crestone at this time of the year. Previous anniversaries have taught us to be prepared, and we had already moved the venue for the interfaith presentations and the afternoon concert from the outdoor amphitheater to the large tent, which is set up each year for the Sunday luncheon. After Sampai, the schedule called for a short concert featuring the local Crestone Community Chorus, and then the candlelight vigil wrapped up the day's activities.

Right after Sampai ended, the spring skies, darkened by the storm, unleashed an intense burst of wind, rain, and even some hail for good measure! I was heading from the sanctuary back to the tent in my suit, about a 100-yard walk, umbrella in hand, when I encountered a woman of advanced years accompanied by two others, one on either elbow of the older woman, and each juggling umbrellas while trying to keep the woman upright and dry at the same time. It was immediately clear that the woman could barely walk, and they were at the top of a series of stairs that led down to the tent. I offered to assist, and one of the people actually suggested that we carry her down the stairs. I suggested that the woman return to the sanctuary where I could arrange for a vehicle to carry her safely and dryly to the tent, but she was quite insistent that she wanted to make her way down the stairs to

the tent. It was right at this moment that the most intense rain and hail began to fall amidst a furious wind. The four of us made our way, very slowly, toward the shelter of the tent, supporting the woman and using the umbrellas to try and keep the woman dry. By the time we arrived, three of us were pretty well soaked and the woman had gotten a little wet, as well. We made a space for her in the front row, close to where Kaicho–Sensei would sit, and I found a couple of blankets to cover the elderly woman.

Why did this experience stand out with so many other exciting things happening? There was something slightly mysterious about it. I never learned the woman's name, and I did not recognize her. It seemed like the people I had assumed to be her family were, after all, innocent bystanders like myself who saw someone in need and put aside their own comfort to help. After the candle vigil she vanished, and to tell the truth I am not sure I would recognize her if I saw her again. Although, on the other hand, I think we can all recognize this mysterious person who has so much to offer our lives. We can all recognize someone who is in need. That need, which we sometimes would prefer to avoid, can be the key to our own happiness. I tell this story not out of egotism, but to demonstrate that Meishusama's words, "We cannot be happy ourselves until we make others happy," is true. I was wet and cold, but all my soul was warm. I had a deep sense of peace and joy simply looking into her eyes for a moment in which she imparted to me a sense of joy and gratitude. Nothing during the fifth anniversary had given me more joy than this simple experience.

Each year at SII's anniversary, the interfaith presentations on Saturday are a high point for me. I had come to Crestone a little over three years earlier, not because of all the spiritual centers here, but really because I had given a friend a ride home one year. That I followed an Indian who followed a bird down County Road T to Crestone, is as true as any explanation as to why I am here.

It was after I made my decision to come that I began to discover the stories of Crestone, and learned that many traditions, including Shumei, had made a home here. I remember thinking before I came, "I wonder how all those different traditions interact with each other." For a long time now, I have been keenly interested in how people come together. What I found when I arrived, is that to a large extent the many groups here in Crestone do not gather together as one. There are exceptions, to be sure, but for the most part, in my years here, Shumei's anniversary is the one time during the year when representatives from so many groups, sixteen this year, gather together with a common intention—peace.

This year Father Dave Denney and Sister Tessa Belecki, from the Desert Foundation, sent a prayer and specifically asked if I would read it for them in their absence. They were in Jerusalem meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to pray together for peace in an area torn by conflict and strife. How beautiful for friends from our small Crestone Community to be in that place on this day, and announce their intention to also join with us, and us with them, in this common prayer! Before reading their prayer, I shared my personal experience and the beauty of finding myself in this place to testify. It is my deep belief that when we gather together in ways such as this, the effects and ramifications of that gathering are far, far greater than may meet our five small senses. "I wonder what happens, when we get together like this," I said to the 200 or so people from such diversity, all huddled beneath the tent in the spring rain. "This is what happens," I said, answering my own question.

I was not even sure exactly what I meant when I said, "This is what happens." A little later, when Kenichi Yasuda Sensei brought the Sanctuary altar fire from the World Peace Sampai to light a candle in the hand of each and every person in that tent for the candlelight vigil, I thought to myself, "All these people from all around the world, all this diversity united: World Citizenship—Unity in Diversity." As we gathered together in song and as the candles were lit, I simply knew that Meishusama's vision for heaven on earth would be brought about in just this way. One gathering, one candle, one song, and one smile at a time. One day we will look into the eyes of those around us gathered in a great



Taiko artists in concert at the Crestone Center's amphitheater.

and shining circle. We'll see in each other only peace and joy. It may come along with a momentary sense of delightful surprise, when in that holy instant we realize there is nowhere that this circle is not.

What Our Neighbors Say about Us

The following is drawn from a series of interviews that Eri Ohata of Shumei's International Department conducted with people from various spiritual retreats and organizations that make up the community in the area of Shumei's Crestone Center. The interviews took place during the celebration of the Crestone Center's fifth anniversary.

Mr. Prem Anand,
The Haidakhandi Universal Ashram

Mr. Anand is the vice president of the Haidakhandi Universal Ashram, an organization of the Hindu tradition. His organization began in 1986 when land for the Ashram was procured in Crestone. Its main practice is called 'karma yoga,' which is believed to bring unification with God through action. Prem Anand has lived in Crestone for eleven years and has been a devotee of Haidakhan Babaji for seventeen years.

Shumei's existence here has been very beneficial. Every month Shumei flies a group of people to Crestone to do volunteer work. This is the time when SII has the most visitors. At least once a month during the summer the visitors tour the temples to learn what is happening here. We always appreciate their presence and willingness to expose themselves to various spiritual traditions. It has been a very beneficial relationship for all of us.

I particularly like Shumei's appreciation for art. I think it is important, valuable, and beneficial to recognize that beauty is in everything. Shumei people have a well planned organization, with beautiful landscaping, and architecture. Shumei's contribution to the spiritual awareness here comes about from their sampais, and other spiritual practices. All of the other organizations here are engaging in some form of spirituality and the energy from that seems

to go out and benefit people all around us, the environment, the world at large and the universe. I think this is a very significant thing. I also appreciate Shumei's gardening. They bring us produce occasionally, and give us plants to grow. I am watching to see how their compost operation turns out this year because I intend trying it myself.

We very much appreciate that Shumei maintains Camino Baca Grande Road, which becomes Dreamway Road. The amount of money and energy that goes into making the road drivable is significant. We are all on the same road and having a smooth way for visitors to drive along makes it easier for people to visit. So we appreciate Shumei's road maintenance very much.

My sense of what is happening in this part of the world, near the mountains, is that this seems to be a gathering point for people with their own particular spiritual practices. My direct experience of visiting and then living here is that there is a quality to the silence that seems to emanate from the land. The geography itself ties in with the legends of various Native American tribes who came here for their own spiritual practices.

Sister Suzie Lyan

The Nada Hermitage, Spiritual Life Institute

Suzie Lyan is a nun of the Carmelite Order of the Roman Catholic Church. She is a resident of the Nada Hermitage, a monastery in Crestone. The Hermitage has been in Crestone for close to twenty years and is a spiritual retreat center in which people can experience a serene environment and become spiritually balanced. Each visitor has his or her own living space, and there are now sixteen separate hermitages available. People of all beliefs are welcome. Visitors are welcome to join the community for prayers, mass, and work, usually in the garden. Counseling is also available.

We have been associated with Shumei for five years, especially during the Shumei Anniversary in May each year. We mark it on our calendar right away because it is a wonderful celebration. As I was thinking earlier about what I want to say at this year's celebration, I realized that I repeat myself over the years. Essentially what Shumei represents for me and for our community is wonderful. We always recommend that our

Hermitage retreatants visit the Shumei Center, and they always come back astounded by the beauty of the place and Shumei's kindness and hospitality. That teaches and inspires me, in my own monastic life in the Hermitage, to welcome people. So I love it when a lot of Shumei people come to the Hermitage. This is also very important for



Visitors take time to view art at the Crestone Center's gallery.

the entire Crestone Community. I find that the Shumei members' generous and kind nature is a part of them. Again, they are their own community and we are our own community, but Shumei is the fellowship that helps us build the larger community, and that I find very inspiring.

We were given the land for our retreat through the generosity of Hanne Strong¹ back in 1981, and moved here in 1982. We were in Arizona, but had to leave because a part of what we do is to provide silence and solitude for people, and Arizona was losing the space to provide that. When Hanne offered us land here we were grateful, accepted it, and started building. As a part of the larger community, to support one another in prayer, practice, and meditation, Shumei's anniversary is a marvelous way to build our kinship.

I find that people come to Crestone deliberately because of their spiritual practice, whatever it might be for each person or community. I find that the more I am inspired by visiting other spiritual communities, the more I am enriched in my own Catholic tradition. So, the spirit, vibration, and energy here is very real. People who

1. Hanne Marstrand Strong is the president of the Manitou Foundation. For over twenty years, her vision has been to establish a comprehensive ecumenical, spiritually based, and self-sustainable community in Crestone, Colorado.

come to retreat with us always feel that. It is not a religious but a spiritual thing. I am grateful to Shumei for coming here.

Ms Shauna Lanson
Yeshe Khorlo

The Yeshe Khorlo center was established in Crestone about five years ago, about the same time as the Shumei Center was being built. The retreat center was founded by Gangteng Tulku Rinpoche, from the kingdom of Bhutan, and its members practice vajri-ana Buddhism. The center facilitates personal, individual, and solitary retreats for students from all spiritual traditions.

As our Yeshe Khorlo center has been growing here alongside Shumei's Center, I have seen Shumei's contribution to the Crestone community through its sustainable Natural Agriculture, sharing the spirit of beauty, and through the friendliness of their volunteers.

Many of the teachers from our tradition of Tibetan Buddhism have felt that this land was especially good for spiritual practice and for living a peaceful life, with the added benefit of creating a harmony that can radiate out from this place to the whole world. Shumei, the Ashrams, the Buddhist retreat centers, the Carmelites, and others are all contributing in different ways. In the Buddhist tradition, there are many flavors, and in Crestone we have even more flavors, so it becomes a richer experience for people who visit here. It is wonderful to be part of such a community.

We enjoy having Shumei members visit our center. I remember one young man who asked me what my favorite words are, and I answered "compassion." He said his was "thank you," and added, "People place one hand on the heart to say thank you." Nobuyuki Sato² and Kenji Sakai² often bring us vegetables from their garden to share. When we have visitors, we also take them to the Shumei Center, which enriches their interfaith, cultural experience.

It has been five years! You have been here five years, and everything is going very well. I think Shumei will continue to grow

2. Nobuyuki Sato spent two years in Misono as a hoshisha and later became a full-time staff member. In 2002 he was transferred to Crestone to practice Natural Agriculture. He now works on Shumei's farm in Steinfurth, Germany. Kenji Sakai worked at Shumei's agriculture facility on Kishima Island between 1991 and 2003. He is now a resident of the Shumei International Institute's headquarters at Crestone, where he researches the practice of Natural Agriculture in a high desert area.

and become a vital part of this community. I hope people in Japan can also celebrate and be happy about your success. The Shumei community is the only organization that really brings the whole Crestone spiritual community together by having this yearly anniversary. It is a wonderful time when all of us can come to the amphitheater and share with each other.

Mark Elliot
Karma Thegsum Tashi Gomang

Mark Elliot works with Karma Thegsum Tashi Gomang in Crestone. The organization is part of the Karma Kajyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. Mr. Elliot has lived in Crestone for close to twenty years. The organization came to the area in 1980 at the invitation of Hanne and Maurice Strong,³ who granted them 200 acres of land.

At first I was not quite sure what to think of Shumei, but everyone at Shumei seems very nice and friendly. I was impressed by Shumei's building program because usually people here are very disorganized. I was impressed at how quickly the buildings were put up. It took seven years for us to build a stupa.⁴ I am also impressed at how Shumei people relate so beautifully to the local community. I was impressed by the efficiency, which is unusual here, but also by its members' kindness.

They are always helpful, not just in their healing Jyorei,⁵ but also working with the kids at the Charter School. I really think Shumei has been a very good example for us as Buddhists on how to be really good citizens, how to fit in, and how to be a beneficial influence in the community. Shumei has acquired a very good reputation.

My son David has a good friend, named Issa Retuta,⁶ who is a good example of the

3. Maurice Strong, Under Secretary General of the United Nations, is President of the UN Peace University. He is married to Hanna Strong.

4. The stupa is the earliest of Buddhist monuments. Its name derives from the Sanskrit word for 'mound' or 'heap.' Originally these mound-shaped structures were built to cover relicts of the Buddha. They can be found throughout Asia and increasingly in Europe and the Americas as well. These structures are symbols of enlightenment and of Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

5. Jyorei is the spiritual practice of sharing divine light that was created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, and is administered to people by Shumei members.

6. Please see Shumei Magazine's May/June 2007 issue, page 15, for Issa Retuta's story. Back issues of Shumei Magazine can be found on Shumei's website: www.shumei.org.

Shumei influence. Issa was not quite sure what to do with his life after he graduated from the Charter School. His going to Japan for a year I think took a lot of courage. He was not so healthy, though now he seems to have blossomed like a flower. He learned Japanese, and he looks terrific. Good for you, Issa, and good for Shumei!

The thing I love about Crestone is that it is the best place in the world that I know of to practice meditation. Also, I have a family. It is wonderful to bring up my son in a clean, healthy, and small community environment.

I like the fact that there are many different spiritual paths here and we get along very well. I honestly found it boring to be just around Buddhists. I think it is very healthy to have dialogue with people who have different approaches to spirituality. Some important things in life to think about are how we live as decent human beings, how we can be helpful, and how we can find some kind of truth in ourselves. I think it is inspiring to have other genuine seekers around you.

Paramacharya Swami Parameshwaranda
Temple of Consciousness/Humanity
in Unity

Paramacharya Swami Parameshwaranda, referred to as Swamiji, is the Resident Master at the Temple of Consciousness. Her Holiness Sai Maa Lakshmi Devi is Founder of the Ashram and the non-profit humanitarian and educational organization, Humanity In Unity (HIU), and is Spiritual Master of the HIU community. HIU's vision is the union of humanity consciously awakened as 'Divine Love in Action.' While following Hindu practices, H.H. Sai Maa and HIU honor all faiths and traditions, as does Shumei. The Temple of Consciousness has been in Crestone about two and one-half years.

Immediately, when we met everybody at Shumei, we felt we were with family because there was such joy and such heart in everyone with Shumei. We felt unity consciousness, joy, love, peace, and serenity in being with everyone. We have been to a few anniversaries, and I spoke at the anniversary last year.

We have what we call SYMPLE (Spiritual Youth Mentoring Program for Leadership and Enlightenment), and part of this program is a two-week summer retreat. We brought Shumei youth and our youth togeth-

er in the past, had a party, and listened to Taiko drumming. We have pot luck gatherings with the community as well. Shumei comes to visit us and we visit Shumei.

We love the artwork and Shumei's exhibits. Actually the person who cooks our meals does glass art, and she had an exhibit in the Shumei gallery. We appreciate self-expression through the arts and also through natural agriculture, as you can see by our greenhouse. We are very much interested in growing organic food.

We feel Jyorei is much like our practice of Diksha,⁷ which has been around for many years. We have received Jyorei several times at the Shumei Center and also from Ms Hiroko Koyama, your president. We feel Shakti⁸ energy from Jyorei, similar to what we feel with our 'Ananda Jyotir' (Light of Bliss) Diksha. It is a different kind of light transmission, but very much about energy, purification, and transformation.

I would like very much to acknowledge and say how grateful I am to Shumei for the embracing, unifying togetherness that it manifests and demonstrates in this community. There are many communities here, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jewish and others. There have not been many occasions when all of these different faiths and traditions come together. I would say that Shumei has been the most instrumental in bringing these different communities together. Of course, the anniversary is a wonderful occasion for this to happen. This is the fifth anniversary, and the anniversary has already brought these communities together five times.

Thank you Shumei! I would like to say you are all very much invited to visit the Temple of Consciousness community. Please do come when you are in Crestone.

Lama Wangdu

Vajra Vidya Retreat Center

Lama Karma Wangdu moved from Nepal two

7. 'Diksha' is a ritual of initiation performed in Hinduism and Buddhism. As practiced by Humanity in Unity, it is the physical transference of divine energy, or supreme light, directly into the brain, initiating a process of illumination and enlightenment in which the mind is brought back to its original harmony and balance.

8. 'Shakti' is a Hindu term that means the power or the potential to produce. Believed to be the ultimate and primordial creative force, Shakti energy is associated with the feminine aspect of the divine and is thought to represent the dynamic principles of feminine power. It is the energy of cosmic consciousness, and the source of all divine evolution.



The candlelight peace vigil begins with Kenichi Yasuda Sensei bringing fire from the Crestone Center Sanctuary.

years ago, when the founder of Vajra Vidya sent him and another Lama to Crestone when the Vajra Vidya retreat center first opened. Many visitors come to the center from differing religious and spiritual backgrounds. Some come for individual practice. Some of them practice only for a weekend, others for a week, some for a month, and still others stay a full year. At the center, prayer and sitting meditation is practiced for one hour in the mornings, after which individual meditation takes place in the visitors' rooms. After dinner they have a one-hour practice session together. Every Sunday, they perform what is known as "the medicine Buddha," when people are invited to send prayer requests for relatives and friends who are ill.

Shumei is our neighbor, and we have visited Shumei a few times. What I like about Shumei is that they really care about nature, especially with their Natural Agriculture. The Shumei Center is clean and peaceful. So, when I enter it, I feel very comfortable.

I believe Crestone is a place that has a lot of energy because of all the spiritual centers that are together here. The Haidiakandi Universal Ashram, for example, invites all other spiritual groups to their center when they have a special day. Also, there is Shumei's annual celebration. Many spiritual organizations celebrate and share together, and although many different spiritual practitioners come together, we are all very comfortable, peaceful, and do not have fear. I think this place has a wonderful energy.

People from many different places come to our center. If they are new, we take them to all the spiritual centers around here. When they came back from Shumei, they are really happy, and show their interest in Shumei, especially in Natural

Agriculture. I also went to the gardens and it inspired me because I thought, "Oh, I should start a garden like Shumei." On one visit, a practitioner of Natural Agriculture was there from Japan. We entered the gardens, picked some vegetables, and ate them. One of our visitors and I were very surprised to taste the sweetness of the vegetables. Normally, when she buys vegetables at the supermarket, they are sour. She boils them in a pot and adds something to get rid of the bitterness. The vegetable from the natural agriculture garden had no bitterness. This sort of thing is very good for the community and also for people all over the world where Shumei has Centers. Many people from different places go to visit Shumei, and later say to other people, "You should go to Shumei. It is a wonderful spiritual center."

My message to Shumei people in Japan is that I really appreciate what you are doing in our community. Many people are encouraged in seeing this, and become more and more interested in Shumei. Congratulations for your achievements, and thank you for everything you do.

Dan Welch and Craig Hase

Crestone Mountain Zen Center

Dan Welch is the Assistant Abbot of Crestone Mountain Zen Center. Craig Hase, a resident of the center for three years, has held many positions during his time there. Presently, he holds the position of Work Leader, in charge of the various work projects.

Crestone Mountain Zen Center was established in 1987. The primary focus of the center's practice is a combination of meditation with some chanting, and maintaining the center through daily work. In the sum-

mer months most of the center's income is derived from hosting groups that use the center's facilities. During these times the monks prepare their visitors' rooms and make elegant, vegetarian meals for them—a bit fancier than what the monks usually eat during the rest of the year.

Dan: The Crestone–Baca is an interesting community in that we get along as neighbors so well. For the most part the various centers and their members have their own unique practices, but on occasion we meet to share each other's celebrations, anniversaries, and special events.

Also, we support each other during times of crisis. For example, we are working together to form a volunteer fire department among the spiritual centers, so that in case of fire we can pool our resources to help protect our buildings before the local fire department arrives. The summers are often quite dry and during these times the fire danger can be extreme. There are other ways we help each other. We share gardening tips and, if we have an abundance of vegetables, our produce. Many people have come to live in Crestone to cultivate a conscious life style far from the pressures of metropolitan life and the busyness of the world. Even though we may not share spiritual practices together, we find a lot of people who similarly appreciate the solitude of a quiet life in these mountains.

Craig: I think what is special about Crestone is the people who come here. They tend to be sophisticated, educated, urban types who are looking for a different kind of life. Most seem to have some kind of spiritual practice. I think there are five Tibetan centers here, two Zen centers, two ashrams, and a number of other groups. Many local residents study with a spiritual teacher or belong to a community, and even those who don't, still value a contemplative life—something calmer, more inwardly directed. In some sense, we are all here to examine what it means to be alive.

Dan: When Ms Koyama first visited Crestone she stayed overnight at one of our guest houses. I think she was so struck by the beauty of the place that she was determined to start a Center here. Shumei started with one building on an old abandoned mine site and then other buildings followed. They are beautiful buildings with carefully considered architecture. Little by little, we

have become acquainted with the Shumei residents and through the years have enjoyed quite a close relationship.

We have a lot in common. I think that Shumei's love of beauty has a deep resonance with a long tradition in Zen that cultivates beauty within daily life—how we live, taking care of the buildings, the architecture, and how we take care of the gardens and grounds as well. We are blessed here with beautiful surroundings. It is also great to have neighbors who not only enjoy the beautiful mountains and surrounding San Luis Valley, but also make a keen effort to bring beauty into their buildings, into their lives, and their ongoing support of local artists. Shumei attracts many artists and creative people, and offers programs that share these artists and their work with the community.

Craig: I think what we are most struck by is the heart that Shumei people bring into their work. I feel connected to them. They build bridges between people. They bring people together for art exhibitions, weekly movie nights, and taiko drumming. They offer classes in taiko drumming. Shumei members contribute an enormous amount to this community, and Crestone would not be the same if they were not here. They are a good influence on kids; they teach values by living example. I find that very impressive, and like having them as neighbors.

Dan: Throughout the years that Shumei has been here, often we get phone calls from their office saying, "Can we bring a tour by?" Most always, we say, "Sure. Please come by." We give them a tour, show them our center including this beautiful Kannon statue, our Zendo meditation hall, and other buildings. It has always been a joy for me and others to give these tours and to see the surprise and enthusiasm of the Japanese visitors when they see a little piece of Japan here in the Colorado mountains. Those of us who have been to Japan, who have a deep love for Japan, and even those of us who have not been there, have a curiosity and a keen interest in Japan.

We welcome Japanese Shumei visitors to our center.

Craig: Well, I have not been to Japan, but I study in a Buddhist lineage which came from Japan. So I am always happy when Japan comes to me. So, Please come. You are welcome here.

GRAND SAMPAI, 2007

Connectedness

Matthew Crowley (USA)

I was excited, but it seemed unlikely that I would go to Japan. April and May are perhaps the busiest two months of the year at Shumei's Crestone Center. Our fifth anniversary celebration would be held between May 19 and 20. If I were to attend the Grand Sampai¹ and Paul Winter's concerts in Misono, I would be back in Crestone only nine days before the anniversary, and I had a lot going on. When I was asked to go to Japan twice in less than twelve hours, I began to realize the trip would become reality.

First Paul Winter, who I had met through Shumei, called me with a few questions. I had been involved in Shumei's support of Paul Winter's Crestone CD project, which would be released at this year's Grand Sampai, where three concerts would be performed in Meishusama Hall.² During that conversation Paul indicated that he would like me to come to the concerts if I could. "Wow," I said, "I'd really love to, but..." and then I explained that I was needed in Crestone to plan the Shumei International Institute's upcoming anniversary. I said I would talk to Sensei Alan Imai and Mitsunari Kato³ to see what they thought. It was an exciting possibility, but I just did not know if I could.

The very next morning I answered the phone at SII's office. It was Sensei Eugene Imai,⁴ who without a moment's pause, proceeded to tell me that he wanted me to attend Grand Sampai and write an article for the media department from the standpoint of a newcomer to Misono. "Funny you should ask," I said. Suddenly it was clear that I would be going. This was one of those times when one realizes that life is happening, and we can just step back and hold on for the ride.

1. These are special sampais held in Misono annually in May. In attendance are Shumei members and friends from throughout the world.

2. Meishusama Hall is the centerpiece of Shumei's International Center at Misono. It holds over 5,000 people and is used for both daily sampais and special events throughout the year.

3. Mitsunari Kato presently is the General Manager of the Shumei International Institute's headquarters at Crestone, Colorado.

4. Eugene Imai is the Director of Shumei America and the Director of Shumei's International Department.

The truth is that at times I was very uncertain what to write about for these pages. So, I will go directly to the heart of the matter and tell you that I can sum up my experience of Grand Sampai and indeed this whole trip in one word—connectedness. I could say “strengthening connectedness,” but it is more accurate to say it revealed the connections that have always existed. So that is it; that is the story, and the rest is just detail. I love details, so I shall go on.

I feel that the Grand Sampai ceremony itself, and those precious few minutes when Kaicho–Sensei blesses all present, is the core and most important aspect of what happens. However, there is so much that surrounds those minutes, so many details; the journey, the people, the magnificence of Misono. It was on my last morning in Japan, at what seemed to be an unassuming breakfast, that I posed a simple question. “If you care to comment,” I asked, “what, if anything, did you experience when Kaicho–Sensei gave us Jyorei?” It was not as if I did not have my own answer, and the specific answers I received to this question are not what really mattered. The answers were more like a frame of reference; a context in which I could see the gifts I have received.

I have asked this question about Jyorei before, and I have heard many different responses. I am sure all are quite valid. The one answer that sets me free is, “I don’t usually feel anything.” This answer, on more than one occasion, has come from Japanese, long-time Shumei members. I realize that, because of the challenges of communication between two languages, that answer might well be a kind of generalization. I always appreciate the makoto⁵ of those who do not feel much, and feel free to simply say so. I think that there can be a kind of self-imposed, quiet pressure to have an answer to the question, “What do you feel?” It is not that I do not feel anything, it is just that I have not yet seen a vivid image of Meishusama, Kannon, or God. Not yet, but I am open to, and would welcome, that experience were it to come. It is similar for me when giving Jyorei. In good humor I



Members of Shumei’s international community who attended the 2007 Grand Sampai in Japan. The photograph was taken outside of Shumei’s sanctuary on Kishima Island when the group was touring the facilities. Matthew Crowley is first row, second from left.

sometimes say, “Well, I haven’t seen fire come forth from the palm of my hand yet, but I’d like to!” I have indeed had some profound experiences surrounding Jyorei, but my point is this: I believe that we are working mostly, if not entirely, on a spiritual level when giving and receiving Jyorei. If we do not see or feel something with one of our five senses or even at the level of thought, that does not come as a big surprise.

Twice on this trip, from two different Senseis, I heard the following idea. Once from Sensei Joe Amanai,⁶ over a fabulous meal. The second time was from Oguri Sensei,⁷ during her address on Kishima Island, following the May monthly Sampai. Both spoke of how thoughts follow feelings, and how thoughts make our experience. Hearing this twice leads me to deeply consider Meishusama’s teaching that all things in the material world are preceded by actions in the spiritual world. What effects in this material world follow our Jyorei activities? I will answer in one word: connectedness.

I believe these connections can at times transcend the realms of the spiritual and material. We need not all have these transcendental experiences. At times in history, a few have had profound visions, which carry a message for those of us willing to

hear it. Sometimes we consider these people great beings: Jesus, Buddha, and Meishusama. However, at other times it could be you or me. The message might be profound: “a quiet agricultural revolution,” “Love thy neighbor as thyself”; or it might seem small and personal: “Pay that old debt to a friend who has probably forgiven and forgotten it long ago.” While on this trip, I heard people talking over and over again about how things are speeding up, and the importance of positive thought and actions during this time of acceleration.

Details? I did not know what I would write because in some ways I felt “between the worlds,” a role I am now intimately familiar with. Some years ago, in perhaps a transcendent moment, a poem came to me that ended “...I hang in weightless stasis, between the pendulum’s swing, I bask in silvery ghost light, between the worlds go I.”

The experience of being between worlds is not always an entirely comfortable one. It can feel like you are a little bit here, a little bit there, but not entirely anywhere. On this trip, I was invited to join Paul Winter and the musicians. I had already been involved closely in some aspects of the Crestone CD project. I arrived a few days early at Misono to assemble the cathedral gongs played in Meishusama Hall by the taiko team, who would do the song “Akebono” (sunrise), but I was certainly not one of the musicians. At times I was uncomfortable and felt I was riding along on Paul Winter’s coattails. I felt

5. Makoto is a Japanese word with ancient roots. The word was often used by Shumei’s founder, Mokichi Okada (Meishusama), in his teachings; it sums up an approach to life in which each of us can find harmony with the world by practicing sincerity and truth in thought, word, and deed. Its meaning might vary according to circumstance.

6. Sensei Joe (Yoshinori) Amanai is the Center Head of Shumei’s London Center, and Europe’s first Shumei Sensei.

7. Oguri Sensei is the head of Shumei’s Hiroshima Center, and currently a member of the Executive Board of Shumei.

uncertain if I deserved the royal red carpet treatment I received while traveling with the musicians. This proximity to the creative genius of these musicians was at once exhilarating and humbling. I can only return to that which I believe must always be true; I was exactly where I was meant to be.

The concerts at Misono began with Paul walking all the way up the aisle from the rear of Meishusama Hall to the stage while playing “Song for the Mountains,” the beautiful theme that begins and ends the new CD. Next, Peter May⁸ introduced “Awakenings” with the mighty call of the conch shell from the rear of Meishusama Hall, surprising some in the audience. Koji Nakamura⁹ responded from the stage with a thunderous taiko call. The soaring sound within this magnificent sanctuary, dedicated to Shumei’s founder, was very reminiscent of when and where it was recorded in the magnificence of nature’s own sanctuary, high in the mountains above Crestone. When John Carlos Perrea, a gifted singer with Mescalero Apache roots, launched into “Blue Horse Special,” it sent shivers through my body. To hear the powerful and traditional Native American song and drum echoing throughout Meishusama Hall felt like a powerful coming together. I thought those walls and the many ears within them had likely never heard anything like this before. I imagined a broad smile on Meishusama’s face at this way of east meeting west.

As beautiful as my entire journey in Japan was, I feel blessed and have deep gratitude for being able to spend these years of my life living in a place as extraordinary as Crestone. When “Sunset on the Great Sand Dunes” was played, I felt a powerful longing for my home in the beautiful mountains of Colorado. The entire first half of the concert was played without pause, even for audience applause, and was a compendium of songs from the new CD. After a brief intermission, the Consort took the stage and played a second set of Paul Winter Classics, ending with “Common Ground” and then an encore return with “Icarus.” It is truly inspiring to see this group of master musicians come

together and present the art of nature musically. It is one thing to put together a CD of such sweeping vastness from field recordings and studio mixes; it is quite a different thing to put it together in a live show. This group of musicians did not just succeed; they excelled in their very first presentation of this magnificent gift of music.

Besides the invitation to help with the concerts, I had been invited to join the international tour group. Trouble is, because of the ‘other world’ I was traveling in with the musicians, I did not fit easily into the international tour group itinerary. My gratitude to everyone in the international department, in particular to Hiromi Suzuki, whose patience with my numerous e-mails and phone calls allowed me to walk in two worlds.

Details! I endured 12,000 miles of air travel, cars, trains, busses, boats, and a broken rear window in my Subaru at 5:00 a.m. in Denver before my flight. I assembled and painted seven cathedral gongs before the concerts, and attended a rehearsal, followed by three days of extraordinary concerts with the Paul Winter Consort. I had the privilege of greeting Kaicho-Sensei with the international tour group and then visiting Shigaraki No Sato¹⁰ and the Miho Museum. I had amazing meals that simply were beyond description. I had a solo adventure, finding my way by train and wandering rainy streets and alleys in Kyoto, then a bus ride reunion with the international tour heading south to Ushimado and Kishima Island. It is difficult to choose just which stories to tell from so many.

Following the monthly Sampai ceremony at the beautiful Kishima Sanctuary, Oguri Sensei shared some beautiful and mysterious stories about Kaishusama¹¹ and how Kishima Island had come to be a place for youth camp experiences and a center for the practice of Natural Agriculture for over thirty years. She spoke of both her own feelings and her son’s feelings of connectedness to the entire world through Kishima. Oguri Sensei mentioned my friends, Kenji Ban, Massaharu Noda, Kenji Sakai, our farm managers in New York, California, and Colorado, as well as farmers from Canada, the UK, and from farms all

over the world, who had all received their Natural Agriculture training on Kishima Island. Connections!

Oguri Sensei closed her presentation by saying that she hoped we would all take the time to absorb “the energy that connects us all” from this place. With a few hours of free time to ourselves on the island, I heeded her advice and headed off for a remote corner of the island for some solitude. I felt drawn to a place where I noticed a small turtle on a map of the island. Later I learned that “Kame,” which means “turtle” in Japanese, was a nickname for Kaishusama.

I made my way through brush to a rocky point at the edge of the Seto Sea and immersed myself in the watery energy of this sacred place. I felt a deep sense of completion and elemental balance, having now visited and been transformed by the Fire of Misono, along with living at home amidst the Earth energy of Crestone, and now being immersed in the watery bliss of Kishima. Completion, balance, we are all connected!

THE STATE OF THE ARTS

A Long-Awaited Gift

Jane Imai (USA)

Jane Imai is one of the founders of the Shumei Arts Council of America and is Executive Director of that organization. Her background is in the visual arts. She graduated from Saga Arts College in Kyoto, Japan, majoring in textile. Her textile designs have been featured in a variety of exhibitions, including a solo exhibition in Kyoto, Japan. She has worked with Shumei America since 1986.

The Shumei Arts Council of America has, for the first time, received a grant from the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Foundation for our Children’s Concert Series this year. We are very grateful and honored to receive this grant, along with those from other respected organizations, after several years of effort

Receiving the grant means not only getting funds from the foundations, but also that we were able to gain their trust. This is

8. Trumpeter, resident of Crestone, and long-time friend of Shumei, Peter May was responsible for finding the site at North Crestone Lake where Paul Winter created his CD “Crestone.”

9. Koji Nakamura is considered one of today’s finest taiko artists. He was the Shumei Taiko Ensemble’s first leader. Koji came from Japan to live in Pasadena, CA in 2005 to promote the art of taiko in North America.

10. Shigaraki-no-sato is a cultural heritage site near Misono, where two traditional Japanese farmhouses have been relocated and restored, and where a model Natural Agriculture farm is located.

11. Kaishusama is an honorific name used when referring to Mrs. Mihoko Koyama, Shumei’s first president and spiritual leader. Kaishusama passed away in November of 2003.

very important, and I am very grateful that such prominent foundations in our community have recognized the Council.

The Shumei Arts Council has presented the Children's Concert Series at Shumei Hall, Pasadena since 2000, and as of June 2007, 8700 students, teachers, and parents, mainly from the Pasadena Unified School District, have attended.

There is a great void in music and arts education in our local public schools, due to drastic and ongoing budgetary cuts. The impact of this arts educational vacuum has adversely affected children in particular from cultural and socio-economic backgrounds where exposure to the arts might be generally limited. In targeting these public school children who have been greatly affected by these cuts, our concerts directly address this need for more education in the arts. It is very important to nurture aesthetic sentiments, especially in children. The concerts give young people the opportunity to learn about music, and to learn how to listen to music of the highest quality within a concert hall setting with good acoustics.

Suzanne York, a third grade teacher at Sierra Madre Elementary School, wrote:

"For three years now, myself, my grade-level colleagues and our students have been the recipients of the generosity of Shumei Hall and its extraordinary programs that it offers, particularly for children. I am writing to you to express just how special an experience it has been for us.

"The whole experience of going to Shumei Hall is one that, I am sure, will imprint many positive things on children. The beautiful hall itself is quiet, comfortable, serene, and 'reverent'—you can sense that children connect with this as soon as they walk in the door.

"The quality of the programming is carefully chosen. All of the performances that I have witnessed never 'dumb down' the selections. Rather, they present the music to the children in an intelligent way that will enhance the experience—sharing anecdotal stories about the composers, the pieces of music, and stories of themselves as artists that are truly inspiring and real. I'm sure many children leave there imagining themselves as future cellists, pianists—any variety of artist. Listening to the amazing taiko drummers, who generally open each performance, creates an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation. It is a

language far more powerful than any text presented to them in the classroom. Because of the demographics of our school population, many of the students from our school have never experienced any such kind of event. I am sure that this kind of cross-cultural exposure to the arts will have a profound effect on their memories.

"It is an experience like no other. We are truly thankful to them for giving us opportunities to dream, wonder, imagine, and feel a world connected with the beautiful language of music and caring."

We of the Shumei Arts Council were honored to have Pasadena's Mayor Bill Bogaard attend one of our Children's Concerts on March 3, 2006, and we received a wonderful comment from him, as well:

"Based on my experience today, it's a wonderful way to enjoy music, but more importantly, it's an opportunity to learn about music and music's ability to tell a story or to present an animal or to capture other sounds or images that are all part of life. So this is a learning experience for the younger people, and the performers were excellent. I've been treated very graciously, and I thank Mrs. Imai and all of you for the hospitality. I'm glad to be here, I'm glad to know about this wonderful venue and this wonderful program."

Since our first concert featuring Mieko Takizawa in 1998, many outstanding musicians have come to Shumei Hall and performed both for our children's series and at our regular concerts. Most of these musicians make mention of the hall's special acoustical qualities. I would like to share what some of the artists told us of their experience of Shumei Hall.

Earl Wild, one of the 20th century's greatest pianists, was pleased with two things concerning his concert at Shumei Hall on November 17, 2002: the piano's quality (Kawai America Corporation donated one of their best pianos and brought in their best piano technician from Japan for him); and the acoustics of Shumei Hall.

Henry Hunt, President of Church Organs Incorporated, who installed and currently maintains the organ in Disney Hall, told us, "The only difference between Disney Hall and Shumei Hall is size...."



Jane Imai, between officials of the Pasadena Tournament of Roses Foundation, holds grant certificate.

Guitarist **Isamu Nakashio** came to Shumei Hall to check out our building, and played a few songs. Afterwards, he said, "The sound reaction of this hall reminds me of playing at Carnegie Hall. I want to perform here."

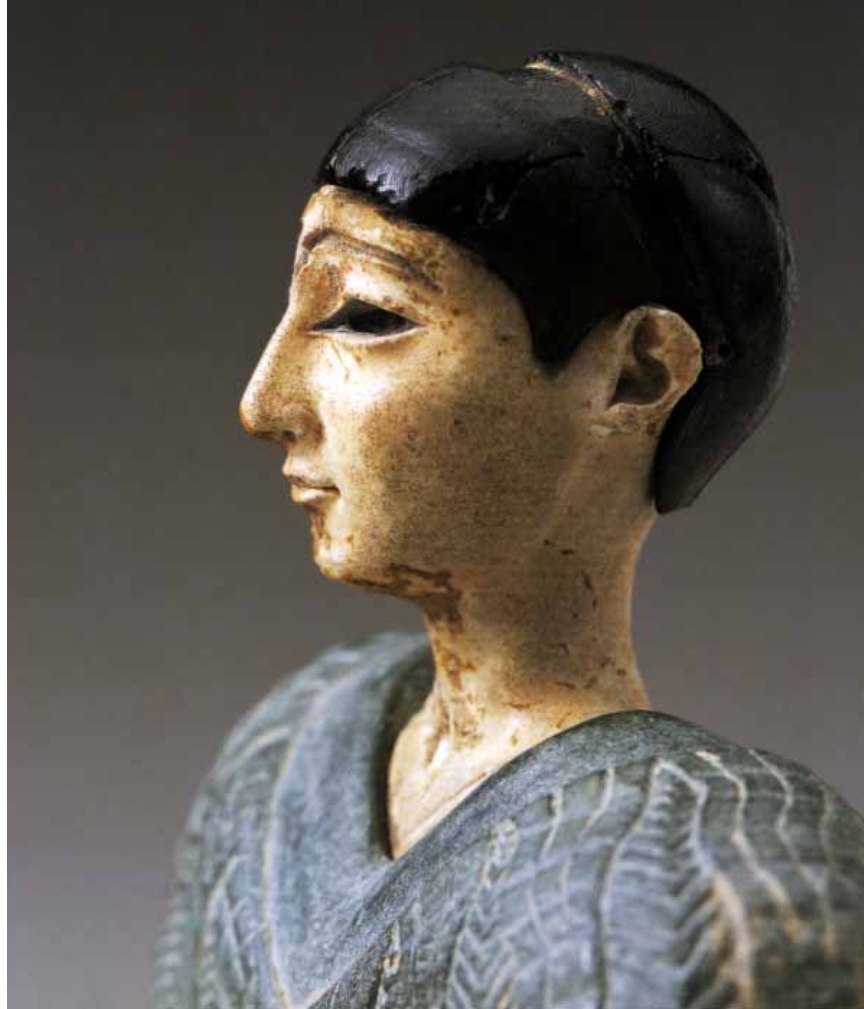
Peter Rutenberg, Director of the Los Angeles Chamber Singers, who won a Grammy Award this year, told us, "Since your hall has good acoustics, I think sixteen singers are enough [instead of the usual twenty-four singers]."

In March, 2006, **Kouji Shitara**, a nephew of Toru Takemitsu, the famed composer who died in 1996, visited Shumei Hall. I told him that when we built Shumei Hall, we never thought that we would eventually present live concerts in it. However, most musicians comment on the hall's good acoustics. He replied, "Although you did not plan it, God planned to use the hall for concerts. This hall is a gift from God."

I realize now that God has prepared for us to use our sanctuary for these concerts. The Shumei Hall is a treasure embodying the appreciation of beauty that Meishusama and Kaishusama valued so much. I am very grateful for that.

We firmly believe that art has the power to uplift and purify us, and when individual inner beauty spreads, social beauty comes into being. We will continue to present unique concerts and the Children's Concert series for our community.

From the Miho Museum Collection



Seated Margianan Goddess

(Detail)

Bactria–Margiana (Present day Turkmenistan, northern Afghanistan.) Late 3rd to early 2nd millennium B.C. Chlorite, limestone, bitumen. Height 22.5 cm. Width 22 cm. Depth 16.5 cm.

Agriculture developed early in the ancient Bactrian region due to fertile soil and the water that was afforded by rivers draining from the mountains of western Central Asia. While Bactrian culture was influenced by Mesopotamia and Elam of southern Iran, Bactria along with Margiana in the southeastern region of the Caspian Sea became a unique cultural sphere in its own right. Similar images of the goddess sometimes are portrayed with plants growing from their bodies. It is thought that in those times, the goddess was believed to determine fertility, rebirth of life, and sometimes the life and death of humans. Her expressions varied; she

sometimes is portrayed with a stern visage, at other times a gentle smile. This Seated Goddess was made over 4,000 years ago. Depictions of earth goddesses, such as this figure, probably were the focus of prayers for renewed fecundity.

There is a sharp contrast between the stylized costume and the delicately modeled head. Images of rounded bodies wrapped in wool and sheepskin were common to goddesses portrayed in Mesopotamian and Elamic art at the time. This Margianan goddess is particularly refined. Her short–cropped hair is carved from jet– black bitumen and her face and neck is of warm white limestone, making the goddess' appearance life– like. Even by modern tastes, she is a fine–boned, striking woman.

SHUMEI AMERICA

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