



June Program

Larry Ragle will present the June 22nd program. He will show pictures from the 18th Annual Korean American Soosuk Exhibition that was held on April 2-3 at the L.A Arboretum in Arcadia.

Come early for the swap meet. See page 2.



ALERT: You know the drill. There are 5 Wednesdays in June. Join us on the 22nd. Show up on the 29th and you'll be left out.

Stone of the Month



Richard Turner suggested abstract stones. It has been 2 years since we tackled this subject so perhaps you have a stone we have not seen before. Quality stones without a recognizable shape should still be open to a variety of interpretations and these very suggestive and mysterious stones should be in a *daiza*.

Ragle collection: A gift from Ralph Johnson, this stone is from China 16"h x 8"w x 4"d *daiza* included

Patrick Metiva is making *daiza* in Seattle. View his website at: home.comcast.net/~snjbm/site/

The Power of the Point

“What we have here is a failure to communicate” *

As the lights were dimmed and an air of excitement filled the room, no one – particularly me -anticipated a new “issue”. As I bragged last month, “I’ve solved the problem” referring to the 2 to 3 seconds we had to view most of the Vietnamese stones during our April meeting. I did. I managed to capture “single frames” and create, in effect, a slide. We could have looked at each “slide” as long as we wanted, that is, Microsoft willing. To my dismay, my laptop computer, built for Microsoft 2003 didn’t like my new desktop’s Microsoft 2010 PowerPoint program. The plan was to compare the character of and the manner in which stones are displayed in Vietnam to China, Japan and Korea, as we appreciate and understand them. I’m not sure when that will happen as a club, since we have other programs scheduled, so I’ll make some comparison at this point for you to consider.

First and by far the most important observation from my point of view was- they are exactly like us. Most of us, well many of us who collect stones as *objet d’art*, are crazy –obsessed with a need for more stones while hoping to find the ultimate masterpiece. You can see in the eyes of the collectors as they pull their prey from the river, the same emotions and excitement that most of us feel, at least I do, as we see the stone for the first time. And you can see they have huge collections-rooms and shelves loaded with stones on display - and no junk in sight. The shapes - landscape, human and object, and patterns - human and plant, for example, would be appreciated by most collectors.

I feel their technique of display, primarily on *daiza*, is the major difference when compared to the Japanese method of display. They show a lot of wood, similar to the Korean style, that is often terraced and filling as much bulk as the stone, but not as ornate as some of the classic Chinese scholars’ rock *daiza*, with which I am familiar. There’s a lot to discuss. [The night was saved, since I had Part 2 on the DVD to view, revealing dozens of more stones on display as well as some obviously very personal moments as the collectors expressed their passion for stones. See pg 3]

*Thanks to - “Cool Hand Luke”

Larry Ragle

May Meeting Notes *by Linda Gill*

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Jim expressed the hope that the **Bob Watson** Exhibit being planned as part of the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the Japanese Garden at the Huntington Library would encourage members and other collectors to take the time to record their personal 'suiseki' histories and recollections of collecting trips, companions and exhibits. If interested, email him at jimgreaves@roadrunner.com to request a sheet of guidelines to help you organize the types of material that may prove useful for future 'history' projects and exhibits. He also asked that you please contact him if you have stones that belonged to any of the original members who collected with **Bob Watson** (**Cliff Johnson, Tony Thomas, Melba Tucker, etc.**). Some may be of immediate use for the upcoming **Bob Watson** Exhibit and/or accompanying book, while the very best examples will be considered for a broader exhibition, possibly in 2012.

Swap meet at the June meeting! Come early and bring in anything you wish to **trade** or **sell**. Please be prepared to conclude your business not later than 7:20

Stone of the Month; human shaped stones. Almost all the 'stones of the month' were figure shaped stones although a few were patterns and some were not human. You know who you are!

Measurements are in inches, h x w x d.

The following were either not photographed or the photograph was of poor quality:

Kazue Takada brought a 2 piece ink pot that she uses for calligraphy or to burn incense. She also brought an oval stone that she uses as a mortar and a dark green tone from the Yuha. **Don Mullally** had a dark brown sandstone figure that looked like a primitive sculpture and came from the Mojave desert. **Richard Turner** brought a picture of **Buster Keaton** who was known as the 'great stone face of film' because he never smiled. **Lois Hutchinson** brought her delightful face stone with two large white eyes from the Van Duzen River. **Sharon Somerfeld's** first stone was a long black oval with great luster that had a mouth and her second was a small malachite that looked like a person sitting. She also showed a book, *California Jade* by **Donald L. Dupras** that has a map of jade sites. It is available through the author by email at geopubs@sbcglobal.net. It is \$15, shipping included.



Joseph Gaytan 2 x 5 x 3, a fallen geisha like Madame Butterfly



Jim Greaves 2 x 1 x 7.5, Euro-style sculptural figure from Jim's driveway



Jim Greaves 6 x 2 x 2, figure stone from Northern California



Nina Ragle 3.5 x 3.75 x 2.5 (daiza by Gail Middleton) Kings River, CA
continued on pages 8-9

The 1 inch wide inner margins are designed for use with a 3 hole punch.



May Program Notes *by Linda Gill*

Larry showed the *Suiseki in Vietnam DVD #2* Starting with the wind chime of hanging rocks again, this video showed a rock displayed in a fishbowl and the fruit as well as a number of single stones in *daiza*.

Then on to a show in a park with lots of single stones displayed like *suiseki*, carved statues - some as tall as a man, and geodes large and small. There were



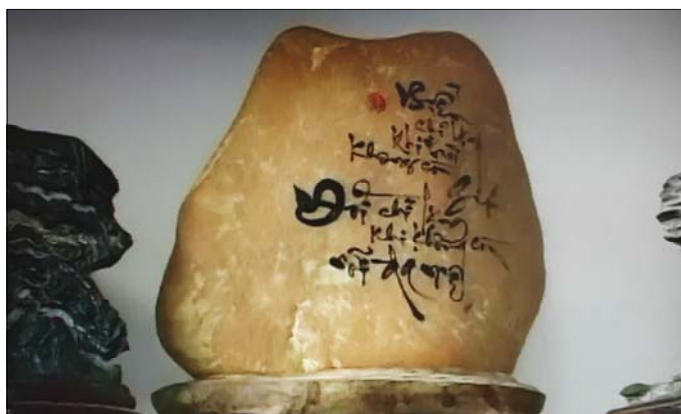
displays of *saikei* - the combination of multiple stones and bonsai on a large *suiban* that represent an entire landscape. They were beautiful and at least one had a running waterfall!

One interesting display had a large dark stone in a *suiban* filled with yellow gravel. The gravel also was in several depressions in the stone representing lakes. There were more shots of mounted stones and several discussions which were in Vietnamese. Larry will try to get these translated for us.

In several shots in the video we saw stones in *daiza* being sprayed with water, then the *daiza* being



wiped dry. Although we saw several single *tenkei* used, there was one scene where a man was constructing a whole scene with people and animals walking up to a temple on the top of a stone on a 'path' built around the stone. Many *tenkei* were used to create this scene. Both of these practices may be unique to the Vietnamese.



One displayed stone was yellowish and was inscribed with calligraphy. Such stones with carving are common in Japan but not considered *suiseki*.



Ask Guy Jim

Dear Guy Jim,

Some club members [and undoubtedly many visitors] were confounded by your display of the small boat stone at the recent Huntington show. Others singled it out for praise, including Larry Ragle while reviewing the show at our February meeting. Would you share a bit more of your thinking behind the unusual presentation?

Curious in Culver City

Dear Curious,

I must confess that I am somewhat surprised and gratified by the many positive comments regarding the display of the *funagata-ishi* (boat stone) at the recent Huntington show. There was some apprehension that allotting a full 8 foot (2.44 m) table to a 4 3/8 inch (11.2 cm) stone (and a thin stone at that) might find me on the receiving end of rocks thrown by club members whose stones may have been lacking ideal space on the center tables. With such anticipation, this was the sole stone I had prepared for the show. [The stone was so dwarfed by the table space that when the show opened **Joseph Gaytan**, looking from across the room reacted in panic thinking a stone had been stolen!] Whether the results were effective or feeble or effete, must be left to the viewer. For those who found the display a bit much (or too little), be forewarned that the following ‘after’ thoughts may take up as much empty space as the display itself!



Detail of display as exhibited
The *suiban* measures 24 3/8" x 16 7/8" x 1 1/4" H
(62cm x 43cm x 3.3cm)

The basic presentation may be interpreted narrowly as a simply a boat on water or in terms of a voyage, physical or philosophical – the search for enlightenment. The ‘empty’ boat as a theme has long been associated with Asian thought and aesthetics. The image of an abandoned boat is frequently used to convey the concept of *wabi*, while an isolated boat, perhaps fog enshrouded, might suggest an aspect of *yugen*. ‘A drifting boat’ is an image encountered in *Ch’an* (Zen) poetry, these lines of Shih Te’s (c.730) possibly being the earliest example:

*... I’ve wandered down the years to now,
free in the flow, and floated home the same,
a drifting boat*

[trans. J.P. Seaton].

The suggestion being that a person needs to simply let go of the accouterments of life, forget attempts to learn or to control and just allow oneself to go with the all-encompassing flow. ‘Aloneness’, quite distinct from ‘loneliness’, is a common theme in Zen. From my Western perspective, having worked with American paintings, the presentation also conjures the images of the 19th century painter **Thomas Cole**’s vastly popular series called the *Voyage of Life*, in particular, the final painting that shows an old man calmly drifting towards death.

The stone [Figs. 4/5/6] is a ventifact that was collected in the Saddle Peak Hills, one of our favorite



General view of California Aiseki Kai, Huntington Library 2010 Exhibit



The eight-foot ‘formal’ table display





4. Stone in antique *doban* with open-work fret pattern

sites during the early years of California Aiseki Kai, but long since closed to collecting after being incorporated into the new Death Valley National Park. It is a small, rather sharp, sliver-shaped shard of Indian Blanket Stone that has been smoothed by wind-driven sand.



5. Stone as displayed in brown, unglazed *suiban*

After conceiving the basic display, I initially considered and experimented with several more traditional boat stones of different sizes, but kept returning to this original choice. To me, this stone has always suggested the form of a dugout canoe of the coastal Amerindian tribes of the Pacific Coast, especially Washington and British Columbia. In addition to its shape, there is a



6. Stone in blue glazed *suiban*

‘sunburst’ pattern on the prow that recalls the painted talismans seen on such canoes. (At the show, **Jack Dennis** commented that the boat also closely resembles a craft that was ubiquitous throughout regions he traveled in Asia.)

It is possible that members with a long (still functioning) memory may recall that **Alice** and I presented a similar display with the same boat in an early 1990’s Huntington show. At that time it did not draw any special attention. The primary difference is that the earlier presentation was placed on one of the center tables at a lower level and with little space separating it from surrounding stones and therefore easily passed over with, at best, a quick glance at a curiosity. In contrast, presenting the stone on the elevated eight-foot table forced the visitor to look more carefully, even if only to determine what strange thing was being presented. To that extent it was quite often effective, if still bewildering.

It may be worth explaining the rationale behind the rather ambiguous identifying line of my label: *Funagata-ishi*. I considered several poetic titles such as ‘Adrift’, ‘Abandoned’, ‘Lost’, but decided against ‘forcing’ any viewpoint. Although aware that few visitors would understand, I consciously chose *Funagata-ishi* rather than even identify the stone as a ‘boat’ in English. I am the first to admit that it left many visitors puzzled and some derisive. However, with great pleasure I witnessed several of our member ‘security-docents’ interpreting the presentation to more attentive visitors. (Such enthusiastic interaction remains one of the great pluses of our exhibitions.) Other visitors obviously made their own connections; several visitors spent an inordinate amount of time trying to photograph whatever it was they themselves detected in the presentation. I questioned one small boy as to what he saw? ...”a boat.” And what is happening? ... “It is lost!” Gratifyingly, without knowing the display was mine, a Professor of Buddhism and Asian Studies positively praised the display as he was exiting the show.

‘Nothing’, that is space itself, was actually the key element of the display. The large *suiban*, simple low table, and empty tabletop were intended to evoke an endless emptiness. Note that the inclusion of any additional item such as a complementary figure or plant would have defeated that intent. Any additional element would have presented an overpowering physical presence that would have instantly ‘restricted’ the overall space; any suggestion of theme would have further limited interpretive possibilities and the ‘size’ of the visual space. For instance, a reed would have implied a shore; certain plants might have specified a fresh water setting of a lake rather than the endless



ocean or void itself. Even the tiniest *tenkei* (small scenic figurine) would have collapsed the allusion of infinite space.

Note, too, that I had experimented with thinner, vintage Japanese *doban*, but found their greenish patinas and/or decorative detail inappropriate (Fig. 4). Though a bit deeper, the plain brown ceramic *suiban* (fig. 5) is more homogeneous with the colors of the stone. The unglazed brown is neutral, whereas, a highly glazed or brightly colored *suiban*, for example, the bright blue (fig. 6) that many collectors immediately associate with water, would have competed visually.

... And I didn't even get beat-up for using gray-white sand! Actually, it is worth observing that the use of a tan or brown colored sand would to me have been less effective because either color sand would have had the effect of visually unifying the combination of brown *suiban*, sand, and brown boat, thus condensing the space rather than emphasizing the broad expanse of surface. Also, a more uniform warm brown tone would likely have created the comfortable feeling associated with a peaceful twilight. I consciously selected 'white' sand to suggest the bleak, bleached, reflective surface of calm or becalming waters or enveloping fog. Note that the *suiban* was filled to its rim with the sand so as to reduce the limiting visual 'barrier' of the lip.

[As a tribute to our visitors, one has to note that, amazingly, in seven days the spread of tempting, perfectly flat sand was touched less than a half dozen times, most with so light a touch as to be barely detectable; the two slightly deeper depressions were easily corrected. I am tempted to believe that even if no specific connotation was understood, something resonated, providing a sense of that and protected it!]

Within the *suiban*, the boat was placed way to one side and, flouting convention, much closer to the front edge. The viewer's perspective therefore becomes somewhat parallel to the orientation of the boat. Positioning the stone in front establishes that it is a small boat in a vast space. Contrarily, if the boat had been placed to the back, a different foreground to boat dynamic would have been established. The visual space would have been reduced to a finite bit of water between the viewer and the boat; the boat, in turn, would have appeared to be relatively much larger. The 'view' would have become bracketed, closed, static, and perhaps more knowable. The space would have been reduced to that within the *suiban* rather than infinitely expansive. The boat, itself, may have taken on more prominence, but the experience would have been constrained and diminished.

The placement of the boat may also be dissected



7. Stone placed at front facing away (limitless possibilities)

in terms of dynamic positioning. In the selected position in front with bow towards the open space behind, there is the implication of a 'voyage' outward (physical or spiritual), potentially limitless and unknown (fig. 7). If the boat remained in the 'facing away' orientation, but had been placed towards the back of the *suiban*, it obviously could not have implied endless space and possibilities for interpretation because it would have already reached the barrier of



8. Stone at back facing forward (changes the impact, eliminates the mystery)

the *suiban* lip to which its proximity would draw attention. If the boat had been placed at the back, but turned 180 degrees to face towards the viewer (fig. 8), one would have been able to envisage only the short, finite 'voyage' to the near lip – the journey being over before it started! Interestingly, when a boat is placed parallel to the longer *suiban* axis and more or less in the center it may suggest a boat at anchor. However, in this case, the raking angularity of the bow and low, streamlined form would still suggest movement.

Normally, I would have carefully leveled and set the boat in wet sand and then let it dry. However, the *suiban* had been prepared with the sand two weeks in advance, thus the boat had to be set on the dry surface once the *suiban* was in place at the Huntington. Upon carefully dropping the boat in its predetermined location, I was initially a bit dismayed to see that it would have to be forced into the sand to be leveled, but



then realized that, serendipitously, the slight tilt toward the back added to the sense of a listing wind-driven, abandoned craft. The boat being askew reinforced the idea of the absence of a controlling presence. The potential interpretations were increased to the extreme when I realized that the slightly depressed prow could imply the pooling of water within the boat or even the possibility of an unseen lifeless body!

The final display consideration was the choice of the secondary support to go beneath the *suiban*. First thought was that a simple flat *ji-ita* would be most complementary as it would directly reflect the low-profile expanse of the *suiban*. However, the thickness of my biggest *ji-ita* was similar to that of the *suiban*, itself, thus it competed visually. Frankly, flat-on-flat also did little to add a sense of ‘presence’ to the display. It was decided that elevation on a display table (*shoku*) would best establish that this was a carefully considered presentation, not an afterthought on a



9. Stone on selected low table
The table measures 40" x 24" x 3 1/2" H (101.5cm x 61cm x 8.9cm)

board! [This is not intended as an insult to a carefully chosen *ji-ita*.] A highly finished black lacquer table was quickly ruled out – as overpowering and too formal for the tabletop presentation – in favor of the final selection with its subdued wood finish, broad surface, and simple lines (fig. 9). Even then, at show set-up, a smaller, slightly higher table (fig. 10) was checked as a possible alternative, but eliminated



10 *Suiban* on shorter, higher table
This table measures 35" x 22" x 4" H (80.9cm x 50.8cm x 10.2cm)

because despite being better quality, its display surface area seemed too confining and its bulk and prominent legs also worked against the goal of ‘expansiveness’.

The above examination (dissection/autopsy?) of many specific aspects of this one simple, austere presentation will hopefully prove useful. Contrary to the opinions expressed by **Peter Warren** (*California Aiseki Kai Newsletter*, Nov. 2010) that stressed the view that the stone is more important than the display, I would suggest that this presentation is an example where the presentation as a whole is more significant than the stone, itself. My belief is that a poor presentation will diminish even the best stone, while a good presentation may enhance one’s appreciation of a lesser stone (However, these observations are not intended to diminish the significance of properly acknowledging and appreciating stones of high quality.)

This *funagata-ishi* display reflects the public face of stone appreciation, what we have discussed: aesthetics, showmanship, didactic. At the same time it reflects the deeply personal, intimate side of stone appreciation discussed by Sean Smith (*California Aiseki Kai Newsletter*, January, 2011): This display was not originally conceived with thoughts of the philosophical and aesthetic concepts discussed above, nor for public presentation. Rather, weeks earlier in a despairing moment, it originated as a reflection of where I was with respect to my loss of **Alice**. Gradually I came to perceive it as a way of silently sharing yet another show with her.

*Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide
sea!*

...

Samuel T. Coleridge, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*

Guy Jim

[Photo note: Disparities of size, contrast, and space make it impossible to adequately illustrate this display with small photos. The sand appears whiter and brighter than when on display. As with many stone displays, this one is better appreciated with more subdued lighting.]

The views expressed in this column are personal, perhaps irreverent, irrelevant or just plain wrong and do not reflect the consensual view of California Aiseki Kai. Send your viewing stone questions (or comments) for Guy Jim to jimgreaves@roadrunner.com or 1018 Pacific Street, Unit D, Santa Monica, CA 90405 (310) 452-3680

Meeting Notes

continued from pg 2



Hanne Povlsen 16 x 6 x 3, feminine figure, China.



Janet Shimizu 6 x 2.75 x 2.5, her dad's, Mas Moriguchi, China



Buzz Barry 14.5 x 4.5 x 3, a robed figure, from the Yuha



Larry Ragle 11 x 3.5 x 3.75, figure from the Stillaguamish R.



Janet Shimizu 3 x 2 x 1, Gumby?



Janet: Mas Moriguchi 8.5 x 5 x 3



Larry Ragle 4.5 x 2 x 1, Eel R



Nina 6.25 x 2.5 x 2, Sanjiang R



Ragles 5 x 3 x 2.5, China



Ragles 6 x 4 x 3, China



Al Nelson 4.5 x 4 x 2 & 5.5 x 2.5 x 2.25, two figures talking, Yuha





Barry Josephson 9 x 9 x 5.5, head of an African tribal woman, a gift from Manny Martinez



Bruce McGinnis 4 x 5 x 3, a monk with a pointed hat, found near Death Valley

Program Notes continued from page 3

As in the first video most of the stones were black and often lustrous and the tables were ornate, similar to some Chinese tables. *Daiza* were shown being carved, some with chisels by hand and some with routers.



A collecting trip to a pea soup colored stream was shown with shots of their picnic and stone hunting by feel. They arrive and depart by motor scooter.

Richard Turner brought a book "Mountains in the Sky - The Vietnamese Landscape Art of Hon Non Bo" by **Phan Van Lit** and **Lew Buller** which looked to be very informative.

We thank Mr. **Bui Duc Tam** and **Chiara Padrini** for making this video available to us. We expect to revisit it soon in another form (see The Power, page 1).



A Visit with Ralph Johnson

On May 14th, a lucky group of Aiseki Kai members were invited to an appreciation luncheon and, as one guest said, an urban rock hunt, at the home of **Ralph Johnson**.

We enjoyed viewing **Ralph's** outstanding malachite collection and his demonstration on determining the best "attitude" for a stone (see below). **Ralph** has a masterful eye and a lot of experience.

Ralph also made another generous gift to our future because he believes in what we are doing. Our host could not have been more gracious. The day was such a special treat. We are so fortunate that **Ralph** is a member of Aiseki Kai.



Aiseki Kai presented Ralph with a crystal vase engraved with our club's logo and these words:



*Ralph Johnson
You make a world
of difference
California
Aiseki Kai
May 14, 2011*



Special Suiseki Exhibition

September 3-5

The Pacific Northwest Bonsai Association Convention in Seattle, Washington will feature a best of the Northwest suiseki exhibition with material collected exclusively in the Pacific Northwest. **Rick Stiles** said, “The design scheme for the show includes Edo Period scrolls, antique *doban*, custom-made *suiban*, and quite a nice selection of stones from a variety of collectors. In all, we expect to have about 35 stones from our geographic region.” ... “We are doing everything we can to make this show the best ever seen in Seattle. The Bonsai Convention will be an added bonus, although the bonsai folks will rightly regard it as the main event.”

In addition to viewing this unique sampling of Northwest stones, plan to visit some of the streams and rivers where these treasures are found.

Free admission to the suiseki exhibit:
Sept 3-4 (9-5) Sept 5 (9-noon)



Island Stone (shimigata-ishi)
Collection of Cassandra Johnson
Spokane River, Washington State – 2008



Boat-shaped Stone (funagata-ishi)
Collected by Dan Laxdall
Mt. Baker, Washington State – 1950
Collection of Dan W. Laxdall



Double-peaked Mountain Stone (soho-seki)
Collected by Rick Stiles
Stillaguamish River System, Washington State – 2010

California Aiseki Kai meets on the 4th Wednesday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Nakaoka Community Center located at 1670 W. 162nd St, Gardena, CA. Second floor. We do not meet in Nov-Dec.

Contact People

Programs: Larry Ragle	949.497.5626
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We hope you will participate. Please send any submissions to ragle@cox.net no more than 10 days following our monthly meeting. Thank you!

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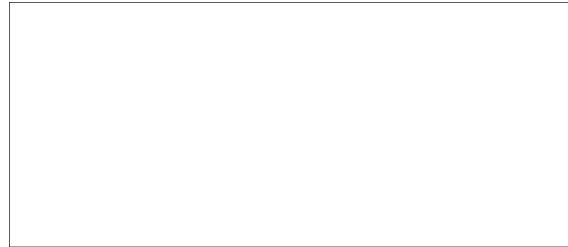
ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Leaves no stone unturned

See our website:

aisekikai.com



Coming Events

DESCANSO BONSAI SOCIETY

41st Annual Bonsai Exhibit, June 18-19, Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Drive, La Canada. 9-5, demos 11 and 1 both days, sales. Reception June 18, 7PM in Van de Kamp Hall. Auction and raffle. For more info: **Michael Jonas** 818.776.0813 or go to their website: descanso-bonsai.com

PACIFIC NORTHWEST BONSAI CLUBS ASSOCIATION

Convention XXII: "Elegance in Emerald City", Sept 3-5, Fairmont Olympic Hotel, 411 University St, Seattle. **Michael Hagedorn, Boon Manakitivpart, Ryan Neil, Suthin Sukosolvisit.** Bonsai exhibits, demos, workshops, critiques, raffles, auctions and vendors. Suiseki display in the Windsor Room (see page 11). More at: pnbca.com

Stone Sales

Ken McLeod

209-605-9386 or 209 586-2881

suisekiken@sbcglobal.net ~ californiasuiseki.com

Always check Golden Statements Magazine
Calendar section for additional coming events

GSBF CONVENTION XXXIV

"Bonsai Full Circle" Oct 27-30, Marriott Hotel and Convention Center, 3400 Market St., Riverside.

**Kathy Shaner, Ryan Neil,
Pedro Morales, Roy Nagatoshi.**

Demonstrations, seminars,
critiques, workshops, raffle, vendors
Go to: gsbf-bonsai.org



CALIFORNIA BONSAI SOCIETY

55th Anniversary Convention, April 11-15, 2012, Crown Plaza Hotel, Anaheim. We will participate in a viewing stone exhibition.



Refreshments

Thank you **Maria Atkison, Phil Chang,**
and **Emma Janza** (did you taste **Emma's**
lemon meringue pie!) for the May
munchies.

June's lip smackers will be provided by **Buzz Barry,**
Joe James and the **Ragles.**

