

O N E N E S S

Quarterly Newsletter of the Rev. Gyomay M. Kubose Dharma Legacy

Vol. 6 No. 4 Winter 2002

Minnie Somi Kubose

(1915-2002)

Minnie Taniguchi was born to Tsuneshichi and Taka Taniguchi in the town of Kerman, just west of Fresno, California on October 14, 1915. The family moved to a 40 acre farm in Fowler where they grew grapes for raisins. She had an older brother Kay Kiyoshi and a younger brother George.

After graduating from Fowler High School, she attended Fresno State College for one year, before marrying Masao Kubose in January of 1936. She accompanied her husband to Japan where he began studying for the ministry. Their first son, Don Akeru, was born in December of 1936. They lived at the Myotatsuji Temple in Kanazawa for five years. They returned to America in July, 1941 on the second to the last ship that left Japan before World War II broke out. They stayed in Los Angeles where second son, Sunnan Koyo, was born ten days after Pearl Harbor was bombed in December, 1941.

The family was interned first at the Heart Mountain, Wyoming relocation camp and then in Poston, Arizona. In the spring of 1944, the family relocated to Chicago, where they started the Chicago Buddhist Church in the Hyde Park neighborhood near the University of Chicago. Daughter, Joyce Terumi, was born in September, 1946. Minnie supported her husband in many temple activities. She played the piano for Sunday services and was also active in the scouting programs, serving as a Cub Scout den mother. The temple moved north to the Uptown neighborhood in the mid 1950's. Minnie continued her involvement in the temple and opened up the Kubose home to host the many guests and famous Buddhist figures who came to visit their temple from all over the world.

She and her husband went to Kyoto, Japan, in 1966 for a three-year stay. While her husband furthered his Buddhist

studies, Minnie studied the Urasenke Tradition of Tea and the Ikenobo Tradition of Flower Arrangement. After three years of study, she received her Tea name, Somi, and her certification to teach both Tea and flower arrangement.

On their return trip to America, they visited many countries in Asia and Europe, and also later toured South America where her husband was invited to give guest lectures on Buddhism.



From 1969 Minnie began teaching the Japanese traditional arts of both Tea and flower arrangement in their second floor apartment in the rectory building next to the temple. One room was converted into an authentic eight-tatami mat tea room with a tokonama alcove and shoji sliding doors.

Teaching both Tea and flower arrangement were very demanding, and after a year or two, she decided to concentrate her efforts in Tea. She named her student group Seiwakai, pure harmony group. Under her leadership, they gave numerous presentations of The Way of Tea and served tea to hundreds of visitors at the temple's cultural festival every summer. In 1986, she and Rev. went to Kyoto to visit Joyce who was

studying Tea in the Urasenke Three-Year Midorikai program. At that time, she received from the Grand Master, Kyoju, the highest rank of merit for a teacher.

Over the years, Minnie suffered from a chronic lung condition. Her health and stamina gradually weakened. In 1994 her lung disease worsened and she was in the hospital for several months. Upon recovering, she had to gradually spend more time being taken care of at her daughter Joyce's home. She was still doing okay after her husband's death in March, 2000. Then, in September, 2002, she had to go into the hospital for several weeks. After that, she went into a home hospice program at her son's place in Skokie. Six weeks later on November 11, 2002, she succumbed to respiratory failure and a weakened heart condition.

She is survived by sons Don and Sunnan; daughter Joyce; grandchildren Kristine, Darren, Shauna, Kanon, and Tate; and great grandchildren Kamryn, Emiko, Marika, and Karissa; brothers Kay and George Taniguchi; and a large extended family of nieces, nephews, cousins and in-laws. She will be missed very much.

(A videotape of Minnie Kubose's memorial service is available upon request.)

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President's Message

By Rev. Koyo Kubose

Losing a loved one is the saddest thing in life. Through my ministry, I had learned that death is a profoundly spiritual event. I now had the opportunity to experience this personally when my mother died. My mother had chronic lung disease for over 20 years. Her scarred lung tissue sometimes caused her to cough up blood. Her condition gradually got worse and during the last few years she needed constant oxygen support. She never was in any pain but she tired easily and could not go out much. When she became bed ridden, we moved her from my sister's home to my place because I would be better able to handle her physically. I took care of her in my home for the last six weeks of her life.

We set up a hospital bed in the dining room. We put up a curtain between the dining room and the living room. The curtain provided privacy but could be pulled aside when desired. One side of the dining room opened into the kitchen. My mother had difficulty chewing food so most of her meals were pureed. Things settled into a nice routine. For breakfast she had five stewed prunes, a soft-boiled egg mixed with a jar of baby food. Lunch was soup with some meat and rice blended together. Dinner was whatever we were having but put through a blender. Dessert was Jello, custard, or rice pudding. For a snack, I concocted a "smoothie" drink of soy milk, blueberries, cherries, strawberries, banana, plus some soy-protein powder and wheat bran. Our blender got a good work out.

After she woke up in the morning, I would see that she used a medicated oral swab to wipe the inside of her mouth. She'd put in her dentures and hearing aids and she was ready to start the day. During the day I'd move her around in the bed or put a pillow under her hip, or remind her to lie on her side. These measures would minimize bedsores and take the pressure off her sensitive tailbone. During the years before coming to my place she used to read magazines and the newspaper, and also watch Oprah on television. By the time she came to my place, she had stopped doing these things. However, she said she was never bored lying in bed. She would point to her head and say that she could think about many things.

Indeed, she stayed conscious and alert to the end, and she never lost her sense of humor. Next to her bed I had put a small bell she could pick up and ring to call me. When she first started using this bell, she smiled and said, "I like the sound of this bell."

In the evening before bed, the routine was dentures and hearing aids out, facial cleansing and moisturizing cream on. We set up a sound activated room monitor. During the night, all she had to do was call out my name and I'd come. A portable commode was set up next to her bed. I'd help her move from the bed to the commode. After a few days she was able to do this by herself.

When she first came to my place, she had been constipated for four days. Finally she had a bowel movement. It was quite large... very impressive. I said, "Wow!" I held up the portable commode bowl so she could see. When she saw her BM, she threw up both her arms and shouted, "Banzai!" After that, whenever she did BM, she always wanted me to see it. If someone was going to clean her commode bowl, she would say, "Don't throw it away until Sunnan sees it." Whenever I saw her impressive BM's I would loudly announce, "Mom did another Banzai BM!" Nobody likes to look at or have to handle someone else's BM. BM is a yukky thing. Probably most of us would rather not look at our own BM. However, I didn't mind taking care of my mother's BM. It occurred to me that things had gone full circle from when she had to take care of my BM when I was an infant.

BM is a sign of health. BM is as essential to health as eating. Without a daily BM, toxic waste products will poison one's body. I have often thought that in addition to giving thanks before meals, we should give thanks after we have a BM. I introduced the spiritual practice of "Toilet Gassho," the putting together of one's hands in gratitude while sitting on the toilet. Doing BM is also an appropriate time to introspect on getting rid of mental waste products such as resentments, regrets, or other negative emotions. Getting rid of the inevitable mental waste products from everyday living and being able to start a fresh day is a good spiritual practice. Perhaps because of my daily practice of "Toilet Gassho," I was not put off by cleaning up my mother's BM. In fact, it is one of my precious memories.

Another thing I am extremely grateful for is that I was able to share a special experience with my mother just before she died. On the morning before she died, she was conscious and alert. I took the opportunity to talk about spiritual things with her because I thought later she might become groggy and her mind may not be not so clear. I told her to make her peace because no one knows when the end may come. It might be next week, next month, or maybe even next year. Since we don't know, one should make one's peace. This doesn't mean one is giving up. Make your peace and then still stay strong. I told her to think about her life and all the things to be grateful for. I also told her that nobody is alone. The rest of the family is right behind her... even down to the youngest great grandchild. All, without exception, will follow her, join her, and all will be one in nature. She said, "I understand; I understand." We both became filled with emotion. She grabbed my face with both hands and gave my cheek 3 or 4 fast kisses, saying, "I love you, Sunnan." I hugged her with a hug that sent through my body a jolt of warm love and closeness that overwhelmed me. I never had such a feeling before. She asked for her *ojuzu* beads and a few hours later she quietly slipped away.

Chanoyu Center of Chicago

Pictured to the right:

lacquered tea container & bamboo tea scoop



Chanoyu is the Japanese Way of Tea, a traditional art that conveys the principles of harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility through the making and sharing of a bowl of tea. The literal meaning of the word chanoyu is 'hot water for tea.' Chanoyu usually takes place in a traditional Japanese tearoom with a *tatami* straw mat floor, *shoji* sliding doors, and a *tokonoma* alcove. Hanging in the alcove is a scroll with a calligraphy of a spiritual or Zen phrase. Below the scroll is a simple but elegant flower arrangement. Built into the floor is a small square hole which holds charcoal to heat hot water in an iron kettle.

Preparation for chanoyu is extensive. Everything is meticulously cleaned and prepared before the guests arrive. Although the utensils have been cleaned, they are cleaned or purified again in front of the guests as an expression of the host's sincerity in wishing to make the most delicious bowl of tea. Once the bowl is purified, it is filled with 1-1/2 bamboo scoops of green powdered tea. With a bamboo ladle, simmering hot water is poured into the bowl. Then with a bamboo whisk, the tea and water are whipped into a frothy foam. The host then turns the bowl twice and offers it to the guest. Prior to this, the guest has been served a special sweet, the making of which is an art in itself.

As implied in the above description of chanoyu, many aspects are involved in addition to the making, serving, and drinking of tea. Some of these aspects include the knowledge and appreciation of calligraphy, flower arrangement, ceramics, lacquer ware, and the making of sweets. Each of the tea utensils used also has its own history and significance. The true way of chanoyu is a lifetime spiritual practice and becomes a way of life.

The standard size tearoom in Japan is designed with a small entrance so that guests have to bow and crawl in to enter.

Samurai were at the top of the social class hierarchy in Japanese society. In a spirit of humility and equality, samurai removed their swords before entering a tearoom. This spirit is maintained today, where all social differences and distinctions melt away in the atmosphere of the tearoom. Ideally, the host and guests exchange hearts and spiritually become one. It makes for an unforgettable gathering.

Minnie Somi Kubose taught chanoyu for over 25 years in her second floor apartment in the rectory building next to the Buddhist Temple of Chicago, which was established by her husband, the Rev. Gyomay Kubose, in 1944. Mrs. Kubose converted her living room into an eight-mat Japanese tearoom. Over the years, her collection of tea utensils grew quite large. She also had a wide variety of flower vases and her husband's collection of calligraphy done by famous Buddhist teachers.

Mrs. Kubose's daughter, Joyce, has become a well-respected chanoyu teacher and is carrying on her mother's love of the Way of Tea. Joyce Kubose and her students recently established the Chanoyu Center of Chicago, a non-profit organization devoted to chanoyu/Japanese Way of Tea [www.chanoyuchicago.org]. The Center will be a repository of Minnie Kubose's collection of tea utensils and equipment. The center will provide a place where future generations of teachers and students can practice and study chanoyu in an authentic tearoom with all the necessary utensils.

The current plan involves finding a building that can be converted into a suitable facility. The building of a tearoom will require extensive remodeling. The Board of Directors of the Chanoyu Center of Chicago will undoubtedly need to organize a formal fund drive for the building of a tearoom. In the meantime, persons wanting to support the vision of the Chanoyu Center of Chicago can make donations in memory of Minnie Somi Kubose to:

Chanoyu Center of Chicago
c/o Elizabeth Plotnick, Treasurer
2430 N. Lakeview Avenue, 17-N, Chicago, IL 60614

New Year's Eve Party Will Not be Held

Minnie Kubose was the matriarch of our family organization, the Kubose Dharma Legacy. She was more than just the wind under the wings of her late husband, the Venerable Gyomay M. Kubose. They were a team. They flew and soared high in tandem together. As our Patriarch and Matriarch, their lives are the very source of what inspires us to carry on their pioneering vision of how the spirituality of Buddhism can be manifested here in America.

Due to the recent passing of Minnie Kubose, the Kubose Dharma Legacy will not be hosting their annual New Year's Eve Party this year. The family will also be taking a hiatus from sending out greeting cards this year. We thank everyone for their understanding.

*We wish everyone a spiritually significant 2003,
Kubose Dharma Legacy*

Oneness Newsletter Winter 2002

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Remembrances of Minnie Kubose

By Daughter Joyce Kubose Prosis

(From Memorial Service)

There is a scroll written by Rev. Haya Akegarasu, my father's teacher, that reads, "Ten billion people have ten billion mothers, but my mother is the best." This scroll really expresses my feelings today. Several qualities come to mind in thinking of my mother: dedication – She was dedicated to whatever she did and always gave 100%. She believed in doing the right and proper thing and for her it was natural to go that extra mile. She always did her best. On my mother's urn there is an engraved ginkgo leaf. This is one of the symbols of the Urasenke Tradition of Tea and represents her lifelong dedication to chanoyu, the Japanese Way of Tea.

She was intuitive and had a deep human understanding. She could tell what kind of person you were by looking at your face and she was always respectful about the feelings of others.

Compassion – She had true compassion for all beings, for everyone who came into her life, for all the pets we ever had, for all the plants she lovingly cared for. She lived with Robert & I for 4 years and when she was no longer able to visit her apartment, the stairs being too much for her, she would always remind me to water the plants whenever I went there.

The first half of my mother's adult life was devoted to others. She was busy raising three children and helping my father with the temple. We had numerous guests over the years, guest who visited us, who lived with us, who ate with us. She always cooked meals for guests; we never went to a restaurant. She was unpretentious, had an easy sense of humor, and people felt at ease with her. Sundays were busy with pancake breakfast for whomever was picking up the Sunday School children, teaching Sunday School classes, attending services, meetings, and meeting with people.

In the mid-60's, my parents went to Kyoto, Japan for three years. My mother was 50 years old and she wanted to make good use of her time there and decided to study Tea and flower arrangement. This was a very special time for her. She was given the privilege to do something for herself and this gave her the chance to become her own person. She loved to study. After her Ikenobo flower arrangement lessons, she would take the time to draw and copy her arrangements with colored pencils, so that she could better remember what she learned and could arrange the flowers again after she got home. She could draw pretty well. I was impressed.

Although she really enjoyed working with flowers, her love was chanoyu. She studied the Urasenke tradition and

went to lessons 3 times a week and filled many notebooks with her notes. She was always studying, carrying a notebook or textbook with her so she could study wherever she was, on a bus, in a car, or waiting in line. She studied for the joy of learning. When they returned to Chicago, at my father's suggestion, they made their living room into an 8-mat tearoom and my mother began to teach chanoyu. This was her joy for the remainder of her life.

The most precious gift she gave me was a direction in my life. I went to visit my parents while they were in Kyoto. It was my first visit to Japan. My mother intuitively knew that I would like chanoyu and suggested that I go to class with her. Without any knowledge of chanoyu and because my mother knew I would like it, I knew that I didn't want to study it. Her wise reaction then was to ask me if I would just go with her to one of her classes. So, to placate her, I went. However, I was fascinated by the grace, beauty, and serenity I experienced and had my first lesson before we left. I studied with my mother for about 10 years. I really enjoyed chanoyu and every now and then she would say how nice it would be if I became a teacher, and I would adamantly say that I was not going to be a Tea teacher.

Then in 1981 she organized a Tea trip to Kyoto taking a handful of her students. This trip was a turning point for me. Through the various tea activities, I saw and felt a glimpse of the deep spiritual side of Tea and felt compelled to really study seriously. Several years later, I was accepted into the Urasenke Midorikai program in Kyoto, which was designed for non-Japanese to study chanoyu. I went for 1 year, but ended up staying for nearly four years. During my last year or so, I realized that I was going to return home and teach chanoyu. It was what my mother had already known years before. As I said, she was intuitive and she knew that this was the best thing for me. Through tea, my mother and I have shared so much and she has given me so many life lessons. The greatest gift I can give to her is to continue the life work that she began over 30 years ago. She personally gathered many utensils over the years and it is her wish that they stay together. We talked of the idea of starting a center, where future genera-



tions could have a tearoom and utensils with which to study and a place where those qualified could teach so that tea can continue into the future. With that in mind, last winter we established the Chanoyu Center of Chicago.

On the table near the incense burners is some of my mother's tea things. Starting from the right side is a natsume/thin tea container that she was fond of. She enjoyed its refined, elegant design. Next is a bamboo tea scoop that was carved by my father on that Tea trip in 1981. The tea bowl was one that she used all the years she taught and all her students have made tea in it. Next is one of her many fukusa, a silk cloth that is used to purify the utensils, her very first kobukusa, which you can see is very worn, her tea fan, and the holder for all these things, which is now well worn and falling apart.

Next to the tea things is a flower arrangement. My mother so enjoyed arranging flowers. I asked Yoko Miller, who also practices the Ikenobo tradition of flower arrangement, to make this arrangement using a pine branch and white flowers. The pine represents eternity since it is evergreen, never losing its beautiful green color and the white roses are purity and freshness. The small lavender flowers were added by Yoko and when I saw them, I thought they express my mother's sweet gentleness. Yes, my mother is the best. Her heart is pure and her strength and love are never-ending.

To you, Mom, I bow my head in deep respect and honor, and with the utmost gratitude I receive all you have given me. Thank you.

A Teenager's View of a Tearoom

By Grandson Tate Kubose (written when he was 13 years old)

My grandmother's tea room always seems peaceful and quiet. It makes me feel alone, unless there are other people in it. If I spend enough time in it, it makes me not hate anything because of the peacefulness of it. It can also calm me down if I am angry. It also makes me feel relaxed, like nothing can harm me.

The room is always cool, even in the summer. It feels like a continuous, gentle breeze is passing through it. It smells like freshly cut wood and incense at the same time. It occasionally smells like green tea. It also smells sweet, syrupy sweet. If I could taste it it would probably taste sweet too.

It is very quiet. The only sounds are from outside or from the telephone. It looks like an early Japanese room. It almost looks like it is from the movies. The walls feel and look like silk, though they are not. The floor is smooth if I rub my hand with the grain. It is rough if I rub my hand against the grain. Everything looks too perfect. Everything looks breakable and fragile. It looks like everything is old, but in good condition, making it look valuable.

By Son Don Kubose

(From Memorial Service)

I was very fortunate that my business travels for my job allowed me to stop by Chicago on my way home to Fowler. I was able to spend several weekends a year visiting my parents, brother and sister. During the later years I felt I was really lucky to have my parents for so long and each visit became very precious. After Dad died, the visits with my Mom were priceless. I knew some day that I would have to make that long flight from Fowler to Chicago to say my final goodbye to Mom.

This past September my brother Sunnan called to tell me Mom wasn't doing too well and that she was in the hospital. Nothing really seriously life-threatening but she was very weak. I went and ended up staying about three weeks. During that time Mom got stronger and the decision was made to bring her to Sunnan's place for 24 hour Hospice care. She was doing pretty well when I left and I fully expected to see her again.

There are many, many memories I have but the most vivid one occurred when I was saying goodbye to return to Fowler after the three weeks. Mom noticed that I was slightly bent over when I walked, like an old man. She held up her left hand, open with finger tips up, and said, "stand up straight!" Now, every time I'm walking, I make a conscious effort to stand straight and have the memory of Mom with her hand up.

This memory of Mom's one hand up reminded me of the Zen Koan puzzle of "what is the sound of one hand clapping?" Indeed, it is the puzzle of how with all the myriad of things a minister's wife has to do, together with Mom's schedule of teaching flower arrangement and tea, that she could still have the time to be the best Mom in the whole world.

Minnie Kubose's 49th Day Memorial Service



The Kubose family will be having Minnie Somi Kubose's 49th Day Memorial Service on Sunday, December 29, 2002 at 8:30 p.m. Central Standard Time. The public is invited to join in via telephone. Simply dial 1 (877) 241-3594 and then enter the passcode number 166320, followed by the # sign. This will enable you to listen to the service live; that is, the chairperson's comments, the chanting, readings, and Dharma talk. If you call early, you will hear music until the service starts. Your call is "listen only" and you cannot verbally participate. You can hang up at any time to end your call.

The purpose of the Kubose Dharma Legacy is to offer a non-sectarian, non-dualistic approach, the Way of Oneness, to further individual spiritual growth in everyday life for people of all backgrounds.

American Buddhist Services

The Heartland Sangha holds 11 a.m. Saturday services at Lake Street Church, 607 Lake Street, Evanston (use courtyard entrance on Chicago Avenue). For more information, please call Heartland Sangha at 773-545-9972. Rev. Koyo Kubose's upcoming Dharma Talk titles are:

Dec. 21	The Dharma of Greed
Jan. 4	Year of the Sheep
Jan. 18	Guilt and Shame
Feb. 1	Turning Words
Feb. 15	Why Haven't I Stopped?
Mar. 1	Gentlemen First, I presume?

Video Loan Program

Dharma talks from past services are available on video tapes for interested persons (e.g. shut-ins, incarcerated persons, people without a nearby Sangha, or to those who simply wish to hear Dharma talks). Contact the Kubose Dharma Legacy to receive a tape on loan at no charge. Return the tape and another will be sent to you.

Winter Haiku

Winter solitude
In a world of one color
The sound of wind.

Basho



The gale will not let
The cold winter rain
Fall to the ground.

Kyorai

How soon
The snowball
Got beyond our strength!

Yaezakura



Acknowledgements with Gratitude

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Beatrice Arakawa and
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Paul & Frances Arakawa
*On birth of Grandson
Austin Jackson Arakawa*
Naomi Asano
*In memory of
Esther Gottlieb*
Tonko & Paul Doi
*In memory of
Gerald Sunahara*

Edwin & Karolyn Fukuda
*In memory of
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Laura Fukuda
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Parents and Family*
Evelyn Inamine
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Masayuki Nagai*
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DEC	<p>Theme: Mindful Tranquility Purpose: To pause before drinking a hot beverage Method: Make it a habit to sit quietly before taking the first sip of hot tea or coffee.</p>
JAN	<p>Theme: Hot Vapor Purpose: For physical and mental health Method: Before taking a drink of a hot beverage, wrap your hands around the top of the cup, put your nose at the opening of your hands and breathe in the hot vapor. In addition to stimulating nasal mucous membranes, imagine the hot vapor softening the “hardness” in you.</p>
FEB	<p>Theme: Mindful Drinking Purpose: To promote enjoyment and benefit of a hot drink Method: After the first swallow of a hot beverage, relax your shoulders, and say, “Ahhh.” As you feel the warmth of the drink settling in your belly, relate this feeling to having a settled feeling in your life. Enjoy being settled in the present moment.</p>

Mailing List Update: Our mailing list has welcomed new additions from many sources and referrals. We are happy to continue sending our newsletter to all interested persons. One reason for staying on the mailing list is to find out when new books come out. Also, you never know when you might want to order a book for a relative or friend in a future time of need. If you know someone who would like to be added or removed from our mailing list, please indicate below and send to:

Oneness Newsletter, Kubose Dharma Legacy, 8334 Harding, Skokie, IL 60076.

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Please remove from your mailing list Address: _____