

Shoyo Sensei's Dharma Message:

Mrs. Fumiko (Ayako) Hashimoto Returned to the Pure Land

Mrs. Fumiko (known as Ayako) passed away on September 26, 2008. She was a shy and private lady. Respecting her wish, the Hashimoto family held a private funeral service for her. However, before and after the service, I received numerous phone calls inquiring about the service from those who deeply cared about the family, particularly Dr. Walter, her dearest husband. Now, completing the 49th day memorial service and considering those who wanted to attend the funeral service, I decided to share my Dharma message with those who could not attend. Dr. Walter accepted my request. Thank you, Dr. Walter. Once again, I would like to, extend my sincerest condolences to the Hashimoto family.

I express my sincerest and deepest condolences to Dr. Walter, Dr. Scott, Teri, Jordan, Taylor, Drake, and Joyce.

First of all, let us admire Ayako san's tremendous courage, enormous strength and powerful patience during those most challenging days and years of her life in her fight against illness. Ayako san, please allow me to humbly applaud you, knowing that my understanding is so low compared with reality

Secondly, let us admire the family's tremendous love and care that they poured over her for years, particularly during the last six years in spite of the difficult various challenges they had to go through. They worked hard together as a strong unity called a "family" in supporting her till the last end. They did all what they could do. I am sure she was so thankful to each of them.

Today, we gathered here together to pay the highest tribute to her. To pay the highest tribute does not simply mean to say the final "good bye" to her. It does not mean either simply to celebrate her life. To pay the highest tribute to her means to listen to her voiceless voice to each one of us. It is to find a precious guiding light from her to carry on our life. It is to humbly receive her true wish to each of us. Our job today is to carefully listen to her messages sincerely and appreciate her.

Soon after she passed away, trying to make a Buddhist Dharma name for her, I visited Dr. Walter. For a deceased person's Dharma Name, I usually use a Kanji character from her full given name. So, I wanted to know those Kanji characters. Upon my request, he brought me numerous papers from the back room. They looked very old and were all tightly rolled, tied with strings, and wrapped with papers. The colors of these papers had turned into yellow. Untying strings was not easy. It was apparent they were kept this way for a long time and never been opened before.

Carefully opening them, we found that they were the certificates, awards and appreciations that she received from her elementary school days to high school days for the excellence of her academic studies, calligraphy, disciplines, or perfect attendance, etc: "Grand Award," "Silver Award," "Bronze Award," or "Special Award." There were another bunch of papers. They were all for her achievements: discus, low hurdles, and swimming. Few showed her tremendous performance in the national championships, twice, in hurdles and discus

There were even another bunch of papers: Awards, Honorable Certificates, Master Titles and Acknowledgements in her training of the Japanese tea ceremony, Japanese flower arrangement, and Japanese Koto instrument.

When a person achieves physical and cultural trainings in such high levels, it would be totally impossible without training the mind. Physical achievement and mental achievement should go hand in hand. Ayako san was seriously practicing the Buddhist practice of the Six Paramita (training of giving/sharing, disciplines, tolerance, effort, mental calmness and wisdom) as she reached the gold level in athletics and cultural trainings.

It is amazing that even at the age of 6 or 7, she was given special awards in calligraphy. Japanese calligraphy does not simply mean the skill of writing nicely and beautifully. Japanese calligraphy is the Path, specifically called "Sho Do." Sho" means "to write" and "Do" means "the Path." Writing with a special brush and ink demands that a person cultivates those six realms of mental activities. It is indeed the Buddhist Path.

In front of her admirable accomplishments, we were speechless. She truly enjoyed them, tirelessly trained and achieved to the highest level. And yet, she kept them private and left alone till we opened that day. She not only did not boast about them, but also had no attachment to those such brilliant records.

She genuinely enjoyed and loved Japanese traditional culture. She maintained a sincere and deep humility towards it. Many of us are often attached to titles, names, positions, and fame. But, these were what Ayako san always tried to avoid, sometimes even hated. As an outstanding athlete and as an outstanding Japanese cultural master, she kept practicing the Buddhist Path from her tender age to 70. Through sports and Japanese culture, she truly enjoyed the world of silence, calmness, tranquility and gentleness in body and mind. She learned the importance of non-attachment. She was a beautiful lady, but her mind was even more beautiful.

As the chairman, Mr. Mas Yamasaki, said, she was a renaissance lady, with a vast variety of knowledge and cultural learning. But, she was indeed more than that, for, she knew the danger of arrogance, attachment and pride that may reside in a renaissance lady.

Siddhartha Gotama, the future Sakyamuni Buddha, was an excellent athlete when he was young. He became a champion in the then Indian athlete competition, and thus won a most

beautiful princess to marry. After that, he fully cultivated his mind, and became a Selfless Person, a Buddha.

In this sense, Ayako san was similar to a Buddha: She accomplished both sports and culture to highest levels in a true sense.

Dr. Walter, you truly loved, respected, cared, encouraged and supported your wife throughout her life. You took the very best of care for her. I hear her say, "Thank you so much for sharing a most wonderful and enjoyable life with me!."

Dr. Scott and Teri, the Buddha said, "Mother is like a Buddha." That is because mother has the only one wish to children, that is, their happiness. Your mother has returned to the Buddha's Land. But, she is not resting there. After reaching the Buddha's Land, she immediately came back to your place to guide and teach you as a Returning Buddha. She will continuously be doing her best job for you, your happiness and wholesomeness. According to the Buddha, though children can never pay back to their parents, there is only one way that you can pay back: that is, to live your parent's wish and to become positive and wholesome as much as possible.

Please remember that Buddha Ayako never wants to be a cause of your pain or sorrow. Your job is, by listening to her wish, to become happy, peaceful and wholesome.

Jordan, Taylor, Drake, your Grandma is saying, "Study well, Play well. Be a good child. Listen to your grandpa and parents." Your Grandma is telling each one of you, "Do Your Best!" as she herself did throughout of her entire life.

I chose "Buntyo" as her Buddhist Dharma Name. "Bun" is the Chinese way of reading her name "Fumi" in "Fumiko." It means Wisdom and Insight. "Nyo" means enlightenment, freedom of attachment. "Buntyo" is actually one of the Monshus' name, and usually we are not encouraged to use Monshu's name. But, this is the one that she deserves and I could not but help choose it.

Buddha Fumiko is saying:

Enjoy life.

Live powerfully.

Life is beautiful.

Life is wonderful.

Life is too short to fight.

Be positive any time at any condition.

Enjoy every day.

Enjoy every moment.

Please Dr. Walter, Dr. Scott, Teri, and all the members of the Hashimoto Family, take good care of your body and mind.

Ayako san has left, but her gentle smile has not left.

Ayako san has left, but her kind words have not left.

Ayako san has left, but her warm-heart has not left.

Ayako san has left, but she always comes back to my hands of Gassho

Namuamidabutsu

Shaku Shoyo