



In July 2008, Bessie *Banmi-sensei* installed Ric *Bansho* as the 2nd Generation Headmaster of *Banmi Shofu Ryu*. Ric *Bansho -sensei* was a student in the first classes Bessie *Banmi-sensei* taught in Taiwan in 1972. He received his initial teaching

certificate in 1974. They continued working together for over 40 years, their last joint creation exhibited during the 2008 North American Regional Convention held in Monterey, California. Upon installation as *iemoto*, *Bansho-sensei* launched a 5-year plan, a formalization of their shared vision, but until then, not combined nor communicated to the entire family, and only to a handful of *ikebana* communities. The 5-year plan included this brochure, a website, and an aggressive education initiative of workshops, demonstrations and teacher training. The mission of *Banmi Shofu Ryu* is to preserve, grow, teach and communicate the legacy of its *Banmi-sensei* aligning with the motto, "Friendship across the globe through flowers and driftwood."

For five years, Ric *Bansho* and Bessie *Banmi -sensei* hosted annual *Banmi Shofu Ryu* workshops in Florida. In December 2009, the annual event became the Bessie *Banmi* Fooks Memorial Annual Workshop. In 1996, they refined the *Banmi Shofu Ryu* curriculum, based on the translation of a Japanese manual of flower arrangement handed down from *Bansui*



Bansho Ric-sensei inspects heirloom driftwood before the 2008 *Banmi Shofu* annual workshop.

teaching, teacher training, demonstrations, and exhibitions, which are negotiable according to student expertise and venue needs.

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Obta-sensei. It is now a manuscript used to teach *Banmi Shofu Ryu kaden* (rules) to students and future teachers. The curriculum dovetails with levels of *Banmi Shofu Ryu* study. To date, the school has certified 5 *sensei*: Greg *Banshakuyaku* Alderson, Laurel *Banbara* Fooks, Irene *Banayame* Gomulka, Jesus *Bantake* Minguez, and Monique *Banrenge* Noujaim.

Banmi Shofu

Ryu is open to developing talent and chapters in various locations, and offers various models of



*Friendship across the globe through
flowers and driftwood*



*moon moon come shine on me send your beam to warm
me moon moon come shine on me*

Bessie *Banmi* Fooks, July 19, 2009



Hallmark Banmi Shofu Ryu design created by Bessie Banmi Sensei for a Honolulu Hale exhibition.

Ikebana is the ancient Japanese art of arranging flowers, documented as far back as 1486 (Yoshikawa, 1936). The art, and the companion discipline of *kado*, (way of the flower) evolved from a ritual of randomly thrown floral offerings to the spirits of the dead in the birthplace of Buddhism – India. When Buddhism came to Japan during the 6th century via China, the flower practice came along with it. By the 10th century, priests, who were primarily responsible for temple floral offerings started the use of containers. Soon, the aristocracy took a liking for *kado*, transforming it from its religious purpose into a domestic, albeit royal aesthetic.

By the 15th century, *ikebana* achieved its status as an art form, while retaining its symbolic, philosophical, and spiritual underpinnings. The first teachers and students came from the religious and aristocracy, but now, all levels of Japanese and Western societies practice the art of *ikebana*. Various *Ikebana* schools started when personal expression, business with the Western world, and adaptation to different home settings appeared.

By 1936, there were 500 schools in Japan. Today, there are more than 5000 *ikebana* schools all over the world.

Roots of *Banmi Shofu Ryu of Ikebana*

Banmi Shofu Ryu originated from *Shofu Ryu*, which, like all other schools had its roots from *Ikenobo*, only superseded by *Saga Goryu* in being the oldest school. *Shofu Ryu* appealed to European taste because of its clever adaptation of *kado* principles to new conditions. Its name translates to pine or living breeze, and *Shofu* creations express a spirit of naturalness, as effortless as the wind on the pines on a summer day; they show both fluidity of line and fidelity to the way plants grow in nature.

In 1962, Bessie Yoneko Banmi Fooks, 1st Generation Headmaster of *Banmi Shofu Ryu* took her first lessons in Japan, and because her creations took a naturalistic form, her *Ikenobo sensei* referred her to *Bansui Obta*, then *Shofu Ryu* Headmaster. During *Bansui Obta-sensei's* frequent visits with her daughter in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, *Banmi Bessie-sensei*, then living on the island nation, continued to study with her. In 1972, she received her professor's certificate, and authorization to establish *Banmi Shofu Ryu*. She started teaching in Tainan, and began exhibiting and demonstrating *kado* during *Ikebana* International world and regional conventions



Bessie Banmi-sensei in a 1962 vintage photo in Japan

for close to 50 years, and wherever her and her husband Gil's work with the US Department of Defense Dependents Schools took her family – Japan, Germany, Turkey, Philippines, among many. Her body of work highlighted the hallmark of *Banmi Shofu Ryu* – the use of driftwood, not as an artifice, but as a way of connecting with the spirit of driftwood in creating a floral design. The driftwood pieces she used came to life as they infused floral designs with their living spirit. Driftwood is featured in the school's identity graphic (*designed by Kevin Banes and featured on the back page*), together with a rising moon and happiness *kanji*.

"In evolving Banmi Shofu Ryu, I used natural materials in simple lines provoking movement and symbols that in turn achieved serenity and tranquility; I could view the designs from any angle. They were simply the product of a process that connected me spiritually with plant and driftwood materials. This has been my experience that began in Japan years ago; I continued to learn from Bansui Obta Sensei, and transplanted what I absorbed in Japan to Hawaii and to the many places in the world where I traveled and connected with friends who love flowers," (Banmi Bessie Fooks, 2005)



New Year Honolulu Luncheon Exhibition, 2005.