Bishop Seytsu Takahashi
1933 - 1982

Perhaps nothing captures this infectious quality of Bishop Takahashi’s character better than the story of Boy Scout Troop 379. While the founding of the group took place during the stewardship of Bishop Kitagawa, its incredible history of success and worldwide fame was a direct result of Bishop Takahashi’s passionate belief in the program’s potential to impart the precept of personal excellence. Emulating the enthusiastic, determined spirit of Bishop Takahashi himself, 50% of the troop’s members achieved Eagle Scout status during this period – an unprecedented number. The hard work and dedication behind such individual accomplishments was reflected in a legendary string of awards, accolades, and achievements for the troop, including many regional and national awards and honors, an invitation to the Roosevelt White House, and the troop’s proud role as an international goodwill ambassador between Japan and the United States.

In 1931 a fresh graduate of Koyasan University became the temple’s newest priest. It was appropriate that Bishop Seytsu Takahashi arrived in Los Angeles aboard the same ship that first brought Bishop Aoyama to America, aside from the revered founder of our mission, no one has contributed more to its establishment and growth. In his 50 year association with Daishi Kyokai (later known as Beikoku Betsuin), Bishop Takahashi oversaw the realization of countless temple achievements and milestones. But to say that he merely “oversaw” them is to miss the essence of his greatness. The words “enthusiasm”, “dedication”, and “tireless” come up again and again in the remembrances of those who knew Bishop Takahashi. The singular monument to his remarkable indefatigability of spirit is, of course, Bishop Takahashi’s successful campaign to construct a new temple. Completed in 1940 at a cost of more than $100,000 – the equivalent over one and a half million dollars in today’s money! – the beautiful and impressive structure had been a dream envisioned by Bishop Kitagawa as far back as 1928. While transforming that dream into a reality was the result of years of dedicated, painstaking effort by numerous followers of Shingon Buddhism here and in Japan, Abbot Taiken Kato could not help but single out Bishop Takahashi’s extraordinary personal contribution to the great achievement, crediting him in his congratulatory address with “…devoting his body and soul to this project without rest for a number of years.”

The effects of Bishop Takahashi’s powerful faith radiated outwards, inspiring generations inside and outside the temple to heed the Buddhist injunction to “be the best you can” at whatever you do.
Illustration and Floor Plan of the Koyasan Buddhist Temple

CONSTRUCTION OF KOYASAN BEIKOKU BETSUIN 1938 PROPOSAL

Donation Solicitation for Construction of New Temple - February 25, 1940
Groundbreaking Ceremony Service - November 17, 1939

From left, Reverend Shozen Yasui, Reverend Ryosho Sogabe and Bishop Seytsu Takahashi bless a sumo wrestling ring (dohyo) as part of the groundbreaking service. It was a common ritual to have visiting sailors of the Imperial Japanese Navy sumo wrestle before the Buddha as a type of blessing.

It is believed that these photos are of a groundbreaking service for retail rentals. The purpose of the rentals is to generate continuous income to help cover the expenses of the Temple.
Various phases of the construction. Bishop Seytsu Takahashi (lower right) examines the craftsmanship of the soon-to-be main entrance of the Temple.

A marker announces the construction site of the new temple to be called Koyasan Beikoku Betsuin.

Construction Completed - August 1940

With the Temple courtyard behind him, Bishop Seytsu Takahashi kneels at the stairs to the entrance of the Temple, resting his hand on an incomplete stone lantern that exists to this day.
Vice-Archbishop Jisho Matsubashi of Koyasan Headquarters and Bishop Seytsu Takahashi lead the procession of officials of the congregation through the streets of Little Tokyo.

Dedication Procession - October 26, 1940

Vice-Archbishop Jisho Matsubashi of Koyasan Headquarters and Bishop Seytsu Takahashi lead the procession of officials of the congregation through the streets of Little Tokyo.
Members of the Fujin-kai and other officials of the congregation escort the chigo through First Street.

Vice-Archbishop Jisho Matsubashi approaches the Temple doors.

Leading the procession into the new Temple are Reverend Josen Kawashima and Vice-Archbishop Jisho Matsubashi.
Officials of the congregation sit on stage as the dedication service commences.


Officials of the congregation sit on stage as the dedication service commences.
Opening of Koyasan - October 26, 1940
The congregation, Sunday School students and Troop 379 gather at Evergreen Cemetary in Boyle Heights.
Many children dress as chigo to commemorate Shomieku on March 1934. Bishop Seytsu Takahashi stands in the center. It is the 1,100th Memorial of the passing of Kobo Daishi who entered eternal Samadhi in the year 835.
The commemoration of the 1,100th Memorial of Kobo Daishi entering into eternal meditation continues on into the night. Members dance on Commercial Street with the Daishi Kyokai structure visible on the right.

A parade is held in honor of the 1,100th Memorial of Kobo Daishi entering into eternal meditation (Shomieku). Extending as long as one-hundred yards, the procession includes the Boy Scouts, celestrial children (chigo), representatives of the Daishi Kyokai and Bishop Seytsu Takahashi.

The commemoration of the 1,100th Memorial of Kobo Daishi entering into eternal meditation continues on into the night. Members dance on Commercial Street with the Daishi Kyokai structure visible on the right.

The excitement of Shomieku in April still lingering, the Obon Festival in July is also a gala celebration. Japanese actor, Shiro Otsuji (center) participates in the festivities.
Boy Scout Week 1934 – Troop 79 (later named 379) celebrate their second anniversary. The 170-member troop is awarded second place in uniform inspection and wins official commendation from the Boy Scouts of America Headquarters.


Ceremony of President Roosevelt Award and the Second Anniversary of Troop 79
Boy Scouts of America - February 11, 1934
On March 24, 1936, at Okuno-in, Mount Koya, Bishop Seytsu Takahashi (seated second from the left) attends the third year memorial service for Bishop Aoyama, which is also a service for his newly erected tombstone. Other high ranking priests, including Bishop Shinko Fujimoto, sitting to the left of Bishop Takahashi, participate in the service.

Sunday School - 1935

Sunday School students in front of the Daishi Kyokai on Central Avenue in 1935. Formed in 1933, the Sunday School program flourishes under the guidance of Bishop Seytsu Takahashi.

Sunday School - Spring 1940

The children and teenagers of Sunday School gather on the front steps of the Daishi Kyokai on Central Avenue. The Sunday School students hold a fundraiser, selling snow cones, candy and soda.

Daishi Kyokai Junior YWBA - September 1, 1938


379’s First Family: The Narumi Family - 1930’s

From left, Tatsuo Frederick, Shigekazu August, Yoneo Junior, father Jutaro, and Michio George.
The Seinen-kai (Young Men's Group), mainly comprised of Kibei-Nisei males and the Shojo-kai (Young Girl's Group), comprised of Nisei females, is believed to be the predecessor of the Young Buddhist Association.
Sachiko Furusawa and the Fujin-kai - 1938

Above: Sachiko Furusawa (far right) leads female members of Koyasan, Miss Kiyomura, Miss Kuriki, and Mrs. Murase, to visit the Imperial army in Japan and China. The visit to Japanese-occupied China is the very first visit ever made by a women’s group.

Left: Seen here as a young lady, Sachiko Furusawa is given the nickname, “Auntie of the Imperial Navy (Kaigun no obasan)” in her later years.

Visit to Imperial Army Hospital in Nagoya, Japan - 1938

Top: From left, Mrs. Murase, Mrs. Furusawa, Miss Kuriki and Miss Kiyomura stand in front of the temporary military hospital in Nagoya. Above: The four ladies from the Temple give support to injured and sick soldiers of the Imperial Army at the hospital.
Tour group in front of the Koyasan Headquarters, Wakayama prefecture. Tomokichi Wada (front row fourth from the right) serves as the tour group leader. Jack Wada stands to the left of his father. Tomokichi Wada was Temple President from 1959 - 1960.

Members including the Fujin-kai of the Temple gather at the Port of Los Angeles to greet Admiral Mineo Osumi. Pictured here is Bishop Seytsu Takahashi and Sachiko Furusawa who is holding the Imperial flag of Japan.

Welcoming Party for Admiral Osumi, Port of Los Angeles - 1939
Reverend Ryosho Sogabe marries Shikako Uyeda in 1941 with Bishop Seytsu Takahashi officiating the ceremony.

In 1941, Kiyomi and Tsuyoshi Akazawa are the first couple to be married after the completion of the temple construction.