



# Preface

By Master Hsien Du

Translated by: ABLS Translation Team

*To realize the ideal that “Buddha Dharma is without national boundaries” is being able to provide the immigrant communities the opportunity to enlighten themselves with the teachings of Buddhism and adopt the Buddhist faith, and to attain the goal of teaching and cultivating sentient beings regardless of nationality.*

It was with this mission that our Elder Master Cheng Yi, founded the Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society (ABLS) in San Jose, CA, in July 1984, during his visit with Buddhist scholars residing in America. ABLS started as a group of young Buddhist followers from the local area meeting on a weekly basis to study and cultivate Buddhism. Venerable Master would make time to visit ABLS every year. During the winter and summer holiday months, he lectured on the “Avatamsaka Sutra.” Also, on a regular basis, he conducted Dharma services at ABLS and led the assembly in the cultivation of Buddhism.

Venerable Master often said, “The predecessor devoted their heart and soul to an undertaking. What should the successor do? Guard it! Develop it! Fail not in what the predecessor had entrusted!” The path to building ABLS was one of many difficulties and hardships truly beyond description by words. Nonetheless, he persisted in this endeavor. Even in the face of material shortcomings and insufficient resources, Venerable Master never forgot his vision and mission to propagate the Dharma and benefit all sentient beings. In addition to building ABLS, he laid the foundation for spreading the Dharma, for Buddhist culture, education, and for charity. These are significant contributions and their role in the recent history of Buddhism in California cannot be dismissed.



I was so blessed to inherit what the Venerable Master has accomplished and will face the challenges of today's pluralistic society using past accumulated experiences. In reality, it won't be possible to maintain these accomplishments using traditional methods alone to cope with our fast evolving society. We must constantly strive to innovate, adapt, and grow with our resources, and set a goal for direction of future development in order to meet the needs of the new generation.

Remembering in 1989, when the Board of ABLS was officially formed, I was nominated to the Board and made multiple trips to ABLS every year since to preside over Dharma services and assist in Dharma propagation work. In 2003, upon appointment to the position of Abbess of ABLS, I strived to work hard at putting practical ideas into action and further advancing Dharma propagation work. All in the hopes of turning ABLS into a modern scholarly research center for Buddhist studies, fostering a new generation of Buddhist experts, and providing many Buddhists the best service.

In 2009, at age 96, Venerable Master passed the duties of ABLS Board Chairman to me. Along with gratitude to Venerable Master for 25 years of nonstop support and painstaking fostering, I further resolve to adhere to his purpose in founding ABLS and aims to make Dharma propagation work better to meet the needs of people in contemporary society, to sincerely serve the large Buddhist following, and to promote the education of Avatamsaka Buddhism nationally and abroad. The center of gravity of this education work will be on cultivating a new generation of experts in Buddhism. In parallel, we will not forget to pay attention to the weak and vulnerable and to care for the poor and sick. These are the foremost objectives to use in leading our organization forward.

Concerning Dharma propagation work, aside from routinely keeping the annually scheduled Dharma events on track, it is imperative that the Sangha and laity's knowledge of Buddhism not stop at the perceptual level of superficial acceptance of the faith, but transcend to rational acceptance of Buddhism, its Sutras and Dharma practices through constant education (listening and absorption) and practice. With that in mind, I visit ABLS twice a year to direct the major spring and autumn Dharma assemblies. Aside from guiding the Dharma assembly in the recitation of the Avatamsaka Sutra or repentance texts, different topics are compiled and taught in conjunction with current events using multi-media teaching aids to explain the essence of the Dharma, progressing from beginner to advanced levels. In particular, the instruction of Avatamsaka Dharma Practice is the primary focus. Thus, the Dharma assemblies at ABLS become more than just a forum to honor ancestors and to help them cross over to the next life, and are no longer just "traditional" events.

The biggest difference between ABLS and other traditional Buddhist monasteries is its emphasis on the teachings of the Avatamsaka Sutra. In keeping with the times and using modern academic techniques, the Sangha and laity can research the profound philosophy of Buddhism. To that end, ABLS held the "Avatamsaka Sutra and Sastra Symposium" in both 2006 and 2007. Several scholars and professors from Taiwan, Japan and India were invited to present a series of talks at the events. The symposiums generated dynamic participation and discussion from local residents and attendees, and received resounding



acclaim from Buddhism enthusiasts. In addition to periodic seminars, ABLS frequently invites various venerables and teachers (nationally and abroad with the most excellent qualifications), making use of the newest digital instructional technology, to hold special lectures on specific topics in Buddhism, so that local devotees can immerse in the Dharma rain, nourish their soul and moisten the seed of Buddha within.

Public welfare and charity has long been Buddhism's lifeline to society. To continue the importance the Venerable Master placed on the enterprise of public welfare and charity, various activities such as disaster relief efforts, aid for the poor, philanthropic medical services, and academic scholarships are all executed in coordination with ABLS' annual project plans. In the future, we will gradually move towards expanding our scope, area and items of service. We hope to unite religious function and community engagement by taking practical measures to care for society and the disadvantaged, benefiting all sentient beings – carrying out the Bodhisattva's mission.

To benefit local students in need of assistance, a scholarship program was initiated in Milpitas. Through communications with the school principal, this scholarship was introduced and made available to students of Milpitas High School. The review and selection criteria are based on the student's academic performance, degree of participation in community service, teacher's recommendation letters, family financial status, and personal essay. A number of professionals volunteer to thoroughly review the essays and make careful selections for this "High School Youth Scholarship." The scholarship recipients come to ABLS to receive the award in person. The scholarship will continue to be awarded every year and its scope expanded to other cities. Hopefully, this scholarship will encourage youths to instill in themselves good values and to give back to society with a grateful heart.

On this happy occasion of celebrating the 30th anniversary of the founding of ABLS in Milpitas, California, this article is dedicated for the preface to this commemorative publication. The hope is that the series of lectures and activities held in celebration of this anniversary spurs diversified learning of the Avatamsaka School among Sangha and laity, and injects new elements of vitality into the propagation and transformation work that has been performed by ABLS for many years. Looking ahead, with sound planning for future developments of ABLS and together with deep plowing, the widespread dissemination of Avatamsaka represents the opening of a new page in the future of Avatamsaka Dharma transformation in the West!





# CITY OF MILPITAS COMMENDATION

TO  
**AVATAMSAKA BUDDHIST LOTUS SOCIETY**  
*For Its 30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary in August 2014*

The City of Milpitas extends congratulations to Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society in Milpitas, California on their 30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Celebration. Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society provides wonderful services for the community including daily prayer sessions and holding regular classes teach Buddhism and Buddhist practices. Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society also reaches out to the community through charitable activities, donation drives, and a Scholarship Program. Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society truly does put into practice the Buddha Dharma of knowing no boundaries or nationalities and providing a sanctuary and opportunities to learn and practice Buddhism. On behalf of the Milpitas City Council, I, Mayor Jose S. Esteves, would like to extend my appreciation for your contributions!



  
Mayor Jose S. Esteves



**CITY OF MILPITAS**  
**OFFICE OF MAYOR JOSE S. ESTEVES**

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MESSAGE from:

**Jose S. Esteves**  
**Mayor, City of Milpitas CA**

August 1, 2014

***30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Celebration***

Greetings Dear Friends:



From the City of Milpitas, I send my warmest greetings and congratulations to the **Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society (ABLS)** in recognition of its 30<sup>TH</sup> Year Anniversary in 2014. Your work and dedication to Milpitas community has helped to heighten the public's interest in community services.

The (ABLS) provides wonderful and memorable events such as the daily morning and evening prayer sessions, weekly Sunday service and the annual Buddha's Birthday celebration. With over 3,000 members in the Bay Area, ABLS holds regular classes and invites Dharma masters and Buddhist scholars to lecture on various topics from the birth of Buddhism to how to properly meditate. Besides striving to educate the community, ABLS also places emphasis on helping the community and people in need through charitable activities and donation drives. In fact, ABLS even set up a Scholarship Program extended to high school students in Milpitas and San Jose. ABLS truly does put into practice the Buddha Dharma of knowing no boundaries or nationalities and providing a sanctuary and opportunities to learn and practice Buddhism.

Congratulations on your 30<sup>TH</sup> Anniversary Celebration.

I commend you on your sustained advocacy in helping those who are in need within our community and beyond. On behalf of the Milpitas City Council and, myself, congratulations, once again, and we wish you a most successful celebration!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jose Esteves'.

Jose S. Esteves  
Mayor  
City of Milpitas





Abbess Tien Inn  
Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society  
50 South Main Street  
Milpitas, California 95035

Dear Venerable Abbess,

Thank you very much for inviting me to participate in your guest column in conjunction with your celebration of 30 years of service to the Milpitas community.

I have been honored and happy to join with you on many festive occasions during the past 30 years and I take great pleasure in thanking you and your members for helping our city grow. While I have always appreciated the warmth and friendliness of you and your staff, I am most impressed by your emphasis on scholarships for our young people. By helping them obtain their educational goals, you are helping to build a stronger and better Milpitas, and I salute you for it.

I also thank you for the peace, wisdom and tranquility that I have found at your temple and in the teachings of the Buddha. You are a wonderful source of enlightenment in our community. I look forward to your next 30 years of service.

Gratefully,

  
Peter McHugh  
Former County Supervisor



***Sek Tuan Ti***

Dharma Joy Buddhist Centre  
Singapore

## ***CONGRATULATIONS!***

Congratulations to Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society and its Committee on its 30th Anniversary!

Over the years, the Society and its Committee had contributed to the society spiritually by conducting various prayer events, dharma talks and meditation sessions. Various Venerables were invited from different traditions and countries/background for various events to enrich and broaden the knowledge of the Society's laities and members. Besides conducting activities, the Society also took advantage of various social media like Facebook and the Society's Website and Magazine publication, to reach to those who might not be able to come to the Society personally.

Communally, the Society distributed scholarships and bursaries to students in need, and conducted classes for new migrants. The Centre venue acts as a gathering place for these new migrants. Beside these, the Society's youth group also visited and offered gifts to some elderly people in Elderly Homes, led by Ven. Tien Inn and Ven. Tien Yung as well as other Sangha members.

As the Society's Abbess, Ven. Tien Inn demonstrated energetic and dynamic leadership, inspiring those under her care to do more for the better good of all. It seems like only yesterday that we were both fellow classmates in Hua-Yen Buddhist College (Taiwan). Although time and space kept us apart, we are always mutually concern over each other, be it physically, emotionally or spiritually. We will also visit and assist each other at our Centre whenever time allows. Hence, today, on this auspicious occasion, I would like to extend my heartiest congratulations to Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society, Abbess Ven. Tien Inn and all the Society members. With this, let us all look forward to its further endeavors and a successful celebration.

With metta

## *Edward Ting*

Abbess Venerable Tien Inn and Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society have had a very positive and long lasting impact on my life. It is under Venerable Tien Inn's teaching and guidance that enable me to continue and enhance my journey to seek enlightenment, wisdom, and inner peace.

I met Venerable Tien Inn when my mother passed away in 2009. Venerable Tien Inn taught me the way to properly take care of mother on her last journey in this world. And it is also at this time that I converted to Buddhism to help my mom to also become a Buddhist.

Although it is my intent to help my mother have a good journey into her next life, the result actually helped me just as much if not more. Since 2009 I have volunteered to be the temple photographer, youth group leader or just a devotee. What I have noticed is that the more I volunteer the more I learn and the more I become awakened.

As the temple photographer I had the opportunity to observe the various ceremonies first hand and up close and also listen to the many enlightening Dharma Talks by the various venerable masters. Being the photographer forces me to stay from the beginning to the end and to listen and fully immerse in the day's teaching. I also got to participate in many of the discussions between the dignitaries and the venerables. This also offers me insight into how Buddhism has affected so many people in so many different ways. All very positive and all very meaningful.

As the youth group leader it was great to bring young people together helping the temple and community we live in. I am also very grateful to the temple for offering such a great program to the youth of this temple. The youth group really offers a bridge and a deeper way for the youth to connect with the temple and to connect with Buddhism. It also gives me an opportunity to interact with the young people and to be able to pay it forward to the community first such as visiting senior homes, and volunteering at food banks.

During this time, through Abbess Venerable Tien Inn and the temple, I have learned a great deal about Buddhism and myself. The more I learned the more I realized that there is more to learn. I have noticed that in these five years, I am better now at letting things go, I am better at understanding people from their perspective, I have become a better listener and I have also told myself every day not to harm people, to forgive and forget. Often we think we are doing things for others but in reality it is ourselves that



benefit from all the kind actions the most. So I now say, the smart way to be selfish is to be kind and loving to all others.

As part of this personal transformation, I am now much more effective in doing my job, especially with a big passionate smile. In personnel management, in high level negotiation and in meetings and presentations I can now see more of the partners' need and try harder in coming up with a better deal for all because of my inner peace. This has definitely contributed to the success in my career. Unfortunately as a result, I now have less time and have been unable to participate in many of the temple events. I hope to make more time so that I can continue to grow with the teachings from Venerable Tien Inn.

However, I sincerely believe that this temple under Venerable Tien Inn has done a great job and there are many more opportunities for us all to work together to promote Buddhism and the temple. Why am I so excited?

I believe we have the best Venerables and the best temple in the San Francisco Bay Area.

San Francisco Bay Area has one of the highest concentration of Buddhists.

San Francisco Bay Area has some of the best educated people.

San Francisco Bay Area is one of the wealthiest area in the country.

These are just some of the key elements that can help us succeed. We just need to work together to make it happen and I am sure it will happen. Venerable Tien Inn has helped many people like me and I am sure she will continue to positively impact countless people in the San Francisco Bay Area. We are very fortunate and blessed to be here, close the Venerable Tien Inn and the temple.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Venerables of Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society for giving me this opportunity to write an article for this special issue celebrating the 30th anniversary of ABLs. During the past few years, I have been through several different transitions in life, and throughout this period, ABLs has always been a place where I could separate myself from the world and find serenity. As a beginner, I believe that it has been greatly beneficial to practice with the Venerables of the temple, being reminded of the Buddha's teachings when we slowly drift away. The form of serenity I seek is through the practice of compassion. I believe my learning in Buddhism is fairly shallow, but my main understanding starts from compassion, and from there, anything in life we encounter can be realized through this approach of thinking. For me, these things can start small, but the initial thought should be genuine. The simplest acts such as helping an elderly to their seat during Sunday services, or helping wash the dishes after the Sunday lunch offerings, is a way for me to remind myself what life is about, and the mentality we should use to approach our daily lives. Of course, this is not limited to just the temple, but should be practiced everywhere and in every situation.

ABLS had a great idea to organize a youth group during 2012, where many activities were organized to attract many youths. The activities ranged from visiting elderly homes to small construction projects like building a pond for lotus plants in the garden of the temple. I think that the group succeeded in its mission to promote and spread Buddha's basic concepts in addition to providing youths with leadership and practical skills to spark their interests in activities which they might not have been exposed to before. Due to work and school commitments, a lot of the core members were unable to continue, but I hope that the youth group could continue to become bigger and stronger in the near future.

Sometimes when life gets too stressful, Venerable Tien Inn reminds us it is important to stop and think what you are doing, and determine if it is necessary to stress yourself to that level. Often times, I find myself to be in a better state of mind when I stop whatever I am doing, sit in a quiet place, and observe my breath, even for just five minutes, it makes a huge difference. I have learned that meditation not only allows our mind to focus, but also helps to envision the steps needed to move forward from the current challenges ahead.





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My most current transition has been going back to being a full-time student, it has been a while since college, and I am being reminded of how tough it could be as a student. The lesson I have learned is that we are all human, and it is important to break down things into manageable quantities so you do not get overwhelmed. Humans make mistakes, and are not perfect. From my experience, we have to do the best to our abilities, and sometimes when outcomes don't come out the way we expect, we need to take advantage of learning from this failure, it presents opportunities for the personal growth, and this is the ultimate reason for our existence. Life's journey is about learning from mistakes, and where these mistakes will take you in the future.

I think that the Buddha's teachings also encourage us to give our best efforts in everything we do, but also contemplate on how we can further improve it. When things get tough, don't play yourself as the victim, and question why it is happening to you, but be responsible for the consequences because you have the choice and power to make change happen, it is up to yourself to make sure things follow through. Smile, and stay positive. These are some of the small things in life I have learned and incorporated from the Buddhist teachings, and I believe that it will be helpful for those who often have challenges to overcome.

ABLS has provided me a place to learn, practice, and build great relationships with not only friends, but also with Venerable Tien Ning, Venerable Tien Rong and Venerable Abbess Tien Inn. I especially want to thank Venerable Abbess Tien Inn for the tremendous time and patience that went into organizing the youth group, and also inspiring me with a generous Buddhist heart. I hope that the youth group can be reorganized in the near future because it is a great way to introduce youths to Buddhism in a fun and informal way. I wish ABLS can continue to make a dominant Buddhist influence and hope they can bring Dharma rain to enrich all of western societies.



# Timelife of Elder Master Ching Yi

1914

In the Thai, Jiangsu province in China the Wang Family gained a second son named Rukang (汝康). He was physically weak during his early years, therefore from age 11; he adapted a vegetarian diet with his mother. At age 13 he went to Guanyin Chan Monastery to receive tonsure under Dharma Master Chunyuan (春遠上人) with the Dharma Name Jueyin (覺因); Cheng Yi also named Shoumin (壽民) and Ruiding (瑞定) hallmarked according to Guangxiao Monastery (光孝寺) (hereinafter as Elder Chengyi)

1936

Venerable Master Yu Cheng (玉成) encouraged Elder Chengyi to go to school at Guang Xiao Monastery of Tai Zhou province studying Buddhist Studies while following the patriarchs Venerable Masters Zhi Guang (智光) and Nan Ting (南亭), studying the Avatamsaka Lotus, and Mādhyamika sutras.

1937

During the war against Japan, classes at the monastery were ceased.

1940

At Longchang Monastery (隆昌寺) of Nanjing Province, Elder Chengyi received the Full Ordination Precepts under the preceptor—Venerable Master Miaorou (妙柔)

1941

Classes resumed at Guang Xiao Monastery. Per request of Venerable Master Nan Ting, Elder Cheng Yi was appointed the dean of Guang Xiao Monastery (光孝寺) and also as a lecturer teaching the Hua Yen Treatise written by the Fifth Patriarch Master Kuei-Feng

1942

With encouragement from Venerable Master Zhi Guang Elder Chengyi went to Shanghai and studied diligently at the local community college. Then he was admitted into the Shanghai Chinese Traditional Medicine College to study medicine. During his study of medicine, and with recommendation from Ven. Master Nan Ting, he continued to study under the Ven. Master Zhi Fang (止方和尚) at the Qing Lian Hermitage (青蓮庵). Later, Ven. Master Zhi Fang was appointed as the Abbot of the Yufo Temple (玉佛寺), where Elder Chengyi was his attendant and was a lecturer in the Buddhist College for the next six years

1947

After graduating from the College Elder Chengyi began his Oriental Medicine practice starting the first Buddhist free Clinic in Yufo Monastery



# Timeline of Elder Master Ching Yi

- 1948 As the time became insecure Elder Chengyi followed teacher Shaoqi Chang (張少齊) fled eastward to Taiwan and settled in Taipei. Because he saw the temples at the time lacking in availability of sutra texts, he invited his teachers to establish Jueshi Book Club (覺世圖書文具社) and other reference material, also distributing sutra texts to meet the demands of the devotees on the island including Buddhist literature and research material
- 1949 From here on, the situation in Shanghai became more nervous by the day, Elder Chengyi wrote to his masters, Venerable Masters Zhi Guang and Nan Ting inviting them to come to Taiwan to avoid the disaster and stayed at Taipei Shipu Temple (十普寺). In the same year, He requested Venerable Master Dong Chu (東初法師) to begin the publication of *Life Magazine* for propagating Buddhism
- 1952 Venerable Master Nan Ting purchased a property in Taipei City on South Xinsheng Rd to build Huayen Lotus Society
- 1953 Elder Chengyi took up the post of secretary in the Chinese Buddhist Association (中國佛教會), being Editor of *Chinese Buddhism Monthly*
- 1956 Elder Cheng Yi was invited by the congregation of Kai Cheng Temple (開成寺) in Tou Cheng City of Yi Lan County (宜蘭頭城) to be their Advisor and to also train the youth in singing Buddhist songs, propagating the teachings
- 1957 It was the first time the Elder Chengyi gave teachings over radio broadcast including the morning and evening chanting services. That autumn he became the editor of *Jueshi Magazine*, which was a periodical published every ten days, and was elected as a director of Taiwan Buddhist Affiliate (台灣省佛教分會)
- 1958 Elder Chengyi helped to organize a tour around the island to promote the printing of the Buddhist Tripitaka Canon
- 1959 Elder Chengyi took the post of superintendent of the Huayen Lotus Society and as attendant to Venerable Masters Zhi Guang and Nan Ting
- 1960 As a promotion of generosity, Elder Chengyi held a winter charitable relief and goods distribution. In August he participated in a dialogue with the front line troops at Jin Men County. On November 4<sup>th</sup> he gave Dharma teachings at Jin Men for the first time

- 1962 At Dasi City of Tao Yuan County Qiaoal Hall was established. Dasi, Taoyuan
- 1963 February 19, Venerable Master Zhi Guang passed away and Venerable Elder Chengyi took the task of handling all funerary arrangements and building the relic stupa April of the same year Venerable Master Nan Ting gave the Dharma Transmission of the Nan Shan Vinaya School (南山律宗) Of the Qian Hua Hall (千華堂上) Thirty Seventh Generation, The Guang Xiao Hall (光孝堂上) Seventeenth Generation, and the Thirty Seventh Generation transmission of the Avatamsaka School (傳華嚴宗) to Elder Chengyi with the Dharma Name Ruiding (瑞定)
- 1964 Qiaoai Buddhist Lecture Hall in Tao Yuan County was established, chanting services were held every weekend and Elder Chengyi gave Dharma talks after the Dharma Service
- 1965 Elder Cheng Yi went to Hong Kong to give teachings regarding the recitation of the Buddha's name at the City Hall and Deer Park Temple. The Private Chih-Kwang Senior Vocational Business & Technology High School (新北市私立智光高級商工職業學校) officially opened
- 1968 Within the Buddhist Association, Elder Chengyi was appointed with a high position, and while being active in the Buddhist community he attended the World Buddhist Sangha Council Conference in Saigon, Vietnam
- 1969 Elder Cheng Yi established the Yuan Hua Temple in Zhong Li City (中壢元化寺). He was also the Vice President and Dean of Education at the Buddhist Institute. Later he was invited as a lecturer at the Lotus Buddhist Ashram. (蓮花學園)
- 1970 Elder Chengyi was appointed as the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China's Vice Director of the South East Asia Group.
- 1972 Ven. Master Nan Ting retired from his position at Huayen Lotus Society, Elder Chengyi accepted over the position as Abbot. The same year he was appointed as Councilman of the Taipei Buddhist Association and elected as President of the China Institute of Medicinal Plants.
- 1973 Elder Chengyi led a group to Seoul, Korea to participate in the World Buddhist Youth Leadership Training Conference



# Timeline of Elder Master Ching Yi

1975

With the Guidance of Ven. Master Nan Ting, established the Institute of Huayen Buddhist Studies (華嚴專宗學院), October of the same year, the school officially opened.

1977

The Legal Foundation of the Huayen Lotus Society Taipei has been established with the Elder Chengyi as its first Chief Executive Officer.

1978

July 9, Elder Chengyi went to Los Angeles to officiate over the opening ceremony of Dharma Seal Temple. On October 26 the Song Shan Temple (松山寺) in Taipei held their Triple Platform Precepts Ceremony to transmit the Vinaya. Elder Chengyi was one of the witnessing masters. The same year he was invited as the Vice Director of the Chung Hua Buddhist Institute.

1979

January 21 the Buddhist Association of the Republic of China held its annual National Prayer Dharma Service. This time it was held at the Huayen Lotus Society for three days. Elder Chengyi invited Venerable Masters Nan Ting (南亭), Wu Ming (悟明), and Ling Gen (靈根) to preside over the service. Government officials and representatives were present to offer incense and join in the service. April 27 President Jiang Jing Guo held an interfaith dialogue at the Presidential Office; Elder Chengyi attended representing Buddhism.

1980

Participated in the World Buddhist Conference at Ryokoku University (龍谷大學) in Kyoto, Japan. The same year he was appointed as the Chair of the World Chinese Medicine Convention.

1982

Ven. Master Nan Ting passed away, the CEO position Private Chih-Kwang Senior Vocational Business & Technology High School was passed to Elder Chengyi. In the beginning of April the same year, Elder Cheng Yi visited the U.S again with Venerable Master Sheng Yen (聖嚴法師) representing the Chinese Cultural Institute visiting Florida State University discussing about exchange program collaboration.

1984

May 24 A representative of the President at Eastern University in Pennsylvania went to Taiwan to honor Elder Chengyi with an doctorate degree. By invitation of devotees, Elder Chengyi came to America to spread the Dharma at a temporary Buddha Hall in San Jose, California. In December he purchased an apartment as a temporary temple site on Pelleas Lane in San Jose.

1985

Elder Cheng Yi established the All Ways Monthly Publishing Association(萬行月刊) . In January Elder Chengyi represented Buddhism at President Ronald Regan's inauguration ceremony. In autumn of the same year he brought Buddhist images and sutras to the US. On December 7, ABLs invited Elder Chengyi to give a month-long series of teachings on the Avatamsaka Sutra and Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's Vows.

1986

The search began to establish a temple site in San Jose, California. In August a property was purchased in Cupertino and the Buddha hall was established including Saturday chanting services and Sunday study sessions.

1987

Ven. Master Cheng Yi attended the Philosophy Conference held in San Diego.

1988

Because the current location of ABLs was a residential location, large events were held at an outside rental venue. Because of this, Elder Chengyi started to look for a property to build a temple.

At the end of July the same year, the day of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva's Enlightenment remembrance, Elder Chengyi Expounded on the teachings and practices of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva.

1989

As wished, a property was purchased in Milpitas to build ABLs-USA. On August 24 the Board of Directors was officially established.

1990

Work officially started to build ABLs-USA, and took two years to complete. In June of the same year Elder Chengyi went to Houston, TX to participate in the grand opening of the Jade Buddha Temple (德州玉佛寺) , and was awarded an Honorary Citizen.

1992

On January 11, on Buddha's Enlightenment Day, Elder Chengyi gave talks at the Ta Kioh Buddhist Temple (大覺蓮社) in San Francisco regarding Avatamsaka Thought and the Path the Enlightenment. On May 24 Elder Chengyi gave a talk on Sudhana's 53 visits. On May 30, after two years of construction ABLs was finally built and the Buddha Statues were enshrined. On October 25 the Dharma Protector Support organization was established, at the same time Elder Chengyi expounded on the meaning of protecting the Dharma.

1993

May 16, ABLs-USA held its grand opening; many masters gathered filling the hall. At the same time, Elder Chengyi began his work on spreading the Dharma beginning with a talk on the commentary of Venerable Master Sheng Ar's An Essay on Exhortation to Bring Forth the Bodhicitta.

# Timeline of Elder Master Ching Yi

1994

Plans were made to repair and revive the monastery where Elder Chengyi received tonsure, Guan Yin Chan Monastery in Hai An city of Ying Xi.

1995

The local government approved plans to rebuild Guan Yin Chan Monastery. The same year construction began.

1997

Elder Chengyi visited Hong Kong to pay respects to the patriarch Venerable Master Ai Ting (藹亭和尚). He also visited Tung Lin Kok Yuen (東蓮覺苑) and Bodhi Association (菩提學會). On May 24, Elder Chengyi visited the Chuang Yen Monastery in New York (紐約莊嚴寺) for their grand opening. On May 30, Elder Chengyi led a group to visit Orlando, Florida and other parts of the east and west coasts. Before returning to Taiwan, Elder Chengyi gave Dharma Talks at ABLs. On October 24, he led his disciples to Guan Yin Chan Monastery in Hai An for their opening ceremony and began travelling the silk road including Gansu, Xin Jiang, Qing Hai, and other locations on the route.

1998

Beginning in May, Elder Chengyi began his teaching series in USA temples. The Mahabodhi Society (菩提學會) invited Elder Chengyi in April to give talks on the Avatamsaka School's practice of the pure land. The Bodhi Way Association invited the Elder to give a Dharma talk about the Maitreya Buddha Practice. At ABLs he gave a series of talks during Sunday service on the Maitreya Buddha Great Achievement of Buddhahood Sutra, and gave talks at the Ta Kioh Buddhist Temple about the Maitreya Buddha Pure Land Practice. In mid-August a water disaster occurred in mainland China, Elder Chengyi gathered donations and sent them to the San Jose Red Cross. On September 6, plans were made to expand ABLs by acquiring property to perform expansion. On October 28 Elder Chengyi led his disciples back to Guan Yin Chan Monastery in Hai An to participate in their Emperor Liang Repentance Ceremony.

1999

As Elder Chengyi got older, events were minimized; he retired from his position as President of the Hua Yen College, Ven. Xian Du became his successor

2000

In May Elder Chengyi held his summer teaching series at ABLs about The Sutra of Mind Meditation in Mahayana Jataka.



2001

Ven. Master Cheng Yi made plans to expand ABLs-USA. On July 25, Elder Chengyi at the same time accepted the position of Abbot of ABLs. In mid-November he continued his Dharma talks on The Sutra of Mind Meditation in Mahayana Jataka.

2002

Plans were approved and authorized to expand ABLs-USA. On October 26, Elder Chengyi led a group on a special trip back to China to participate in the Guan Yin Chan Monastery (Patriarch Temple) in Hai An's Sutra Canon Library Building's ground breaking ceremony and visiting the Patriarch Temple in Tai Zhou province, Guang Xiao Vinaya Temple.

2003

In mid-August the ground breaking ceremony was held on the expansion project of ABLs USA. The same day Elder Chengyi retired from his abbotship at ABLs and transmitted the abbotship to Venerable Hsien Du as the new abbot.

2004

Work on the expansion project officially started. On May 30, Elder Chengyi led a group to the Hai An Patriarch Temple, Guan Yin Chan Monastery, for their Sutra Canon Library opening and ribbon cutting ceremony. In mid-December he visited the USA to again give Dharma talks on The Sutra of Mind Meditation in Mahayana Jataka. At the end of month he officiated over the Main Shrine's Pillar Rising Ceremony.

2005

In April Elder Chengyi officiated over the Spring Qing Ming Filial Piety Dharma Service concluding with the Amitabha Triple Contemplation Ceremony. On April 15 he visited Texas to officiate over the Houston Huayen Lotus Society's opening and ribbon cutting ceremony. At the same time he was honored with the title Life-long Advisor. September 17, the grand opening ceremony was held for the completion of the expansion project at ABLs.

2006

As Elder Chengyi aged, he never forgot to promote the practice of Maitreya Buddha. He officiated over different Dharma services in different locations. In mid-April he led his disciple to visit famous monasteries in Shanghai, and returned to Hai An and then Tai Zhou. The group later went to Feng Hua in Zhe Jiang province for a pilgrimage to Maitreya Bodhisattva. On June 28 he visited the USA for the summer and continued to promote the Maitreya practice. On July 9, the remembrance of Avalokitesvara's enlightenment, Elder Chengyi officiated over the Dharma service. On August 1, ABLs held its first thesis forum; Elder Chengyi was personally on site as a form of encouragement.

# Timeline of Elder Master Cheng Yi

2007

Elder Chengyi was busy with the Dharma activities in Hai An and Tai Zhou.

2008

On May 1, Elder Chengyi visited Hai An, Tai Zhou, Nan Jing, and other locations for cultural exchange and to exchange academic ideals and Dharma with the local government officials and mainstream Buddhist masters. On August 3, during Ullambana, Elder Chengyi returned to the USA to officiate over the Dharma Service. August 11, Elder Chengyi went to Houston Huayen Lotus Society to officiate over the Dharma transmission and abbotship transmission ceremonies to Venerable Cheng Xuan. On October 10, he officiated over Dharma services in Hai An and then went to Tai Zhou. Wherever the elder was, the media would stand by to report his footsteps.

2009

Elder Chengyi, due to his age, decided to retire from the Board Chairman position at both the Taipei Lotus Society and ABLS. Elder Chengyi recommended Venerable Hsien Du and was voted on unanimously by the entire board of directors. During Qing Ming in April, Elder Chengyi visited the USA to perform the purification and ribbon cutting ceremonies of the Cheng Yi Building and at the same time held the installment ceremony of the new Board Chairman.

2010

Ven. Master Cheng Yi returned back to his roots, inviting the relics of Ven. Masters Zhi Guang and Nan Ting back to the patriarch temple, and Ven. Master Cheng Yi himself moved back into Guang Xiao Monastery for his retirement.

2011

April 27, after finishing his worldly affinities, with his merit and practice reaching completion, he was surrounded by all his Dharma heirs chanting Maitreya Buddha's name, Elder Chengyi passed peacefully, reborn into Tushita Heaven. The Dharma Flag has broken; The Wisdom Sun has lost its brightness, all merits dedicated to the Dharma. Both shores of Taiwan and China were in grievance. Ven. Master Cheng Yi passed at the worldly age of 98, Sangha age of 85, Precept age of 72. His merits from his Dharma activities have been completed.

# My Reflection

*By Tien Inn*

*Translated by: Translation Team*

This year, 2014, is USA Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society's 30th anniversary. Thirty years ago, in 1984, the Elder Master Cheng Yi decided to purchase the property on 50 South Main Street in Milpitas and build a temple. This was the official beginning of the Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society (ABLS). For sixteen years, because of various causes and conditions, I was unable to participate in ABLS operations. I joined the ABLS team in 2001. It has now been fourteen years and I truly appreciate Elder Master Cheng Yi and Chairman Dr. Hsien Du for their mentorship, positive feedback, and learning opportunities. Because of them, I have been able to service the devotees and build many friendships.

It has been said, "One must have good karma to be able to live in California," and I wholeheartedly agree. The wonderful weather and the abundant sunshine makes one feel as if he is on top of the world, as if any little effort is sure to go a long way. The land is open and the air is tranquil, allowing one to easily find peace and serenity as he studies. To live here and simultaneously be able to service the Bodhisattvas is truly good fortune.

For the past thirty years, ABLS has been growing. According to records, not long after ABLS opened, Elder Master Cheng Yi formed a support group composed of devotees supporting the Dharma. At that time, Elder Master Cheng Yi traveled between America and Taiwan, only staying for a short period each time. Perhaps this was a hint from Ven. Master Cheng Yi that as Buddhist devotees, it is our responsibility to protect and support ABLS. Development was slow to start off, but through proper order and gradual progress, ABLS was able to achieve the success that it has today.

These fourteen years, since being appointed as the temple supervisor to becoming an abbess, my vows have not changed – residing and abiding within the ABLS, and work with other Venerables, volunteers, and devotees to form a monastery of Dharma. Many people have offered their support on this journey, some offered physical and financial assistance, some come to worship, and others come to generate merit. Some come to the temple to honor their passed loved ones, and some just happen to pass by and share a meal. Looking back, perhaps many of these people are no longer acquainted, due to the condition of their health, moving to other countries, or perhaps some other reason but there are some who started with us in the beginning and continue to support us till this day. To those: persevere in your faith to ABLS and your confidence in the Dharma. I believe that it is affinity that brought us together, and I am forever grateful in my heart! Sometimes, looking at old photographs, I realize that many are no longer here with us. The Chinese say, "Time is cruel, but humanity is not." I am saddened by such, but this is the Buddhist teaching that all phenomena is impermanent, therefore we must cherish the many different relationships we have around us.



Following Ven. Master Cheng Yi's great vow to expand the temple, the architectural tasks began in 2003. The Main Shrine took 18 months to finish and debuted in September 2005 with blessings and prayers. In 2007, renovations began again at 50 South Main Street and in April 2009, the "Cheng Yi Hall" debuted with a special opening ceremony. This hall commemorates Ven. Master Cheng Yi's dedication to the ABLS in Milpitas. The last stage was to connect the two halls by building a gate that surrounded the perimeter of both buildings, forming one entity. The above projects took a total of six years; it is hard to describe everything that happened during that time with only a few words. There was laughter and tears throughout, and reflecting back, although it was difficult, we did not disappoint all the donors who had offered their support and were able to successfully complete the expansion projects.

The two halls at ABLS stand majestically and with grace. Inside, all the necessary equipment is present and updated. There are three Avatamsaka Buddha statues in the Grand Hall where the disciples come to pay homage. The library on the second floor is the location of Buddhist classes and various interest group classes. The simple yet graceful meditation hall is located on the second floor of Cheng Yi Hall. In the past, Seven-Day Intensive Meditation Retreats and many other meditation retreats have taken place here. After Sunday Service, depending upon the situation, the dining hall is used either to serve individual boxed lunches or buffet-style lunches. These meals replenish not only the physical body but also the spiritual self. The ABLS office is located on the first floor and provides information on the Society's activities that offer disciples the opportunity to perform good deeds in the community and gather good karma.

Throughout the renovation and expansion of the ABLS halls, classes, Sunday Services, Refuge Ceremonies, and the publication of The Avatamsa magazine were not affected. This was to perpetuate progress on the society's four great principles: spread the teachings of the Buddha, education, culture, and charity. Although for many years there has been a shortage of Venerables, these activities have continued to take place. Every time there is a conference or activity, I see the resident Venerables, volunteers, and visiting Venerables working hard together and my heart is content. I am especially thankful for the visiting Masters – some come from different temples and others from different countries. When they arrive at ABLS, they do not hesitate to help. Even an abbot will find time amongst his busy schedule to support us. They are very dignified and austere during the ceremony, but during the rest periods, they are eager to help in all aspects. Whether it be lifting and carrying, or helping to prepare meals in the kitchen, everyone becomes one big family with the same goal in mind – to create a successful and joyous conference or activity for all the attendees.

Here, I would like to thank the two resident Masters for their dedication and cooperation. Ven. Tien Yung manages the temple's internal and external affairs, such as visitor relations, computer and networking issues, office management, purchasing, and is the occasional chauffeur. Ven. Tien Ling is in charge of all the altar-offering affairs, such as obtaining incense, candles, and other materials for the altars. She is involved in all the preparations for the Dharma assemblies and activities. She also manages the library and the publication of The Avatamsa magazine. The three of us have worked together for more than ten years and have formed a connection that allows us to accomplish many things without much difficulty. I remember three years ago, when Ven. Master Cheng Yi passed away, Ven. Tien Yung

and I traveled to China's Tai Zhou Guang Xiao Monastery to work with the person in charge to coordinate the funeral ceremony. We were the only representatives from USA. At that time, on behalf of USA ABLS, I partook in the ceremony rituals. Ven. Tien Yung was responsible for taking pictures and interviews, and each night, would e-mail the news to Ven. Tien Ling. The next day, Ven. Tien Ling would then distribute the latest updates to all the devotees.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the devotees and volunteers who have selflessly contributed their heart and energy to supporting ABLS all these years. USA ABLS has been in the Bay Area for thirty years. It is normal for the Venerables to come and go, as monastics do not have a permanent home; wherever there is Buddha, there is home. Thus, the Chinese say, "The temple will always be there, but the Sangha will come and go." However, the heart of the Sangha and the volunteers which protects the Buddha Dharma will be forever.

Time flies, and in the past thirty years, the USA ABLS has welcomed innumerable devotees in hopes that their faith will be strengthened, their wholesome karma improving, and progress will be made on their roads to finding liberation. It is said that the Buddha will lead his followers to liberation. To raise the quality and level of learning the Dharma, the society has increased the number of various Buddhist seminars in recent years. Besides teaching The Avatamsaka Sutra, the USA ABLS has invited many Venerable Masters and professors from Theravada, Chinese, and Tibetan branches of Buddhism to come and introduce devotees to the Dharma and Buddhist moral principles from different points of view.

As a Chinese propagator of Buddha Dharma living in a Western country, one must follow the Chinese culture and tradition of thought. On the other hand, he must also face the impacts of the Western culture. As a result, the spread of the Dharma does have its challenges. The Chinese who immigrated to the United States from the 1950's to the 1970's were very eager to embrace traditional Buddhism. However, the second and third generations of these immigrants are Americans who were born and raised in this country. They have embraced American culture, and possess a different perspective on understanding and accepting Buddhism and its moral principles. As a result, ABLS's current traditional Dharma services and rituals does not satisfy their needs; they possess a rational characteristic that searches for tangible evidence when approaching matters of faith.

To respond to the generational changes and the current mindset of the American devotees, the future of ABLS needs young adults who are organized, capable, sincere, and able to reside in America to more deeply understand American culture, religion, history, etc. This wisdom will hopefully aid us in reaching the current generation that is highly educated but curious about Buddhism, answering their questions and hesitations, and providing classes to increase their spirituality. Through true and constant Buddhist teachings, the newer generation will go from merely exploring Buddhism to applying Buddhist principles to their daily lives.

Lastly, I'm very happy to partake in the 30th anniversary of the USA Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society. I want to wish the Society prosperity in all its affairs, continued spread of the Dharma, that every devotee will grow on their path to liberation, and that all the aforementioned will be achieved with a single heart!

# ABLS Development Summary

## *The Beginning :*

The passed Elder Cheng Yi first arrived in the United States on 1978 for the grand opening ceremony of Dharma Seal Temple. In April of 1982 he visited the Chinese Cultural Institute in Florida with the passed Venerable Master Sheng Yen to discuss a plan to have an exchange program. In 1984 Elder Cheng Yi visited the Bay Area again to visit local devotees Zhen Hui Gan Wang, Ben Kong Hu Wang, Shu Qiang Cai, Ai Na Hu, etc. At one of the gatherings, exchange students including Ti Xing Cai and Ming Zhang Chen suggested and requested Elder Cheng Yi to open a temple in the area. Elder Cheng Yi felt the importance of spreading the Dharma overseas, and that the Bay Area resides a strong Chinese community, he felt that this would help to reach his goal of spreading the Dharma and agreed to the request for the benefit of the community.

## *Establishing the Lotus Society*

In December of 1984 Elder Cheng Yi acquired the property located on Pelleas Lane in San Jose as a temporary Buddha Hall. In August of 1985 he carried a copy of the Buddhist Canon, a Buddha statue and other Buddhist books to the US officially establishing the Avatamsaka Buddhist Association. In September of the same year he established the Buddhist Research Center, inviting devotees Wu Xu Luo and Chuan Xun Li as lecturers. In October Elder Cheng Yi requested Yunliang Wu to apply for Religious Organization status on ABLs' behalf. Later, because the Pelleas Lane location is northeast of town creating inconveniences coming and going, Elder Cheng Yi decided to honor the devotees' request to acquire the Cupertino house in August 1986 to propagate the Dharma and hold chanting services. Unfortunately since it is a residential property the work of spreading the Dharma was not as ideal. To hold events at a larger scale required renting a separate venue. Therefore, Elder Cheng Yi decided to find a property to build a temple site.

In April 1989, through the recommendation of Mr. Xian Wu Hu of Happy Realty, Elder Cheng Yi acquired a 0.4 acre property in Milpitas to build a temple at the cost of \$425,000. Fundraising efforts were led by Elder Cheng Yi, former abbot of Shan Dao Temple Venerable Yun Xia, and owner of Shin Wen Feng Publishing Mr. Ben Zhao Gao. In August of the same year the California government awarded the Religious Organization status and the Lotus Society Board of Directors was officially established with Elder Cheng Yi as the first Chairman.

January 1992 the construction was complete and the Elder personally made the final inspections and in May the Buddha statue installation ceremony was held. At the same time chanting groups and charity groups were established as well. Elder Cheng Yi announced Venerable Master Jing Hai as the abbot, Venerable Hong Du as the director, and Lecturer Venerable Ming Du. The Lay Support Association was established in October with Du Hong as the president, Elder Cheng Yi at the time expressed the importance of the protecting the Dharma.

March 1993 a meeting regarding the grand opening ceremony was held. In May the same year the



grand opening ceremony was held, in attendance included Milpitas City Mayor Pete McHugh, Taiwan Consulate Bay Area office officials including Ambassadors Xian Qing Lu and Di Fu. Also Venerable Masters Wu Ming, Yun Xia, Yin Hai, Jing Hai, Ling Zhen and Elder Cheng Yi all presided over the Buddha statue eye-opening ceremony.

In June of the same year Abbot Ven. Jing Hai was promoted to the abbot of the Jade Buddha Temple in Houston, TX. In August Venerable Zhuan Du came to America to aid in the Dharma activities. In spring of 1994 Director Venerable Hong Du went to Taiwan to care for her illness and therefore the Directorship was transferred to Venerable Yuan Guo with Venerable Zhuan Du as the Vice Abbess. Later that year in the fall Venerable Hong Du returned to take the position as Abbess of ABLS.

### *The Expansion Project*

In September 1998 a committee was formed for the ABLS expansion project which has decided to plan on expanding the current property. In July of 1999 the third meeting on the expansion project took place.

July 2001 ABLS Abbess Venerable Hong Du completed her term and the Board of Directors invited Elder Cheng Yi to become the Chairman and Abbot, Venerable Zhuan Du as the Vice Abbess, and Venerable Tien Inn as Director with a term of three years.

The Main Shrine preparation meeting was held in April 2002 with thirteen people in attendance. Architect Liang Yuan Yang described the plans of the Main Shrine and engineer Zhi Yu Zhang explained the permits that need to be requested regarding construction and land use. After the main shrine is built it can accommodate up to 500 people with 100 parking spots. The original Main Shrine will be remodeled to become a dining hall on the first floor and a dormitory on the second floor.

On May 8, 2002 Elder Cheng Yi with more than 70 disciples and devotees participated in the hearing meetings regarding the temple expansion project. With the review of nine different city council members and after a year of complicated filing and requests, the project was unanimously approved.

August 3, 2003, the ground breaking ceremony for the new Main Shrine was held. After describing the causes and conditions of ABLS Elder Master Cheng Yi, Zhi Hai, and Venerable Hsien Du presided over the purification ceremony and then followed the ground breaking ceremony with ten VIPs. With the golden shovel Elder Cheng Yi made three vows:

With the first shovel: to shovel away all obstacles;

The second shovel: may the Main Shrine be successfully completed;

The third shovel: may the activities of the Dharma successfully flourish.

The same day, Elder Cheng Yi passed on his abbotship to Venerable Hsien Du.

June 2004, representative of ABLS Ven. Tien Inn, engineer Zhi Yu Zhang, project supervisor Long

Sheng Shi, Betty Wang, and executives of the Cinecon Group held the signing ceremony of the project agreement. The entire project book consists of 98 prints, with three copies and the original totaling over 400 pages of plans. Each print needed signatures from both parties. Venerable Tien Inn and Cinecon group spent over two hours signing the prints, after that the project officially started with a timeline of eighteen months.

September 2004—Construction began with digging the foundation.

December 31, 2004—the pillar rising ceremony was held for the new Main Shrine. Elder Cheng Yi led the congregation in performing the purification rite.

September 17, 2005—the Buddha statue eye-opening ceremony was held, the hall was filled with guests including Los Angeles Dharma Seal Temple Abbot Venerable Master Yin Hai, Milpitas City Mayor, and Taipei Economic Cultural Center Director.

January 13, 2006—final inspection from city hall and fire department has been passed, the building can now officially be used.

January 29, 2006—The Main Shrine has officially opened for devotees to pay their respects.

April 2, 2006—Preparations began to rebuild the 50 S. Main St. site. A planning meeting was held with architect Steve Yang, engineer Dennis Chang, project supervisor Stone Shi, and ABLs representatives Venerables Tian Inn and Tian Yung. The agenda included drafting the plans and to divide the project into two phases with the first floor as the first phase and the second floor and exterior as the second phase.

May 15, 2006—documentation regarding the old building has been submitted to the local health department by architect Steve Yang to request kitchen and restaurant permits.

June 12, 2006—electrical engineer Mr. Daniel Yue visited ABLs to plan the electrical wiring for the project and submitted a proposal with plans.

February 3, 2007—A meeting was held on the project, in attendance was Venerables Tian Inn and Tian Yung, architect Steve Yang, engineer Dennis Chang, and project supervisor Stone Shi. After the meeting Steve Yang began to draft the plans, and should finish by April.

April 15, 2007—ABLs Abbess Venerable Hsien Du transferred her abbotship to Venerable Tien Inn witnessed by the Milpitas City Mayor, and Venerable Tien Yung was promoted to director.

May 4, 2007—the fourth meeting was held regarding the project. In attendance were Venerables Tien Inn and Tien Yung, Steve, and Dennis. Steve already drafted a set of plans and will submit them to city hall for approval by July 4 in estimation that the permit will be given in September. For the time being contractors can be brought in for estimates and if all goes well work can begin in October and complete by the following March.

June 15, 2007—the fifth meeting was held regarding the project progress. There was discussion about electrical distribution and capacity and the conclusion was to combine the power from the Main Shrine to the new building for usage. On July 3rd, plans were submitted to the health department for approval and ABLs at the same time assessed various vendors for materials.

September 15, 2007—the sixth meeting was held regarding the project to discuss any alternations and corrections that need to be made and to discuss the selection of vendors.

September 22, 2009—the seventh meeting was held to discuss the project. During the meeting Steve presented his plans in detail to prepare for the opening of bids for the vendors.

October 25, 2007—the eighth meeting took place regarding the project progress. Steve presented his plans in detail to prepare to open the bidding for the vendors.

January 2008—construction work officially began.

April 5, 2009—the new building would be named “Cheng Yi Hall” to remember Elder Cheng Yi’s compassion and great vows in building ABLs.

August 1, 2008—the first phase of the Cheng Yi Hall was complete.

October 2009—the dining hall officially opened, a gathering was held to welcome guests as they filled the hall.

April 2010—the meditation hall on the second floor of Cheng Yi Hall has completed and initiation ceremonies were held for the occasion.

July 30, 2011—the first meeting regarding the temple gate project was held. In attendance was engineer Dennis Chang, project supervisor Stone Shi, representatives from Moon Chien of Cavestone and ABLs. The agenda was to discuss the outline of the project and to secure the agreed timeline of two months to complete the project.

August 7, 2011—a purification ceremony was held for the temple gate project.

February 16, 2012—the permit for the second phase of the temple gate project was approved. This approval process was stricter than the first phase, as documented, the standard for the structure of the gate must be approved by a city certified and provided inspection firm in order to receive final approval.

June 29, 2012—the gate project has finally completed, awaiting final approval before official use.

July 2, 2012—city hall sent an official to inspect the last phase of the project and gave final approval. From now on the gates will be controlled remotely from the computer.

July 2, 2012---Municipal officials sent personnel to inspect the perimeter gate. This last task passed, and the gate become fully operational. From then on the opening and closing times of the gate would be controlled by a computer. The two structures were surrounded by a perimeter railing, forming one large building. This satisfactorily completed the entire expansion project.





## *The First Abbot - Venerable Master Jan Hai*

**V**enerable Master Jan Hai was born in 1931 in Wu-Chin, a county in the province of Jiangsu, China. His family surname was Yuan. He followed the Elder Master Zhou-Ran and received tonsure at the age of nine and began his monastic life at Fu-Xing Temple in Jiang-Su. In 1946, he received full Ordination at Lung Chang Monastery in the mountain of Bao-Hua, China. After studying at the Tian-Ning Temple Buddhist Academy, in 1949, Venerable Jan Hai traveled to Taiwan and became a disciple of the late great Buddhist Master Elder Master Ci-Hang and studied at The Maitreya House of the Interior in Taipei for ten years.

Venerable Jan Hai then went to Thailand in 1960 to study Thai and Pali languages and enrolled in Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University. In 1969, he went to Japan where he earned his master's degree in Buddhism from Rissho University in Tokyo. In 1972, Venerable Jan Hai was invited to the United States where he propagated the Dharma and in 1978, established Buddha's Light Temple in Texas collaboratively with Venerable Wing Sing. Between the years 1998 and 1994, Venerable Jan Hai served as the abbot for Hua-Yen Lotus Association in Taipei, Taiwan. From 1992 to 1994, he also served as the abbot for Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society in USA.

To achieve the long-term dream of spreading the Dharma, in 2002, along with Venerable Hung- I, he promoted the establishment of the American Bodhi Center in hopes that the development of Buddhism will gradually be rooted in the US and be passed on for generations.

Venerable Jan Hai is currently the president of the Texas Buddhist Association and Texas Buddhist Academy. He has written works including *The History of Theravada Buddhism* and *The Sea of Enlightenment*. His translated works include the *Dhammapada: The Way of the Truth* and *A Pictorial Biography of Shakyamuni Buddha*.

Venerable Jan Hai is compassionate and merciful with a peaceful personality. He faces life with a pure heart and treats everyone respectfully. He demonstrates "The pure heart is the Place of Practice." Although he is retired, he has never stopped lecturing on the Sutras and propagating the Dharma, and will continue to spread the Dharma in the USA.



## *The Second Abbess - Venerable Hong Du*

*V*en. Hong Du was born in 1959 in Keelung, Taiwan, family name was Chen. Ven. Hong Du graduated from the Senior Business School in Keelung, Taiwan and later studied at the Taipei Hua Yen Buddhist College in 1987.

In February 1986, Ven. Hong Du followed the Elder Master Cheng-Yi and began her monastic life at Taipei Hua Yen Lotus Society. In 1986, Ven. Hong Du came to United States to assist Elder Master Cheng-Yi for various Buddhist activities and the weekly Sunday Services.

In May 1989, Ven. Hong Du became the Manager of ABLS USA.

In early spring of 1994, due to the health conditions, Ven. Hong Du went back to Taiwan and after six months then back to USA to become the abbess in 1995. Ven. Hong Du finished her mission and retired in July 2001.

In December 2012, Ven. Hong Du decided went back to Taiwan for her retirement.



## *The Third Abbot- Elder Master Cheng-Yi*

*Venerable Master Cheng-Yi was the third abbot of Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society USA. He was born in 1914 in Tai Xian, a county in the province of Jiangsu, China. His family surname was Wang. When he was thirteen years old, illness caused him to feel that life is short and bitter. He left the home-life and began his monastic life at Guan Yin Temple and studied at Thaishiann Guangxiao Buddhist Institute afterwards.*

In 1948, Elder Master Cheng-Yi traveled from China to Taiwan to implement his great vow: "Propagating the Dharma as life's mission".

In 1952, Ven. Master Cheng-Yi assisted Elder Master Nan-Ting in establishing Huayen Lotus Society at Taipei, and Ven. Master Cheng-Yi became the Third Abbot of Huayen Lotus Society Taipei in 1972.

Ven. Master Cheng-Yi not only propagated the Dharma but also engaged in education, culture, and medical academic research. He participated in the founding of Chih-Kwang Senior Vocational Business & Technology High School(CKVS), and established Huayen College at Taipei, Taiwan.

During the years 1996 to 1997, Ven. Master Cheng-Yi completed the project of rebuilding the Guan Yin Temple in Tai Xian and served as the abbot for ABLS USA in 2001. In August 2003, Ven. Hsien Du was appointed as the abbess of ABLS USA by Elder Master Cheng-Yi. As Elder Master Cheng-Yi was growing older, he gradually passed down the duties of the Chief Director of ABLS USA to Ven. Hsien Du.

Elder Master Cheng-Yi was the founder of ABLS USA.

In 1984, (at seventy years old), after travelling to the USA twice, he decided to establish a temple in the Bay Area, which is currently still the location of Huayen Lotus Society USA. Since then, Elder Master Cheng-Yi frequently traveled between China, Taiwan and USA. He tirelessly dedicated his spirit to the Dharma and contributed his best efforts. Moreover, he has been able to increase the number of Buddhist devotees and build many friendships.

In May 2010, Elder Master Cheng-Yi ceremoniously accompanied the return of the relics of the two Patriarch Elder Masters Chih-Kwang and Nan Ting from Taiwan to Guang Xiao Temple in China. Elder Master Cheng-Yi entered stillness on April 27, 2011. After cremation, a portion of his relics were ceremoniously returned to ABLS USA for worship.



## *The Fourth Abbess- Venerable Hsien Du*

**T**he Fourth Abbess of Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society USA was Venerable Hsien Du. Her ancestors came from Huichang, a county in the province of Jiangxi, China. She followed the Elder Master Cheng-Yi and left the home-life to begin his monastic life in January 1986. Her name was Liaohang and another alias was Siqi. Venerable Hsien Du graduated from the Taipei Hua Yen Buddhist College and earned her Master's Degree in July 1990. In 1991, she served as the director of Taipei Huayen Lotus Society and became the sixth abbess in October 1994. In September 1999, Ven. Hsien Du succeeded the Dean of Taipei Hua Yen Lotus Society. In 2002, she went to study Philosophy at Delhi University of India and became the abbess of Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society. Venerable Hsien Du earned her PhD degree in 2005. In 2009, she succeeded the position of C.E.O. of HuaYen Lotus Society.

Venerable Hsien Du specializes in the Avatamsaka Sutra and the Avatamsaka philosophy. She is also a dependable, earnest, and constant Bodhisattva practitioner. She promotes and practices the practice of Cundi Bodhisattva every day and has made it her mission to live her life according to the Avatamsaka principles. Venerable Hsien Du also makes great efforts to extensively propagate the Dharma and hold a variety of other Dharma activities to benefit all beings. Besides these, Venerable Hsien Du focuses even more on education, and aims to promote Avatamsaka teachings, research, and training in domestic and foreign areas in hopes of tapping the potential of those skilled in propagating and lecturing the Avatamsaka Sutra.

In 2006 and 2007, Venerable Hsien Du actively promoted the propagating of Dharma to benefit beings. She organized a series of conferences to deliver talks at symposia on the Avatamsaka Sutra and published many Avatamsaka Sutra themed Papers. All these activities received consistent high praise.





## *The Fifth Abbess - Venerable Tien Inn*

Venerable Tien Inn comes from Hong Kong, graduating from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University and earning the Degree of City and Guilds of London Institute then travelled to Taiwan to concentrate on studying Buddhism. In 1997, she graduated from the Taipei Hua Yen Buddhist College, and in 2000, earned her master's degree in Buddhist Studies and was the one of the coding fellows of the Taipei Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society.

In 2001, Ven. Tien Inn became the vice abbess for USA ABLs, and in 2007, assumed the role of abbess, modernizing and organizing ABLs operations. Ven. Tien Inn spread the teachings of the Avatamsaka sutra to the public, and formed a class at the Bodhi Way Association to propagate Avatamsaka teachings. By 2001, Ven. Tien Inn was already leading the weekly Sunday Services, the Celebration of Buddha's Birthday Assembly, as well as the three big Dharma assemblies of the year – Ching Ming Festival Dharma Service, Ullambana Festival Dharma Service, and the Year End Dharma Service.

Ven. Tien Inn was responsible for various Buddhist activities, and was involved in the Construction Committee to expand the former monastery at 20 South Main Street. She maintained close contact with the architect, engineer, and builder and through many meetings, decisions, and mediations, completed the expansion project in 2005.

Since Ven. Tien Inn became abbess in 2007, she resumed the Year End Emperor Liang Repentance Service which had been stopped for the previous three years. In 2009, Ven. Tien Inn completed renovations of the building on 50 South Main Street, naming it "Cheng Yi Hall" to commemorate Ven. Master Cheng Yi's hard work in establishing the temple.

At the same time, Ven. Tien Inn continued to uphold Ven. Master Cheng Yi's vision, promoting the four missions (spread the teachings of the Buddha, education, culture, and charity). In 2008, Ven. Tien Inn founded The Avatamsa magazine, a major cultural breakthrough for USA ABLs. In every installment of the magazine, Ven. Tien Inn provides an explanation of a segment from "Avatamsaka Sutra: Leaving Worldly Possessions".

Ven. Tien Inn enthusiastically supports the American method of education, helping aspiring Buddhist Studies students by providing them with appropriate guidance and relevant research and documents in hopes of obtaining satisfactory results also supports Milpitas students by offering them scholarships. Ven. Tien Inn actively leads youth groups in visiting senior centers and donating to the elderly, as well as brings devotees together to partake in disaster relief activities.

Ven. Tien Inn has made the Avatamsaka sutra a life mission, applies the Avatamsaka teachings to daily life and follows the Dharma teachings to maintain purity and solemnity within the temple also founded a variety of art classes, such as painting classes, calligraphy classes, cooking classes, and vegetarian and health classes, allowing the devotees to relieve stress by pursuing their interests.

Time to time, Ven. Tien Inn has organized Seven-Day Intensive Meditation Retreats, as well as personally led Cundi Bodhisattva Dharma camps and Medicine Buddha Sutra camps.

Due to the rapid growth of technology, she has instituted modern developments such as the creation of the ABLS website, the ABLS Facebook page, and a more fully computerized office.

In recent years, to increase the population's interest in learning the Dharma, Ven. Tien Inn has regularly scheduled Buddhist classes, inviting domestic and foreign Venerables, Buddhist scholars, experts and professors to give lectures and intensive classes. The content includes Chinese, Theravada, and Tibetan branches of Buddhism and their moral principles, allowing the devotees to have a more thorough and diverse understanding of the Dharma.

# Afterword

Spreading the seeds of Dharma in the west was never an easy task. In fact, it had already been difficult transmitting the Dharma from India. America started to see signs of Buddhism in the 1800's but the first Chinese Buddhist Temple did not pop up in California until the 1950's. Great masters like Ven. Master Xuan Zang struggled to bring the precious teachings to China, and likewise, Elder Master Cheng Yi's mission to bring the Avatamsaka Sutra's teachings to the west was no easy process either. Establishing a Buddhist temple in the west takes joint efforts of the sangha and the congregation in order to take place. The founding of USA ABLS is the best example of the monastic vow to treat the propagation of Dharma as one's duty and to benefit beings as one's career. It is only because of such devotion that Buddhism has spread to where it is at today and ABLS stands 30 years strong.

By the request of the local devotees, and by the compassionate vow of Elder Cheng Yi to spread the Dharma to the west, ABLS was established. For thirty years, ABLS has held a wide array of activities reflecting its four missions—propagating Dharma, education, charity, and culture. These include seminars held by Venerable Master Hsien Du herself or activities led by abbess and residence masters or other Venerables and scholars from all over the world. Classes include calligraphy, vegetarian cooking, tea ceremony, Dharma instruments, as well as meditation retreats like the Medicine Buddha retreat and the Cundi Bodhisattva retreat. To reflect the compassion of Elder Cheng Yi, Chinese Medicine Free Clinics were also held to benefit the community. The ABLS Youth Group periodically visits senior citizen communities to do outreach and bring the communities joy and care.

The ABLS not only operates beyond the face value of a Buddhist temple where one would find chanting and ritual, but also as a community center where one can find classes, workshops, youth groups, charity relief, etc. This demonstrates to the congregation that Buddhism and daily life go hand-in-hand and is not just a Sunday morning duty that is seemingly unrelated to anything else. In fact, ABLS has already brought the Buddha's teachings into our daily lives, where it is a Way-place of Proper Dharma.

For the past thirty years, the Elder Master Cheng-Yi worked tirelessly, undaunted by hardship, to establish a Way-place which stands majestically with grace in the Bay Area. We the four assemblies of disciples should follow the Master's spirit of dedication to the Dharma and selflessly do our best in contributing to the efforts, propagating the Buddha Dharma, guiding living beings onto the bright path to Bodhi and benefitting communities in a variety of activities. Let's work together to achieve this mission and let the banner of Avatamsaka Buddhist Lotus Society USA fly high in the Bay Area forever!

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文殊菩薩

