

EXPERIENCE—EMIKO GATINEAU

My name is Emiko Gatineau from Watsonville, CA. I am in the seventh grade. A few weeks ago I attended the first Santa Cruz Chapter Junior High and High School Division Meeting. It was a lot of fun. I was born in this practice since both my mom and dad chant, as well as my brother, sister-in-law and my grandparents. Ever since I can remember I have loved dance. Even when I was 3-1/2 years old in preschool, I remember asking my mom if I could take ballet classes with my friend after watching her dance. And I have been dancing ever since.

For more than three years I have been with a dance group that does competition dancing in the San Francisco Bay area. This year I have been doing a lyrical dance, which is between ballet and jazz. Before each dance competition, I try to do gongyo with my mom and dad. My dance group had been doing well, receiving gold awards and some platinum [awards] at competitions. I also was doing well but not as well as the other studio, the #1 studio in Northern California and our competitor. Before a competition, my mom would encourage me to chant that my dance would touch the hearts of the judges and the audience. Last weekend we had our last regional competition in Alameda. Many studios from the Bay Area were there, including our competitor. The morning of the competition I looked in the program and it said that I was the only one competing against two lyrical dancers and was glad that no one from our competitor's studio was dancing against me. But before I was scheduled to go on they added six more soloists in my age category and all from the top studio! I suddenly started to get more anxious and nervous. I began to chant softly under my breath remembering what my mom had said, "Dance to reach their hearts."

Finally my turn came. I danced to the song, "I Will Remember You," and I looked at the judges and saw the smiles on their faces. When I finished I could tell they loved my dance. I felt that I had danced my best ever. And my group dances were the best also. When the awards presentation was announced, I received the top lyrical award with a platinum and my group won first place in jazz, tap and lyrical, beating our previous competitor. We had finally won!

We were all very happy. In addition to competing, what I enjoy the most about dance is performing for the community. My group has danced at malls, the boardwalk, First Night in Santa Cruz, and the Monterey Bay Aquarium. In the last two years we have also performed with Linda Arnold, a local children's songwriter and singer. And we have also made two CD's singing with her. This year she has asked us to make a video with her. I really enjoy these performances, watching little kids come up front and dance with us. All of us have fun.

One of my most recent benefits is that our studio was asked to perform next summer at EuroDisney, in Paris and in Munich, and at the annual dance festival in Innsbruck, Austria. I had not realized how well-known we were. The promoter who selected us travels throughout the country and selects the top five studios to participate. It will be an exciting and challenging year for me. I hope I can reach out to thousands of people through my dancing, based on my Buddhist practice.

Title: Experience: Emiko Gatineau

Subject: World Tribune 07/21/00 n.3303 p.D SD000721pD Watsonville, California

Author: Emiko Gatineau

Keywords: California Emiko Experiences Gatineau Seize Tribune Watsonville World Youth