



August 2005

Treasure Coast Bonsai Society

Joshua Roth New Talent Competition - American Bonsai Society

By: Bart Thomas

-The annual Joshua Roth New Talent Competition was held this year at the World Bonsai Convention in Washington D.C. Bart Thomas, an entrant into the New Talent Competition, wrote a journal detailing his experiences with the preliminaries, preparation, and styling of a ponderosa pine in the Joshua Roth New Talent Competition. This is the third and final article of his journal. It focuses on the styling of a Ponderosa Pine for the New Talent Competition. Hopefully it will inspire more Treasure Coast Bonsai Society members to enter into the competition.

May 29, Sunday: 8 AM (!) Woke up early. Things began with a random draw of trees (collected ponderosa pines). Some variety in potential of trees offered, but no extra trees, so if you draw a tough tree (aka potential loser), that's your problem. Wire was supplied, and the room was well-lit, with adequate electric outlets.

My tree was interesting, with, I felt, some real possibilities. I spent the first hour and one half futzing about the tree, doing the obvious clean-up stuff, while waiting for a plan to form. This time was taken because I felt the tree had potential as a wind-swept, but I was very aware of the difficulty in doing this style well. Finally, I did what I should have done at first: concentrate on the trunk (not much in the way of roots, except one that looped up over the soil). That was quickly taken care of by making a "hairpin" of light copper wire and anchoring it in the soil.

The trunk's movement was somewhat contrary to the direction the sweep would have to take, so I abandoned the wind-swept idea, gritted my teeth, and, at 9:45, removed the crown. Doing that got

the ideas flowing, but the next problem was that most of the branches were quite long, without ramification. (Some call these "lion's tails".) Thus, I knew I would have to make them quite serpentine. Not a problem, as they were very flexible.

Thus, the challenge was to make this work in a design. Although the tree had great bark (it was about 80 years old), since most of the branches were slim, this would have to be a younger, feminine, tree. (The trees were not to be repotted as part of the competition.) One dead branch was broken off and jinned, with a shari running down to about an inch above the soil line. Later, I extended the shari above the jin to complete the line drawing the eye into the canopy, as it were, of the tree.

Now, my problems were simple. All I had to do was build a new crown and shape the branches into an appealing canopy. Some branches seemed to be potential problems, but, as they also presented opportunities, I decided to get to work wiring the tree. That would help sort out the branches.

It would also put the pressure on! I have never before done wiring to be criticized by judges! Thus, it took far longer than I expected. Thank goodness I was not paying for the wire! Every time I checked, it seemed as though some bit of wire had jumped away from the branch! Some had gotten even more adventurous and had crossed other

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wires! Thus, there were several times that I'd cut some new wire off and start again. It must be what it is like in one's first days as an apprentice in Japan! Finally, I got it all sorted out to the point where I could not find any crossed wires, and everything was in its place, except for one large and long branch.

That branch was one of those that you want to think about hard before you do anything to it. It was too long, but had some ramification and was in a spot that needed filling. It was also right next to the shari on the trunk, so removal would have created problems, and jinning would have looked awkward. Clearly time to go to lunch!

The break helped a great deal, even though I didn't think about the tree at all during lunch. As soon as I got back, I cut off the longest sub-branch, and shortly after, the next one. Now, once again, it was simply a matter of arranging the remaining parts of the tree.

Now that I had decided to keep part of the branch, it was going to have to be bent sharply. First, I simple wired it to see how much of a bend I could get, but I needed more of a bend, closer to the trunk, so off came the wire, and I wired the branch lengthwise for support, holding that wire in place with Vet-Rap (which I covered with raffia, because of the Japanese judges).

Then, I wired it and bent again. Pretty good! Then, I pressed my luck, and tried to bend a little closer to the trunk (this is the weak spot in a ponderosa). It opened up a little at the top of the junction with the trunk, but the support system worked

and a bit of cut paste sealed the tiny crack. I stuck some small pieces of bark in the cut paste, and the fault was hidden.

Now it was time for clean-up. The soil the tree was in included oil-dri and vermiculite, which made it unattractive for show, so I swept off the top layer and went into the vendors area to bum a little lava soil sample from Ed & Randall's, to use as a top dressing. I also added a little fern-like moss to give color, and I was done! Somehow, I had taken 7 hours to do what would have taken me 3 or so at home. Most of this was the attention to detail that must be paid to a tree to be judged.

At the end, I was exhausted! It was not just a day's work under pressure, but the accumulation of two months of concentrated effort, working at my very best skill level to prepare the entry, prepare for the competition, and the competition itself!

The result was not flawless, but I could honestly say that it represented my best work, with no excuses to be made. It was like being a figure skater whose program had gone almost perfectly! Being able to say that made all the work of preparation worthwhile. I have found tremendous support from all my friends and associates. It has been a wonderful bonsai experience and a lot of fun.

I am very grateful to Jack Douthitt, who ran the event and the American Bonsai Society. I urge others, who have the opportunity, to jump in and have as much fun as I did. I feel very privileged to have been a part of this highly talented group. As I had been advised, it was a very collegial atmosphere, and I felt that I was competing only in the sense of trying to do my best with my assigned tree, rather than trying to "beat" any other competitor.

I also cannot express the depth of my gratitude to those two pied pipers of bonsai, Chase and Solita Rosade, who took me by the hand and led me into a wonderful world.

May 30: Monday. The results are in. Second place went to Todd Hansen, From East Hartford, CT. The popular vote and the championship went to Ed Lauer. Both fully deserved their awards. Their trees were truly excellent

As for me, wait 'till next year!

TREASURE COAST BONSAI SOCIETY

MINUTES OF MEETING JULY 12, 2005

Richard Turner calls the meeting to order at 7:20 P.M. and explains the mix-up about the scheduling for Jerry Meislik. Louise Leister purchased our club night creation at the auction. Several of our club members won awards at this year's convention.

Next year the convention will be in Gainesville

Remember that the 4th Sunday is "under the oaks" at Jim Smith's.

The door prize is awarded.

Since the air conditioning isn't working, we need to get on with our program, which is Ugly Trees. Richard starts with one he brought. Work then begins on all the trees members brought in that had serious problems.

The raffle is held.

The meeting is adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

-Barbara R Poglitsch, Secretary



Calendar of Events

August 9th the St. Lucie Ag. Center-

TCBS will hold its normal monthly meeting at the St. Lucie Agriculture Center on Tuesday, August 9th starting at 7:00 P.M. Mary Madison will be doing a demonstration on a buttonwood, and if time permits will assist others with buttonwoods they bring to the meeting. So be sure to bring one in.



TCBS Logo Tree



Rob Kempinski's shohin ficus salicifolia is developing nicely.

TCBS Board of Directors

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Treasure Coast Bonsai Society



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**Come
Join Us!!**

TCBS Meetings take place at 7:00 P.M. on the second Tuesday of every month.

Meeting Place: St. Lucie Agriculture Center on Picos Road