The first time we met Mikio was on the beaches of Washington State. He had the most magnificent kite in the air and was talking to a friend of ours. We were introduced and he treated us as long time friends. We talked, or more accurately, he talked and we listened attentively. He talked about how to fly a Japanese kite, the various styles, and their history, all with jokes and a wonderful attitude. I believe we next met him at the Portland Art Museum where he was lecturing and demonstrating Japanese kitemaking. Since then we have met many times, and each time we learn something new from him. We know others too who are impressed by him; you will notice that several people who W e asked to “second” his nomination wrote letters of their own and we have forwarded these on as well. It is almost as if he was nominated 4 times. Our nomination is as follows:

This person is first and foremost an artist, whose work is recognized in the US and around the world. His kites are traditional in nature and beautifully executed. In each kite you can feel as well as see the artist's strengths. His work is coveted by both collectors and kite flyers, and proudly displayed and flown. He has displayed his kites and demonstrated his methods at museums all over the world and in fact is presently featured in a museum in Haifa, Israel.

Secondly, this person is a teacher, traveling around the world teaching kite art and kite making to both adults and children. For over a decade he has been a guest at an annual kite festival in California because of his popularity. He is known to invite people into his home and mentor them. We also know that many AKA competition winners have benefited from his advice.

Thirdly, this person is an innovator. One of the problems with traditional Japanese kites is that they are rigid. While showing respect for tradition, this person has deconstructed the traditional kite skin and frame, creating a design that is easy to take down and transport kites that would not otherwise be able to travel.

Fourthly, this person is a craftsman. Whether he is adhering silk to paper, to make a better “skin,” or hand working bamboo into perfect spars, or crafting his delicate bridling, the results are simply stunning

And finally he is a magnificent ambassador for kiting. Always friendly and helpful, he makes kiting more approachable to those who start out just watching. Whether these spectators are

adults or children, he approaches and engages them. Sometimes he is the clown and sometimes the dignified statesman, but he is always the instigator who gets kites into peoples hands.

Artist, Teacher, Innovator, craftsman and ambassador: Mikio Toki.

Dave and Diane Butler

Seconds: Don Mock, Greg Kono, Scott Skinner, Ali Fujino, Jose Sainz

From: mockkites@comcast.net [mailto:mockkites@comcast.net]
Sent: Monday, August 29, 2011 12:02 PM
To: Butler, Diane E
Subject: Mikio's second for the Lee Toy award

Dear Dave,

When you asked me if I would like to second this nomination I wondered where I would start describing how I know Mikio.

I feel that he epitomizes the sharing of our passion. He has taught at many schools and kiting events both in the US, Europe and in Japan. He was one of the guest teachers at the Fort Worden kite makers conference. He comes to California yearly to teach at the Asian-Pacific Exposition and he will share his knowledge with any one who asks.

It has been my pleasure to have him with me in my studio for several days on three occasions where we have tried new techniques and materials. Unfortunately I have not been to his studio, yet, but I am making plans to rectify that issued in the near future. I have several friends from Europe who have been there and said that he has given them new inspiration and insight into

making their kites better and they have gone on to make wonderful kites that stretch the imagination. Mikio has experimenter with new techniques to make the traditional kites of Japan which are rigid into kites that can be transported in an easier manner including the use of "traditional Japanese wing nuts" to hold the frames in place, thus allowing his kites to be rolled up for transportation.

Mikio and I have flown kites at several venues both in Europe and in the US and I look forward to flying with him soon. I think that some day in the future he will achieve the recognition of national treasure in Japan.

It gives me great pleasure to second his nomination for the Lee Toy award.

Don Mock

I first met Mikio Toki in 2003 at the University of Missouri, where together we taught a week long kite making workshop to advanced sculpture students. I was nervous about teaching, since I was still new to kiting and teaching and I didn’t know much about my cohort from Japan. My nervousness and fears were quickly erased soon after Toki-sans arrival, with his wacky sense of humor and his years of experience. His passion to the craft of kite making became contagious with the students and faculty. It was a site to behold, watching new budding kite artist emerge before our eyes as students began testing their creations on the campus streets and any available open spaces. There was so much creative energy and excitement that other students outside our class were hoping we could stay longer so they could participate. In the years to follow I’ve taught many kite workshops to all ages all over the world, but none have topped the first workshop I spent with Toki-san.

Over the years I would bump into Toki-san at various kite festivals and kite making workshops, but my greatest experience with him was when I received a Drachen Foundation grant which allowed me to travel to Japan and learn traditional Japanese kite making from the master himself. I left Japan with an even greater appreciation to his craft after witnessing his process, unwavering passion, dedication, generosity and patience to teach and share his kite making skills with me at his home and studio.

I consider Mikio Toki to be a good friend and mentor to me and would not hesitate

recommending him for the lee Toy award.

Greg Kono August 4, 2011

Mikio Toki

I don't remember the first time I met Mikio Toki, but I know he made an instant impression on me. I had visited Teizo Hashimoto, famous Tokyo kite maker a few years before his death, and thought the professional tradition of the Edo kite maker may have died with him. Toki-san proved me completely wrong. Here was a young artist who was dedicated to carrying on the tradition and who had the skill to do so. Now, over twenty years later, Toki-san has truly come into his own as an Edo kite maker working to the high standards of his predecessors.

I have observed Toki-san in our own National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. where he patiently demonstrated his art and craft to hundreds of Gallery visitors. Through the Drachen Foundation, I asked Toki to recreated all the kabuki-inspired kites in a woodblock print titled, "Kite Flying Competition in the Blue Sky", by Yoshiharu. Toki-san produced over twenty *Edo* kites, of several traditional styles, that were exhibited in the US as well as India. Finally, I have asked him for help and advice in completing several kite projects. He has shown me kite making techniques as well as decorative ideas that complete any kite project.

Toki-san has been an active participant at kite festivals around the world, and often is an invited workshop-presenter. He was a friendly and energetic teacher even when he was unable to speak much English. Now, he is more confident in his English skill as is a gregarious and engaging leader. Through it all, he continues to spread knowledge, worldwide, about traditional Edo kites. Toki-san has developed and produced a number of workshop kits and is a ready source for Japanese materials for kite making.

Finally, his kites! Toki-san demonstrates the finest skills in his wide range of *Edo-dako*. >From straightforward graphic design and infallible-flying smaller kites to his full-sized
Edo-dako
featuring multiple bridles, paper-wrapped spars, and
susudake

(antique bamboo), each is a refined illustration of contemporary Japanese kite making. Toki-san has become a confident painter and his kites – featuring traditional kite scenes common to many kite makers – display his own singular style and beauty.

I am proud to call Mikio Toki a mentor, a friend, a fellow kite artist, and a kindred *tako-kichi* (“kite crazy”). It is time to the AKA to recognize his contributions to the world kite movement.

Scott Skinner