

Spotlight: Patricia Lee Masters

The following bio was prepared by the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists (HAIB) in May 2018, while Pat was in hospice care, to complement outreach surrounding the release of her book, Searching for Mary Foster.

It's ironic that Mary Elizabeth Mikahala Robinson Foster is better known and more revered in India and Sri Lanka, than here in Hawai'i. Best known locally as the woman who bequeathed her estate to found Foster Botanical Gardens, she was an internationally known philanthropist, social activist and Buddhist. She was a major donor to the construction of Honpa Hongwanji Temple on Pali Highway, purchased beds at Kapiolani Hospital for the indigent, sponsored scholarships at Kamehameha Schools, and purchased lands in Kahana Valley, as a refuge for displaced Hawaiians.

Patricia Lee Masters, PhD, recently retired as a faculty member and administrator at the University of Hawai'i. Her twenty five-year commitment to research and document Foster's fascinating biography culminated in the publication of *Searching for Mary Foster* in 2017. But Pat's life story is also worthy of recognition.

Pat received a BA in Oriental Languages and Cultures (Sanskrit, Japanese and Mandarin) and an MA in Buddhist Studies/Asian Studies from UCLA. She earned her PhD in Political Theory and Philosophy and Masters in Public Health from the University of Hawai'i, Manoa. She was the Associate Director for the UH Manoa Student Equity, Excellence and Diversity Office.

While studying in Bodh Gaya (where Buddha is said to have attained enlightenment), Pat came across a plaque on a temple wall in Sarnath honoring Mary Elizabeth Foster for her contributions. The priest at the temple recounted the valuable contributions of Mary Foster, sparking Pat's curiosity about this unsung Hawaiian hero.

Pat is now courageously facing cancer, in hospice care, having completed this major contribution to recognize a noteworthy Hawaiian woman. Pat's own lifework to live the way of the Dharma and teach others about Buddhism, also deserves distinction and praise.

Other achievements include receiving ordination as a Buddhist nun in India in 1998, and establishing an East Asian Center in Kyoto, Japan for American University students. She previously served as Academic Dean for MacQuarie University (Sidney, Australia), Director of International Programs for Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles, and International Program Director at Antioch University in Ohio. Patricia remained active in the local Buddhist community through involvement with the Hawaii Association of International Buddhists (HAIB) and led meditation sessions at the Bodhi Tree Meditation Center and with Vipassana Hawaii.