

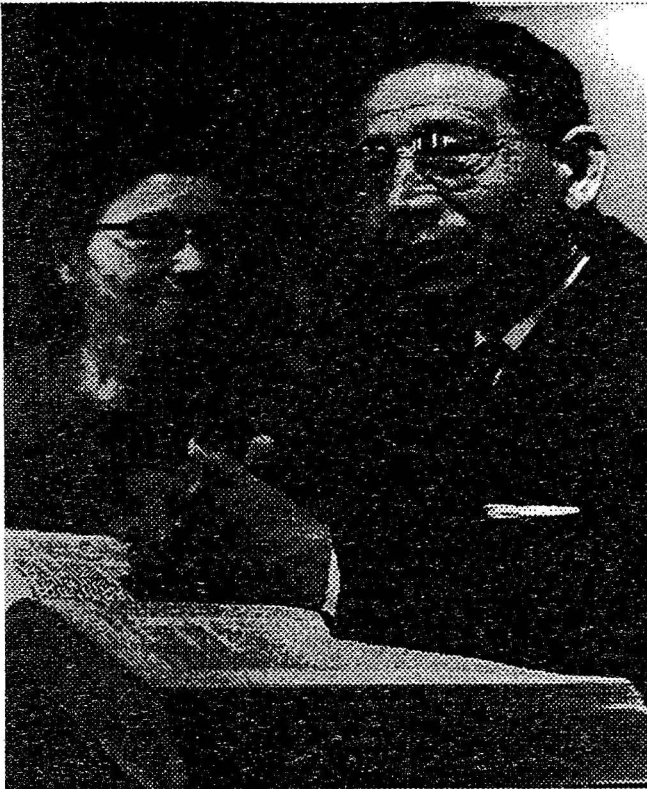
# FOOTPRINTS

*Impressions from where we were to where we will be*

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Spring Issue 1995

Volume 4, Number 1



*Reverend and Mrs. Kenji Kikuchi*

## Our Grandfather

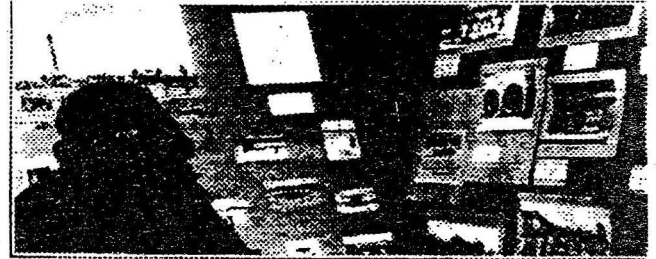
*In remembrance of Rev. Kenji Kikuchi*

*The Eulogy spoken by Rev. Garrett Yamada*

*September 8, 1994*

Grandfather was someone who was always there for us, and for our family. So it is impossible to imagine a world without him. He filled it to the edges. He was the center and the foundation of our clan. He gifted us the understanding of God's care and blessings, a sense of well being and the value of self and the worth of every human life. He welcomed each grandchild and great-grandchild, appreciating their varied personalities and interests. He embraced each spouse of his children and grandchildren and loved them like his own.

*See Grandfather page 4*



*Gaylord Millentree visits the Poston photo display currently at the SWC library.*

## POSTON EXHIBIT RECALLS EXPERIENCES

The JAHSSD Poston photo collection put together by Don Estes and Yukio Kawamoto for the Family Expo at the Los Angeles Convention Center in November, 1994, sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum is now on display at the Southwestern College Library. Anyone interested in this display is welcome to come and view it. The exhibit should be available for the next two months.

This display is our organization's first attempt at a traveling exhibit and when it is taken down, the display will be reconstructed to make it more portable and to enhance the material. We have requests from the San Diego Public Library and other institutions to make this display available to them.

Please visit this display and make any comments or suggestions to help us improve our project. This particular collection is part of a planned three part series.

Southwestern College is located at 900 Otay Lakes Road, Chula Vista, CA, taken I-805 to H Street, east, right on Otay Lakes Road. Parking in student lots at \$1.00 with parking permit or in visitor lot on parking meters.

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## **PADRES' BASEBALL 39-40**

*by Mitch Himaka*

### **BETTER THAN REPLACEMENT BALL?**

Probably. I remember the days Padres baseball was played at Lane Field at the foot of Broadway.

Papa used to take me once in awhile.

Sometime my old friend, Akira Shima, who my brothers and sisters affectionately knew as Akira-san, would call me and invite me to see a ball game

Akira-san probably was responsible for helping me learn to read English. He would often call me in the early morning after he got to Nippon Shokai where he worked and asked for the Padres score from the game the night before.

I would scan the San Diego Union sports page and look up the score. I knew where to look because the baseball standing, like they do today, listed the Padres in bold agate type in capital letters like SAN DIEGO and then give their won-lost record and the score from the night before.

I remember those old ball players like George McDonald, first base; Mickey Haslin, third base; George Detore, catcher; Herman (Old Folks) Pilete, pitcher; Al Olsen, pitcher; Stan Sperry, second base; Cedric Durst, manager; and on and on. Those guys could play but the major leagues only had 16 teams then — eight in the American League and eight in the National League.

The old Pacific Coast League had teams like the Sacramento Solons, Los Angeles Angels, Hollywood Stars, Seattle Rainiers, Oakland Acorns, Portland Beavers and the San Francisco Seals.

Lane Field — where the hot dogs always smelled better, the peanuts were hot, Cracker Jacks had better toys and bigger popcorn and the players were just across the stands almost within touching distance.

Thanks for the memories, old Padres.

Thanks for everything, Akira-san.

### **Kenji Kikuchi**

Biographical Sketch

February 29, 1898 - September 8, 1994

Kenji Kikuchi was born on February 28, 1898 in Miyagi-Ken, Tohoko, Japan. He was the fourth son

of six sons of Kisaburo and Ryu Kikuchi.

During his first year of high school, Kenji Kikuchi attended church school in the home of Naoji Iwama, a pioneer Christian leader in the small village of Watari. Not only was he exposed to Christianity, but it was there that he met Yoshi Iwama, whom he later married.

After graduating from Tohoku Gakuin College in 1921, he continued his education at Tohoku Theological Seminary where he received his degree in Theology. From 1923-1924, he served as assistant pastor of the Nibancho Sendai Church.

With a keen sense for adventure and a dedication to learn more about Christianity, Kenji Kikuchi sailed for the United States, arriving in San Francisco on March 3, 1924. In order to pay for his expenses and to repay debts, he worked in Brawley and San Gabriel, picking berries for Japanese farmers.

In the fall of 1924, he left for San Anselmo to attend the San Francisco Theological Seminary on a Foreign Student Scholarship. He had an insatiable appetite for learning and entered Princeton Theological Seminary as a post-graduate student in New Testament Theology, graduating with a Master's degree in Theology in 1926.

He returned to the West Coast to serve a brief summer internship in the Japanese Presbyterian Church in Sacramento.

In September, 1926, he accepted his first full time position as minister of the Wintersburg Presbyterian Church in Orange County, CA. It was during this period of his life that he married his childhood friend Yoshi Iwama, on December 12, 1926. All five of his children were born in Wintersburg (now Huntington Beach), in the manse adjacent to the former Wintersburg Church on Warner Avenue.

After serving ten years in Wintersburg, he returned with his family to Japan where he considered a ministry in Sendai. However, in 1937, he accepted a call to the Japanese Presbyterian Church in Seattle, Washington where he pastored from 1937 to 1940. In the interim year of 1940 to 1941, he was a part-time pastor and director of language schools in Los Angeles and

*See Kenji Kikuchi page 6*



*Angel Island, San Francisco, 1914, future brides just off the Siberia Maru*

## SHASHIN KEKKON

(Part One)

BY

DON ESTES

Not too long ago I was in a conversation with a student of mine from Laos. During our talk she mentioned in passing that during the semester break that she was going to Washington, D.C. "To see the capital?", I asked. "No," she replied, "To meet my future husband." As our discussion developed she told me that hers was a union that had been arranged by both sets of parents when she and the young man in question were very young children.

My initial thought was one of mild wonder. Not of the custom, but of being able to talk with someone in the middle of a process I had read so much about for so long. Later as I reflected on the meeting, I wondered why I had such a reaction. I had, after all interviewed a number of Issei women, who while not betrothed in childhood, did marry with little foreknowledge of their future partners. The great majority of Issei men who immigrated to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were young bachelors, under the age of twenty, who had every intention of eventually returning to Japan after making their fortune here. America was believed to be a place

*See Shashin page 7*

## DAY OF REMEMBRANCE OBSERVED

Working in a direct support capacity with the students of the UCSD Japanese American Society your JAHSSD assisted in the presentation of the Sixth Annual Day of Remembrance program at the local UC campus. The JAHSSD's contribution to the day's program included: films, slides, and a photo exhibit on relocation. In addition your society presented a panel composed of veterans of the 442nd Regimental Combat who discussed their World War II experiences for the program.

We would like to express our thanks to the veterans who participated in the program, Martin Lloyd Ito, Nobe Takashima, Joe Tanabe, Frank Wada, and moderator Ben Segawa, President of the JAHSSD. We also wish to thank Matthew Estes who coordinated our activities with the students of the Japanese American Society at UCSD, and who participated directly in the organization and presentation of the program.

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*Grandfather, continued from page 1*

I had the chance to visit with grandfather a few days before he died, and I want to reflect on some of the words he spoke during my visit with him in the hospital, because they reflect in part some of his character and qualities. So although Grandpa is no longer with us, these words that were a part of him, are now a part of us.

One of the words he spoke was "Unagi" (a Japanese delicacy). To me this request for his favorite dish, while he was suffering great discomfort represents his love for "the things of earth." He enjoyed life in all its fullness. Even as he lay in the hospital bed, he tenaciously held onto life as long as he could.

• He loved **Food**. He enjoyed his meals with a real gusto. His love for food is seen in the whole Kikuchi clan. One of his favorite Sunday activities during the past year was to visit the Yaohan, a Japanese market, where he hand-picked the Kabocha, (Japanese pumpkin), fresh fruits and fish. Enjoying life meant having good food to eat.

• He enjoyed **Nature**, the beauty of the earth, the arts and culture. He was a fisherman and he loved to explore. He was an enthusiastic rock hunter. I remember as a child, grandpa showing us his latest rock find. He would hold these precious stones as if they were gold. He also collected and appreciated art, antiques and samurai swords.

He loved **Sports**. When he was young, he was a fierce ping pong competitor. After his stroke fourteen years ago, when he was no longer able to drive, grandpa became a tennis fan. He would wake up at 6:30am to root for John McEnroe, Andre Agassi or Michael Chang.

*See Grandfather page 5*



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## SMOKEJUMPER

*By Stanley Kubota as told to Yukio Kawamoto*



My name is Stanley Kubota and I'm a smoke jumper for the U. S. Forest Service. I work out of a smoke jumper base in Redding, California. Redding is the only smoke jumper base in California. We fight fires all over the western United States in the national forest system, some state fires and the Bureau of Land

Management fires. I've fought forest fires in California, Nevada, Idaho Montana, New Mexico and Alaska. Every state presents different problems in fighting fires. California is pretty rough because of the terrain. Alaska is unique because of the tundra. When we go outside of our area we travel in two planes to other smoke jumper bases and fly out of there to fight the fire. I don't like to fight fires in southern California because it's mostly brush and we have to interface with city crews. I like it better in the forests where we're by ourselves. The neat thing about being a smoke jumper is not just the travel, seeing different national forests and national parks and being outdoors, but meeting a variety of different people.

I started my fire fighting career with the Forest Service in 1981 working on a conservation crew, then on a fire truck crew, then spent two years on a hot shot crew. In 1984 I put in an application for a job as a smoke jumper, was accepted and have been doing it ever since. I didn't have any experience in parachute jumping before I was accepted and I was trained after I joined. Most smokejumpers don't have any jumping experience before they become one, but there are a few who've had experience in the military. There doesn't seem

*See Smokejumper page 8*

He loved **Humor**. Grandpa shared his love of life with all of us. he was a fun loving person with a lively sense of humor. He enjoyed telling stories and jokes. One happy childhood memory was grandpa performing his magic tricks for us. He really liked mystifying us and we would all laugh together.

Above all he was a "**people person**." He valued his wife and his children and treasured his family, relatives and friends. Grandpa loved his family and his wife. He loved the members of his many congregations and the young people he taught in Japan. He loved to visit and to be visited.

**This eulogy is also a special tribute to my grandmother, his wife.** Our grandmother was his partner who worked side by side with him in the Lord's work. She supported him and encouraged him, corrected his sermons, undertook the unseen menial tasks and raised the five children.

One of the most precious scenes I have witnessed was watching grandpa and grandma during those last days together. At age 96 and 92, they held hands, reminisced about their childhood, shared memories, sang hymns, and played "jan ken po." He could hear her voice when he could no longer hear ours.

We must also take a moment to give a special thanks to David Oyama. He is a real saint, who came to help Grandpa recover from his stroke 14 years ago (when he was just 21). He stayed with them, to keep grandpa and grandma together in their home. With a compassionate heart and tender hands, he soothed comforted, fed, healed, entertained, nurtured and attended to their many needs. Their long and wonderful life is due in large part to David. Words can not express our gratitude and thankfulness for his many years of sacrificial service.

The other words Grandpa whispered as he faced death his last hours were, "**Praise the Lord.**" To me this represents his love for "**the things of heaven.**"

• He was known for his **Christian faith** and his **love for Jesus**. Grandpa had a strong and vibrant faith that enabled him to stay in the ministry all these years.

• He was known for his **Christian faith** and his **love for Jesus**. Grandpa had a strong and vibrant faith that enabled him to stay in the ministry all these years.

• He loved the **church and the people** to whom he ministered. As a pastor, he enjoyed the personal relationships with the people he served. His most happy memories are of his visiting the families, transporting Sunday School children, counseling and supporting the church families. Even after his stroke left his right hand partially paralyzed, he continued his letter writing to former members and friends (average of 1 or 2 daily) until last April.

He also enjoyed reading books on theology trying to understand God and his faith. Grandpa was a scholar who had a wonderful library of over a thousand books. His favorite theologians were Kierkegaard and Barth. I remember his enthusiasm as he shared some of his prized books with me.

To me it is the "**things of heaven**" that he passed on that I treasure the most.

Perhaps it is symbolic that Grandpa ( a member of the Los Ranchos Presbytery) died only a few days after I came and started work in that same Presbytery. So perhaps in a way, he has passed the torch on to me.

I have no doubt that my grandfather's faith is an important part of my being a minister today. My hope is to follow Jesus as faithfully as he did.

I also have no doubt, that my grandfather is now at peace in the arms of Jesus and I know that one day I will see him again. So for me this is not a final good-bye, but rather an opportunity to honor my grandpa and to say that I look forward to seeing him again later.

Thank you, Grandpa, from all of your children and grandchildren. We will miss you and we love you.



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Downey, California His next pastordship was at the Japanese Congregational Church in San Diego, California, which was his major and longest term of ministry from 1941 to 1962 - 21 years. After less than a year in San Diego, he was called to assist the Japanese community in its evacuation from San Diego to the Santa Anita Assembly Center and Poston III Concentration Camp in Poston, Arizona. He helped to establish one of the Christian Churches in Poston III and served as its pastor during the internment. He was also assigned the task of assisting the families and young people to relocate to Chicago, Illinois. He also helped families make the transition back to San Diego after the release. He served as a liasson leader between the Japanese community and the San Diego community in church and cultural related matters. During his pastordship, the church building was moved from a deteriorating downtown area to its present location on Ocean View Boulevard. The chapel was renovated and the parsonage was built on the site. He retired in 1962. He was awarded a Pastor emeritus status of the present Ocean View United Church of Christ. When he finally completed his semi-retirement interim work, he returned to live in Huntington Beach in 1973. At the age of 82, he suffered a stroke which left him partially paralyzed. He was confined to his wheelchair for 14 years but continued his personal ministry through his numerous letters to former friends and parishioners. It is befitting and symbolic that Mr. Kikuchi's ministry begins and ends here at the Wintersburg Church for the funeral service and that he was laid to rest in San Diego where he served the Lord and the Japanese community for 21 years.

### Pastorships

Wintersburg Presbyterian Church	1926-1936
Japan	1936-1937
Seattle Presbyterian Church	1937-1940
Los Angeles/Downey(language school)	1940-1941
San Diego Japanese Congregational Church	1941-1942
Poston III Christian Church	1942-1945
San Diego Japanese Congregational Church	1945-1962
Officially Retired	1962

### Semi-Retirement

Sendai, Japan - Chaplain of Miyagi Gakuen  
Salt Lake City - Ogden Church  
Yamagata, Japan - Principal at sister school of Miyagi Gakuen  
ElCerrito, Ca. - Sycamore Congregational Church  
Altadena, Ca. - First Presbyterian Church  
Hollywood, Ca. - Christ Presbyterian Church

### AND OUR COLLECTION CONTINUES TO GROW

With the continuing help of our members and friends our collection of artifacts on the Nikkei experience in San Diego continues to grow. We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to Mrs. **Tamiko Koide Kinoshita** of Rancho Santa Fe. Mrs. Kinoshita donated a painting by her mother, Mrs. **Miwa Koide**, of a barracks at Poston. The picture is both painted and etched on a wooden base and is a classic example of the art work that came out of the camps.

### FOOTNOTES *by Jeanne Marumoto Elyea*

Remember-"History is in the making" and any and **ALL** materials past and current will be considered for our future newsletters, so record, write, and send your thoughts to FOOTPRINTS.

Special thanks to Debra Kodama for her desktop publishing assistance with our newsletter. Deb is taking maternity leave and we are temporarily struggling without her. Please excuse any minor or major errors. Write your complaints or comments legibly in this box ☐ and mail.

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had every intention of eventually returning to Japan after making their fortune here. America was believed to be a place where money was scattered like, *kusaru gurai*, or winter leaves. As one former native of Kagoshima recalls, the money was said by everyone to be there, just waiting to be raked up. There was even a popular Japanese song at the beginning of this century that said if you went to America, you could live like a king, that opportunity was unlimited.

One study has indicated that five percent of the Issei who came to the United States came for "adventure", ten percent for "education", fifteen percent for "family needs", and a very substantial seventy percent for economic gain.

These goals were not attained with the rapidity most of these Issei pioneers would have desired. In fact, it took considerably longer than most had thought. As these were young men who not only possessed the motives and emotional drives of young men, but also came from a society that placed strong, positive values on filial piety and the continuation of the family line, it is not surprising that before long their thoughts turned to the opposite sex.

The problem they found not only in California, but throughout the United States was that they were beset by both legal restrictions in the form of miscegenation laws, and social mores that positively discouraged inter-marriage with non Japanese. So it was that these Issei men fell back on a time honored Japanese custom, the arranged marriage.

The form of these marriages generally fell into one of three categories. The first involved couples who were married in Japan prior to the husband's departure for the United States, and were subsequently "called" by their spouse to join them. The second category involved men who returned to Japan specifically to marry. They however, faced two major hurdles. One was the cost involved and the other equally serious problem raised by Japan's conscription law. Overseas males were deferred as long as they maintained their immigrant status, and did not return to Japan for longer than thirty days. Any stay beyond that time meant automatic induction into the military.

The third option was facilitated by the fact that both Japanese common custom and law recognized that marriages could properly be concluded by proxy. Thus between 1910 and 1921 a large number of Issei marriages were concluded with the assistance of photographs, making them *shashin kekkon*, or photo marriages

## WE REALLY CAN'T DO WITHOUT YOU

We were just wondering if by chance you overlooked us in the holiday rush and the beginning of the new year. If you forgot to renew your JAHSSD membership for 1995 now would be a very good time to do so.

Come along and join with us in our effort to preserve and educate about the Nikkei experience here in San Diego County. 1995 holds several special challenges for us in the form of major exhibits of photographs and artifacts on our community. Be a part of this important work. Join with us today, and by renewing your JAHSSD membership.

Please check for a renewal form elsewhere in this newsletter. You know, we really can't do it with out your help. Thanks.

## PLANNING THOSE ANNUAL DATES

As you lay out your family calendar for 1995 we would like you to take special notice of Saturday, October 14, 1995. That's the date for the regular Annual Meeting of our JAHSSD.

Our 1995 meeting will again be held at Southwestern College in Chula Vista, and feature an obento lunch along with a special program and historical exhibits.



**Aileen Oya**

*Sitting in the Sand,  
Seasons Passing By  
Waiting for Summer.*

*Haiku for You*

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time; right now, I'm just about in the middle. Although I'm only 33 years old, the younger guys call me a Jurassic jumper I begin work about March or April every year and get laid off in November. During the off season, I do odd jobs, like cutting firewood or fixing cars. During the fire season, we aren't fighting fires all the time; so in between fires, we do maintenance work on our equipment. All smoke jumpers are good sewers -- we have to know how to use a sewing machine to repair our bags and parachutes. One of my specialties is sharpening crosscut saws --it's pretty much a lost art. Everything you carry to a fire has to be carried out so you want to go in as light as possible. A chain saw weighs about 30 pounds, so when we know we don't have to do a lot of sawing to clear a fire line, we take in a two man crosscut saw instead of a chain saw I also pack my own parachute. But before I could do it, I had to pass an FAA test to be licensed as a Class A parachute rigger. You have to be a jack of all trades to be a smokejumper.

We don't fight a fire like most people envision; we don't fight fires with fire hoses. In most cases, there's no water available so we construct a hand line by removing fuel and letting the fire burn itself out. Most of the fires we fight are small fires started by lightning. If just the top of the tree is burning, we can cut down the tree and let it burn itself out, or cover it with dirt.

How close we jump to a fire depends on the availability of a safe jump spot and wind conditions. Usually, it's within a mile from the fire. We look for a meadow or a ridge top with an opening. We make a tree jump as a last resort. When we jump, we carry a little food, a fire shelter, a parachute on our back, a hard hat, and a chest bag. Our jump suit is made of kevlar and we wear a motorcycle helmet with a wire cage. The Forest Service uses a round parachute with steering toggles. Our equipment is parachuted down in a cargo pack. We have to be good tree climbers too. Sometimes the cargo pack will get caught up in a tree and we have to climb up the tree to retrieve it. We're supposed to spend no more than 24 hours on the line, but most times we're out in the middle of nowhere so we have to be out there longer than that. Typically, we spend

about 2 days on the fire line, but sometimes in a big fire we will stay on the line for a week. Our food is brought to us by helicopter or parachuted down to us from a plane.

The first jumper out the door is the crew leader. He is, not only in charge of the crew, but at times is in charge of all the resources available for the fire. One thing about being on a plane, you can see the whole picture: how big the fire is, what will be needed to fight the fire, and the best way to get in and out of the fire. Once there were four of us flying back from a fire to the smokejumper base in McCall, Idaho. While we were in the air, they diverted us to another fire and told me I was in charge of the entire fire. They told me there were 3 air tankers, 2 helicopters and 20 other men on the way. They were giving me map coordinates, radio frequencies and other instructions. There's a million things going through your mind, but you have to keep your cool and concentrate on getting the job done.

I really enjoy the work I do. If I had to live my life over, I would still choose being a smokejumper.

*Editor's Note: Stanley Kubota lives east of Redding in a town called Shantytown with his wife Colleen, two stepdaughters, Barbara and Satchel, and two daughters, Mallory and Melanie. Stanley is the son of Hiroshi and Yayoi Kubota of Chula Vista.*

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# Issue Dedication



Kikuchi Family-Christmas, 1949, Left to Right, Yoshi, Anna, Marion, Elizabeth, Kenji, Thomas, David.

THIS ISSUE OF  
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IN MEMORY OF  
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1898 - 1994  
BY HIS FAMILY

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