

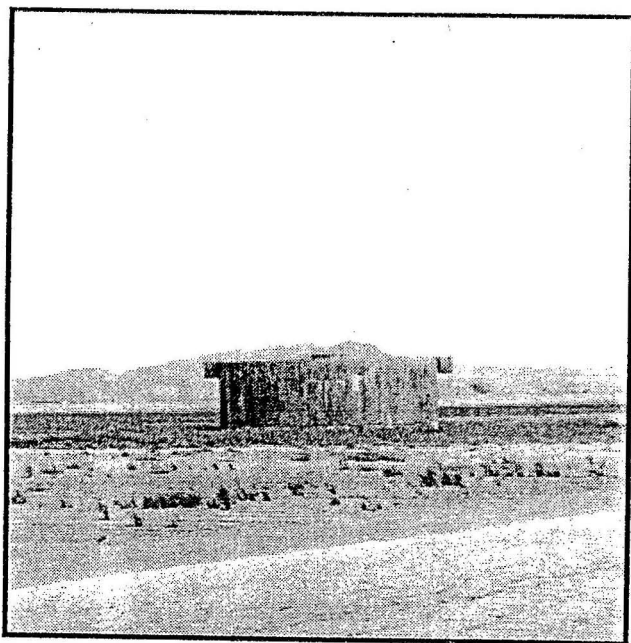
FOOTPRINTS

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Summer Issue 1995

Volume 4, Number 2



POSTON PILGRIMAGE - March 21, 1995

by Elaine Hibi Bowers

I couldn't believe we were there. I didn't recognize a thing. Not even the dirt that used to fill our shoes and turned to mud as we hiked to the Colorado River was there. Not one mesquite tree or shrub. What we beheld was acres upon acres of empty rows of coarse granular grayish soil, furrowed, tilled agricultural farmland. This was Poston Camp III?

There was just one tangible object that continues to exist: A charcoal grey, circular, concrete structure, the cesspool that was right outside Block 322. If you should go and try to find Camp on your own, watch for it; that's all that remains.

See Poston Pilgrimage, page 6

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by Ben Segawa

Your Historical Society with the San Diego Public Library are co-sponsoring the traveling exhibit "A More Perfect Union: Japanese Americans and the U.S. Constitution". Only 20 public and academic libraries in the U.S. were selected for this six (6) week exhibit. The exhibit is based on a large scale exhibition of the same name that is on display at the National Museum of American History in Washington D.C. Scheduling is projected for sometime in 1996 at the San Diego Public Library and the actual dates will be announced this June.

Our Society assisted the San Diego Public Library with the initial application grant and agreed to co-sponsor the event, with the support of the SD JACL. One part of the JAHSSD's role in the project will be to supplement the Smithsonian's exhibit with camp related items available to the society.

We will be looking to the public for support and help to host this meaningful exhibit. If you are interested in assisting please contact Ben Segawa at 482-1736 or Don Estes at 280-9418.

see President's Message, page 7

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PRE-WAR PLAYERS OF NOTE

by Mitch Himaka

Ask anyone who was the best at any sports and you can get an argument that will carry into the next generation.

It's the same even in our own small community but not nearly as bad as you think.

I asked that a few "old timers" recently and, surprisingly, got a little disagreement as to who was the best of the pre-war athletes who performed in San Diego.

The consensus was that Hideo "Hi" Higashi and John Yamamoto were probably the best athletes ever to play in San Diego. Both were outstanding football players at San Diego State College. John also was an outstanding baseball player.

Hi Higashi came to San Diego State from the Los Angeles area but he settled here after the war. John was a local boy who made good.

"John's brother, Paul, also was outstanding as a football player and baseball player as I recall," Fred Katsumata said. "I believe both brothers played at San Diego High in the early 1930s."

"Both of them were big name guys here," Joe Owashi said. "So was Hi Higashi, who came to San Diego State from out of town."

My brothers, Osa and Tets Himaka, both recall hearing of Hi Higashi's fetes at the college.

"Not many of us had cars to go see anyone play so most of what we heard was what we got out of the newspapers and Hi got a lot of ink as a running back at San Diego State," they said.

But our community was blessed with a lot of other athletes who performed at the high school level here.

See Pre-war Players, page 4

CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING NICE

The JAHSSD would like to pause and recognize some folks who have done something nice for all of us by helping build the collection of our society.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the receipt of a book commemorating all the Nikkei who were interned at Crystal City Texas. The Fiftieth Anniversary booklet was donated to us through the generosity of Hideko "Bubbles" Shimazaki.

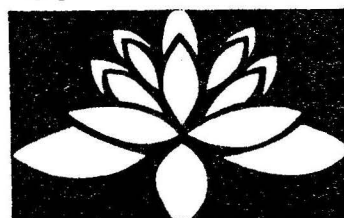
Our collections committee would also like to recognize Mrs. Aiko Kida, and the family of the late Yutaka Kida for their donation of a copy of a notebook Yutaka kept while at Poston III. The notebook contains the menu of every meal Yutaka prepared in his role as a cook for Block 330. The period covered by the notebook runs from Tuesday, September 8, 1942 to Monday, March 15, 1943.

Finally, we wish to thank Mr. Soh Yamaha, now a resident of Kiku Gardens in Chula Vista for his generous gift of a scene of Poston III carved on the end of a lug box. Soh's donation is a fine example of camp art that was produced at Poston.

I REMEMBER WHEN

Just prior to his death, Fred "Kats" Nakagawa wrote this short note when he sent in his membership.

My parents moved to the area now known as the



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Tijuana River Valley Estuary. They grew sugar beets for Spreckles Sugar Company of San Diego. We lived near an army camp and air field and they practiced shooting down parachutes over our beet field every day (World War I).

I used to ride the 2 ton sugar beet wagons to the railroad dump.

FOOTNOTES

from the Editor

Editor's personal apology to the Kikuchi family for the misspelling of Reverend Kenji Kikuchi's name on our Spring issue dedication. With extreme regrets. Jeanne Marumoto Elyea

After 94 years Woo Chee Chong closed its doors and I'm sure we will all miss them. Special recognition to Mike Okuma, manager of the Chula Vista store for his support of our organization with his donations of almond and fortune cookies for our last 2 annual meetings. We wish him success in his future endeavors and thank him for his past and continued support.

Mitch Himaka's article about the Padres reminded Mary Marumoto when before World War II, they arrived late from the produce market and sat in the left field bleachers watching a young handsome Ted Williams standing in the outfield waiting for a fly ball that very seldom came.

LETTERS, WE GET LETTERS

The following is excerpts from a letter from Babe Karasawa.

"I have a suggestion for an article about the past which may be very interesting if we can obtain information from people who should be able to recall some or much of it. Before WWII there were several Nisei athletes who starred at San Diego State. I remember seeing a picture of Johnny Yamamoto on the sports page with a caption like "The Yokohama Express" over the article which dealt with football. I recall hearing that his younger brother Paul was also a star athlete. The youngest brother, Saburo, may have also gone to San Diego State. I'm wondering if the three of them are still living and could provide any information or have any old scrapbooks. One sad thing about the people who went thru college in those days was that they couldn't get professional jobs. Before we were shipped out to the Santa Anita Racetrack, I remember John and Paul working as icemen (we had ice boxes in those days).

I'm sure Weenie Tsunoda and Take Taniguchi would remember some things about the Yamamotos. Take Taniguchi was a first stringer on the Cal Frosh football team before we went to camp. That was a real accomplishment since Cal was a major university.

I also remember seeing Hi Higashi playing for State against the San Diego Marines. That used to be a big game in the City. Hi was also a baseball star, and the Yamamotos also must have been. My college baseball coach was probably 10 years younger than Hi and told me that he broke the school batting average record which was set by Hi about 10 years earlier. And my coach was a really good player.

I can't recall the name of another Nisei who starred at SD State, but I'm sure some others can. There were many, many Nisei who starred at the high school level in various sports. Maybe they could be mentioned in another article". . .

Editor note: I have been in contact with Johnny Yamamoto Jr., D.D.S. and he promises to write an article about his Dad and I hope future articles about his grandmother and his own career. If anyone has material to share on athletes current and past, please contact the editor 690-1151.

Professor Shinkichi Tajiri wrote to Hannah Sato, that he was interested in renewing old friendships with those who he knew in Camp and this area. He wrote that he left the U.S. in September 1948 due to his disillusionment with the U.S. government and has made a life for himself in Europe. He would like to get in contact with old friends and he has offered his extra apartment for anyone who might be visiting Holland. Please write : Shinkichi Tajiri, Castle Scheres, 3990 AA Barrio, Holland.

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"Two of the best all-around athletes from the Japanese community were Haruki Koba and Min Hatada, both outstanding football and basketball players at Coronado High," Tets said. "I think they played baseball, too."

Ben Honda said others who were outstanding at Coronado were Mas Koba and Fugio Mayeda, who were small but quick linemen.

"San Diego High used to have outstanding wrestling teams made up mostly of Japanese guys," Ben said.

"We had some of the best in Southern California wrestling at San Diego," Tets said. "They were all-SCIF (Southern California Interscholastic Federation) when they were selected from through-out the Southern California area.

"Some of the best were Tsuneo Yamasaki, David Arata, Masaharu (Fatty) Tsuida, and (William) Weenie Tsunoda. Other really good wrestlers included Power Sogo. Tom Sakaguchi, Masayoshi Tsuida, Benson Iwata and Tom Arata. I don't recall if they made SCIF but they were outstanding."

In fact, the San Diego High wrestling team lost out on the SCIF team title in 1942 because of the wartime curfew imposed on all Japanese residents in the San Diego area. Because of the curfew, the wrestlers were prohibited from traveling to the Los Angeles area for the tournament and the late SDHS wrestling coach, Frank Croby, made no bones out of the fact that their absence deprived the school of the title that year.

"There was another outstanding football player who played at San Diego State, who came out of the Imperial Valley area," Tets recalled. "George Kita. He wasn't a very big guy but he played an outstanding game at lineman for them."

"We had a lot of other good athletes in the county," Tets recalls. "There was Art Ozaki, who played football at Sweetwater High. I think he was a starting quarterback for them around 1940-

41. Those were the days when they played both ways, he also was an outstanding baseball player.

"At Grossmont High, there were the Kida brothers, Tom and Satoshi. I think they both played football and wrestled.

"Also at Coronado, there were Yo and Kotcho Koba. I think Yo played football and Kotcho was an outstanding trackman. Hide Takeshita was a good football player at Coronado.

"At La Jolla High, there was Sando Shinmoto, who played football. At Hoover High, I remember Willie Yamada, who was a starting guard in football."

"At San Diego High, Tak Taniguchi was an outstanding football player and a baseball player. Tak went on to play freshman football at University of California at Berkeley."

"Yuki Tsumagari was an outstanding swimmer at San Diego High. Walt Obayashi was a starter in basketball and the star hurdler on the track team."

"Walt also was an outstanding swimmer," Osa added. "He probably was the fastest swimmer in our community as well."

"Most of what we heard about other athletes was due to what we read in the newspapers because we didn't get to attend many of the other school events," Osa said. "Not many guys had cars."

Ben said another outstanding football player at Grossmont High was Kats Tanizaki who was a small but quick lineman.

"Kats played just before the war," he said. "At Oceanside High, there was Sam Sugita, another outstanding athlete."

No doubt, we've probably missed a few others not mentioned but you have to remember, these guys I talked to are past "Prime Time" so we'll excuse them. But if anyone of you out there (if there are actually anyone who reads this dribble) remember
See Pre War Players, page 7



Shigeru and Yuki Matsumoto with son Fred, circa 1918

SHASHIN KEEKON (Part Two)

by Don Estes

For the vast majority of the Issei, emigration to the United States did not constitute a break with their families at home. Virtually all of them maintained some contact after their arrival in North America. It was frequently these family members who assumed the role of Nakodo, or middleman, or woman as the case might be. It was the Nakodo who was tasked with finding a suitable candidate, and working out the "details". The "details" were facilitated by an exchange of letters, and perhaps more importantly, photographs of the prospective parties.

Ultimately, if both parties agreed with the conditions of the union, the woman's name would be duly transferred from her family register to the family register of her new husband, thus officially becoming his wife. Even today these family registers or koseki are maintained by local authorities in Japan. Japanese law, then as now, requires that the representatives of each household report all births, adoptions, marriages and deaths to the registry office.

The now officially registered wife was then

eligible to request a passport and visa for the purpose of joining her husband. Immigration records indicate that the majority of Issei women entering the United States between 1910 and 1920 came as, shashin bekon, or picture brides.

Mrs. Fuji Hashiguchi married Mr. Kasuke "Frank" Hashiguchi in 1918. Later, she came to the Sweetwater Valley where they settled as husband and wife. Mrs. Hashiguchi was 79 at the time she described how her marriage was arranged.

I came to the United States through the services of a friend of my parents and my husband's parents. He was our go-between. At that time many people in our village used to brew "shochu" (A sweet potato brandy) and then sit around and drink it together. My parents liked to drink it with the go-between. They all said later that it was funny that they didn't think of the marriage between the two of us sooner.

Since we were from the same village I knew my husband but not too well since he was away in the mountains working a lot. When he left our village for America he broke off a loquat branch with a lot of fruit on it; put it over his shoulder and walked down the road towards the sea. That's how I'll always remember him.

People said America was a nice place and I wanted to come here too. My parents told me that there was a person in America that they would recommend that I marry. I told them that I would like to go even though I didn't know the language or anything else.

We invited our friends and neighbors to the marriage ceremony even though we had it without my husband. I needed a passport to go to America so my Mother walked to the prefectural office which was nine ri (About 22 miles) away from our village. I traveled by foot then by train to Moji, and then by boat to Honshu and finally by train again to Yokohama. I left Japan on the Shintoku Maru.

When we arrived in San Diego from San Francisco I was unsure about an American breakfast, so I ask for "ottsu -miru". I finally had to point to what I wanted. Then they understood I was asking for oatmeal.

Mis-steps aside, most of these marriages remained solid unions as the Nikkei community in San Diego began to grow and prosper.



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Poston Pilgrimage, continued from page 1

Michi Minamide Kira, with artist's perspective, recognized the hills. They appeared just as she had sketched them more than a half century ago.

As we approached Parker, Arizona, **Kazumi Hayashi** said, "That's it, that's the same place." Kaz recalled that more than 50 years ago she, accompanied by her father **Mr. Minamide**, had left Poston and stopped at this station to transfer to the bus to Manzanar where she was to become Mrs. Bunky Hayashi. Kaz said that she and her dad were very quiet and kept as low a profile as possible because of the hostile wartime atmosphere that prevailed. They also never forgot how good the cold Coke tasted there that day.

On to the Monument. The memorial is situated next to the Poston Fire Station whose staff of native Americans, too young to have lived during the Poston Experience, had no idea why it exists and had hitherto been unable to answer the questions of passersby. **Yuki Kawamoto** constructively planted seeds of information and education by leaving them a copy of our own Poston video (which has been shown during the trip to Laughlin).

The weather, always a factor to consider when visiting the Mojave Desert, was perfect. At the monument it was probably mid-60s, very comfortable, but ever so windy! Everyone clutched their headgear and hair was blown every which way, except for **Taka and Beverly Sawasaki's**. As Tom Hom attempted to take a group photo, the force of the wind blew over his tripod and his camera crashed to the ground.

Back aboard, we might still be looking for the road to Poston III had **Masami Honda** not been

there to navigate. Mas's son, **Stan**, a photojournalist from New York City, came with the express purpose of going to Poston. We hope some memorable professional photos have been developed.

Thanks to **Mits Kawamoto, Dorothy Asakawa, Dorothy Hom, Chet Kaneyuki's wife Kimi**, and many others who graciously shared cookies, fruit, and snacks on the bus.

There was not shortage of cooperation among the men during the bus breakdowns. They quickly switched baggage from Bus No. 1 to Bus No. 2 at Needles, CA; and later from No. 2 to No. 3; and **Po Kaneyuki** easily carried the ice chest filled with soft drinks from bus to bus. Thank you, fellas, for a smooth transition.

Mabel Hibi and **Yo Kuyama** had commented earlier on **Osa Himaka's** son **Gary's** samurai features. As things turned out, the observation was prophetic. On the trip home to San Diego, after the second bus breakdown at 11:30 at night in an isolated stretch north of Escondido, it was Gary's cellular phone, rather than a sword, that came to our rescue enabling us to call for yet another replacement bus. **Gary** and **Karen's** son **Garrett** (wasn't he well behaved! Grandmother **Yuki Sugiyama** should have been very pleased) represented our fourth generation on the pilgrimage.

At this opportune time, **Bubbles Shimasaki** sprang into action, entertaining the captive audience with her impromptu comedic pantomime of the flight attendant's emergency evacuation routine. It was a tension-breaking performance. While we waited in the incapacitated bus, the fumes from the potty became overpowering to those most adjacent, including **Dorothy Asakawa**, the **Tsuida** sisters **Masako, Kiyo**, and **Bubbles** and daughter **Robin Shimasaki**. They succumbed to the "laughing gas" and went into tears of hilarity over everything that was said thereafter, and eventually had to disembark into the chilly night air to recover.

It was a pleasure to see passengers such as **Jumbo** and **Helen Takeshita**, **Tom Kida**, **Oscar** and **Grace Kodama**, **Toshiko Springer**, **Kenji Sato** and his wife and her sister **K. Sakamoto**,
Poston Pilgrimage, page 8

Pre War Players, continued from page 4

any pre-war athletes who were outstanding, jot me a note or two and we'll try and include them in a future article. Write me at 10388 Limetree Lane, Spring Valley, Calif. 91977 and maybe we can put together another pre-war athlete column.

And also for a future article, I'd like to put together one for war time and postwar athletes. I know we've a few outstanding ones since the war but MY memory has faded and I need some help. Include your name and phone number so maybe I can call you back and talk to you about it.

If you want to talk about yourself, that's fine, too. If you'd like to write a piece on any individual, please do so and we will try to run it. Thanks.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

As indicated else where in this issue the JAHSSD recently received a copy of a notebook kept by Yutaka Kida. From time to time we thought we would reproduce excerpts from Yutaka's notebook including and occasional camp recipe in case you want to try it at home.

Tuesday, September 8, 1942

7:30A.M. Breakfast

1/2 Grapefruit
Cornflakes and Milk
Boston Baked Beans
Bread and Butter
Coffee

Noon Dinner

Combination meat ala king
Butter Beets
Macaroni Salad
Fruit Jello
Fig-cake
Bread
Tea

Yutaka's Poston-Boston Baked Beans: Take one bucket of beans and cook until done. Divide beans into three pans. Into each pan place: 4 cans of tomatoes, 1/3 of a number 10 can of karo syrup, one ounce of dry mustard, one onion, bacon, salt and pepper. Bake for two hours and serve hot.

President's Message, continued from page 1

The Museum of San Diego History has also contacted us to sponsor an exhibit on the Japanese Americans in San Diego. It is now in the formulating stages. This project is scheduled to run 2 months again some time in 1996.

These are only two projects that we are involved in. It is exciting that so much interest has been shown on our Heritage.

I ask for your continued support so we can make information on the Japanese Americans of San Diego available to anyone and any organization who requests it.

Be proud of your culture and heritage. Share it with others, so we Americans can better understand one another and build a better America.

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Tak and Yukako Nakano, Ruth Handa, Florence Ueno, Richard Matsumoto and Jimmy Kondo; in fact, everyone present who were models of composure during this trying time. It was as though the passenger list had been selectively chosen for resilience and dignity.

Had we broken down underwater or up in the air (nothing could be ruled out after the second breakdown), we had on board a seasoned Navy SEAL instructor, **Mel Tanaka**. Also making the trip out of curiosity and interest was **Maki Okamoto** from Japan, a graduate student at San Diego State.

We finally arrived at the Buddhist Temple, San Diego at 2:00 a.m. the next day. **Mas Asakawa** was instrumental in making sure all distress telephone calls were completed and facilitated transportation connections.

Subsequently, **Jane Takeshita** who was accompanied by her sister **Edie Suzuki**, wrote: "I want to tell you I enjoyed the trip to Poston and the bus ride back to San Diego really wasn't that bad (it certainly was not boring!).

It was great to see old friends again and meeting new people

On observing people on the bus - the close relationship of the Tsuida sisters, Masako, Parker, and Bubbles. They were the life of the bus and seem to enjoy themselves.

This was my second trip to Poston. The first time, I did not have a chance to read all the plaques on the monument, and was able to do so this time. Also, going down the road to Camp III, even

plaques on the monument, and was able to do so this time. Also, going down the road to Camp III, even though there's nothing there except the sewer tank, being there brings back old memories. I wanted you to know how much I enjoyed going to Poston with your organization."

From **Dorothy and Tom Hom**: "... cannot thank you enough for the wonderful and educational trip. ... we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. We saw a number of old friends and also made new ones as well.

The visit to Poston was indeed an emotional

one. Especially as we visited the monument commemorating the camp site and the acknowledgement of the Japanese American soldiers who gave their lives in defending our country that acted in panic by violating the civil rights of a group of fellow Americans and their families. That event will be a benchmark that will always remind America that such an event must never happen again."

Also, thanks to a trio's "little token of appreciation." We certainly appreciate your spirit of generosity and respect your request for anonymity.

If you've been wondering what sort of compensation we've received from the MARK IV BUS COMPANY for all the inconvenience and discomfort caused not only to every member of the tour group but also to those waiting for hours, outdoors, uninformed back at the Temple, there has regrettably not been a word of apology, regret or any acknowledgement nor of course, even a penny of financial adjustment.

All in all, a trip which had been pleasant became, with adversity, an adventure and a further source of bonding among its courageous participants. It was an honor to have been present in this company. Thanks for the warm memories. Yo Kuyama probably summed up the sentiments of all when she said. "In spite of everything, I really enjoyed that trip to Poston."

Poston, as we knew it, is history.



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POSTON TRIP PLANNED

Masato Asakawa and Yuki Kawamoto are seeking some help and information from members of the community, particularly those interested in Poston.

Recently the Poston Monument Committee, spearheaded by former Camp II people, decided to erect an informational kiosk by the walkway leading to the present Poston Monument. Plans for the kiosk have been completed by Ray Takata, who designed the original monument, and construction will be supervised by Ted Kobata, who directed the monument construction.

The estimated cost of the kiosk's construction is about \$25,000. In addition the committee estimates that an additional \$3,000 per year will be required for up-keep and on-going maintenance.

The monument committee is seeking your tax deductible donations for this worthy project. Contributions may be sent, and made payable to: Poston Memorial Monument Fund, George Makishima, Treasurer, 6540 Chetwood Way, Sacramento, CA 45833.

In addition Mas and Yuki are interested in determining how many local people might be interested in attending the dedication ceremony for the kiosk, which is now planned for Tuesday, November 7, 1995, starting at 11 A.M. PST. If there is sufficient interest a bus trip can be scheduled. As Mas and Yuki have written in their information letter:

This could be an opportunity to show our children the area where we spent so much time and is so meaningful to us.

If you and any of your family members or friends are interested in such a trip, please contact either Mas Asakawa at: 2961 Arnoldson Avenue, San Diego CA 92122, Phone: 453-2739.

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THIRD ANNUAL MEETING

The JAHSSD Third Annual Meeting will be held on Saturday, October 14, 1995 at Southwestern College in Chula Vista. This year the event will be co-sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Depart. at Southwestern College enabling us to use both sides of the Student Union and enlarging our display and exhibit area. We will make the exhibit available throughout the day to the community and we need your help to make it bigger and better than last year. If you have any items, pertaining to the Japanese American history in San Diego please contact Jeanne Elyea 690-1151 or Ben Segawa 482-1736 or any other Board member.

Remember, the time period is not just Poston or pre-war, but anything beginning today. All items will be returned to you immediately after the exhibit. Help us share our heritage with your friends, family, and our community. We are currently developing a theme and deciding on a speaker for the luncheon. *Arigato*

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ISSUE DEDICATION

Cost of this Summer, 1995 issue has been subsidized by donations made in honor of **Shizuo and Bessie Doiguchi**, who celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Shiz and Bessie were married in Chicago on July 28, 1945.

Bessie Wada Doiguchi is sister of San Diegans: Mary Wada Marumoto, Frank Wada, and Hank Wada and Bessie was interned in Camp III, while she and Frank were staying with the Marumoto's in the Tijuana Valley.

The Marumoto Family: Mary, Linda McLemore, Joyce Kelly, Allyne Tachiki, Jeanne Elyea, and Steven congratulate them and wish them more years of happiness.

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JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO 1995 MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION (includes **Footprints** Newsletter)

☐ Initial Application

☐ Renewal Application

- ☐ \$20 Individual
- ☐ \$30 Couple
- ☐ \$15 Senior (over 62 years of age)
- ☐ \$25 Senior Couple
- ☐ \$200 Charter Life (Individual)
- ☐ \$300 Charter Life (Couple)
- ☐ \$100 Corporate (Annual)
- ☐ \$500 Corporate (Life)

Name (please include title, e.g., Mr., Mrs., etc.) _____

Name (please include title, e.g., Mr., Mrs., etc.) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

Please mail this form and your check to:

Jr.
Elaine Bowers, Treasurer
P.O. Box 620988
San Diego, CA 92162-0988