

# **FOOTPRINTS**

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

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Spring Issue 1996

Volume 5



**"THE YOKOHAMA EXPRESS", my father**  
**By Dr. John K. Yamamoto, Jr.**

John Kazuo Harrison Yamamoto was born at home in Los Angeles, California, on June 29, 1907. His mother was too ill to register him until the following month, so his official birthday is July, 1907, making him one of the older nisei in America.

John Harry, as his friends knew him, was a quiet, shy, private person, who despite his stoic demeanor, (we quietly referred to him as "stoneface"), was very sensitive and emotional. Around the home, as with most Japanese fathers, he was a man of few words, but through cracks in his facade, we were able to see the care and concern he had for people as he shared their joys and pathos. If I were to characterize him, I would have to call him the last boy scout. He never swore and I remember towards New Years, when fellow farmers received

*See Yokohama, page 4*

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

**By Masato "Bruce" Asakawa**

The Third Annual Meeting of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego was held on October 14, 1995 at Southwestern College in Chula Vista. The event was co-sponsored by the Fine Arts, Humanities and Communications Division of Southwestern College.

Some of those in attendance included Professors Penelope Banks (interned in Poston Camp I) and Norris Nagao of Southwestern College, and Susan McNeal, formerly of Mayor Golding Office, now with Jenny Craig's corporate office. A Proclamation from the Mayor's office officially proclaiming October 14th, Japanese-American History Day in honor of our organization's achievements was presented by Professor Norris Nagao representing the Mayor's office. Other attendees included Seiji Kiya from Palo Alto and Dr. Azusa Tsuneyoshi from Twenty-Nine Palms. Dr. Tsuneyoshi donated a wide variety of items which included various publications and photographs with articles relating to the Nikkei.

Board member, Don Estes contributed his time and materials to create an excellent exhibit of artifacts and photographs, along with John Rojas, Jeanne and Bill Elyea, Howard McLemore, and Naomi Himaka (representing Mitch who was

*See Annual Meeting, page 2*

## **IN THIS ISSUE**

**"The Yokohama Express**  
**Annual Meeting**  
**The People vs Nakamura**  
**Labels on Display**  
**Museum of S.D. History**  
**Footnotes**

**pg 1**  
**pg. 1**  
**pg. 2**  
**pg. 3**  
**pg. 3**  
**pg. 4**

*Annual meeting, continued from page 1*

temporarily under the weather). Special thanks to Frank Wada and Abe Takehara for the use of their military and Poston items.

The guest speaker for the event was Maki Okamoto, who, while a graduate student at San Diego State University working towards her Masters Degree, wrote a thesis on the three Japanese American Churches in San Diego. Her interesting talk covered things she learned during this study.

The Mistress of Ceremonies was Elaine Bowers. At one point in the program, Elaine called some people to the front. They had no idea why they were being called forward and as it turned out these people had taken the bus trip to the Poston Monument in March and Elaine presented each one with a vial of authentic Poston Dirt that she had picked up at the site of Camp III.

Organizational kudos to Naomi Himaka for her generous donation of the floral arrangements for the tables; the Union Bank, Frank Fujikawa, Gordon and Eileen Shimizu, Tom Yanagihara Ochi Nursery and our Board Members for donating the door prizes; Suzy Yamada for the delicious cookies; and to all those who helped and donated items. *DO - MO ARIGATO GOZAIMASHITA ! ! !*

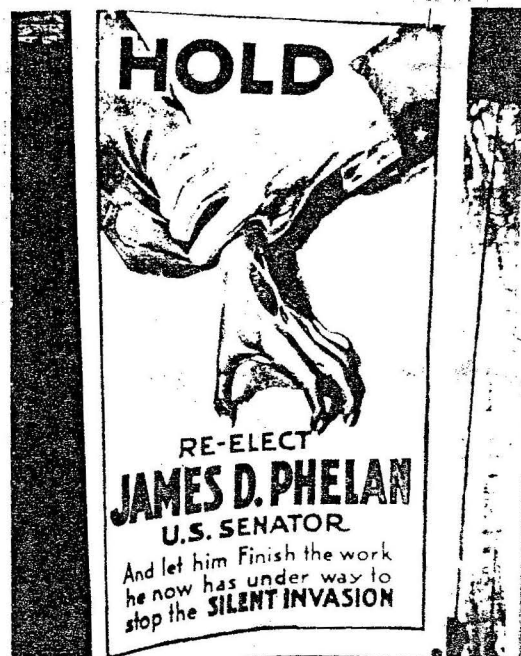
### CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING NICE

The JAHSSD would like to acknowledge, and thank Mrs. Michi Okuma for her generous gift



NAOMI HIMAKA  
10388 LIMETREE LN  
SPRING VALLEY, CA  
9 1 9 7 7  
(619) 660-9865

to the society of two ironwood canes made at Poston by her father, Mr. Tomekichi Sakaguchi. In addition Michi provided us with several valuable early photographs of San Diego as well as a copy of a diagram showing the location of individuals who were living on the wharf at Van Camp's Fish Camp before World War II.



### THE PEOPLE vs NAKAMURA

By Don Estes

For many of the *Issei* pioneers who came so eagerly to the United States there rapidly developed racially inspired, legal impediments to the achievement of every new comer's dream - the ownership of their own land. Unlike the other immigrants who came to our shores however the *Issei* were denied that right.

By the end of the first decade of the Twentieth Century anti-*Issei* feelings had risen to such a high level intensity that in 1913, the California State Legislature moved against them. With a already long history of anti-Asian legislation, and aided by the ardent backing and active support of nativist groups like the California State Grange and the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, the legislature passed the Haney-Webb Act.

The group targeted for this first piece of legislation to restrict the ownership of agricultural land by aliens who were deemed to be, "ineligible for citizenship" were - the *Issei*. Under then existing Federal Law, United States citizenship could only devolve upon "... Free, white persons, and ... Persons of African descent." The phrasing of the legislative language effectively removed all Asian immigrants from eligibility.

In November, 1920 the Haney-Webb Act was further augmented by State Ballot Proposition  
*See The People, page 6*



*Sammy Itami at October meeting holding his label.*

*photo by Yukio Kawamoto*

## **LABELS ON DISPLAY**

**By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea**

The E-TAH-ME brand label belonging to Sammy and Mary Itami and the Rocky Rancho label of K. and Mary Marumoto which were part of our Organization's October annual meeting display, have also become a permanent part of the decor Applebee's Restaurant in Plaza Bonita.

I was asked by my friend Marge Engler who is decorating at least 6 Applebee's in southern California if she could have a Rocky Rancho label for display. I in turn contacted Mary and Sammy and asked if their label could also be used. Both labels are now located near the bar and restroom area at the entrance from the Plaza Bonita inside door.

***Ralph Miyashiro***

Registered Piano Technician

4173 Loma Alta Dr., San Diego, CA 92115  
(619) 265 - 2495

## **MUSEUM OF SAN DIEGO HISTORY TO FEATURE LOCAL NIKKEI HISTORY**

At the invitation of the San Diego Historical

Society's Museum of San Diego History our organization has been asked to develop an exhibit which explain in words, photos, and artifacts the history of the Nikkei in San Diego County. The exhibit is presently scheduled to open in the museum's Great American Gallery in January, 1997, and will run six to eight months.

Responsible for designing assembling the exhibit is Don Estes, member of the board of our Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego.

Don is presently forming a committee to assist with both the design of the show, and the artifacts that will be featured.

We are interested in the loan of photographs and artifacts dealing with farming, fishing, the business life of the community including restaurants, barber shops, pool halls and other stores, camp materials and just about anything you can think of.

We would also like to thank Dr. and Mrs. Frank Kastelic for their generous donation to assist with the underwriting of the expenses involved with this exhibit.

If you have any materials to donate, or would like to assist with this project, please call Don Estes (280-9418), or Ben Segawa (482-1736). Donations to the JAHSSD are gratefully accepted and will be duly acknowledged and recorded. Thank you very much for your assistance.

## **SUPERCOPIES**

- Full Copy Service
- Color Copies
- Velo Bind - Comb Bind
- Business Cards - Rubber Stamps
- UPS

662 H STREET (619) 425-7300  
CHULA VISTA, CA 91910 FAX (619) 425-8116



## FOOTNOTES

By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea, Editor

At our October meeting, several people from other Camps were present and it helped to emphasize that we are not just covering Poston. We may have members from all the 9 camps and we need to cover all of them. Suzy Yamada let us display some of her pictures from Heart Mountain and as it happened a gentleman named Stanley Igawa called the editor, said he was from Hawaii and was in Oceanside visiting his daughter and was formerly in Heart Mountain. He came to the meeting, and met with Suzy and her niece and nephew who just happened to be here from San Jose and they had a mini-reunion of their own as a table displaying Heart Mountain pictures.

Would you like to see such things as recipes, etc. in futures newsletter? Suzy Yamada gave the editor the following recipe for making Japanese pickles. Our grandmothers used leftover rice and the stuff leftover after you make tofu as a medium for aging vegetables. This recipe does the same thing but is just what we need quick and easy. Use vegetables of your choice, cucumber, dikon, radishes, etc., prepare 3 cups oatmeal (Lady Luck brand from Lucky's is good), 1 cup brown sugar, 1 can beer, and salt to taste, mix well, put in your vegetables, let set to desired flavor.

We need input and written materials for future newsletters. If you are not sure you can personally write the article alone, contact a Board Member and our organization will help you. Remember "we are making history as you read this" so we want articles about you and your family from the past to now. "Variety is the spice of life."



### TOMA PLUMBING

REPAIR • REMODEL • NEW CONST. • DRAINS

ROY TOMA

P.O. BOX 152090

SAN DIEGO, CA 92195

(619) 287-6623

CONSTR. LIC. # 568059

*Yokohama, continued from page 1*

calendars with nude pin-ups, he always received calendars with dogs and cats. It really made him mad.

My father said his early childhood was very hard; moving from one dirt floored structure to the next. He told me how they had to fill the chinks in the walls with mud and paper to keep the wind out. His mother would sprinkle the floor with water and when it dried, she would sweep it smooth. He recalled how his brother Paul and he would share shoes; how once all they had was one turnip so his mother boiled a big pot of water on the hearth, diced the turnip into the pot and seasoned it. They had the soup for half a week. His mother, being from old samurai stock, taught them to carry themselves quietly and with dignity. He always said that he felt bad for Paul; that Paul had it the hardest, but Dad would never elaborate. He always felt very protective over Paul, and when reminiscing about later football years, talked about what a smart quarterback Paul was. "he was always a thinker."

John Harry found an old baseball glove in an Imperial Valley drainage ditch. He cleaned it, oiled it, massaged it soft and brought it back to life. A love was born. He took his mother's old pair of shoes, took off the heels, pounded spikes into the soles, and had his first pair of cleats. He recalls that he wasn't an exceptional athlete. He just worked hard. At a later time, after they moved to San Diego, he related how he would stand on a corner on Broadway pretending to be waiting for a bus. After the bus would pass, he would dash down the sidewalk, dodging people, pretending to be chasing the bus. He would do this hours at a time, practicing his broken-field running for football.

He loved sports. It was fair. If you were good, you did well. (Or so he thought.) He recalled bitterly of the time when his San Diego High School team went to an out of town game and they couldn't take him because there was no place to house a Japanese American athlete.

Charles Peterson, Dean of Men at San Diego State College (Peterson Gym) wanted to recruit my father for the football team at State. *My See Yokohama, page 5*

*Yokohama, continued from page 4*

grandfather wouldn't give his consent. "Dean Pete" went to his home to ask, but my grandfather wouldn't relent. Understanding what sports meant to my father, my grandmother secretly gave Dean Peterson her consent. "The old man never knew I played ball. One game I broke my arm and I had it in a sling. I draped my letterman's sweater over my shoulders at the dinner table, and he never noticed."

During the early years of football, players wore soft leather helmets without faceguards. In this old style game, if a player left a game, he couldn't return during the same half. There was no platooning and you played a full sixty minutes of both offense and defense and every play was a running play, because two incomplete passes during a series was a five yard penalty.

In these glory years of San Diego State football, when none of the present West Coast powers could touch State, my father, a big fast running back teamed up with speedy scatback, Kenny Johnson and the duo "shredded the opposing teams defenses, running for record yardage and immortalizing themselves in Aztec history". Recognizing his strength and power running ability, the newspapers nicknamed John Harry, "The Yokohama Express".

My father recalled how after the opposing players would tackle him, they would punch him on the ground and call him racial names. He said that as much as he loved to carry the ball, he didn't mind blocking for Kenny, where he could look for familiar faces to take out. He smiled. When I was a child, my father would take me with him to Stanley Andrews Sporting Goods to look at equipment and to talk to his old football cronies. One of his old teammates told me of how one time, when my father had led an end sweep, he took out the two corner men, got up, ran downfield overtaking Kenny, and took out the last man in front of Kenny. He said, "when your dad took someone down, they got up real slow."

John Harry lettered in all sports for four years at State and was honored for it by being given a lifetime athletic membership to San Diego State, and was allowed to attend all athletic functions for life.

He graduated with a degree in Education,

but could never find a teaching position. He was approached by a group that was creating the diplomatic corps to Japan. Accepting their offer would have meant entering a PhD program at Harvard. As sole support of two families and with little work to be had, he had to decline the invitation.

Though my father sustained an essentially crippling injury to his knee during football, his love for the sports had him playing semi-professional baseball in a league whose players would form the core of the future San Diego Padres. His former Aztec teammate, Bert Richey's little brother, John, would be the Padres' catcher. And when he could no longer play, he would coach teams like the JACL Falcons, or Omar Rendering; fast pitch softball in A, AA, and AAA leagues, where you heard names like Iwashita, Jumbo, Bear, Honda and Segawa, where you could see Jim Shinohara in a fist fight at second base, and where Panda was always on the mound.

In later years, he and Frank Otsuka would take off and spend Spring in Yuma, and attend all the Padre games. As a child, I remember staring, in amazement, at the tears of joy and excitement flowing unashamedly down my father's cheeks after a two out, game winning hit by the Padres. He watched sports with the same intensity that he played it. Maybe it was a blessing that he passed away when he did. I don't think his heart could have taken the Padres going to the World Series.

When we think of father, we remember warm memories of home and family, but when I'm asked to remember John Yamamoto, I remember the man at Lane Field, hand on his son's shoulder, crying.

**Debra Kodama**  
**Communication Consultant**

Offering professional services in a variety of business communication areas, including

- PR materials
- business reports
- speeches and scripts
- newsletters
- training materials

Call today to discuss your business needs  
463-5181

See *The People*, page 2

Number One which was a far more stringent statute passed through the initiative process.

The birth of the Nisei, and the phrasing of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution did much to mitigate the negative force of the California statutes. The Nisei, as citizens by right of birth (*Jus Soli*) were eligible, even as minors, to have land purchased or leased in their own names, with their alien parents acting as legal guardians.

The first case in San Diego County to be prosecuted under these alien land laws involved eighty acres that had been purchased by Shoichi Nakamura who was an American citizen. Nakamura in turn "employed" four *Issei* farmers. In 1938 all five men were arrested and indicted for being in violation of Article Nine of the State's alien land law. If found guilty the five men faced two years in jail and a fine of \$500.

The *Nikkei* community quickly rallied to the defendants aid by raising approximately \$10,000 to fight the case. George Yasukochi of San Marcos remembered that his family donated \$500, and George's father, Kiso stated in his diary that \$1,500 was raised at a single meeting in the North County.

A Los Angeles lawyer, Marion Wright and his translator Sei Fujii, who held a bachelor of law degree represented the defendants. Later, acting on the old legal maximum, "if you don't hire a local attorney - you lose," M.H. Conklin and Ed Harvey of San Diego joined the defense.

Wright's case was built on the premise that the burden of proving citizenship lay with the State, not with the individual, and is probably best remembered locally because of the method Wright used to bolster his point that it was difficult to prove an individual was, "an alien ineligible for citizenship." To this end the Los Angeles attorney asked the prosecutor how he knew the defendants' nationality. The prosecutor replied that their facial features revealed them to be Japanese.

The next day, and with the consent of the judge, Wright brought three other men into court; a Chinese, a Korean, and a Filipino. He then requested that the State's prosecutor identify the nationality of each of the individuals. The prosecutor identified two as being Japanese.

In the end the San Diego jury acquitted the defendants of the conspiracy charge. Eventually the court of appeals allowed the State to escheat the property in question. By the time the State seized the eighty acres, the four *Issei* were bankrupt and had moved on, and the anti-Japanese forces had their victory.

## ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

The annual election of Board Members was conducted during September. Of the 250 ballots mailed, 139 were returned. Elected to three year terms were Elaine Bowers, Jeanne Elyea, Carol Kawamoto, and Yukio Kawamoto.

At the last Board Meeting in November the roster of officers was approved with the following changes: Elaine Hibi Bowers will be the vice-president and Masato "Bruce" Asakawa will be the new treasurer (they just traded jobs).

If anyone is interested in serving on the Board, or knows of someone who may be interested, please contact one of the Board members. You will find it an interesting and enjoyable experience, honest!!

## Douglas Urata

Agent and Registered Representative

*Life Insurance*

*Fixed and Variable Annuities*

*Investment Products*

*Nursing Home Policies*

Sansel Insurance and Financial Services, Inc.  
1971 West 190th Street, Suite 200  
Torrance, CA 90504  
(310) 715-1500  
(800) 281-4442

*Securities offered through Transamerica  
Financial Resources, a Registered Broker/  
Dealer*

# Advertiser's Order Form

Business Name \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

## Check one:

Full page \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Half Page \$80.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Quarter Page \$45.00 \_\_\_\_\_

Individual Section \$30.00 \_\_\_\_\_

(Advanced payment only.)

Mail order form and check to:

Jeanne K. Elyea, Newsletter Editor

P.O. Box 620988

San Diego, CA 92162-0988

Please attach camera-ready ad or your business card (for individual section). If you do not have camera-ready artwork, we will attempt to assist you in designing an ad for an additional charge.

## REMINDER

### ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS DUE IN JANUARY

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO ARE NOT CHARTER LIFE MEMBERS,

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL. FOR THOSE OF YOU

WHO ARE CHARTER MEMBERS AND WHO HAVE ALREADY RENEWED,

ARIGATO, THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

JAHSSD BOARD

## 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:

JAHSSD

Elaine Bowers, Treasurer

P.O. Box 620988

San Diego, CA 92162-0988



## Society Officers

President:	Ben Segawa	482-1736
Vice President:	Masato Asakawa	453-2739
Treasurer:	Elaine Hibi Bowers	421-3525
Secretary:	Yukio Kawamoto	286-8203
Historian:	Donald Estes	280-9418

Advisor: Aileen Oya

## JAHSSD Board of Directors

Jeanne Marumoto Elyea	690-1151
Michio Himaka	660-9865
Carol Kawamoto	287-7583
Mas Hironaka	

## Newsletter Staff

Editor:	Jeanne Marumoto Elyea
Desktop Publishing:	Bill Elyea

*Footprints* is a publication of the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. Subscriptions are free with membership. Comments and questions from readers are welcome. Please address your letters to:

*Footprints* Editor  
 P.O. Box 620988  
 San Diego, CA 92162-0988

Nonprofit Organization  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 Chula Vista, Calif.  
 Permit No. 126

JAHSSD  
 Jeanne K. Elyea, Editor  
 P.O. Box 620988  
 San Diego, CA 92162-0988