

FOOTPRINTS

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Winter II Issue 1996

Volume 5 Number 5

WW II VETS REMINISCE AT ANNUAL MEETING

By Yukio Kawamoto

Some 70 members and guests turned out for our fourth annual membership meeting on October 19th at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego to enjoy a bento lunch and meeting old friends and new.

The meeting was highlighted by a talk by retired Army Col. Christopher Keegan, who was a company commander with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and a panel discussion with World War II veterans Min Sakamoto, Joe Tanabe and James Yamate.

The meeting was a reunion for Col. Keegan and Joe Tanabe. Tanabe served under the colonel in H Company of the 442.

Joe thought that Col. Keegan had been killed in 442's last campaign in Italy. But as it turned out, Col. Keegan was wounded but survived.

COL. KEEGAN

Col. Keegan related his experiences with the 442nd RCT from the time he joined the regiment upon its activation in February 1943 until he was wounded in combat in Italy six days before the war in Europe ended.

"I belonged to a unit that was unique, a unit that I loved and still love," Keegan said.

"I've been involved with it for 50 something years now." He recalled that when the Hawaiian Niseis first came to Camp Shelby in Mississippi for training, they didn't get along with the mainland Nisei GIs. They called mainlanders "Kotonks." "You know what a Kotonk is?" Col. Keegan asked. "He's a guy with a coconut for a brain and every time he walks his head goes 'kotonk kotonk.'" (see WW II Vets page 2)

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The mission statement adopted by the Board of Directors defines our goal: "To establish, operate and maintain a historical, scientific, cultural, literary and educational organization for the recognition and preservation of the contribution and influences of Japanese and Japanese-Americans in San Diego and contiguous areas."

It is very clear that our mission is wide in scope and ongoing. Our history and culture are our roots. It is this experience that will influence our children.

Let us endeavor to accomplish as much as we can to fulfill our mission.

We are here to serve you call us and let's work together for our children's well being.

Sincerely,
Ben S. Segawa

THANKS

The JAHSSD wishes to thank Jeanne and Bill Elyea for having inaugurated and published "*Footprints*," the organization's quarterly newsletter, for the past four years. Little did we know how much work it involved until we under took the task ourselves. Reflecting on what they did for four years, it was an enormous task. They leave big "Footprints" to fill. We can only try to fill them. We thank you, Jeanne and Bill, for a job well done.

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OYAMA v. CALIFORNIA

(Part 2)

By Don Estes

Under constant and heavy pressure from politically powerful groups like the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West, The California Farm Bureau, and the American Legion, Attorney General Kenny's office initiated over eighty escheat actions directed at Nikkei properties between 1942 and 1948. One of the first such actions instituted by California's new attorney general in 1944, was a petition to the San Diego Superior Court to declare an escheat against Fred Oyama's Chula Vista property. The grounds cited by the state was that the conveyance of the two pieces of property was to "...violate and evade the Alien Land Law." After a trial, Judge Joseph L. Shell granted the state's escheat petition against Fred Oyama.

Returning to Chula Vista in 1946, the Oyamas once again took up farming, and continued to appeal the state's escheat action against their property. On October 31, 1946, the California Supreme Court affirmed the judgment by a four to three vote. Less than two weeks later, on November 11, 1946, following the defeat at the polls of ballot Proposition Fifteen, which had unsuccessfully attempted to strengthen California's alien land law, the attorneys for the Oyama family petitioned the court for a rehearing. Their request was promptly denied.

By this time the Oyama case not only had gained national attention, but the support of two groups interested in seeing these discriminatory laws struck

down. Urging Kajiro and Fred Oyama to continue the appeal process to the United States Supreme Court was Saburo Kido of the Japanese American Citizens League, and Abraham Lincoln Wirin of the American Civil Liberties Union. Acting on a writ of *certiorari* filed on Fred Oyama's behalf by the JACL and the ACLU, the U.S.

Supreme Court agreed to re-view the case, and on January 19, 1948, ruled six to three for the plaintiffs.

Writing for the majority, Chief Justice Fred M. Vinson agreed that the California law deprived

Fred Oyama of both the equal protection of the laws, and the privileges and immunities guaranteed him as an American citizen by the United States Constitution. The Court's majority held that California had discriminated against Fred Oyama solely by reason of his parents being Japanese. Further, the Court noted that a father's country of origin could not be used as a pretense for subordinating the most basic rights of an American citizen.

Frank Chuman has observed in his book, "*The Bamboo People*," that ***Oyama v. California***, "...literally cut the heart out of the Alien Land Law."

The culmination of the events that had started with eight acres of land on Third Avenue and K Street in Chula Vista came on November 4, 1956. On that day, the California voters passed Ballot Proposition Thirteen by a two to one majority; repealing the state's forty-three years of racially biased, discriminatory, alien land laws.

(WW II Vets continued from page 1)

Things were turned around by the regimental commander, Col. Pense, who took busloads of Hawaiian GIs to one of the war relocations camps in Arkansas, where relatives of the mainland GIs were interned, and the Hawaiians realized what the mainland GIs were going through.

That started a series of get-togethers between the Hawaiian and mainland Niseis which led to the two groups to becoming a cohesive fighting unit.

The 100th Battalion had been sent overseas to Italy
(see WW II Vets page 3)

(WW II Vets continued from page 2)

before the two other battalions of the 442nd RCT, Col. Keegan explained, and through its campaigns in Salerno, Cassino and Anzio became known as the Purple Heart Battalion because of high number of Purple Hearts awarded to its troops for combat wounds. The battalion also earned eight Distinguished Service Crosses, the second highest medal awarded for heroism, and was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. Two battalions of the 442nd RCT later joined the 100th Battalion in Italy. Col. Keegan followed the campaigns of the 442nd through Italy and France, then back to Italy where they were when the war ended. He told of the successful battle in France to rescue the Lost Battalion in one of the most important battles in U. S. Army history. He said the 442nd suffered many casualties. About 3,500 Purple Hearts were awarded, about 600 were repeats. He himself was awarded three Purple Hearts and one man in his outfit was awarded four. The 442 also was awarded one Congressional Medal of Honor, 47 Distinguished Service Crosses and eight Presidential Unit Citations.

JAMES YAMATE

"My experience was entirely different from Col. Keegan's and the 442," Mr. Yamate recalled.

Yamate was drafted on Dec. 1, 1941, while a senior at UC Berkeley. He spent 48 months in the army, all with "hakujins." Why he didn't get transferred to the 442, he didn't know.

He went into combat in September 1944 landing in Normandy 60 days after D-Day. He fought in eastern France and ended the war in Austria.

He said there were only three Niseis in the entire division of 15,000 men. He related that when his unit was crossing the Rhine to take the city of Mannheim, he saw the most beautiful artillery firing that he had ever seen.

Later, he found out that it was the 552nd artillery unit of the 442. While he was in the service, he said, he never knew there was an outfit like the 442.

Two years ago, he went to the 442 reunion in the French town of Bruyeres, which the 442 had liberated, and went on a tour of all the main battle sites of the 442.

Viewing the conditions that the 442 fought under and hearing stories of the 442's deeds made him "so proud of my fellow Japanese Americans."

JOE TANABE

Mr. Tanabe stated that he was married in San Diego on April 6, 1942, two days before evacuation, and spent his honeymoon in Santa Anita. He volunteered for the Army from Poston. He and a small group of other volunteers, three from San Diego, were inducted at an induction center in Salt Lake City.

He then joined H Company of the 442 in Camp Shelby.

He fought with the 442 through all its campaigns in Italy and France. He thought that Col. Keegan was a sincere and serious commander and thanked him for the H Company guys and on behalf of all Japanese-Americans for helping to spread their story.

MIN SAKAMOTO

In telling his story, Mr. Sakamoto recalled that he was inducted into the army just after the war started. He volunteered, he said, although his records say that he was drafted. At the induction center in San Pedro, the inductees were asked for volunteers for the air corps; about three-fourths of the Japanese-Americans in the group volunteered, but none was accepted. Instead, the Niseis were sent to hospitals all over the country. When the 442nd was activated, he was sent to Camp Shelby for training and then went to Italy. The big event was the rescue of the Lost Battalion. They had no chance for the rescue, but they went ahead anyway in the "Go for Broke" spirit. He served with I Company, which spearheaded the attack. Out of 200 men in the company that started out on the rescue, only five remained when it was over. In all, there were 800 men wounded or killed to rescue 211 men. In closing, Min stated that we were fortunate to have all San Diego County men come back alive from the war.

(The JAHSSD thanks Col. Keegan, James Yamate, Joe Tanabe, and Min Sakamoto for participating in our annual meeting and providing us with a most interesting and informative program.)

We also thank our luncheon chairpersons, Elaine Bowers and Jeanne Elyea, program chairperson Masato Asakawa, all the volunteers who helped with the luncheon and program, and donors Union Bank, Ouchi Nursery, Kei Dan Floral Designs, and Chula Vista Lawnmower.

FROM THE KIDA COOKBOOK

The late Yutaka Kida of Spring Valley and San Diego kept a regular record of the meals he helped serve at Poston III's Block 330. From Yutaka's notebook dated December 25, 1942, comes the following menu:

Friday 12/25

Christmas Dinner

Grapefruit Basket	Dessert Assorted Fruits
Celery	Cranberry Sauce
Giblet Sauce	Biscuit
Chestnut Stuffing	Jam, Coffee, Milk
Southwest Sweet Potato	Roast Turkey
Waldorf Salad	

Yutaka's Biscuit Recipe

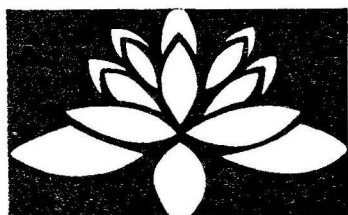
12 pounds of flour
8 ounces of baking power
1/2 cup salt
6 quarts of milk

Butter when finished.

NATIONAL MUSEUM TO HIGHLIGHT SD

With the assistance of your JAHSSD, the **Japanese National Museum Quarterly** for Spring, 1997 will feature an article on the San Diego Nikkei experience by Don Estes, accompanied by a series of personal interviews with local Nikkei which will be conducted by the museum staff.

If you are a member of the museum you automatically receive a twelve month subscription of the *Quarterly*. If you would like to receive a copy of the *Quarterly*, you can become a member for as little as \$35.



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SOUTH BAY NIKKEI CHRONICLED

John Rojas, a charter member of the JAHSSD and publications director of the Chula Vista Historical Society, has announced the release of the society's latest publication, *South Bay Monogatari: Tales of the South Bay Nikkei Community*.

The work which represents volume five of the society's Early Years Series, is authored by Don Estes. The theme of the book is woven around events, families and individuals who have lived in, and contributed to, the development of both the Nikkei community and the South Bay area.

Copies of *South Bay Monogatari* may be purchased for \$12.50 by contacting John Rojas at 427-7459. Mail order request should be addressed to: John Rojas 1169 Second Ave. Chula Vista, CA 91911

JAHSSD JOINS CONSORTIUM EFFORT

Ben Segawa has announced that our JAHSSD has submitted a letter of agreement in principle to join with the Japanese-American National Museum, The Japanese-American Resource Center of San Jose, and the Chicago Japanese Historical Society to apply for a 1997-98 grant from the recently established Civil Liberties Public Education Fund.

If funded, the proposed project would initiate a living history program involving both oral and videotaped interviews with members of the involved Nikkei communities. The project also hopes to develop a model that can be used by other communities who desire to initiate similar projects.

Susan Hasegawa has agreed to coordinate the local component of the consortium's effort with Don Estes serving as the scholar-advisor.

Grants awards are expected to be announced in early 1997.

CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING NICE

The JAHSSD would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for their help in furthering the mission of our society.

Mr. John Ono: John is a veteran of the 442 RCT and has very kindly loaned our society a number of items related to his service in World War II for our upcoming exhibit in Balboa Park. Included in John's (See **Caught doing something nice** page 5)

(Caught doing something nice continued from pg.4)
loan are medals, including a Bronze Star and Purple Heart, newspaper items, and **photographs.**

Mrs. Roxie Phillips of Phillips Research Services: After talking to John Rojas, Mrs. Phillips of Ocean Beach has called to offer the loan of a carved and painted lug-end crate from Poston, Ariz., for our Balboa Park exhibit. The work is signed by Tomi Uchiyama of Camp I (43-3-A).

Mrs. Alice Matsumoto and the Nishii family: Mrs. Alice Nishii Matsumoto has kindly offered to loan a set of vestments belonging to her late father, Reverend Guzei Nishii, who served the San Diego Buddhist Community from 1937 to 1948. Her mother, Mrs. Nobue Nishii has likewise graciously offered the loan of a small Buddhist statue, a trunk used at Crystal City, and an abalone pin made by Reverend Nishii. These items are also for our Balboa Park exhibit.

Mr. John Rojas: As a charter member of the JAHSSD, John has worked tirelessly over the last three years to help negotiate the return of selected lug labels that were formerly in the possession of Ben and Kathy Segawa from the San Diego Historical Society. Last month, the SDHS and the JAHSSD reached an agreement whereby selected labels would be transferred to our society and we would transfer copies of labels in our possession to them along with background information pertaining to each label.

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ISSEI MONUMENT DEDICATION SET

In a joint announcement, Karen Tani, president of the San Diego Japanese-American Citizens League and Ben Segawa of the Japanese-American Historical Society of San Diego set **1 p.m. Sunday Jan. 26, 1997**, to dedicate a monument and plaque in memory of Issei pioneers, who contributed so much to the development of the South Bay.

The monument will be situated near Broadway and Palomar Street in Chula Vista at the last site of the old Chula Vista Gakuen building. The present owners of the Palomar Trolley Shopping Center have donated the piece of land at the northend of their property that will be used for the monument site.

A committee of Ben Segawa, Roy Muraoka, and Robert Ito have been working with all parties for over a year. Ken Nakamaki is the landscape architect. Assisting the project has been Don Estes, Tommy Yanagihara of Ouchi Nursery, Fred Hatashita, and Ken Yasuda of Yasuda's Nursery.

Please mark **1 p.m. Sunday January 27, 1997**, for the dedication, and reception sponsored by the SD JACL.

Oriental Zodiac

According to Oriental lore, the Oriental Zodiac has a 12-year cycle, each year named after a different animal, which imparts its characteristic traits to their particular year. 'Tis said that one born in the year of the particular animal take on that animal's traits and determine one's personality, physical and mental attributes and the individual's degree of success and happiness.

1997: The Year of the Ox

1985 1973 1961 1949 1937 1925 1913

The Zodiac says people born in The Year of the Ox usually are bright, easy going and inspire confidence in others. They are dextrous to where they are almost genius and work well with their hands. However, they can be eccentric and bigoted. One should avoid them when they are angry. They are alert. They speak little but they can be eloquent when they required to speak. They can be stubborn and hate to fail. Ox Year people make good parents. The best marriages would be with people born in the Years of the Snake, Rooster or Rat while the worst marriage would be with a person born in the Year of the Sheep.

(A brief synopsis of four more years follows:)

1998: The Year of the Tiger

1986 1974 1962 1950 1938 1926 1914

A fighter; aggressive; courageous; sensitive. A deep thinker. True to friends. Often in conflict with authority. Marry a Horse or Dog but stay away from the Monkey.

1999: The Year of the Rabbit

1987 1975 1963 1951 1939 1927 1915

Luckiest sign. Talented, affectionate but shy. Peace seeker. Good gambler. A Sheep or Boar would be good match. Avoid a Rooster.

2000: The Year of the Dragon

1988 1976 1964 1952 1940 1928 1916

Honest, sensitive, brave, inspires trust in others. A born leader. However, excitable, stubborn, short-tempered and gullible. Compatible with the Monkey and Rat. Beware of the Dog.

2001: The Year of the Snake

1989 1977 1965 1953 1941 1929 1917

Wise, attractive, fortunate in money matters but stingy if approached for loans. Sympathetic. Calm by nature but intense. Passionate. The Rooster and the Ox are best mates. The Boar should be avoided.

(Seven more years will be covered in the next issue.)

The JAHSSD board and *Footprints* would like to thank members and advertisers for their support these past few years and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous 1997. We would also like to thank past contributors to this publication. If anyone has suggestions for future articles, please let us know and we will try to follow through.



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JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO
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(JANUARY-DECEMBER)
(INCLUDES **FOOTPRINTS** NEWSLETTER)

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