

Fall 1993

Vol. 1

No. 3

Footprints

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Quarterly Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Issue Dedication



Kathy Segawa
April 9, 1932 - August 2, 1993

The publication costs of this issue have been donated in memory of Kathy Segawa, who passed away August 2, after a six-month battle with Leukemia. As the wife of President Ben Segawa, Kathy worked hard to help begin JAHSSD. She will be greatly missed by those who were fortunate to have worked with her in this organization.

The individuals who kindly contributed the funds for this issue are:

Mary Marumoto	Howard & Linda McLemore
Steven Marumoto	Don & Carol Estes
Bill & Jeanne Elyea	Joyce Kelly
Les & Allyne Tachiki	Charles & Elaine Bowers

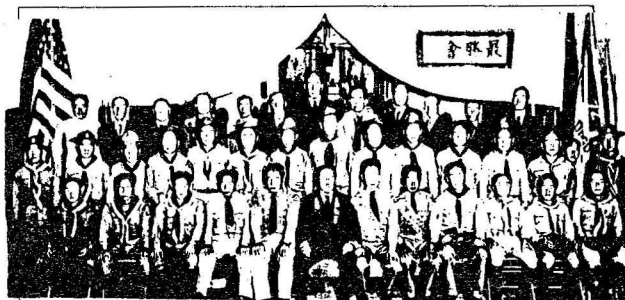
Hard Rap—Gentoksu

Some people say "rap" is something new on the musical scene.

Rap isn't new! It's at least older than I am for sure! In the "old days," they spelled rap g-e-n-k-o-t-s-u! Genkotsu! In Japanese, that's a rap on the head! Usually, a pretty hard rap. It's a tune the senseis in our Sunday School used to play when we got out of hand, which, in some cases, was quite often. (You old San Diegans! You know who you are!)

Sunday School at the old pre-war Buddhist Temple usually meant Japanese language school, too, on Saturdays and Sundays during our regular school year, and during the summer.

(see Genkotsu, page 4)



Buddhist Temple, Boy Scout Troop 72, 1935

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Yesterday - Kino



First Annual JAHSSD Meeting

Saturday, October 2, 1993

11:30 am

Guest Speaker: Mitch Himaka

See page 8 for details!



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Welcome new members

The JAHSSD welcomes the following members who recently joined our membership ranks:

Masami Honda	Kenji & Yoshiko Iguchi
Karen Tani	David H. & Carol
Guy & Toshi Kiyoi	Kawamoto
Frank & Janet Koide	Hiroshi Kubota
Sally M. Lorang	Mary Marumoto
Hideo & Kiyoko Ochi	John Rojas, Jr.
Vernon T. Yoshioka	(Lifetime member)
Hideko "Bubbles" Shimasaki	
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Udo	

Next Issue

Special Holiday Issue

- Christmas
- New Year's
- Girls Day
- Boys Day

Memories. . . Part IV, by Mitch Himaka
Footnotes, by Jeanne Elyea

The warp and the woof

The influence of the three major religious institutions of the San Diego Nikkei community simply cannot be understated. They are in a very real sense the warp and the woof of the social fabric of the local Japanese American experience. What follows represents only a thumbnail sketch of each of their histories.

The Ocean View United Church of Christ, Japanese American

The origins of the Ocean View Church can be traced back to the arrival of the first Issei. For a variety of reasons some of these men were drawn to the activities and services of the Chinese Mission which had been established in 1884 by the local First Congregational Church. By 1907, the number of Japanese attending the mission had grown to the point that a decision was made to organize a separate Japanese Mission and locate it in a small house at 540 7th Avenue. A month later, the new mission moved to a larger two-story home at 527 8th Avenue which was situated next to a blacksmith shop.

The first baptisms at the mission took place in 1908 when Toraichi Ozaki, Mitsusaburo Yamamoto and Ichiyo Matsunaga officially joined the fellowship of the new First Japanese Congregational Church. Between 1917 and 1920, the expanding congregation undertook to raise the funds to purchase a lot at 431 13th Street, and then build a church. In June, 1920, the new sanctuary was dedicated by Rev. Jinshiro Kikuchi.

Between 1920 and the outbreak of World War II, the church expanded both its programs and services. A church-sponsored kindergarten was initiated at two of the local fish camps. Later, Rev. Junzo Nakamura founded a Japanese language school, assisted by Mrs. Nakazawa. These activities were followed by a youth group, Boy Scout Troop 52, with John Yamamoto as Scoutmaster, and Girl Scout Troop 8, lead by Troop Captain Mae Otsuka. Throughout this period there were also the ubiquitous church potlucks and picnics on Mission Bay and Coronado's Silver Strand.

With the outbreak of World War II, the congregation, like the greater Nikkei community, was forced off the West Coast into concentration camps. During this period of crisis and

(see *Warp*, page 3)

Warp

uncertainty, leadership fell to Rev. Kenji Kikuchi, who successfully brought the membership through the trauma of both Santa Anita and Poston III, as well as the eventual return to San Diego in 1946.

Rebuilding the church in both a symbolic and literal sense began almost immediately. A new location was secured at 3525 Ocean View Blvd. In short order, the original church building was moved from 13th Street; completely remodeled, and the refurbished facility dedicated in June 1950. At the 1962 congregational meeting, the membership voted to adopt the name "Ocean View United Church of Christ." During the tenure of Rev. Benjamin Hiraga, a new sanctuary was completed and dedicated in 1967. The 1969 congregational meeting became an event of note when the membership elected their first woman moderator, Yone Shiwotsuka.

In 1982, the church congregation celebrated their 75th Anniversary. Five years later, the membership voted to modify the church's official name to the "Ocean View United Church of Christ, Japanese American."



Susan Hara Namba (girl on left side, with hairbow) and her sister Lois standing with their mother in front of Rev. Kikuchi.

San Diego Buddhist Temple

In January of 1961, San Diego suffered a series of disastrous rains that culminated in the collapse of the Otay Dam. Among those killed were eleven Japanese, the majority of whom were Buddhist. This disaster served as the catalyst that brought together local Buddhists who felt the need to organize a fellowship. Operating at first without any formal leadership, the fledgling congregation began to meet on the second floor of Kikuji Kawamoto's Frisco Cafe, and in the homes of Rintaro Kuratomi, Torago Kuratomi and Toyokichi Ito.

(see Warp, page 4)



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Memories of the Japanese Congregation Church

My memories of the Japanese Congregation Church begin forty years ago. Sunday was always "church day" in our family. My mom made sure that we were dressed in our Sunday best, then, off we went to the Japanese Congregation Church (now the Ocean View United Church of Christ). Rev. Kenji Kikuchi, our spiritual leader, was the most respected person to us. Yet, he knew all of our names and always had time to talk with us.

The Burton sisters, Grace and Myrtle, and our Sunday School teachers taught us all about the Bible, and how to sing with great joy! I remember the many Easter and Christmas programs. We would be performing on stage with shaking knees and quivering voices—before a packed congregation (with lots of dads present, too). After the first few nervous moments, we realized that the audience was our church family and they loved us whether or not we remembered all of the words. Then we relaxed and really shined!

By Susan Hara Namba

Genkotsu

My early memory of my Sunday School experiences goes back to the first day I had the pleasure of going to Sunday School. Sensei used to drive his black Chevrolet four-door sedan to the various parts of town to pick up a load of kids. The locations were spread from downtown to fish camp to the Coronado ferry and other points.

I became quite close to the old fire hydrant that sat for years in front of the old Nanking Cafe on the corner of Fifth and Island Avenues (Why does the word "old" keep creeping in these time pieces?).

On this Sunday, Sensei picked up the downtown kids in front of the Takahashi pool hall as he usually did. There was Ruth and Kik Takahashi, George Nishigaki and others who normally caught "the bus" there.

Except the Himaka kids. Why? A crisis! The littlest kid (guess who?) had wrapped himself around the fire hydrant and was not about to let go. Must have been the first to holler, "Hell, no! I won't go!" With two big brothers and three big sisters, it didn't long to pry the kid loose...like seconds!?

It was almost ritualistic. We would all squeeze into the car—the big kids first, the next size kids next and the smallest ones sitting on the laps of those underneath the mass of humanity. A crowd of 12 in one load was not unusual.

That dip in the road on Market Street at the 28th Street overpass usually meant the little kids bounced up and hit their heads on the car rooftop. (Sometimes, we got a little help from the bigger kids underneath to make sure we hit the roof!)

And who can forget the churchyard? Rocky and unpaved (not like it is today) with deep grooves from rainwater that ran through the yard and drained into the street.

Almost without exception, some kid every weekend went home with scuffed hands and knees after falling while being chased across the yard. Somebody!

Then there was the huge pepper tree in the southeast corner of the lot. Everyone climbed it. Some went higher than others. Some came down faster than others. Yoto Takeshita, for one. Broke or sprained his wrist real bad as I recall.

And the eugenia bushes that lined the northern boundary fence. We used to eat those berries! Or throw them at someone.

Across the street from the backyard was "the hill" where we used to go and eat lunch.

Lunch! Ask Jim "Gopher" Yanagihara today why he went to Sunday School then and he will reply: "To eat lunch!" The same Rev. Jim Yanagihara of the San Luis Obispo Buddhist Temple.

Couldn't understand the guy, though. He brought the best lunches, usually obentos. We swapped often. My baloney sandwiches for his obentos. (Hey! I liked baloney sandwiches! I just like obentos better!)

And who can forget Book 1 of our Japanese language class? Ah-ee-oo-eh-oh! Ka-kee-koo-keh-koh!...

Saita, saita, sakura ga saita! Koi, koi, Shiro koi! Susume! Susume! Heitai susume!

And on and on and on!

By Mitch Himaka

Footnotes

If you have any materials, ideas, or suggestions for the newsletter, please call the Editor at 690-1151. Or, contact one of the board members. We want your input and help.

Special thanks to Debra (Segawa) Kodama for volunteering her desktop publishing and word processing skills for this issue. She volunteered just when we lost the expertise and creativity of Rick Johnson, formerly of Southwestern College. Rick has moved on to more artistic endeavors and the Editor wants to express special **kudos** for all the time he donated in the preparation and design of the first three newsletters. I also wish him all the best. Also, *Arigato* to Dolores Duenas and Jo Ann Forbes of Southwestern College for volunteering their time and technical skills.

Jeanne Marumoto Elyea, Editor

Warp

It required ten years of effort and hard work before the dream became a reality. But, in May of 1926, the first temple was established on the upper floor of a building located on the southeast corner of 6th and Market. Three months later, Rev. Tessho Kikuchi arrived and assumed his post as the resident priest, with Yoshio Arakawa serving as the temple's president. By the end of its first year, the new temple opened a Japanese language school.

In the decade of the 1930s, both Young Buddhist Men and Women's groups were founded, as was Boy Scout Troop 72, with Azusa

(see *Warp*, page 5)

Warp

Tsuneyoshi serving as Scoutmaster. The membership also organized a temple-sponsored *tanomoshi*, or rotating credit association.

In the aftermath of December 7th, Rev. Guzei Nishii and most of the temple leadership were placed in "custodial detention" by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. With the impending removal of all local Nikkei, the temple property was leased for use as temporary housing for defense workers that were crowding into the city.

At Poston III, the members of the San Diego congregation met in a barracks in Block 322, which had been converted into a temple. In January 1943, an arson-set fire destroyed the interior of the vacant San Diego temple. Acting for the membership, Masami Honda and Ichiji Ouchi were able to negotiate a lease with the USO, which allowed the funds to be utilized for the repair of the facility.

On their return to San Diego, the temple congregation was forced to meet in the members' homes until the lease with the USO expired in 1947. One of the first groups to re-organize after the war was the Young Buddhist Association, led by Yukio Kawamoto. Leading the rebuilding during this period was Rev. Tetsuro Kashima. By 1952, a new priest's residence had been completed and the organization of North County Buddhists begun. By 1958, the original temple building had undergone an extensive renovation. As the congregation continued to grow a new two-story building with classrooms and a social hall were completed and dedicated in 1964. In commemoration of the temple's 50th anniversary, in 1976, the Hondo ceiling was redesigned, new drapes installed and new altar adornments added. In 1986, the temple celebrated its 60th Anniversary.

San Diego Japanese Christian Church

It started in June 1923, with the visit of Junro Kashitani, a ministerial student from the Los Angeles Holiness Church. On his trip to San Diego he met with several Nikkei families living in the rural La Mesa/Spring Valley area. By December, the family of Tasaburo and Fusae Mukai had become the first family to join the Holiness fellowship.

Between 1924 and 1939, the membership grew at a slow but steady pace under the guidance of Rev. Sadaichi Kuzhara of Los Angeles. The local members held monthly services and weekly *Katei shukai*, or cottage meetings. It was during this period that the membership began to lay plans for the

establishment of a permanent church. In February 1939, the first meeting of the San Diego Japanese Holiness Church was held in a rented house located at 30th and Newton. Rev. Kichino Fukada was installed as the first pastor, along with seven charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Kataro Ishimoto; Mr. and Mrs. Kamikichi Kaminaka; Mr. and Mrs. Tasaburo Mukai; and Mr. Tatsui Mita.

Beginning in the summer of 1939, the congregation began to hold regular Saturday night evangelistic meetings on the corner of 5th and Island, in the heart of the downtown Nikkei community. These services were punctuated by the use of a large base drum.

With the advent of World War II and relocation, the Holiness fellowship of San Diego was broken and scattered. In 1946, a small, but faithful band of three followers gathered and once again began to build.

Between 1946 and 1954, the church was led by Rev. George Yahiro, who began the rebuilding process by first establishing an active Sunday School and young people's group. He also initiated plans for a new church facility that would be able to double as an educational complex and social hall. During this same period, an English-speaking department was established, under the leadership of Rev. Arthur Tsuneishi. Both pastors worked together to develop an outreach program for short-term agricultural workers from Japan known as *tanno* boys.

As the congregation continued to grown in the early 1960s, the need for a new location became imperative. After a detailed search, property was located and purchased at 1920 E Street. The new facility was dedicated in August 1966.

Under the direction of Rev. Shinichi Fukiage a program directed toward the wives of international marriages was undertaken by the congregation. In August 1970, a major remodel was completed, timed to coincide with the church's 40th anniversary.

Upon completion of a 1972 remodel, the Mission chapel portion of the church facility was renamed the Issei Memorial Hall, in honor of the congregation's founding members. In July of 1990, the membership celebrated their 60th anniversary.

By Don Estes

San Diego Japanese Christian Church

I have belonged to the Japanese Christian Church all my life. My mother was practically a charter member during its early beginnings in the late 1920's. As I reflect on my thoughts, I drift back to the 1930's.

It all started with meetings in private homes in and around La Mesa and the El Cajon Valley. In 1930, 19 members formed the church which became a part of the Holiness Conference. As I remember it, our family started attending services in the mid-1930's. We even attended a few Japanese language classes.

After the war years we returned to the church. It was during those readjustment years that I began to understand what the Bible teaches. I remember my fellow classmates — Abe Mukai, Hisa and Grace Imamura, my sister



Members of the O.M.S. Japanese Holiness Church of San Diego.

Marian, Raymond and Sam Uyeda, and Florence "Babe" Kida. Our teachers were Tom and George Mukai. Other teachers included Nobie Imamura and Mrs. Okimoto, wife of Rev. Tameichi Okimoto, who preceded Rev. George Yahiro. Among the other students were Frank Ogura, Grace Kaminaka, and Hisako Kida. Our music director was Sophie Shizume Shimamoto, together with Susie Mukai.

After returning from four years with the Air Force my attendance at church was not too regular. However, the church has always been a dominant part of my life.

When Rev. Arthur Tsuneishi was appointed pastor in the 1960's and our children were born,

we attended more regularly. One of my fondest memories of this period was going to Charger football games with Rev. Art, who is an ardent fan of the game. His wife Sally would pack us a brown bag lunch and drop us off in

front of Balboa Stadium, then pick us up after the game. It was a rare privilege to be able to spend so much time with Art, when we talked about all subjects freely.

Our church has had many pastors during its history. One who is particularly memorable for me was Rev. Shinichi Fukiage. He was appointed our first full-time Japanese-speaking minister in 1971. For years he would pick up my mother and take her to the Wednesday night prayer meetings, even though her house was out of his way. This is just one example of the many kindnesses he did for the Issei members of our church. I believe it was service over and above the call of a minister.

The church relocated to its present site from Webster Street in 1966. From its earliest days, when members met on Saturday nights on the corner of Fifth and Island Avenues and attracted attention to the services by beating a huge drum, to its current era, when services are conducted by Japanese and English-speaking pastors, the church's message has always been to preach the evangelical message to San Diego's Japanese community.

By Ben Segawa

Bukkyokai Memories

Nihon Gakko. . . a-i-u-e-o. . . samurai movies. . . boy scouts. . . those are some of the things I remember about Bukkyokai, as we used to call the Buddhist Temple of San Diego in the old days.

I first started going to Bukkyokai and the Nihon Gakko (Japanese language school) in 1930 or 1931, when I was 5-years-old. Right after the temple was built at its present location at 29th and Market Streets.

When I started going to Bukkyokai in my father had just quit his fishing business and we moved downtown where he and my mother ran a hotel (the Anchor Hotel on 4th, between Island and Market, above the Royal Pie Bakery). I went there with my two older sisters, Tomiko and Fusako. My younger sister, Kazuko was not old enough to attend then, and my youngest sister, Ruth, hadn't been born yet. My brother, Hiroshi, was still in Japan. At the time, I didn't even know I had a brother. My parents never told me I had a brother, not even in 1931 when he came back from Japan to live with us. All of a sudden, my father brought home this strange kid who

(see Bukkyokai, page 7)

Bukkyokai

spoke only Japanese and he started to live with us. I didn't find out for a few days that he was my brother. Like many Japanese families, communication between me and my parents wasn't the greatest.

Back to the main story. Mr. Kikuji Kawamoto (no relation), who owned Frisco Cafe, and Mr. Arakawa, who owned a dry goods store, took turns driving the downtown kids to and from Bukkyokai. Mr. Arakawa had a delivery van and we rode in the back. Once he closed the rear door, it was pitch black inside—you couldn't see your hand even if you had it next to your eyeball. It was crowded back there and we would roll over each other whenever Mr. Arakawa turned a corner.

Mr. Kawamoto took us in his sedan. The smaller kids always had to sit on someone's lap. Once, after Mr. Kawamoto let me off across the street from our hotel, I waited for another car to pass before I crossed the street. The car ran over my foot and stopped right on my big toe. Mr. Kawamoto saw what happened and he and the other driver lifted the car off my foot. I wasn't hurt, except for a little blood clot under my big toenail, but the tire scuffed up my shoes, so I ran home and polished them so my parents wouldn't see it and bawl me out!

We went to Bukkyokai on Saturdays and Sundays. Nihon Gakko was all day Saturday. On Sundays, Buddhist services were part of the morning and Nihon Gakko the rest of the day. How I envied my non-Japanese classmates in regular school who didn't have to go to school on weekends. I was always mad at my parents for making me endure the torture of Nihon Gakko.

As a Japanese language student, I was pretty lousy! Rather than grade levels (first, second, etc.) as in regular school, Nihon Gakko went by book numbers. When you finished book 1, you were promoted to book 2, and so on. When we got a new teacher, he or she would give us a test to see where each student stood. After those tests, I was always demoted 3 or 4 books. I think the highest I ever got was book 12, but I don't know how many times I had to go back through the lower books to get there.

At the end of each school year, they gave out awards. I think they called the honor students "yutosei." Needless to say, I never made yutosei. When I was finally allowed to quit Nihon Gakko I was down to book 7—that's progress for you. Good thing my parents let me quit when they did; a few more years and I probably would have been down to book 1 learning "a-i-u-e-o" all over

again. After years of pleading, my parents relented and let me quit when I was about 12 years old.

Lunch hour was a great time to get together with our buddies and fool around. We played marbles or tops while the girls played jacks or hopscotch.

The lower floors of the temple were used for classrooms and for the minister's residence. Today, when you look at the room where the ministers and their families lived, you wonder how they managed in the small space and lack of privacy.

The upstairs hall was used for religious services and social gatherings—shibai, odori, movies, talent shows, etc. About once a month, Japanese movies were shown. In the early days, the movies were silent, but a man narrated the film, speaking all the parts. Some of the temple organizations such as the Young Men's Buddhist Association, the Young Women's Buddhist Association, and the Boy Scouts, took turns selling candy and soda pop during the movies.

There was no admission charge, but a donation was expected. Each donor's name and the amount of the donation was written in Japanese on a sheet of paper and these sheets were hung clear around the hall. Real intimidation!

The samurai "chambara" movies were the favorite of all the little boys. The day after a chambara movie, they would play like samurai swordsmen. The favorite character was a one-eyed, one-armed samurai named Tange Sazen.

The Buddhist Temple sponsored a boy scout troop, Troop 72. Masato Asakawa and I joined together when we were 12 or 13-years-old. We weren't very good boy scouts, but we had a lot of fun camping, going on hikes, throwing over-ripe tomatoes on Halloween, etc. Masato and I like to brag that we were probably the oldest "tenderfeet" (the lowest rank) in the boy scouts—never earned a merit badge and never got promoted in the two or three years we were in the scouts.

Despite the bad times I had with Nihon Gakko, I still have fond memories of my childhood at the Buddhist Temple. I've known many of my friends since my Nihon Gakko days. The times must not have been too bad. I still belong to the temple and even work there part-time doing toban, so to speak.

By Yukio Kawamoto

Japanese American Historical Society

First Annual Meeting

"Kino - Yesterday"

Can you believe it? It's been almost a year since the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego (JAHSSD) was founded. To mark the event we have set a theme: Kino - Yesterday, and scheduled our first annual membership meeting.

Our special guest speaker will be Mitch Himaka. A bento lunch will be catered by Ichiban Restaurant and we will be featuring an exhibit of historical photos and artifacts. The emphasis of the meeting will be on informality and fun. We invite all members and friends of JAHSSD to come out for this event.

Date: Saturday, October 2, 1993
Time: 11:30 am
Place: VFW Hall, Post 4851
541 E Street
National City

Special Speaker: Mitch Himaka
Bento: \$8/person
(Child plates available)

For tickets and information, contact Jeanne Elyea at 690-1151. Or, mail your check (JAHSSD) to 4270 Powderhorn Dr., San Diego, CA 92154.

JAHSSD
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