



FOOTPRINTS

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Winter Issue 1996

Volume 5 Number 4

EX-442 COMPANY C.O. To ADDRESS MEETING

Col. Christopher J.R. Keegan, USA ret., who served as a company commander with the famed Japanese-American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, will be the featured speaker at the JAHSSD's Fourth Annual meeting at 11:30 a.m. Oct. 19, at the Buddhist Temple of San Diego's annex hall.

Keegan, who currently lives in the Rancho Penasquitos area, was assigned to the 442nd in February 1943 when it was first activated at Camp Shelby, Miss., and merged with the battle hardened famed 100th Battalion made up mostly of Hawaiian Nikkei.

He served as commander of Co. H, 2nd Battalion, 442 RCT, throughout its initial training and went into combat with them through Italy, France and back to Italy, when he was battalion operations officer.

Reached at his Rancho Penasquitos home, Keegan said he plans to talk to JAHSSD members about his impressions of the men who served with him in combat.

"You must remember that not all of them came from relocation camps," he said "They came from all over, including, See Keegan page 3

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As we approach our fifth year of existence, many good things have happened to the organization. The JAHSSD membership has grown to more than 270 members and, for that, we thank you.

In the past year alone, your board members have participated in a number of events within the community. In April, 11 of us traveled to Parker, Ariz., where we were hosted by the Parker Historical Society and the Colorado River Indian Tribes to participate in a panel discussion about our life in Poston during the war years. With the photos collected by Don Estes, we displayed a photo exhibit of Poston. Our visit there included a stopover at the Poston Monument and visits to the sites of the former Camp I, II, III sites. At Camp III, I collected a can of soil as a souvenir.

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CAUGHT DOING SOMETHING NICE

The JAHSSD wishes to recognize and thank the following individuals for their support of our efforts to preserve as many aspect of the local Nikkei experience as we can. The knowledge and understanding of posterity depends on all of our efforts of today.

Mrs. Hatsune Mukai - who has become one of our most active supporters has again made a welcome donation of a number of *okome* bags for our collection.

Take, Nellie and Norman Taniguchi of Taniguchi Sports Fishing have loaned our society some fine examples of Nikkei items connected with the development of the pre-World War II tuna industry of which their family was a part. Included are a bamboo bait pole, a two-pole tuna rig, sample hooks, rooster hackles, and a very fine handmade model of the clipper *Prospect* for our Balboa Park exhibit this January.

Mr. Saburo Uyeji who also has made a number of previous donations has once again come through with a major gift in the form of a complete set of the *Pacemaker*, the newsletter issued by the evacuee staff at the Santa Anita Assembly Center, 1942.

Sam and Mary Itami presented your society with the gift of a valuable panoramic photograph taken on January 11, 1931, of the congregation of the San Diego Buddhist Temple. The photograph is especially welcome because it pictures so many of the early pioneer members of the temple.

Mrs. Alice Yano and the Oyama Family have again added to our growing collection of Nikkei farm artifacts by donating a number of blacksmithing tools used by her father **Kajiro Oyama** on his Chula Vista farm in the 1930s.

Mr. Masami Honda, who has long been a great friend and active supporter of your society, has donated two fine panoramic photographs. One of San Diego's Hiroshima Kenjinkai 1952 picnic, and another depicting Mission Valley Nikkei families at a 1925 picnic.

Mr. Kiku Yasukochi of the Yasukochi farms in Oceanside has very kindly donated copies his "Sound Off" Label for our collection of

Nikkei lug labels. His donation is especially welcome because we need to build our collection of North County labels.

Nagata Brothers Farms of Oceanside were able to locate one sample of their "Wize By" label for our collection. We appreciate of all their efforts on our behalf.

The above two labels were the result of the efforts of **Mr. Robert Hasegawa**.

Mr. Tom Nakada, who has been assisting the JAHSSD with the mysteries and complexities of computers, especially how to MACs and PCs to "talk to each other."

Mr. Jess Thompson Chula Vista historian and Pearl Harbor survivor for his gracious donation of a Squibb bottle unearthed at the site of Poston.

The following monetary donations in support of your society's exhibit scheduled for Balboa Park January to August, 1997 have been gratefully received.

George and Toshiko Asakawa\$ 500
(of Yellow Springs, Ohio)

Ponce and Mary Duran\$ 100
(of Tucson, Arizona)

We would likewise like to acknowledge an error in our last donation list. We inadvertently misidentified **Union Bank of California** who has so kindly donated \$1000 to our Balboa Park exhibit.

Your tax deductible donations to the JAHSSD are always welcomed and gratefully appreciated.

*County Nikkei, continued
from page 5*

our local population.

If you have any materials, or can assist us, please call either Ben Segawa at 482-1737 or Don Estes at 280-9418
Thanks for all your help.



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

Keegan from page 1

of course, Hawaii, but many came from the midwest areas."

Asked about the big welcome 442nd members received when they returned to New York after WWII, Keegan said he missed it having suffered severe shrapnel wounds 10 days before the war in Europe ended.

Keegan said the 442nd members as a whole was awarded only one Congressional Medal of Honor throughout their service "but there should have been more. A lot of those men who received the Distinguished Service Cross (the nation's second highest medal of valor) should have been awarded the CMH.

"But that's the way it was then. They (Congress) just weren't dishing CMHs out to the 442."

Keegan said he plans to talk about the valor of the men of the 442nd.

After his World War II service, Keegan served as battalion operations officer in Korea. He later saw duty in Viet Nam, Thailand and Laos during the Southeast Asian war before ending his 30-year Army career serving under the commander in chief of the Pacific Forces.

During his military career, Keegan was awarded three Legions of Merit (one with a V for Valor); two Bronze Stars (one with V); three Purple Hearts; a Joint Service Commendation Medal; an Army Meritorious Medal; two Army Commendation Medals; and a French Crux de Guerre.

A native of the Bronx, N.Y., Keegan grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio, before he was drafted into the Army in 1941. After basic training at Camp Wolters, Tex., he was assigned as a platoon sergeant with a heavy weapons training battalion.

With the outbreak of World War II,

Keegan attended Officers Candidate School at Fort Benning, Ga. After completing the program, he was assigned to the 89th Division as a platoon leader before his assignment to the 442nd.

He retired from the Army to Rancho Penasquitos, where he lives today with his bride of 53 years, Ann. They have five children, including four sons, three of whom served in the Army and one currently a Coast Guard commander, and a daughter, who is married to a retired Army lieutenant colonel.

The Keegans have 16 grandchildren to keep them busy.

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President continued from page 1

In May, some of us participated in a discussion at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot with young Marine recruits. Frank, Hank, and Bob Wada spoke to them of their military experiences of "looking like the enemy," which was written about in our last *Footprints* issue. The recruits were spellbound as the Wada brothers shared their experiences.

Looking ahead to January 1997, under the chairmanship of our historian Don Estes, the organization will host an eight-month exhibit tentatively titled *The History of the Nikkei in San Diego* at the San Diego Museum of History in Balboa Park.

In July 1997, we will be participating with the San Diego Public Library and the Smithsonian Institution in putting on an exhibit titled "*A More Perfect Union and the U. S. Constitution.*" That exhibit will be on display for about six weeks.

While we may not be planning the next Poston III Reunion, the Los Angeles committee, which is planning the event scheduled April 7-9 in Laughlin, Nev., may ask us to contact the Parker Historical Society for their possible participation in the reunion group's planned visit to the Poston Monument, which is located just outside what used to be the entrance to Poston I. Make plans to attend what may be our final reunion. Yuki Kawamoto and Masato Asakawa are

planning to arrange bus transportation from San Diego to Laughlin and Poston. More news on that trip will forthcoming from Yuki and Mas.

We have more work ahead of us and we will be in need of lots of help and support from the community. Everyone and anyone can become involved as docents, helpers, hosts, hostesses and other jobs. Contact any of the board members listed and I think it will be an experience you can treasure. I think you will receive more than you give by participating with us in the activities just ahead.

I thank you for the past four years of help and support. I look forward to even greater things to come.

Ben Segawa
JAHSSD President

Douglas Urata

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PIONEER DEDICATION SCHEDULED

The San Diego JACL working in cooperation with the JAHSSD is planning the dedication of a monument and plaque recognizing the struggles and accomplishments of the South Bay Issei pioneers.

The bronze plaque will be placed in a landscaped area near Palomar and Broadway in Chula Vista, on property that was formerly owned by the San Diego JACL. The JACL had been deeded the property in 1965 by the Chula Vista Institute. The Institute had been incorporated in 1930 to operate a *Gakuen*, or Japanese language school in Chula Vista.

The Palomar property was taken from the JACL by the City of Chula Vista in an eminent domain action to redevelop the property. As part of the agreement, the City agreed to set aside a small piece of the property for the appropriate marker.

A committee consisting of Ben Segawa representing the JAHSSD, Roy Muraoka, a South Bay native, and Robert Ito representing the SD JACL developed the plans for the memorial. Working with landscape architect Ken Nakamaki, and landscaper Tom Yanagihara, the site was developed. Yasuda Landscaping has donated a sculptured Japanese pine which with the mounted plaque will highlight the monument.

Please watch your Nikkei organizational newsletter for more specific information relative to time, date and program.

GONE! MISSING!

Gone from Mount Hope Cemetery is a small, marble stone measuring 12 inches by 10 inches by 6 inches and weighing perhaps twenty pounds. Although small, the stone has special significance to the local Nikkei history.

The stone in question is the top component of the memorial marker erected in memory of Tsunejiro Toya, a Japanese sailor who drowned in San Diego Bay, and was buried at the city cemetery in 1887. Seaman Toya was the first Nikkei buried in San Diego, and one of the earliest in California.

The missing marker originally was brought to San Diego aboard the Imperial Navy warship

Heiyi, which visited the port in July 1899. In 1993, Toya's grave was moved by the local Nihonjinkai to the Nikkei section of Mount Hope, and a new stone was dedicated. As a result of a desire to keep the original stone, it was decided at the time to cement the *Heiyi's* marker to the new memorial.

Sometime in early September 1996, the "*Heiyi*" stone disappeared. During this same period, more than 100 tombstones were vandalized at Mount Hope. The present supposition is that the stone was carried away by vandals.

Through the efforts of Admiral Kenzo Sato, the local media was notified and the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, and KGTV carried the story and an appeal for the marker's return was made on Sept. 12th. Assisting Admiral Sato has been Professor Don Estes of the JAHSSD, Reverend Akio Miyaji of the San Diego Buddhist Temple, members of the Japanese Coordinating Council and Japanese-American VFW Post 4851.

COUNTY NIKKEI STORY TO BE FEATURED

The story of the Nikkei in San Diego from the time of their arrival in the 1880s to the present will be on display at the San Diego Museum of History in Balboa Park for eight months starting in January 1997. The exhibit will be prepared by our Society under the direction of Don Estes.

We are interested in the loan of any photographs, documents, or artifacts like books, ceramics, clothing, luggage, toys, vegetable and fruit lug boxes, labels and the like. We are seeking the loan of items that will be representative of things that were used daily by our local Nikkei people.

Please rummage around your storage sheds, garages and closets to see if you have anything that we can share with the greater community, and help them better understand the local Nikkei experience.

The San Diego Museum of history is visited by literally thousands of county students each semester as part of the "Week in the Park" program. This exhibit represents a major opportunity to reach a very important segment of
See "County Nikkei, page 2"

OYAMA v. CALIFORNIA

(Part One)

by Don Estes

Unknown to many, a San Diego County Nikkei farmer and his family played a critical role in ultimately defeating California's alien land law, and consequently negation of similar laws in at least ten other states.

No sooner had President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, than the long arm of California's anti-Nikkei movement reached into San Diego and began to direct legal actions against Nikkei farmers. One of the first actions taken by California's new Attorney General, Robert W. Kenny was an escheat action directed against Kajiro Oyama, formally of Chula Vista.

Kajiro Oyama, the oldest of three sons was born on February 11, 1899, in Tsuga-machi, Koza-cho, Higashimuro-gun, Wakayama-ken, Japan. A "small farming village," as Mr. Oyama described it in a 1975 interview. Arriving in the United States in 1914, he worked in the Bay Area and later with his uncle, Tetzuo Kushino, in Orange and Riverside counties. In 1918, Kajiro Oyama joined another uncle, Otokichi Kushino, who opened the OK Produce Company at Sixth and Island in San Diego. In 1922, the young Oyama returned to Japan where he married Miss Kohide Kushino to whom he was related by marriage, but not by blood. In 1923, the couple settled in Chula Vista.

In 1923, the five-acre Oyama farm was located immediately east of the railroad tracks that now parallel Interstate 5 between "J" and "K" streets. The land on which the Oyama farm and an eight-acre plot operated by his uncle, Otokichi Kushino, was located, had been purchased in 1923 for four hundred dollars.

Because of the discriminatory land laws directed against the Issei, the two farms had been purchased in the name of a Caucasian friend. Later, the land had been registered in the name of a Hawaiian-born cousin, who was a U.S. citizen. In 1934, Kajiro transferred the ownership of the land to his son, Fred, who had been born in San Diego County in 1927. In 1935, the San Diego Superior Court granted Kajiro's request to be appointed the legal guardian for his minor son Fred. In December 1937, an additional two acres of adjacent land was purchased for Fred by his father.

In 1937, the Oyamas and Kushinos shifted their farm operations to 340 acres of leased land in San Mateo Canyon in Oceanside, still retaining and leasing property in Chula Vista. The families farmed in the north County until February 1942, when Kajiro Oyama, then under the threat of impending internment, moved his family to Payson, Utah.

Part two to follow in next Footprints.

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Newsletter Staff

Editors:	Michio Himaka
	Yukio Kawamoto

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 letter to:

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

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