



Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai Newsletter



Volume II, Issue 3

3rd Quarter 2013

108th Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai Picnic—June 23, 2013

The biggest event of the year—our Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai (NYK) picnic—was held at Elysian Park's Monticello Leo Politi Picnic Ground on June 23. The weather was absolutely perfect to enjoy a full day of tasty food, great music, dance and games with family and friends!

Kokoro Taiko, a group co-founded by NYK member, **Victor Fukuhara**, kicked off the program. The members are from Long Beach and Orange County and we thank them for dedicating their time and talent each year to entertain us.

Mistress of Ceremonies, **Aki (Fukuhara) Vaughn**, welcomed everyone and introduced special guests: **Jun Nagata** from the **Rafu Shimpo** and the following kenjinkai presidents:

Bert Inouye, Fukuoka Kenjinkai; **Takami Igawa**, Hiroshima Kenjinkai; **Yoshikuni Okita**, Kumamoto Kenjinkai; **Shigeo Watanabe**, Tottori Kenjinkai; and representing the Kenjinkai Kyogikai (all Southern California kenjinkai), **Kazuhito Nakanishi**.



Richard Fukuhara
NYK President

NYK President, **Richard Fukuhara**, gave a few words of welcome and officially opened the 108th Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai picnic.

Arlene Nakamura, Scholarship Chairperson, announced the recipients of the 2013 NYK scholarships that are awarded to Yamaguchi-Ken descendants: **Avalon Igawa**, **Jenna Shoho**, and **Curtis Toyota** (see article on page 2).

Lunch was announced at 12:00 and for those who didn't bring their own (or just didn't want to cook), delicious pre-



Everyone learns the line dance, "Skinny Genes", from instructor, **Arlene Nakamura**.

ordered bento lunches from **Nijiya Market** and complimentary hot dogs grilled by the **Lea Hayashi-Arturo Yoshimoto** family were served to savor. As always, soft drinks, juices and water were available and sno-cones in fruit flavors and *azuki* (sweet beans), cooked to perfection by **Yoshiko Kishimoto** and **Yasuko Katayama**, were enjoyed by all.

After lunch, **Miko (Igawa) Sanchez**, treated the kiddies to face, arm and leg painting. Everyone was later called to don *happi* coats and dance the coal miner's ondo, "**Tanko Bushi**", and "**Iwakuni Ondo**" led by dance captains, **Yasuko Katayama** and **Yoshiko Kishimoto**. **Arlene Nakamura** then taught a line dance called, "Skinny Genes" to a plaza packed with guys and gals of all ages.

After the "*mochi*" toss of pink and white rice balls, everyone gathered for the annual picnic photo.

NYK has many talented members and therefore music is a must at our events. Karaoke MC, **Patrick Seki**, invited



Patrick Seki



Yoshiko Kishimoto

singers to entertain with Japanese and English songs. A big "thank you" for those who shared their talents: **Trace Fukuhara**, **Tricia Fukuhara**, **Monica Furuta**, **Bert Inouye**, **Yasuko**

Katayama, **Yoshiko Kishimoto**, **Mrs. Ota**, **Patrick Seki**, **Henry Yasuda**, and **Shinji Yoshitomi**. If we failed to mention your name, please accept our sincerest apologies!

At the other side of the picnic grounds, **Larry Fukuhara**, called the games that included races for the *kodomo tachi* (children) from infants to 13 years of age. Then kids to seniors participated in the 3-legged race, "*atsui* (hot) *daikon*" and the ever popular water balloon games.



Larry Fukuhara

Closing out the day was the raffle drawing of gifts and cash awards. Special appreciation to **Patrick Seki** of **Miki Seki Jewelers in Little Tokyo** for donating a beautiful man-

(Continued on page 3)

2013 Scholarship Recipients



Each year, the NYK awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors who are descendants of Yamaguchi-ken. Applicants were asked to discuss how our kenjinkai can become more pertinent to their generation and how they can help in bridging the gap among generations. Scholarship chairman, **Arlene Nakamura**, presented scholarships to the following recipients at the June 23rd picnic. Here is what they had to say:

Avalon Kennedy Kiyome Igawa - "Along with people resources, I think that treasured cultural lessons would be very enthralling to many in my generation. This could mean classes about a particular style of cooking, gardening, dancing, dressing...the list goes on." She refers to these as "activities with a purpose." She feels that "continuing to publish articles in English" which "will attract readers of my generation that don't speak Japanese" and "...getting word out through other social platforms like Twitter, would be a great way to remind members of my generation about our kenjinkai and its importance."



Arlene Nakamura (2nd from left) presents the scholarship award to Avalon's grandparents, Kiyoshi & Wakiko Igawa & auntie, Miko. Avalon was in Hawaii and could not attend.

A self-described "avid Twitter user," Avalon says that she would definitely be interested in helping to create a kenjinkai twitter to "garner more attention from my generation." She goes on to explain of discovering the alumni network at her high school which offers resources in such areas as finding internships or information about certain professions firsthand. Using that format to create a network for the kenjinkai "would not only serve as a factor that would draw members of my generation, but I think it would also strengthen the community as a whole." Avalon has also expressed her desire to help in setting up such a network. We will definitely draw on her expertise.

Avalon will be attending USC in the fall. She is the daughter of **Kiyoshi Igawa, Jr.** and **Catie O'Farrell** of Seattle, WA, and granddaughter of **Kiyoshi** and **Wakiko Igawa** of Whittier.

Jenna Akemi Shoho - "Our kenjinkai may not be very well known to my generation, however I feel there are many things we can do to eliminate this problem. One way our kenjinkai can become more pertinent to my generation is through technology. Technology can spread information very fast and easily, especially with all the social networks available." Secondly, she feels that her generation



Accepting for Jenna, who was in Texas, are her uncle & aunt, Ray & Susan Uyemura.

could get a better understanding through an annual family fun day. "At this day, kids could go with their parents to play culturally-based games and eat a variety of different foods."

Jenna's idea to make our kenjinkai more pertinent to her generation is by educating through informational posts via our Facebook page. "For a more direct understanding, we could even connect to Yamaguchi citizens in Japan and communicate back and forth."

Jenna will be attending the University of Virginia in the fall. She is the daughter of **Alan** and **Vera Shoho** of San Antonio, TX, and great granddaughter of **Fusado Shoho** of Yamaguchi, Japan.

Curtis Takashi Toyota - "As each generation becomes more and more immersed in American culture, it is important to be aware of our heritage—one filled with exciting stories, heroic individuals and humble beginnings." Curtis believes that "before taking on the mysteries of the future, one must first understand his or her past..." To do so, he embraces the idea of "strong personal connections, shared experiences and meaningful conversation." Events such as community service days or group art projects could "inspire the kind of collaboration necessary to form deep personal bonds between generations."



Curtis (2nd from right) with Arlene Nakamura, grandfather, Ted Imoto, sister, Kristin, and parents, Craig & Angie Toyota.

"I would be interested in organizing and helping to run an inter-kenjinkai basketball tournament to promote healthy cooperation between generations through friendly competition." Since the age of 4, Curtis has been participating in basketball leagues, and would "love the opportunity to give back and help organize one myself. I think it would greatly benefit all involved, allowing the different generations to work side by side and form a bond that will hopefully lead to not only meaningful discussions but also to a close and intimate friendship."

Curtis will be attending USC in the fall. He is the son of **Craig** and **Angie Toyota** of Montebello, and the grandson of **Ted** and **Susan Imoto** of Monterey Park.

—Submitted by Arlene Nakamura



Awardees flanked by Arlene Nakamura & Richard Fukuhara.

Annual Picnic—*Cont'd from pg. 1*

tel clock as one of the raffle prizes; and thanks to the younger generation of kids who helped draw the raffle tickets.

In closing **Richard Fukuhara** thanked all who helped with the picnic and invited everyone to come again next year!

###



Arigatou gozaimasu!
 ありがとうございます

A special recognition and big *arigatou* to the following for all their time and hard work in making the picnic a great success:

Notices / Mailings / Tickets / Posters *Richard Fukuhara, Atsu Kimoto, Naomi Suenaka, France Wong, Henry Yasuda and Arturo Yoshimoto.*
 9:00 am Setup *Board Members & Advisors.*
 Kokoro Taiko *Ron Dam, Nancy Kimm, Ken Konno, Michael LePage, JoAnn Matsunaga, Ken Sumida, and Darren Yomogida.*
 Mistress of Ceremonies *Aki (Fukuhara) Vaughn.*
 Hot Dogs Station *The Hayashi-Yoshimoto Family: Arturo, Lea Hayashi, Manami, Kysa & Remi.*
 Sno-Cone Station *Kiyoshi Igawa and volunteers.*
 Azuki Beans *Yasuko Katayama and Yoshiko Kishimoto.*
 Sno-Cone Flavors Pick-up *Richard Fukuhara.*
 Drinks & Ice Pick-up *Larry Fukuhara and Kiyoshi Igawa.*
 Bento Order & Pick-up *Arlene Nakamura.*
 Mochi *Yasuko Katayama, Yoshiko Kishimoto, and Helen & Henry Yasuda.*
 Group Photographer *Richard Fukuhara.*
 Donations Table *Atsu Kimoto, Michi Ota and Naomi Suenaka.*
 Face Painting *Miko (Igawa) Sanchez.*
 Ondo Dance Captains *Yasuko Katayama & Yoshiko Kishimoto.*
 Line Dance Instructor *Arlene Nakamura.*
 Happi Coat Caretakers *Yoshiko Kishimoto & Naomi Suenaka.*
 Karaoke MC and Karaoke System *Patrick Seki.*
 PA System *Aki Vaughn.*
 Singers *To all our talented members: Thank you!*
 Races & Games *The Fukuhara Family: Larry, Masako, Richard, JoAnn & Trace, Erin Masuda, Sandi Saiki, Aki & Mike Vaughn.*
 Raffle (prize purchases & helpers) *Richard Fukuhara, Kaz (Igawa) Fong, Atsu Kimoto, Arlene Nakamura, Naomi Suenaka, Millie & Steve Tani, Aki Vaughn, France Wong, and Helen & Henry Yasuda.*
 Raffle Donations *Thank you to all members for their donations. Special thanks to Patrick Seki of Miki Seki Jewelers, Millie & Steve Tani, and Susan Uyemura.*
 VIP Hospitality *Richard Fukuhara, Atsu Kimoto, Arlene Nakamura and Naomi Suenaka.*

If we missed anyone, gomen-nasai!



*Dancing the "Tanko Bushi"
 led by co-dance captain Yasuko Katayama (on right).*



"Getting to Know You"

Member Profile

はじめまして

Kaiji Katsumoto



Where were you born? I was born in Iwakuni, Yamaguchi-ken, very near the Kintaiyo Bridge where my father had a vegetable farm. I was the second-born son and had 3 brothers and 2 sisters.

What kind of work did you do after the War? Around 1958 the U.S. and Japan agreed upon a yearly program to send

1,000 young Japanese men to America to work as short-term laborers. At that time, most families were making about 500 yen a day—a little more than \$1.00 U.S. I signed the 3-year contract and on September 1, 1961, started work at the Lawndale Nursery in Gardena at \$1.15 an hour, 9 hours a day. I couldn't believe how large my first paycheck was so I started sending some of it back home to my family. The owner of the nursery, **Frank Shimohara**, was a Hiroshima kibe-nisei and was very nice to us. My job was in the greenhouse where I learned about many different plants.

Are you married? In 1963, while I was in the U.S., I met **Miki Seki**, **Patrick Seki's** father. Miki had a jewelry store in Little Tokyo and his family was from Yamaguchi-ken. Many of us Yamaguchi-ken natives would congregate at his store to socialize and get his advice. Since my older brother inherited the family farm and was obligated to run it, Miki advised me to stay in America. I wanted to find a nice girl to marry and it was through Miki's matchmaker friend that I met the lovely **Toshiko Iwamoto**. Toshiko, who was working at the MTA when I met her, was born in Montebello, California, but raised in Hiroshima. We married on August 8, 1964.



In October 1964, eighteen of us contract laborers had to return to Yamaguchi-ken when our 3-year contract expired. Toshiko came later and we stayed in Yamaguchi for 6 months.

Toshiko and I returned to Los Angeles in April 1965 and rented a duplex on Olympic and Ardmore. I worked from 1965-1967 for Frank Shimohara at his Lawndale Flower Mart on Maple Street. I then was hired at a plant rental company that furnished and cared for indoor plants in offices from San Diego, Los Angeles to Riverside. Toshiko worked at Union Oil as a keypunch operator and later worked at the Altech Sound System Company that supplied speakers for Disneyland and many large stadiums.

My boss and I had a great relationship. I worked very hard and, although I spoke little English at the time, he promoted me to manager. The company became very successful and my boss purchased a waterfront Maui condo and 3 houses in Park City, Utah. He offered me the use of these homes as vacation destinations for my family and we were very fortunate to have the chance to do that many times.

We lived in Gardena for 5 years and in 1973 moved to our present home in Anaheim near the OC Buddhist Church. I commuted to Los Angeles every day for 30 years until I retired. Toshiko and I have two children: **Ellen Kazuye Fithian** and **Douglas Kenji**, and a granddaughter, **Kiana**, age 13.



Family photo in 2012 (l. to r.): Ellen, Kiana, Chris (son-in-law), Toshiko, Kaiji & son, Douglas.

How did you get involved with NYK? I wasn't active for a long time. Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai member, **Frank Murakawa**, was in charge of the Orange County district, collecting donations from members, but later due to age, he was unable to handle the large area, so I was asked to step in. I became more involved when I retired in 2001.

Do you have a special or proud memory? When I was a little boy in Japan, I wanted to have a dog—a Shiba "Ken" (Shiba Inu), but they cost about 30,000 yen. In those days, salaries were about 12,000 yen a year, so that was an unrealistic dream. In the 1970's, my dream was realized when I began raising a male and a female Shiba "Ken". I worked hard to get the name of the dog changed from Shiba "Ken" to Shiba "Inu", and a proud moment came in 1974, when the breed was officially registered in the U.S. as "Shiba Inu". My special memory is when I married Toshiko. I am grateful that we both have our good health and are able to rise every day at 5:30 a.m. to walk our dogs together.



Feeding his Shiba Inu with ohashi.

Where have you traveled? We visit family in Japan every 3 or 4 years. I love to visit national parks—we've been to the Grand Canyon 24 times—every time we get visitors from Japan, I take them there! We've been to Yellowstone and Texas and every 2 years, we visit my uncle's berry farm in Vancouver.

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time? I belong to a Shiba Inu Club and every 2nd Sunday in March, there is a Shiba Inu Show in Gardena. The dogs are judged based on the *Nihonken Hozonkai* standards to preserve the breed. I really enjoy seeing the U.S., exploring, bird watching, gardening, and taking pictures. I've always been very inquisitive and I like to do and see as much as I can because life is too short!

###

More 2013 Picnic Photos!



5th Annual Tanabata Festival

Once again, the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai will have an entry in the Tanabata Festival during Nisei Week in Little Tokyo. The “*tanabata kazari*” is a colorful paper decoration with streamers, and the sight of nearly 200 colorful *kazari* hanging and blowing in the summer breeze is ethereally beautiful! If you’d like to lend a hand in helping create this year’s entry, the next *kazari*-making session has been set for July 24.



Next Kazari-Making Meeting

When: Wednesday, July 24, 2013
Time: 12:00pm - 4:00pm
Where: Koban in Little Tokyo
 307 E. 1st Street
 Los Angeles, CA 90189
 (213) 613-1911
What to bring: Your good ideas and your enthusiasm.

Come on down between 12:00 and 4:00 and join in the effort. We can use all the help we can get!

Questions? Contact Arlene Nakamura at arlenenakamura@gmail.com or 626-281-6548.

All *kazari* entries will be up for viewing during the following dates:

Start: August 9, 5:00 p.m.
Opening Ceremony: Aug 10, 11, and 12.
Cost: Free
Venue: Central Avenue @ Geffen MOCA /
 Japanese American National Museum
 (JANM).

Nisei Week Festivities are from August 10th to the 18th.

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Like Us on Facebook

The Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai Facebook page, created and administered by **Steven & Millie Tani**, is not only loaded with information about past and upcoming NYK events, photos and newsletters, but the latest news about Yamaguchi, Japan and the Nikkei community.

www.facebook.com
Yamaguchi-Kenjinkai-Los Angeles

Check it out for more picnic photos!

Upcoming NYK Events

Keiro Nursing Home Visit—Date to be Determined.

This is a yearly event for the Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai and a very gratifying day for those who participate. We honor our elders on Keiro-No-Hi with entertainment, gifts and sweets. Please join us if you can. You’ll be glad that you did!



Nisei Week Tanabata Festival—August 10-18, 2013

The Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai will have a *kazari* displayed at the 2013 Tanabata Festival in Little Tokyo (see column on left).

Memorial Service—Date to be Determined

Memorial service to remember members who have passed away this year and in years’ past.

Kenjinkai Kyogikai Talent Show—Date to be Determined

A talented member or group from each Southern California kenjinkai will perform.

Watch Your Email for Updates!

If you would like copies of the picnic photos in this newsletter, please contact aki.vaughn@yahoo.com.



Nanka Yamaguchi Kenjinkai

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