



Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii  
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e-Newsletter  
 2020  
 NOVEMBER

Membership Meeting  
 Saturday, November 21, 2020



Word of the Month  
 “karii”  
 Happiness; propitiousness; joyous event; luck

Posted on the HUOA website:

“The Hawaii Okinawa Center will remain closed until further notice.”

There were no meetings at the Serikaku Chaya since March 2020 and no year end party will be held at the Legacy Ballroom.

Due to COVID-19, we are closing our 2020 year on Zoom at 10 a.m. with a short meeting, guest speaker Ed Kuba, and a Tookachi Celebration.

There will be no chattering of people; “long time no see;” the homemade pupus and desserts; the decorated sheet cakes; Tamashiro Market’s tako poke; the clattering of dishes, the long buffet line filled with ono food, the live Okinawan entertainment, and the lucky numbers.

On Saturday, November 21, 2020, it will be buy your own tako poke; bring your own food and beverage to the computer; sit down and watch Zoom. As you watch, the ambience of the Legacy Ballroom will be missing, but the OGSU Uchinanchu spirit will be with all of us. Niffee Debiru

*Ippee Niffee Debiru Donna*



*Thank you Donna for welcoming OGSU in 2020. As president you have updated the By-Laws, introduced the Umiganasa Committee, and started the OGSU Website Committee. Your commitment to update and upgrade the web presence of OGSU and the many other things you have accomplished is much appreciated.*

*As COVID-19 came along in March 2020, you kept OGSU going.*

*The time and dedication you shared with OGSU is priceless. Thank you again.*

Donna Nakamura has resigned from her role as president of OGSU. Please welcome Joy Schoonover as president

Guest speaker: Ed Kuba

Tookachi Celebration for all celebrating their 88.

-bring a cup of beverage available for karii

-during celebration, turn on your camera, show your face on Zoom for a chance to win a prize Kachashi

October’s Report  
 Treasurer’s Report: Income – Membership dues, donations; Expense – none.  
 Secretary’s Report: Newsletter  
 OGSU Photos: Curtis S., members and friends

Activities  
 2020 November 15 -2021 January 15  
 Virtual Craft Fair  
<https://huoa.org/nuuzi/virtualcraftfair.html>  
 2021 January 16 Virtual Okinawan of the Year Award  
 OGSU- Shigeru Yoshimoto  
 23 OGSU Zoom Meeting

“How a Shy Guy from Kapahulu Became a Born Again Uchinanchu”



Ed Kuba is known as the “Father of the Hawaii Okinawa Center.” This is because under his leadership it was built on time and on budget. He coordinated 500 volunteers to raise \$9 million in three years.  
<http://wubhawaii.com/?p=984>

This month we have Conrad’s Enterprises sharing their products available for sale. OGSU member Cheryl is a co-owner. A company that started with her father-in-law, Cheryl’s daughters will be the next generation to run the business.  
 Have a business? Email [OGSHnews@gmail.com](mailto:OGSHnews@gmail.com)

## “BORN AGAIN UCHINANCHU”

- An Overview -

In October of 1980, 37 young Okinawan *Sansei* (third-generation Japanese Americans) from Hawai‘i were selected to participate in a “Young Leaders” tour to Okinawa, their ancestral homeland. The tour was funded by Okinawa’s various city governments and supported by the Okinawa Prefectural Government.

Other than the fact that their grandparents had immigrated to Hawai‘i from Japan’s southernmost prefecture, the participants, all of them in their 20s and 30s, knew very little about their Okinawan heritage.

Upon arriving in Okinawa, the participants had a busy schedule: They visited popular tourist sights, paid courtesy calls on government officials, and attended lectures on the history, economy and culture of Okinawa. The participants were also required to spend two days living with their Okinawa relatives in their homes. Most of them were apprehensive about having to spend 48 hours with people they barely knew, especially since they couldn’t speak or understand Japanese, let alone Okinawan language.

They needn’t have worried. Broken Japanese and English, gestures, laughter, warm smiles, and even tears, shared over home-cooked meals and bottles of beer and Okinawan *awamori* spirits, made the two days the most precious memory the participants brought home from their 11 days in Okinawa. When they returned to their hotel after the two days, they were loaded down with boxes of *omiyage* (gifts) from their relatives for themselves and their families back home in Hawai‘i.

As the trip progressed, the warmth and generosity of Okinawa’s people began to penetrate their hearts. As they walked the land where their own grandparents had once walked, something began to change.

For the first time in their lives, they felt connected to their ancestral homeland and to a family beyond their immediate *‘ohana* in Hawai‘i. They understood what it meant to be Okinawan, or in the language of Okinawa, to be Uchinanchu. They had become “born again Uchinanchu” and would go on to lead the Okinawan community renaissance in Hawai‘i, contributing great things to the Okinawan community, many of which live on today, nearly forty years after they visited Okinawa on that 1980 trip.

The “born again Uchinanchu” movement intersected with the Native Hawaiian renaissance of the 1970s and ‘80s and the call for ethnic studies programs on college campuses across the United States, including at the University of Hawai‘i.

The cultural awakening that resulted from just 11 days on the ground in Okinawa inspired the participants to get actively involved in the United Okinawan Association of Hawaii (later renamed the Hawaii United Okinawa Association), the “umbrella” organization made up of small village clubs that the Okinawan immigrants formed after settling in Hawai‘i. Through good times and bad, these village clubs helped the members remain connected to relatives and close friends from the old country. Today, membership in the HUOA’s 49 village clubs totals approximately 40,000 individuals.

Some of the most active and dedicated members of the village clubs were not born of Okinawan parents. Through marriage or friendships with people of Okinawan ancestry, or other means, they adopted the Okinawan community and culture in their hearts. These “Uchinanchu at Heart” are as much a part of the Okinawan community as those with ancestral roots in Okinawa. Their story will have its rightful place in the chronicling of this vibrant community.

In the ensuing years, five members of the tour group would lead the HUOA as president and play key roles in several of its most visible projects, including the annual Okinawan Festival, which has been sharing Okinawan culture with the larger Hawaii community for 37 years and remains a totally volunteer-driven event staffed by 4,000 volunteers; construction of the \$10 million Hawaii Okinawa Center, the home of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association and Hawai‘i’s Okinawan community, which opened debt-free on the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Okinawan immigration to Hawai‘i; and, more recently, construction of the Hawaii Okinawa Plaza, a for-profit development designed to provide a steady revenue stream to sustain the Hawaii Okinawa Center beyond donations.

The Okinawan community’s success in undertaking new and bold ventures was due, in part, to the willingness of the organization’s elders to pass the reigns of leadership to a younger generation of Okinawan leaders and to support them. Also important was the transition from Japanese to English language communication within the organization.

“Born Again Uchinanchu,” the book, will not be a history of the United Okinawan Association/Hawaii United Okinawa Association; nor will it be a sequel to the 1981 volume, “UCHINANCHU: A History of Okinawans in Hawaii.”

It will, however, retrace the journey Hawai'i's Okinawans took as they became "born again Uchinanchu," revisiting in detail the many milestones and movements that contributed to the Okinawan community's progress, including:

- The seminal 1980 young leaders' trip to Okinawa;
- Formation of the Young Okinawans of Hawaii club by the 1980 tour participants and, in 2015, introduction of an even younger group, Shinka Hawaii, made up of millennials;
- Start of the Okinawan Festival in 1982 and its growth over the years (2018's turnstile count at the Hawaii Convention Center was 55,000);
- Opening in 1990 of the Hawaii Okinawa Center, home of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association and Hawai'i's Uchinanchu community (HUOA is the only prefectural organization, or *kenjinkai*, of 21 prefectural clubs in Hawai'i to have developed its own facility.);
- State-funded commissions to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup>, 90<sup>th</sup> and 100<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of Okinawan immigration to Hawai'i;
- Debut of two locally recorded CDs featuring Okinawan music performed by Hawai'i musicians and singers of Okinawan ancestry;
- Hawai'i participation in the Worldwide Uchinanchu Festival in Okinawa every five years with Hawai'i participants making up the largest contingent from abroad (1,800-plus from Hawai'i for the sixth festival in 2016, including many Uchinanchu-at-heart who wanted to experience Okinawa for themselves); and
- The election in 2014 (and re-election in 2018) of Hawai'i's first governor of Okinawan ancestry, David Ige.

Cultural, educational and social movements have further added to the vibrancy of Hawai'i's Okinawan community and enhanced the ties between Okinawa and Hawai'i. They include: performing arts schools for students to learn Okinawan music and dance and even travel to Okinawa to be tested on their proficiency; cultural performances from Okinawa; a high school student exchange program between Hawai'i's Department of Education and Okinawa Prefecture's education department, which includes a homestay; an annual "study tour" to Okinawa; restaurants serving Okinawan dishes and spirits; "sister" relationships with colleges and islands in Okinawa; establishment of the Worldwide Uchinanchu Business Association, a global business organization made up of Uchinanchu throughout the world; and the Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii to explore topics related to Okinawan heritage.

There are several Okinawan words that reflect the values with which the Okinawan community has undertaken each and every challenge before them: *yaaninju* (family), *yuimaaru* (working together), *ukaji deebiru* (with deep gratitude), *chibariyo* (to persevere). These values are the pillars of Hawai'i's Uchinanchu community and are the inspiration behind the publication of "Born Again Uchinanchu." ek

Remember in 2012...

## We Have A Winner!

By Ronald Miyashiro

For about a month from mid-April, a handful of members of the Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii (OGSH) were glued to their computers. They were part of more than 75,000 volunteers nationwide who joined the 1940 census community indexing project. The purpose of the project is to create a search-

able name index for the 1940 United States Federal Census—which was just released to the public on April 2—more than 3.8 million pages with more than 132 million names. On their own computer at home, these volunteers looked at images of the handwritten census enumeration pages and determined what to type into the online program at the FamilySearch indexing Web site. They quickly learned why searchable names are sometimes misspelled. The process, called indexing, involved two persons transcribing the handwritten census information. A third person, in the role of arbitrator, then adjudicated any differences in interpretation of the handwriting.

As of this writing, the indexing process for six states have been completed and are now searchable online by a person's name. With the helping hand of the OGSH members, Hawaii is 100 percent indexed and, along with 11 other states at 100 percent, are in the process of being posted online on the Internet. The rest of the states are still being indexed, and the OGSH members are helping them also. The total project is about 40 percent complete. Go to Web site, FamilySearch.org, type in a person's name, and view the image of the actual

handwritten census page that person is on. Census pages can also be viewed at the National Archives' official 1940 census Web site, [1940census.archives.gov](http://1940census.archives.gov).

For the genealogist, the census is a goldmine of information. Besides the standard information such as name, age, gender, race, citizenship and place of birth, the

1940 census included questions about housing, highest educational grade achieved, and detailed income and occupation. The census shows at a point in time exactly where people in the United States resided. You can find where your grandparents or parents lived in 1940.

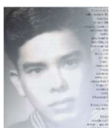
Many genealogical societies throughout the United States were preparing to help index the census months before the census was released on April 2. OGSH got a late start and did not get involved until after its monthly meeting on April 21. The organizers of the indexing project ran a contest for the week of April 26-May 2. OGSH won a printer for being the largest increase of people to sign up as indexers. The mem-

bers who registered as indexers are Ronald Miyashiro, Amy Tsuru, Penny Sakamoto, Sally Tsuda, Stanley Uehara, Gloria Dugay, and Nancy Yogi. Congratulations and thank you for your time and efforts!



OGSH Census team members (front row): Penny, Stan and Nancy. (back row): Amy, Gloria, Terry Shinsato and Sally. Missing: Ron Miyashiro

HUOA 2013 Legacy Program



What is **TOOKACHI**?

When one reaches 88 years of age, life cycles have passed, and a person will reminisce the earlier years like riding a bicycle or playing with a windmill with the wind blowing it faster. Now one can enjoy the simpler, happier times of life with no problem or worries.

Let us celebrate Henry Isara's Tookachi (88th Birthday) Celebration with fun and laughter. Henry was the eldest of 10 children living in Kalihi, worked as an engineer draftsman and later a C&C Housing inspector; married and raised 3 children and has 3 grandchildren, devoted many years of service to HUOA. Two of his greatest accomplishments were volunteered & organized HUOA video production team, OLELO by recording many, many events, and activities. And organizing HUOA softball & volleyball teams creating involvement in club & Okinawan culture to the young people. Let us not forget Henry was OGSH PRESIDENT and during that period we were officially known as OKINAWAN GENELOGICAL SOCIETY OF HAWAII.

No wonder, Henry Isara received the Legacy Award in 2013. ki

**TOOKACHI SONG  
(HAPPY BIRTHDAY TUNE)**

**HAPPY TOOKACHI TO YOU  
HAPPY TOOKACHI TO YOU  
HAPPY TOOKACHI, DEAR  
HENRY  
HAPPY TOOKACHI TO YOU !**

A note from Cheryl Sasaki

The notes for this short story was actually written by Jimmy himself. I wanted an oral interview (cause I knew I wouldn't be able to read his handwriting), but he insisted to write. He said it would've been easier for him to think back and reminisce. My eyes were very tired, that tells you something.

## Jimmy

James Torao (tiger) Jitchaku was born August 22, 1928 at home in Waipahu, Territory of Hawaii, to Nabe Jitchaku and Soyo Niwa. The home was below the sugar mill between Yoshida Barber Shop and the Takayama family, by a Chinese Church. Tora attended August Ahrens Elementary, attire was short khaki pants, white shirt, with slippers or sometimes barefoot. He would carry his books and lunch in what is now called a shoulder bag. The school was across Waipahu Service Station (Waipahu Garage), the Shinsato and Nabarette stores on Waipahu Street. Behind the stores was the Spanish Camp. Lunch at school costed 15 – 25 cents for lunch tokens. Later on Tora changed schools to Waipahu School, there was a division change at Depot Road, East and West. The school had vines growing on its concrete building. Across the school was the Stable Camp, where the plantation kept mules and donkeys to reshoe the hoofs. Breakfast was sold after 2<sup>nd</sup> period at school, for a penny, chocolate soup over toast. No food went to waste. One of the teachers was Clara Inter (famously known as Hilo Hattie). Around age 10, family name changed to Serikaku, kanji is same for Jitchaku and Serikaku. Tora went to movies with his friends for 10 cents. They would hide in the bathroom for the next movie (usually westerns), until the ushers caught on.....they got busted. His school friends were Masa Nitta, Bernard Hamada, who just passed in January. His wife 's niece is Bonnie Miyashiro that works in the Okinawan Center. Another school transition, during Intermediate, he got transferred to the New First Waipahu High School on Farrington Highway, this is where Tora finished rest of schooling. He took classes like ancient history, American history, American government, algebra, geometry, and science. Friends at that time were Isamu Matsumoto(Popeye), Ernest Morinaga, and Kumao Nakamura (his best man). One day Tora went to hang out with his friends at the Ewa sugarcane field, he said it was a big mistake. They went to smoke (but dad said he didn't), but when they got busted, they had a 17 hour detention, some days detention time was cut short so they could make it to Japanese School. One day Tora wasn't feeling well, so he told the teacher and left school. On the way home, he met 6 classmates that were cutting out of class, so he joined them for a movie outing. They all got busted, and the dumb thing was they all sat in the same row. The principal and usher then gathered them and took everyone home to their parents.....detention again. This time it was digging trenches on the school grounds for a bomb shelter.

In 1940 before the war, new fad was the pleated pants, called zoot suit.

1941 the war started. No more school. Tora said he saw a zero-pilot crossing while looking toward Pearl Harbor. Once the jet was so low Tora could see the eyes of the pilot. As a Boy Scout, he had to warn everyone no hanging white clothes, and later on people had to have shortwave band(radio) removed. After the undeclared ending of the war, Tora was at Banner Beach (Kahe Point) with his friends lighting fires. Bernard's dad came down to the beach and sent everyone home, the ending of the war was not legally signed. High School years were spent going to Honolulu to ride the street car, to the junction by Liliha (now Foodland), by Waialae and Kilauea, and another junction by where the zoo is now located. After holoholo in town, Tora and his friends had to get to the Oahu Railway Bus Station in time for the last bus to get back to Ewa. Another time while hanging with friends, Tora folks went to the Walsh's Farm to pick macadamia nuts. They encountered the water luna as he called out to the boys "HEY", and they all ran away, except one friend who actually was frozen scared stiff. The boys went back for him to snap him out of it, and continued running away. In another outing in Haleiwa, Tora and his friends decided to drive to the military road from Kahuku to Helemano, speeding 45-50 mph. His friend did not say a word to him till they reached Wahiawa. Now remembering all his experiences, Tora said "I value my life more and more". There were numerous other accidents, getting injured on left leg while working on a wood project, driving his dad's truck and hit a deep hole in the ground and flipped, landed him in the hospital with a broken arm, he said good thing he wasn't killed.

Tora started helping his dad (Shigeru)at the service station in the early years of high school. He had other side jobs while in high school. All students worked at Del Monte (Kunia) plantation to help cut weeds in the pineapple fields, so while riding on a truck load of pineapples to the field, he tossed some pineapples to his friends waiting below. Tora was drafted after high school and was stationed @ Schofield 1952-1954, and assigned to the motor pool as an office clerk and dispatcher. After Tora was discharged, he played the markets, first investment was ZENITH, made \$5000. He saved his earnings from the station, one day it was to be for purchase of his first real estate. Shigeru told Tora to buy cash



only. Tora purchased his first property in Halawa Heights for \$7000 for 12,000 sq feet lot. He later sold the property to a classmate, saying it was the best decision he ever made, profit was around \$7000. He then went into commercial real estate, purchasing a larger lot after buying a smaller lot by "agreement of sale". Once Tora helped out a friend that was in financial trouble, put \$ into escrow for him. They later sold the property and made "good money" on it. His friend was the bigger winner because he invested less money, but was able to buy a condo after the sale. Soon after, Tora, along with 5 other investors, bought a piece of property in Waianae on an agreement of sale, and later sold it to Tamura's Market. He talked to the Tamura boys to purchase more land for parking, but not having enough money, they decided not to. They later purchased a residential property in back for the parking. Tora wished them well for a prosperous business.

Jimmy got married to Beatrice Takao on November 21, 1954. They had 6 girls and 1 boy. He now has 12 grandchildren and 4 great grandkids. He took the family across the United States every summer for history lessons, visiting many museums, historic places like D.C. Boston, and of course, the US Mint in Denver. He worked at the station till he opened Jimmy's Auto Parts in 1962 at the old Cornet Store on Farrington Hwy., then moved to where the current location(across Leeward Drive Inn ) is where George's Auto Parts now sits. He had branched out to Aiea(where brother George managed), Jimmy's Foreign Car Parts and Jimmy's machine Shop in Waipahu, Kaneohe, and then his last expansion in Hilo.

Jimmy retired from the parts business and in 1992, moved to Medford, and Beaverton Oregon. He taught all his children how to ski. His wife Beatrice pass away in 1999, so he found other ways to keep busy. While in Oregon, he joined the Worldwide Uchinanchu Business group for trips to China, South America 's Machu Picchu (climbed it with Goro Arakawa), Peru. Also took several trips to Okinawa. He made donation for the Serikaku Chaya which was erected in 2005, while he was still in Oregon. Jimmy moved back to Oahu in 2012, and was able to attend many more functions and continued to make new friends. Jimmy is "back on the markets, trying to make some money. Most will say not now. Save cash and pay only what is due on your mortgage. There will soon be good deals to come by because of the corona virus, the rail will be done soon, condo construction/purchase will get slow, prices are still rising, locals won't be able to afford. Sometimes cannot reach too high."

"So those of you reading this, don't give your life away, don't miss your doctor appointments. Life is so precious, we all know our own bodies, so take good care of yourselves. Now I'm relaxing, have a cup of hot chocolate every night, go to you tube from 8:30-11:00 to keep up with corona virus news, listen to Japanese/Okinawan songs and reading. Was all guts and no brains when I was young, not anymore.....more brains now." Arigatoo gozaimasu.

So for those of us that rely on our electronics for fun and games, this is what life was like for Tora, simple things I think we all could take a step back and smell the flowers.



[http://olelo.granicus.com/player/clip/49572?view\\_id=21&redirect=true](http://olelo.granicus.com/player/clip/49572?view_id=21&redirect=true)

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