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e-Newsletter
 2023
 July

<p>Donna Nakamura <i>President</i></p> <p>Ken Kamiya <i>First Vice-President</i></p> <p>Jackie Toma <i>Second Vice-President</i></p> <p>Heidi Shimabuku <i>Corresponding Secretary</i></p> <p>Susan Ramelb <i>Recording Secretary</i></p> <p>Clyde Higa <i>Treasurer</i></p> <p>Virginia Tully <i>Assistant Treasurer</i></p> <p>Rodney Kohagura <i>Advisor</i></p>	<p>OGSH Meeting July 15, 2023, 9AM Serikaku Chaya or Zoom</p> <p style="text-align: center;">AGENDA</p> <p>I. Remembering Sally Matsumoto</p> <p>II. Treasurer’s Report</p> <p>III. Meet Kayla Mukai</p> <p>IV. Speaker: Hiroaki Hara, Okinawan Prefectural Library (on Zoom from Okinawa)</p> <p>V. Committee Updates</p> <p>photos by Curtis and members</p>	<p>Upcoming Events 2023</p> <p>July 22 Jikoen Hongwangi Bon Dance 7pm – 10pm</p> <p>August 19 OGS August Meeting, 9am</p> <p>September 2 and 3 Okinawan Festival 16 Autumn Matsuri, HOC, 5pm 24 Legacy Award, Sheraton Waikiki, 9am</p> <p>November 18 Bonekai Hawaii Okinawan Center Legacy Ballroom</p>
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DHaitai OGS members!

I open this message with sad news of losing another one of our staunch members and supporters for OGS. Sally Matsumoto passed on Sunday, July 9. I have no other details regarding planned services and will start the meeting with a moment of silence to remember her years with us. We will be sure to share information as we get it.



We have an exciting meeting planned for you as Hiroaki Hara will be joining us to share their experience at this year’s taikai. His experience will certainly help us as we get ready for this year’s festival and it will be nice to meet his fellow team mates. We will also be introducing Kayla Mukai, our summer intern, who is working on improving our web accessed database that we share with OPL. She has made preliminary recommendations and we will continue to bring fresh eyes and options as we work to make our research experience user friendly and accessible with another tool to add to our toolkit of ways to discover our ancestral roots.

We have many events lined up for you and while you plan to participate in these gatherings to celebrate our Uchinanchu families and ties that bind us, I would like to send out a call for candidates who are interested in serving as our new president, treasurer and corresponding secretary. These positions are up for election this year per our bylaws so please give this opportunity your consideration. Our organization was established and flourished under the leadership of many individuals who have served whole-heartedly and I know that this organization will continue to grow and thrive in the years ahead. Members of our nominating committee will be announced before the end of this month to give everyone ample time to submit nominations.

Hope to see you on Saturday!

Ipee nifee deebiru,
 Donna

Donna’s Word of the Month

Usuri: (noun) respect; reverence; awe

Amy and David Kaneshiro

Amy and I will share our ancestral journey with you. (Showing his Power Point pictures): This is Kana Arakaki-Kaneshiro, my grandmother on my father's side. She is the reason why for us to pursue connection. We have some folders here which were our tools on our travels. Our tools for communication in Okinawa, things we will need for our children. We hope that our talk will not stress anyone's personal or spiritual beliefs. Our journey actually started around 1965. My brother experienced warts on his face, from below his eyes to under his chin. At that time, the only medication was Compound W, which is used to 'burn' the wart. After a year, it did not work. My brother's face got all black and crusty from the burning effect. My sister and I started to get warts. One morning on my mother's walk with neighbors, it was suggested she see a spiritual healer. It just so happens that her neighbor's mother-in-law was a healer, Shimabuku Daisan as they called her. In doing research, the proper priest name for her is Noru. We called her sensei because it was easier. On our first visit, she said our grandmother, Kana is being forgotten. She is sending a signal to our family that she needs to be prayed for. Our earthly support helps souls progress. So, we went on a weekly trek to pray. After a couple of months, all clear. My brother's face, you'd think it wouldn't heal. It was that bad. It cleared without scars. We're believers since then.



In this slide, my grandfather, Kamaji, my mother Kana, and my uncle Masao. By looking at this photo, it appears that my grandmother is carrying my father. She returned to Okinawa because she was ill and needed family to care for my dad. All of this, we did not know till our Taikai adventures. If you think about it, my father who never knew his mother, it was quite hard to remember someone you never knew. Unless it is brought to our attention, as my grandmother had sent us signs for us to remember her.

We got interested in Taikai when we saw a flyer in our Kochinda Chojin Kai Newsletter and Amy and I thought it was an opportunity to touch our ancestor's soil. My grandmother became a side product at that point but it'll become focused after awhile.



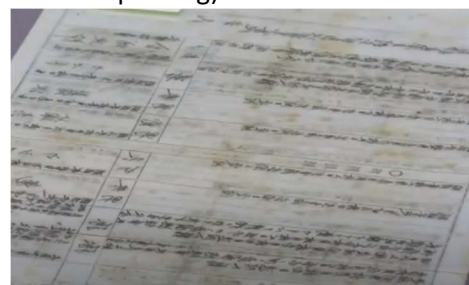
This is where my father came back to Hawaii in 1931. He was 11 years old. In this photo, his uncle, Koske. We never knew who he was till recently and OPL helped us to identify him. He is my grandmother Kana's brother. Back then if you were under 16, you needed someone to escort you back and forth.

This is a photo of my great-grandparents, Jiro Kinjo and Kamato Kamiya. I might have some papaya in me. This is as far back as we can go. I have a copy of an interpreted Koseki that I am passing around. Not everyone is fortunate to have a Koseki. (Amy speaking) When we first tried to get this interpreted, it was discovered that it was backwards. (Back to David speaking) Take a look at that.

We're not sure if everyone ever had a chance to touch a Koseki. Even though



Kochinda was a war zone, somehow this got into our family's possession, especially this one. OPL was surprised that we had one on rice paper. This is rare and were told to protect it. A koseki, for those who don't know, is an official Stamped Prefectural document showing a family lineage.



During Taikai in 2011, we kind of left it to the venue because we heard we were going to meet our families. So, we went to the community celebration and that's what it was. It was a major celebration. It seemed like thousands. There was food, drinks galore, and I was introduced to Awamori and after a few, I didn't care and after a couple more, I didn't care

to care. We continued to leave it to the program managers. There was really no program, just entertainment, menosore, and a thank you for helping our economy. That was that for 2011, our first Taikai.

This is a beginner's guide that Nancy Yogi and her team put together. This is the kind of book you need to put together your questions and pictures of what it should look like. We didn't have it in 2011 because it came out in 2012. Therefore, in 2016, we were a little more prepared. Back in 2011, the go to person at that time was Bonnie Miyashiro. I called her a couple of weeks before departure and she got all the information to me the next morning.



This is a personal profile. It has the address of where my grandfather resided and in 2016 we found out that this was a prewar address, so our data was a little outdated. In 2022, we found out that is Hokama now. That's OK because there is so much cross referencing. Another reference book is the 'Issei'. It is like a small AI Toma data base and OGSB data base. It is a hard copy and a start. When you find something, it is an "OH, Yeah!" moment.

In 2016, it was like 2011, but no awamori. We were able to get a translator to go around the community center asking if there were any Kaneshiros from Eushi and were later told there are no Kaneshiros in Okinawa, just Kinjo and the address was prewar, so that was that. We were not successful, again. But, that's OK. This time we took our kids to touch our ancestor's soil. It was fun, with the environment, history, and culture.

Haisai David,

Thank you for your reply.

Mao san would get approval from the Kaneshiro family in to interview and come with the TV crew.

宮平さん
NHKの岡田さんという方から、
連絡があったと思います。(事
前にお伝えできずすみませ
ん)
沖縄のご親族のかたに確認して
いただけませんか?

よろしくお願ひします。
はら

Taikai 2022, we were sort of versed with what information we needed to have. OPL is up and running. We registered again, requested research, and Hara-san really grasped being the leader for our adventure. Within several days, he contacted us and apologized that the previous 2 times they did not contact us. So, he assigned a team for us and some of the material we needed to gather like my father's and mine birth certificates to link to their database.

This is one of the texts from the community center saying who will do what. Is it OPL, NHK. NHK got involved and helped with communication. When we got there, Colin Sewake was very instrumental from the beginning. He met us at the airport. At the community center we met the family.

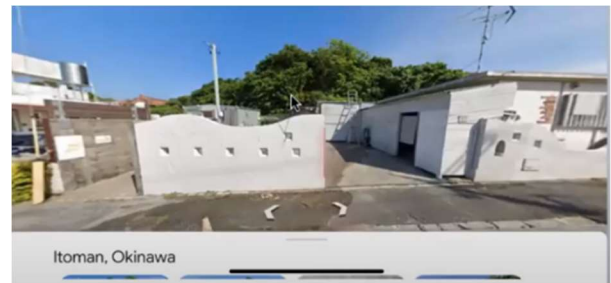


This a picture of Masako. We kind of looked at each other and she wondered why this 'monkey' don't look like me. We brought pictures in a booklet. When she saw this picture of herself, she then knew that we were related. I didn't need to do more convincing. Later on, we tried to build the family tree. From there we visited the hakas (tombs). This is how I knew the original hakas looked like. It is dugged into a mountain. There is no sign or scriptures or anything.

We were taken to the new one, which is basically in back of another structure. We had to use an easement to get to it.

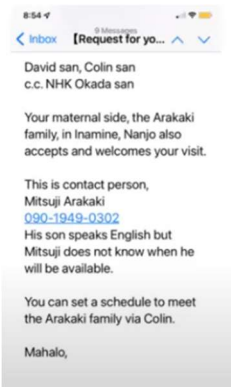


When I saw it, I said, "No, this is not it". Colin had interpreted my concern and took us around to the original. The structure had collapsed and a new one was built. We had our blessing with food and awamori.





We returned to the home to have dinner. The first thing was a dance called kagiyadefu, a slow celebratory dance. We had a cousin from the mainland and one from Palolo. They were from our grandparents sibling's side.

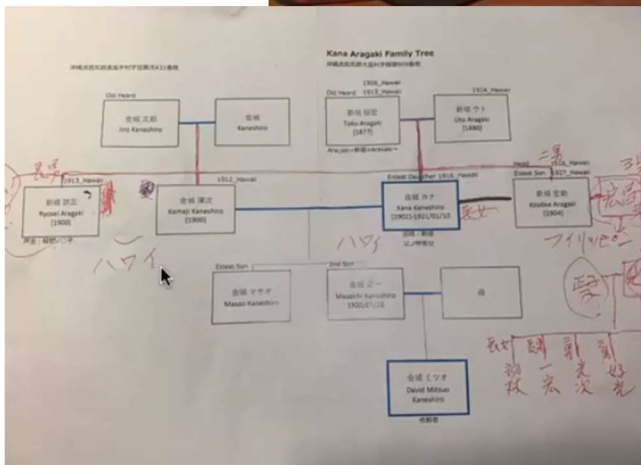


Moving on to the Arakaki side. This is a communication from OPL, NHK, and Colin. Again, Colin took the lead by making friends with my second cousin Mitsuji. (Next slide) We visited a haka. This is a view from 1985. This is in the countryside. Now, 40 years later, as you can see from this picture, that things have been cleaned up and rebuilt with concrete. We did our blessings.





This shows how huge this haka is. A parking lot was built in front of it. They may have their Obon there. Mitsuji is in construction, so that probably explains it all. They then treat us to lunch of goat sashimi. A soup made with goat innards, heart, kidneys, all that good stuff. Everything tastes good with beer. They wanted to serve us snake but they decided it was too smelly. After lunch, we returned to the house and NHK, through OPL provided a family tree flowchart to find out how Mitsuji and I are related. We got kind of confused, so what we did was to redo it on a separate sheet of paper to make it more legible to us. We are satisfied for the moment, but there is more work to be done. It is very exhausting. (Next slide) This is Hara-san and Selsa Shiroma from Brazil, my main contact at OPL. He worked so hard for us. These 2 ladies, Chira and Chikaki did much of the research.





Aloha! Hara-san came to thank us and say goodbye at the Trans Pacific Party. Colin was there as he was awesome in the help he provided. (Amy speaking) Thank you to Colin, as he was a tremendous help because we do not speak Japanese and a lot of our relatives don't speak English and if it wasn't for him, we wouldn't have as much information as he was able to gather. (David speaking again) One last thing, every time we return from a Taikai, you get this renewed appreciation of our forefather's bravery to venture into the unknown. We're thankful they chose Hawaii. Ippei Nifei Debiru!

Colin Sewake

What I want to say is that the Koseki is basically a family registry. When I left the military I lost my sponsorship of the US government, so I had to get a visa when I got married to Keiko. So, my information is with her family registration in Chatan and when they moved to Yomitan, the information was passed on and when she gave birth to our kids, they get added on. There is a Koseki Tohon (Comprehensive-Full Registry) and Koseki Shohon (Selective-Information for 1 family member).

OPL is not staffed to provide more information than the first generation. So when it gets down to identifying where your ancestors lived, there is no staff to help you. That is where you need a volunteer to help to get to the Kominkan level. As for me, I was able to help David. That's the challenge, getting down to the Kominkan level. It was great taking him around. I know it is hard for Hawaii people with the language and cultural barriers and I get to meet more people here. In a way, I become part of your family. When I introduced myself to Mitsuji, I told him I lived here and I am not Okinawan but I am helping your cousin to get in touch with you. In typical country Uchinanchu fashion he said we need to get together and drink beer. So, Okinawa, like Hawaii is laid back.

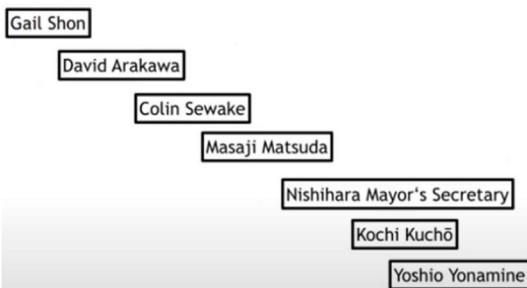
So, David's paternal side (Kaneshiro), is from Yaese town. Within Yaese town, over the years there are geographical changes to the boundaries. Within Yaese town, Hokama is where the Kinjos are actually from. Although a direct connection could not be made with those Kinjos that we visited, but from what I heard them say is the Kinjos are from the Hokama area. So, we went to the Hokama Kominkan which is the Community Center where we met a volunteer who is with the board of education and also a volunteer with OPL. We went to the property where his grandfather Kamaji lived. After that, we went to another cousin that lived close by and walk down several houses. When we got there, we were told there were several gaijin visitors and I wasn't sure what the connection was. There were other relatives David didn't know about that were at that house. Everyone there looked Japanese, so I spoke in Japanese and was told that they speak English. So, it turns out they were 2 more relatives of David, one from Hawaii and one from California. It was the first-time meeting, so it was very interesting.

(Referring to slide) There are 4 points I want to share. The first is, everyone is a dot. Not just in Hawaii, but the overall worldwide Uchinanchu network is viewed as a spider web. There are dots at the connection points of a spider web.

- Everyone a dot
- Lifelong Process
- Documentation
- Kōminkan (community center)

Everyone is a dot. Everyone is important. It doesn't matter how active you are or not. How sociable you are. How many friends you have. Everybody knows somebody. On the next slide, if you remember from November 2021, Gail Shon's story where she is at Yokotsuka Naval Base working as a civil servant. She was coming to Okinawa in November 2021. Her relatives are Yonemine and she is related to Mac Yonemine. She calls David Arakawa and asks how she can get in touch with her relatives. He then calls me (Colin) and explains the situation and I call Masaji Matsuda, who lives near me. We were both involved in the Okinawan-Hawaii Kyokai, the Okinawa organization that

supports HUOA. We are active with that. I explain to him in Japanese what Gail is looking for. He calls the Nishihara Mayor's secretary and Masaji explains the situation. The secretary calls Kochi Kucho. Kochi is the area where her roots (relatives) are from and Kucho is the community chief. The secretary calls the community chief and the chief from that kominkan gets in touch with the Yonemine family and then it goes back up the chain to David. He calls to say they have made positive contact and so what is next. He needs her flight information, her schedule, etc. So, you can see here, everyone holds a position in the process. As you can see from this slide, it took 5 dots to get from Gail to her relatives. It took 7 dots to get totally linked up. At any point in this chain, anyone could be a point of failure. If someone said I



couldn't be bothered with this, Gail would have never met her relatives. Likewise, me being in Okinawa, I could request to find relatives in Hawaii and you might think I don't know many people or I'm not really involved. I just go to the OGSB meetings and I don't really do a whole lot. But, you are still a point in the spider web. There are times when I am asked to reach out to Hawaii connections. That is when I email all of you. You hold that position because you might be the person that knows that person and help to get them together. So everyone is a dot. Continue to stay in your network. You can never know when something like this will happen.

- 1994 Dec Arrived Okinawa
- 1998 Jun Separated active duty
- 1999 May Moved to Yomitan
- 1999 Jun Fukuoka relatives
- 2004 May Fukuoka relatives
- 2013 Mar Hiroshima relatives
- 2013 Apr Tokyo relative
- 2014 Nov Fresno relatives

My second point is the "lifelong process". This genealogy research thing to connect with relatives is a lifelong process and not a onetime thing. I think, we as Japanese-Americans have a sense of connecting with our relatives. We want to know about our grandfather, our great-grandparents, we're from this area of Japan. Just growing up in Hawaii, we hear about it at parties. We start talking about the family. It was instilled in us that we were descendants of immigrants. One of the big things for me when I graduated from University of Hawaii and the Air Force ROTC Program. I got to choose my job and where I wanted to be stationed. I wanted an air force base in Japan and I got sent to Kadena. I married Keiko in 1996. I decided to stay in Okinawa and separated from my active duty assignment and did just 1 tour. I move to

Yomitan in May of 1999. During those three and a half years, I said to myself I came here to find my roots, my Japanese culture, my relatives in Hiroshima, but during that time, I did nothing. So, I started making calls back to Hawaii to try and get information. I had an uncle that visited my aunty in Fukuoka. So, finally in June 1999, I actually met them on a trip to Fukuoka and it was quite an experience. My grandfather is the oldest of six boys. The number 3 boy went to California. So, the number 4 son became the main Sewake family line in Fukuoka. I was able to talk to son number 4's wife and daughter, my aunty. My uncle, not a Sewake, took on family name to keep the line going. In 2013, my 2 cousins and myself, made a trip to Hiroshima to connect with relatives related through our great-grandparents and got to meet them. As you can see from this slide, my genealogical journey took a couple of decades, even though I lived in Japan. This is a lifelong process. Since then, I have kept in contact with all my relatives, especially the Fukuoka ones. My generation cousin, her son is the only Sewake left in the number 4 line.

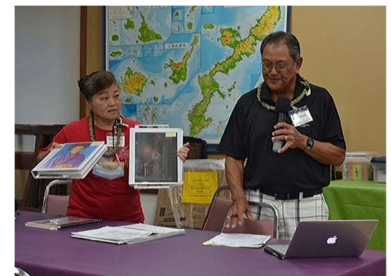
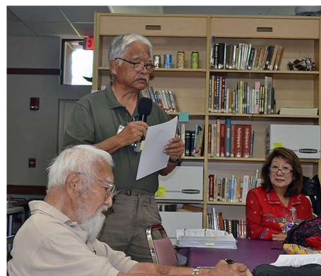
The third point is documentation. I talk a lot with Masaji Matsuda and he emphasizes the same thing. It is important to document all the information. For me, it is not about what is in the data base, like your birthday, when you moved to Hawaii, when you immigrated, your address. I'm talking about documenting the stories you heard. All the stories you shared. What job did they do, school they graduated from, favorite foods, what foods they didn't like. I say this because we need to document ourselves, our generation because it occurred to me that we asked a lot of information of our grandparents. I hope one day our kids, our grandkids, our great-grandkids, our descendants will ask about us. So, in this digital age, it is easier to share and document the information and have it recorded so future generations will have it. I think we should write a book about ourselves, our life story. Something to pass down to the next generation. It could be simple things like my mom and Keiko's mom don't eat raw fish. So, it could just be simple things like this. Once the information is gone, it is gone. So, now is the time to document not just our ancestors, but ourselves.

Kuni (country)
Ken (prefecture)
Shi/Chō/Son (city/town/village)
 Naha-shi, Chatan-chō, Yomitan-son,
 etc.
Azaku (ward)
 Nagahama, Takashiho, Namihira, etc.
Han (block)
 Ippan (1), Nihan (2), Sanpan (3),
 Yonhan (4), Gohan (5)

The last thing I want to talk about is the Kominkan. (Referring to his slide) The Kominkan is the community center, unlike what we have in America or Hawaii. Starting with the structure, you have "Kuni" or country, next is "Ken" or prefecture or like states in America. Hawaii would be the 50th State and Okinawa would be the 47th Ken (prefecture). You get down to the next level which are "Shi", "Cho", or "Son", which are city/town/village. Examples are Cities: Naha-shi, Itowan-shi, Nago-shi; Towns: Chatan-cho, Kadena-cho. I live in Yomitan-son. It is the largest village, population wise, in Japan. I don't understand the rules that govern their status placement, but it deals with tax rules. Another difference with the U.S. is "Azaku" or ward. Where I live in

Yomitan-son, there are 24 wards. I live in Nagahama-ward. Each of the 24 Azakus has its own Kominkan (Community Center). If you want to get further, it breaks down further into "Han" or blocks. So, you have blocks 1 to 5 called: Ippan (1), Nihsan (2), Sanpan (3), Yonhan (4), and Gohan (5). The Community Center is the center of the community. A lot of the information lost in the war may be found either documented or people still surviving today who may know your family members. I really encourage you, when you come to Okinawa, to have as much information concerning their city, town, ward because you want to get down to the Kominkan (community center), where your grandmother and grandfather lived. They would have the most information. I make it a point to visit the Kominkan as much as I can. I would walk down there and just hang out and talk story with the ojisans, obasans. The OPL is a start for information, but after that, you need the Kominkan. This is pretty much what I wanted to add to David's presentation.

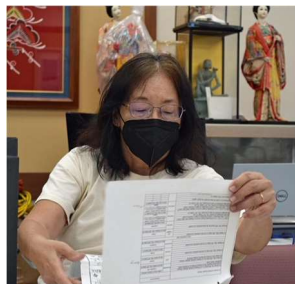
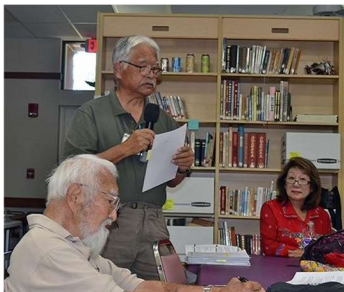
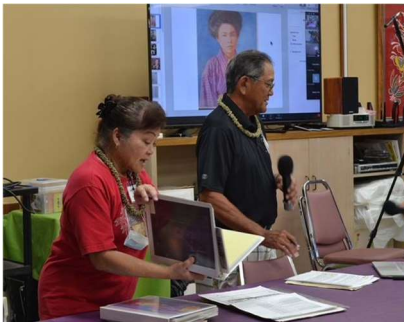
People at the Serikaku Chaya on June 17, 2023



SALES AND SERVICES PROCEDURES

Purpose: the purpose of these procedures is to establish a method for monitoring of all funds to ensure accountability and accuracy in a reliable manner.

- All OGSH sales products shall be stored in the OGSH office of the Chaya Room. Products include the Guidebook, Short Stories volumes, Bookmarks.
- All products shall be sold from the OGSH office of the Chaya Room except during the Okinawan Festival.
- Prices of the products shall be established by the Finance Committee and the Board of Directors
- Sales shall be recorded on Form I (Guidebook), Form II (Short Stories), Form III (Bookmark).
- Inventories shall be taken at the end of each calendar year, and recorded on Forms I, II, III.
- Collection of fees are as follows:
 - 1) Payments shall be accepted by cash, check, and Pay Pal (*see addendum*). Cash and checks shall be kept in a cash box until deposited in the bank account.
 - 2) Monies shall be deposited in the OGSH bank account and a copy of the deposit receipt shall be submitted to the Treasurer.
- Requests for reimbursements of incurred expenses must be supported by appropriate invoice or receipts, i.e., printing, supplies, postage, etc.





CULTURE GOING HOME

Colin Sewake

Special to The Hawai'i Herald



Momohara family after *aisatsu* (greeting) meeting with Yomitan Mayor Denjitsu Ishimine. (Photo by Shingo Sunabe)

It's been almost six years since I started to write for The Hawai'i Herald at the request of former editor-in-chief, Karleen Chinen. I really don't know how many people have read my articles since August 2017, but I love sharing stories from my home in Okinawa of 28 years with especially those who are of Uchinānchu (Okinawan) descent.

The Momohara family from Kaua'i have been longtime subscribers and among the readers who have been following my writings. Daniel, the oldest son, reached out last October to editor-in-chief, Kristen Nemoto Jay, in an attempt to make contact with me. His mother, Doris, visited Japan and Okinawa once 26 years ago but succumbed to a stroke that

left her paralyzed after the trip. According to Dan, she always wanted to return so my articles were her primary contact between Japan and Okinawa. Unfortunately, Doris passed away last year, and her wishes were to be entombed with other Okinawa family members in the *haka* (tomb) located on Torii Station in Sobe, Yomitan.



Haka with overgrown foliage and debris in October 2022. (Photo by Colin Sewake)
street from Torii Station's main gate and escorting

During Dan's first visit to Okinawa in 2004, his Uncle Sōsuke Furugen took him to the original haka that was a cave dug into a limestone hill because he wanted Dan to inspect the burial chamber, which was deteriorating and falling on the *ikotsutsubo* (ceramic urns). The family of the adjacent haka told Uncle Sōsuke that they had built a new haka in front of the cave and moved the *ikotsutsubo* into it. Dan took a lot of photos and videos to show his father, the last senior male Momohara in both Hawai'i and Okinawa, about the dire situation. Dan's father funded the project and Uncle Sōsuke Furugen, a Japanese civil engineer who worked for the U.S. Army, hired contractors to clear the area in front of the cave and construct a new haka in 2005.

With Japan lifting travel restrictions that were imposed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Dan started to plan a trip to Okinawa with other family members this June to place a portion of his mom's ashes in the haka and a portion of his late World War II veteran father whose remains are in the Kaua'i Veterans Cemetary in Hanapēpē. Dan wanted to see if I was interested in covering his family's story so that it could be shared with others. He thought perhaps there are other overseas Uchinānchu who might one day experience the same situation where a family member would like to return to their ancestral homeland's family haka upon passing.

I was deeply moved as I read Dan's email while on a weekend trip to mainland Japan and replied several hours later that I was not only willing to write an article about his family's story but that I could also possibly assist. Torii Station is located in Yomitan, where I live and have base access as a retired U.S. military member. Several individuals who would need to be in the coordination loop, such as the Torii Station Community Relations Office and Tōru Uechi, *kuchō* (chief) of the Sobe Kōminkan (community center) also knew who I was and could help. We corresponded over the weekend and upon returning to Okinawa, I easily located the haka across the scuba locker the next day from Dan's descriptive emails. He could see the overgrown trees and vegetation in the pictures I texted him as no Okinawan family member had performed any maintenance of the site since the haka was reconstructed.

I told Dan that I would be traveling to Hawai'i for a few months to spend the holidays there and he mentioned that he had plans to visit O'ahu. We then arranged to link up and meet face to face in February over some 'ono local food at Zippy's in Wahiawā. I had meant to ask questions and discuss the details of the June trip and Dan and his younger brother, Melvin's, March preparation visit but, in local Hawai'i-boy fashion, we talked story about everything else instead. We also discovered we're distantly related. In the spirit of *ichariba chōdē* (once we meet, we become family), Dan started referring to us as family.

Barely four weeks later, I was picking up the Momohara brothers from the Royal Hotel across the

them on base to survey the haka condition and work that I coordinated with Marty McBride, a disabled veteran and Okinawan resident of 38 years married to an Uchinānchu, to cut back the overgrown foliage and pressure wash the haka and concrete surfaces. Dan was happy to see the progress from the pictures I had texted him several months earlier and had the opportunity to speak with Marty and his suggested improvements and plans for recurring maintenance. Visiting Okinawa was also important for meeting several key individuals ahead of the June trip. After surveying the haka, I took Dan and Mel to the community relations office where we did a quick *aisatsu* (introduction) with community relations specialist Yumiko Uchima before heading to lunch at Havana's Restaurant and running into Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Gladding, garrison commander of Torii Station, who graciously offered any support necessary to make the June trip a success.

As Dan and Mel continued filling themselves up with the Mexican buffet, I called fellow Yomitan resident and former Okinawa Hawai'i Kyōkai director, Masaji Matsuda, to see if he was available to meet since he has been so instrumental in bridging the Hawai'i-Okinawa community together. The Momohara brothers' first day continued as we drove off to Masaji's house in Takashiho where we met him on the steps covered by his *hisuikazura* (jade vines) that were starting to bloom its greenish blue flowers.



Doris and Stanley Momohara at hakamairi in 1996.
(Photo by Daniel Momohara)

During our *yuntaku* session in the living room with Masaji and his wife, Etsuko, I explained about the Momohara haka and the reason for Dan and Mel's visit. I asked if he could call the Sobe Kuchō to schedule an *aisatsu* with him, and Masaji's quick action landed us an appointment just a short while later that afternoon. Once again we hurried off to head for the Sobe Kōminkan where we met Tōru Uechi, who was another key individual as Torii Station is located in Sobe and base access for those families with haka on the U.S. Army base are coordinated through the Sobe Kuchō. The picture became clearer to the Momohara brothers about how different individuals are intricately connected with each other in the community. In Uza for *omiyage* shopping, the Yomitan

Marty continued his clean up work of the haka the next day so Dan, Mel and I planned on visiting the site again. We were pleasantly surprised that Uncle Sōsuke showed up at the Royal Hotel unannounced before I arrived to see his Kaua'i nephews. The timing was perfect since I could also escort him on base to check out the haka, which he hadn't seen in years. Dan had explained to me family discussions between Hawai'i and Okinawa about the transfer of title of the haka to the Momohara brothers. Auntie Sueko Teruya in Zakimi, Yomitan had ownership of the haka and the *kenrishi* (certificate of title) so I asked Uncle Sōsuke if he could set up a meeting with her. Before it was even lunchtime, we were on Auntie Sueko's doorstep and then back at the Sobe Kōminkan meeting with Tōru Uechi for another *aisatsu* to connect more dots.



Original haka in limestone cave. (Photo by Daniel Momohara)

It's a good thing we were able to meet with Auntie Sueko, who's been wanting to hand over the title of the haka to the Momohara brothers, because we made several visits to an office in Yomitan that handles such property transfers. It was quite a learning curve for me as well since it was the first time for me to help facilitate something like this. While Uncle Sōsuke worked with Auntie Sueko over the next several weeks regarding documents that she needed to submit, I acted as the go-between for Dan and Mel for the documents that they needed to submit, which included copies of photo identification and powers of attorney.

Not everything was business. I was able to get the Momohara brothers around Yomitan to Okashigoten

Dentō Kōgei Sōgō Center (traditional crafts center) in Zakimi, and my late Okinawan brother's *kōbō* (studio) in Yachimun No Sato Pottery Village. Dan and Mel were also able to experience some local flavors including seafood at Toya Gyokō (fishing port), Okinawa soba at Kinchichi Soba in Kina and the menu at Izakaya Suishin in Sobe.

The 11-day trip went by quickly, but I remained in contact with the Momohara brothers as the *meigi henkō* (name change) on the *kenrishi* and English translations were completed as well as painting and concrete repair work to the haka. Everything was set for the family's June trip.



Mel and Dan enjoying a bowl of Kinchichi Soba in Kina, Yomitan. (Photo by Colin Sewake)

On Sunday, June 11, Dan and Mel returned with eight family members who were on their first visit to Okinawa. I picked up the two brothers the next morning so that they could inspect the haka site once again and make sure the door could be opened. It was a good thing we did as a tropical storm that recently passed had left the haka covered with leaves and small debris. After that, we visited the Yomitan office that handles *gunyōchi* (U.S. military property) matters and the Sobe Kōminkan for a final coordination meeting with Uechi Kuchō.

We returned the next day to wash down the haka with the assistance of the heavy rains that finally came during this dry *tsuyu* rainy season. The hot bowls of ramen for lunch before taking them back to Naha helped us to warm up our soaking wet bodies.

The big day finally came. I headed down to Naha with the Sobe Kōminkan bus driver to pick up the eager family of 10 members. When we made our way back to Torii Station, Uncle Sōsuke and Auntie Sueko were waiting for us and boarded the bus. We arrived at the site, set up the pop up canopy that Marty loaned us, which came in handy because of the continued heavy rains and worked on opening the heavy door. Uechi Kuchō arrived a short while later. Once opened, Mel placed the urns with partial ashes of their father and mother on the shelves along with other Okinawa Momohara relatives. While the haka was still open, each family took turns taking a peek

Dan also had similar comments. "We carried our parents' ashes back to Okinawa because we hold and

inside before closing the door, decorating the vases with flowers and lighting *senkō* incense sticks. Dan's youngest son, Nathan, offered a Christian prayer in accordance with his grandparents' spiritual faith to close the event.

Our group boarded the bus and headed to lunch at Club Havana's on base where lieutenant colonel Gladding, Yumiko and Yoshua Andersson also from the community relations office, and my wife, Keiko, joined us. Dan recognized and thanked Lieutenant Colonel Gladding, Yumiko, Yoshua and Uechi Kuchō for the outstanding support provided to complete his parents' wishes.

From there we headed to the Yomitan Sonyakuba (village office) for an *aisatsu* greeting with Mayor Denjitsu Ishimine. My brain worked to process information in both Japanese and English as I translated for both sides while media representatives from the Okinawa Times, Ryūkyū Shimpo newspapers and FM Yomitan attentively listened in. Mayor Ishimine emphasized the importance of the connection between Yomitan and descendants of Hawai'i and worldwide Okinawan immigrants and *chimumukuru*, the Okinawan version of the Hawaiian aloha spirit.



Urns with partial ashes of Doris and Stanley Momohara.
(Photo by Colin Sewake)

keep the Okinawa spirit in our hearts. For us being Sansei, this spirit is still very strong, and it binds us back to Okinawa. We were not taught this or lectured by our parents or grandparents. It is in our DNA, and this connects our mind, heart and body to carry on those traditions of compassion, kindness, goodness and gratitude that make us so unique in the way we live our lives no matter how distant we are from Okinawa or how distant we have grown in our generations."

Mission accomplished. Welcome home to your ancestral homeland, Mom and Dad.
Colin Sewake is a keiki o ka 'āina from Wahiawā, who was assigned to Kadena Air Base in Okinawa in December 1994 to fulfill his U.S. Air Force ROTC commitment. There, he met his future wife, Keiko, and decided to make Okinawa his permanent home. Colin is now retired from the Air Force and the Air Force Reserves. He and Keiko
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