



SYSTEM FOR FINDING RELATIVES

- OPL/OGSH research to kōminkan/relative

TIMELINES

- lead time to visiting Okinawa
- time to coordinate and meet with respective individuals

DOCUMENTATION

- info pkg/family tree
- meeting relatives

RELATIONSHIP

- exchange communications

OGSH

2024
February

OGSH
PO Box 894779
Mililani, Hawaii 96789
OGSHnews@gmail.com

Message from Jackie and Ken
Interim Presidents



Intro for February OGSH Meeting

The Year of the Dragon is upon us. The dragon in Chinese culture represents good fortune, strength, and health. With those auspicious signs, we look forward to what the New Year will bring. We continue to grow, eight new members joined since the end of November, three who live on the mainland. At our January meeting alone, we welcomed four new members.

At the January Board meeting, members continued the discussion with the Internet Technology (IT) and Research Committees about privacy and liability issues with having AI's database linked to the OGSH database. It was decided that we should ask the membership what is the purpose of OGSH and have discussions with OPL and HUOA.

Announcements:

- A reminder that our membership for 2024 begins January 1st and ends December 31st.
- We need a volunteer who will carry the OGSH banner at the Honolulu Festival Parade on Sunday, March 10th. The route is 1.5 miles.
- We will be sending out a survey to members to find out your interests and how we can meet your needs.
- The 2023 Uchinanchu Annual will be available for purchase at the meeting for \$7 (the cost the Club paid for the books).

Agenda

- I. Introduce new members and guests
- II. Treasurer's Report
- III. Guest Speaker: Hiroaki Hara, Okinawan Prefectural Library, will speak about the 1941 book written by Giryō Oyodomari about Okinawans living in Hawaii at that time.
- IV. Discussion on the purpose of OGSH

The Zoom portion of the meeting will end.

January 27, 2024
OGSH Meeting

Treasurer’s Report
Expense-OGSH UOY fee, 2 tables at the UOY, postage stamps,
Income-Donations, UOY tickets, Dues
Speaker: Colin Sewake
Camera: Eric Pilger
Photos: Clyde Sugimoto, Colin Sewake, and members
Transcript: David R

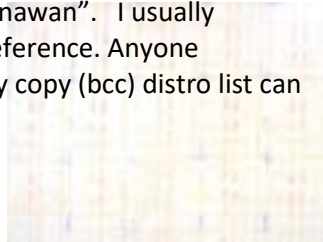


Colin’s Column

I voluntarily share my experiences in Okinawa mail whenever I come across things I think be interesting, informative, and insightful with mostly Hawai’i Uchinānchu and several others worldwide. What started out as updates about Yomitan to the Yomitan Club officers in 2016 turned into “Colin’s Column”, named by Gwen Fujie, covering “all things Okinawa/Okinawan”. I usually include pictures with my writings for visual reference. Anyone interested in subscribing to the blind courtesy copy (bcc) distro list can e-mail me at colin.sewake@icloud.com



via e-
mail



2024

February

17 OGS Meeting 9a.m.
Hiroaki Hara, from OPL

March

10 Honolulu Festival Parade
(Looking for someone to hold the OGS flag and march in the parade.)

15 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.

22,2324 10th Annual Loochoo Identity Summit

Windward Community College
Hale ‘Ākoakoa (flyer attached)

April

20 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.

May

3 Senior Health and Fitness Fair
9am, Hawaii Okinawa Center
18 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.

August 31, September 1, 2024
Okinawan Festival
Hawaii Convention Center

OGSH Meeting January 27, 2024
Speaker: Colin Sewake

I like to say Happy New Year. I can’t believe a whole month has gone by and its also been one year since I’ve been here. I’d like to congratulate the 2024 HUOA Executive Committee. A job well done on that. I’d like to give a shout out to the HUOA Heritage Tour to Okinawa. A lot of them were first timers who got to see their culture, history, and language. When I was here, David Arakawa invited me to lunch and I thought it was just me and his UH law school classmate but it was a surprise because there were 16 of us at Kam Bowl and it was good to see there were tour members and everyone had a great time in Okinawa and we were able to get together again. It was nice to see the faces on this side.

For those of you who don’t know who I am, I am a 1989 graduate of Leilehua High School and a 1994 graduate of the University of Hawaii. I studied for my Education degree but never became a teacher. I was in the Air Force ROTC program and got assigned to Kadena Airbase. I graduated in May 1994 and requested for assignment in Japan. I am not Uchinanchu but from Hiroshima. I wanted to find my relatives and be immersed in the culture. I was assigned to Kadena Air Base. At that time, I didn’t know anything about Okinawa. I thought I was going to Tokyo. When I got to Okinawa, I met my future wife there and we were married in 1996. I got out of active duty in 1998 and went into the reserves. I made my home in Nagahama, Yomitan, Okinawa in 1999 and became a permanent resident of Japan. I didn’t know about the Okinawans in Hawaii nor of HUOA. I didn't know about OGS till 2016. Our relationship is still new and I was learning about OGS’s activities, what you do, and who is doing what.

One thing I got involved with was helping in genealogy, where you would look for your roots, your relatives in Okinawa. In 2016, I started my involvement with the Hawaiian Okinawan community through the Yomitan Club. Gwen Fujie introduced me to the officers and became friends with them. I met Linda Takushi's relative and her husband Masaji Matsuda. He was part of the Okinawa/Hawaii Kyokai Association. He mentioned he had the Uchinanchu Taikai this year and what would want me to do. He had just met someone from the Okinawan Prefectural Library and would like help in putting together a genealogical service table (booth) where visiting Uchinanchu can look for information regarding their Issei immigrants' relatives. I was helping to translate for that and I got more involved with OPL and OGS. So actually, the first OPL/OGS meeting took place at my house on my kitchen table in February 2017. I didn't have WIFI so I had them come to my house because my wife is working and the kids are at school. We talked and introduced ourselves to each other. That's how I got involved. People contact me and I go out and find out what information I can.



This picture is of my friend from Leilehua High School. We connected on Facebook. Her roots are from Izena Island. There is a picture in Facebook and she says that is her cousin. So, I go back and ask if your cousin is from Wahiawa, went to Leilehua, etc. She says that's her family. So, I asked Valdean Kogachi if she's been to Okinawa and she hasn't. So, I tell her

she needs to come and I'll take her to Izena. In March of last year, she came on a tour and I scheduled her a trip to Izena. So, this picture is of us staying at her aunty and uncle's minshuku (Japanese style Bed and Breakfast). Her uncle is looking at pictures that she brought. I asked her uncle if he could take us



around. He took us around the island which took about 30 minutes. She visited their family haka. I don't know who is in there or their relationship.



The next day, we went to Yoshiyaki Sushi Restaurant in Seitan. He is from Seitan and he moved to Hawaii in 1971 and stayed in Wahiawa with relatives who were here. He then went to the mainland and worked at a sushi restaurant in Hollywood for 10 years and because of that, he got to know actors, educators, musicians, politicians and others. He returned to Okinawa and opened his restaurant. The walls

of the restaurant are covered with pictures of famous people like Danny Glover, Tiger Woods, military generals that come through Okinawa, former prime minister Abe and others. I met Amori-sho, who is the 23rd generation Shoan. He comes to Okinawa once in a while and I was able to meet him. When I was at the Kadena Special Olympics, he took Tom Arnold, Akebono, Konishiki, and I was able to take Kalapana and all of their pictures are on the wall. She already knew her relatives, so there was no research involved. I wanted her to come to Okinawa to introduce her to her relatives. She couldn't be here with us this morning because she is on the Big Island.

The second case I'd like to talk about is Frances Lum, who is a Higa. David Arakawa contacted me before the Heritage Tour last year and told me about her and she sent me her information. I went out to Nakagusuku Ishado area and went to the Kominkan (Community Center). Every municipality, you have these different wards and each has a community center. Not every center is open 40 hours a week. So, I show up on a weekday, the office is closed, it's mid-morning and there is a



paper taped to the door saying if you need assistance to call the Daikichikaicho. So, I'm sitting in the parking lot and I call that number, explaining to the person that answered that I'm a Hawaii guy, not Okinawan but I live here helping these Hawaii Uchinanchu people and somebody is trying to find their Ishado roots. He tells me, "Chotto matte" and he comes in from the farm field. I show him everything I have. He takes out his map and it is the same map I got from the Okinawan Prefectural Library (OPL). He has some area circled and tells me that this is where the houses were. He calls a relative and explains to her about me, but we couldn't meet. She recognized those village residents and asked if I could come back on Thursday and said I would. I go home and come back 2 days later and they're doing this party thing every month and what not. So, their relatives came and I got to meet them. I introduced myself and explained the situation that their relatives are coming to Okinawa on a Heritage tour and want to meet them. So, we did meet at their house while they, the Frances were on the Heritage tour. I think Frances's relative's name was Toshio Higa. He shared about family things. In the picture, that is her daughter, who spoke very good English. What really helped is that Frances had a picture of her dad wrote the yago on a piece of paper. She took a picture of that and sent it to me (Colin). I took it back to them, it's from the yago and they were able to identify all that. They're not direct relatives from that same line, but they are relatives none the less. The yago where her relatives lived, they all moved to Argentina, so that house is no longer there. There are no Higas currently living there. But I was able to hook her up with another cousin. They are not direct relatives from the same line, but they are relatives none the less. That was the Ishado Nakagusuku.

Per David Arakawa's suggestion: a heartwarming story of saving their grandmother during World War II. This account came about as we were talking to the family and sharing stories. Grandma, during the war time didn't want to leave. Everybody is evacuating, getting out, getting their things together to get away from danger. Grandma didn't want to go, so she was left behind. The whole family went to Yanbaru and grandma remained by herself, waiting for the war to come to her. She resigned herself to her fate. Frances Higa Lum's family, her branch of the family saw her there and told her they were not leaving her there. So, they just picked her up and physically took her to Yanbaru. They took her away from the war and saved her life. So, the 2 families were forever tied together, even though they are different branches of the family. They are together because one side, Frances's family, saved grandma's life during the war. At that luncheon where we met at Toshio Higa. It was the first time Frances spoke of that event. If it wasn't for Colin's work in setting up this meeting, no one else would know of this story.



The last case I would like to talk about is the Karatsu family from California, relatives of Gwen. They explained to me what their background was and who they are trying to find. They contacted OGSB and was able to get a printout of database. They sent that to me. Their mom's dad and mom are both from Nago. The dad is from Sukuta area, a little south of Nago, someplace I've never been to in the 29 years I lived in Okinawa. The mom is from Miyahira, further north. I took their information and went to Sukuta. The roads are so narrow, my son's car could barely fit on the road. It was like a hundred years

ago. So, I parked my car and got on foot and started walking through that area. I followed my iphone and it leads me to this house. This can't be the Kominkan, this is somebody's house. So, I am just walking all around and it looked like I was going to steal something. I thought about it and walked toward the new building I just saw. As I was heading there, a lady came walking out and she's talking on her phone to a guy at the Kominkan. I show up and she asks me if I needed help. I tell her I am not Uchinanchu, I live here, I am trying to help out these Hawaii people and can you help me. She invited me in and doesn't even introduce me to the secretary. She gives the information and they start researching. She goes on the intercom system and calls for such and such Tamaki, says there is a Hawaii customer looking for you. A minute later, this guy shows up and again, no introduction. After all this, no connection could be made. So, I thank them and if you find anything to let me know. Then the lady tells me that there are elder ladies who talk story at the sports field where I parked my car and I should meet them. I am willing to talk to anybody from that generation. Since my car was not at the Kominkan, the lady offered to drive me to the sports field. I was able to talk to the ladies, but they did not know anything.

When I talk to local people, I bust out as much Uchinaaguchi as I can, so it doesn't sound like I just lived there for 2 years. I tell the lady that I am going to the village office and was able to talk to a man named Oshiro. He tried to help me and I told him I'm going to eat lunch and meet back at 1pm. The lady was still with me and offered me 2 mikan (tangerine) from her car. I take them and I leave. So, this is an Okinawan country setting, laid back, they don't even know me, I don't know them. It reminded me of old Hawaii, where we talk to whomever. It's a friendly setting. So, anyway, I eat lunch and return to the Nago City office and I meet with Oshiro-san. He introduced me to another staff member who speaks English and Spanish. I meet her and give them my House Card. I don't call it a business card because I am not in business anymore. I'm at home washing dishes. I tell them if they find anything, to call me.

I go to Tokyo and see my daughter. I return to Okinawa and get an email that is 'CC' copy saying that Kominkan found more information. In their records, there is a story of their grandfather going to California and meeting a guy who takes him to a store where Uchinanchus went to shop and connect and meet with each other. So, the Karatsu family came to Okinawa and I hadn't the time to go back to the Kominkan, but I had planned to take them there to thank the Kominkan people. So, when we went there to thank them, I mentioned that I had more information from the library and if they could take a look at it. Their chief was there. I did not meet him the first time. He takes a look and goes and take a book off the shelf. Looks through it and makes a connection and he calls that relative (Shigeharu) who was busy. He said he was busy but could meet later. The chief asked if we could come back later. So, I told him I was going to take the family around to see the village and show them where their grandfather lived and be back in a couple of hours. As we are coming back to the Kominkan, I get a call that they want me back because he is here. I said we'll be there in 2 minutes. I put my phone down, turned around and Shigeharu is standing in front of me. So, he already knew that they were his relatives. We go to the Kominkan and do introductions. In the picture, Shigeharu is on the bottom right and his cousin on the left. In the middle are Karen and Wayne, on the right is Kyra (Wayne's daughter).

The next night, we went to dinner, to get together with everyone. We went to this sushi izakaya that Shigeharu likes to hang out at. We get there and I thought it was just going to be a couple of sons and their wives and that's it. We show up and there is like all the kids and that was great. In the picture, that is us at the front and everyone else in the back. It was an awesome meeting. We were the only ones at the sushi izakaya that night, so I think we had the whole place to ourselves.





Since Wayne and Kyra are on our Zoom call, I thought I'd give them a chance to talk about what their thoughts were going through this whole process and their emotions were meeting relatives for the first time. I remember what it was like to meet for the first time when I met the Sewake relatives in 1999 in Fukuoka, 5 years after I came to Okinawa. So, what I try to do is help others to connect. I can't forget the feeling. Having learned your whole life growing up here that you are Japanese-American, we're from this, Samurai this, grandma came from here and hearing all these things at parties and get-togethers. I finally get to Okinawa and meet my relatives. So, I understand the feeling, this side, with you folks wanting to meet your relatives. I didn't realize that a lot of people who haven't been to Japan, so it is exciting to go for the first time.

Wayne: I want to thank you for setting up the meeting for us. Kyra was in Tokyo doing a study abroad and at the end of the semester, we thought we'd go to Okinawa as a kind of reward. We were just going to hang out at the beach and go to some restaurants. So, we contacted Colin through Gwen, looking for restaurant recommendations. My sister wanted to listen to some Okinawan music, so we thought we could ask Colin for that, also. Another thing we were concerned about is how we were going to get around because there were 5 of us and tons of luggage. We wanted to rent a minivan but were afraid to drive because of the narrow roads. Colin volunteered to drive, which was great. Basically what we wanted to do was just hang out at the beach. But that all changed when we met Colin. We mentioned that we were interested in genealogy, finding out the village where my grandfather came from. Colin asked if we wanted to meet some relatives and we thought it was kind of out of the realm of possibility because it's been so long. Through the OGS, we got my grandfather's address. We thought that it would be great to see where my grandfather lived. We never thought we would meet up with relatives. We did meet at the Kominkan and it was like out of a reality TV show. Shigeharu had a huge smile on his face when he saw us. One of the first things he said was that he was waiting for us. His grandfather was living in Sukuta when my father came to America. So, my grandfather was sending money back to Okinawa to help build a roof, since it was a grass roof. So they put a concrete roof over their house. My grandfather also sent money to buy kimonos for Shigeharu and his cousin. He was 5 or 7 years old at that time and he still had that picture that he showed me, so he was very grateful to my grandfather. That is something we would never have known about him sending money back to Okinawa, which helped them live. That is one of the main takeaways is that they were looking for us, as we were looking for them. After my grandfather left, they were wondering what happened to his descendants, just as we were looking for our ancestors. I thought it was cool that we could link those 2 generations. The other takeaway is how difficult it must have been to come to America; to Hawaii, Mexico. It was just amazing. Something I will always remember.



Kyra Karatsu: I've been interested in genealogy research for about 4 years. It kind of started during the pandemic. I started looking around on the web. I'm half Japanese. For my dad's side of the family, there wasn't much information available on the web and a lot of it had to be translated. I was always interested in going to Japan to see for myself what was out there. So, I had this opportunity to study for a couple of months in Tokyo at ICU (International Christian University) from August to November. It was to study, but also to find what I could about my roots and where my family came from. This was all unfolding with my dad talking to Colin and I was just listening in the background. I had compiled a lot of research that ended up being helpful in this journey. I felt thankful that I put in this work, but also that there was stuff already out there that I wasn't able to find through

OGS. There was information out there that I spent two, three, four years trying to find and OGS had it and it was such a relief to see all these puzzle pieces coming together. At the end of the trip, we went to Okinawa not expecting much. Once we met all the relatives, my saying was, "Who do they remind us of?" One of my cousins did a Photoshop of Shigeharu's hair on different relatives to see who does he look like. Meeting with them was such a surreal experience. When we went to Okinawa and said these were all my cousin, it was an unique experience. I was fortunate enough to learn enough Japanese to communicate with them. One of my cousins also did a study abroad at Lodi, California, in the middle of nowhere. So, all in all, I have this connection now, that I would never have dreamed of.

Imelda: One word I'll start with is "Amazing." Just watching it all unfold and starting with them not knowing anybody in Okinawa and walking into a room full of people who were very warm and welcoming. Even I felt being part of the family and I definitely don't look like one of the family. You can tell that they are nice people to the core. I would be glad to be related to any of those people. I would be proud to say that they are my family. I come from a very extended family. I'm Irish and we have strong roots. It's important to know who you are and where you came from. Where you came from is who you are. I was very moved by the whole thing and it was the highlight of the whole trip.



I've prepared some notes that I want to share with you of my perspective of being there, seeing things, helping out, and getting involved. Four things I want to talk about. The first is "System for finding relatives." What I learned since being involved and volunteering for the OPL and OGSH efforts is that OPL has their Immigrant Database that they share with OGSH and the OPL researchers do the research and create a printout that shows your grandpa, grandma, names, address, passport number, date passport was issued, date they left Japan, etc. The question is, "What happens after that?" There is no system in place for taking the 'customer' down to try to meet the relative at the municipality or Kominkan. So, for right now, I am doing it on my own time. There is no actual system in place, so that is something I want to talk to the OGSH leadership about. There is a need for follow-up in helping to connect the relatives together. Especially if there is a language barrier, my time is limited, I don't know my way around, how to get there, and how do I find out if there are any relatives. So, this is one thing I want to have a discussion with OGSH leadership.

The second is "Timelines." Since this is mostly me just helping out, what helps me is to contact me as soon as you know you are coming to Okinawa. Don't wait 2 weeks before you come. If you're still discussing when you are coming a year or more out, let me know. Contact me as soon as you can, so I can set it up in my calendar. When I receive an inquiry, I actually go and talk in person, not call, to make an appointment. I'd like to make it personal by having a face to face meeting with the Kominkan people. It takes time to coordinate and meet with respective individuals.

The third is "Documentation." When you submit your request to me, I need your database printout, any stories or periodicals with their name. As an example, the Karatsu case, the printout from OGSH was not enough. From a story from a publication that Hiroaki Hara provided, I asked Keiko, my wife, what does it say. She starts reading the story and highlighted the names and took notes. I went back to the Kominkan and asked them to check out the names I provided. That's when they started pulling out their books and making phone calls. That's how they found Shigeharu. What is also important is the family tree that spells out the hierarchy, what number is the older brother or older sister, the order of birth. The first thing I do is establish the family relationships. It is important to translate and transcribe (take notes). It may be a large family, so have a much people take notes which can be compared later.

Relationship: I encourage everyone to keep in touch with your relatives. You might not speak Japanese and they might not speak English. But by just sending, for example, a Christmas card, it may be in English and they may send you one in Japanese, but it is still a relationship. What I noticed by helping these people out, they may have a card or letter sent to them, in English from Hawaii. They can't read it, but they still keep it. They are your relatives, so keep up the relationship. Use the new technology for your benefit.

One last thought I want to leave with you...you're here in Hawaii and your relatives are in Okinawa. I'm not Okinawan. They call me Uchinanbuku. I'm also a part of the Okinawan family. This is our world. It is up to us to preserve our legacy, our history, our culture, our relationships. So, I encourage everyone to get involved and to get others involved, which is why I invited Chase and I hope Chase invites other younger Okinawans in Hawaii to participate in HUOA and get involved with OGSH, so that this does not die out. As much as I am doing this, one day will come when I can't continue to do this. I hope my efforts were not in vain and were passed on to you. This is not for me, but for you and the next generation to carry on. So, it is up to us to preserve this. It doesn't matter how much or how little you know, how active or inactive you are, it is important to do your part.

SYSTEM FOR FINDING RELATIVES

- OPL/OGSH research to kōminkan/relative

TIMELINES

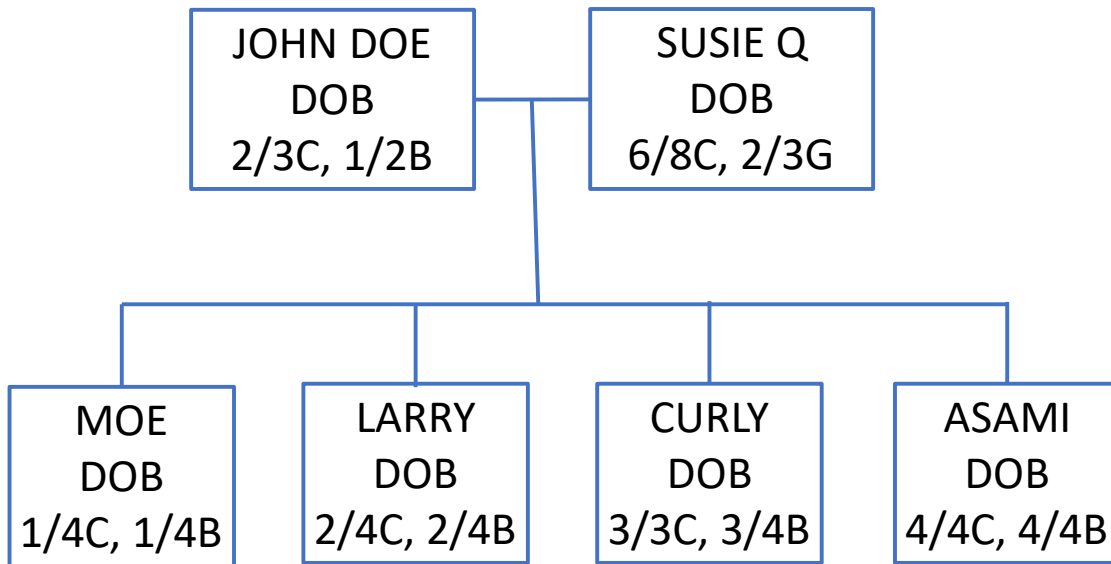
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- meeting relatives

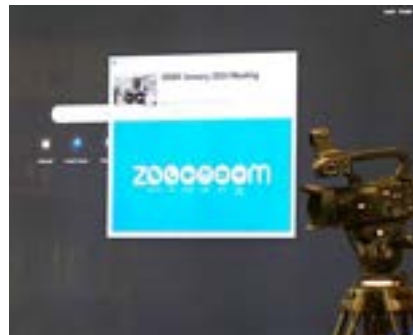
RELATIONSHIP

- exchange communications



JOHN DOE, DOB, 2/3C, 1/2B = second of third child, one of two boys







 Ukwanshin Kabudan presents

10th Annual Loochoo Identity Summit

Munugatai:

How We Remember
How We Share
How We Create

March 22 thru 24, 2024

Hale 'Ākoakoa

Windward Community College

Details & Registration:

loochooidentity.org

Contact Us:

events@ukwanshinkabudan.org



For those of us who are separated from our ancestral homelands by both generational time and geographic space, stories are often the only connections we have left. In Okinawan, the word for "story" — *munugatai* — also means conversation or dialogue. In this way, stories are not simply recollections of past events, people, or places, but a vital means of communication that helps build relationships with others and the world around us. The understandings we gain from *munugatai*, however, depend heavily on the lens through which we view the information presented to us. Therefore, as we engage in *munugatai* on a daily basis, we constantly rewrite our own stories and co-create stories with others. Come join us for our 10th Loochoo Identity Summit as we delve into the ways we remember, share, and create stories and conversations together.



OKINAWAN GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY OF HAWAII, Est. 1993

PO Box 894779, Mililani, Hawaii 96789

Email: ogshnews@gmail.com

To promote, preserve and perpetuate our Okinawan family heritage through education, research, and networking.

Date: _____

Name: _____ Mailing Address: _____

City, State and Zip Code: _____ Birth Year: _____

Preferred Contact Number: _____ Email Address: _____

(To receive newsletters/updates)

I would enjoy participating in the following activities/committees:

- Committees: Food; Aloha; Bonenkai; Okinawan Festival
- Group Projects: Short stories, Library; Bookmarks; Presentations; Fundraising
- Information Technology: Computer; Data base; Graphic Arts
- Japanese/English Translation
- Leadership (OGSH Officers)
- Other: _____

How did you learn about OGSH?

- Another Okinawan organization
- HUAO
- OSGH event
- Okinawan Festival
- Word of Mouth
- Other _____

OGSH MEMBERSHIP: Membership year is from January to December.	
\$10 Annual Dues	\$
Donation	\$
Total Due:	\$

Payment options for OGSH Membership Dues:

For mail-in:

1. Please complete membership form
2. Write check payable to OGSH
3. Mail completed membership form and check to:

OGSH

PO Box 984779

Mililani, HI 96789

Or give to Treasurer at the Membership meeting

To pay via PayPal:

1. Submit the completed membership form
2. Go to [Annual Membership | PayPal](#) .