



OGSH  
 PO BOX 894779  
 Mililani, Hawai'i 96789  
 Email: ogshnews@gmail.com

Upcoming Speakers for OGSB Monthly Meetings

June 15, 2024

Speaker: Ty Wakahiro, CA Polytechnic University, Pomona student  
 2023 National Day - Immigration History Award winner

Topic: "Jikoen Hongwanji's Role in supporting Hawaii's Okinawans"

July 20, 2024

Speaker: Riuping Lu, UH Linguistics student from Beijing

Topic: "Ryukyu Kingdom and Qing Dynasty Relations"

August 17, 2024

Speaker: Dr. Kaori Akiyama, Research Fellow

International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Kyoto

Topic: "Hardships of Okinawan POWs in Hawaii during and after WWII"



**MAY  
 2024**



Message from JackieToma  
 Interim President



**Intro for May OGSB Meeting**

The word for the month is Chibariyo. Chibariyo can mean *Do Your Best, Never Give Up, or Go for it*. I've decided to CHIBARIYO and declare that I am running for President of the Okinawan Genealogy Society of Hawaii (OGSH) for the balance of the term ending December 31, 2025. I was fortunate to experience the challenges and opportunities facing OGSB as Interim Co-President with Ken Kamiya since January of this year. The April retreat with an expanded Board which resulted in our Vision and Expectations convinced me that I wanted to lead our organization going forward. I am fortunate to have knowledgeable Board members, Committee Chairs, and volunteers to support me. Mifaiyuu.

**MAY AGENDA**

- I. Welcome - Ken Kamiya
- II. Introduce new members and guests - Kay Ikei
- III. Treasurer's Report – Ginny Tully
- IV. Special Election for President - Ken Kamiya
- V. Announcements – Jackie Toma
- VI. Guest Speakers: Rodney and Lahapa Ichimura, Family Search genealogy database
- VII. Update on discussion about Lew Chew database with OPL and HUOA – Jackie
- VIII. Zoom portion of the meeting will end. Thank you to all on Zoom.
- IX. BREAK
- X. After the break, members present will divide into the Bonenkai and Okinawan Festival Committees. The Research Team will be available after the break to provide in-person genealogy research assistance. The OGSB Genealogy Service form is attached, please bring with you if you will be talking with a member from the Research Team.



Hawaii Okinawa Center – Takakura Okinawa Garden

April 20, 2024  
OGSH Meeting

Treasurer’s Report as of  
April 17, 2024  
Expense-Office supplies; bentos for  
planning meeting  
Income-dues, donation, book sales  
Speaker: Sally Tsuda  
OGSH Research Team  
Camera: David Shinsato  
Photos: Clyde Uchima and  
members  
Transcript: David R



## 2024

### May

18 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.  
24 and 31 Jikoen Bon Dance Practice 7-9pm  
Jikoen Hongwanji  
25 and 26 Hawaii Okinawan  
Invitational Golf Tournament

### June

7, 14, and 28 Jikoen Bon Dance Practice 7-9pm  
Jikoen Hongwanji  
15 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.  
Speaker – Ty Wakahiro

### July

5 and 13 Jikoen Bon Dance Practice 7-9pm  
Jikoen Hongwanji  
14 HUOA Legacy Award, 10 a.m.  
Sheraton Waikiki  
20 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.  
Speaker – Riuping Lu  
Jikoen Bon Dance 5 p.m.

### August

17 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.  
Speaker – Dr. Kaori Akiyama

### August 31, September 1, 2024

Okinawan Festival  
Hawaii Convention Center

### September

TBA  
21 Maui Okinawan Festival

### October

19 OGS Meeting 9 a.m.

### November

16 Bonenkai  
Hawaii Okinawa Center  
Legacy Ballroom

### December

No Meeting  
Happy Holidays

## 2025

Short Introduction by Kay

Sally has been with us for a long time. She has an Uchinachu of the Year (UOY) and we thank her for all her help.

Sally



For those of you who don't know me, I am Sally Tsuda. There are many faces I don't recognize, maybe because of the last 7 or 8 months, I've been looking thru life through dirty windows because my cataracts never got fixed until last February. So, now I can see people's faces, their smile, green trees and I can even see raindrops. You never know what you miss till something happens to you. So, I appreciate life right now.

What I thought about what I would do, is to share what our research team does. Our research team is very small. Shigeru is our translator. We have to protect him vigorously because he can speak, write, and read Japanese and is a historian on Okinawa. People that do the actual research are Claire and myself. Lynn is our newest member. So,

whatever I say is a promotion to get people interested in joining. We do have one person who is not here, Anne, she helps us with the computer because we are not computer experts. Rodney is our backup. He is always with us, every Friday. We can talk to him and he gives us advice because he is knowledgeable about HUOA, OGSH, and this whole facility.

Right now, we have 7 requests. People are saying, we are interested in going to Okinawa and can you get me some information about grandparents, relatives, whatever. We have 7 of those requests. With each request, we give them the OGSH form to complete. Our team in January did an assessment of our festival and we realized that our cliental they are getting younger. The people are getting younger and asking more questions. So, we wondered, how can we target those specific questions they are asking. We came up with a flowchart. If they asked who is my grandfather, how can I find out information about him. If they ask I want to get to Okinawa, what do I need to know. Someone says I just found out that I am Okinawan, how do I get started. With all these questions, we took the most common questions and made a flowchart for our new, beginning researchers. First you do this till completion and then do the next step and so on till the question is answered. Anybody here can do this. We are not doing anything magical. We take what we feel is needed to know and how to get started. We found out with our form, for everyone who needs assistance, that there are 3 basic things we need to know, the name of the person, the village they came from, and their birthday, we will be able to get into the data base and get information enough to get started. We make sure each client that makes a request understand this is a partnership. After we get a request and find out who they are looking for, the name, village, and age with the date of birth, then we go into the database. We have 2 sources of database information: our own, OGSH's database, which was developed over 17 years because we do not speak Japanese and had to have information translated and the other database we use is OPL's, (Okinawan Prefectural Library) It is best to look at both databases, as there may be missing information in one or the other.

At this point, she has a printout of a database that she passes out. I arbitrarily picked someone's information from OPL's database. When you look at a database, make sure you know which database you are using. OPL's database goes from 1904 to 1937. This printout provides enough information for us to get started. When you look at a database, make sure you look at the name. What you are looking for is specifically the Kanji to make sure all the people with that same name has the same Kanji writing. If not, then it is 2 different people. So, you will need to know the Kanji of the specific person you are looking for. The US National Genealogical Society has a book and it recommends that there be at least 3 different sources of similar information for validation. For us, the most part we always say, if the family says so and so's name is

this way and born in 1894, we go with the family because they are the real source of information, until you can clarify. Back to the database printout, if you look at number 4 Asato and number 5 Asato, both are Choyu, same Kanji, but if you go across, the house lot number is different. If the house lot number is the same, you can expect they probably came from the same household. If you notice for numbers 4 and 5, you see different house lot numbers, they're similar. If you go across, you'll find they are probably from the same family. They just live in different lots and how does that happen. In the old days, the way Okinawa was developed, it was just open land and as people migrated, they took the land. So when you look at a database, you look at house numbers and look at everything else to see if they match. If they don't match, it's probably not the same family. Keep in mind that passport numbers change because every single trip a person makes, a new passport number is issued. So, if it is a repeat trip, you might get a different passport number. We've had people say the passport number is different and they want to know why. This is the system in Japan, a new number with each trip. We need to check each household...the head of household, number 1 son takes over, so you always have to look at relationships. If the household head's Kanji is different, even though their addresses are the same, it could mean 2 people lived on that lot and each one setup his own household, so there are 2 households on that same property. You cannot assume that same lot number, but it is 2 households on the same property. You need to look at the name and the Kanji and look at the relationships, 1<sup>st</sup> son, 2<sup>nd</sup> son, daughter-in-law.

A comment by David Kaneshiro: Addresses and locations were totally changed after the war. So, we had a hard time as we were asking for the pre-war address and coming up with differences. OPL vs. OGS database cross-referencing is very important.

Back to Sally: It's true. He is Itoman and I am Itoman. I have pre-war addresses, which I got from the city office. After the war and because Itoman was the most destroyed area, they had to change everything. They had to go back and reconstruct who lived where and whether they had to change house lot numbers. So, if you are in that position, you put parenthesis around the new one and the old one. So, in your mind, as you check the records and see the parenthesis, you know you need to double check. Okinawan genealogy is so unique and different because the old ways vs. when Japan came in and took over and changed a lot of things. So, what you assume to be is not.

A question on name changes: I had one case where the man's name is Kame and looking at the database, there are 7 named Kame but they're all females. So, who married who? I have a hard time deciding and of course a Kame male can marry a Kame female makes it even worse. There is also a difference in kanji for male and female. Also differences in Japanese way and Okinawan way. So, that gets you more confused and I use parenthesis a lot, so I will need to double check. On why do the names change, in the Ryukyuan days, only royalty had names and the commoners had warabina names or childhood names. I counted 52 warabina names, which means for example, grandfather might be Kame his number 2 son might be Kame, his grandson might be Kame, so how do you know which one you need to check. You need to check the date of birth and plot it out on a piece of paper, Write it down. For example, this one was born in 1872, this Kame was born in 1888, and this other one in 19 something. That's the only way you can differentiate who's who. It's not easy. We have lots of scratch paper. As a side note, there are no Kaneshiro name in Okinawa. It is Kinjo, but the kanji is the same. This is also true for Tamashiro, Tamaki and other names.

Just to let you know, one of our research projects based on what we experienced at the last Festival, we decided to write a book that would answer most of the questions that we were faced with during the Festival. Section one will deal with cities, towns, and villages and describe how they evolved. Section two will deal with Ryukyu names and why they are confusing and not simple. The third section will cover the social characteristics of the unique things that are Ryukuan or Okinawan, like head of household, the lineage or the idea that Okinawans are group focused, the family, the community are very important. American style is the 'individual'. It is different. We try to identify those social characteristics that are unique to Okinawans or Ryukyuan. We're still working on it.

This is my last chance to push one idea based on the work we've been doing. We're looking at facts, ancestors. Our title for our book, which came from young people like Claire and Connie. They came out with a title that says "Genealogy Connections: Past, Present, and Future". If you think about what we've been doing. The database is on our past

ancestors...a hundred years ago...when did they come in...what were they doing...what was it like then...grandparents, grandparents...it's the ancestors. We had a strategic meeting Saturday and here's this guy, pointing at Ken Kamiya, saying you've got to have values...what is the value of the people you're dealing with. I thought to myself...yes, the value. The values that I grew up with. My parents and my grandparents and the Okinawan values are different from the values of today, the present. We're getting more young people, so I want all of us to think about what has happened to the values of Ryukuan and Okinawan identity from our ancestors to our generation today. Steve Miyashiro last week, had the look on his face and you know he was going to say something. He said,"Genealogy Club, this club should be focusing on our young generation." I thought about it. I have 3 sons, 2 grandsons and as they were growing up, the Okinawan value where the household head is in charge, in control, the number one son. He tells everybody what to do. As a mother, I am thinking my boys need to stand on their own 2 feet, make decisions and never mind if 1<sup>st</sup> son, 2<sup>nd</sup> son, or 3<sup>rd</sup> son, each one needs to be independent, but you know, that is the American way. So here I'm mixing up the 2 cultures, but I thought if I die, my boys would need to survive. So, the biggest argument between my Japanese husband and myself, is doing things his way and now because he said so. I'm thinking now, we're focusing on our database, focusing on what happened a hundred years ago, and now with new cases, to look at their values. It's OK if their Okinawan-ness changes a little because we're living in Hawaii. It's different. We're not living on the mainland. We haven't been living in Okinawa, but we need to adapt. I'm going to encourage my kids and grandkids that it's OK to adapt. You're still Okinawans. We all are Okinawans. I'm standing here looking at you and thinking that each one of you must have altered something to be successful. You've got food on the table, roof over your head, money to spend on little something, take a trip. We have had to have altered ourselves. Our ancestors had done exactly the same. So, I am going ask everyone sitting here to think about your ancestors and think about the present. Your children, your grandchildren...what have you done to alter their identity, not to erase...we are all Okinawans still, no matter what. What did you altar that makes them what they are today. If you can give me anecdotes, little insights, I sure would like to put it in this book.

Comments by Colin Sewake

Technically the names aren't changed. In Japan, when we read Kanji, there is Onyomi and Kunyomi. So, it depends on how the name is read. As an example, it's Kinjo here in Okinawa, but the kanji could also be read as Kaneshiro, so it depends on how it is read. My name is Sewake and the postman read my name as Seibun. I told him my name is Sewake. So, it just depends on how the kanji is read. When I asked my wife, how do you read this name, she doesn't really know how it is read in kanji. What I am getting at, I think Shigeru would know more, is a chart could be developed that could show different meanings of certain names. For example, Momohara is actually Tobaru here and when we say Serikaku, it is Seirikaku here in Okinawa. If there is a chart, customers could look for different pronunciations of the name. This is something that may be helpful to customers. Regarding addresses, it depends on how good and what records were maintained after the war and to be known if they are prewar or after war. Sometimes OPL overlay a current map over an old map and kind of get an idea of where that house was. I've seen that done before. Because of the war, it depends on what records were maintained or not damaged.



I have a question, when customers come in, do you encourage them to do the same inquiry for genealogical research to OPL? The reason why is when they contact me, I also tell them to fill in the OPL research request form. The reason why, is in OPL, depending on their workload, if they have time, they may do further research on their database and pull out publications that their ancestors name may be in. In the case where I was helping the Kuratsu family from California, the database was not enough to go on when I went to Nago to look for their relatives. When they came here and went back for the second time, I took a PDF file from a book with a story of their relatives. I took that back to Nago and that helped identify who their relatives were. So, I encouraged them to do the OPL request.

Answer from Sally

We do not ask the client to double to OGSH and OPL because we are doing that here. We begin to gather as much data as we can. The agreement with OPL and Hiroaki was we would do what we can in finding information about the relative here in Hawaii. OPL agreed that they would try and find the information relative to Okinawa. That was the agreement. So, we do not ask the client to contact OPL until we have used up our resources. In regards to names, we use the Ryukyuu

names book that was edited by Shinzo Sakamaki of UH. There is only this one book that is in English and that is the one we use to create the bookmarks. You were saying the different spellings and pronunciations of the name, That book has it according to the years the change came out. The current book (1961) has the most current and common pronunciation of last names. When it comes to first names, your're going to find, as an example, I had one case where there were 5 different ways to pronounce the same name. The sad thing is the records, whether it's the census data, immigration data, social security death index, sometimes they use 3 different names of the same spelling. It makes research a little more difficult. But I have to explain that to the client so they can understand what does their records show. Basically, we say, go home and check what you have.

A comment from Fred

I want to clarify and explain to the young people and older members who didn't know, when you write the kanji on the immigration form, guess who is looking at the form, it is a Japanese and not an Okinawan. He sees the kanji and he puts on the paper all the "Kane" names on the paper, he puts Kaneshiro or Kinjo, for Miyashiro, it's suppose to be Miyagusuku, but he is Japanese, so all of the people in Hawaii have the wrong pronunciation of the same kanji and there is a reason for that. The young people should understand of why there is a Kaneshiro here and Kinjo in Okinawa. Miyashiro here and Miyagusuku in Okinawa. My mother is Miyagusuku in Okinawa and when she came to Hawaii, her name was Miyashiro. She use the Miyashiro name to collect Social Security and all that, everything was fine. Also, she got a paper from the Japanese Consulate that she is a Hawaii resident, issued way back in 1920. That was OK. She used that name Miyashiro all her life for Social Security, medical, and others. But the Federal Government cracked down, they needed your legal name for the Board of Health, so she couldn't renew her ID card. Her ID card had expired. They told me you had to go to the Board of Health and get her birth certificate. She outlived everybody. She lived to 102. No friends, no relatives, nobody in Hawaii could verify. She is Mitsuko Miyagusuku or Miyashiro. So, I talked to the director of health. He gave an exception. After talking to him for an hour, he told his advisor to make a birth certificate for her. They called it "delayed birth certificate". It's on record. Her birth certificate is over 100 years after. She was 102. It's a true story. Anyway, that's immaterial. But the main thing is you've got to know the reason why the kanji is pronounced either Miyashiro or Miyagusuku.



Comment by David Arakawa

First of all, I would like to thank Sally for her message on adapting and changing to make things more relevant. Along that line, there are 2 things that I'll like for us to consider. Colin talked about the state of the art...what's happening in Okinawa now. He talked about something that really helped us find the Frances Higa's family in Okinawa. We went to OGSB at the same time we went to OPL. So, Colin's suggestion to make the request at the same time. You don't have to do it through OGSB. You can go to OPL. Doing so helped us immensely because what happened was Colin, OPL, and even Masaji Matsuda were able to go to the town hall and do the research at the same time. So, we should not be telling our people, no, to not go to OPL, just finish with OGSB first, before you go to OPL. We should leave it open and adapt. We should say if you want to go to both places, go to both places at the same time because the information from OPL can help us in Hawaii by finding other members of their family they might not know in Hawaii. We should not tell them, "No, do not go to OPL. Wait until you're finish with OGSB." That's something I want to clarify. If there are more resources, the more information are possible. Ken and Jackie that is something we can work on, some kind of protocol or form, if they want to go to OPL at the same time. The second thing is when Colin is talking about the names in Okinawa, he knows what is going on in Okinawa today. So, Prof. Sakamaki's book in 1961 was state of the art. It was the encyclopedia in 1961. But to the extent things have changed and OPL and people like Colin can tell us this is how we do it now. We should be open to that because even Prof. Sakamaki, if he was alive today, he would say we should update this. So, we shouldn't be telling Colin, "Colin, no. We only do Sakamaki's one." I agree, Sakamaki's one is the Bible for us right now. But, even the Bible changes little bit when it is reinterpreted. I love your message on adaption, on change. So, we should incorporate your message and we do. When Shigeru and you helped Frances Higa on her research to find her family in Okinawa and Argentina, just because of the work of OGSB. So thank you very much.



Reply from Sally

References that you used is applicable to the period of time when it was created. So, because we were paying so much attention to ancestor's period, we tend to depend on that. Today's request, if they are coming for current information, we need to look at other resources. I need to mention that sometimes the database do not have the name of the individuals, which is what happened with this lady's case. What happens when there is no information on your database. We went to Ancestry and Family Search because there are other resources. So you have to be open on what resources are available to us and we are able to use. You cannot be locked in your mind to do it only one way. There are many ways to find information. That is why it is called research.



1850 Map of Ryukyu Kingdom



## Jon Arakaki 's Journey to Okinawa

By Jon Arakaki



It all started with a cold call to the offices of the Hawaii United Okinawa Association and Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii.

Prior to Spring of 2022, I had absolutely no interest in learning about family history and uncovering my ancestral roots. However, through a series of interconnected events, I came to realize that there was a responsibility, perhaps even an obligation, for me to research, connect with, and honor family members who preceded us and made our existence possible.

The first question: How to start? I currently reside in North Plains, Oregon, but was born and raised in Pearl City, and recalled attending a few events at the Hawaii Okinawa Center. Wouldn't they know about Okinawan history? So in late May of 2022, I made the call to their office, hoping someone would at least pick up the phone. Fortunately, Bonnie Miyashiro answered, collected a few details, graciously provided immigration information on my grandparents—and set me off on a long and winding path that culminated with the trip of a lifetime two years later.

### The Trip

Armed with the basic information provided by Bonnie, the "Beginner's Guide to Genealogy Research" booklet from Donna Nakamura, and additional documents from Al Toma, I enlisted the genealogists at Ancestry.com to obtain and translate the kosekis, and conduct additional research in Hawaii. The ultimate goal was to reconstruct the lives and tell the story of my four grandparents—Reiyei Miyashiro (Nago), Kazu Kaneshiro Miyashiro (Itoman), Giujin Arakaki (Kuba), and Matsu Arakaki (Kuba).

Over the next 18 months, I collected a fair number of official documents, newspaper articles, and family photographs, and received additional assistance from the staffs at the Okinawan Genealogical Society of Hawaii, the Consulate General of Japan in Honolulu, the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, and the Okinawa Prefectural Library (Naha). But there's only so much you can do from 5800 miles away, so in October of 2023, I signed-up for the Personal Heritage Journeys program, a joint venture between Ancestry (providing research and a genealogist/translator) and Kensington Tours (providing a tour guide/translator, private driver, and handling of the hotel/flight arrangements). After six months of planning and plotting, a couple of Zoom sessions, and a ton of emails, it was showtime.

First stop was Pearl City, to visit my mother and sister for two days. Then, I departed from HNL on April 6, had a four-hour layover in Tokyo, and headed down to Japan's southernmost prefecture with a combination of excitement and anxiety. Would I add to the information I had already gathered? Could I overcome the language barrier? What if I didn't like the local food?

### Monday, April 8, 2024

This was my only totally free day, as I planned to recover from the flight and adjust to the time change. Prior to the trip, I sent a message to Hiroaki Hara, a librarian at the Okinawa Prefecture Library (Naha), asking about the possibility of a visit to his institution on Monday. I didn't know him, but had seen his Zoom presentation at one of the OGS's monthly meetings. Not only did Hiro conduct a personal tour of the library, with a focus on the Hawaii Immigration section, he also took me to dinner at a local restaurant, as we discussed the challenges of Okinawan genealogical research.

On a side note, I became slightly obsessed with the Kokusai Dori area on this first day, walking up and down the main drag, as well as the covered side streets, three times.



Tuesday, April 9, 2024

t breakfast, I met Yuzo Ochiai, a genealogist from Osaka assigned by Ancestry. Even though this was our first face-to-face meeting, we had a pre-existing relationship, as Yuzo obtained and translated my two kosekis, and we communicated regularly once I committed to the trip.

We decided to spend the day in Itoman, searching for relatives or information on my maternal grandmother, Kazu Kaneshiro Miyashiro. I started the day with just a pre-WWII address, a bunch of photos, and absolutely no hope. Expectations were so low, I didn't even bring along any "omiyage" cookies and candies to hand out. What was the use? It's not like we were going to find family members or actually receive assistance from total strangers.

After literally knocking on neighborhood doors and speaking to residents, with no luck, we knew the key was finding people who could identify names and faces from the 1940s-1950s. The exact details of what happened over the next hour would be too long for

this newsletter article, and they'd seemingly appear to be ripped off from the pages of a fictional work. But in summary, a couple who owned a local hardware store recognized someone in a photo and provided an address, which led to four strangers supplying us with information and a cell phone number, which led to several phone conversations, which led to meeting two of my cousins by 6:30 PM that night.

Ultimately, Tatsuru Tamazawa agreed to meet us for coffee, and brought along his older sister Junko Tamazawa Oshiro. It was a surreal experience, as we all started the day not knowing of the others' existence. We exchanged information and determined how we were related, facilitated by Yuzo's translation. To top things off, I was carrying around a 1951 photo of a family, with no idea of exactly who they were, or how we were related. It turned out the baby girl in the image was Junko. We made preliminary plans to meet again at the end of the week.

First lesson of the day: You just never know what's possible when strangers are willing to help. Second lesson: Having a private car and driver to navigate the sudden twists and turns of this type of research proved to be indispensable, not only on this day, but for the entire trip.



*My second cousins, brother and sister Tatsuru Tamazawa and Junko Oshiro Tamazawa of Naha. At the start of the day, they didn't know I existed...and vice-versa.*



*A 1951 photo of Junko as a baby on her mother's lap. I had this for nearly two years, and didn't know who the family was, or how we were related.*

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

This day was dedicated to visiting Kuba village in Nakagusuku, including plans to get together with a relative of my paternal grandfather, Giujin Arakaki. Yuzo had also made an appointment at the Gosamaru Historical Materials Library, to meet with curators Chiaki Hayase and Daisuke Takushi, who discussed pre- and post-WWII information on Kuba, and explained the general context for immigration in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Prior to the trip, an Ancestry representative contacted Kazuaki Arakaki (no relation), chairman of the Kuba Neighborhood Association, and provided him names of possible relatives, as well as photos from the 1970s. He didn't recognize any of the names or faces, but felt that one of the men in a photo looked like an acquaintance from the village, Hiroharu Higa, who immediately identified the man as his father. We were expecting to meet with just Hiroharu (my newly discovered second cousin) on Wednesday, however, he invited five other relatives to the community center. The Higa family provided me with a copy of their koseki, and took me to two gravesites (including the hillside tomb of my grandfather's sister). Also there was a reporter from the *Okinawa Times*, Yoshikatsu Onaga, on hand to cover the "reunion." I never found out who invited Mr. Onaga, or why the visit was considered newsworthy—but it was a pleasant surprise.

Lesson of the day: Once again, you never know what can happen when strangers are willing to help, even closely looking at facial features in a photo and searching for clues.



*Curators Chiaki Hayase and Daisuke Takushi of the Gosamaru Historical Materials Library in Nakagusuku.*



*Hiro Hara, friend of the OGSJ and librarian at the Okinawa Prefectural Library (Naha).*



*Meeting with Higa and Arakaki relatives at the Kuba Community Center in Nakagusuku.*

Thursday, April 11, 2024

This day was split into two parts—the first half was spent identifying gravesites of my maternal grandmother’s family in Yonabaru, and the second half included a meeting at Itoman City Hall, and taking a whirlwind tour of family sites in Itoman.

The Tamazawas (the brother and sister we met on Tuesday) provided information on their family haka at the Kosaiji Cemetery in Yonabaru, however, they could not tell us the location of my great grandparents’ haka, which was somewhere in the same sprawling cemetery. A very nice woman in the office offered to help, and also gave us incense sticks for the gravesite offering and chalk (to fill in the writing on the back of the gravestones so they could be read). Tatsuru Tamazawa called while we were there, as he remembered my great grandparents’ yago house name—Takushi Gua. With that information, the woman was able to locate their haka.

After lunch, we had an appointment with Juichi Gima and Yukiko Tateishi, historians at Itoman City Hall, who went over pre-WWII maps of the area, and discussed regional history. Later, Mr. Gima personally took us on a quick tour of family sites around Itoman, including the huge mass tomb of the Kochibara and Akahigibara Monchu, where the remains of hundreds (maybe thousands?) of my Kaneshiro relatives are supposedly interred.

Lesson of the day: Finding the yago house names of my relatives proved to be difficult (Takushi Gua, Iri Matsu, Akamineya), but once discovered, unlocked previously unattainable information.



*Historians Juichi Gima and Yukiko Tateishi from Itoman City Hall, along with genealogist Yuzo Ochiai.*



*The family haka of my great grandparents, Genzo and Kame Kaneshiro, at the Kosaji Cemetery in Yonabaru*

Friday, April 12, 2024

It was off to Nago to meet my maternal grandfather's (Reiyei Miyashiro) family members, and learn about their prior business, the Hotel Koyokan, located in an oceanside area of the city. Yuzo, the genealogist, had returned to Osaka, so I was accompanied by local tour guide/translator Suiko Oshiro for the next two days. Once again, there was a combination of luck and having "boots on the ground" in locating anyone who would know my relatives, or remember the hotel. To make a long story short, in the weeks leading up to my trip, Suiko walked around the current location of the hotel with names and photos, and randomly came across a woman who had learned about the hotel just days prior. She provided Suiko with the contact information for Hatsuko Kishimoto, the widow of one of the hotel owner's grandsons (my second cousin).

Along with Mrs. Kishimoto, also present at the meeting was Akira Oshiro, who purchased the Hotel Koyokan from the Kishimoto family, and another cousin, Hayashi Kishimoto. We actually gathered at one of Mr. Oshiro's properties, located across the street from the original Koyokan site. As with the gathering in Kuba, there was a surprise guest—this time a reporter, Daiki Kinjo, from another Okinawan daily, the *Ryukyu Shimpo*, sent by his editor to cover the event.

After determining exactly how we were all related, a discussion ensued on the history and significance of the Hotel Koyokan—known for its large public bath, first three story structure built in Nago, with lights strung along the top of the third story to help guide ships entering Nago Bay. Next, there was a quick run to the grocery store for flowers, and a trek in the rain to pay our respects at three tombs of the Kishimoto/Miyashiro families, including my grandfather's eldest sister, Kana Kishimoto. The day ended with a long drive back to Naha in rush hour traffic.

*Lesson of the day:* You really need living relatives to help locate gravesites. Without Mrs. Kishimoto, there is absolutely no way in the world we would've found the tombs on our own—three hillside structures with no signage on the path, located behind a wall in an office building parking lot.



*With Akira Oshiro, who purchased the Hotel Koyokan from my relatives, and Hatsuko Kishimoto, the widow of my second cousin, Kinsho. The meeting took place at one of Mr. Oshiro's properties, the Hotel Yamadaso in Nago.*



*The Hotel Koyokan, which was demolished and replaced by Mr. Oshiro's property, the Nago Business Hotel.*



*Three hillside tombs of the Kishimoto/Miyashiro families in Nago.*

Saturday, April 13, 2024

The final full day of the journey! Suiko took me on a tour of the Okinawa Prefectural Museum in the morning, before we headed to a Farewell Luncheon at the Naha Terrace with the Tamazawa family. Tatsuru and Junko had just learned of my existence five days prior, but in a relatively short period of time, they gathered additional family members and organized a meaningful send-off party.

Rather than starting immediately with the meal, to my surprise, all of the family members pulled out a partially filled family tree, and asked me to help complete the document with names and relationships of their Hawaii relatives. After lunch, we exchanged photos and information, and I provided a step-by-step account of how strangers had assisted with our finding the Tamazawa siblings on Tuesday. They indicated that all of this would have made a great reality show. I left the luncheon with two kosekis, photos, an authentic Okinawan shirt, a gift for my mother, and fifteen boxes of cookies as omiyage for family in Hawaii.

*Lesson of the day:* I thought this trip was all about me, and my effort to gather information for a research project. I failed to realize that all three groups of Okinawan relatives I met had completely lost touch with any family in Hawaii, so my arrival served as a conduit for them to collect information on the Arakaki, Miyashiro, and Kaneshiro families across the Pacific.



*Farewell luncheon at the Naha Terrace with the Tamazawa family. I had only met Tatsuru and Junko five days prior—everyone else was meeting me for the first time.*



*Group photo with the Tamazawa family. I apologized for my attire—I only brought jeans to wear on this trip, not anticipating an elegant luncheon with newly discovered relatives.*

### **Three Final Takeaways from the trip:**

1. It's all about the Okinawan people (relatives)! As with Hawaii, it's the people that make the difference. Most of the relatives I met did not know I existed prior to the trip, yet they immediately treated me as a long-lost family member. In addition, all the information and documents I received were gathered through this face-to-face, human connection.
2. It's all about the Okinawan people (non-relatives)! The genealogist from Osaka had never been to Okinawa, and was stunned by the friendliness and willingness to assist displayed by the locals. Total strangers—librarians, curators, government and cemetery workers, random people on the street, etc.—with no obligation to help, all pitched in to lend a hand. Without their involvement, this would have been a failed endeavor.
3. The plan all along was for this to be a one-time only “business trip,” to gather information, collect documents, meet a few people, and take photos, with no intention to return. Now, I'm not so sure...

...I may have to go back to Okinawa, bring along a few relatives, and see what other stories we can uncover. And to think, this journey started with a simple phone call to the Hawaii Okinawa Center in Waipahu.

Jon Arakaki



Okinawa Times, 4/19/2024 (covering the Kuba village visit).



Ryukyu Shimpo, 4/23/2024 (covering the Nago visit).

## OGSH Visitors

Gail Yoshimura



I was invited and introduced to your club by Rodney and so I appreciate his background and letting me know about your club, so I could get more information about by ancestry. The first question is hard because I don't know anything that I could share about my family. So, that is why I am here.

Hiromi Nakada

Hello, I'm Lisa. My mom is from Kin. Auntie Donna invited us. I met her at Loo Choo Identity Summit, a month ago.



My name is Hiromi Nakata. My daughter brought me here. I didn't know about this club. I am impressed by the Okinawan people in Hawaii because I was born and raised there. My family is in Okinawa. We don't pay attention to things like this because your parents would take care of it. Your grandparents are there. So, it's like we know them. This is really surprising and I know lots of young students from Okinawa. Studying here, they tell me it opened their eyes to how Okinawan people in Hawaii are so proud being Okinawan. They don't really think about it. A girl I met a few months ago said she was from a really good university in Okinawa and study in Hilo college now. She said, "It's weird that I learn so much about Okinawa since I left there." I said, "Me too!" I've learned so much about Okinawan people after I moved here. So, yeah to everyone here!

Theresa Tom's daughter, Jeanette



I'm Jeanette. I grew up in Pearl City and then moved away and went to college. Then I kind of never came back. Now I live in Virginia. I'm visiting my mom this week and I believe we're from Shuri...Shuri adjacent people. Anyway, I've heard a lot about this group and my mom is so excited to be here and participate and what I consider new friends for her over the years. So, it's been great to help her socialize and be in touch with people with common interests. So, I want to thank this group for keeping my mom active and providing a place for her to interact with people, since obviously I'm not here. Thank you for everything you've done for my mother. Thank you.







Special Elections for OGSB President will be held on May18, 2024.  
Current members will be able to vote in person or on Zoom.



## OGSH GENEALOGY SERVICE Form

### Person Making Request

お名前	**Full Name	
居住地域	**Living area (City & State, Village, Town)	
メールアドレス	**E-mail*	

### About 1st generation immigrant

お名前	**Full Name	
漢字	Name in Kanji	
生年月日・年齢	**Date of Birth/Age at Travel	
本籍地住所/字	**BirthPlace/AZA	
パスポート番号	Passport Number	
出発年（月日）	Travel Year & Date	
家族関係	Family Information	
屋号	Yago/Household Name	

### Footprint in Hawaii \*House Head Only

	Residential Place	
	Occupation	
	Number of family	
	Residential Place	
	Occupation	

Asterisks in red means "ESSENTIAL INFORMATION"

Additional Comments:

**OKINAWA GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
OF HAWAII (OGSH)**

c/o Hawaii Okinawa Center  
94-587 Ukee Street, Waipahu, Hawaii  
Telephone: (808)676-5400  
E-mail: [ogsh.rteam@gmail.com](mailto:ogsh.rteam@gmail.com)

Volunteer hours: every Friday 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.  
Appointments are encouraged