

Karoku and Shime Iwamasa

“Mr. and Mrs. Iwamasa resisted going to the Christian church,” said Yoshitoshi Aoyagi, a member of the Buena Vista Methodist Church in Alameda, CA. “They disliked Christianity.”

“It wasn’t until Reverend Junichi Fujimori’s time (1959),” Aoyagi continued, “that they started to come. Reverend Fujimori used to go to their home in Berkeley and invite them to attend, but they used to say, ‘Well, Alameda’s so far... if we went to church we’d go to the one in Berkeley.’”

Shime, by then living in Alameda at 1810 Oak St., was baptized in 1966, but it was too late for Karoku, who had died on April 30, 1965. A family friend (Edna Mashihara) prompted her to be baptized... and perhaps her husband’s death did, too.

Married in 1900, the Iwamasas both arrived in Honolulu



the Reluctant **Christians**

in 1902 and later boarded the ship Mongolia to arrive in San Francisco in 1910.

Karoku was born in Japan on March 1, 1881, Shime Yanagihara on September 10, 1883.

During World War II, the Iwamasas would find themselves relocated to Tule Lake in June 1942, and then moved to Topaz, Utah on September 18, 1943.

War Relocation Authority

records show that they were living in Alameda when they evacuated. They had a son, Shizuto, and a daughter, Hatsumi.

Shime died in April 1982 in Alameda, at 98 years old.

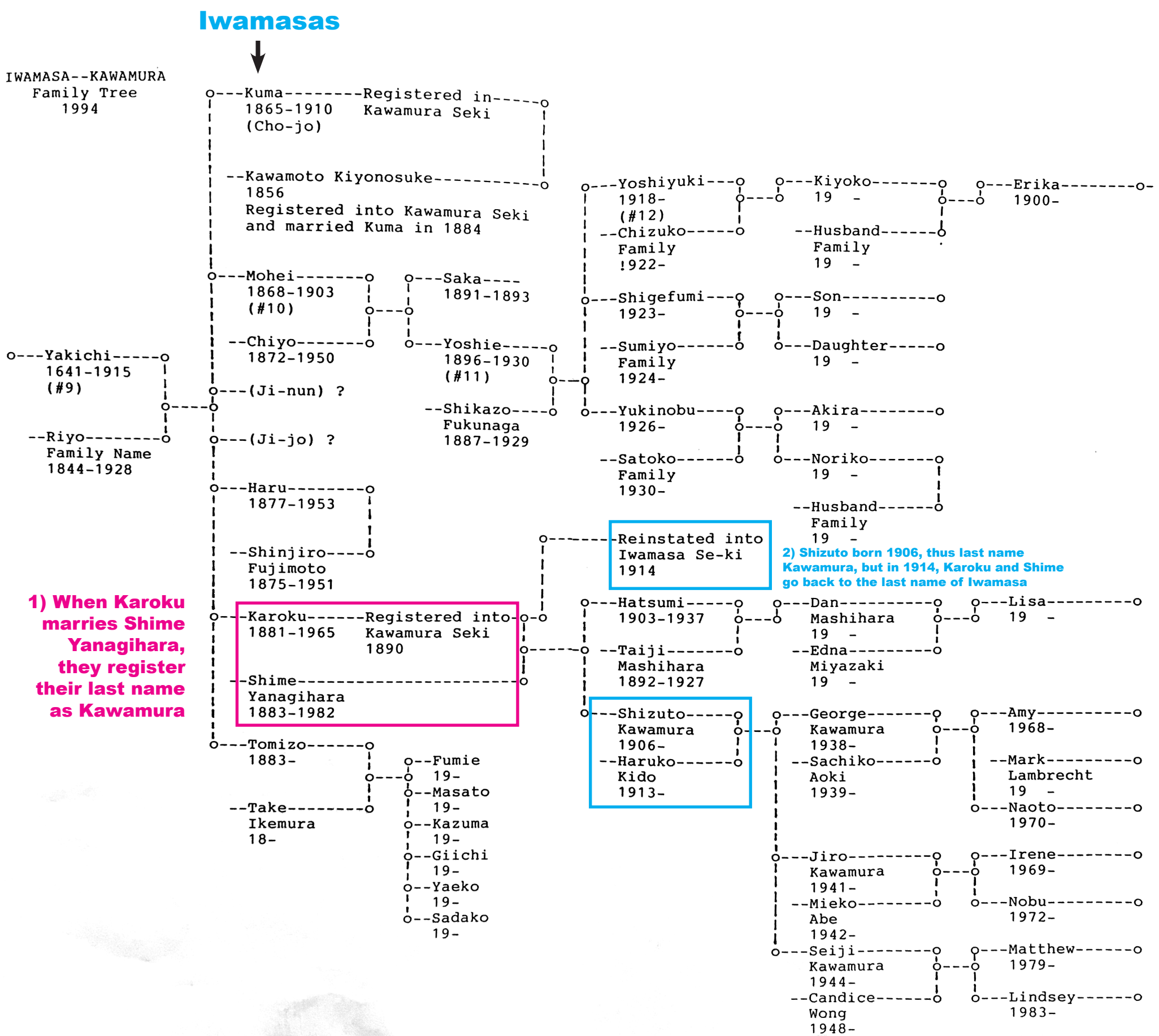
Her early reluctance to become Christian long past, Shime Iwamasa prays in the sanctuary of Buena Vista Methodist Church in 1978.
Photo by Wendy Hanamura



What's in a name? Iwamasa or Kawamura?

Some Alamedans knew Karoku and Shime as the Kawamuras, others as the Iwamasas. Karoku and Shime were really the Iwamasas, but their son, Shizuto, carries the last name Kawamura. How so?

“The reason they are not Kawamura, they changed their name,” said Seiji Kawamura, Shizuto’s son in 2022. “The Kawamura line had no son, so they (Karoku and Shime) took the name Kawamura so they could continue it. When my father (Shizuto) was a certain age, they (Karoku and Shime) changed back to Iwamasa. So our family is really Iwamasa. In a way, we inherited the name Kawamura.”



Family tree courtesy Seiji Kawamura