

**Many Japanese** men immigrated to the United States at the turn of the 20th century, unsure of how they would succeed in a strange, new land.

**Taiji Mashihara was not one of those men.** You don't attend the University of California at Berkeley, and then the Harvard School of Dentistry without a plan.

He arrived in America in 1907, finding his way to the Japanese Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in Alameda, CA. He not only attended service there, but was living there as well by June 5, 1917. At the same time, he listed himself as a student of dentistry on his World War I draft card.

Not far from his Alameda home was Cal Berkeley, where he would have been a freshman by 1916, joining the Japanese Club by 1918, perhaps earlier.

Born in Japan on January 13, 1891, we don't know if Taiji graduated from Cal, although it seems likely.



**A Brief Flame,  
Brightly Lit**

Regardless, his plan took him to Harvard University in Boston, MA., to study dental surgery. His eldest brother, Atsuyuki, provided him with financial support for his education. On July 5, 1920, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized him to practice dentistry and dental surgery there as a DMD, a Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry, a very rare occupation for an Issei in America.

Masihara, Taiji, D.M.D. 1920. 473 Broadway. Red Cross, Boy Scout Work, entered 1918, discharged Aug. 8, 1919, service Alameda, Cal. Assistant Scout Master, B. S. A., Clerk in Draft. Instructor of Boy Scouts, Examiner in First Aid work of B. S. A.

**1920 Harvard Directory of Students**

While living in Boston, Taiji, 32, returned to California to marry Hatsumi Iwamasa, 19, who arrived in Alameda in 1920. We don't know how they met, or if it was an arranged marriage. By the time she arrived in Alameda, Taiji was already living in Boston.

The wedding took place on August 8, 1923 at his Alameda church and former residence, with Rev. Shigeji Oishi presiding. Fusaji Takata and Byko Umezawa witnessed the event.

The Mashiharas would return to Boston, where Taiji began work as a dentist and surgeon.

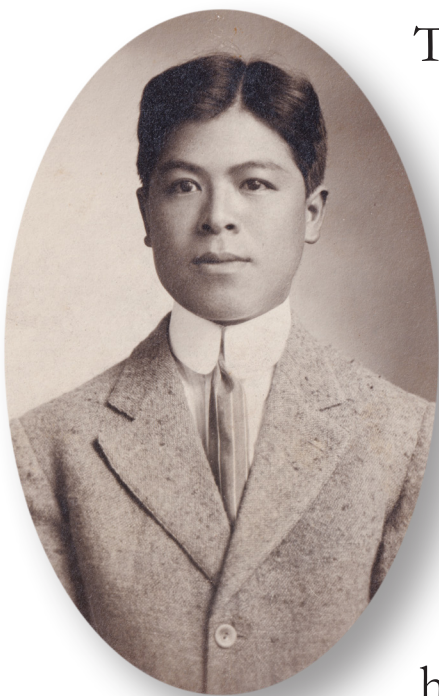
Married and with a prestigious degree in hand, Taiji's life seemed to be on track when he died of tuberculosis on January 10, 1927. His marriage did produce a son, Dan, who was just two and half when his father died.

His time on earth may have been brief, but Taiji Masjihara was a *success*.

**Cal Berkeley Japanese Club 1918**



Taiji's July 1920 certificate of dentistry from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Tuberculosis was a much feared and unknown disease at that time, highly contagious, and too often yielding a death sentence. It was called consumption because the body seemed to waste away. It was also referred to as the Great White Plague, because of the pale skin tone of the sufferer.

So it was tragic, but not a surprise, when young Taiji contracted the disease. Perhaps it was contracted as an occupational hazard of working in such close proximity to his patients. Perhaps he had a premonition his life would be cut short, hence his desire to accomplish as much as possible in whatever time he was given. Tuberculosis ran rampant in America and even more so in Japan, before a vaccine was found. According to the World Health Organization, 1.5 million people died of TB in 2020. That same year, the WHO reported 3.3 million deaths worldwide due to Covid-19.

Family information, documents and photos courtesy Lisa Mashihara Westley, Bob Mashihara, Seiji Kawamura and Wendy Hanamura. Special thanks to Pam Hashimoto, for editing the copy and text suggestions.