

An Alameda

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All Star

The 1930's produced its own group of sports stars from Alameda, CA.

Shigeshi "Shug" Madokoro was a standout in three sports: football, basketball and baseball. During his senior year at Alameda High School in 1932, Shug became the captain of the basketball team and led them to the championships.

The San Francisco Mikados basketball team was made up of all the best Japanese American players in the San Francisco Bay Area, and Shug was a member.

"I think playing basketball with the San Francisco Mikados we considered ourselves to be the best Japanese team in all of California," he said. "We were just the best team. The team was composed of mostly San Francisco people, but they also invited in other players from Alameda that they asked to join the team."

photo: Shug as a member of the Alameda Mudhens, circa 1933

Shug Madokoro Voted Most Valuable Player

ALAMEDA, April 20—Voted the most valuable player by his teammates, Shug Madokoro, all-JAU forward, was awarded a trophy at the victory banquet given by the Friday night at the Riviera cafe in Oakland.

The trophy was donated to the club by George Tanaka, former University of California tennis star and advisor of the group, before he left for Japan last fall. Min Iwahashi, manager of the varsity team which won the JAU and Northern California tourney championships this year, made the presentation.

Coach Kim Obata and his assistant, Tad Hikoyeda, were also presented with trophies, Shug Madokoro making the presentation in behalf of the team.

The club received a handsome trophy from Professor Chiura Obata, distinguished father of the Acorn coach.

Francis L. (Hands) Slavich, former all-American football and basketball star from Santa Clara, was main speaker of the evening. Other speakers included Jack Clark, sports editor of the Alameda Times Star; Dick Mitchell, member of the Alameda recreation department; Tui Iwahashi, American consulate attache in Dairen, Manchukuo; S. Nogami, advisor; George Rokutani, advisor, and Osky Kono, well-known florist.

Sam Miki, president of the club, was the toastmaster.

Shug possessed all the skill needed to succeed, but great athletics need more than that.

“I feel that everybody needs ego. You have to like yourself and it doesn’t make any difference whether its in sports or music or whatever,” Shug said. “If they don’t, they’re not going to survive, they are not going to succeed. Sports gave me that ego.”

Shug was a born competitor, even competing for the woman who would become his wife, Imiko June Matsumoto. He was playing baseball tournament in Santa Maria, and noticed a young girl, who happened to be the prettiest girl in the room at an event that evening. “She came with another date but I hogged her all night. Even the last dance... poor guy that brought her.” Shug said.

Shug’s sports career extended beyond high school. “But I was a bad student at Cal (UC Berkeley),” Shug recalled. “I wanted to spend all of my time down at the gymnasium and I use to cut a lot of classes because I figured all I needed was to have C’s in order to graduate with a degree.”

“I played handball at Cal from my freshman year... all 4 years,” he said. “I was top man on the Cal varsity handball squad. I was on the top of the ladder. Those are the kinds of things I enjoyed more than anything.”

In a 1988 interview, fellow Alamedan Paul Yoshino remembered being "in awe of a young Alamedan named Shug Madokoro" who played on all the all-star teams.

Shug Madokoro was born in Alameda on July 1, 1914.

He served as a member of the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) during WWII.

Shug was given permission to leave his Army base at Ft.

Custard in Lansing, MI, to marry Imiko in Cook County, Illinois, on February 19, 1944.

She was incarcerated in Gila River, Arizona at the time and met him in Illinois for the wedding. Shug sponsored her, so she could leave incarceration. Having a sponsor was a requirement to leave the camps. They had one son together.

Imiko died April 8, 2008. Shug died on November 30, 2010. They are buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.



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