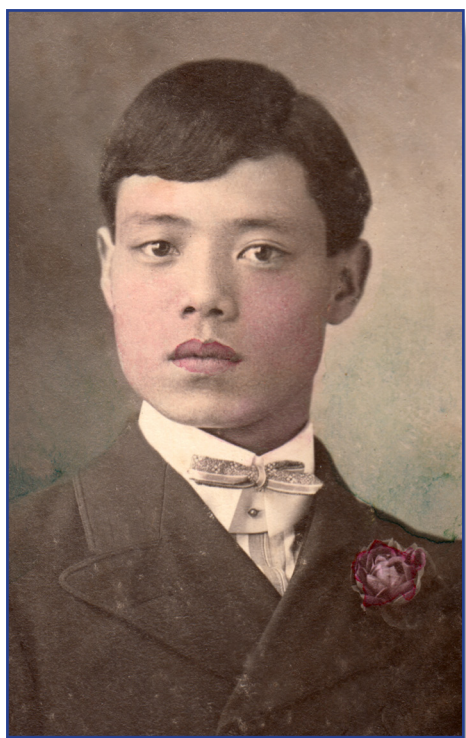


# CATCH of a LIFETIME



No matter how hard the fish fights, no matter how long it takes, if you love to fish, you never tire of landing another one.

Even if it's the last thing you'll ever do.

Mataichi Ozeki had been many things in his relatively short life. An immigrant, a laborer, a professional photographer (he shot this photo), a laundry man and perhaps a farmer.

His daughter, Mitsue, described him as *doraku*, which means prodigal... a person of wasteful means, wanting to live a lavish lifestyle.



**"Portrait of a Striped Bass"**  
Caught with a Meisselbach reel, probably the Free Spool Surf 50 (1918-1932)

Photo by Mataichi Ozeki, circa 1918-1939



Born in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1881, he moved to San Francisco, California in 1903, moved across the bay to Alameda and quickly found ways to live a life he probably could never have achieved in Japan.

He was an Issei (“E-say”). He was among the first of the Japanese to immigrate to the America of his dreams, the America that would allow him to live... doraku.

Photographs of Mataichi, many of which are self portraits, depict a man who enjoyed drink, enjoyed life and enjoyed friends.

He appears to be quite gregarious. And he certainly found fishing to be a way to live.

He entered a fishing derby in 1933 (see *Rio Vista* next page), landing a near 14 pound bass in the Georgiana (or Georgia) Slough, which is located near Isleton in the Sacramento–San Joaquin River Delta of Northern California.

Then in 1939, an excited Mataichi Ozeki had come in second in another fishing derby. Like any competitor, he must have felt pretty darn good.

## Maybe just a few ounces

short of first place. He'd catch the big winner next time.

Only there wasn't going to be a next time for ol' Doraku.

## RIO VISTA GOOD.

C. Gimoetti writes: "Bass fishing above the Rio Vista bridge on the flats is very good, limit catches are being made and most of them are all big fish."

Seven Japanese who qualified for the derby made the following catches during the week: I. Kakakore 11½ pounds, H. Moriya 13 pounds, M. Ozeki 13¾ pounds, all in Georgia Slough; Kuno Shijo 6 pounds and A. Fukuiji 8 pounds at Y. Miyawaki 12½ and S.

## Excitement Following Fishing Contest Is Fatal To Alamedan

ALAMEDA, July 24 — Mataichi Ozeki, 58, of 2325 Clement Avenue died last night at his home at 9:30 o'clock of a weak heart. He is survived by his wife and three daughters, Hasuyo, Mitsuye and Yasuye.

Mr. Ozeki is a pioneer of Alameda, having resided there over 30 years. Funeral service will be held on Wednesday, July 26, at 1:30 p.m. at Smilev and Gallagher, 1415 Oak Street in Alameda. Otsuya is slated at 8 p.m. on July on July 25.

Mr. Ozeki came home at 2 o'clock from a fishing contest feeling rather weak. He had just won second in the fishing competition. A doctor, who was immediately summoned, found Mr. Ozeki's blood pressure too high so he was sent to bed where he passed away later in the evening.

## A weak heart, the

doctor said. The real diagnosis was an aortic dissection, according to his granddaughter, Kay Yatabe now of El Cerrito, CA.

Maybe Mataichi knew he wasn't long for this world. So he laughed. He drank. And he fished.

Ol' Doraku fished to the last day of his life.

May we all be so lucky.

*Ol' Doraku*





Produced by Brad Shirakawa  
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Thanks to:

**Kay Yatabe** for the photos and thoughts  
about her grandfather

**Alan Tani**, fishing guru: <https://alantani.com/>

**Roger Shultz**, rod and reel guy

**Tom**, fishing guy

1931 map of the Georgiana Slough this page:

<https://californiarevealed.org/islandora/object/cavpp%3A183054>

Photo this page by **Mataichi Ozeki**,  
who would have appreciated your attention today

ALAMEDA  
**Japanese  
American**  
HISTORY PROJECT



**The reel is a Meisselbach. Probably the Free Spool Surf 50 (1918-1932), per Roger Schulz, fishing expert. Per Alan Tani, the fish is a Striped Bass, perhaps 8 pounds. It was caught in San Francisco Bay or possibly Frank's Tract, a popular spot for Striped Bass.**

**Unusual to see a 'portrait' of a fish, versus the usual photo of the person who caught it. The old Japanese Issei (first generation in America) loved to eat these fish raw, as sashimi. Photo circa 1907-1920s, by Mataichi Ozeki. It is very likely he caught this fish himself.**