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COMPLIMENTARY PUBLICATION
FOR THE
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
SACRAMENTO J.A.C.L. CHAPTER

"OLD TIMERS"
(Years 1931 - 1942)



GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
AT
SACRAMENTO COMMUNITY CENTER
Saturday, November 14, 1981

DEDICATED TO
PRE-WORLD WAR II PRESIDENTS AND THEIR CABINETS



Late Col. Walter T. Tsukamoto
Term: 1931 - 1935



Late Jiro Muramoto, M.D.
Term: 1937



Henry Taketa
Term: 1938



Edward M. Kitazumi
Term: 1939



Late George H. Takahashi, O.D.
Term: 1940



Goro Muramoto, D.D.S.
Term: 1941 and 1942
(Ending with Evacuation)

ASSIGNMENT -- "OLD TIMERS"

By

HENRY TAKETA

(Written for 1957 P.C. Holiday Issue and)
(Edited for Sacramento JACL Fiftieth Anniversary)

Introduction - Pre-World War II Years:

This article is confined to activities and undertakings of the Sacramento J.A.C.L. from its inception in 1931 to its suspension in the Spring of 1942 in preparation for evacuation of persons of Japanese ancestry and to the officers and members who faithfully served the J.A.C.L. organization, both locally and on the District and National levels during its formative years. With the disruption of the evacuation and passage of time, much of the old records has become lost or misplaced, and therefore this biography of Sacramento J.A.C.L. during its pre-World War II years is sketchy at best and void of many people, places and things. However, meager records were searched out and carefully reviewed, and portions of the Chapter's Minutes, Pacific Citizens, and other writings of historical interest are quoted or noted. On the occasion of Sacramento J.A.C.L.'s Golden Anniversary, it is hoped that through this writing the officers and active members of the Sacramento Chapter of the pre-war era will be recalled, remembered and accorded appropriate recognition for the part they played in the service of their organization, community, country and fellowman.

Years 1931 - 1934:

Historical steps to organize the Sacramento J.A.C.L. Chapter took place at a meeting held on October 31, 1931. Minutes quoted:

"A group of Japanese American citizens met at the Japanese Student Club on the evening of October 31 at 8:00 p.m. to organize a Japanese American Citizens League in the City of Sacramento. Mr. Walter Tsukamoto presided as pro-tem chairman over the meeting with the assistance of Miss Mary Oyama, acting as pro-tem secretary. First part of the meeting was devoted to business. Following the business, an election of temporary set of officers was held. The results of this election were: Walter Tsukamoto, President; Gerald Kobayashi, 1st Vice President; Miss Alice Kambara, 2nd Vice President (Social Chairman); Miss Elaine Oki, Recording Secretary (Registration); Miss Mary Oyama, Corresponding Secretary (Publicity); Roy Miura, Treasurer; Gerald Kobayashi, Sergeant-at-Arms."

Also known to be the Chapter's initial members were Tolu Miura, Henry Taketa and Fred Sakata. Additionally, Jun Miyakawa, Yohei Kato and John Tanikawa may have been classed as "associate members" due to their noncitizenship status. Messrs. Kato and Tanikawa were veterans of World War I and became naturalized as U. S. citizens shortly afterwards through a special act of Congress enabling those servicemen otherwise ineligible to become citizens through naturalization.

From the wordings of the Minutes of April 28, 1934, it appears that the Sacramento Chapter was almost at a standstill between 1931 to 1934, and effort was being made to reactivate the organization and its membership. Minutes of April 28, 1934:

"The first regular meeting of the Japanese American Citizens League was called to order by President Walter Tsukamoto on April 28, 1934, 8:30 p.m. at the Japanese Association Hall with Miss Miyoko Nishimura acting as secretary pro-tem. The following officers were elected officers for the fiscal year 1934: President - Walter Tsukamoto; 1st Vice President - George Takahashi; 2nd Vice President - Fred Sakata; 3rd Vice President - James Imahara; 4th Vice President - Tolu Miura; 5th Vice President - Martha Kitagawa; Recording Secretary - Miyoko Nishimura; Corresponding Secretary - Sumiye Ryugo; Treasurer - Stewart Nakano; Assistant Treasurer - Harry Hara; Head Sergeant-in-Arms - Hoshiro Oshima; Assistant Sergeant-in-Arms - Frank Nakatomi, Joe Kawahara and Kay Hirai.

"Various committee chairmen then appointed by the President were: Entertainment - Hatsuyo Kumagai; Transportation - Frank Nagano; Publicity - Elaine Oki; Social - Mrs. Harada; Music - Mrs. Iki."

Minutes of the meeting of September 22, 1934, quoted:

"The reports of the National Convention held in S.F. were given by Dr. G. Takahashi and he spoke on the business highlights while Harry Hara spoke on the social side.

"Mr. Saburo Kido, executive secretary of the National J.A.C.L., explained the importance of the World War (I) Veterans movement and asked the cooperation of each and every member of the League. He also explained the Pacific Citizen, national newspaper of the J.A.C.L. and the work carried on by the League."

Year 1935:

Business held by the Chapter on March 2, 1935, at the Presbyterian Church. Minutes quoted:

"The following officers were elected and committee chairmen were appointed for the fiscal year 1935: President - Walter Tsukamoto; Vice Presidents - George Takahashi, Fred Sakata, Tolu Miura, Tom Nakaguchi, Yohei Kato, Martha Kitagawa, and James Takehara; Recording Secretary - Miyoko Nishimura; Corresponding Secretary - Nobu Miyoshi; Treasurer - Frank Nagano; Assistant Treasurer - George Inagaki; Sergeant-at-Arms - Kenneth Kuroko, Takao Nakayama and Masao Yamasaki.

"Committee Chairmen: Program - Tsugiye Fujii; Entertainment - Sumiye Ryugo; Social - Roy Nikaido; Music - Alice Mayeda; Transportation - Alice Sakata; Welfare - John Tanikawa; Official Reporters - Robert Tsuda, Elaine Oki, and James Hashimoto."

Members of the Sacramento Chapter may be pleased to learn that George Inagaki (1955-56 National President) was an active member of the local J.A.C.L. during the year 1935. As with many service organizations, Sacramento Chapter was plagued with financial problems. Chapter's first benefit movie project was mediocre at best and resulted in adding a meager \$279.75 to the near-defunct treasury.

State Fair Dance was a highlight of several yearly events sponsored by the Sacramento J.A.C.L. prior to World War II. Minutes of August 6, 1935 prescribed the rule for admission as follows:

"It was also decided that all paid up members of this Chapter would be admitted to the dance without charge, while nonmembers and unpaid members will be required to purchase tickets for \$1.00 per couple. Visiting J.A.C.L. members will be admitted for 50¢ per person upon presentation of their membership card."

1935 Fair Dance and others to follow were invariably chaired by Roy Nikaido and James Hashimoto. Names of Dr. and Mrs. G. S. Iki, Mr and Mrs. T. Sato, Mr. and Mrs. R. Sato, Mr. and Mrs. J. Miyakawa and Mr. Oki frequently appeared in the records of these social functions as chaperons.

Another notable undertaking was the testimonial for Tokutaro Slocum. Mr. Slocum, who so ably represented the National organization in Washington, D. C., for the passage of the World War I Veterans bill, was honored by the Sacramento Chapter on August 24, 1935, at a banquet preceding his appearance as a principal speaker before the good people of our Sacramento community. Minutes of the meeting of August 24, 1935, in part reads:

"The principal speaker, Mr. Slocum, was introduced by the chairman to the members. Mr. Slocum announced that the pen with which President Roosevelt signed the World War Veterans Bill was presented to the National J.A.C.L. Headquarter. Mr. Slocum invited the audience to ask any question pertaining to his recent success in Washington, D.C."

Year 1936:

The year saw the initiation of new organizational policy. Until then, functions and activities of the Sacramento J.A.C.L. Chapter were largely confined to a small group because no concerted effort had been made to expand the membership of the Chapter. Many new faces were brought into the organization. J.A.C.L. was becoming everybody's business and vice versa. First step undertaken was a house-to-house canvass of Japanese American families for membership within the City and outlying districts served by the Sacramento J.A.C.L.

From the minutes of February 1, 1936, the following persons were elected to serve as officers:

"President - Walter Tsukamoto; Vice Presidents - Tokio Kawashima, Henry Taketa, Dr. Jiro Muramoto, Tolu Miura, Fred Kitagawa, Fred Sakata, and John Tanikawa; Corresponding Secretary - Miyoko Nishimura; Recording Secretary - Nobu Miyoshi; Treasurer - Dr. George Takahashi.

"Committee Chairmen: Program - James Hashimoto; Entertainment - Martha Kitagawa; Social - Roy Nikaido; Music - Alice Mayeda; Transportation - Alice Sakata; Welfare - Florence Miyaoka; Official Reporter - Dr. Kiyoshi Tsuda.

"Dr. Jiro Muramoto was appointed membership chairman, and his committee was composed of the Vice Presidents."

As a result of the successful membership drive, the Sacramento J.A.C.L. matured into an organization representative of the Japanese American families residing in Sacramento and the districts of Woodland, Elkhorn, Yolo-Broderick, Clarksburg, Oak Park, Mills-Perkins, and Riverside. It is noted that Dr. Goro Muramoto and his committee were given the responsibilities of revising the Chapter Constitution to give district representatives a status of cabinet members and provisions were also made to bring in Issei of the community as special members.

Unlike today, public speaking was a form of national pasttime, and the Chapter was an active sponsor of the movement among our Japanese American scholars. Minutes of May 29, 1936 made the following reference to regional oratorical contest planning by the committee chaired by Henry Taketa:

"Mr. Henry Taketa gave a final report of the regional oratorical contest held on May 25, 1936, at the Buddhist Hall.

"The judges were announced as follows: Mr. W. S. Howe, Mr. H. P. Seldon and Mr. J. F. Miyakawa.

"The representative speakers and their respective chapters were announced as follows: Mr. Masaru Yamasaki - Florin Chapter; Mr. Kazuto Daijogo - Placer County; Miss Shizue Ishimoto - Sacramento; Miss Grace Kaneda - Stockton; Mr. William Yukawa - Yolo-Solano."

Names of the winning contestants remain a total mystery for lack of any record on the judges' decision.

Money or the lack of it has always plagued the Chapter, but the problem was magnified many times during its formative years due to the dreaded national and worldwide depression of the time. Minutes of the meetings contained much discussion on ways and means of raising funds for the organization. Official delegates to the District and National meetings were either unpaid or very much underpaid and their registration fees remained unrefunded more often than not.

Year 1937:

Up to this point, Sacramento J.A.C.L. did well just to be able to survive in the face of financial hardship, lack of membership and other difficulties. However, the Chapter literally came into its own during 1937 under the capable guidance of President Dr. Jiro Muramoto. As noted in the minutes of December 21, 1936, his cabinet consisted of:

"Vice Presidents - Sacramento - Edward Kitazumi; Kibei - George Hayashi; Riverside - George Kawaye; Mills-Perkins - Fred Kitagawa; Clarksburg - Fred Sakata; Yolo-Broderick - Kiyoshi Okamoto; Woodland - Tokio Kawashima; Corresponding Secretary - Nobu Miyoshi; Recording Secretary - Hisako Higashino; Treasurer - Henry Taketa.

First major undertaking of his administration was to plan for and implement a concerted membership drive and the results were most satisfying. It is worthy to also note the Chapter's first successful fund drive. Pacific Citizen of July 19, 1937 reported:

"A record of some kind or another in the annals of J.A.C.L. history was set here when the Sacramento Chapter realized the gross income of \$1,971.91 at a benefit movie Saturday and Sunday, July 17 and 18, at the L Street Arena. The project was to increase the treasury fund. Expenses totaled \$541.29, leaving a new profit of \$1,430.62 for the Chapter's coffer.

"A record breaking audience was present for both evenings and the splendid cooperation of public and members resulted in an unprecedented amount of donations received.

"Dr. Jiro Muramoto gains credit as general chairman and Kenneth Kuroko headed the purchasing department and Miss Mieko Inbe the publicity division. Special speakers were Riki-taro Sato and Giichi Aoki."

Here and there from the Pacific Citizen during the year of 1937:

- (a) Walter Tsukamoto, Sacramento attorney and National Executive-Secretary, filed the Article of Incorporation for the National J.A.C.L. and our organization officially acquired a corporate nonprofit charitable status.
- (b) Dr. Goro Muramoto was appointed to head the committee of five members to design pins and banner for the National J.A.C.L. for submission to the National Convention through Northern California District Council.
- (c) Henry Taketa was designated chairman for the revision of National J.A.C.L. Constitution.
- (d) Miss Miye Kasai and Mr. Tolu Miura, two prominent members of the local J.A.C.L., were married in Berkeley and will reside in Los Angeles.
- (e) Miss Marion Ishida, graduate of San Jose State Teachers College, is teaching at Los Gatos Grammar School.
- (f) Dr. and Mrs. George Takahashi became proud parents of a seven pound baby boy, Gordon Hideki.
- (g) The Sacramento Chapter acting on behalf of the National organization presented one of four Japanese samurai swords given to the National body by the San Francisco merchants to Edward G. Neron, former State Commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The presentation was in token of appreciation for his effort in aiding passage of enabling law extending naturalization to World War I veterans of oriental ancestry. Dr. Jiro Muramoto, president, was in charge of the committee to arrange for the banquet and presentation.

Year 1938:

The year of 1938 saw the administration of the Sacramento J.A.C.L. under the presidency of Henry Taketa, who was ably assisted by many individuals including Dr. Jiro Muramoto, Edward Kitazumi, Dr. Goro Muramoto, Calvin Sakamoto, Miyoko Nishimura, Walter Tsukamoto, Mieko

Inbe, Hisako Higashino, Mieko Ashizawa, Masako Sugiyama, Tokio Kawashima, Mina Iwamoto, Mary Nagatoshi, Sadah Iwamoto, Kikuji Ryugo, Dr. George Takahashi, James Hashimoto, Fred Sakata, Sam Ishimoto, Dr. Joe Kawahara, Mary Abe and Yuki Hayashi. This was the year the National Convention was held in Los Angeles, and the principal convention undertaking of the Sacramento Chapter was the submission of the revised National Constitution to the delegates attending the Convention. Although the National Constitution has since been amended time and again to meet the changes of time, Sacramento proposal was adopted in the form presented. The Los Angeles Convention saw Walter Tsukamoto, National Executive-Secretary, elected to the presidency of the League. Sacramento delegates to the National Convention were Edward Kitazumi and Henry Taketa. At this gathering, Sacramento Chapter played an important part to secure the acceptance of Inter-Mountain Region into the National J.A.C.L. Mike Masaoka of Salt Lake City, then 21 years of age, appearing for the first time before the National Convention, had been given the brush-off by the old guards and his appeal for admission of the Inter-Mountain Region fell on deaf ears until several valley chapters, including Sacramento J.A.C.L., moved to support Masaoka's plea. History of our J.A.C.L. organization could have taken a different slant had Mike Masaoka on this occasion returned to Salt Lake without having accomplished his mission and purpose. This young "up-start" has since been acknowledged the most respected of lobbyists in the National Capitol.

It may be of interest to note that the Sacramento Chapter sponsored Mr. Yoshinori Matsuyama, noted Japanese tenor, at the Y.B.A. Hall, on October 14, 1938. Whether or not the undertaking was successful is questionable for lack of financial records.

Year 1939:

Administration of the local chapter for the year 1939 came under the presidency of Edward Kitazumi. His cabinet consisted of the following: Vice President - Dr. Jiro Muramoto; Corresponding Secretary - Yuriko Date; Recording Secretary - Ariye Oda; Treasurer - Henry Taketa; District Representatives: Woodland-Elkhorn Ping Oda; Yolo-Broderick William Tanaka; Clarksburg Yaeko Ishimoto; Oak Park Y. Yoshino; Mills-Perkins Charles Machida; Sacramento Mieko Inbe, Mary Abe and Kenneth Kuroko; Riverside Masako Matsunami.

Although minutes and records of his administration were no longer available, 1939 was a very eventful year for the local J.A.C.L., and considerable advancement was made in earning public support and recognition for the organization. For these achievements, much of the credit belonged to President Kitazumi and his hard working cabinet.

Year 1940:

The year of 1940 saw the Chapter under the presidency of George Takahashi, ably assisted by members of his cabinet, whose names are no longer available. It would appear from the Minutes of the earlier meetings that the Chapter was plagued with cash-flow problems although approximately \$1,500.00 had been put away in a safe place for future use. As of January 16, 1940, the active account of the treasury was down to a meager \$155.66. Committee chairmen working with President Takahashi and his cabinet were as follows: Finance - Dave Noguchi and

Henry Taketa; Registration and Membership - Henry Okamoto; Arrangement of Program - Mary Abe; Publicity - Ariye Oda; Pin - Calvin Sakamoto; Public Relation - Tsugi Fujii.

As in the past, membership drive was conducted from house to house to reach all the eligibles for members in the area served by the Sacramento Chapter. For the first time, price of the subscription to the Pacific Citizen was included in the Chapter's membership due.

The local chapter was well represented by Edward Kitazumi and Calvin Sakamoto at the Portland National Convention, and Sacramento was again the locale for the District Council Convention held on October 27 at the Sacramento Hotel, and earlier visitors enjoyed a pre-conference dance the preceding night at the local Y.B.A. Hall. Other activities of the organization for this term remain unknown due to meagerness of records.

Year 1941:

Minutes of January 21, 1941, would indicate that Dr. Goro Muramoto was elected as the Chapter's President. His cabinet is listed as follows: Vice President - George Takahashi; Treasurer - Mieko Inbe; Recording Secretary - Esther Ogasawara; Corresponding Secretary - Kinuye Maki-shima; Official Delegates - Dr. Goro Muramoto and George Takahashi; District Representatives: Sacramento - Koki Kumamoto, Roy Kitade, Tayeko Hosokawa; Yolo-Broderick - Bill Tanaka; Clarksburg - Fred Sakata; Oak Park - Coffee Oshima; Mills - Charles Machida; Riverside - Masao Ishida; and Woodland-Elkhorn - Thomas Kunibe.

One item of interest may be noted in the Minutes of July 9, 1941:

"The President reported that in the absence of Tsugiye Fujii, Chairman in charge of purchasing Japanese cook book, that she sold fifty copies and as more is required fifteen additional copies will be ordered. Those who want to purchase a copy of the cook book were requested to contact Miss Fujii."

There was truth to the old saying that "you win a man's heart through his stomach." Another event of interest may be the amount of assessment made by the National J.A.C.L. on the local Chapter for the year. Sacramento J.A.C.L. was obliged to pay into National Treasury the total sum of \$362.12. It is obvious a great deal of change has taken place since those good old days.

The extent of good public relationship established between the Sacramento Chapter and the people of our community is shown in the financial report of November 13, 1941. Minutes:

"The President reported that the Sacramento J.A.C.L. had invested \$2,000.00 in savings bonds and had \$1,800.00 in cash and that \$1,400.00 was taken in at the annual benefit movie which netted the organization \$900.00."

Selective Service and draft were in full swing and older members of the organization may recall that Dr. Teru Togasaki was in charge of the Committee on Draftees. One of the undertaking of this group was to

arrange for sending a box of homemade cookies to each draftee from the Sacramento district. Wonderful gesture was feasible until the number of Japanese American draftees became too numerous for our cookie makers.

Year 1942 and Finis:

Due to the critical situations and problems brought about by Pearl Harbor and to capably face the pending emergencies, Sacramento J.A.C.L. returned to office its 1941 officers to again serve during 1942. In assuming his responsibilities, President Dr. Goro Muramoto devoted considerable time and effort even though it entailed the sacrifice of early closure of his dental practice. Under his directions, a body known as "Emergency Coordinating Committee" composed of Walter Tsukamoto, George Takahashi, Henry Taketa, Dr. Jiro Muramoto, Dr. Koki Kumamoto and the President was formulated to represent the J.A.C.L. in all public matters pertaining to the Japanese Americans of the community, to gather and give out information of interest to everyone of Japanese ancestry and to be of service whenever and wherever possible. State employees membership in the local chapter became synonymous to a symbol of loyalty as a result of public relation effort with the heads of State Government. Although this accomplishment did not ward off the eventual and arbitrary dismissal of State employees of Japanese ancestry, it did serve a definite purpose in preventing or minimizing embarrassment or difficulties for a brief period for many individuals. To render public service and assistance, the local chapter took over the office of the defunct Sacramento Japanese Association and staffed it with the capable secretary in the person of Mieko Inbe. The office became a locale for registering Japanese Aliens, Selective Service Advisory Board, registration of new draftees of Japanese ancestry, and headquarters for dissemination of information of public interest. With evacuation facing the community, several hardworking committees were formed and put to work and among them were evacuation housing committee chaired by Dr. Koki Kumamoto, Community Welfare Council, Red Cross Unit, Farm Welfare Committee and others. The Farm Welfare Committee was chaired by Edward Tokunaga as assisted by Masao Ishida, Frank Matsumoto and Kiyoshi Kumagai. Its primary purpose was to prepare a complete survey of the Japanese American farmers in the area and to represent their interest in every way possible.

All those who experienced the trying period immediately preceding their uprooting and evacuation could well recall the suffering and heartaches from the closing paragraph of the Minutes of the Chapter's meeting of March 30, 1942:

"In view of the imminent evacuation, President stated that this may be the final Board of Governors meeting. The matter on what to do with the Sacramento J.A.C.L. office and its equipments and furnitures, as well as the money in the Treasury, was brought up. It was suggested by Mr. Walter Tsukamoto that, in regard to the money in the Treasury, we elect or designate three or four officers to act as trustees of the Chapter for the entire duration to represent the Sacramento Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. The monies in the bank and the defense savings bonds to be kept in their custody. It was agreed upon by everyone present that the office furnitures will be donated to the American Red Cross and one filing cabinet will be stored at the local Y.W.C.A., 17th and L Streets, and the rest of the office

furnitures will be stored in certain premises owned by Coffee Oshima. It was agreed upon that the J.A.C.L. office will render its services and help to the public to the very last day, and it was moved by Dr. Koki Kumamoto that we retain Mieko Inbe as our acting secretary until such time as the Sacramento Chapter of the J.A.C.L. officially adjourns in Sacramento for the duration of the War. Mr. Henry Taketa suggested that a bulletin or a letter be mailed to the members giving cheer and encouragement to those who faced imminent evacuation."

While the meeting of March 30, 1942, was the last official gathering of the local chapter, true to its resolution, President Goro Muramoto, office secretary Mieko Inbe and many others of the Sacramento J.A.C.L. continued to work and serve in the interest and welfare of the Japanese Americans of the area until the very final day of the evacuation itself.

Conclusion:

Last page of the pre-war era of Sacramento Chapter was written in May of 1942, and for a period of several years it ceased to exist. A reserve sum of \$4,000.00 was deposited into a savings account for safe-keeping for the duration of evacuation with George Takahashi, Dr. Goro Muramoto and Henry Taketa as custodians. Small portion of the funds was put to good use in mid-1945 to establish hostels and to provide other assistance to those returning to or converging upon Sacramento for resettlement immediately after removal of the Exclusion Order. After the hostel project got underway successfully, funds advanced were promptly restored to the Chapter's reserve account. It may be said that Sacramento J.A.C.L. was "well heeled" on its rebirth in early 1947.

The "old timers", both named and unnamed in this writing, have had their definite place and have left their imprints in the making of our J.A.C.L. organization at all levels and in its heritage. In their own quiet ways, they were the activists of their time. Perhaps, on the occasion of celebrating the Golden Anniversary of our Sacramento J.A.C.L. Chapter, we may find it in our hearts and minds to spiritually extend to them our sincere "thank you" for a job well done.

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THE JAACL HYMN

There was a dream my father dreamed for me
A land in which all men are free --
Then the desert camp with watchtowers high
Where life stood still, mid sand and brooding sky --
Out of the war in which my brothers died
Their muted voices with mine cried --
This is our dream, that all men shall be free!
This is our creed, we'll live in loyalty --
God help us rid the land of bigotry
That we may walk in peace and dignity.

Music by Marcel J. Tyrrel

Lyrics by T. Marion Tajiri