

Memo

from the desk of

HELEN R. MacGREGOR

Kimi Fujii

I brought this
to the meeting.
This recognition
of you pleases
me.

Warm regards
Helen

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She's AC Transit's Big Wheel

By ELAINE REED
Tribune Staff Writer

If Kimiko "Kimi" Fujii had her way, more people would leave their cars at home and ride the bus. You see, "Kimi" is the new president of the AC Transit Board and the first woman in its 19-year history to serve in that capacity.

Elected by fellow board members, she is well qualified for the post, having served as vice president of the transit board for two years.

"I've always been interested in transportation," said Miss Fujii (she prefers Miss to Ms.) during an interview at Fujii Florist, a 53-year-old family business in Hayward. But her interest is heightened in view of the gas shortage plus environmental issues.

She was appointed to the seven-member board in April, 1971, to fill out the unexpired term of the late E. Guy Warren. And just last November, she was elected (she won by a wide margin) to a four-year term. She represents voters in Ward Five, which takes in Hayward, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo and a little strip of San Leandro.

Miss Fujii has no doubt that the public is more transit-oriented these days, but she still thinks there's a need to get more people riding buses. "Some people," she noted, "are in their middle 40's and don't even know how to ride a bus." And the best way to teach them, she figures, is through a vigorous marketing campaign. "We have to send some of our public relations employes out to organizations, factories and schools and just show people how easy it is to use the bus."

Miss Fujii figures the more people who use the bus, the better off the debt-riddled transit system will be. "There is a definite need for more money," she noted, "and we don't want to raise fares.

Because, you see, mass transit, philosophically speaking, is for people who don't have any means of transportation."

As president of the policy-making board, which works closely with the AC Transit District staff, she wants to see all of the programs started last year continued. She also wants to see bus lines within the city studied more carefully so they can be more useful to the public. She's going to be pushing for more shopper buses, now in operation in Oakland and Hayward, put into use during off-peak hours. And she would like to see the district purchase buses with wide doors and aisles so they could be of service to the handicapped. "It's very important for anyone who's confined or with limited mobility to be able to get out and be a part of the mainstream," she emphasized.

Miss Fujii would like the public to know that she is deeply interested in people's transit-related problems. "There's nothing worse than having city government or any kind of government where the people are not involved," she said. "I feel very strongly about being available to people. I've had people call me here and I'm glad they do. It's surprising how people don't know where to go with a problem."

Working on people-problems is nothing new to Miss Fujii, who's been involved in community problems in her home town of Hayward since 1947.

In 1942, her Japanese-American family was sent to a relocation camp in Topaz, Utah. Miss Fujii studied for a year at Brigham Young University and then transferred to the University of Wisconsin, majoring in botany and minoring in art history. Friends had kept the family business going during the war years and after the war her family returned and picked up the



Tribune photo by HOWARD ERKER

Kimiko 'Kimi' Fujii, who's devoted a good part of her life to community affairs, is in the driver's seat as head of AC Transit Board

pieces.

Miss Fujii returned from college in 1947 and began working in the family business as well as working on housing problems in Hayward. At that time, she recalled, Japanese-Americans were returning from the relocation camps and having trouble finding housing. People didn't want to sell or rent to them.

Working on people-problems came naturally because, she said, "my father was active in the Japanese-American community and I was brought up to think about the welfare of people and the community." Her experiences during the war years helped to reinforce her beliefs.

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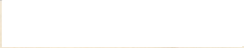
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