

Sat. 1/10/98

20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary New England *Kenjinkai Oshogatsu*  
Year of the Tiger                      A *Sansei* Perspective

Happy New Year! *Omedeto Gozaimasu*. My name is Allan Shigeo Fujita. It is an honor to be asked to speak on my *Sansei* Perspective on our *Oshogatsu*. I have attended all but 1 or 2 of these gatherings. By 1989, the *Nisei* had already done 12 years of *Oshogatsu*. The 12-year cycle is very important in Asian cultures. It helps me to think that the *Nisei* completed the first animal cycle on their own, and they are now helping us in the 2<sup>nd</sup> twelve-year cycle. I was the first *Sansei* to volunteer for the Committee. I became the Chairperson of the Committee, and I retired after that one time. We appreciate the responsibilities the committee takes on every year to coordinate this important event.

So, the first thing you figure out, when you are born Japanese, is what generation you are, and how you are a part of that generation. My older cousins were born in the Internment Camp at Topaz, Utah. They were some of the few *Sansei* who had the camp experience as a part of growing up. The closest I got to camp was the filming of Farewell to Manzanar, in 1974, which was a lot of milling around with Japanese people waiting for something to happen, sort of like the real thing. I also went to Topaz on the pilgrimage in 1993.

So, *Sansei* Perspective means to learn your history from the *Issei* and *Nisei*, to try to preserve the culture, and to keep the community alive and healthy. One of the ways *Sansei* have tried to do that is to be political and cultural activists. I was at Cal (UC Berkeley) when a *Sansei* woman from my high school (Patti Iiyama of El Cerrito) shocked the Japanese community and the rest of the world by helping to take over the Administration Building during the Free Speech Movement, 1964. *Sansei* Perspective is taking the past into the future. Same with the Asian Studies Movement, December 1968, at San Francisco State College. Professor S.I. Hayakawa, a Canadian, vs. *Sansei* and friends. *Sansei* were there at the forefront of the Third World Liberation Front, which advocated for Ethnic Studies and diversity of faculties. A *Sansei* activist actually went too far and torched the Bank of America at Santa Cruz. In the 1970's and 80's, *Sansei* promoted identity by starting *taiko* groups like San Jose' *Taiko*. *Sansei* attorneys worked on cases like Korematsu and Redress & Reparations. So, *Sansei* bring our own history and perspective. It's hard to believe that I am now 51, and my *Yonsei* sons are 23 and 21 years old.

These gatherings are a time to socialize and see each other as one community. We enjoy the traditional symbolic foods and attempt, once again, to "cook it better and get it right". We strengthen our bodies and souls together as one big family we call New England *Kenjinkai*.

Living in New England has given me an appreciation of U.S. History and Winter Survival skills. Thank God we missed the ice storm today. As Japanese people are nostalgic by nature, the preoccupation with New England history falls right into place. Here we fuse together the traditions of Japan and New England, exemplified by the Sister City Program of *Kyoto* and Boston, the two ancient capitals. *Kyo-machiya* is the complete Japanese home inside the Boston Children's Museum, which can be visited on special *Matsuri* festival times. Boston's Museum of Fine Arts has the largest collection

of Japanese Art outside of Japan. The Zen Garden was designed by one of the masters from *Kyoto*. I encourage you to sit there in the good weather at the MFA. You might be transporting yourself to Japan for that period of time.

So, *Sansei* Perspective on *Oshogatsu* is also to be active. Get into the kitchen and cook! Learn how it's done from scratch, not from a can or sealed plastic bags. Make use of your time and energy to get to know and thank the *Issei* and *Nisei* for what they have struggled through and what they have done for all of us by their living example. Go to *Yoshinoya*, *Japonaise Bakery*, *Tokai Gift Shop*, *Sasuga Book Store*, Boston *Shiatsu School*, *Bunsai Gakuen Cultural Center*, *Showa Women's Institute*; join the Japan Society of Boston, the oldest in this country. Support your local Remembrance Day next month, and Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month in May, being presented by AARW, Asian-American Resource Workshop, Boston. Support Arawana Hayashi's *Jo Ha Kyu*, *Bugaku* performance group. Go see *Odaiko* New England, February 1, at Somerville Theatre. Go to Fairhaven, Massachusetts, and learn about *Manjiro Nakahama*, the first Japanese person in the United States, around 1842.

I always tell visitors, everything in Boston is either old, famous, or old & famous. From the T to First Night, to Walk for Hunger & the Marathon, many things began here first. You have the best of both worlds right in your midst. Be active. Remember the history and rich culture and take it forward into the future. Go out and do it. *Issei* and *Nisei* laid the groundwork for *Sansei* and *Yonsei* to live freely without their constraints. We should keep alive their legacy and spirit. That is the *Sansei* way. *Ganbate*'.  
*Dohmo arigato gozaimasu.*

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Bostonian since March, 1977  
*Ikebukuro, Tokyo and Saga, Kyushu*