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## My Introduction to Gedatsu

By Jackson Ito

My family joined Gedatsu in 1950, when I was 9 years old. My mother was a good friend of the late Rev. Arthur Sakamoto's mother. Arthur had two brothers and one sister. I had three brothers and one sister. In 1950, it appeared that there would probably be a war between North and South Korea. In those days, the U.S. still had a draft to fulfill military requirements.

During World War II, when Japanese Americans were removed from the western coastal states of California, Oregon and Washington, the thriving Buddhist churches were disbanded and upon returning to our homes after the war relocation, the Buddhist church my family belonged to was not restored. Two of my older brothers were already of draft age and a third would also soon be eligible for the draft. My mother was very concerned about having to send my brothers to war without an adequate religious preparation. During a visit to the Sakamoto family, my mother asked what they were doing to prepare Arthur, who was within the same age range.

Arthur was a good friend of Masaru Yamamura, whose family had been Gedatsu members under Mother Kiyota since Tule Lake Camp. While Arthur and Masaru were driving together with their high school friends, they were involved in a very serious car accident. Arthur experienced a strong pressure within his abdomen during the accident, and remarkably nobody was injured in spite of the seriousness of the car accident. It was because Masaru had been carrying his *Omamori* with him. If the *Omamori* was so effective in protecting against auto accident injury, it could be equally effective in protecting against war injury or death. Thus, the Sakamoto family joined the Yamamura family in Gedatsu. This is exactly what my mother had been searching for my brothers, so we also joined Gedatsu.

As for myself, when I joined Gedatsu, I had always been frail as a child. When Bishop Kishida studied me, he asked my mother to confirm that I excelled academically in school. My mother agreed that I did not have difficulties learning

my subjects in school and always received good grades. He replied that although that was not a problem for now, if I continued on my current path, when I got to college my mind will overpower my body and my body will fail (die). Since we lived on a farm, Bishop Kishida told my family to send me out into the fields to build up my body. It was immaterial whether my work on the farm was productive or not.

When I worked in the fields with my father and brothers, I would always fall behind, and they would help me so I could keep up. That was because I was always day dreaming about something else besides what I was doing. As my brothers grew up and went to school, into the armed services, or started their careers, I was the last son left to help my father on the farm.

One day when I was 16 years old, I was working together with my father in the fields. He asked me what I wanted to do for a living when I grew up. Since farming was the only occupation I knew, I replied that I wanted to become a farmer, just like my father. He was quiet and did not say anything for over 15 minutes, so I assumed that he was satisfied with my answer. When he finally spoke he said, ***“You think too much with your head and work too little with your hands to be a successful farmer. If you became a farmer, you will starve. We will have to send you to college.”***

During all the years that I had been working with my father, not once did he criticize me for being lazy, or ask me to work faster, or why I couldn't be more like my older brothers. He just accepted me as I was and didn't try to change me. I am extremely grateful to my father that he turned my ***liability*** (mental distraction from performing manual labor) into an ***asset*** (understanding the complexity of rocket science). Because of that, when I had children of my own, I also gave them the freedom to choose what they wanted to do for their careers. That was my way of repaying my father for what he did for me.

When I attended college at Caltech, I usually had final examinations from 8 AM Monday through noon Wednesday. Due to the very rigorous curriculum, when finals arrived, my self-assessment was that I was always at least two weeks behind where I thought I should have been. This was in spite of attending classes on Monday to Friday from 8 AM to 4 PM. I would wake up every morning at 7 AM, have a good breakfast, take 1 hour for lunch break, try to do homework

between 4 to 6 PM, have a good dinner between 6:30 to 7:30 PM and try to do more homework between 8 PM to 2 AM before going to sleep. This schedule was followed seven days a week except for one evening a month while attending the Gedatsu services at the Ogura branch in Pasadena and the following Sunday morning service at the Tsujimura branch when Bishop Kishida and Mother Kiyota would come to Los Angeles.

In order to try to catch up on my studies as best I could, between 7 AM Friday morning before finals until 7 AM Wednesday morning, I would only be able to get about 15 to 18 hours of sleep. After finals were over, I usually returned from Pasadena to Sacramento by a 10 to 12 hour bus ride on Thursday. Having been accustomed to a 2 PM bedtime, I could not go to sleep until 2PM when I returned home. However, I would sleep in late the following day, usually until 2 or 3 PM in the afternoon. This went on for several days until I had a chance to catch up on my rest. My mother would sneak into my room and bend over me to make sure that I was breathing to check that I was still alive. It was then that she remembered Bishop Kishida's warning that if I did not build up my body by working in the fields during my childhood, when I went to college, my mind would overtake my body and my body would fail.

***Bishop Kishida saved my life!*** If my family had not heeded Bishop Kishida's advice and sent me into the fields to build up my strength, I probably would not be alive today.