

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"Act with sincere appreciation
instead of talking about acting
sincerely. Sincerity comes forth
without our saying anything."*

Gedatsu is to do things with
appreciation.

Why is that so?

It is because we all have received
immeasurable blessings from many
people and things in the universe.
Nothing was created by ourselves.

Others provide everything to enable
us to live today. Therefore, we should be
thankful and do our best to perform our
duties and activities as an expression of
appreciation.

FEBRUARY 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	11	10:00 am	Sun Spirit Service
Tue	13	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting – via Google Meet
Tue	20		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
Sun	25	10:00 am	Appreciation Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4		Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	11	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	18	10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Sun Spirit Service
Tue	20		Church Closed (in lieu of Presidents' Day)
Thu	22	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	25	10:00 am	Ajikan Meditation Practice

MARCH 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	10	10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	12	7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	24	10:00 am	Appreciation and Higan Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	3	10:00 am	Hiho Meditation Practice
Sun	10	10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	17	10:00 am	Appreciation and Higan Service
Thu	21	5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	24	10:00 am	Ajikan Meditation Practice

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	16	10:00 am	Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom
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February “Never Forgotten” Memorial Services

“Never Forgotten” Memorial Services are held monthly at the Gedatsu Church to honor the memory of those who have passed away during that particular month.

People of all faiths are welcome, so invite your friends and family members to attend. Even if you are unable to attend, you may still honor the soul of a loved one.

The Sacramento Spiritual Center will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, February 4, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Kaneko (Ide) Hatae, George Hughley, Hisaye (Kino) Ide, Anna May Kao, Roku Kino, Helen Sekikawa, Ted Sekikawa, Karl Kaoru Tanaka, Noburo Tateishi, Yasuko (Noritake) Tsuboi, and Yoritaro Tsuboi.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, February 11, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Kimiye Akiyoshi, Masue Akiyoshi, Matsuno Aso, Maxine Chodor, Hideo Fujii, Mariko Fukumoto, Masato Fukumoto, Scott Hamamoto, Tadayoshi Ishida, Yvonne Suzuko Ishida, Nancy Michiyo Ito, Morio Kaku, Yasuo Kikuchi, Kikuo Konishi, Fumiko Makishi, Kofuku Makishi, Kimiko Matsugami, John Seiki Mitsuuchi, Kesao Naito, Kikuko Naito, Shoichi Naito, Tomokata Naito, Horace Kazumori Nakamura, April Hawley Navran, Chikajiro Nishi, Koto Nishi, Miyo Linda Okayama, Masanobu Sakuma, Yoshinosuke John Sakuma, Don Makoto Shiba, Sayoko Dorothy Shiroishi, Karl Tanaka, and Ishi Yuzuki.**

Spring Grand Festival

Gedatsu Church will hold its **Spring Grand Festival on Sunday, April 14, at 9:30 a.m. at the Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento.**

Fire Ceremony *Saito Goma* Plaques

Apply now for plaques for the Fire Ceremony to be held in conjunction with the Spring Grand Festival. An application form is enclosed with this newsletter. Applications are due by March 17.



Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund

Membership dues and donations help to ensure the day-to-day operations of our church. Donors to the Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund give the church an additional boost – providing sustaining dollars that help the church achieve its longer-range plans for growth and development.

The Gedatsu Kongo Appreciation Fund enables Gedatsu members to demonstrate a higher level of commitment, appreciation and support for the church. Participation in the fund requires an annual pledge of \$600 a year, in addition to the general membership dues.

2023 Appreciation Fund Donors

John / Nancy Horner
Dave / Penny Ide
Mark / Marie Ishida
Tadao Ishida
Jo Ann Kaku
Kimiye Kitasoe
Julie Mah
Tetsuya / Sachiyo Matsumoto
Victor / Marian Mizokami
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Ritsuko Nakatani
Naoya / Yuko Okano
Tom Okimura
Paul / Joyce Reid
Sam / Harriet Sekikawa
June Tanaka
Sadaye Tanaka
Howard / Carol Tsujimura
Dennis / Judy Tsuboi
Terumasa Yamada
Ushigome Branch, Japan

Return Old *Amacha* Holy Tea and Paper Plaques

If you ordered new *Amacha* holy tea plaques and/or holy paper plaques for the home, return your old plaques to your local church. They will be burned in a plaque-burning ceremony at the Sacramento Spiritual Center.

Attend Sun Spirit Services in February

On February 11, 1940, **Master Gedatsu Kongo** dedicated the Sun Spirit Monument on the grounds of the *Goreichi* in Japan. He regarded this monument – with its large circular sun image at its center and Japanese characters for *seishin*, or “spirit” – as a symbol of the sun’s expression of selflessness, fairness, and endless compassion. The everlasting light and heat from the sun are attributed as the sacred source of life, which the sun gives freely to all living things on earth without taking anything in return.

In his dedication speech, Gedatsu Kongo said: “I put my whole heart and soul into building this monument at my dear birthplace. It is only the expression of my sincere heart of reverence to God and respect for ancestors, and appreciation and requital.”

Members are encouraged to attend the Sun Spirit services at their local Gedatsu churches in February to recognize and give thanks to the sun for its gifts and significance in our lives.

Holiday Fun and Merriment



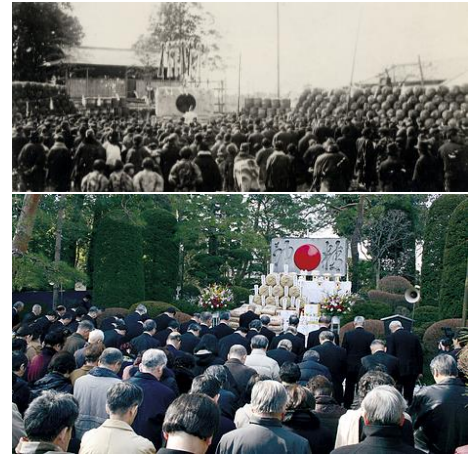
Yoga Enthusiasts Uplifted Performing “Downward Dog”

The open-air activity room of the Gedatsu Church of Hawaii recently served as an ideal studio for yoga enthusiasts to stretch, flex, and perform their “downward dog.” The venue – with its stunning view of swaying palms and serene blue sea amid cool morning breezes – added to the positive experience.

Yoga school instructors, dedicated to the pursuit of mental and physical health, guided participants in Hatha Yoga, focusing on poses and breathing exercises, as well as correct body usage and health principles.

The attendees, mainly women, expressed joy and enthusiasm for the class: *“Moving the body was pleasant both physically and mentally.” “It was not only a fitness activity but also enjoyable.” “I was healed by doing yoga with the chirping of birds and feeling the wind. I want to continue this in the future.”*

Given the popularity of the class, future classes are being planned.



At top, members gathered for the Sun Spirit monument unveiling ceremony in 1940. At bottom, current-day *Gedatsu-kai* members assemble in February before the monument.

The L.A. Church held its annual Christmas Celebration Program with a visit from Santa Claus (Brian Waldman) and musical performances by the Gedatsu Church ukulele class and singers/musicians, under the direction of instructor Stanford Tashiro.





How a Teenage Band Lifted Spirits, Created Pride in a Post-war J-A Community

The year was 1953, when a group of Japanese-American teenage boys in Seattle, Washington formed a swing band known as the Lotus Skyliners. For nine years, the musicians performed at dances, weddings, private parties, school proms, and other community functions, building an ardent fan base as they successfully toured the Pacific coasts of Washington, Oregon, and California.

Besides their shared Japanese ancestry and love of big band music, the young musicians were connected through the turmoil and trauma they and their families experienced in concentration camps in World War II. They were aided in adjusting to their post-war lives by the camaraderie of fellow band members; their beloved, inspiring music teacher, Don Kinsley; and the support of the Japanese-American community in Seattle.

The band's unique story is chronicled in the documentary book, *The Lotus Skyliners – A Big Band Lifts Up a Small Community*, published in 2023.

Dennis Tsuboi, a long-time member of the Gedatsu Church in Sacramento, was a tenor saxophonist in the Skyliners, when he attended high school in Seattle. In the book, he and other band members and friends reminisce about what the band meant to them and to the greater Japanese-American community in Seattle. Their collective voices document a fascinating and important part of *Nikkei* history.

Besides being interviewed for the book and authoring one of the chapters, Dennis was also on the book planning committee (consisting of the two authors/editors, five former Skyliners, and three "groupies"), which collaborated over three years before the book's launch last summer.

The Lotus Skyliners book is available for purchase through Amazon and <https://www.chinmusicpress.com>. For more information, go to the Skyliners home page at <https://www.lotusskyliners.com>. All proceeds to the book planning committee will be donated to charity, mostly to the Seattle Buddhist Temple and the Music Program at Washington Middle School, where Mr. Kinsley taught and most of the band members attended.

A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Chapter 4 The World of Shipping

In the beginning of the year 1911, Eizo Okano (Gedatsu Kongo) was employed by the Uchida Kinzo Store. In June, the storeowner told him to work at the receiving dock of the Shimizu Shipping Company. The work was very hard, but Eizo acquired a knack for it, soon becoming a highly regarded employee. Even the director trusted him without reservation, saying, "The matter is safe in his hands." The store owner then decided to appoint Eizo as a manager – less than a year since he was apprenticed.

A solemn vow to his parents, ancestors and God

Eizo began to visit Kitamotojuku, his hometown, at midnight on a fixed date every month. Going first to the Tenmanten Shrine, he stood before the shrine and apologized with his entire heart for his misdeeds. He then walked to the grave of the Okano ancestors. He bowed deeply and apologized for his past impiety with tears in his eyes.

Eizo then went to the Okano home but did not enter. At the front gate, he knelt on the ground and bowed deeply, shedding tears and apologizing to his parents from the bottom of his heart. He silently promised his parents, "I'll become a new man and will stake my life to succeed. I'll surely be successful and practice filial piety as much as possible. Until then, I'll see you from here every month."

Eizo's younger brother, Shoji (see photo, page 6), occasionally came to see him. Through Shoji, the Okano family received regular reports about Eizo and was relieved to learn about his situation.

Opportunities and aspirations

Eizo's business at the receiving dock proceeded favorably. One day, he was invited to dine with the director of the Shimizu Shipping Company. The director said, "The owner of our company thinks highly of you and would like you to work for us."

(Continued on page 5)

(Biography – Continued from page 4)

Although it was a great shock for the Uchida Kinzo Store, as a subcontractor, they could not refuse Eizo's request to leave. The store owner reluctantly consented to Eizo's transfer to the Shimizu Shipping Company. Thus, Eizo took his first step into the shipping business.

Filled with high aspirations, Eizo started working at the Shimizu Shipping Company. He put his full effort into his job and mastered the work with remarkable speed. By New Year 1914, Eizo was promoted to manager – an exceptional accomplishment.

Six months later, Eizo resumed an intimate relationship with Aki Kumashiro, the *geisha* he had fallen in love with eight years earlier. A year later, Eizo became chief manager. Being financially self-sufficient, he decided to redeem Aki, but they mutually agreed not to formally marry. He also decided to establish a home of his own in Kagurazaka, Tokyo.

A rising star in the shipping business

The Shimizu Shipping Company ran briskly in a booming era for shipping. Eizo began to spend half a month at the Yokohama branch office, and the other half at the main office in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. He played a leading part in every department of the company, with seventy or eighty percent of the business under his control. During that time, Aki began operating a *geisha* house business in Kagurazaka, a venture that was more prosperous than expected.



These photos, taken in 1916, show a stylishly outfitted 35-year-old Eizo Okano, denoting his status as a leader in the Shimizu Shipping Company.

In 1916, Eizo started to rearrange the business, giving priority to domestic lines and focusing efforts to build up the Northern Sea Route. Eizo bet on the profitable possibilities of Hokkaido.

One day, Eizo was introduced to Tatsuzo Hamada, owner of the Hokkai Shipping Store. Eizo sensed great character in Hamada, and their compatible spirits drew them close from their first meeting. Eizo promised Hamada to cooperate with each other hereafter. He made efforts to establish the Northern Sea Route business in cooperation with Hamada.

A grand dream to serve country and business

Eizo strongly desired to serve his country, and he felt he could do this through his shipping business. This was his great dream.

The first step to implement this idea was to distribute the Hokkaido products widely. He would promote the business with Sakhalin (an island north of Hokkaido, now owned by Russia) and, in the future, transport goods from Siberia. To expand Japan's economic influence in the world, Eizo felt it was absolutely necessary to transport as many goods as possible from the continent to Japan.

New business dealings

With the business of the Northern Sea Route thriving, Eizo was largely allowed to do anything at his own discretion, as long as there was no conflict of business interests. He then started his own business of dealing stone material with the money he earned during the war boom.

Once his stone-dealing business was on track, Eizo was invited to a meeting by a local businessman, Mr. Kuga, and a number of Kuga's close friends and business associates. They wished to have Eizo join them in a business venture: to establish a financial company together to safeguard their assets in a potential economic depression and to serve as a money lender.

With everyone agreeing, the Keika Trust Company was established in March with 500,000 yen as capital and 10,000 total shares of stock.

(Continued on page 6)

(Biography – Continued from page 5)

In March of 1920, half a month after the establishment of the Keika Trust Company, a great stock crash occurred on the Tokyo Stock Market, creating serious postwar panic.

High risk, high reward

Eizo saw a way out of the difficulty through the transportation of explosives to a coal mine in Hokkaido, but the freight charges were very high because of the danger. If Eizo's shipping company were to undertake this business, it could tide them over the depression years.

Eizo approached the company's owner and management with this plan, but they stubbornly opposed it, refusing to listen to him. Finally, Eizo asked, "Do you have any good plan to tide us over this crisis? I venture my life on this plan. If you don't accept my plan, I will leave the company. If you accept it, I'll bear all the responsibility for it."

The owner replied, "Are you sure you will take it upon yourself to bear the whole burden?"

Eizo replied, "I never go back on my word."

The owner closed his eyes, contemplated, then said, "Because of your strong endorsement, I won't say anything more. I will leave it up to you."

A few days later, Eizo met the ship captain and crew to obtain their consent to transport the explosives. They were very concerned at first. But Eizo had thoroughly researched the safety operations, and once they were assured about the safety of the work and their high wages, the crew eventually agreed with him. Thus, the first transportation of explosives was undertaken and safely completed.



Eizo, at age 37, at right, shown in 1918 with his youngest brother, Shoji.

In the period that Eizo secretly visited his family home, Shoji regularly met with his older brother, relaying reports to the Okano family of Eizo's situation.



In this family gathering in 1920, Eizo, far right, is seated with his father, Makitaro, and younger brother, Kakutaro. In the rear is Takenori, his nephew.

On December 22, 1920, Eizo's father, Makitaro, passed away at the age of 69. After his father's funeral, Eizo had a feeling of emptiness in his heart. Although he remained very busy at the office, he felt unwell, and his physical health declined.

Grave illness . . . and recovery

In April of 1921, Eizo developed a bad cough and high fever, and was diagnosed with acute pneumonia. Despite careful nursing, his fever rose higher, causing him to be delirious and barely conscious. His sweat soaked through his bedding to the tatami mats. The "stench of death" hung over his sickroom, ending with Eizo groaning in pain and vomiting bloody pus. A doctor was summoned.

"While his condition is inconclusive," said the doctor, "we can say that he has turned the corner."

Soon after, Eizo regained consciousness, and grew stronger each day. From his window, he saw trees with fresh green leaves and colorful, sunlit flowers. He felt the vividness of life throughout his body. He felt happy to be alive from the bottom of his heart.

In June, Eizo went to the Shiobara Hot Springs in Nasu for a hot-spring cure. During that stay, he became eager to become independent and work with Mr. Hamada of the Hokkai Shipping Store.

Eizo made up his mind. "As soon as I return to Tokyo, I will discuss my plan with Mr. Hamada."

(Next month: "Trials and Tribulations")



DECEMBER 2023 OFFERINGS

Northern California Total: \$2,770

General Donations: J. Tanaka, M/M D. Ide, J. Detwiler/J. Sebe, M/M J. Horner, K. Ota Schubert, M. Fukushima, No Name, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa

Special Acknowledgments

M/M C. Tanaka	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service
J. Ito	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service
A. Sebe	Appreciation for 2023 year and Bishop Kishida memorial service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation for 2023 year and Bishop Kishida memorial service
J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" for Tokio Tateishi, Tomota Tateishi, Kiyoshi Tateishi
P. / D. Tateshi	In memory of Tomota and Kiyoshi Tateishi
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" service
M/M S. Sekikawa	Appreciation for 2023 year and Bishop Kishida memorial service
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation for 2023 year and Bishop Kishida memorial service
M/M D. Tsuboi	Gratitude for Appreciation service and Bishop Kishida memorial service

Southern California Total: \$9,770

General: Anonymous (\$1,500), D. Shiroishi, E. Ogawa, J. Hamamoto, J. Ito, J. Kaku, J. Taylan Jr, K. Fujii, K. Mortuary, M. Nakamura, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M J. Peck (\$1,000), M/M K. Chinen, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M M. Hamada, M/M M. Locheo Garcia, M/M N. Chodor, M/M N. Okano, M/M P. Young, M/M S. Mukai, M/M S. Shaklan, M/M S. Tashiro, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M T. Hiram, N. Takara, No Name, P. Nakamura, T. Ishida, T. Murakami, T. Nagao (\$1,000), T. Okimura, Y. Oishi

Special Acknowledgments

F. Sueyoshi	In memory of Thomas Sueyoshi
A. Yokota / R. Cooley	In memory of ancestral spirits of Cooley and Yokota Family
Tomita Family	In memory of Robert and Dorothy Tomita, Tomita/Katuko ancestors
M/M S. Mukai	In memory of Tomota Tateishi
D. Shiroishi	In memory of Junnosuke and Eiko Ishida
A. Tsujimura	Appreciation for 2023
T. / K. Ishida	In memory of Junnosuke and Eiko Ishida
D. Shiroishi	In memory of Archbishop Kishida
N. / Y. Okano	Year-end appreciation
Do. Shiroishi	Appreciation for holiday service
T. Nagao	In memory of Katsuyo Nagao (\$1,500)

Online Donations: Total: \$8,885

General: G. Iwata, M. Springer, N. Kishida, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, M/M P. Reid, M/M M. Tsujimura, G. Hass

Special Acknowledgments

T. Palelek	In memory of Loretta Tsujimura
A. Kishida	In memory of Eizan Kishida
D. Allum	In memory of Chiyoko Kamei
J. Mah	In memory of Tomoki and Margaret Oyanagi (\$7,000)
M/M M. Tsujimura	In memory of Loretta Tsujimura (\$500)

Note: Special Acknowledgments are listed for gifts \$100+. Dollar amounts are shown for gifts \$500+.

GEDATSU CHURCH USA
www.gedatsu-usa.org



Editorial Staff

Joyce Reid, Editor

Reverend Naoya Okano, adviser

Reverend Mica Rodriguez, adviser

Editorial contributors to this issue:

Dave Ide, Mark Ishida, Marie Ishida, Mariko Locheo,
Rev. Hisakazu Taki, Dennis Tsuboi, Rev. Kazuo Yamada

Gedatsu Church USA
Los Angeles Branch
7850 Hill Drive
Rosemead, CA 91770

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The recently published book, *Lotus Skyliners – A Big Band Lifts Up a Small Community* – tells the story of a 1950s-era swing band, composed of Japanese-American teen musicians in the Seattle, Washington, area.

Sacramento Church member, Dennis Tsuboi, played tenor saxophone in the Skyliners. (He's pictured at right, in the front row, second from left of the seven saxophonists.)

Read how the Lotus Skyliners built an ardent fan base throughout the West Coast states and how the band experience helped the youths and their families overcome the turmoil and trauma of wartime incarceration. Story on page 4.

