

GEDATSU COMPANION

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Gedatsu Kongo's Thought for the Month

*"The greatest discovery in life
is the discovery of oneself."*

Master Gedatsu Kongo further stated: "Self-discovery is, in the end, the discovery of Gedatsu."

When the Gedatsu teaching is firmly installed in our minds, we will surely become happy. Why? Because we will be able to accept everything as Nature's blessings and the benevolence of our ancestors.

When we have this outlook, we begin to see that our achievements in work, school, and other endeavors are due to the countless blessings we constantly receive.

This self-awareness keeps our egos in check and prevents us from becoming too greedy. Our mistakes and setbacks in life become learning opportunities for our personal growth and development.

Gedatsu allows us to view our "ordinary lives" with profound gratitude. Our self-discovery enables us to share our happiness with others in an ever-expanding circle of joy.

JULY 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Thu	4	Church Closed (Independence Day)
Sun	7 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Tue	9 7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	14 10:00 am	Appreciation / <i>Obon</i> Service
Sun	28 10:00 am	Appreciation Service / Graduates Honored

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	2 10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Thu	4	Church Closed (Independence Day)
Sun	14 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	21 10:00 am	Appreciation / <i>Obon</i> Service Graduates Honored
Thu	25 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	28 10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	28 12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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AUGUST 2024

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	11 10:00 am	Appreciation Service
Tue	13 7:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Google Meet
Sun	25 10:00 am	Appreciation Service and <i>Benzaiten</i> Service

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Sun	4 10:00 am	<i>Hiho</i> Meditation Practice
Sun	11 10:00 am	"Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
Sun	18 10:00 am	Appreciation and <i>Benzaiten</i> Service
Thu	22 5:00 pm	Regional Board Meeting via Zoom
Sun	25 10:00 am	<i>Ajikan</i> Meditation Practice

CHURCHWIDE

Sat	24 12 noon	Steering Team Meeting via Zoom
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July “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, July 7, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Yukio Jim Ide, Tsuma Kino, Kazue Ando Kotabe, Miyoko Nakamura, Steven Ikuzo Nakatani, Alan Yoneo Oshima, Yukie Ota, Shizu Sebe, Charlie Zenzo Tagawa, Keichi Takemura, Steve Morio Taketa, Keisuke Tateishi, Susie Setsuko Tateishi, Yukio Tateishi, Kimiko Yomogida, Tsuyako Yuno, Yukie Yuno, and Yone Yuno.**

The Los Angeles Church will hold its “Never Forgotten” Memorial Service on **Sunday, July 14, at 10 a.m.**, honoring the souls of **Hideko Arakawa, Iku Arakawa, Masao Arakawa, Nathan Capross, Haruko Chinen, Kathryn Christina Howe, Tomoko Imai, Louis Kiyoshi Ito, Yoshino Kawamura, Maria Antonia Lechuga, Hiroko Murakami, Stanley Muronaka, Yasoji Nagahama, Tomoyoshi Naito, Kyoko Nakaguchi, Shigeko Nakamura, Helen Nakano, Eddie Kinya Ogura, Nancy Yoshie Ogura, Hiroko Omiya, Setsu Sakuma, Malayka Jane Sexton, Thomas Gray Sexton, Otomatsu Shiba, Yukio Shimada, Michiye Shimohira, Nobuyoshi Shimohira, Shigeko Sugata, Yoshinori Takamine, Genpachi Tanji, Riichi Tomita, Kazuma Toyama, Rudy Koichiro Tsujimura, Yoko Tsujimura.**

Minister Schedules

Reverend Naoya Okano and his family will vacation in Japan this summer. Rev. Naoya will depart for Japan on July 9 and return on July 29.

From Japan, we welcome the return of **Reverend Hisakazu Taki**, who will serve as guest minister at the L.A. Church from July 6 through July 31.

Senior Reverend Akira Sebe and his family will vacation in Japan. He will depart on July 15 and return on July 30.



Let's
Celebrate
Together!

Join in the celebration of the 75th anniversary of our Gedatsu Church in America at our Grand Fall Festival, which will held on Sunday, September 1, at our Sacramental Spiritual Center.

Special guests from *Gedatsu-kai* Japan will attend our Fall Festival: **Bishop Teruo Okano**, chairman; future Abbot, **Yotsugi Takayuki Okano**; and other *Gedatsu-kai* leaders.

- **Order your *Saito Goma* plaques by August 18.** Price per plaque has increased to \$5. Application form is in this newsletter and at your local church.
- **Dinner party for honored guests on Saturday evening, 8/31.** Contact your local church if you would like to attend. Cost and venue to be announced.
- **Reserve a lunch for Festival Sunday.** A free catered Mexican luncheon, featuring *birria* grilled tacos, street tacos, and other tasty foods and beverages will be served.
- **Reserve a bus seat.** A free chartered bus from L.A. (minimum of 12 riders) will be provided. Gratuity for bus driver is appreciated. Contact **Mariko Locheo** at the L.A. Church at locheo-gedatsu.lab@gmail.com. The bus is made available through the generosity of **Senior Deacon Jackson Ito**.

Memorial Tower Enshrinements – Fall 2024

New enshrinements of souls in the Gedatsu Memorial Tower are scheduled for the Grand Fall Festival in September. **The price for an enshrinement plaque is \$500. Applications for enshrinement will be accepted through June.** Application forms are available at your church office.

New Martial Arts Classes Offered at L.A. Church

Adults interested in learning the Japanese martial arts traditions of *Daito-ryu aikijujutsu*, close unarmed combat, should contact the L.A. Church for information on dates, times, and cost. Classes by *Nichigetsukan Sensei Nathan Scott* will be offered, starting in July.



Mothers Celebrated with Tokens of Love and Appreciation

The congregation of the Sacramento Spiritual Center honored mothers who attended the Mother's Day service. Moms and ladies were presented with Belgian truffles and an assortment of natural/organic skincare products. Pictured, from left: **June Tanaka, Harriet Sekikawa, Nancy Horner, Sally McSwain, Rev. Mica, Judy Tsuboi, Ritsuko Nakatani, Miyako Lumpkin, and Reiko Ide.**

At the L.A. Church, Sunday School students honored their moms with roses and handmade bookmarks. The Women's Club gifted all ladies with *origami* giftbags filled with cookies, *origami* towel cupcakes, and Mother's Day prayer.

Pictured, from left: **Uzuko Shiroishi, Anna Rico, Annie Dewitt, Fukuko Rico, Yuko Okano, Toyoko Murakami, Chiharu Young, Kiyoko Fujii, Marian Mizokami, Juri Addley (behind Marian), Staci Jackson, Saki Maekawa, Yoko Oishi, Michelle Ishida, Donna Shiroishi, Sandra Martinez, Jo Ann Kaku, Janet Hirayama, Karen Nakamura, Tae Scott, and Carole Tsujimura.**

Plaque-burning Joen-no-gi Service

The Gedatsu Spiritual Center in Sacramento held its annual *Joen-no-gi* Plaque-burning Service on the fire ceremony site on the *Goreichi* grounds. With prayers of invocation conducted by **Rev. Mica Rodriguez**, as well as holy tea blessing and prayers offered by the congregation, old holy tea plaques and holy paper plaques that were returned to the church were lit on fire, returning the sacred items to their natural elements and to the universe.



A Brief Biography of Gedatsu Kongo

Chapter 8

Building the Gedatsu Pathway

By 1937, the Gedatsu teaching continued to advance throughout Japan, spreading to such areas as Nagoya, Aichi and Kobe.

In June of that year, President Okano was summoned to the headquarters of the Daigo Temple to meet with Head Priest Kaigyoku Okada. That visit would bring about new developments that would affect the Gedatsu teaching in various ways.

The backdrop to the meeting was Japan's pre-war relationship with China, which was becoming increasingly strained. As a result, the Japanese government instructed religious organizations to cooperate with one another to benefit the nation as a whole. Hence, the Daigoji Temple was tightening its control over its branch churches, which included the Gedatsu Church.

Cooperating with governmental, religious authorities

Therefore, at their meeting, Okada requested President Okano to adopt the basic doctrine of the Daigo School of Shingon Buddhism. President Okano understood the reason for the request, so he accepted without hesitation, agreeing to publish the Daigo doctrines in the monthly Gedatsu bulletin. He felt an obligation to the Daigo Temple and believed strongly that the essential teachings of Gedatsu would not be affected.

Head Priest Okada also requested President Okano to discontinue the performance of the *Goho* practice. To Okada's surprise, President Okano agreed, mainly because he had already considered suspending the practice.

The purpose of the *Goho* practice was self-reflection and self-reform through communication with ancestors and other spirits. When President Okano directly guided members, the *Goho* practice was performed according to this purpose. However, as members increased in number, he was unable to always guide them directly. This often resulted in the practice being performed incorrectly and departing from its intended purpose.

When members performed the *Goho* practice without the proper attitude or direction, they could become possessed by spirits or behave abnormally – sometimes causing the local police to be apprehensive of the practice. The following true account illustrates this misapplication of the *Goho*.

When a certain member performed the Goho practice at his branch, he was told by a spirit that a huge pile of gold was buried in a specific place. Members who witnessed this rushed to the place and began to dig.

One of the members reported this to President Okano, who said, "Good! Take this paper with you, and when you find the gold, say 'thank you' to the gods."

He then wrote a receipt for the buried gold and handed it to the person, who reported this to the others.

They continued to dig all night. Exhausted, they could not find the gold. Early the next morning, a messenger arrived, saying, "I am delivering a message to you from President Okano. Listen carefully."

In great anticipation, they waited and listened. Then the messenger loudly read President Okano's words: "You fools! You've dug to the depths of your avarice. See how deep your greed is!"

Focus on practicing Gedatsu in daily life

Aware of this misapplication of the *Goho* practice, President Okano felt it necessary to alter his teaching. Relying less on *Goho* training, he instead urged members to put into practice what they learned in their daily lives. He focused on teaching them how to live as wartime citizens, encouraging them to donate care packages for soldiers and contribute to their country. Each month, members put aside money from their meager household budgets to support their communities and country. Members continued these activities until the end of war in 1945.

(Continued on page 5)

(Biography – Continued from page 4)

Mother Kiyota seeks guidance

In the fall of 1937, a woman from the United States visited House Number 6. Ine Kiyota had immigrated to America right after her marriage. With her husband's permission, she returned to Japan with her three children to learn from President Okano.

On her first glance at President Okano, Kiyota felt intuitively that he was a god. She rented a house near House Number 6, and she visited President Okano almost every day to learn from him. Moved by her dedication, he allowed her to accompany him when he visited branches to teach members.

After half a year of her intense training, President Okano told her, "You may return to America now." He gave her the scrolls of *Tenjinchigi* and *Gochi Nyorai*, Holy *Goho*, a *Kuyo* stupa and other symbols of worship, and told her, "Work for the happiness of all people and extend Gedatsu across the United States. When you return to America, you will realize what you should do."

Gedatsu takes root in U.S. soil

Kiyota returned to the U.S. In 1942, after the forced evacuation of Japanese Americans on the west coast to relocation camps, Gedatsu spread its roots in the United States. In the Tule Lake Relocation Camp where Kiyota and her family were interned, she began to propagate Gedatsu. After the war, she continued to teach the freed internees, who had relocated to Sacramento and San Francisco. Thus, the foundation of Gedatsu in the United States was established.

Propagating Gedatsu through delegation, training

At the end of 1937, President Okano appointed seven leaders – including Takeo Kishida – as Gedatsu teachers. He hoped that they would serve him in attaining his goal to extend Gedatsu throughout Japan for people's happiness and peace.

While President Okano sometimes visited various parts of the country to teach members, he urged regional leaders to come to House Number 6 for training. When they came, he had trainees prepare lunch for them. When members came from remote areas, he always treated them to a restaurant, asking, "What would you like to eat, sushi or unagi?"

Establishing ties with Sennyuji Temple

In April 1939, President Okano visited the Sennyuji Buddhist Temple in Kyoto. For a long time, he had cherished a strong desire to defend and support the temple, because it was the only family temple of the Imperial Family. While the general public was not permitted to visit the temple, members of the Sennyuji Association support group were granted visiting privilege.

Therefore, President Okano encouraged Gedatsu members to join the Sennyuji Association, and 144 members subsequently joined. President Okano was then allowed to visit the temple. After making an appointment, he traveled with Kishida to Kyoto, where they were welcomed at the station by a high priest of the temple. President Okano met with the chief priest and other high priests for four hours, thanking them for being allowed to join the Sennyuji Association and explaining the purpose and religious activities of the Gedatsu Church.

President Okano makes a request

"I've been contemplating a plan in my mind for several years," he told the priests. "It is the sincere duty of the Japanese people to serve the Imperial family. I believe there are three sites in Japan that we Japanese citizens should always respect. They are Ise Shrine, Kashihara Shrine, and Sennyuji Temple. I've wished, as president of Gedatsu Church, to visit these three sites annually together with our members. But, I've felt it most difficult to visit Sennyuji Temple."

(Continued on page 6)

(Biography – Continued from page 5)

He then asked the chief priest to allow Gedatsu members to visit the temple annually by themselves, but his request was denied. After a long discussion, the chief priest told President Okano, “When you make a good showing to ensure adequate financial support to protect the temple, let us discuss this matter again.”

Throughout the war years, President Okano encouraged members to put into practice what they learned. Thus, they showed their respect and appreciation to those who sacrificed their lives for the country by performing *Amacha* blessing for the war dead, including animals used in the war effort. They also donated articles for the care of war orphans.

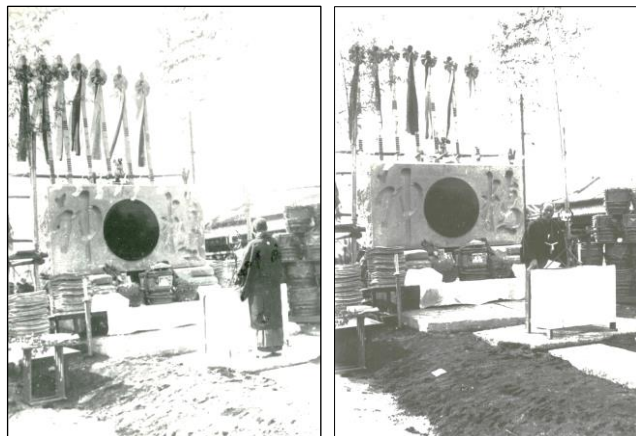
Because of severe material shortages, President Okano instructed members to be resourceful and create their own industries, such as the production and distribution of foods, charcoal and manure. For example, because charcoal was highly controlled, he had members send charcoal directly from production areas to consumers. To resolve the shortage of foods and manure, he encouraged using seaweed.

After the New Year service in 1940 – in preparation for the unveiling ceremony of the Sun Spirit Monument the following month – President Okano purchased five kinds of cereal grains: rice, wheat, soybeans, millet and corn. He wanted to get as much of these grains as possible to offer at the ceremony, a difficult task because of wartime shortages. Members made every effort to get them.

Dedication of the Sun Spirit Monument

The unveiling ceremony was held in *Goreichi* on February 11, an auspicious day marking the Empire Day of the 2600th year of the Imperial reign. The Sun Spirit Monument was covered with a white cloth. On both sides of the stone monument, 50 casks of *sake* from all parts of the country and 1,048 bags of grain were stacked in one enormous pile. The plaza before the monument was filled with the participants.

After the Sun Spirit Monument was unveiled, President Okano asked a member, who was rice dealer, to mix the bags of grain and send a portion to every branch in Japan. President Okano wanted all members to recall the hardships of their ancestors and thank them for their blessings by eating the mixed grains.



Hundreds of Gedatsu members gathered for the dedication of the Sun Spirit Monument on February 11, 1940.

The results of this gesture were not all positive. Many members failed to understand President Okano’s thoughts regarding the significance of the grain. Some members regarded the mixed grains as animal feed and returned them to the branches.

Teaching that daily life is the religion

President Okano encouraged members to practice Gedatsu by cultivating their spirituality through their daily lives. He would repeatedly say, “Life is religion. Religion is life.” He wanted members to work – with appreciation and without complaint – for the supply and distribution of foods, manure and clothing, despite the harsh wartime circumstances and material shortages that they faced daily.

(Continued on back page)

Northern California Total: \$5,725

General Donations: J. Tanaka, M/M D. Ide, M/M D. Tsuboi, J. Detwiler / J. Sebe, M. Fukushima, M. Lumpkin, No Name, P. Harada, R. Ide, R. Nakatani, M/M S. Sekikawa, S. Taketa

Special Acknowledgments

J. Tanaka	"Never Forgotten" for Shigeno Tateishi
M/M D. Tsuboi	With gratitude for "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M/M D. Ide	"Never Forgotten" for Buster Y. Ide and Uncle Ben Ide
M/M S. Sekikawa	<i>Kansha</i> for "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
R. Ide	Appreciation for Buster Ide 3-year Memorial Service
S. Taketa	"Never Forgotten" for Mark Mullins
M/M D. Tsuboi	Appreciation for Plaque-burning Service
M/M D. Ide	Gratitude for <i>Joen-no-Gi</i> and Appreciation Service
S. Yabut	"Never Forgotten" for Mas Ota
M/M J. Horner	Appreciation for "Never Forgotten" Memorial Service
M/M C. Tanaka	Appreciation
M/M D. Ide	Appreciation and gratitude for Buster Y. Ide 3-year Memorial Service
Anonymous	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund
J. Ito	<i>Joen-no-Gi</i> Appreciation (\$500)
A. Sebe	<i>Goreichi</i> Maintenance Fund (\$2,000)

Southern California Total: \$3,160

General: Anonymous, I. Long, J. Hamamoto, J. Ito, J. Kaku, J. Wakasa, K. Fujii, M. Nakamura, M/M G. Morioka, M/M H. Tsujimura, M/M K. Chinen, M/M K. Kuritani, M/M L. Muronaka, M/M M. Hamada, M/M N. Chodor, M/M N. Okano, M/M S. Mukai, M/M S. Shiroishi, Y. Oishi, M/M T. Hirami, M/M T. Matsumoto, M/M V. Mizokami, No Name, T. Ishida, T. Okimura.

Special Acknowledgments

M/M K. Kuritani	"Never Forgotten" for Joe Tsujimura and John Kuritani
M/M Ho. Tsujimura	In memory of Yozo Tsujimura, Hiro Yamamisaka, John Kuritani, and June Morioka
M/M C. Morioka	Healthy birth of Makena Santander
T. Matsumoto	Special offering for Sumako Matsumoto and Hiromi Nakaguchi
M/M S. Mukai	Appreciation and gratitude to Gedatsu Kongo
Do. Shiroishi	Appreciation for Mother's Day

Online Donations: Total: \$583

General: G. Iwata, C. Sunahara, S. Shiroishi, H. Tsujimura, J. Reid, G. Hass

Special Acknowledgments

C. Sunahara	In memory of Kenneth Taketa
C. Sunahara	In memory of Masao Taketa

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

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(Biography – Continued from page 6)

By 1940, with church branches throughout the country and membership exceeding 10,000, House Number 6 in Tokyo was too small to hold the meetings of church leaders, who gathered on the first and 15th of each month. So, a new church meeting hall – *Dojo* of Great Japanese Spirit, or Tokyo *Dojo* – was erected in the Yotsuya district of Tokyo on property that was purchased with members' donations.

Celebrating the past, facing the future

On November 10, the 2,600th anniversary of the Imperial Reign of Japan was celebrated in the Imperial Palace Garden. President Okano was invited to the celebration to represent the Saitama prefecture residents.

He attended the ceremony wearing brand new formal attire. Emperor and Empress, other Imperial Family members, the prime minister and other ministers of state attended the ceremony.

President Okano was deeply moved and greatly honored to attend, thinking of the 2,600 years of Japanese history that culminated in this moment. Now, approaching the age of 60 – in Japanese tradition, the age that marks a rebirth to a second life – he was filled with deep emotion. He renewed his resolution to devote himself to work for the realization of peace and mankind's happiness through Gedatsu.

(Next month: "War")

