

# KOKORO

the heart and soul of our community  
san mateo chapter Japanese American citizens league sept 2009  
[www.sanmateojacl.org](http://www.sanmateojacl.org)  
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San Mateo JACL is dedicated to promoting the historical and cultural understanding of the Japanese American experience and to protecting and advancing the human and civil rights of our multi-ethnic society through educational and community programs.

Articles must be submitted before the first Friday (one month prior to publication) to [katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com](mailto:katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com)

## SAN MATEO JACL AGAIN PART OF SF AIDS MEMORIAL GROVE CLEAN-UP

San Mateo JACL would be happy to have you join us as part of the SF AIDS Memorial Grove Clean-Up, which will be held at the grove in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park on September 19<sup>th</sup>, from 9 am until about noon. San Francisco chapter has long participated in this event, and we have been joining with them and other volunteers for several years.

The Grove is a place of natural beauty and contemplation, and you will enjoy working with others—there are tasks for any level of fitness—to keep the grove beautiful as a legacy for future generations. Youth are especially welcomed. Meet us at the grove; gloves and tools are provided.

## OMIAI KKKON: BACK IN FASHION?

An article by this name, authored by Shiina Morimoto and published in the *Nichibei Times* [May 7-13, 2009], discussed the “single and too busy” problem faced by many young Japanese in Japan. The article explains that Japanese weddings are “eclectic:”

*A wedding can be Shinto, Buddhist, Christian or non-religious. It can be Western in style, Japanese, or often times, both. There can be a real Christian priest or a fake priest conducting the ceremony. The wedding can take place in a hotel (equipped with shrine, chapel, ballroom) or in Hawai'i. The bride typically changes three to four times during the course of the reception. Guests bring money instead of presents (usually about \$300 per person or odd-number figures for good luck), and are sent home with expensive gift baskets containing jewelry, lacquerware or confectionary.*

Lately, as young singles find themselves busy with careers, they have turned to *omiaiai kekkon* or arranged marriages. The term, *omiaiai kekkon*, means “to look at each other.” In the past, arranged marriages were brokered by parents or a *nakodo* or *baishakunin*, a go-between. Arranged marriages prior to the 1900s were then displaced with *ren-ai* or “love marriages.” However, there are now *omiaiai* clubs that help those who don't have time to meet and fall in love with their future spouse—for the sum of about 300,000 yen (\$3,000 joining fee to the club). Then, when according to custom the prospective groom gives a dowry of one million yen (\$10,000), the *omiaiai* club gets ten percent for the successful match.

## POWERPOINT PAGE FROM NATIONAL JACL SURVEY OF “WHAT WE COULD DO BETTER”

Communication is key.

—Most past members polled felt that inter-organizational communication was insufficient to broadcast all of the activities and opportunities that the JACL has to offer.

—53% of those polled said that National and District events and programs were not broadcast at all or not very well.

—30 % of those polled felt that chapter activities were not broadcast well, and about 33% felt that they were only broadcast sometimes.

San Mateo chapter is fortunate to have an active website that is updated frequently [thank you, Bob Smith!] as well as a monthly newsletter mailed or emailed to members.

### ACCHIKOCCHI (here, there, everywhere news from the COMMUNITY CENTER)

Recently, Clifford Hayashi came by SMJACC requesting assistance in identifying students from the Tri State High School yearbook, AQUILA, in Tule Lake. If you were a junior high or high school student at Tule Lake, or know of anyone, Clifford needs your help. He can be contacted by email at [tristatehigh@yahoo.com](mailto:tristatehigh@yahoo.com) or 650-721-1814. He will go anywhere to meet with you.

### UPDATE OF SMJACC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- October 7th (Wednesday) 1 p.m. - 2 p.m. Flu Shot  
Blood Pressure reading and Flu Shots, \$5.

- October 10th (Saturday) 9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. SMJACC Fall Clean Up  
We need helpers to assist with the annual Fall Cleanup! For people who are 80+ years old, please send your able-bodied children to represent you in helping us clean and maintain the Community Center.

- November 14th (Saturday) 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Holiday Fair  
Please plan to attend our Holiday Fair where you will be able to find some beautiful Christmas gifts for giving and delicious foods! The ladies have started to prepare for displaying and will gladly help you make your selections.

### UCHINANCHU IDENTITY IN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA

An article in *The Hawaii Herald* by Shari Y. Tamashiro, titled "A Shared Culture and Heritage" [April 3, 2009], discussed Okinawan immigration to South America, which began in 1906. These immigrants ended up speaking Uchinaguchi, Portuguese, or Spanish, but regardless of the language the shared culture and history binds the Okinawan community together.

The first group of Okinawan immigrants settled in Peru. Soon thereafter, immigrants were contracted to work on coffee plantations in Santos, Brazil. Like many immigrants before them, Okinawans were lured by false promises of wealth and fortune, but instead found harsh working conditions. However, Okinawan immigration to Argentina was different, as most were "free migrants" and not contract laborers. The article states, "Okinawans flocked to urban areas, running dry cleaning, floral or gardening businesses. By the 1950s, they dominated the dry cleaning business, an interesting contrast to Uchinanchu in Hawai'i who, overwhelmingly, went into the restaurant business on O'ahu." This latter fact has been celebrated within the capitol of the islands, and many famed restaurateurs came from the ranks of hardworking Okinawan immigrants. These were the pioneers or "seed folks" for future generations:

*According to University of the Ryukyus data, there are currently about 150,000 Okinawans living in Brazil; 35,000 in Argentina and approximately 60,000 in Peru.*

## A MEMORY FROM ARTIST SUMAKO COHN

Sumako Cohn is an artist who was born in Hokkaido, Japan. The Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai'i is featuring Cohn's work in an exhibit, "Scenes in My Memory," at its Community Gallery in Honolulu; JCCH wrote about the artist in its July 2009 issue of *Legacies*.

Cohn was deeply influenced by an exhibition of painter Maurice Utrillo, whom she also had the opportunity to meet. She moved to Tokyo in 1968 to study oil painting. Upon relocating to Boston in 1976, Cohn put up some sheets of "natural plant-dyed Japanese rice paper" on her walls as inspiration. Her work at that time tended to be ink and watercolor pictures of old New England houses. But Cohn began noticing that her memories of her hometown in Hokkaido were fading, so she created images from her childhood. She continued this after her move to Honolulu in 1988.

Cohn eloquently explains her memories about her childhood days, which include images of sheep shearing, wintry sleigh rides, fishing games, o-bon, Girls' Day, and catching fireflies in summer, and the intention of her work:

*If I had not come to the United States, these pictures would have remained no more than sketches. As I worked on these paintings, I came to realize that these scenes were also real points of departure for me. I find myself thinking more and more about our bonds with the past and the almost unimaginably hard lives of earlier generations. Thinking of ancestors I had never met, an uncle who died in the war, and so many others who had given life their all and taken part in so many dramatic events, these pictures became my way of engaging in dialogues with all of them. As I go on creating these pictures, I feel both affection for my ancestors and a wish for the repose of their souls welling up within me.*

*Although our lives are nothing more than tiny specks in the vastness of the Universe, I have tried to recreate in these pictures scenes from a way of life that can no longer be seen, as they were viewed through the eyes of a girl growing up more than half a century ago in a little town far away to the North.*

## SHIPPYAKI BELT BUCKLES

San Mateo JACL board member Mary Jo Kubota-Arcarese loves estate and garage sales for the treasures they sometimes unfold, and one discovery she made was *shippoyaki* belt buckles. *Shippoyaki* is the art of Japanese enameling, a centuries old craft that is not well known today.

*Shippo* indicates the seven treasures of Buddhism, including gold, silver, and coral, and *Shippoyaki* is ceramic ware that appears to be inlaid with these treasures when a glassy glaze is baked at high heat onto metals or a ceramic object. Mary Jo suggests that, if you are lucky enough to find a *shippoyaki* belt buckle, you can take it to a jeweler who can transform it into a special brooch—traditional, yet with a twist.



**JACL**  
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