

Photos by Don Yungling, Tetsuo Ishisoko and Peter Weber

2025 Keiro-kai Recap by Annette Adams

To accommodate the increasing number of attendees, this year's NCOKK Keiro-kai was held at a new location at the South Berkeley Senior Center in Berkeley, California. We had almost 200 in attendance! Members, their families and friends traveled from all over Northern California to celebrate "Respect for the Aged Day" by honoring members who achieved milestones of 80+ years. All event attendees were also given a raffle ticket for an opportunity to win a prize. It was an enjoyable afternoon of food, entertainment and for the NCOKK community to come together to reconnect.

The afternoon began with a moment of silence for the passing of our members, **Calvin Abe, William Blang, Takeko Cox, Fumiko Leach and Toshiko Slagle.**

This year, NCOKK honored 33 members (24 women and 9 men), between the ages of 80 and 99 with free bento, leis and *fukubukuro* goody bags. In alphabetical order, they were **Yoshiko Adams, Noriko Alberta, Toyoko Araki, Helen Austin, Liz Baker, Kazuko Bray, Michiko Fujii, Sumiko Fujimori, Akiko & Jack Journeay, Ben Kobashigawa, Fred Kodani, Kyoko Kohama, Akiko Kohler, Shingi**

Kuniyoshi, Masako Maurer, Toshi McRorie, Al & Yumi Patrizio, Al Perez, Haruko Profumo, Thomas & Yoneko Rieker, Mitsuko Shimabuku & Gene Smyth, Leo & Teruko Stone, JoJo Takata, Yoshiko Tauber, Marielle Tsukamoto, Christine Yamashiro, and last but not least, **Toyoko Yungling.** Among the *Keiro-sha* Honorees were 5 couples: **Akiko & Jack Journeay, Al & Yumi Patrizio, Yoneko & Thomas Rieker, Mitsuko Shimabuku & Gene Smyth and Teruko & Leo Stone** and a brother/sister **Noriko Kuniyoshi Alberta & Shingi Kuniyoshi.**

MC **Megan Calhoun** took over the mic by introducing 4 new members: **Masako Maurer** and daughter **Kumiko Sund, Asuka Tokashiki, Marielle Tsukamoto,** and **Kiyomi Wohlschlegel.**

President Tetsuo Ishisoko introduced VIPs **Ms. Ky Lam,** Executive Director of J-Sei and **Mr. Yusuke Teruya** representing the Consulate-General of Japan in San Francisco who gave a speech and led the customary *kanpai ondo* toast. The entertainment portion began with a rousing rendition of *Tachiutushi* by Okinawa **Eisa Shimadaiko.** This year the classical dance *Yotsutake* was performed by Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenkai Kinuko Mototake Ryubu USA
(continued on pg.4)



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE:

Hai-Sai, Gusu-yo, Chu-uganabira!

As we enter the month of December, the days have grown noticeably colder, reminding us that the year is quickly drawing to a close. I hope you all enjoyed a warm and joyful Thanksgiving, spending quality time with your families, relatives, and friends. With Christmas just around the corner, many of you may be busy preparing and shopping for gifts, and I sincerely hope you are all doing well.

This past October, we held our annual Keiro-kai (Senior Appreciation Celebration) at the South Berkeley Senior Center, a venue we used for the first time. While there may have been some inconveniences due to the new location, we were honored to welcome almost 200 attendees, and the event concluded successfully thanks to your support. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all of our members and dedicated volunteers whose cooperation made this event possible.

I would also like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Ryukyu dance instructors, Ms. Sanae Write from Albuquerque and Ms. Masako Frost from Las Vegas, who traveled a great distance to support us with their beautiful performances. Their presence and artistry brought great joy and inspiration to everyone in attendance.

Looking back on the year, I am pleased to report that all three of our major annual events—the New Year's Celebration (Shinnenkai), the Summer Picnic, and Keiro-kai—were completed with great success. One particularly meaningful milestone this year was the addition of our children's group and the new "Tiida Kankan" *Sanshin* group to the Geinobu (Performing Arts Division), marking an important step toward nurturing the next generation.

In addition, receiving official recognition from the IRS as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization has been a significant achievement for our Kenjin-kai. We believe this designation will serve as a strong foundation for expanding our activities and strengthening our mission in the years ahead.

I would also like to address another important goal: the planning and implementation of a sustainable program for passing down Ryukyu and Okinawan performing arts to future generations. As I have mentioned before, this is a critical issue that directly affects the long-term sustainability of our organization. For this reason, we hope to gather ideas and insights not only from the executive committee, but from our members and community at large.

With our new charitable status, we plan to seek donations and develop effective, wide-reaching programs that will ensure a lasting impact. This includes exploring opportunities with major companies that offer charitable donation matching programs for their employees.

If you are interested in contributing ideas, expertise, or support, we warmly invite you to contact the executive team. We are also always looking for individuals who are willing to share their time and talents to help our Kenjin-kai continue to grow and thrive.

As the seasons change, please take good care of your health. I look forward to seeing all of you again at our New Year's Celebration and wish you a warm and joyful holiday season. "*Nuchi du Takara*"

ハイサイ、グスーヨー、チューウガナビラ！

十二月を迎え、日ごとに寒さが増し、今年も残りわずかとなったことを実感する季節となりました。皆様には、感謝祭をご家族やご親戚、ご友人の方々とともに、温かく楽しいひとときとして過ごされたことと存じます。また、クリスマスを目前に控え、準備やプレゼント選びなどでお忙しい時期かと思いますが、いかがお過ごしでしょうか。

去る十月には、初めて South Berkeley Senior Center を会場として、恒例の敬老会を開催いたしました。新しい会場ということもあり、何かとご不便をおかけした点もあったかと存じますが、約二百名の皆様にご参加いただき、皆様のご支援のおかげで無事に成功裏に終えることができました。会員の皆様、そして献身的に支えてくださったボランティアの皆様に、心より感謝申し上げます。

また、遠方より駆けつけてくださった琉球舞踊の先生方、Albuquerque の Sanae Write 先生、Las Vegas の Masako Frost 先生には、美しい舞をご披露いただき、誠にありがとうございました。お二人のご出演は、会場に大きな喜びと感動をもたらしてくださいました。

一年を振り返りますと、新年会、夏のピクニック、そして敬老会という当県人会の三大大行事を、いずれも大きな成功のうちに終えることができました。特に今年は、ちびっこグループと新しく結成された「ティード・カンカン」三線グループが芸能部に加わったことが、次世代育成に向けた重要な一歩となる、大変意義深い出来事であったと感じております。

さらに、当県人会が IRS より 501(c)(3) 慈善団体として正式に認可を受けたことも、大きな節目となりました。この認可は、今後の活動の幅を広げ、私たちの使命をより力強く推進していくための、確かな基盤になるものと考えております。

ここで、もう一つの重要な目標について触れたいと思います。それは、琉球・沖縄芸能を次世代へと持続的に継承していくための計画づくりと、その実行です。これまでも申し上げてきたとおり、この課題は当県人会の将来、そして長期的な存続に直結する極めて重要なテーマです。そのため、執行部だけでなく、会員の皆様や地域コミュニティ全体から、幅広いご意見やアイデアをいただきたいと考えております。

慈善団体としての新たな立場を生かし、寄付金の募集や、より効果的で持続性のある事業の展開を進めてまいります。その一環として、従業員向けの寄付金マッチング制度を持つ企業との連携の可能性についても検討していく予定です。

ご意見や専門的な知識、ご支援をお寄せいただける方は、ぜひ執行部までご連絡ください。また、時間や才能を分かち合い、県人会のさらなる発展にご協力いただける方々のご参加も、常に歓迎しております。

季節の変わり目でもありますので、どうぞご自愛ください。来年の新年会で皆様と再びお会いできることを楽しみにするとともに、心温まる、健やかなホリデーシーズンをお過ごしになることをお祈り申し上げます。「ヌチドゥウ宝」

2026 CALENDAR of EVENTS

イベントカレンダー:

- February 15, 2026** Shinnenkai (New Year Celebration) 年新年会
Doors open at 11am – 5pm, Fairfield Community Center, 1000 Kentucky Street, Fairfield
- March 5 – 8, 2026** Kubasaki High School (KHS) Nashville Reunion
link to the website: <https://khs76reunion.mycheddarup.com/>
- March 13 – 15, 2026** 12th Annual LooChoo Identity Summit sponsored by *Ukwanshin Kabudan*
Windward Community College, Oahu, Hawaii
Registration information will be announced in early 2026
- April 11-12, 2026** 59th Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival, San Francisco Japantown
北カリフォルニア桜まつり
Grand Parade (4/19), San Francisco, 1:00pm from Civic Center Plaza
グランドパレード (4/19) 午後1時開始
(If you're interested in walking in the Grand Parade on Sunday, April 19, contact either Tetsuo Ishisoko 510-703-7926 or Fumiyo Tomita 510-426-2833)

VOLUNTEER ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We are looking for volunteer members interested to become the Regional Representatives for the **408 & 510** Area Codes. The job is to call / contact members in the telephone area code and pass on timely kenjinkai information to them. A listing of those in the telephone area will be provided for you. You do not have to be in that Area Code to volunteer to make the calls.

408 および 510 エリア コードの地域代表に興味のあるボランティア メンバーを募集しています。仕事は、電話エリア コードのメンバーに電話 / 連絡し、タイムリーな県人会情報を伝えることです。あなたの電話エリアのメンバーのリストが提供されます。電話をかけるボランティアをするのに、その市外局番内に住んでいる必要はありません。

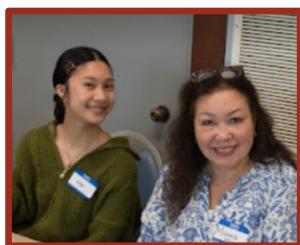


A TIP OF THE HAT, TO OUR MANY KEIRO-KAI VOLUNTEERS!

There were SO many people who stepped up to volunteer (a few are pictured here) with any task in the absence of Juli. There is not enough space to thank everyone who helped and express how appreciative the NCOKK Board was with how people of all ages were ready to help throughout the event and even stayed to clean-up at the end! Here's a BIG shout out to ALL OF YOU since we may not have caught your name: overseeing the entire operation were President **Tetsuo**

Ishisoko, VP **Annette Adams**, and Board Member **Tsuneko Silva** in charge of the volunteers. Members of the **Okinawa Eisaa Shimadaiko**, **Tom Ducharme**, **Chris Ishisoko** and **Yoshiya Kinjo** helped set up the tables, dressing area and audio; assembling the *fukubukuro* goody bags for all 33 Honorees, cutting and passing out the cakes, and helping with the raffle included **Miana Adel**, **Harumi Ducharme**, **Susan Detwiler**, **Evelyn Frank**, **Yasuko Heffner**, **Kumiko & Kiki Sund**, **Christine & Jane Yamashiro**. Manning the reception area were **Joanne Takata**, **Kenny Higa**, **Joyce Tamanaha-Ho** and **Tamara Ho**. The beautiful programs were the creative artistry of **Keiko Nakamura** and **Akane Matsuo**; **Tsutomu "Tom" Tomita** was the program time manager; and **Megan Calhoun** was our enduring and charming MC. Stepping in to capture and preserve those precious Keiro-kai moments on film <https://photos.app.goo.gl/47hNwheN5qnRZoZRA> were **Don Yungling**, **Tetsuo Ishisoko** and **Peter Weber**.

Also, a big thank you to everyone who made donations for raffle prizes, drinks, and snacks. Because of the number of donations, we were able to raffle off prizes at program breaks throughout the event. There were so many donations for prizes that any "leftovers" will be used in future raffles. **This shows the strength of our community and willingness of our members to help. Thank you to everyone!**



Wakamatsu Tea and Silk Farm Pilgrimage

by Annette Adams

The Wakamatsu farm is a historic landmark nestled in the rolling Sierra foothills, owned and maintained by the American River Conservancy. It is believed to be the first Japanese settlement in North America. The Nichi Bei Foundation organizes a pilgrimage every other year to honor the memory of the colonists. The farm was about 45 minutes from our location in Sacramento and the weather was perfect for the drive to Placerville. My sister, Evelyn, and I had never been to the farm, knew nothing about the settlement, and were curious why the colonists chose Placerville.

We and a few others arrived a few minutes early and started to explore on our own. One group from Los Angeles arrived with award-winning author Naomi Hirahara. She introduced herself and asked what brought us to the pilgrimage. When we explained we were members of the NCOKK, she revealed she has an Okinawan connection through her husband. She also has written books with Okinawan connections such as *Snakeskin Samisen*.

The crowd gathered at the Donor Wall for the dedication ceremony and the descendants of the Wakamatsu farm were introduced. After the ceremony, we were guided to the garden area for our bento lunches. Entertainment was provided by Koyasan Kongo Gumi who are students from UC Davis. The descendants of Wakamatsu families told stories and were recognized with awards, and Reverend Yuki Sugahara of the Buddhist Church of Sacramento Betsuin gave the introduction to the Bon Odori.

After lunch, the group was guided to Okei Ito's gravesite. Okei came to America at 17 years old, died at 19 and believed to be the first Japanese woman to die in America. Reverend Sugahara performed a blessing and attendees were invited to place a flower in vases in front of her grave. Nearby was a memorial for Matsunosuke Sakurai, the only identified samurai at Wakamatsu. After the blessing, we headed to the farmhouse museum for the tour and to speak with a volunteer from the California Genealogical Society. We were always curious about our Okinawan family line and who our great-grandparents were.

After short success, the colony only lasted 2 years. Reasons for its failure included drought, contamination from mining, and lack of funding. During the main program and to our surprise, we ran into some other NCOKK members and had our picture taken together. It was an enjoyable afternoon at the Wakamatsu farm and we met some interesting people.



From left to right: Jun Yamashiro, Susan Detwiler, Joyce Tamanaha-Ho and daughter Tamara, Annette Adams, and Evelyn Frank.

(continued from pg.1)

(hereafter "Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenkai") **Suzuka Suarez** and **Asuka Hirata**. Special guest Miyagi Ryu Noshō Association New Mexico **Sanae Wright Sensei** performed *Kanayo*. Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenkai **Master Kinuko Mototake** partnered with Miyagi Honryu Otori Kinsen Kai Arakaki Noriyoshi Ryubu Dojo (hereafter "Miyagi Honryu Otori Kinsen Kai") **Mieko Merrill** to dance *Kui Nu Hana*. **Okinawa Eisaa Shimadaiko** continued with *Ashibina* and later *Miruku Munari*. The youngest members of Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenkai, **Lizbeth Suarez**, **Emiko Weber** and **Ayumi Clarke** performed the crowd favorites *Yui Yui* and *Arigatou*. Another special guest Miyagi Ryu Mahonokai Las Vegas **Masako Frost Sensei** continued with *Sesokojima e Mensohree*. *Nuchibana* was performed by Miyagi Honryu Otori Kinsen Kai's **Ritsuko Spalding, Courtney & Yori Nakaishi**. During a program break, the ceremonial cake cutting was done by our oldest member in attendance – **Michiko Fujii** who is 99 years young! Later Azama Honryu Seifu Ichisenkai **Master Kinuko Mototake** continued with *Hachinai* and *Kanayo Amakawa* partnered with **Kyo Yohena** and *Inagu Gukuru* and *Ayakari Bushi* solo. Guest Senseis **Sanae Wright** and **Masako Frost** performed the joyful *Tanchame*. **Mieko Merrill, Kyo Yohena** and **Blake Hihara** performed solo dances, **Asuka Hirata** showcased Uta Sanshin and **Akiko Nagayama** sang to round out the lively afternoon. The traditional *eisaa* by the **Okinawa Eisaa Shimadaiko** capped an afternoon of fun with everyone dancing *kacha-shi* in the aisles!

We look forward to seeing all of you at our next BIGGEST annual event, the *Shinnen-kai* or New Year Celebration on **Sunday, February 15, 2026** at the Fairfield Community Center. Be sure to mark the date on your 2026 calendar. We hope you can come and help us make it a rousing success as well!



S U S H I
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107 Caledonia
Sausalito, CA
94965

415.332.3620
sushiran.com



Uchinanchu Through and Through

by Makoto Kuniyoshi

With a massive Eisa drum strapped to my side, I jumped on the stage. In front of me sat the governor of Okinawa, Denny Tamaki, along with rows of news cameras. Hot sweat rolled down my headpiece. A week earlier, I had never held a drumstick in my life. Now I stood with nine teenagers from around the world, waiting side by side for the first beat. Then the music began . . .

As an Okinawan descendant, I was awarded a full international scholarship last summer by the Okinawan government to experience Okinawan culture with the Junior Study Program. At first, I was hesitant to apply because of my limited Japanese speaking skills. I had actually traveled to Okinawa before as a child for summer school with my cousins at *Tenpi Shogakko*, and I distinctly remember how foreign the customs were to me. For instance, elementary schooling there included "*osouji jikan*," or clearing time, when my classmates and I would sweep the campus rather than taking recess. As a nine-year-old, I wasn't accustomed to the discipline of Japanese culture, and I felt a disconnect between my American and Japanese identities. Despite this, I decided to pursue this opportunity to learn more about my cultural heritage thanks to the Northern California Okinawa Kenjin-Kai.

During the evening of my first day of the program, our group sat in a large semicircle. Startled by a loud *BANG*, we watched in awe as traditional Okinawan drummers flooded the room, performing Eisa, or Okinawan drumming. After a long sequence, the performers ended with a humble bow. We were initially amazed and then stunned when they stood up and exclaimed, "*tsugi wa kimi no ban!*" which meant "it's your turn next!"

At our first Eisa practice, I was anxious about following along with the instructor due to my lack of rhythm and Japanese ability. However, I carefully watched the instructor's intricate movements and used context clues to bridge any language gaps. The next few days, our practices were tough, as we often had to relearn parts of the routine. One evening, we camped at a remote bungalow near Nago on the northern coast. After grilling dinner, I noticed our drum sets at the campsite. Despite our Eisa instructor's absence, I grabbed a drum and told everyone to head to ready positions. One of my new friends played our Eisa song on his phone, and all ten of us began rehearsing just for ourselves. Using the moonlight to guide us, we were able to finally drum in unison, leading to a flawless performance. Drenched in sweat and covered in mosquito bites, we ended the routine and headed to bed that night with a quiet sense of satisfaction with our work.

On the day of the performance, my Eisa group and I looked out into the packed auditorium including many of our relatives and officials, ready to hit the first synchronized beat of our drums. We began, and our drums spun in unison, bang after bang, thanks to the hard work we put in throughout the week. With every synchronized movement, I felt an unspoken connection to my peers and the culture I once struggled to understand. As we struck the final beat of our drums, I thought back to my nine-year-old, confused self at the Okinawan elementary school.

I didn't understand why "*osouji jikan*" was part of school, but now I see that it was not a punishment. It was about taking shared responsibility for the environment and community around me, which is the same spirit that united our international group as we practiced, failed, and succeeded at Eisa together. Through hours of effort, our performance reflected the same unity, pride, and collaborative spirit that I recognize as central to Uchinanchu culture. I now carry with me the lesson that belonging isn't about fluency or perfection, but about showing up with an open mind, ready to contribute, and growing alongside others.



Time to Pass the Baton

by Juli Kodani

I want to thank NCOKK for giving me the opportunity to volunteer and for the experiences and growth I gained through the years. I enjoyed the many challenging and rewarding facets with SFOKK, now NCOKK. I have seen it grow under the dedication of many leaders. However, due to personal reasons, I will be stepping back from some of my NCOKK activities. We are also embarking on a new chapter as a non-profit group and we need everyone to get involved! So, the time has come for me to pass the "baton" and transition some of my responsibilities to the next generation of leaders by preparing and empowering them to go forward, confident that they will achieve greater things by sharing their ideas and opinions. I will still be around to help and to mentor members so they can become valuable additions to our Team!

Looking back to early 2000 when I was a new member, I volunteered to edit the English portion of *Tayui* for the editor. Before I knew it, the newsletter was left without an editor, so I took over its reins and still enjoy doing it! Along the way, I was Membership Chair and Secretary for many years under Presidents Matt Matayoshi, Wesley Ueunten, Junichi Oshiro, Ban Ishii, and Miyori Panis. Then when Yoshiko Sueyoshi "retired" as Treasurer in 2015, I took over for her and now, under President Tetsuo Ishisoko, I'm still Treasurer. However, I planned to step down as Treasurer once NCOKK attained the goal of 501(c)(3) tax-free status and it finally happened this summer!

Our last big event was the **Keiro-kai** (Senior Citizen's Day) in October. It was a FUN event that everyone enjoyed even though I couldn't be there! Our dedicated group of volunteers showed how to make it a BIG success! I think it was a good starting point for many of you to step in and take a more active role in helping NCOKK. Again, we'll need LOTS of volunteers to help us for the **Shinnen-kai** New Year Celebration on February 15, 2026. I will be there and I hope YOU will be there to help too!

I appreciate the past support of our membership and hope that YOU will continue to support and volunteer for our kenjinkai into the future! *Ippee niffee debiru!*

Juli Kodani

Impressions of My Travel Experience

沖縄での体験談と感想

by Yasuko Heffner



Yasuko Heffner (author) in a blue dress on left front

This trip to Okinawa was a truly wonderful experience. Through an introduction from my classmate and member of the *Kayo Tomo-no-Kai*, Yukie Teruya, I met their manager, Miyoko Teruya, who invited me to participate in the charity show, *le Natsumero Yube* in Iejima, and to visit a nursing home to sing with them. This was my first time on Iejima, but it marked a milestone year for the *Kayo Tomo-no-Kai*, who have been visiting the island annually for 30 years as the *Ryukyu Shimpo* newspaper article heading read, “*Natsumero Echos for 30 years on le Island.*”

Iejima is also known for the movie *Ki no Ue no Guntai* 木の上の軍隊 (Army on the Trees) which is was shown across Okinawa. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZMA63sX4RYQ>) The film is based on a true story of two Japanese soldiers who hid in a banyan tree (*gajimaru*) on Iejima for two years during the war. One of them was Shujun Sashida, a 28-year-old man from Ishikawa in Okinawa, and the other was Shizuo Yamaguchi (36 years old at the time), a native of Miyazaki Prefecture. Watching this film deeply moved me, reminding me of the desperate struggle for survival and the true horrors of war. It made me realize again that war must never be repeated.

I also participated in the “Ocarina Peace Concert,” where the ocarinas were made from a banyan tree branch from Iejima! It was a wonderful experience singing with the *Ayahashi* vocal training choir, led by their teacher, Katsuaki Chibana, who is a tenor opera singer and song writer.

The last event was performing at the 13th *Uruma Kayō Tomo-no-Kai Charity Show*. The special guest at the show was singer Masashi Ishihara, a native of Uruma City who has a huge fan base across Japan and is now active in Tokyo. The *Kayo Tomo-no-Kai* has supported him since his debut, so it was wonderful to see him perform at the show. Many people came to support the show, including Masashi’s fans, my family, my classmates and many friends. I even received a bouquet of flowers, which filled me with gratitude. This trip to Okinawa was full of meaningful encounters and precious memories. Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank my daughter Holly and my son-in-law Jeff for their support throughout this journey!

NEWSFLASH: We are excited to announce that thanks to the generosity of one member, we are welcoming rising star, Okinawa-born Japanese *enka* singer, **Masashi Ishihara** to our Shinnenkai on **February 15, 2026!** 速報：この度、ある会員の方のご厚意により、2026年2月15日に開催される新年会に、沖縄出身の若手演歌歌手、石原正志さんをお迎えできることになりました！

今回は沖縄北部の伊江島で「チャリティーショーナツメロの夕べ」に「うるま歌謡友の会」と一緒に参加する事と伊江島老人ホームの慰問に行く為沖縄に行く事にしました。

歌謡友の会のメンバーで私の同級生の照屋幸枝さんの紹介で、友の会のマネージャー照屋妙子さんと出会い、そのメンバーに加えて下さいました。私には初めて伊江島でしたが、友の会は毎年伊江島に30年間も行き続けた節目の年で、琉球新報には「なつメロ、伊江に響き30年」と載られていて嬉しかったです。友の会はすごいとつくづく感心しました。そして、伊江島の社協の方々が温かく迎えてくださった事をとても感謝しています。

伊江島は今沖縄中で上演中の映画「木の上の軍隊」の物語の中の島で、戦争中に木の上に2年間伊江島のガジマルの木に隠れた二人の日本兵の実話の映画です。その一人は当時28歳の沖縄石川出身の佐次田秀順です。もう一人は宮崎県出身の山口静雄(当時36歳)でその映画を見て感動し、当時の生き延びる為の手段と戦争の恐ろしさを知らされました。戦争は2度と繰り返してはならないと。その伊江島のガジマルの木の枝で作ったコカリナで演奏した「オカリナ平和コンサート」に「あやはし」のボイトレメンバーの合唱部としてコンサートにも参加できて、ほんとにいい体験になりました。

最後のイベントでは「第13回うるま歌謡友の会チャリティーショー」の出演でした。そのショーの特別出演者は沖縄うるま市出身の歌手石原まさしさんで全国に沢山のファンがいて、今では東京で頑張って活躍しています。デビューの頃から歌謡友の会は彼をサポートしていました。まさしさんのファンの方達や私の家族、私の同期生や沢山のお友達がショーに来て応援してくれて、花束まで頂き感謝の気持ちでいっぱいです。こたびの沖縄の旅は沢山のよい出会いとよい思い出の詰まった旅でした。最後に私の娘のHollyと婿Jeffのサポートにこの場を借りてお礼を申し上げます。



Yasuko in blue, next to Toshi McRorie (hat), singer Masashi Ishihara in back



The Last Sakura - Tales of the Yurii

by Ashley Nakanishi (and beautifully illustrated by Toni Silva)

Ashley Nakanishi-Keliikoa is a NCOCK member living in Sacramento with her husband and 2 children. Originally from Honolulu, she was born in *Chatan-cho*, Okinawa, and "raised all ova." Ashley is an author, actress, poet, teacher and activist (see Spring 2021 *Tayui*). Her latest novel is the second in the series after "*The Last Sakura: Tales of the Yuta*" which was published in 2021 (see *Tayui* Spring 2021 article).

The story revolves around two sisters Kiko and Yuki, who return to Okinawa after the tragic loss of their mother to live with their mysterious *Obaa* (grandmother), *Tomii*. While there, they are introduced to a world of mysticism, magic, language and lore as they discover their grandmother is in fact a *yuta*!

Ashley based these stories about her family on live interviews, her studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and while working at the Okinawan Center of Studies. She hopes that this new age twist on old tales will reinvigorate the younger generation's spirit to continue practicing the Okinawan traditions, language and cultural practices.



Description by the publisher Lō'ihī Press: "Burdened by her mother's final words and a haunting prophecy, Kiko is forced to train for her future as a *yuta*-warrior as prophecy states she is destined to battle the notorious Iron Dragon. When her *Obaa* vanishes without a trace, Kiko dives headfirst into the supernatural network of *yuurii* and *yokai* to track her down. With the help of the mischievous *kijimuna*, *Soojimu*, and a few unlikely allies, Kiko must navigate the blurred lines between the human world and spiritual realm. Steeped in Okinawan mythology and brimming with *chimagukuru* spirit, 'The Last Sakura'

is a thrilling YA fantasy series about legacy, friendship, and finding courage in unexpected places."

The Last Sakura: Tales of the Yuurii will be available on December 17 (lucky day in Chinese horoscope), just in time for the holidays and the perfect gift for Lunar New Year. It goes into detail on how to celebrate *Soogwachi/Soogwachi* the Okinawan way. You can meet Ashley in person at the February 15 Shinnen-kai for her book signing!

Thank you to our generous members:

Donations to NCOCK:

Anonymous donations, in memory of Yoshiko Sueyoshi and another for NCOCK

Ted Canty, 501(c)(3) Non-Profit donation

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(If you made a donation in money or in-kind and we did not recognize you by name, please know that it was not intentional. We appreciate all the support we receive and will make every effort to acknowledge you in the future. Thank you for your understanding.)

REVISED TAYUI DISCLAIMER (2022)

SUBMISSION OF ARTICLES FOR TAYUI NEWSLETTER:

You are invited to submit requests for any community announcements or other events that you feel are important to promote for our NCOCK members in the quarterly *Tayui* Newsletter. This includes Okinawan dance performances, concerts, Japanese festivals, local fundraisers, school events, etc.

Please consider if what you want to promote will benefit the NCOCK member community. The *Tayui* Editing Team reserves the right to make editorial and formatting changes to your story if space is limited.

REQUIREMENTS:

1. It must be in **English** and **Japanese (if available)**
2. It must be emailed to the Editing Team at sfokkjuli@yahoo.com, at least **two (2) weeks** PRIOR to printing.

VENMO & PAYPAL ONLINE PAYMENT

Some members asked about online payment for some time, so it happened. As of March 8, we are accepting online payments via **Venmo** and **PayPal**. Please make sure that you check **for friends and family and NOT for goods and services**. We hope that this will make it easier for everyone to pay their membership dues, etc.

For those who prefer to pay online:

Venmo
@NCOCK
or ncokk2020@gmail.com

PayPal:
ncokk2020@gmail.com



However, if you prefer the old-fashioned way, checks are still acceptable!

NCOCK Personal Contact Information Policy (as of July 2021)

Due to privacy concerns, the NCOCK Board approved **NOT** to include personal data information (i.e. new member's address and member's change of address) in the *Tayui* newsletter going forward. Any personal contact information in the NCOCK Membership Roster can also be withdrawn. Please email treasurer@ncokk.org if you **DO NOT** want to be listed beginning with the 2022 Membership Roster.

個人情報の記載: ニュースレターやメンバー登録名簿等に記載を希望しない方は treasurer@ncokk.org にお知らせください。

めんそーれー

New Members / Address Changes as of 12/31/2025:

新会員加入 2025年12月31日付

- Kara Justeson
- Jazmin Moyer
- Marielle Tsukamoto
- Mayuko Ueda



TAYUI ADVERTISING RATES (for 4 issues):	
Business Card	\$100
¼ Page	\$200
½ Page	\$300
Full Page	\$500



Content Editor – Juli Kodani

Graphics Editor – Megan Calhoun

Artwork: <http://illust.okinawa>

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UYEHARA TRAVEL TOURS IN 2025/2026

We are in our 40th year thanks to your support. Join us on our tours!

Save the dates for 2026
Hawaii Trip – 5 nights – Feb. 2026 (dates TBA)
Eastern Mediterranean 11 day cruise – Oct. 8, 2026
Okinawa Tour – Nov. 2026 (dates TBA)

Uchinanchu Festival is in 2027. Dates are pending. Applications will be sent out early next year! Mark your calendars!

For information, availability, and fares, please contact:
Uyehara Travel
319 E. 2nd St. Suite 203, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: 213-680-2499
Email: tamiko.uyehara102239@gmail.com
C.S.T. #2062682-40