



The Voice

of the Volcano Community Association



May 2020

UPDATED INFO Re: Old Japanese Schoolhouse

RE: February 2020 "Did You Know?" article in THE VOICE RE: Details of Volcano's Old Japanese School House (OJSH)

This is a very interesting story reprinted from J. M. Buck, writer for BigIslandNow.com. Unfortunately, it is so full of inaccuracies I wonder about the writer's source(s) of information. I gleaned the following information largely from a series of 1983 interviews with my neighbors, Motoi and Teruko Shiotani and Giichi Okano, the oldest member of Volcano Japanese community in 1983. Interviews were conducted as part of a Directed Study under supervision of UH Hilo Anthropology Professor Craig Severance. Most of the information comes from a November 3, 1983 interview with the Shiotani's. Note: The Shiotani's would not even talk to me until after I'd spoken with Mr. Okano, as he was their senior having come to Volcano in 1913, decades before the Shiotani's.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JAPANESE SCHOOL AT 29 MILE Giichi Okano was one of four leaders of 29-Mile Japanese residents who spearheaded a drive in 1927-1928 to solicit funds to build a Japanese language school for area students. Besides Okano the committee was made up of Volcano House bookkeeper-assistant manager James Tsuchiya and farmers Tsunesaku Honma and a Mr. Tanomachi. Donations were obtained from businesses, such as the sugar plantations and Volcano

House, where a number of the Japanese community members were employed. The OJSH was constructed for under \$2,000 and was opened and dedicated on February 11, 1928, the birthday of Giichi Okano's second son Edison.

1) The first OJSH school principal was a Mr. Fujimoto who taught from 1928 until 1931.

2) Motoi Shiotani, the second OJSH school principal, and family moved to Volcano in October 1931 at the request of the community after Mr. Fujimoto had died.

3) The size of the school house building is more like 818 square feet, not 476 sf as stated in the article.

4) The Japanese School house was the de facto community center. [I do not know when the area became known as "Volcano" versus "Twenty-nine Mile" because 29 Mile is the name used in early 20th century accounts of the area.] Before World War II, except for the English family and Peter Lee family and later National Park staff, Volcano community was largely made up of the Japanese who were farming, working at Volcano House and at Shipman and other ranches. The Volcano Summer Lots' houses, many owned by plantation elites, were largely second homes of the more well-to-do, part-time residents, whose main homes were elsewhere.

OJSH was the site of New Year's, graduation and other gatherings, including Friday night movies brought by a Mr. Hoshide and Sunday church services performed one Sunday a month by Rev. Uenoyama of Kurtistown Jodo

Mission and another Sunday by a Rev. Kishi of the Hongwanji.

Community gatherings were almost exclusively Japanese affairs except at one point an elderly single woman from Honolulu named Miss Cooke retired to Volcano and took a great interest in the Japanese community, attending many functions, giving piano lessons and gifts to the children and greatly enjoying being a part of the Japanese community. Mrs. Fujimoto, widow of the first school master, became Miss Cooke's maid for many years. After Miss Cooke died, she left her house to Mrs. Fujimoto.

5) From its founding in 1928 until 1946, the Japanese school master and family occupied the right half of the Japanese School house building (approximately half of 818 square feet). The area included an office, living and sleeping quarters. Cooking was done on a charcoal burner (Hibachi?) on the bare ground floor underneath the school house, an arrangement commonly found on farm houses, even those built with Farmer Home Administration (FmHA) funding, such as those farther up Haunani Road. The right side stairs coming from the school house building led directly to a two-seater outhouse and in back there was a furo-house under the redwood water tank for bathing, again plumbing arrangements common to worker plantation housing at the time. These features are no longer there, but the outhouse and furo house were there when the Volcano Art Center first leased the OJSH from the Kumiai in 1974. The school house was not served by electricity or running water and there was no fireplace

Volcano Community Association (VCA) Mission Statement

To improve and protect the quality of life in Volcano, County and State of Hawaii, on behalf of all residents of the area. To promote the social and educational advancement, increase recreational opportunities, ensure health, protect natural environment, and develop community spirit. Also, it will undertake any consonant project the community may be moved to assign to it.

However, it will remain nonpartisan and nonsectarian.

or source of heating for the single-wall school house building. Shiotani's recalled how the cold weather took some getting used to for the family coming from low-elevation Papaikou that first winter in Volcano.

6) Within days of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the military seized most of the Territory's Japanese school masters, apparently, afraid of what those who could speak, read and write Japanese might do, although no examples of espionage were ever discovered. Motoi Shiotani was taken away, leaving Teruko Shiotani a single mom with six children (the oldest was 11 years old) to fend for themselves. No father, no income and no car. There were no buses or public transportation serving Volcano. In the words of Teruko Shiotani: "As soon as the school stopped, he was taken away and everybody was scared. They figure that if they hang around my place they gonna be picked up, too.... Yes, human beings are like that. Yeah, they don't understand why it's happening. They can only guess. We better not stay by the Shiotani's. They stay away, yes. Not all.... Mr. Takaki was one...he was the only one who give us a ride and take us to Hilo when we have to do some things, you know.* Shopping and what not. But otherwise all the rest of the parents so scared of coming close to our house because they figure that if they come around my place, ..think they gonna be picked up, too..We're the only family that was taken in Volcano." While it is true that Mr. Matsunaga, another Volcano resident, was also interned, he was picked up in Honolulu, not from Volcano.

* In the 1940's only five Volcano Japanese residents owned vehicles, mostly cars.

7) The Shiotanis were not taken as a family group all together to be interned during WWII. First the military came and took Mr. Shiotani
cont. pg 8 see OJSH

VCA Board at Home April 2020

April was an interesting month for all of us. With the COVID 19 Pandemic we all had to find things to keep our minds and bodies busy at home. I personally did a lot of sewing (mostly masks) just because I like to sew. I also did some house cleaning, planted some red ti plants in homemade planters and worked on some websites. OK, so I played games on the computer but I do that everyday to challenge my brain, mostly Freecell and Spider Solitaire and 3 daily word puzzle challenges. I look forward to the Sunday Farmers Market every week. The VCA had their first online board meeting Monday, April 20th. This could be a future trend. *Sher Glass*



Be Careful What You Wish For! Remember when you were so busy, you wished you could just escape from the world for a while? Well, you got your wish. Too bad, you say? Isn't it funny how we always want what we don't have? Always in perpetual want mode. This is a chance for me to accept what is, make the best of the situation and feel comfortable in my own skin. Sometimes, we plod along without thinking too much about our own feelings or others' feelings. I see more people thinking about each other and reaching out to friends. Tell someone that you love them and smile your winning smile. We'll be better people when things get back to normal. I just hope there's enough TP and rice. Aloha, *Jim Buck*



The family and I travelled on a work trip to Guam and Saipan at the beginning of March. It turned out to be one of the most stressful trips I have been on. Things were okay when I left, but took a sharp turn for the worst while I was there. I did not expect something like this to happen and so fast. Needless to say we came home early and put ourselves into self quarantine. This is similar to what we are all going through now, except we did not go anywhere during this time. Not to the grocery store, the farmers market (the hardest part for me!), the post office. Nowhere where I could potentially come onto contact with anyone. I did not want to spread the virus if I did pick something up traveling. We had to protect our Volcano community. It was a tense 14 days for me, but luckily no one in my family experienced any symptoms. We are adapting to a simpler way of life and I cherish these moments with my family. Reading to the kids and playing outside instead of rushing off to various activities in Hilo. It is surprisingly nice. Thank you to my friends in Volcano for dropping off groceries and checking my mail. We appreciate this community immensely. Stay safe and healthy everyone. Aloha, *Anne Farahi*

The Voice of the Volcano Community Association is published by the VCA Board of Directors: Jim Buck, Carol Caseylittell Anne Farahi, Sher Glass, Aubrey Hawk, Mary Narito & Evelyn Wight

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away, leaving Mrs. Shiotani to fend for herself and six children. To survive, the family did yard work, Mrs. Shiotani working during the day and being joined by the children after school. Later in 1942 the authorities came to take Mrs. Shiotani and the children to be interned. They were given 24 hours to pack up and leave and were only allowed one duffle bag a piece. Mrs. Shiotani protested when the officer announced they had to leave and to be ready in 24 hours. "But I am an American citizen. I was born here," she pleaded. "But, you lost your American citizenship when you married him," the officer replied. Apparently, unbeknownst to Mrs. Shiotani, when she married Motoi during the 1920's, a time when U.S. law targeting immigrants, especially Asians, apparently, resulted in her loss of American citizenship. At least this is what the officer told her when he notified them to be ready to leave everything behind/only take what they could carry in their two hands the next day to go to who knows where for who knows how long.

8) The construction of the teacher's cottage must be understood in the context of World War II and it's aftermath. After the war the kumiai feeling badly about the shabby way they had treated Mrs. Shiotani and the children after Mr. Shiotani had been seized, built a teacher's cottage behind the school house.

The school master's cottage included two bedrooms, a small living room-kitchen and a bathroom. Separate living quarters from the school house and indoor plumbing were great improvements from the earlier eleven years when the family of five, later eight, had occupied the approximately 409 square-foot half of the school house. Mr. Shiotani resumed teaching and continued until he retired in the 1970's. In 1958 Mrs. Shiotani began waitressing at Volcano House, a job she continued until she retired in 1973. In 1961 the Shiotani's made a successful bid and obtained one of the newly-created Volcano Farmlots where they constructed a home of their own.

9) The Volcano Community Association we know as VCA today was established in 1986 and the current VCA never held title to the Old

Japanese School House property. [The Volcano Community Association named in old documents might be an earlier group with the same name, perhaps, formed during a time when community groups were not required to register with the government.]

IN CONCLUSION

Even though only a few people in Hawaii were interned during World War II vs. whole communities like on the mainland U.S. west coast, in some ways the social impact on Hawaii and especially rural communities was, perhaps, much more profound. It may be a far more effective way to gain control of a group of people, for example, by picking off a few key folks rather than interning an entire ethnic group.

The effect of internment of only a few Japanese might have altered the social bonds of a very tight-knit Japanese community before the war. When Mrs. Shiotani who had overnight become a single mom with six children and could have been comforted by visits, almost no one came. Only a handful of brave farmers would occasionally come to check up on her and the children, and then only at night. It was fortunate that one of these brave farmers Mr. Takaki had a car because he was able to drive one of the Shiotani daughters to get medical attention when she broke her leg.

This history of the Old Japanese School is gratefully recounted by Mary Miho Finley from 1983 conversations with Motoi and Teruko Shiotani and Giichi Okano, who shared their lives with me. If someone is interested, I would be happy to share what I know. I am an over 40-year resident of Volcano, a UHH Anthropology graduate with an abiding interest in Volcano and oral history.

