



HISTORY *of* JIKOEN

UCHINAA PRIDE AND SPIRIT WERE
STRONG FROM THE VERY BEGINNING!

*(Much of this history is from the recollections of the **Rev. Jikai Yamasato** translated into English by **Dr. Albert Miyasato**, and from **Rev. Yamasato's** oral history conveyed to **Rev. Chikai Yosemori**. Compiled and written by **Shizue Miyasato**.)*

The first group of 26 immigrants from Okinawa arrived in Hawaii.

1889

1900

1936



Rev. Chiro Yosemite transferred from Waipahu Hongwanjito Hawaii Betsuin to begin religious services for Okinawan immigrants.

Jodo Shinshu (Pure Land Buddhism) introduced to Hawaii.



WHEN JODO SHINSHU WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO HAWAII

in 1889, Japanese temples that eventually arose were organized and controlled by those issei who came from the Japanese mainland. The Okinawans arrived 15 years later, bringing with them their own customs and language markedly different from the *naichi*. Experiencing discrimination and ostracism in many ways, the Okinawans understandably kept to themselves.

The Rev. Chiro Yosemite of Okinawan ancestry originally came to Hawaii as a pharmacist; however, his life made a dramatic change after he was exposed to the teachings of Shinran Shonin. He was impelled to return to Japan to study and receive his ordination as a Shinshu minister. He subsequently returned to Hawaii and served at Waipahu Hongwanji and the Hawaii Betsuin.

During these tenures, Rev. Yosemite saw the great need for spiritual sustenance for these isolated Okinawan immigrants who had very little background in Buddhist teachings.

In such an environment, Rev. Yosemite began meeting regularly for services with a few Okinawan devotees in private homes, one of which was a large house rented by the Heisho (later Shohei) Miyasato family on Buckle Lane in the old Palama area. Later, Rev. Yosemite's nephew, the Rev. Jikai Yamasato, arrived from Japan to assist in this ministry.

As the group of followers grew in size and enthusiasm, they began to envision their own temple, first as a place to receive further spiritual guidance in Shinshu teachings, and second as a haven where Uchinanchu could gather to support each other and perpetuate their culture. Thus,

1938

Houghtailing temple and dormitory built with invaluable financial help from Hawaii Betsuin. "Jikoen" chosen as name. Rev. Jikai Yamasato arrives to augment services and activities. Sunday School and Japanese classes begin.



in a Hawaii that was still feeling the damaging effects of the Great Depression, our founding fathers and ministers committed themselves and their very limited resources to this inspired dream.

With much financial and spiritual support from the Hawaii Betsuin Kyodan, this dream became a reality when a splendid temple was finally dedicated in September 1938 at 942 Houghtailing Street. The designer/contractor was an active member, Jiro Higa, who, as a cost-saving tactic, used the same plans he had earlier used for erecting Lahaina Hongwanji on Maui. Later, Hawaii Kyodan underwrote the construction of a two-story dormitory to provide on-going funds for the new temple, another far-sighted and optimistic view of the future for Jikoen by the Kyodan directors.

1941-44



*Rev. Yosemite returns to Japan; Rev. Jikai Yamasato takes over when World War II begins. Rev. Yamasato is interned. Jikoen leaders successfully petition government to keep temple open. Jikoen is the first temple to re-open before the end of the war. **Mr. Shohei Miyasato is lay leader of services.** Rev. Hunt helps with Sunday School.*

Careful thought was given to the name for this new temple—instead of the more mundane "Kalihi-Palama Hongwanji Temple," JIKOEN, meaning "Garden of the Compassionate Light and Wisdom of Amida Buddha," was picked. Members came from all over the island—Kaneohe, Waimanalo, Waialae, Kaimuki and Kapahulu as well from the city.

Together, the two ministers set down a firm foundation for Jikoen by holding regular services, establishing a Sunday School (with the help of the Rev. Ernest Hunt), conducting outreach projects in Kalihi-mauka and Waialae, establishing a Fujinkai for the women, teaching Japanese at night, issuing publications, starting a *tanomoshi* club and helping members make trips to Okinawa.

In June 1941, Rev. Yosemite left for what he had planned to be a short trip, but when it became apparent that he could not return because of building



1950

First meeting of Okinawan community group, Hui Makaala conducted at Jikoen.

Jikoen Kyodan is organized and Fujinkai (JBWA forerunner) is reactivated in special ceremony with Lady Yoshiko Ohtani as officiant.

1945

Rev. Yamasato returns from internment; resumes a 43-year tenure at Jikoen. Jikoen is center for war-ravaged Okinawa relief.

1946



“GARDEN OF THE COMPASSIONATE LIGHT AND WISDOM OF AMIDA BUDDHA”

tensions in Japan-America relations, Rev. Yamasato took over as resident minister.

But in December of that year, World War II began, and Rev. Yamasato and other Buddhist priests were seized by the military government and held in “relocation camps” on the mainland for the duration, effectively closing down all Buddhist temples. But Jikoen’s lay leaders, believing deeply in their faith and the fact that religion has nothing to do with nationality, ethnicity or Americanism, and with a profound trust in the democratic process, boldly petitioned the military governor to allow Jikoen to re-open.

Permission was granted, making our temple the first one on Oahu to remain open during the war to serve its Sangha, albeit on a limited basis. Moving his family into temporary quarters in the social hall under the hondo, Heisho Miyasato as its first kyodan president, kept Jikoen

going with regular services, Sunday School and memorials

After Rev. Yamasato was released from internment, he resumed a long 43-year tenure as our minister and Jikoen became an even stronger and vital center of religious and Okinawan cultural activities. The newsletter “Jiko” was begun, the Fujinkai was reactivated in an impressive ceremony officiated by the Lady Yoshiko Ohtani and radio broadcasts begun for propagation (but suspended after five years because of rising costs). During this time Rev. Yamasato engaged the help of the Rev. Kiyoshi Matsukuma to conduct services in English and help with Sunday School classes. Rev. Matsukuma was a full-time social worker for the State Department of Welfare and served at Jikoen on a part-time basis until Rev. Yamasato retired.

Fundraising was undertaken annually via benefit Japanese movies, a two-day carnival on the Kapalama School

1951

The Hawaii United Okinawa Association (HUOA) is established.



13th memorial service in Okinawa for all the war dead—military and civilian, American and Japanese.

1957



“THE NEW JIKOEN WAS COMPLETED IN AUGUST OF 1964.”

grounds, preparing and selling andagi, nantu and sushi, and bazaars. The entire Sangha participated in annual picnics at Ala Moana beach park. At their annual Shinnen-enkai, the Fujinkai sometimes put on elaborate and hilarious plays based on Japanese children’s fables.

Also as important, immediately after World War II ended, Jikoen became the center for a huge effort in the relief and rehabilitation of Okinawa which had been devastated by months of daily bombardment. Tons of clothing and food, and thousands of dollars were collected and sent to help kinfolk and friends in that war-torn land.

Another proud and unique achievement came in May 1957 when the Rev. Yamasato and Jikoen’s leaders initiated an international project to mark the 13th anniversary memorial for all those who had died in the Okinawa campaign—military as well as civilians, Americans as

well as Japanese. The ceremony was attended by the then Go-Monshu Kosho and Lady Ohtani, the first time that the highest officials of any Buddhist denomination had personally visited Okinawa. (A poignant touch was the fact that Lady Otani herself had lost a brother in that terrible battle.) About 300 people from Hawaii attended and participated in this milestone event, which proved to be the catalyst in opening the doors for all other Buddhist groups to conduct their propagational work in Okinawa, which theretofore had seen only Christian groups.

In 1961 because of Honolulu County’s plans for the expansion of the Kalihi-Palama traffic network, Jikoen was finally forced to look for new quarters elsewhere when the land in front of the temple was seized by condemnation (twice) by the County. The present site at 1731 N. School Street was selected, and negotiations for a long-term



The largest Okinawan stone outside of Okinawa brought from Okinawa by the United States Navy and erected in commemoration of the 65th anniversary of the Okinawan immigration to Hawaii—engraved on its surface, “Shikai Kei-Tei” (all within the four seas are brother) by Waseda University President, Dr. Nobumoto Ohana.

1964



Relocation to School Street on leased Bishop Estate land. Okinawa Memorial Hall dedicated also. Lumbini pre-school established. Rev. Kiyoshi Matsukuma helps with English and Sunday School services and activities.

1965

lease with the then Bishop Estate went smoothly. Leaders of the project were: general chairmen, Mr. Warren Higa and Mr. Yasuo Uezu; finance, Mr. Albert Teruya and Mr. Yasuo Uezu; Mr. Ed Murayama was the architect, and Mr Tommy Toma served as the temple's contractor. Construction of the new temple, minister's residence and Okinawa Memorial Hall began in 1963.

The dream shared by both Rev. Chiro Yosemori and Rev. Jikai Yamasato for Jikoen to be a place of spiritual guidance as well as a place for Okinawan people, regardless of their religion, to come together and meet freely, met successful fruition. Many Uchinanchu—members and non-members were encouraged to use Jikoen's facilities freely. When Jikoen relocated to its present location, the temple asked for contributions for the temple's building fund from not just its members but

the Okinawan community at-large. Thus they named their hall, the “Okinawa Memorial Hall.” In 1980, Mr. Paul Yempuku, CEO and Chief Editor of the Hawaii Hochi Japanese newspaper, wrote that one of the major reasons why the Okinawa Kenjin-kai was so strong and had many members was because they had Jikoen Temple. Japanese immigrants from other prefectures such as Hiroshima or Yamaguchi did not have a similar place for their kenjin-kais. There are a few left who remember this time, but descendants of these visionaries continue to maintain this special relationship between Jikoen and the Hawaii United Okinawa Association.

The new Jikoen was completed in August of 1964 and a gala celebration was held to dedicate it. The total cost was \$400,000.

“AFTER 64 OF THESE FUNDRAISING EFFORTS,
THE MILLION-DOLLAR GOAL WAS REACHED!.”

*Rev. Chikai Yosemori takes
over as resident minister.*

Jikoen chior established.



Lumbini Pre-School was quickly established to help the need for day care for children in the community. Mrs. Haruko Yamasato served as its director for many years. To this day, it is bringing in needed funds for our on-going maintenance projects. The present director is Mrs. Leandra Pasion who works with an able staff of hard-working women. Nutritious snacks and lunch are served everyday by a contractor. We have a fully-equipped playground area and separate work and eating rooms.

The social hall is still being used by many groups in the community, especially such associations as the kin organizations, Hui O Laulima, Hui Maka'ala and martial arts and dance schools. Families also rent it out for graduation and birthday parties, making Jikoen a bustling gathering place all year round.

Upon Rev. Yamasato's retirement in 1981, the Rev. Chikai Yosemori, son of our founder, transferred from Makawao Hongwanji to become our third resident minister. Rev. Yosemori immediately reactivated the monthly temple newsletter which contains items about on-going and future events, mini-sermons and lists of donors among other things. He delivered both English and Japanese sermons and spiritual counseling at the temple and member services, home visits, and hospital visitations.

A new electric organ was purchased and dedicated in 1984; very soon after that, Mrs. Chihoko Yosemori organized a choir. Today it is directed by Mrs. Betty Higa, a retired teacher. A major repair of the main building's wall facing Likelike Highway was completed in 1986. The Jikoen Women's Association donated an IBM computer and printer, air conditioners for the offices and furnishings



Dharma School (formerly known as Sunday School) established.

1985

Dr. Albert Miyasato becomes the first non-Betsuin lay leader to be elected head of the Kyodan of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

1986

Jikoen becomes its own landlord after successfully paying 1.08 million dollars to Bishop Estate for temple property.

1991

for a library/reception room.

In February 1985, the Kyodan's immediate past president and son of the first Jikoen president, Dr. Albert Miyasato, was elected head of the Kyodan of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii. Until then, all such leaders had come from within the ranks of the Betsuin.

But just as Rev. Yosemite was making plans for Jikoen's 50th anniversary in 1988, Jikoen was hit with a bombshell—Bishop Estate which held our 55-year lease, was going to raise our rent from \$5,000 a year to \$5,000 a month! Rev. Yosemite asked Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii's legal counsel, Mr. Kinji Kanazawa for assistance. After much anguish and frenzied bargaining by Mr. Kanazawa, the Estate finally offered Jikoen a chance to buy the fee for the lot for one million dollars. There followed three-and-a-half years of frenetic fund-raising

by our members, most of whom were retired old-timers on fixed incomes. Bazaars, garage sales, BBQ chicken sales, breakfasts, a *luau*, *karaoke* extravaganza, golf tournament was held. Appeals were made for donations from temple, families, friends and businesses. Members of other Hongwanji temples throughout the state came through for the temple, too. After 64 of these fundraising efforts, the million-dollar goal was reached! To express appreciation and gratitude for everyone's support and generosity, Jikoen hosted all of the delegates of the statewide Giseikai (Legislative Assembly) on February 7, 1992. This was truly a momentous time in Jikoen history.

A children's Dharma School was revived in 1986. Besides lessons in Buddhism, they work on various related craft projects such as fans, cards, tiles, *o-nenju* and cultural activities like making *udon* and *mochi*, *kadomatsu* and

JBWA makes a trip to Europe.

1992

1996

1996

Interim minister Rev. Akinori Morii arrives.



Rev. Chikai Yosemori is elected as the 12th Bishop of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii; the first Bishop of Okinawan descent.

mandala designs, and making and learning how to play the Okinawan *paranku* and *sanshin*. O-Bon is a very busy time for them as they are in charge of a very popular food booth that sells plate lunches, sodas, corn, shave ice and home-made cookies. As a group, the students and their families have visited the West Coast (other Dharma schools, Disneyland, etc.) and Japan and have enjoyed a sleep-over at Sea Life park, a train ride in Ewa, and a boat trip for fishing and sightseeing.

The Fujinkai is now called "Jikoen Buddhist Women's Association," and all its proceedings are conducted in English. Since its reactivation in 1952 by Lady Ohtani, the ladies have remained the backbone of Jikoen temple, not only in the kitchen but in all other activities as well—the fundraisers, the excursions, the clean-ups, Bon Dance, etc., and making generous donations to the Dharma

School, buying various equipment for the kitchen and offices, etc. Mrs. Yamasato was its president for almost 30 years. The next longest-serving president was Mrs. Yosemori who served from 1981-96. Both were wives of the ministers, a tradition in the past. Today, we have leaders from among the regular members of the organization.

Rev. Yosemori's tenure at Jikoen ended after 15 years in 1996, when he was elected as the 12th Bishop of Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii.

He was succeeded by interim minister the Rev. Akinori Morii originally from Japan. During his short term, temple improvements included renovations to accommodate air-conditioning for the hondo, FAX machine, telephone recorder, stereo CD player and audio system, streamlined computer-generated membership list, bookcases for



Large contingent of JBWA attends 12th World BWA convention in Brazil. Chihoko Yosemite, as Hawaii's representative, gives a rousing and well-received speech about the Pacific Buddhist Academy.

1998

2002

2004

Rev. Bruce Nakamura starts seven-year tenure.



Several Jikoen Dharma school students perform in "Pigs from the Sea" at the Blaisdell Concert Hall.

the hondo and office, new washers and dryers for the minister's residence and pre-school, and a personal computer for Lumbini's director.

Rev. Morii was succeeded by a local boy, the Rev. Bruce Y. Nakamura, in the fall of 1998. Jikoen enjoyed a renewed spirit of ohana and rejuvenated energy under his leadership. Because of his youthful enthusiasm and can-do spirit, he was able to attract many and younger members to Jikoen. Handicap-friendly parking stalls and bathrooms were installed. A chair-lift was installed for reaching the hondo upstairs. The hondo became a multi-purpose one, with moveable chairs and tiled flooring, and an appropriate dais and plaque for Toshiko Takaezu's beautiful ceramic piece was set up in the hondo. The steel yagura was delivered. In the hall, there were a new PA system and lights as well as big cabinets for added

storage space. Donations from friends included a shed for recycling items and a large van. Night-time Dharma classes were begun. New plastic tables were donated by the Dharma School. Renovation of the kitchen was begun. Services at Avalon Care Center resumed with help from members Gladys Higa, Masuyo Nakatani, Ai Saito and Harue Uechi. He strengthened Jikoen's ties with Farrington High and Kapalama School and some HUOA groups. After seven years at Jikoen, Rev. Bruce left for his home island to serve as assistant minister at Hilo Betsuin.

The Rev. Shindo Nishiyama has been with Jikoen since October, 2005. With his family (wife Suzue, children Shanna and Skyler), he lives in the minister's cottage on the grounds of Kailua Hongwanji, conducts a monthly service there, and daily commutes to Jikoen. During his tenure, offices, workroom and the pre-school director's



Rev. Shindo Nishiyama begins tenure.

Jikoen celebrates its 70th Anniversary; Renovation of columbarium completed by the Takeo & Sachiko Teruya family and fellow members.

2005



2006

2008

JBWA assists in hosting 13th World BWA convention in Honolulu.

office were relocated upstairs. The temple bought a new color copier. Renovation of the kitchen and the columbarium has been completed. The grounds have been repaved and repainted. We have a live-in custodian now, in renovated quarters downstairs. With the assistance of Rev. Irene Nakamoto (ret.), a Living Dharma Study Session meets weekly. The Nishiyamas led a group of Dharma School students and families for a week's trip to Japan in June, 2007 during which they visited Honzan in Kyoto, Hiroshima (the Peace Memorial), Atami and Tokyo. (Note: Most of the major renovations and maintenance projects done over these years have been undertaken by active member and master craftsman Takeo Teruya and a dedicated crew of volunteer workers, including his daughter Sherri. Mrs. Sachiko Teruya and other daughter Amy contribute meals and snacks during work hours. Jikoen is indebted to this remarkable family for their

dedication.) Also, on Sundays and major celebrations, wonderful snacks and meals are prepared by Masaru Asato and his energetic crew of volunteers: his wife Helen, Elaine Hirashiki, Sally Kiyuna, Edward and Haruko Okita and Sadako Oshiro. Jikoen is indebted to these wonderful volunteers who keep us well-fed and happy throughout the years!

In 2008, the temple celebrates its 70th Anniversary culminating with a special service and luncheon in November. The temple, under the direction of Rev. Nishiyama and temple president Lily Horio (daughter of Shohei Miyasato) face the many challenges of a small temple in a quickly changing modern world, but both have renewed vigor and enthusiasm for the future as its members remain steadfast in its mission as their forefathers seventy years ago. The history of Jikoen continues to be made.