



TED K. TAJIMA — A LIFE WELL LIVED

Ted Tajima,

*a noted journalism instructor who was
a mentor to many professional journalists,
passed away on Feb. 20. He was 88.*

Ted Tajima, Alhambra High School's journalism advisor for 35 years until his retirement in 1983, was a founder and president of the Southern California Journalism Education Association, which named a scholarship after him, and a national vice president of the Journalism Education Association.

The California Newspaper Publishers Association gave him an award for outstanding teaching in 1967, and the JEA presented him with the Medal of Merit in 1970. He was also a recipient of the Asian American Journalists Association's Lifetime Achievement Award.

During his tenure, Alhambra High's newspaper, The Moor, was a perennial NSPA (National Scholastic Press Association) All-American, winning that distinction 26 consecutive times, starting in 1957. It also received two NSPA Pacemaker awards for innovation and overall excellence.

One of his protégés is Los Angeles Times staff writer Elaine Woo. "He was the kind of teacher you never forget, compassionate but strict, particularly about adhering to the facts, writing without affectation, and learning all aspects of newspaper production, including selling ads," she recalled. "Many of his lessons have remained with me ...

"It's sad that he could not become a reporter or editor for a mainstream newspaper. He finished college right after World War II and anti-Japanese sentiment was a huge barrier. I never heard him express bitterness about this, although I'm sure he felt it.

"At the same time, I'm grateful he became a teacher because without his encouragement, I would not have

gone into journalism, a very non-traditional field for Asian Americans in the 1970s when I was his student.”

Woo, who worked for the Herald-Examiner before joining the Times, has said that Tajima had the same impact on her that the late Jaime Escalante, the Garfield High School math teacher who was the subject of the movie “Stand and Deliver,” had on his students.

Joe Saltzman, a journalism professor at USC and former CBS producer, was Tajima’s student in the 1950s. He remembered being devastated when the high school counselor told him he wasn’t college material and should go into his father’s profession, washing windows. He told his English and journalism teacher, whom everyone called “T.”

“In all the years I’ve known Ted, I’ve never seen him that angry,” Saltzman said. “He told me to wait there for him, and then went to see that high school counselor. He came back and told me that together, we would work to get me into the best school of journalism on the West Coast — the University of Southern California — and with a scholarship as well. And he made it happen.”

Having taught for 44 years at USC, where he directs the “Image of the Journalist in Popular Culture” project, Saltzman added, “I know I became a teacher because of his influence on me. I wanted to do for future journalists what he had done for me ... My story is not a unique one. Hundreds of Ted’s former students would tell you much the same thing. He changed their lives as he did mine. And he did it with humor, with patience, with grace, with intelligence, with compassion.”

Others who benefited from Tajima’s guidance include Arnold Shapiro, a Emmy winner for the documentary “Scared Straight”, and Steve Padilla, an editor at the Los Angeles Times.

On the occasion of his retirement, Tajima’s former students raised money to send him and his wife on a trip to Japan.

EXPERIENCING PREJUDICE

Born in Salt Lake City to Issei parents on Aug. 6, 1922, Tajima moved to California with his family at the age of 6. He had three brothers and a sister. Another sister had died as an infant in Japan. His father, Kengo, was the pastor of Japanese Union Church of Pasadena, now known as First Presbyterian Church of Altadena.

In an interview he did for “Face to Face,” an educational project comparing the experiences of Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor and Arab Americans after 9/11, Tajima described what it was like to experience prejudice: “Well, the public pool in Pasadena down at Brookside Park was closed to ethnic minorities six days of the week and open only one day of the week. It was called, euphemistically, ‘International Day,’ and it was the day that the blacks and the Latinos and the Asians could swim. We didn’t say, ‘Gosh, this is terrible, this is racial discrimination of the worst kind!’ We just lived with it ... because we kind of grew up with it, you know.”

Tajima graduated from Pasadena High School in 1940 and majored in English at Occidental College, but his education was interrupted by World War II. He recalled the day his family’s life changed: “On a Sunday, we were going home from church, and there’s just a bunch of young people in the car. We stopped at Curry’s Ice Cream Store to indulge. And someone came in saying that Pearl Harbor was bombed ... We thought that was kind of a stupid thing the Japanese were doing, but it didn’t occur to us right away that this meant war.”

At the urging of his father, he relocated to Salt Lake City before the West Coast internment orders were issued. As “voluntary” evacuees, neither he nor his brothers were interned, but his parents remained behind and were sent to the Gila River camp in Arizona while his sister Sophie and her husband, Rev. Donald Toriumi, were sent to Heart Mountain in Wyoming. He later moved to Ohio, where he was reunited with his parents and married Setsuko Itow, whom he had met in high school.

Tajima said of the internment, “Too many lives were affected. Too much property was lost. It was not good in any respect that way. Education for example — many people, their education was cut off. Kids in high school ... went to camps and there was almost a jerry-built high school there. They used people who were in college, they used whoever they could recruit to come and teach in a God-forsaken place.”

After the war, Tajima returned to Occidental and graduated in 1946. He was drafted into the Army and spent one year with a counter-intelligence unit in Maryland, teaching Japanese to agents who would be serving in occupied Japan. He found deficiencies with their writing in English and taught them how to improve their English as well. He later earned a master’s degree in English from USC.

Although he wrote for the campus newspapers at Occidental and USC, a job at a mainstream paper wasn’t in the cards. “When I came out of the Army, I hoped to do some newspaper work, but the only newspapers that were hiring ethnic minorities were ethnic minority papers,” Tajima said in a recent interview. “My wife said, ‘Why don’t you teach?’ Best thing she ever said to me.”

In 1948, Tajima became the first Asian American teacher at Alhambra High School. At the time, he said, there were “three Asians on campus ... two students and me. But when I left, many more.”

While teaching, he contributed articles to the *Rafu Shimpo* on a freelance basis.

For over 60 years, Tajima contributed his skills to *The Clarion*, the newsletter of First Presbyterian Church of Altadena. “That was his baby,” said his brother Calvin. “Rain or shine, he would get it out.” Tajima was also a church elder who served on many presbytery, synod, and general assembly committees. His daughter Wendy, a minister, temporarily took over editing duties in December.

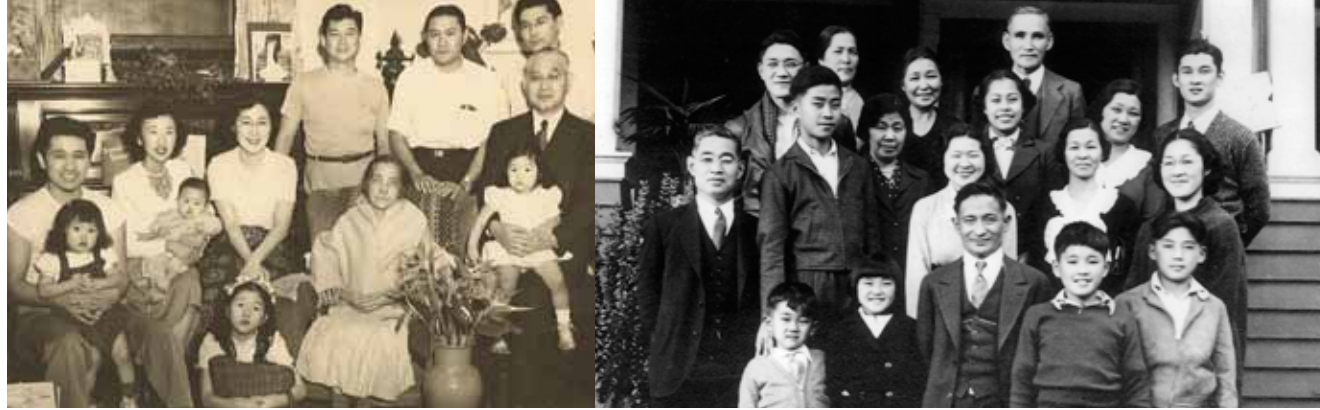
“A lengthy relationship between us has come to an end,” Tajima wrote last month. “First and foremost, I have considered my work on *The Clarion* as a ministry which all of us share, and I trust that it will continue as such in new hands. It has been a long journey, but one that we find gratifying as we work for the family of God.”

In thanking Tajima for his decades of service, the church said in a statement, “Ted is an icon among us of faithful service and Christian devotion. We continue to be grateful for his steady and positive presence in our community.”

He was preceded in death by his wife, Setsuko; brothers Tsuneo and Yuji; sister Sophie; and granddaughter Tara Kimberly Sims. Survivors include daughters Pamela Tajima Praeger, Elaine Tajima Johnston, Linda Tajima and Wendy Tajima; son-in-law Stanley Tajima Johnston; grandchildren David Yenoki, Aimee Epstein and Moira Johnston; and brother Calvin.



In Ted's Words



*As interviewed
by Occidental
College, 2006*

My father was able to do some things most Issei weren't able to do—sent us all to college, while we all earned our own way in some respects—he made sure we went. We always had a house, wheels to run around in, medical attention. I give him a lot of credit for what he was able to do. In the Depression, for example, if a family could even send a son to college that was really something. He sent my two older bros to college, and me for the first two years I came here and he also sent my sister to college.

During the war, I was in Kansas in July—cleaning the boiler, really hot. There I met a black kid who was working with me—thoughtful boy, he said, you guys were put into camp, willing to serve in the army. “Dad” beats you once in awhile, but you still go home, don't you? So I wrote a story about that.

Change happened during my lifetime. Today, talk about glass ceilings — meant to be broken, and are broken. I hope in my lifetime I get to see a woman president. It's there—it's going to happen, but it's taking an awful long time.

*As interviewed by
First Presbyterian
Church of Altadena*

We Nisei have not really developed a vocabulary which we can use to express our spirituality. We are not very conversant in these things. But this doesn't mean that we don't have spirituality. Like my wife, for example...when we were driving out in the country, she would say things like, “This is God's country.”...I think that a lot of us have that kind of aspect in our make-up, but we don't know how to say it...We can't get up in the pulpit and express it, but we can live it...

Church is not someplace to go to for what you can get, but it is where you go to be a part of the family of God...

You come and you are gone, and you may think you have not done much, but it is like a brick that has been added onto the wall, and the wall rises...



WEDNESDAY, MAY 9, 2007

I read quite a few pages of Barack Obama's book, *The Audacity of Hope*. The man writes well. And the very measured sensible ideas he presents for making America the respected, fair world leader reminded me somewhat of John F. Kennedy. He is not 110% one party, but credits both parties when merited. *(Ted was an active supporter of Obama throughout the 2008 presidential primaries.)*

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 19, 2002

From time to time, I am saddened to think that Setsu is not here to see what I'm seeing.

Again, I am puzzled and embarrassed at how the US government found such wide open and undesired places to place prison like, tens of thousands of people. And it is mind-boggling to imagine and realize that 10,000 people, uprooted only because we looked like the enemy, were thrust into such primitive circumstances and managed to, in general, maintain their sanity, to accept this totally unfair treatment, and survive, creating a civil, social, peaceful community.

God bless these people.

And may the government, still manipulating people for its own interests, come to realize that it's government for the people, not people for the government.



SUNDAY, MAY 14, 2000

I am leaving for a meeting. Setsu will ask, "Did you take the stew pot down from the top shelf of the refrigerator?" Probably, as I lay in my coffin being carried into the church, she will say, "You forgot to take out the trash!"

SUNDAY, MAY 28, 2003

Aimee's Graduation

Tucson got very hot.

The streets are laid out in large Mormon-like blocks. There is a lot of room — nothing seems to be squeezed from lack of space. Arizona has many beautiful places but Tucson seems to have been short-changed.



FRIDAY, MARCH 27, 1998

NCAA basketball. UCLA beat a highly favored Michigan team but was swamped by a tall, talented, well-stocked Kentucky team that went on to beat Duke, edge Stanford in overtime, and beat Utah with superior bench strength.

Utah was a pleasant surprise, blasting Arizona by 25 points, beating and upsetting North Carolina before losing in the last few minutes to a strong Kentucky team.

With this year's 16 semi-final teams, Stanford is returning all but one player, Kentucky and Duke have many players coming back (if they don't go NBA), and UCLA will have a talented group of freshmen coming in, including 2 high school All-Americans.

OCTOBER 29, 2002

It is my critical observation that Seattle's streets in the hilly sections are designed after cork-screws. But perhaps being accustomed to Seattle automobile traffic develops some desirable traits in Seattle people like patience, a "shigata ga nai" acceptance of life's little problems.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2002

Drove home from Palo Alto. Elaine was gone early so I didn't see her. The drive home was uneventful, for which I am grateful. About 2 PM my 3,800 mile motor trip came to a quiet end. I bought a Subway sandwich and fill the gas tank one more time.

I would say the trip was most successful. I drove through Nevada, Utah, Idaho twice, Wyoming, Montana, Washington, Oregon, and California north to south. The roads were good, the traffic smooth, and I beat the rain and cold. I am ready to go again. Drivers in the Northwest states were, on the whole, courteous and considerate. I cannot say the same for drivers in California.

FRIDAY, AUGUST 5, 2005

The last day of my 82nd year — tomorrow is my 83rd birthday. Of course there is nothing significant about this day or tomorrow or the year. I will have lived longer than Setsu, but that is no achievement. I would much rather she had lived longer than I. I do miss her. I do a lot — visit and help Tara and Scott, a lot of church work, enjoy the company of Setsu's very good friends Alice and Fumi, travel a lot to Washington, Northern California, and San Diego. But there is a certain emptiness. I could enjoy having a companion to share the trips. But I think that will never happen. I don't know if I'm saying this right. I loved Setsu dearly, still do love her dearly and always will, but I am lonely. Thank God for family and some friends.

MONDAY, AUGUST 1, 2005

Today, my usual day of editing the Clarion is surrendered to driving Linda to LAX, where she would take off for her flight to Austria. Next to Linda herself, I must be the happiest, most gratified person that Linda is taking this trip. Music is her life and combining a European tour with music is a happy marriage. She will be seeing a part of Europe long renowned with music and having the opportunity to play in an orchestra, a beautiful combination of business made pleasurable.





SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2009

I regard it as good planning to arrive at the theater a good half an hour early, but it's probably been a high degree of anticipation that prompts the early arrival.

The plus? Being settled in your seats early and having time to study *Playbill*, the publication about the show.

The minus? You make like a yo-yo, as you pop up and down for latecomers.

Then comes the magic moment. Action time! The air is electric as the orchestra breaks into the overture. Leonard Bernstein's overture, with excerpts from every number incorporated into one major piece.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 7, 2006

It seems typical of an Alaska flight for me to have some problem that delayed the flight. In this case it was only a half-hour delay. I hope it doesn't cause Hiro a long wait. He's to pick up Aimee and me at the Burbank airport. In Portland we had a fish and chips lunch at a express food bar. About \$8. Robbery continues to be commonplace in US airports.

THURSDAY, JULY 1, 2010

Nothing of note today. Trash out. Wendy brought the barrels back in. Did some exercising. Deposited Elaine's checks. Watched Dodgers take a shellacking.



2002

Christmas Letter

Began a love song 64 years ago — and the melody carried on in a marriage of 58 years — rang loud and clear as Setsu's pre-school teaching inspired Pam to start Head Start programs. Setsu's love of music carried on in Linda's violin teaching. Setsu's love of beauty is reflected in Elaine's design company, and Setsu's love of God is a message in Wendy's ministry. The melody rings in our granddaughter Tara and Scott and granddaughter Aimee's delight in musical arrangements and David's adventures after a short interlude in the military. Setsu's melody promised that "there's a place for us" — she has found it and waits for us — assuming that "we'll never walk alone." The song goes on — in our lives.



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2002

I felt a little strange driving to Vegas alone. For years Sets was always at my side and I'd think of a lot of the little things she did, even such a little thing as another driver causing me to fall behind — or something. I used to kid her once in awhile about back seat driving but she often apprised me of something and steered me right or avoided a collision. Gee, I miss her.

I especially missed her at Vegas. I didn't have to go back and forth to the car to unload our luggage. I didn't go back and forth between the Blackjack tables and a lot of machines to check on her. Of course, I missed her most when I ate alone. I guess I ate enough but just never really felt famished.



SATURDAY, AUGUST 6, 2005

Tara seems to be fighting cancer vigorously and optimistically. She still has the ultimate diagnosis and prognosis about her cancer, but she is not feeling sorry for herself. She is remarkable, and I admire her grit.

MAY 12, 2006

Why must there be some suffering in dying? Perhaps we should look at it this way. Death is a time of transition. Think of birth, too, as a time of transition. Birth was the creation of you — and in your birth you were moved to a new existence. And it — your birth — was not without suffering. One Japanese writer wrote about souls waiting to be born resisting being born.

So now in a time of dying, think of this as a time of transition. We know what we are leaving, but that is all we know. There is a transition. What we know little about. We theorize a lot. We believe a lot. But as there was a transition to life in birth, maybe there is a transition from life through death to what is beyond.

Now in this moment of transition, there is a coincidence. Four years ago today, Setsu, Tara's grandmother, transitioned to another existence. I guess she can tell you what it is like. She'll welcome you with a new kind of love.

FRIDAY, MAY 18, 2007

It is difficult to realize that Tara died one year ago today. It is difficult to describe the feeling — the deep feeling of loss of a beautiful granddaughter, who was at the height of her becoming a fully profound person — God took her and left us without an explanation. We have no way to comfort ourselves.

This was a busy day. Perhaps it is good that it was. I did not have a lot of time to ponder Tara's loss.

A WEEK TO REMEMBER

Hi Tara,

I am having a problem with this message. Your mom set it up for me to write for your Care Page, and I created a message that for sheer creativity must rank with anything that Somerset Maugham has written. But for some reason (I don't think it was a violation of copyright) what I wrote disappeared — blank, nada, just left without explanation or warning into outer space. There must be a place in the universe where such messages go. That place just stole my brilliant message that I had created for you.

Before all this vanishes, too, I had better get on with the week to remember. It was actually a day, Monday, when I had the good fortune of attending a Keith Jarrett concert at glittery, aluminum Disney Hall in downtown L.A. I had never heard of Keith Jarrett but by the end of his concert, he became a highly ranked luminary in my listing of pianists. He is a talented, skillful improviser on the keyboard. He just plays a few notes, seemingly at random, then continues to improvise a five-minute composition. I'll bet he can bang the keyboard with his fist, then go on to compose a piano concerto for left fist in E-flat major.

It was a truly exciting concert. I love piano and I especially love jazz. He even composed a boogie woogie piece that really rolled. The rest of the week was ordinary. There were a few church meetings that seemed interminable. You know, in church we are concerned with eternity. Well, in the meetings it appeared that some people thought they had eternity in which to speak.

I said except for the end of the week. The end of the week was today, and I had the pleasant opportunity of having lunch with you, Scott, your mom and Holly. Lunch was fine; the company was greater. Seeing you made my week complete, one to remember. Please continue to brighten my day, my week, my month, my year.

And if you're still reading this, thanks for your patience and enduring love.

Still, Grandpa



THURSDAY, JANUARY 1, 2009

A little afterthought. Elaine is the most successful of our daughters and unusually very generous. She has a successful business but wants to do non-profit projects. But I have no description of it from her. Such projects as Women Beyond Borders are not money makers. They are money raisers — fund raisers.

Pam the educator, Linda the musician and teacher, Elaine the humanitarian, and Wendy the spiritual leader. They're a good family.

Thanks Sets.



THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 2008

When I pause to look at the year 2008, I admittedly do not give a long, deep look. This year I am 85, not an age at which I enjoy many activities and feelings. I can drive. I eat almost anything but still do not enjoy Mexican or Mid-Eastern food. I still enjoy going on dates with a certain woman, a widow I have known (her husband too) for 60 years. I enjoy my family and am pleased to have Wendy here.

2008. May it be a good year.



"SANTA CLAUS. Rest In Peace."

That's all we painted on the tombstone. I painted the name. Fernando thought of putting on "Rest In Peace." He said he had seen it on tombstones in a cemetery.

We propped up the stone - a chunk of old sidewalk - over a mound of dirt that we had dug. Under the dirt was a cardboard box with a picture from a magazine in it, a picture of Santa. We couldn't find him, so we buried the picture.

That was how we buried Santa Claus when he died a long time ago. We buried him in Carmelita Park, which wasn't really a park at all. It used to be an orchard but nobody took care of it any more, so we kids played in it. It was a great place, too. One summer the Olympic Games were held in Los Angeles, so Carmelita Park became the LA Coliseum and, for our marathon run, it was 26 miles of dusty running over hill and dale. Really it was about 200 yards of darting through the trees and around old incinerators, a stack of rotting lumber and a dusty model T Ford that someone had not been able to get started one day.

Another time the orchard became the steaming jungles of Africa. That was the time Johnny Weismuller saved some monkeys and Jane in a Tarzan picture, and we became Tarzan, or took turns at it. I guess it was a dry gulch in the old West, too, because we fought many a bad guy and Indian with rubber guns. These were pistols and rifles cut from the ends of apple boxes, with wooden clothes pins which released bullets made of strips of inner tubes.

Santa's death, one sunny winter day, was attended by some of the kids in the neighborhood. There were about five of us; the other eight or ten wouldn't go along with us, so we conducted the rites for the old guy. We had had it. We knew he wasn't alive anymore.

I guess I was about eight when he died. The truth came sort of

slow like, like something we had suspected for some time, but none of us had the nerve to mention.

It really started when we weren't even old enough to go to school. The idea sort of started when we went to department stores and saw Santas in each one, all sizes and shapes of Santas, and on the streets standing over black pots hanging from tripods. Our parents tried to give us reasonable explanations, but you can't explain much to a four or five year old. He sees it or he doesn't, and we saw a lot of Santas.

Of course, when we saw Christmas presents under the tree on Christmas morning that hadn't been there the night before, our faith was usually restored. But we still had doubts. Some of the things he brought weren't quite what we thought a real-life Santa would bring. Most of our gifts were things like socks, which we needed because all ours were getting holes in the toes and heels and the threads were so tired they wouldn't hold the ^{new} darned thread Mama used to patch them with. Also, shoes, pajamas, maybe a/jacket because the old one wouldn't cover the wrist bones any more.

I wondered why Santa always brought me a book, too. He should have taken them to Fernando because Fernando was always reading the books I got. I didn't. And he never got books.

The year we buried Santa our suspicions had reached the point where we felt he wasn't alive any more. We felt sure he hadn't brought our gifts because we'd stayed awake in bed on Christmas Eve, until we fell asleep well past midnight, I'm sure, and we never heard hoofbeats, bells and "Ho, Ho, Ho's." All we heard was some moving around by our parents.

We were sure Santa had died that year, too, because Fernando told us so. He was the biggest and the smartest of the guys and when he said there was no Santa, we agreed there was no Santa.

Fernando was a lot smarter than all of us and we knew it. He was the one who showed us how to take old pop bottles down to the corner grocery store and get money for them. And it took only 10 cents to go to the movies on Saturday afternoon. And he was the one who, when we couldn't round up 10 cents for each of us, went into the show with the money we had and opened the back door so we could all sneak in. He was always reading anything he could get his hands on, and we thought maybe he read too much. Some times Mrs. Garden, our school teacher, had to discourage him from some of the books and magazines Fernando used to find in trash boxes.

He made the best rubber guns, too. And he was the smartest so we had to steal the clothes pins from our mothers' laundry bags; he never brought them. He didn't have a mother; he lived with an older sister, Josie, and their dad, an old guy who didn't speak English but didn't speak Japanese either, as our fathers did.

That Christmas day, when Fernando came over and said Santa Claus was dead, we didn't want to believe him at first, but he convinced us. We were out on the porch playing with a wind-up train with eight pieces of curved track, the one toy the three boys in our family got that year, the one gift a Santa would have brought. But Fernando came over and had a glum look and watched us a while and didn't even try to show us how to make the train run faster. He just picked up the Book of the Presidents that Santa, again by mistake, brought me, and Fernando began reading it.

About 10 minutes after we asked him what he got for Christmas, he told us the news: There wasn't any Santa. He said he got some socks and a shirt with sleeves too long so he had to fold the cuffs twice and a school reading book, like the one he had lost and Mrs. Garden had bawled him out for.

Then he proved to us there wasn't any Santa. He said he had

taken a nap the afternoon before and then stayed up late on Christmas Eve and, when he heard someone moving around in the living room, he peaked in and saw Josie and his father. They had put up a little tree and she was hanging some popcorn chains and shiny things on it and his father was putting some packages under the tree. And the packages were the very ones he opened Christmas morning and there were no other packages, so he knew Santa could not have visited his house.

Of course, we found it hard to believe Fernando. We had our usual socks, book, etc., but we did have the train. And that night, when I mentioned to Papa that Fernando said there wasn't any Santa, Papa just said one Japanese word that described my mental state.

Fernando was more persuasive than Papa, however, when on the next day, early in the morning, Fernando came over and sealed the argument. We were sitting in the old model T in Carmelita Park when Fernando found us and showed us his evidence. It was a sheet of instructions he had found and it was for the men who did the Santa act on the street with their black pots and bells. Fernando pointed to the end of the instruction sheet and read it aloud:

"10. Remember, when you dress as Santa, children may wonder why there are so many Santas. Be gentle at all times. If they ask if you're really Santa, tell them you are not the real one, but that the real one is at the North Pole preparing to visit them on Christmas Eve. We do not want to rob them of the fantasy of Santa Claus."

We read over the passage several times. Then Fernando explained it. We asked what "fantasy" meant and he said he looked it up in a dictionary and it said, "Thing imagined or not real; daydream, fanciful idea."

It was a dark day, that sunny winter day. We conducted the rites for Santa with genuine dignity. Fernando was in charge. He

knew everything. Fifteen minutes after the ceremony, we were banging away at each other - Superman vs the Green Hornet. And the model T made a terrific Batmobile.

I had forgotten about Santa's burial until the other day. The recollection came when my wife and our little girl and I were in a department store and we went to see Santa.

Gone now is the tombstone. Gone, too, is Carmelita Park. A freeway is going through there now.

Gone, too, is Fernando, I'm afraid.

But Santa's not dead. He's alive and well and he's living in hearts of little girls and boys everywhere.

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ON TED TAJIMA

The year was 1955 and I was a junior at Alhambra High School and there I was standing in the hallway crying my eyes out. My English and Journalism teacher, who all of us called “T,” walked by, saw me, stopped and asked me what was the matter. I told him that the high school counselor just told me I wasn’t college material and that I should follow in my dad’s footsteps — and become a window cleaner. My dream of being the first person in my family to go to college was over.

In all the years I’ve known Ted, I’ve never seen him that angry. He told me to wait there for him, and then went to see that high school counselor. He came back and told me that together, we would work to get me into the best school of journalism on the West Coast — the University of Southern California — and with a scholarship as well. And he made it happen. If it weren’t for Ted, I probably would have ended up a window cleaner.

If I hadn’t gone to USC, I would have never met Barbara, my wife of 48 years, or gone on to a wonderful career in journalism. When I wonder why I’ve spent the last 44 years teaching at USC, I think back to Ted. I know I became a teacher because of his influence on me. I wanted to do for future journalists what he had done for me. Nothing has meant more to me than when Ted showed up at my 70th birthday celebration and told me how proud he was about what I had done with my life. When I

told this story of how Ted changed my life to the audience, they spontaneously stood and gave him an ovation. I will never forget his surprised look and then that familiar smile.

My story is not a unique one. Hundreds of Ted’s former students would tell you much the same thing. He changed their lives as he did mine. And he did it with humor, with patience, with grace, with intelligence, with compassion. I will miss his phone calls alerting me that one of his former students was going to USC, or passing my way and that I should keep an eye out for him or her.

One of the joys of my life was knowing Ted was always there for me — whether it was a question of ethics, or career advice, or just showing up at many of our family’s celebrations. My mother, Ruth, 93 and here today, always considered Ted a cherished member of our family, a second father to her son.

Like everyone here, I will miss sharing important moments in my life with Ted, hearing that magnificent voice gently telling me to follow my best instincts and do what is right, encouraging me to do projects and to accept challenges I didn’t feel I was ready to do. No one’s praise meant more to me. I never really felt that an award or a significant event really happened until Ted called to congratulate me on the achievement.

Ted’s passing has left an incredible void. It is as if the rainbow has lost some of its colors, the sun some of its warmth, the day some of its luster.

Dear Ted: Thank you so much for all you have done for me and so many former students. All we can try to do is to emulate your example and to try to live up to the standards you have created — as a teacher, a journalist and a human being. We will miss you and cherish your memory forever.

— Joe Saltzman, Class of ’57



The Real Mr. T

*Mr. T-
With all due
respect to
religion, I say
That only God
and Mr. T. reveal.
Thanks for showing
me that I could
follow a dream.
Elaine*

One of Mr. T’s most memorable rules of journalism was a ban on the word “reveal.”

“Only God reveals,” he would boom in that wonderful baritone of his. And then he would obliterate the offensive word with his red pencil. To this day, if I am tempted to “reveal” anything in a story, I hear Mr. T’s stern warning in my head and consider the alternatives. From this wise, wry and caring gentleman I learned the fundamentals of my craft and so much more — to listen to others, respect their points of view, and honor the voice developing in myself. Even as I enter my fourth decade in print journalism I remain indebted to his teaching.

— Elaine Woo, Class of ’72



Like many students, I was in awe of Ted Tajima. He taught me how to conceptualize and edit stories, and he gave me some free rein. Once when we were at a convention in San Francisco, I went AWOL to interview the native Americans who had taken over Alcatraz. When I returned to our hotel, Ted chewed me out for missing the day's programs and not consulting with him. Then, with a tight smile, he said, "I hope you got a good interview." Over the last forty-plus years as a writer and teacher, I have thought of him often and fondly as a terrific mentor. It was an honor knowing him.

— Robert McDowell, Class of '71

Re: Mr. Ted Tajima

Mr. Tajima was injured on his way to my house after driving with his cousin all the way from California. He is a highly-honored retired high school teacher. His former journalism students are now professionals in newsrooms all across the country. We all cherish this man, as do his four daughters and his grandchildren. In fact, a main purpose of his cross-country trip was to visit his former students. We have all loved and respected this man for fifty years, and he gave us so much. Before I became a lawyer, I had a career in journalism based entirely on what he taught us in high school.

Please take good care of this wonderful man. Thank you.
Sorethy Gurney

June 12, 1983 -
To T - who is like a second father to me, at least once-over (on career-wise, whichever you prefer). Has it been 13 years, really? Still can't touch-tips, but I certainly can pour out the coffee. Obviously, I can't keep everything I want to stay in 40 words or less, but I'll be in touch, always. (Anybody else gone beyond 40 words?)
Peter Wong
Class of 1970
P.S. Best wishes + best of health!



To Mr. T -
Roshi, rabbi, majister, teacher
— who gave me the inspiration to try to become one myself.
David Sewell

His beginning journalism students were a motley group of high school juniors: the shy and unassuming ones, content to contribute what they could to the paper; the extroverted gonzo photographers and sportswriters who lived for the adrenaline of the breaking story or the close game; the meticulous writers who would sooner break the law than a rule of AP style or English grammar; the countercultural crusaders who wrote every editorial or arts review as if it would immediately transform the world — or at least Alhambra. Mr. T delighted in all of them. He saw to it that each one found his or her most productive spot on the MOOR staff, and inspired them to produce the best work they'd ever done.

— David Sewell, MOOR Staff 1970-72, Editor in Chief, fall '71

I remember Ted very well. He was kind, smart, sweet and cute! Because of his guidance I wanted to be a journalist, or at least a librarian. I went in another direction but he inspired me to be who I am today.

— Cheryl Tiegs, Class of '65



“T” was able to teach ethics in life and in journalism just by his example. It was in the mid-50s that I had the good fortune to be on the staff of The Moor as its photographer. In the years that followed, up to the present time, it has been evident that the passion and the love for writing in my heart came from his direction then and now. It was only a couple of weeks ago, while talking to him over the telephone, that he gave me some off-the-cuff advice that I will never forget as long as I live. “T” taught journalism from the heart and made his mark on all of us as teens as well as later in our professional careers.

— Glenn Kahl, Class of '55

Ted Tajima is the only high school teacher I stayed in touch with after graduating nearly 53 years ago. Why? Because he left the most profound impressions on me. His writing/journalism classes are the only writing classes I've ever taken. What I know about non-fiction writing skills and techniques, I learned from “T.” Along with Joe Saltzman, I might be his only student who went on to write non-fiction television for every broadcast network and 14 cable networks. I don't consider myself a great writer, but I know what I know and function as well as I do (to this day) because of the fundamentals that I learned from my favorite AHS teacher — Ted Tajima. His influence upon me has been life-long.

— Arnold Shapiro, Class of '58



Mr. Tajima always had a strong sense of decorum.

The annual photographer was in the Moor office taking silly pictures of the student staff.

When Mr. Tajima saw a particularly silly pose he intoned, “In five years you will regret that picture.”

Evan Fong replied, “I regret it already.”

— Paul Sosa, Moor photographer, Class of '72



LESLIE MIZUKI OLSON

FEBRUARY 23, 2011

Dear Uncle Ted,

The Clarion is so much more than the weekly newsletter of the First Presbyterian Church. It has served for decades to sustain the bonds of our spiritual family with your steadfast reliability, comforting familiarity, compassion, care, and humor. The Clarion holds a unique place in the heart of this community and the generations it has kept informed and ever-connected.

My childhood memories of The Clarion remain vivid: stenciling headlines by hand, mailing nights for Jr. Pups or Delta Chi at the Kensington manse, noisy mimeograph machines and staplers, and of course, you, tirelessly at the manual typewriter.

Thank you for The Clarion, your gift of continuity, love, and devotion to us all!

CAROLE TAKAGAKI LOWE

FEBRUARY 2, 2011

Somehow, I thought Ted and the Clarion would go on forever. We mistakenly make these assumptions and take too many things for granted in our daily lives. As I've lived in the Bay Area for over forty years now, the Clarion has been my link to the Japanese American community and to the First Presbyterian Church of my childhood. Since Dad and Mom (Moe and Minnie Takagaki) are now gone and no longer give me updates about their friends in Pasadena, I look forward to hearing news snippets via the Clarion. I learn who's passed on. I read that Jim Ishii, Marilyn's father, is still teaching painting classes. I see that Bob Uchida is still involved in the community and receive his hand-written acknowledgements of donations. It's reassuring and comforting to see long-time Pasadena names mentioned in the Clarion every week.

I'd like to express my personal appreciation for Ted Tajima's six decades of service to the Clarion and to the community in general. There aren't many others who have his depth of knowledge of the old-time Japanese-American families and their place in the history of Pasadena, not to mention his journalistic talent.

Thank you, Ted. I wish you and your family well and send you warmest personal regards.

FUMI SHIGETOMI

FEBRUARY 2011

I remember when your Mom became very ill, Ted took continual care of her, never asking for assistance — not many men would have done that. This is a trait that continued on through his life: helping others in need.

Going back to the early 1930s, I shared a photo of 'The Drunkard,' which he performed in 1939 ... this brought back memories to Jackson Elementary School and Bits of Broadway, which utilized the many talents of our PTA, school faculty, and glee club. I'll never forget Ted's singing 'Poor Jud is Dead' from 'Oklahoma' with Bert Singer.

ALICE OKUNO

FEBRUARY 2011

It is difficult to say all that I would want to about Ted and our long family friendship and our opportunity to spend time together these last few years. I will miss him tremendously. We had joyful times together, and his passing leaves a big void. He also was a man of such deep faith. He was quiet, but when it was important, he spoke up clearly without anger. It seems like he is leaving us prematurely.

**KATHLEEN HOLLIDAY**

FEBRUARY 2011

Oh where to begin...

We loved Ted Tajima. Well, everyone loved Ted. He was a man of great character, sharp intellect, humility and a fine singing voice. He found joy in life as it was given him. And as our "advance scout" he was always looking for the next adventure. We loved all these virtues in Ted. Our family had the pleasure of spending a number of Christmas' with the Tajima Clan via Elaine and Aimee. And my parents were of the same generation as Ted and Setsu. As was our custom, a few of us — boys, girls and dogs — went for a long walk after Christmas lunch — but before Christmas dessert. We left the four senior members of the firm at the dining table, deep in conversations about their lives before their kids. They seemed to be enjoying themselves and each other. The day ended with a lot of pie, a fire in the fireplace and hugs for one and all. Setsu even went home with a big bow in her hair, looking adorable and making us all smile.

When our guests left, my parents stayed on. They wanted to share with us how impressed they were and how insightful they found their conversation with the Tajima Seniors. All talked about their careers as teachers, a school nurse and a

drug counselor. And as only their generation can do, they talked of WWII — where they had been and how it affected their lives. With great dignity and profound insight Ted and Setsu spoke of her internment and their eventual return to a more normal life. My mid-western Irish parents were amazed and humbled in hearing of the trials the Tajimas had been through. We talked about that conversation for days. And I remember my Dad saying again and again, "they spoke of where they'd been and what they had given up — but it was never with bitterness or remorse. It was said with clarity, dignity and grace. They are the most interesting people I have ever met!"

We loved lots about Ted — especially his Christmas letters — his celebration of family and a view of the world as he saw it. So we'll close with a quote from his 2010 letter. Ted wrote, "Now as we enter a new year, one that is burdened with natural disaster, terrorism and other forms of broken relationships, may the one great hope for 2011 be the love that has been given us through the Lord." Ted called us "believers in peace and good will." He was a man of faith and indomitable grace. We love him. We will miss him. And we all live in a better world because he walked this earth.

HARRY TSUSHIMA

FEBRUARY 2011

Ted and I.

It was a summer morning. There was a knock on the front door of our rented house on Vernon Street in Pasadena.

Ted and I headed down to Colorado and Fair Oaks, hopped on the trolley and headed East on Colorado to Hill Street and Colorado across from Pasadena Junior College to the Fortner and Loud Ford Dealership.

Were we looking for a hotrod or roadster? No, a family car. My father to his last on Earth never drove a car. He delivered for Meiji laundry to the rich homes on Orange Grove by horse and buggy.

Ted got into our purchased auto. Drove it into our garage.

The next morning, a knock on our front door. It was Ted. Out the auto came out of the garage. I hopped in and down to the Rose Bowl we went. Around and around we went. He must have done a good job, for I was able to get a license.

We had some good times together until evacuation when he went to Salt Lake and the rest of us to Gila.

We got together again. He was like a brother since I was the only child.

I'll sure miss him.

CHIEKO TOMOYASU

FEBRUARY 2011

I remember in order to provide for his family, Ted not only taught high school, but also taught English as a second language, edited the weekly church paper, *The Clarion*, and a weekly edition of *AHS The Moor*. He also worked for the Postal Service during the Christmas season. This strong work ethic shows in his family to this day — he always wanted to provide everything for his family.

**BOB UCHIDA**

FEBRUARY 2011

I know Ted was passionate about UCLA and its athletic teams, even if they were having a bad year. He and I attended many Presbytery meetings together, and even after I stopped attending the meetings five years ago due to childcare responsibilities, he continued to attend, sometime as our church's only representative. He was always attuned to what was going on in Presbytery, especially when it was discussing controversial subjects. One year — in 1994 — Ted had the honor of being selected as our Presbytery's lay representative to the General Assembly in Wichita, the national meeting of the Presbyterian Church. This was a singular honor, one that Ted cherished.

It is redundant to note that Ted was the pillar of the church, not only because he edited the *Clarion* every week for 62 years but also because he served ably as a leader in so many capacities: high school church school teacher for many years, elder for many terms, choir member who carried the baritone section, historian (whenever the need arose, he was asked to write the history of our church to that particular date), chairperson of the church's 75th anniversary celebration in 1988, member of two pastor nominating committees, trustee, etc., etc.



He was so revered as a layman that the Retired Nisei Ministers Association made him a member of their group. I can remember his attending a luncheon meeting with the group once a month — on Wednesdays. The group even made him the secretary.

I was amazed by his stamina — he did so many things that I became tired just thinking about what he did. I remember in the early days that as he and Sets were raising four daughters, he, naturally, had to provide for their well-being by working as a journalism teacher at Alhambra High School, where he had many award-winning newspapers produced by his students once a week, just as the *Clarion* newsletters were. Just his professional career and what he did in it was more than a full-time occupation. But he also taught a night-school class at Pasadena City College and during the winter break worked at the post office. All of this he did because the salary of a teacher was insufficient to raise a family of four daughters.

At the same time, he wrote articles and short stories for the *Rafu Shimpō's* holiday issue; he even wrote several plays, which were performed by our Sunday School children and required many extra rehearsals. Of course, he also directed the plays. Add to this schedule — in the Christmas season, the choir, which sang

every week, rehearsed and presented special Christmas music. Somehow, Ted squeezed in rehearsal time for the choir.

I think he carried on this hectic schedule for the duration of his teaching career. Luckily, I used to sit next to Ted in the choir — and I say lucky because I was able to ride on his "choir robe" (not coattails) because he carried the bass section, no matter how many basses there were. If I couldn't hit a note, I would just follow Ted, and if I still couldn't hit a certain note, I just faked it and let Ted provide the volume, because he had a strong voice also.

It was during these times when I sat next to Ted that I discovered his secret to doing so many things — he took short cat naps, even during a sermon! Sometimes, I became embarrassed for him because I didn't want the congregation to see him asleep, so I tried to wake him. I would do this, however, not by nudging him with my elbow — that would have been too disrespectful — but by coughing quietly or pulling on his choir robe. These actions worked — he would wake up — but sometimes he would fall asleep again, and I would go through my routine again. The disconcerting part is that when I discussed a sermon with Ted — brilliant as he was — I discovered that he heard and understood the sermon more than I did,

even though he was sleeping through half of it!

Having being a substitute editor for your father several times, I experienced the difficulty of editing the Clarion, especially when news came in late. I am sure that is why Ted had to spend many sleepless (or near sleepless) nights editing the Clarion. Yet, in every report that he wrote for our annual church report, Ted was always gracious and thanked the people who helped him and the readers who supported the financing of the Clarion. He was a true gentleman, who always put the needs of the church ahead of his own convenience.

I will miss him very much.

KATHERINE HASHIMOTO

FEBRUARY 2011

I did not get to know Ted until recently, when he was already well into his '80s, but it made me feel good to talk to him and see him in action at Church. I think part of the reason has to do with my stage in life. I have thought that one difference between youth and middle age is that, when you are young, you do not see middle age coming; but when you are middle-aged, you see old age coming. And I'm middle-aged. I liked to see Ted partly because he would make me think, being old is not that bad! He was always contemporary, always articulate, always a leader ... and always dapper! I also much appreciated that he invariably made time for me, a relative newcomer to the Church — he always could be relied upon to provide the information I was seeking, by prompt return email! I sure will miss seeing him at Church.

MARIAN SATA

FEBRUARY 2011

What an inspiration Ted was to all who knew him. That firm handshake, the eye

contact, and the sincere "Good to see you" were truly from the heart of a very profound and caring human being. In this day of partisan politics and intolerance, we can all learn about open mindedness, intellect, thoughtful listening, kindness, and extending the hand of friendship and love to all mankind through the example of Ted's demeanor and life. I feel privileged to have worked with him in the publication of the Clarion (typing and stenciling the Clarion for the mimeograph machine) almost fifty years ago, and to have experienced his friendship over the years.



KATHY PROST

FEBRUARY 2011

Time with Ted ... we escorted Ted to Hawaii for Elaine and Stanley's wedding. Once we landed in Kauai we decided we needed a little lunch so we found a spot that looked OK and ordered. Ted is always willing to go with the flow. Ted told us he wanted to speak at the wedding but hadn't written anything yet. No big deal for a writer, right? Ted spent the first couple days in his room writing; we barely saw him. What we didn't know is that Elaine and Stanley had no idea he wanted to speak. Ted delivered a beautiful speech about Elaine and her new future with Stanley as a member of the Tajima clan.

WENDY

FEBRUARY 2011

Years after Mom died I came home and tried to help Dad rearrange his bedroom. I chided him for not doing more to sort things out, saying, "Look, why do you still have this old muumuu hanging on the back of the door?" Dad said, "Well, it was your mother's favorite."

FEBRUARY 2011

One thing that should be mentioned is Dad's support for inclusion in the church, most recently of gays and lesbians. I think he and some other Nisei church leaders have sworn never to allow others to be treated as "second-class" the way they were treated during World War II. So Dad has been working to open the church to gays since the controversy started in 1977.

As it turns out, Aunt Sophie had a student in her second-grade class who ended up being the first (and perhaps only) out gay person to be ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church. Of course, that came at a price, with San Gabriel Presbytery trying to block her at every opportunity, so Sophie asked me to support her, and we became friends.

Fast forward 14 years. This second-grade student, Katie Morrison, managed to get ordained, and then married her partner, a UCC pastor. They decided to have a baby, and I ended up going to Katie's baby shower. As we were reminiscing about Sophie, Katie says, "So how are you related to Ted?" I said he was my father. She then said, "I'll never forget that when San Gabriel Presbytery was at their worst with me, Ted Tajima was the only one to stand up and speak in my defense."



CAROL TAVRIS

MARCH 5, 2011

Ted was not a teacher of mine, but he thought of me as his student. What an honor, I came to learn! If you were his student, it meant he would keep a stash of everything you'd ever written (including a few things you wish he had overlooked). I wish he had been my teacher in high school, but at least, as a relative-by-marriage, I was privileged to be enfolded into the enormous circle of the family, friends, and students who learned from him, were charmed by him, and who became, as did everyone whose life he touched, his admirers for life.

LORNA JACOBY

FEBRUARY 2011

Conversations with Ted could lead you anywhere and if you didn't know what you were talking about he'd always let you know, in a nice way, by correcting the date, the time, the details of the story and make you think it was you who thought of it. His analytical and keen mind was always at the ready with the latest news anywhere. Not just a general knowledge, like it is for most of us, but a deep understanding and an objective view of the topic or story. His voice was so memorable as was his laugh.



Thanks to the following people for helping to create this tribute booklet. In addition, thanks to all the contributors of stories and images. You blessed his life and honor his memory.

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For more of Ted's original stories and writings, as well as photos and remembrances from friends and family, visit tedtajima.net.

