



TAKACHIZU

JANUARY 2019 / ZINE #003

A YEAR IN LITTLE TOKYO

WHAT IS TAKACHIZU?

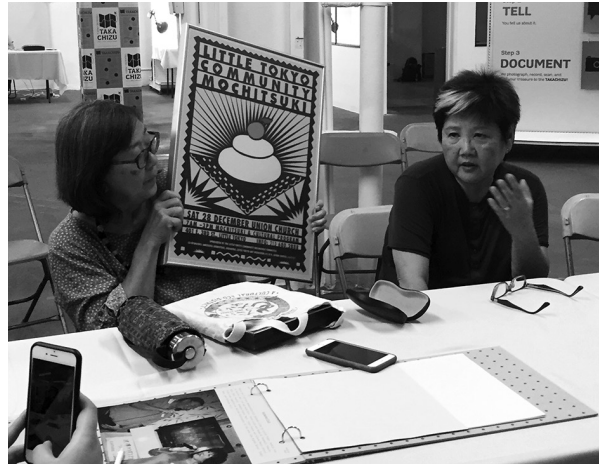
The Japanese words *Takara* (Treasure) and *Chizu* (Map) join to form *Takachizu* (Treasure map). Takachizu was a temporary community “show & tell” gathering space designed to identify and reflect on that which is most valuable, celebrated, and most in need of protection in Little Tokyo.

During 2016, we conducted dozens of workshops with residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors to Little Tokyo. Participants brought in “treasures” that represented Little Tokyo’s values to them. These treasures were shared in a group setting, documented, and then added to a temporary exhibition and online archive.

The gathered treasures will help give guidance and focus to a multi-year planning initiative of Little Tokyo Service Center and Sustainable Little Tokyo.

The full archive of collected treasures are shared online at takachizu.org and selections will be presented in themed zines like this one.

This zine showcases treasures that illustrate the festivals, traditions, and events that give an annual rhythm to Little Tokyo.



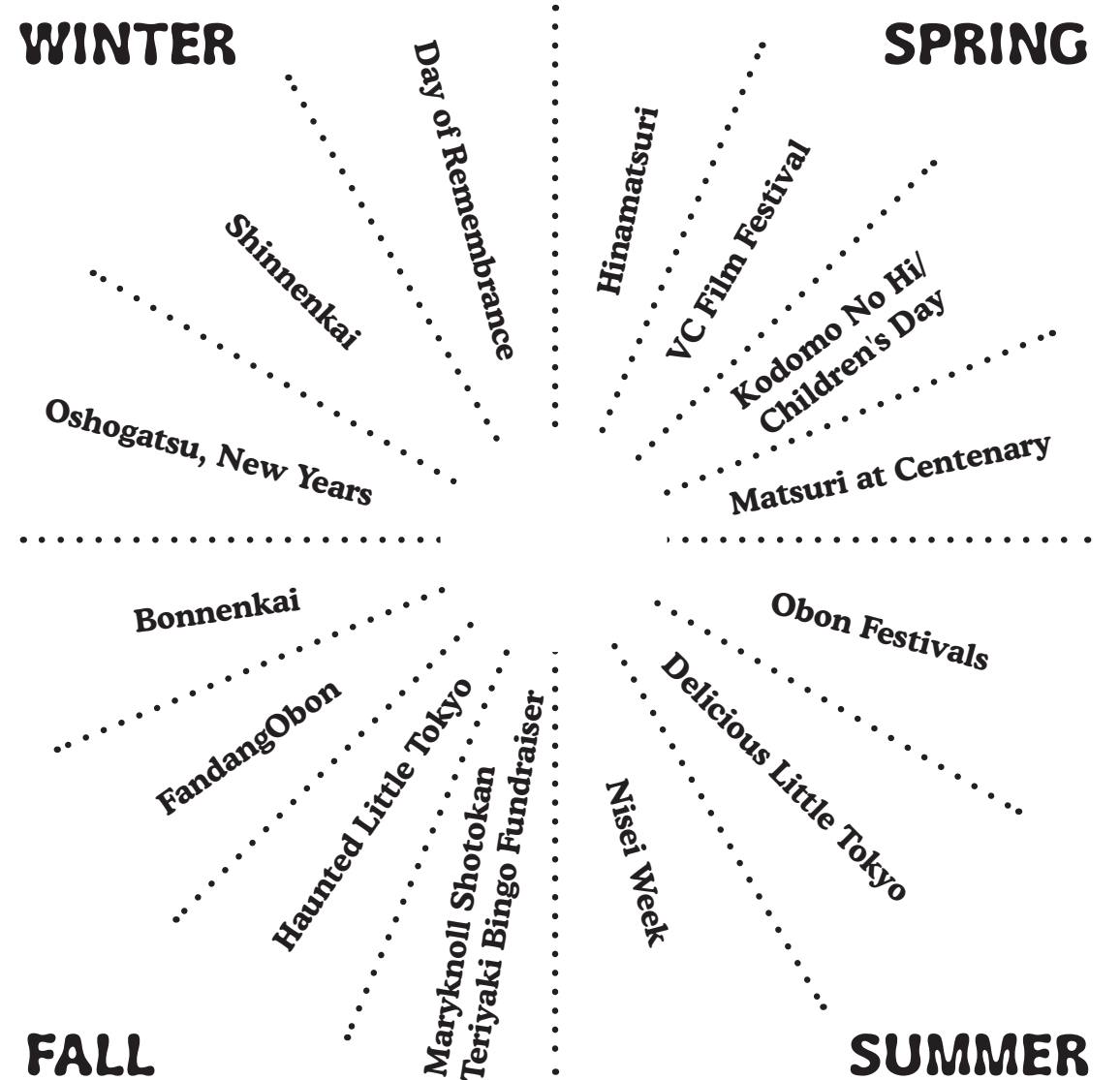
Takachizu was developed and produced by artist Rosten Woo with Maya Santos and design by Tiffanie Tran and Tom Kracauer.

Takachizu is a project of Sustainable Little Tokyo initiated by +LAB, LTSC’s creative community development strategy utilizing collaboration and experimentation to advance Little Tokyo’s power over its future.

A YEAR IN LITTLE TOKYO

WINTER

SPRING



FALL

SUMMER

TREASURES

The New Year is marked by Oshogatsu, a community-wide celebration organized by the Japanese American Chamber of Commerce.

Treasure #000

OSHOGATSU



I became a member of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in early 2000 and started to work for the Oshogatsu new year project since 2006. In the past I would go on vacation, but since 2006 I no longer travel. From November to December I have lots of community meetings to prepare. We raise the flag, but it's joined by all participants. The purpose is to vitalize Little Tokyo. First to provide opportunities and services to develop business in our community, and also to preserve our cultural heritage.

In Japan, January 1st is the most sacred event. They celebrate January 1st, 2nd, and 3rd as three happy days with January 1st as the most important. Our event focuses on January 1st. The event involves lots of cultural activities, dances, drums, paper art, Japanese calligraphy.

In 1990 there was a worldwide economic crash and in 2001 a lot of fear of

This treasure added by Toshio Handa



terrorism, and it caused a real slow down of business, including Little Tokyo. It became like a ghost town. So we started this event to revitalize Little Tokyo.

When I started working with this project, the Doubletree was the New Otani, a famous Japanese hotel with Japanese management staff. They were very cooperative with us and provided space for us. We used to make mochi and the hotel provided the entire kitchen for us. Later on they sold it. A very large hotel like Doubletree doesn't care that much about what we do. So the situation is quite different; these days we set up outside. Things keep changing and we have to cope. Lots of changes but gradually we saw an increase in visitors. In the old days we saw Japanese and Japanese Americans. But nowadays the majority of visitors are just... American people. People seem to know that on January 1st, if I go there, something's going on.

I'm a member of a calligraphy school. This year I went on the stage with my fellows to do a demonstration. I am from Japan, so it stimulates my culture, my sense of heritage. In about 2010, I took my two grandchildren to volunteer. We were in charge of a booth to sell drinks. I was very happy to have them involved. I felt somehow this way heritage is transmitted from one generation to the next. That's how I felt.

I think we will have a large audience as we continue to become more well-known. However people who organize and promote will hopefully get more Japanese and Japanese Americans involved. Every year we have an influx of Japanese from Japan but they are not quite interested in getting involved with the Japanese culture scene. When they leave Japan they have ambition to know about foreign culture, that's why they left Japan but we can involve more Japanese Americans.

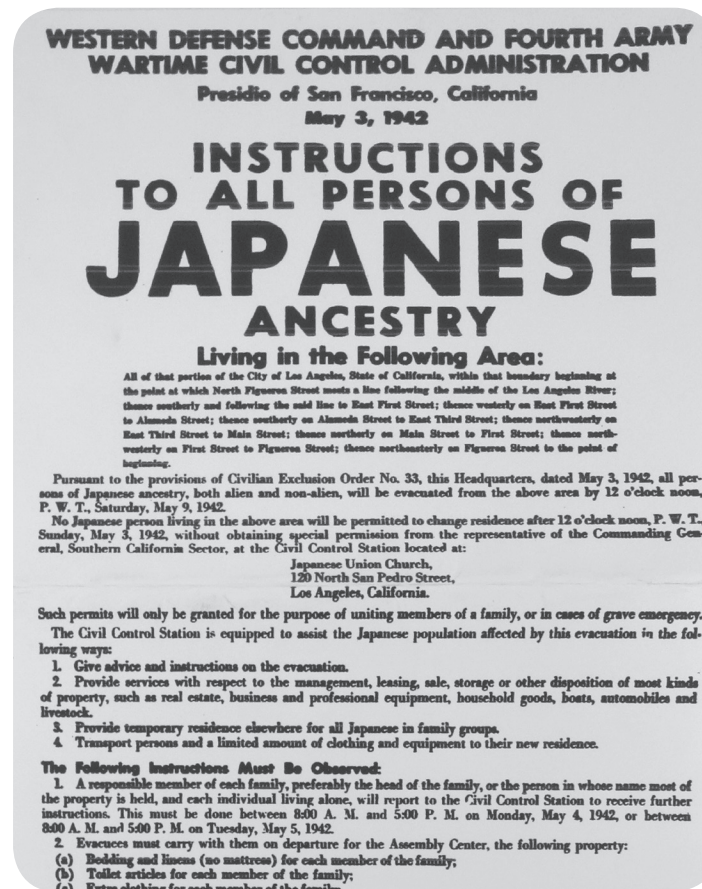
SHINNENKAI (LTBA)



Photo by Mickie Okamoto

Newly installed members of the Little Tokyo Business Association (LTBA) show their state certificates of appreciation. Front row, left: Joanne Kumamoto, Tomoko Omura, Yuriko Shikai, Yoko Kawaguchi, Yoshiko Ueda, Ellen Endo, Assemblyman Miguel Santiago, Mike Okamoto, Tamako Henken, Haru Takehana. Back row, left: Tetsu Shiota, Hiroshi Yamauchi, Doug Aihara, Chris Komai, Thornton Dickerson, Paul Abe, Edwin Takahashi, and Hironori Yonezawa.

EVACUATION ORDER

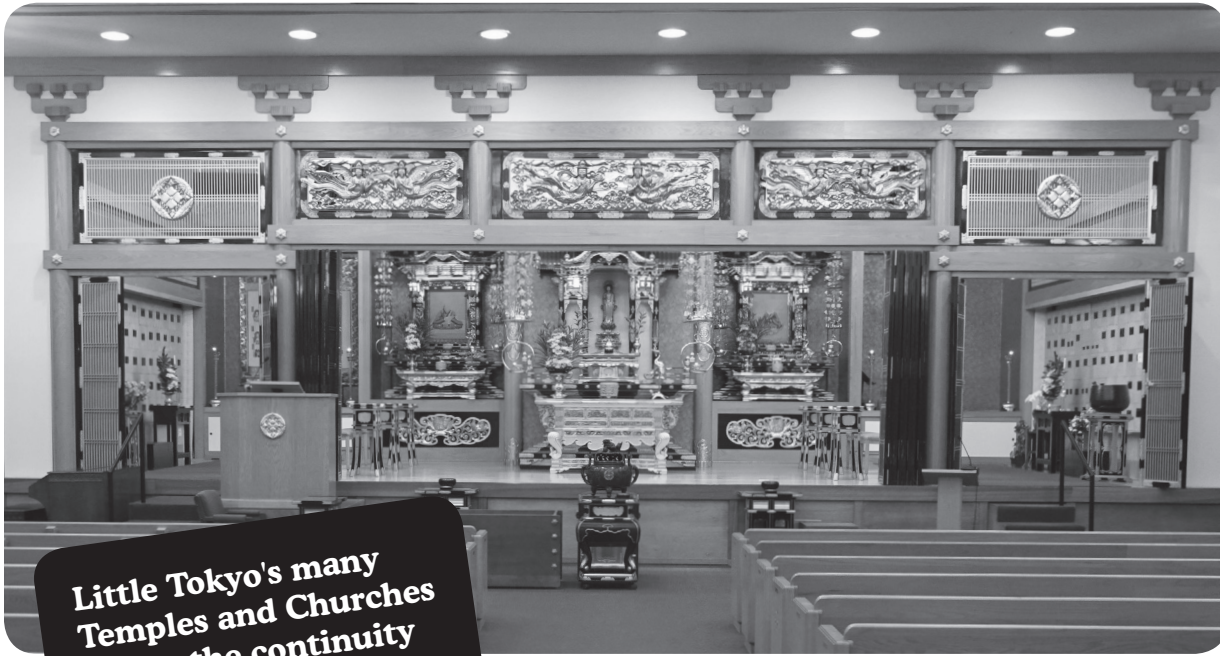


This treasure added by Steve Nagano

Held nationally throughout February, the Annual Day of Remembrance commemorates Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066. It forced almost 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry from their homes and into federal detention camps.

Evacuation Order is important to me and almost all Japanese in America. It not only destroyed our communities, but also in many ways today, binds us together. Our people's common experience, as devastating as it was, is a common thread through our history and Little Tokyo's history.

HIGASHI HONGANJI BUDDHIST TEMPLE



**Little Tokyo's many
Temples and Churches
create the continuity
of community life.**

Group treasure

Well I am an interloper here because I did not have the history that all of you do. Because in fact I did not become affiliated with Higashi until after my father died and then my husband died. In fact, I was sent to a Presbyterian Church by my father who was a very devout Buddhist! At some point as an adult, Caucasian friends asked me why did you go to a Christian church? I said I don't know... my father told me to! So I asked my mother. My father had died by that time. And her answer was that my father very much admired the Japanese-American minister of the Christian church and felt that anything he taught me would benefit me as a human being. For which I was very grateful.

I don't know about the rest of you but I have found that in the Buddhist tradition there is an openness and a lack of fear regarding spiritual or religious life. My parents never said that Buddhists were better than anyone or that you had to be careful about this religion or that religion. They always admired people who were passionate about their spiritual lives.

For instance, when people would come to the door. To proselytize, my younger sister would say 'just close the door!' And my mother would say 'no these people are earnestly trying to share their information and it takes a lot of guts to do that - to go from door to door.' So she

would be respectful and finally, after, she would say 'I haven't much English. I'm a Buddhist. I'm still studying. When I'm finished, then I will learn your religion!' The studying of course, never ends. I appreciate Buddhism as it is presented here.

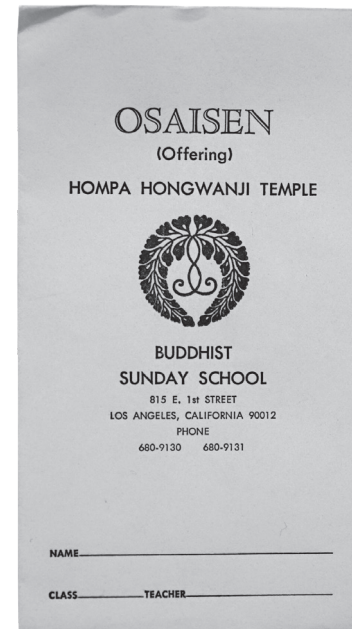
It wasn't that I rejected Christianity per se, except that I always felt I was a hypocrite. That I was not Christ-like. But the real reason I came here, and I've told this to Rimban, was when my husband died after an illness. I wanted to spend time with my mother. Because my father had passed on. And one way I could be with her and be of any help to her was to drive her to the temple because she

didn't drive. So when I came here and I began I only came here as a chauffeur.

But when I began to listen to the Buddha teachings here, I felt very comfortable. And it appealed to me. I felt comfortable and I recognized that what I thought was quaint in my father was actually a reflection of his Buddhist background. He would say 'Let's not say that flower died. Let's just say that flower has completed its bloom, life keeps going' I'd say 'isn't daddy cute.' Or he'd say that his old car had served him well, I'd think 'It's a car it's a machine.' But he always expressed... Gratitude. I began to recognize him and the manner in which they lived their lives.

Treasure #127

OSAISEN ENVELOPE



Group treasure

My memory is of Hanamatsuri at Nishi. After our service, we had a donor that would give us a little coupon - a little 25 cent coupon but this went a long way back in the sixties. So for all of us kids who grew up in the sixties, we all remember getting those tickets and running out of the main Hondo after the service and getting our goodies. The sad thing is that our temple has moved to First and Vignes and I feel like we lost our connectivity to LT when we moved to our present location. Before, we used to walk right outside our door and we'd be in all of the businesses and when we moved we became more of a commuter temple which is kind of sad - though our temple was able to grow.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



Group treasure

What I brought was my Buddhist Sunday school gathas book. This one is interesting because it has hiragana and katakana and romanji. I know this is not the first one, I know they have many editions. This was from when I was an assistant to the nursery class, when I was a senior in high school. So some time in the '50s. When I look at this now I think about all the kids that went through the system. I think ours started in 1917. It started in Yamata Hall, this building they leased the 2nd floor, the 3rd floor was a gambling hall. So on Saturday you'd gamble and come down on Sunday to ask for forgiveness. It was at Central and Jackson. That's all freeway now. This was the first gathering and at this first one, in 1917, that was the first place that they actually had a

meeting and they had a big Chego parade to commemorate the location. We had a lot of kids in Sunday school. I think the enrollment was like 500. To me it's kind of sad, because I see like 50 kids in our whole Sunday school but the times are different. But back in the old days this was the only Buddhist temple.

It would be thrilling to see that many or even half that number attending our temple. But on the other hand it is in an indication that Japanese Americans are more integrated into society. There are so many activities, as you say, that are now available, where then there were not. And one did not feel welcome nor comfortable in many situations where that is not the case now. So there is no need to seek out people who look like you necessarily.

VC FILM FESTIVAL



This treasure added by Abe & Francis at Visual Communications

This is a postcard from the first time I ever volunteered/ worked at a film festival. VC FilmFest (now known as LA Asian Pacific Film Fest) was my point of entry to JTOWN; well that and LTD's dance crew competition, VIBE. It was the family-like-spirit at Visual Communications (VC) that kept me coming back to events in the neighborhood. As a FilAm from Long Beach, JTOWN really contributed to my identity as an API human. I'm forever thankful to the universe for pointing me here.

For many others, connections to Little Tokyo are maintained through culture.

KOYASAN'S STAGE



Group treasure

This is a picture of the Four Leaves. They were the first boy band in Japan. One was a gymnast and would do these dance routines. Misora Hibari also came. Koyasan functioned almost as a community theater in a way, before there was an Aritani.

CHIBI-K/ CHILDREN'S DAY



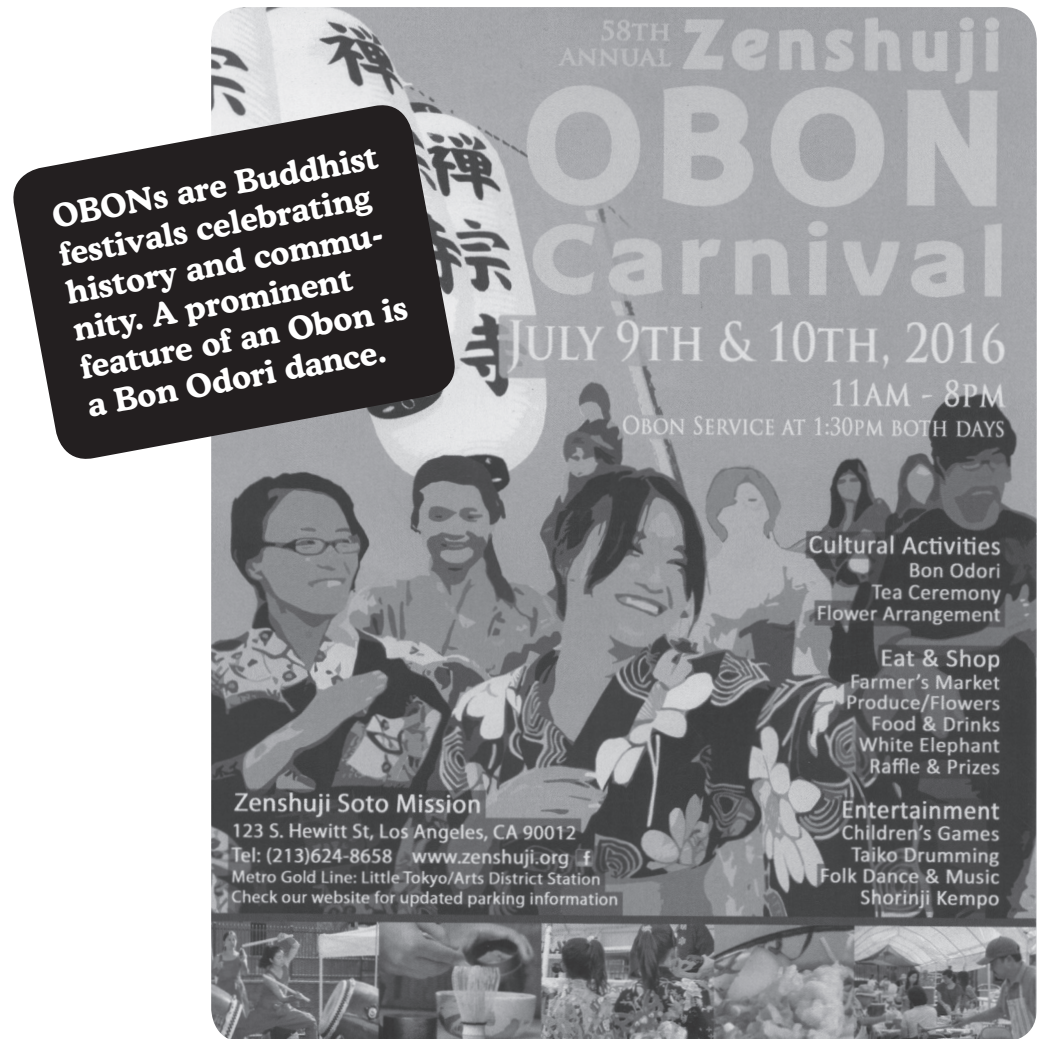
This treasure added by JACCC

The Chibi-K Kids for Kids Fun Run was a popular event of the annual Children's Day Celebration at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center. Although JACCC no longer hosts Chibi-K, they continue to celebrate Children's Day through the annual Fiesta Matsuri.

www.jaccc.org

Children's Day is May 5th!

ZENSHUJI OBON CARNIVAL FLYER



This treasure added by Sunil Vernekar

This flyer of the 58th Obon Carnival from Zenshuji Soto Mission. Zenshuji is the flagship temple in North America for Soto Zen. The carnival is a fundraiser for the temple. A Buddhist festival that shares food, entertainment, and a Buddhist service with the community. A yearly event that brings a wonderful feeling in Little Tokyo. Flyer design by Atsuko Kubota.

SAKURA TREES



This treasure added by Amy Honjiyo

Our Metro center is moving from one corner to another. There were sakura trees that were planted at the original station and because they were moving they dug them up and were just going to let them die. They didn't have any idea what to do. So the 16 trees were moved to this parking lot here. There's maybe 13 that survived that are now planted in Zenshuji's garden, so it's going to have that history. And as you walk up, there's one with a little card on it because an orphanage in Japan, in the Tohuko area, adopted the trees in the honor of the person who started the orphanage.

MY MOM, TWIN SISTER AND I AT THE NISEI WEEK PARADE



*This treasure added by
Kimberly Kawasaki*

Started in 1934, Nisei week has had many forms and holds many traditions. Held in the height of Summer, it's one of the longest running and biggest celebrations of the year.

I would come to Little Tokyo with my mom and twin sister to dance in the parade. We would come weeks prior to learn the dances and enjoy our soda during intermission. These are fond memories I have growing up, and am grateful that my parents helped grow my connection to Little Tokyo from an early age. I look forward to doing the same and passing on those memories to my own, new family.

ONDO DANCING BACHI



This treasure added by Shelly Niimi

Nisei Week is an annual festival held in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles every summer in August. It is described as “the opportunity for people of all backgrounds to celebrate Japanese heritage and culture”. One of the main events is the Nisei Week Parade. In this parade they have martial arts dojos, celebrities, community heroes, taiko players, pageant queens, etc. One of the main participants in the parade are the Japanese ondo dancers. The professional Japanese dance troupes dance the different dance for that particular year. There is also or there was also a section for people from the public to dance.

I used to dance with my grandmother and mom during the 70’s, and we were three generations of Japanese-Americans dancing in the parade. My submission to Takachizu are the bachi or sticks that my grandma and mom helped me to make. They are covered with red and white ribbon and have bells and tassels on the ends. Whenever I think of the time I spent dancing in the parade with my mom and grandmother, I think of these sticks. It is also an important time for me because it was when my mom and grandmother first taught me about our Japanese heritage. We spent a lot of time in Little Tokyo going to events such as Nisei Week to connect ourselves to our cultural identity. I felt that in part because my grandmother and mother had experienced a lot of racism and discrimination especially during WWII and going to the internment camps, they wanted to prepare me for any racism or discrimination that I might encounter as I grew up. Because of this, although I have experienced racism and discrimination, I have never felt ashamed to be Japanese-American. This is also why I volunteer for Little Tokyo. I hope that somehow, I can help in preserving an ethnic neighborhood that could provide a place for people to connect to their cultural identity.

PICTURE OF GEORGE NAGATA, 75TH NW PIONEER



*This treasure added by Kent Marume
Photo by Marc Amba*

NW Parade 2015. San Diego resident, George Nagata, rides in the 75th Annual Parade. This image is important to me because this summer marked my gateway and formal entry to Little Tokyo. I started working in Little Tokyo in November of 2015 (JACCC) and worked/volunteered for Kizuna.

SHOTOKAN



Group treasure

Little Tokyo residents in the know look forward to the Shotokan (martial arts) annual Teriyaki Bingo BBQ.

You know we started on Thursday night and we wash and marinate the chicken for three days before we cook it. So it's not phony sauce going on top.

FUJIMA KANSUMA KAI CLASSICAL DANCE



Madame Kansuma, born in 1918

This treasure added by Chris Aihara

Madame Kansuma, who is 99, has been involved with Nisei Week for more than 80 years. The legendary Japanese classical dance instructor joined in the closing ceremony festivities, accompanied by her daughter Miyako Tachibana, who was Nisei Week choreographer in 2014.

Tachibana said that serving as choreographer for next year's parade is the best way for her mother to celebrate her 100th year.

"She sees this community as HOME and she has taught here for decades. It will give us all an opportunity to celebrate and thank her for her many years of teaching and presenting us in a fashion that represents our Soke Fujima School and our culture in the best light possible," Tachibana said. "Throughout her 80-plus years of being part of Nisei Week, she has always kept the bar high and we do our best to keep up with her."

Born Sumako Hamaguchi in San Francisco in 1918, she began training in Japanese dance at the age of nine. Traditionally, a Japanese child begins training in dance on the sixth day of the sixth month of her sixth year, but Sumako persisted through many challenging years while training in Japan. A student of Kikugoro Onoe IV, Kansuma studied acting, dancing, kimono dress and etiquette, shamisen and tokiwasu music.

Granted the professional name of Kansuma in 1938, she returned to America and opened her dance studio in the Los Angeles hotel owned by her father.

During World War II, Kansuma performed and taught classical dance to lift the spirits of fellow incarcerated at the Rohwer concentration camp in Arkansas and other camps.

In her long and distinguished career, Madame Kansuma has taught more than 2,000 dancers, 48 of whom have been granted professional standing by kabuki grandmasters. Her troupe, Fujima Kansuma Kai, has performed extensively, including in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics opening, the 1980 Tournament of Roses Parade, at numerous Japanese Festivals at Disneyland, and at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

Madame Kansuma was awarded in 1985 the Fifth Class Order of the Precious Crown from the government of Japan in recognition of her contributions toward encouraging the appreciation of Japanese culture in the U.S.

In 1987, she received the National Heritage Fellowship Award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The award was presented in recognition of her lifetime achievements, artistic excellence and contributions "to our nation's traditional arts heritage."

She was the recipient of the Japanese American National Museum's Cultural Ambassador Award in 2005.

-Text adapted from the Rafu Shimpō

TOFU FESTIVAL T-SHIRT

This treasure added by Julie Itahara

After the L.A. Riots, Little Tokyo was a ghost town on the weekends. LTSC began the Tofu Festival to bring people to the neighborhood. By the 12th year thousands of people attended the event. The event showed how LTSC is willing to take risks to help the neighborhood, and how people love Little Tokyo.



Community spirit is maintained through community events like the Tofu/Sake Fest, group runs, and secular festivals.

SAMURAI 5K

This treasure added by Amy Honjiyo

The idea that only runners would be on the streets of Little Tokyo sounded liberating! And to run to the Music Center and back was a real bonus! For a long time, my Samurai 5K t-shirt was my favorite t-shirt. A sleeveless t-shirt with a samurai on the back!



MOCHITSUKI POSTER



This treasure added by Chris Aihara

This poster is one in a series promoting the annual community mochitsuki. Spearheaded by Sansei + Nisei, the intention was to build a community, continue traditions and create an event that was Japanese American. Designed by Qris Yamashita.

The year's cycle is brought around again with an annual Mochitsuki (mochi making).

SCOUT APRON



This treasure added by Sophie Wang

This is an apron from the boyscout troop at Nishi and it's just a reminder that all the food memories and thoughts about food in Little Tokyo is not just restaurants. There's also a lot of food memories related to things in the community outside of what you see on 1st or 2nd Street. They would wear these aprons when they would come together to make manju together.

SAVE LITTLE TOKYO!

Stop the erasure of our historic community!

First Street North is at risk. Located behind Japanese American National Museum, Far Bar, Fugetsu-Do, and more, First Street North is one of the last 3 remaining pieces of land that can be controlled by the community—or sold off to the highest bidders if the city doesn't hear our voice.

- **Sign the petition:** bit.ly/savelittletokyo
- **Write a letter or tag** @JoseHuizar and @EricGarcetti
- **Educate yourself** at sustainablelittletokyo.org/fsn
- **Make a friend do the same and spread the word!**



Sustainable Little Tokyo is a community-driven initiative working to ensure a healthy, equitable, and culturally rich Little Tokyo for generations to come. Led by Little Tokyo Community Council (LTCC), Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), and Japanese Cultural & Community Center (JACCC), Sustainable Little Tokyo began in 2013 as a multi-day community vision effort and has evolved into a holistic, neighborhood-wide campaign to promote the environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability of Little Tokyo.

sustainablelittletokyo.org

+LAB

is LTSC's effort to strategically incorporate collaborative and experimental creative strategies into key community development efforts in Little Tokyo. +LAB works to advance equity, sustainability, community empowerment, and cultural vibrancy within a community of color.

Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)

is a social service and community development organization committed to improving the lives of individuals and families through culturally sensitive social service care, strengthening neighborhoods through housing and community development, and promoting the rich heritage of our ethnic communities.

ltsc.org