

It all Started with Basketball . . .

by Elder Adney Komatsu

I feel very humble to be here with you today. Well, as you have seen in the photo Bro. James showed, I was a member of the Oahu District Council that was established in 1944. All the men in that picture have passed on except me. Both sisters in the picture are still alive, I believe (Carol Oi, and Grace Okimoto-Suzuki).

Oahu District Council (1944)



OAHU DISTRICT COUNCIL FOR THE CENTRAL PACIFIC MISSION – 1944

Front: Alan Ebesu , Wm. Harauchi , K. Koroki , Kichitaro Ikegami , Bro. Takeuchi , Chester Ishimoto
Back: Yoshio A. Komatsu , Grace Okimoto (secretary) , Castle H. Murphy (president, Central Pacific Mission) , Carol KiOko Oi , Floyd Scott (missionary).

Russell Horiuchi was also called to serve as a member of this District Council on Oahu, but he was on the Mainland when this picture was taken. He could not inform us as to his location due to War precautions.

(BYU-Hawaii Archives)

I joined the church when I was 17 years old in 1935., and the way that happened was that I was invited by the missionaries to play basketball for the church, and I said, well, for the basketball I'll go out, but not for church, but before you knew it, I was going to Sacrament meeting, and Sunday school. They told me, you had to attend church in order to play. It was a great beginning in my life, being a member of the church, and one thing led to another and I found myself called to become an assistant to the Twelve as a general authority, and I thought my goodness, a Hawaiian boy in the halls of the general offices of the church, I had an office there in the main office on South Temple. It was a

great experience, and I think if I can go on and become a general authority, then anyone in Hawaii can! As I have listened to the presentations today, I realize again that the church has greatly influenced my life. I met my wife, we got married in the temple, we had four children—2 boys and 2 girls.

I remember President Castle Murphy was the mission president and he called me in one day and said “I want you to be a missionary.” And I said, Thank you very much and I’ll go home and talk to my mother.” When I got home my mother handed me a letter, and I opened the letter and it came straight from Franklin Delano Roosevelt saying “Greetings and Salutations, you are now a member of the armed services. So the next day I wrote a letter to President Murphy and I said I appreciate the call as a missionary but I have to take care of this first. Well I went into the serve and had good experiences. I went to Japan and I got assigned to the Army Intelligence Corps. I wasn’t 007 but I had my own number! It was fascinating work. I was able to go into the Diet building where they kept all their records. Because of my assignment I had access to all the records and I was able to see what was going on.

It was a great learning experience being in the AIC in Japan. Later, I went back as mission president but my Japanese was really poor. It was Hawaiian Japanese with pidgin English and when they asked me to say a few words when I first got there, all I could say was “moemoe” and “kaukau” And I said, “Wa takushi-wa kaukau-ga totemo suki-desu.” (I love to eat) but I knew more Hawaiian words than Japanese, and the people down there were wondering what kind of Japanese is this?! I told them I came from a different prefecture, the Hawaiian prefecture.

Anyway, my experience as mission president was a great one. At the time we had 158 missionaries and we had one mission in Japan from Hokkaido to Okinawa. And by the time I left we had divided the mission into 2 and the next year they divided the 2 into four. One funny thing about the missions in Japan is that most of the mission presidents in the early days were called right out of Hawaii. Seemed like every time they needed someone, I’d get a call—you see I was regional rep at the time—and they’d ask, do you have anybody over there who could be mission president, and I’d look over those who were in leadership positions here in Hawaii.

The other experience in Japan that I always appreciated was that I was able to go back to Hiroshima and see where the atom bomb fell, and there was nothing except for a few buildings. I took pictures of it. I was also able to visit my relatives in Japan. My fathers’ folks and my mother’s folks and I got to meet all my aunties, uncles and cousins. Later, I was called to be temple president in Japan and in that experience was there for 3 years and working with the temple recorder I was able to submit all of my 4 generations and more. It was a great blessing to not only be able to find my own ancestors’ background, but be able to work with the recorder to make sure that the work was done for all the names that I had accumulated. When I think about it, all the callings and responsibilities I’ve had during my association with the church have helped me to understand more about our duty and work here in this life.