



February 2019

Musical Notes

GLADYS FUJIUCHI: TEMPLE VOLUNTEER

By Francis Okano

Some people devote themselves to temple music only. Others volunteer for many temple responsibilities. Mrs. Gladys Fujiuchi of Kauai is clearly the latter. Gladys has not only been the latest choir director, since the 1980s, at Lihue Hongwanji Mission (LHM), she has also been temple music coordinator, organist, Lihue Hongwanji Women's Association (LHWA) president, and LHM Kyodan Board member – to name some of the many hats she has worn. Since she was one of the original members of the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee, formed in 1979, it was a sad day when she announced her retirement from Committee as of the end of 2018. But it was a

happy day when she agreed to share her “story”.

Gladys Akiko Nii Fujiuchi was born the first child of her Nisei parents Tsutomu and Hideko Nii (nee Omoto) of Lihue, Kauai. Her father, who had worked for the telephone company and USED (United States Engineering Department) during World War II, was an electrical contractor, while her mother, the first in her family to finish high school and go on to business school in Honolulu, helped manage the business. Gladys grew up with brothers Donald and Michael who were two and ten years her junior, respectively. As adults, Gladys became a school teacher, Donald a mechanical engineer



Gladys Fujiuchi

who settled his family in Illinois, and Michael a West Point graduate, Viet Nam veteran, and lawyer who returned with family to Lihue.

Gladys' early fond memories of Lihue Hongwanji centered on Rev. and Mrs. Shodo Umehara, who succeeded and Mrs. Hiseki Miyasaki in 1948. According to the Hawaii Hongwanji Centennial publication, *A Grateful Past*,

A Promising Future (1989), Rev. Miyasaki served almost his entire 46-year missionary career at Lihue (while overseeing other Kauai temples and founding Koloa Hongwanji), to build Lihue Hongwanji, by the time of his death in 1948, into “one of the state's most progressive organizations”. Facing post-war challenges, Rev. Umehara pushed forth with building expansion, temple incorporation, and propagation, while Mrs. Toku Umehara, a respected educator in her own right and a Nisei fluent in English, helped lead the Fujinkai, youth activities, and a choir. It was this choir that Gladys joined as a high school freshman. Singing in a mixed choir, Gladys recalls

(continued on the next page)

Gladys Fujiuchi

the occasional pain of memorializing young men, some from its ranks, who perished in the Korean War.

Wanting to learn to play the piano, Gladys began piano lessons at age 12 with Mr. Matsuda in Nawiliwili. Undaunted by the lack of a keyboard in the Nii household, Gladys practiced at a neighbor's home whenever possible. When Gladys turned 14, her parents bought her an old piano, and she continued with lessons through high school.

Gladys enrolled at the University of Hawaii in 1953 to pursue a degree in elementary education and a fifth-year certificate. Studying in the College of Education on the GI Bill at the time was a handsome Korean War veteran, Guy Fujiuchi, who hailed from Kealia, Kauai. They dated. And fortune smiled when both received their first school placements in 1958 on the Big Island – Gladys at Honokaa Elementary School and Guy at Honokaa High School. Since both schools shared one campus and both faculties shared the teachers' cottages, Gladys and Guy became – instantly and conveniently -- neighbors. Gladys and Guy tied the knot the following year, 1959, at Lihue Hongwanji when both found positions on Kauai – she at Eleele Elementary and he at Kauai High.

Between 1960 and 1968

the Fujiuchis produced three sons in Evan, Lorin, and Mark – and three Eagle Scouts about a decade and a half later, as Guy and Gladys became devoted Pack 83 and Troop 83 parents in Lihue Hongwanji's bustling scouting program. Their efforts were recognized when Gladys was honored as Den Mother of the Year in 1979 and Guy received the District Award of Merit in 1984. Gladys and Guy stepped up to temple leadership about the time Rev. and Mrs.

Ryosho Kon-do served Lihue Hongwanji (1965-1975). The Fujiuchis apparently never looked back. With unbounded energy, Gladys sang and accompanied the



Gladys and Guy

choir, played the organ on Sundays until other volunteers stepped in, and later served on the Board of Directors as well as held various offices in the Lihue Hongwanji Women's Association. Guy was President of Lihue Hongwanji for two terms while serving as Dean of Students at Kauai Community College (KCC).

In 1978 Gladys was among a half dozen Hawaii delegates – including Edith Ushio,

Sumiko Yanagisako, Laura Nakasone, Francis Okano -- to attend a BCA Music Seminar at San Jose Betsuin. So it was only natural that in 1979 Bishop Yoshiaki Fujitani appointed Gladys the first Kauai delegate – and charter member -- of the new Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee, chaired by Rev. Yasuaki Hayashi. Gladys busied herself with the Music Committee's early agenda -- a statewide music seminar, gatha translations for original melody,

a Hongwanji Centennial gatha book, a newsletter. Whenever the Committee produced new music, Gladys found herself teaching the songs to the Lihue Choir and eventually to the congregation during services. Over the years, she has been

compiling all the latest music -- the Translation Subcommittee's English renditions plus new compositions by local composers -- into a folder for Lihue Hongwanji use.

Gladys spent four years at Eleele Elementary and the next 31 years teaching at Wilcox Elementary School in Lihue, from which she retired in 1994, simultaneously with Guy from KCC. Husband and wife did a little traveling before Guy

(continued on page 3)

Gladys Fujiuchi

became ill in 1996 and passed away in February of 1998, the same year as Gladys' father (in August). Seven years later, in 2005, Gladys' mother, Hideko, and adored brother, Michael, died within five months of each other. When Gladys' brother Donald, who staunchly professed his Buddhist faith while supporting his wife's Methodist church, passed away in 2009, Gladys offered a reading of Rennyō Shōnin's *Epistle on White Ashes* at his funeral in Illinois. This gesture was warmly welcomed by both Donald's family and the Midwestern Methodist congregation who likely heard Jōdo Shinshū scripture for the first time.

Today, Gladys finds herself involved with community almost as much as with temple and family. While she claims to be "cutting back," her network includes the "Tuesday Night Gang" (a group of friends who play music for fun and public service, Gladys on ukulele); an annual jaunt to Honolulu with a group of ex-tennis-playing friends for their Rainbow Weekend of UH football and volleyball; her weekly card games; Enhanced Fitness, an exercise program for seniors; the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Advisory Council; the Kauai Retired Teachers Associ-

ation; and the Kauai Association for Family and Community Education (KAFCE), a former University of Hawaii extension program that she has served in a variety of capacities for the past 53 years. She has also involved Lihue Hongwanji in community affairs by serving as team captain of LHM Dharma Dragons, among the top fundraisers for the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life.



Evan (left) and Mark (right) traveled with mom to Arches National Park in Utah.

Gladys has traveled widely, having sight-seen the Asian countries of Japan, Korea, China, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, India, and Bhutan. She has, in addition, been to Mexico, New Zealand, Australia and a number of northern European countries. Signs are future travel may be confined to the continental United States -- with stopovers, perhaps, in Las Vegas.

What fills Gladys with pride are her two grandchildren -- Brad, a 2018 graduate of the

University of Portland who, like *his* father, is an Eagle Scout; and Alyssa, a junior at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon. Both individuals have their sights set on the medical field. Gladys' mission now is to just have fun, stay healthy, and, as always, be useful to her temple and community, for she realizes that by helping others she helps herself as well.



Gladys,

*Thank you very much
for your many years
of dedicated service to
the music committee
and for your tireless
efforts in continuing
to promote music in
our temples!*

*In Gassho,
Music Committee
Members*



Kauai District

Brandi Yamamoto, Kauai's New Music Committee Member



Brandi Yamamoto is 24 years old and a member of Kapaa Hongwanji Buddhist Temple. Brandi is very close with the Kapaa Hongwanji Sangha and can often be found singing during various activities and events at the temple and social hall.

Brandi's love for music was discovered by her grandfather, Takeshi Yamamoto, when she was just two years old. At age five, she started voice lessons with Harriet Yamasaki which continued throughout her elementary years. She was also an active member of the choirs at Kapaa Middle School and Kapaa High School. All the while, she also grew up and developed a passion for the gathas that she learned whenever attending church services. When Brandi moved to Oahu to pursue a higher education at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, she shared her love of singing at Peace Day Celebrations and other events at Hawaii Betsuin. For a short while, she also joined the Hawaii Betsuin Choir. Brandi graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work degree in May of 2017 followed by a Master of Social Work degree in May of 2018. Since graduating with her MSW, Brandi has returned to Kauai and is working as a Social Worker for Child Welfare Services. Even in her new position, she still carries her passion for music and the gathas.

Brandi is very excited to take on her new role as Music Committee representative for Kauai. She is looking forward to working with the music committee and would like to express her gratitude to outgoing committee member, Gladys Fujiuchi, for this opportunity and for her guidance and years of service to the Hongwanji community.

WELCOME, BRANDI!

Oahu District

By Gail Taira



Wahiawa Hongwanji: Wahiawa Hongwanji Ukulele group is composed of eight wonderful musicians, and is led by Judy Kakazu. They meet twice a month and play Buddhist and Pop songs.

Waianae Hongwanji: Nola Nahulu continues to play the organ for the monthly services at Waianae Hongwanji.

Mililani Hongwanji: Mililani Hongwanji Ukulele group meets once a month at their monthly "Jam Session" on the fourth Friday evening. Ukulele and guitar players and singers who enjoy playing and singing are welcomed to attend and join this energetic and fun group. On occasion, the group also performs for temple services. Also, the Mililani Hongwanji Choir members had an amazing time as they participated in ChoralFest 2018! We were truly touched by the songs and their messages. We were very grateful as well for the opportunity to perform with outstanding singers, and to be coached by such an exceptional teacher, Nola Nahulu, along with the beautiful accompaniment by Francis Okano! It was an experience like no other! The Choir also performed ***Amida Within My Heart*** and ***Live and Light the World*** for the Hoonko Service on January 13th.

MUSIC COMMITTEE

Francis Okano, Chairman

Gladys Fujiuchi, Kauai—Outgoing

Osamu Kawabata, Honolulu

Rev. Shinji Kawagoe, Hawaii

Ethel Miyashiro, Hawaii

Laurie Rubin, Oahu

Gail Taira, Oahu

Jennifer Taira, Oahu

Joan Tamori, Maui

Brandi Yamamoto, Kauai—Incoming

"Musical Notes" is published biannually by the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawaii,
Office of Buddhist Education
Music Committee.

Francis Okano—Chairman

Joan Tamori—Edit, Layout & Design

Yoshiko Umitani—Distribution

Honolulu District

By Wendie Yumori

Honolulu District was well-represented at Choralfest 2018, held at Hawaii Betsuin on September 29 - 30, 2018, with many enthusiastic participants from Hawaii Betsuin, Jikoen, Kailua, and Moiliili Hongwanji temples. Hongwanji Living Treasure, Nola Nahulu, led focused practices that prepared the Festival Choir of over 100 singers to present a most touching and inspiring Choralfest service. The five Choralfest gathas originated in Japan, very moving pieces that had been sung at choral gatherings at Honzan in Kyoto. The English renditions of *Upon Clouds*, *Amida Within My Heart*, *Green Grass*, *To All We Owe*, and *Live and Light the World*, were the result of much dedicated effort by the Translation Subcommittee of the Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee. So moved was the one mainland Choralfest participant by the gatha, *Live and Light the World*, she asked to share it with BCA temples in the Pacific Northwest! Warmest mahalo to Francis Okano, Hawaii Kyodan Music Committee Chair, for overseeing Choralfest in its entirety. As amply demonstrated in YouTube videos of Choralfest 2018, Francis provided superb



Nola Nahulu and Francis Okano with Honolulu District Choralfest participants (missing a few)

piano accompaniment throughout.



Honolulu District Dharma School families singing Bruno Mars' *Count on Me!*

and Higashi Hongwanji Dharma Hawaiians also led the audience in singing *It's a Small World* and *Hawai'i Aloha* – what an enjoyable close to the Bodhi Day program!

Hawaii Betsuin Choir

Eshin-ni/Kakushin-ni Day, April 29, 2018, at Hawaii Betsuin was lovely and very musical! Many Honolulu United BWA members attended the wonderful service and the delightful Mini MusicFest that followed. During the Mini MusicFest, the compositions of three Hawaii Betsuin women were featured. The HI Betsuin Dharma School Ohana and Choir combined effectively under the direction of Laura Nakasone as they sang *The Life You Lead*, composed by Dharma School teacher, Debbie Kubota. The Choir then sang a cheerful round entitled *The Gifts in My Life*, by Choir member, Wendie Yumori, and concluded with a very affecting gatha, *Nembutsu Moments*, by Choir Director, Mari Murakami. Mari's piece was newly composed in response to the Centennial Music Invitational, the intent of which was to commemorate, through music, the 100th Anniversary of Hawaii Betsuin's beautiful temple structure.

(continued on page 7)



Dharma School Ohana and Choir sing
The Life You Lead

The Choir then sang a cheerful round entitled *The Gifts in My Life*, by Choir member, Wendie Yumori, and concluded with a very affecting gatha, *Nembutsu Moments*, by Choir Director, Mari Murakami. Mari's piece was newly composed in response to the Centennial Music Invitational, the intent of which was to commemorate, through music, the 100th Anniversary of Hawaii Betsuin's beautiful temple structure.

On October 13, following the children's Chigo Parade, the Hawaii Betsuin Choir performed the preludes for Hawaii Betsuin's Centennial service. The Choir sang gathas, *Maneki no Mite* and *Ondokusan I*, both composed by Hawaii Betsuin minister, Rev. Yasuo Sawa, for the dedication of Honpa Hongwanji Hawaii Betsuin's new temple building in 1918. During the service, the congregation sang the respective English renditions of those gathas, *The Beckoning Hand* and *Gratefulness I*. The Centennial Luncheon was joyful with Rimban Toyokazu Hagio popping out of the Centennial birthday cake! The entertainment program featured engaging performances of the Choir reprising *Nembutsu Moments* and Pacific Buddhist Academy students, Naho Umitani and Alexandrianna Harman, singing expressive solos. Everyone smiled to see the Dharma School Taiko Group members don photo masks of the five Hawaii Betsuin ministers and each minister was invited to come up and dance to the taiko beat with his/her taiko "twin"!



Rimban Toyokazu Hagio dancing to the taiko beat with his taiko "twin"



Choir singing *To Live* and *Ikiru*

The Hawaii Betsuin Choir was happy to sing "at home" this year at the 57th Nu'uau Valley Interfaith Thanksgiving Service on November 20 as the event was hosted by Hawaii Betsuin. The theme was "Giving Thanks in Community" and the Choir sang a gatha of gratitude, *Ikiru*, first in its English rendition, *To Live*, and then in the original Japanese. The Choir was also honored to sing with the Interfaith Choir which included participants of many faith traditions. They performed a spirited piece entitled *For Everyone Born...a Place at the Table*. Afterwards, everyone gathered in the social hall for a bountiful buffet and joyous fellowship. We did, indeed, give thanks in community.