

## **The Loma Linda Japanese SDA Church History** **by James Itonaga**

In September 1967, Dr. Kunihiro came here as prof. of LL University. His vision initiated Sabbath School lesson study with three believers, Mrs. Kimura, Mrs. Nishikawa and Mr. Komai in the beginning of October of the same year. On 30th of December 1969, Japanese students of La Sierra and Loma Linda Univ. and their 15 children in addition to Mr. & Mrs. Mochizuki and Itonaga came together for potluck lunch and had a social time, giving thanks to God for the blessing of that year.

The members were Mr. & Mrs. Minoru Hirota, Mr. & Mrs. Masao Uruma, Mr. & Mrs. Toshio Kawai, Mr. & Mrs. Yahei Koseki, Mr. & Mrs. Katsuaki Nobuhara, Mr. & Mrs. Kazuhiko Hongo, Mr. & Mrs. Lie Inae, Mr. & Mrs. Miyajima, Mitsuru Yamamoto, Shigehiro Kinjo, Taiko Takaya, Yoshifumi Takahashi, Koichi Kashiwa, Isao Ueda, Tetsuo Oshiro, Katsuhiko Noguchi, Kunio Miyake. At that time there were more than 30 members of the students and their families, so Sabbath School was practiced under their leadership.

In 1973, Mr. Yuzuru Sugiura came to study at La Sierra Univ. and he preached sermon twice a month. Worship attendance was more than 50. Next, Pastor Kiyoshi Fujita took the leadership for church while he was taking the course of public health at Loma Linda Univ.

In 1975, Pastor Takeshi Ueda came to study the course of chaplain at L. L. Medical Center. He took a spiritual leadership for young students. He started interesting church activities such as outdoor worship service and rice pounding festival. On the festival at the end of the year, they made a furnace outdoors to steam sticky rice and set a fire which caused big smoke, then fire fighters came rushing to us. We presented the permission to them and they went back in peace. Pastor Ueda went back to Japan, leaving three interested souls. Pastor Mitsuhiko Hayashi, as successor to him, came from Japan to take the course of Chaplain at L. L. Medical Center and he directed Japanese Group. He began the Bible study with them. They were ready for baptism. One of them called Pastor Ueda and said he wanted to go to Japan to be baptized by him. Pastor Ueda told him it did not matter who gave baptism to him if he had truly a desire to confess his own faith. So all three of them were baptized by Pastor Hayashi. (Joe Newsom, Mrs. Rice, Mrs. Ryu)?

In September 1961 (1981?), Mr. Ken-ichi Machida was the first student who was elected as church co-ordinator. He was succeeded by Yoshikazu Nemoto, Hideyuki Soga, Shiko Miyagi, Ryuichiro Tsuji, Yoshihiko Matsumoto, Hidetaka Oshiro, Akira Hokama.

It is our gratitude to see them engaged in denominational work in Japan after they got a degree as specialist.

On June 16, 1991, Pastor Masumi Shimada was sent from Japan as pastor of LL Japanese Group. On July 26 three souls were baptized. On the Sabbath, 14 of November 1992, we had a missionary day and invited those who had been in Japan as a missionary. In the Sabbath School, four people - Dr, Richard Nelson, Laurence Nobuhara, Norma Hiliard and Elder Louis Venden - made a witness. For worship service Elder Paul Eldridge made a sermon about the radio evangelism he had tried first in Japan. His sermon was very impressive to all. That afternoon we had a big potluck lunch for more than 200 attendance.

Since May 1, 1993, we rented Christ Community Church for Sabbath worship service. On June 5, 1993, two souls were baptized. On the Sabbath January 8, 1994, Elder G. Penick, SECC Secretary, came to give us formal status as LL Japanese Company. On February 12, 1994 four souls were baptized.

## **Beginnings of Japanese Church in Loma Linda**

Loma Linda is place of special meaning and importance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have all thrilled to the familiar story of God's special providence in making the property available for the incredible price of \$38,900. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and faith in God the pioneers went forward and within a year a sanitarium was opened in 1905 with a nurses training school.

Today Loma Linda is a city of well over 20,000 in population and the original sanitarium on the hill has expanded to the Loma Linda Medical Center and become the largest hospital in inland Southern California. It is a youthful community with the median age being around 30. The medical university with all its related schools and services is the center of activity. The institution has never lost sight of the original goal of the example of Jesus in teaching and healing and strives ever toward making man whole.

To fill the spiritual needs of the community there are many Adventist churches of various ethnic backgrounds to serve the growing influx of different nationalities. You will find Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Indonesian, Cambodian, Arabic, Spanish and Vietnam language groups.

It was after the end of World War II when the Japanese families returned from internment camps to California that the earliest Japanese settled in Southern California. Among the earliest families that came to Loma Linda was Susumu and Sumi Emori with their four children: Helen, Grace, Walter and David. They were led to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the interest of Dr. David Foster in Pomona.

The Emori's were followed by George and Amelia Maeda in 1960, Richard and Ruth Hamamura in 1963, James and Nancy Morita in 1964 and Gary and Dorothy Morikone in 1965.

In' 1966, two families came to Loma Linda: Paul and Helen Yahiku moved here with Helen's mother, M Kimura, Kay and Kiyoko Ota with Kiyoko's mother, T. Nishikawa.

Dr. Kunihira had just finished hi doctorate from Stanford University and was asked to teach in the Graduate School, School of Health, and School of Nursing. He was the former pastor of the Mt. View Japanese Church and with his leadership, a Japanese language Sabbath School was started in Loma Linda in October of 1967.

The small group met in an upstairs corner room of Griggs Hall. It was a room with only one long table around which the group gathered to study the lesson. For the few Japanese speaking members it was a real blessing.

The members of the first Loma Linda Sabbath School group were:

James and Shizu Itonaga from Riverside

M. Kimura (Helen Yahiku's mother)

T. Kumai (elderly blind member of Sunday keeping Christian church who had just moved to Loma Linda with his daughter, Toshi Kumai who had started to work at Norton Air Force Base.

Shirou Kunihira

Satsuki Kunihira ?

Tsune Nishikawa (Kiyoko Ota's mother)

Minoru Hirota entered his graduate studies at Loma Linda in 1968 and remembers attending the Japanese Sabbath School and then joining the worship service at the University Church. From his recollections, some of the student Japan that participated in the Sabbath School were Mr. and Mrs. Kanzo Yamauchi, and Mrs. Kawai, Mr. Isao Uyeda, and Mr. Yoshibumi Takahashi who are all presently on the faculty of San Iku

Gakuin College in Japan.

Masao Uruma came to La Sierra as a business student in May of 1968 and was connected with the early Japanese group. Sabbath get togethers were held often at Fairmont Park in Riverside as a half way place between Loma Linda and La Sierra campuses.

## **Beginnings of the Japanese Company by Kiyoko Ota and Shige Arakaki**

(Loma Linda Japanese Company Newsletter, Sep. 20, 1997)

Loma Linda is a place of special meaning and importance to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. We have all been thrilled to hear the familiar story of God's special providence in making the Loma Linda property available for the incredible price of \$38,000. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit and faith in God the pioneers went forward and within a year a sanitarium was opened in 1905 with a nurses' training school.

Today Loma Linda is a city of well over 20,000 in population and the original sanitarium on the hill has expanded to the Loma Linda Medical Center and become the largest hospital in inland Southern California. It is a youthful community with a median age being around 30. The medical university with all its related schools and services is the center of activity. The institution has never lost sight of the original goal of the example of Jesus in teaching and healing and strives ever toward making man whole.

To fill the spiritual needs of the community there are many Adventist churches of various ethnic backgrounds to the serve the growing influx of different nationalities. You will find Korean, Filipino, Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Cambodian, Arabic, Spanish and Vietnam language groups.

It was after the end of World War II when the Japanese families returned from internment camps to California that the earliest Japanese settled in Southern California. Among the earliest families that came to Loma Linda were Susumu and Sumi Emori with their four children: Helen, Grace, Walter, and David. they were led to the Seventh-day Adventist Church through the interest of Dr. David Foster in Pomona.

### **The 60's - Decade of the infant Japanese group**

It was in 1960 that George and Amelia Maeda moved to Loma Linda, followed by Richard and Ruth Hamamura in 1963, James and Nancy Morita in 1964, and Gary and Dorothy Morikone in 1965. In 1966, two more families came to Loma Linda, Paul and Helen Yahiku moved here with Helen's mother, Mitsuki Kimura, and Kay and Kiyoko Ota with Kiyoko's mother, T. Nishikawa.

In 1967 Dr. Shirou Kunihara and his family also moved to Loma Linda. He had just finished his doctorate from Stanford University and was asked to teach in the Graduate School of Public Health and School of Nursing. He was a former pastor of the Mountain View Japanese Church and with his leadership, a Japanese language Sabbath School was started in Loma Linda in October of 1967.

The members of the first Loma Linda Sabbath School group were: James and Shizu Itonaga from Riverside, Mitsuki Kimura (Helen Yahiku's mother), T. Kumai ( An elderly blind member of a Sunday-keeping church who had just moved to Loma Linda with his Daughter, Toshi Kumai who had started to work at Norton Air Force Base), Shirou Kunihara, Tsune Nishikawa (Kiyoko Ota's mother)

### **The 70's - Decade of part-time ministerial help**

From 1973 Japanese students from La Sierra met with the Japanese group at Loma Linda

bimonthly for worship. The first pastor was Yuzuru Sugiura, a graduate student at La Sierra University. Those who followed him were Kiyoshi Fujita, School of Public Health graduate student, Takeshi Ueda chaplain trainee at Loma Linda Medical Center, and Mitsuhiko Hayashi, School of Public Health graduate student. All of these part-time ministers received a stipend from the Loma Linda Japanese group

### **The 80's - Decade of lay involvement**

In September, 1981 Mr. Kenichi Machida, a doctoral student at U. C. Riverside was the first layman to be appointed church coordinator of the Japanese group. Following Dr. Machida, all church coordinators were students of Loma Linda University and served in the following order: Yoshikazu Nemoto, Hideyuki Soga, Shuko Miyagi, Ryuichiro Tsuji, Yoshihiko (Norris) Matsumoto, Hidetake Oshiro, and Akira (Mory) Hokama. After successfully complete their school work, all the coordinators have been faithfully serving their Master.

### **The 90's - Decade of progress**

On June 16, 1991, Pastor Masumi Shimada was sent from the West Japan Conference to Loma Linda to become the first full-time Japanese pastor. It was during his ministry that the Christ Community Church was rented for Sabbath services and on January 8, 1994 the Japanese group was organized as the Loma Linda Japanese Company.

Pastor Issei Horiuchi followed Elder Shimada. Upon fulfilling his three-year term, Pastor Horiuchi accepted a pastorate in Osaka, Japan. He was succeeded by Shigenori Morimoto, the present Japanese division pastor.

In October of 1995, the Loma Linda Japanese group started an English division and eight months later on June, 1996 Pastor Dean Horinouchi became the senior pastor of the Loma Linda Japanese Company, ministering primarily to the English-speaking members. Three months after Pastor Horinouchi assumed leadership of the Japanese group, many young adults (40) from the Chinese church joined the Japanese Company.

The 90's will truly be a decade of change, challenge and progress for the Loma Linda Japanese Company as it seeks to meet the needs of a wide spectrum of the Loma Linda community.