

The Story of a Japanese American Pitzer Student

Imagine going back in time to the summer of 1959. You are walking down a residential neighborhood in the city of Pacoima, located in the San Fernando Valley. The echoing of screaming and laughing children catches your attention. You decide to investigate where this commotion is coming from. Every step you take, sweat drips off your nose and falls to the ground. Each sweat droplet shimmer like little diamonds, and instantly evaporates when it meets the ground. Distantly you hear the humming of the radio, but you only catch the words of "...104 Degrees..." Turning the corner, you see cheerful children about two blocks away, playing with the hose in the middle of the street. The smell of wet asphalt floats around your nostrils. The adults bask lazily under the minimal precious shade the quilted canopy provides. "Hmmm...Maybe I can ask for ice cold lemonade," you think to yourself. The heat is so unbearable. As you proceed to ask for a glass of lemonade, something catches your attention. There is a house unlike any other houses in the neighborhood. The front yard is well tended, with evenly cut bonsai trees and a koi pond. Just a step on the lawn creates the aura of standing in a Japanese tea garden. However, something has been distracting your gaze at this magnificent scene. These palm trees. There are three of them. Standing strongly rooted in the earth, in a perfect line from shortest to tallest grouped together on the side of the house. On the other side, you also observe that there are two cherry trees positioned perfectly as if they are watching each move the palm trees make. You wonder if there is any significance to this. But the heat is getting to you, and you continue your quest to find that ice-cold lemonade.

What do you think those trees symbolize? Do you stop and think what history they hold? How may they be important to the residents of the house? Each object holds a history. Usually we are too tied up with jobs, supporting a family, studying for a test, etc. As we go on our busy lives, we usually do not stop to think of how a simple object such as a tree can hold so much meaning and importance.

Time, Such a Fickle Thing

Time is a unique and strange thing. It never stops. Every second, minute, hour, we constantly live life around time. The many demands life wants, and only twenty-four hours in a day, we all wonder, "Where has the time gone?" After completing one errand, then there is always something else that has to be completed. "Oh I have to finish an essay due tomorrow, then pay my bills, am I missing anything? Darn, forgot I have to pick up my prescription at the doctor's office. And I have to....." As these thoughts are constantly fired off, there seems to be a never-ending list of life's demands. Before you know it, ten years pass and still you continue this daily routine of completing these demands in life. Twenty years, thirty years.... Eighty years, then... BOOM, like that you are gone of the face of earth. Is it bad to say that life is just a never-ending to-do list?

I Call Him Ji-Chan

The correct way to say grandpa in Japanese is "O-Jii-San." But when I was young, I could not say the long three-syllable word, so I shortened it to Ji-Chan. Ever since then, the name just stuck.

Within A Blink

Every aspect in life works around time, like what time to wake up, when to eat, sleep, etc. I guess there was not enough time in a day left for my Ji-Chan. He suffered from Parkinson's disease for a good number of years. Sadly, I was only old enough to remember him at his last and final stages of the disease before he died. It was the month of February and I was in 5th grade. My Dad was spending a lot of time over Baa-Chan's house. The last I saw of him was a couple days before he died. He was so skinny that I could of wrap my tiny 8 year-old hands comfortably around his leg. However at the time I was so naïve. First of all, I never experienced a death of someone I knew. I also didn't think that it was possible that he could die. I thought that he just had a fever. This concept of a terminal illness was something I could not comprehend. "In a couple of days, he'll wake up from his long rested naps and be back to normal. It's just the flu...right?"

It was around 10:00 at night. I was watching TV on the bed in my Mom and Dad's room. The phone rang, and my Mom told me after she got off that Ji-Chan had died. I was first shocked. I didn't know what to do. It was as if the neurons in my brain stopped firing information for a couple of seconds. The world felt like it froze. I was not very emotional, but this information took me by surprise, as if someone slapped me in the face. Even after his death, I kept forgetting that he was really gone. Every time I went to my Baa-Chan's house on holiday dinners, I expected to see him in the same mint green fluffy chair watching TV. That was his signature spot every time I came to Baa-cha and Ji-Chan's house. The chair is still there, but I

never could sit in it. I always feel like I am taking Ji-Chan's spot. That's his seat and no one can have it.

He Looked Like a Robot

The final visit did not seem like it really was the last. He was in a hospital bed set up at my Baa-Chan's house. All these tubes were plugged in his body like a computer. Every breath he took sounded like knives were being shanked in his lungs. He reminded me of a robot, with the IVs in him and the beeping sounds of the machines. The way he looked frightened me though. This was the first time that death seemed possible to me. My idea of death was based on how my Ji-Chan died. I assumed everyone died a sad and miserable death with tubes plugged in and constant beeping of the heart monitor. Beep.. Beep, Gahhhh....huhhhhhhhh.... repeat. When I volunteered at the hospital, I would hate going to the ICU. I would hear the constant beeping of the machines, see the patients hooked up, and struggling to breathe every breath. It reminded me of how my Ji-Chan was and it makes me shiver every time. I do not want to live when I cannot support myself. I don't want machines helping me continue living a painful life. I rather live 50 long years where I can run and be independent rather than live 30 years with a machine guiding me through life.

It's Funny How the Little Things in Life Can Make Lasting Impressions

Before Ji-Chan became very sick where he had to be hooked up on machines, I thought that my Baa-chan had to help Ji-Chan eat, bathe, and walk because that's what happens in old age. Then I realized at the time he was rather young. He was only around the mid 70s. My grandma and grandpa on my mom's side are almost ninety and they still play golf, do yoga, cook, clean, drive, and travel.

Boy he loved to eat! Now that I remember! He must have passed that trait on to me! When I was little, I liked to study the actions of people. I seem to remember little unimportant details. When I would go on vacations with my family, I would not remember the historical building I saw, but I would relate every experience to the food I ate. My mom would tell me, "How could you remember so clearly what we ate two weeks ago, but you can't remember your times tables!" I remember my dad and sister and I always went to Nijiya market to pick up some bento for lunch before going to my Baa-Chan's house. We always bought *sanma* (mackerel) for Ji-Chan because it was soft to eat and he loved it. My dad and I also love *ika* (squid). While my Baa-Chan was warming up the food, I see my Ji-Chan glance at my Baa-Chan and quickly started shoveling the squid into his mouth. He wasn't supposed to eat the squid because he had difficulty swallowing. I remember every time I ate with him, he would make loud grunts and coughs because he choked on his food. My sister, who was the tattletale says, "Ji-Chan. Don't do that." and Baa-Chan looked up to see a squid tentacle hanging out of his mouth. I thought it was funny because he was a grown man trying to sneak food he wasn't suppose to. It was like me who used to sneak chocolate from the candy bowl.

When I studied my Ji-Chan, he seemed annoyed by the fact that he needed assistance just to walk. What I saw when observing him one day as they were wheeling him outside surprised me. I saw him pick a purple flower and he was examining the beauty of it. I then realized that my Ji-Chan was one of the few people who stopped and admired little things like flowers. He took the time to notice the simple beauty of nature. He took the time out of the busy hectic life. From that and I reflect now, I feel that I am very much like him.

We were eating at Daisuke, a restaurant in Gardena. This restaurant is a hole in the wall place and has the worst possible service ever! But the food there is delicious. My Ji-Chan and Baa-chan used to come to visit and we'd go out to eat Japanese food. There were never any good places to eat back in the Valley. My Ji-Chan loved this one Japanese lamp on the wall. He stood up to look at it, and examined it by touching it. But when he touched it, the lamp broke off and made a noise and everyone looked. He cursed, "baka..." something in Japanese. Then when he placed the lamp back on the wall, it didn't really go back nicely. He was so impatient, I was 5 at time, and recall the lamp hanging crooked on the wall. Every time we went back, that lamp still remains crooked. My Ji-Chan was so pissed at the quality of the lamp, while eating the noodles at the restaurant; the waitress came and asked how his noodles were. He answered, "*Maa-Maa*" meaning something is not too good, but not too bad. Just so, so. My Baa-chan, answered, "Dad, *yamete, soba wa totemo oishkatta desu,*" (Dad stop it, the soba was very good) she told the waitress. Then, my Ji-Chan in return said, "*ie, Oishikunai.*" (No, it is not good) When I was little, I remember everyone laughing but me, because I couldn't

understand Japanese. But now that event was so clear to me, when I finally learned Japanese in 8th grade I started laughing and realized what had happened.

During Easter egg hunts, my aunt and uncle would hide a whole big package of mini chocolate Easter eggs in the living room. My sister and I would look around to find them. Then in a basket, we would have a whole lot of chocolate eggs. My Ji-Chan and I had a kid-like relationship. He knew if he were to steal from Marissa, her tattletaling would get him in trouble. He would sneak our chocolate eggs because he wasn't suppose to eat them. He'd say, Chelsey-Chan and smile and say "SHHHHH" and he'd take one. But he knew I love the green-foiled wrapped eggs; so he would always take the gold or blue color one. While Marissa was not looking, he would smile at me and steal some of her eggs from her basket. To me, he was like another kid, minus the part of running around and playing.

I Deem Him the Best Tsukemono Maker Ever!!!

My Ji-Chan was the best *tsukemono* (pickled vegetables) maker ever! My Baa-Chan has his recipe but it can never be as good as how he made it. He just had that technique and it's the thing where only he can make it. We were supposed to have a sleep over one day at their house in the summer, and he was going to teach us how to make it, but it never happened.

Was that just Someone's Random House I Explained?

Remember that house in the beginning, with the vivid imagery. That was my father's childhood home. He used to tell me stories about the summers in Pacoima. How it was so hot, they would spend time underneath umbrellas/hammocks. Those three trees represented my father's family. The tallest represented the oldest son Gary. The next tallest size symbolized by father, Stan the middle child and the smallest tree was planted to represent the youngest daughter Sharon. The two cherry trees opposite stood for the mother and father who were watching over their children. The two trees were planted to represent the strong bond of their family unity.

In fact, that Japanese garden was tended by my very own Ji-Chan (grandpa). He was a gardener. My dad told me how he worked very hard. He would wake up at 3, to garden other people's yard, and in the summer he would make my dad and his brother help. He even received a newspaper article of honoring the beauty of his garden.

My Little Interchanging Bubble

As a *Yonsei* (fourth generation) Japanese American, I feel that I am losing touch with my cultural roots. Growing up in a diverse community of ethnicities, I never felt or understood what it meant to be the minority. My hometown had a large population of Asian Americans and I regret to admit that I was ashamed of being Asian. Now when I ponder this thought, I realized that the reason why I was so ashamed of being Asian was because I was annoyed on how other Asian American kids my age would act. In high school, there were three subgroups of Asian

Americans were classified as: the FOBS, Asian nerds, and the Asian gangsters and ballers. The FOBS (fresh off the boat) were the Asians in part of the English Learning Program in the school. The Asians nerds are the typical model minority stereotype who are very quiet and keep to themselves mostly in class. Usually they are the ones everyone gets annoyed at for breaking the curve on tests. Finally, the Asian gangsters are the ones who sag their pants a half a foot off their waists, wear big diamond earrings, and strutting around the school looking and talking like they came out of a Snoop Dog rap video. The Asian ballers are similar, but they usually have spiked hair, big baggy basketball shorts that sag low off the waist, and are obsessed with expensive Nike shoes. I could never understand guys spending \$500 on a pair of shoes not to wear, but just own and view at their own pleasure. I was embarrassed that the Asian kids my age were playing these immature and idiotic acts just to fit in with the mainstream. By pulling apart and leaving my Japanese identity behind, I felt that it was the only way to be unique and stand out from the crowd of Asian Americans.

Now, going into college, I was flabbergasted on the drastic change from being in a diverse community of races, to now being the minority at a predominately white school. At Welcome Week, I was asked if I was an exchange student from Japan. This surprised me because I always thought that all the towns were diverse like my hometown. And yet, I was annoyed because at the time I dissociated myself from being Japanese, and wanted to be white.

I wanted to be something more than just pretending to be white just to fit in with the mainstream. In a way, being at Pitzer empowered me to get back in touch

with my Japanese side. Picking up Japanese classes and taking the Japanese American Autobiography class, I realized that ignoring my cultural roots was a huge mistake. Being Japanese, and having living grandparents who witnessed many different sides to the war; three who were interned in camps and one who witnessed the Hiroshima bomb, I will regret forever of being ashamed of who I am.

Reconnecting with my Japanese side, has inspired me to learn more about my Ji-Chan. At holiday dinners, my dad would also tell me about the racism he experienced growing up being Japanese American. He told me how my grandfather was such a hard worker and who was one of the few Japanese who opposed the war. From hearing these great things of my Ji-Chan, I created this mission to learn more about him. Also, I want to find out more about the different experiences, portrayals, and relationships that my father, aunt, and uncle shared with Ji-Chan while growing up as a *Sansei* (third generation) Japanese American.

Recreating the stories told of my family. Writing through the point of view of my uncle, father and auntie's, is a way to better understand myself. By placing myself in their position, by imagining how they thought and their experiences, allows me to tell my story through stories of others. By knowing the cultural roots and family history is a crucial part in constructing an identity. I feel I can better understand my identity through reconstructing the family stories. Based on the stories, I try to imagine and put myself in their position on what they thoughts of life were while growing up. Through my family history and visualization, I can create my own sense of who I am and my cultural roots. It is part of me. Identity is important. As time goes on, and I view the pictures of how young and lively my Ji-

chan and Baa-chan once were, you realize that life is so short. By learning about my family history, my decision to write the life story of my family is to seize not only their past, but also mine, and preserve history. It is a way to place myself in the text and leave a final imprint on the world I live in.

Stanley Toshiaki Kitazawa is the middle child of the Kitazawa family. Born on April 20, 1951, he is married, has two daughters in college, and lives in Torrance, California. He is a pharmacist and works at UCLA Medical Center.

Nice Summer Nights

“Get up!” It would still be dark outside, and I could hear my Dad’s wake up call at five o’clock in the morning. In the summer, my older brother, Gary and I had to help my Dad with his gardening route. My whole shirt was drenched with sweat as I mowed lawn after lawn in the 100-degree heat. We would do about three yards by noon, then return home and I would chug a cold Coke. I would look forward to going fishing afterwards almost everyday. When night hit, I went scuba diving for abalone, clams, and mussels. It must have been around eleven or twelve at night when I came home with the seafood bounty I had harvested. During the summer months the inside of the house was always hotter than the outside. So I usually fell asleep outside on summer nights. In our backyard, I turned a ceramic pot into a fire pit. We’d put the clams and abalone I had caught in the fire pit. In a couple of minutes, the abalone would pop open and we would take it out of the fire, pour some *shoyu* (soy sauce) over it and eat it with the *onigiri* (rice balls) my Mom prepared. There was a giant willow tree in the backyard. The smoke from the fire pit would be absorbed in the tree. No one would know walking by our house that there was a nice fire pit cooking delicious clams at one or two o’clock in the morning. “Ahhh this is the life!” my Dad would say every time as he lay out on a lawn chair and rested his head on his hands.

I loved cool summer nights in Pacoima. Growing up was the best of times and sometimes the worst of times. I was the middle child. I had a super nerdy smart older brother, Gary and a younger rebellious sister, Sharon.

Gotta Watch Them Boys!

Unlike Gary, I was able to spend more time with Sharon. I was always around making sure she was safe and was behaving herself. I know she hated it, but I felt very overprotective of her. Every time a boy asked her out, I would eyeball and intimidate them when they would pick her up.

Gamma Student

Gary and I had our disagreements. He was very studious, Mom and Dad's "pride and joy", as I called him. I actually had a hard time concentrating in school. It was not that I was stupid and did not care, but school never came easy for me. I knew that I could never live up to the standards set by my brother Gary. Though at the time, doctors did not know a lot of the disorder, but I suffered from dyslexia. Gary really knew how to piss me off and win in a fight. He used to call me "Stupid Stan" and "C-student." The name first started when I brought my report card home.

My Dad asked, "How'd you do?"

I answered, "Ohhh, I messed up. I didn't do so good."

"I hope not a C."

“Oh, believe me, if I had a C, I’d be happy!”

Every time after that incident, Dad would say, “I hope not a C.” After a while, I was got bored saying the same thing. So I started making witty jokes every time he asked if I had a C. One day he asked if I had a C in math. I told him, “No, my grade is below *sea-level*.” Sometimes my jokes were so witty, that he could not understand with his limited English. So he took it as the opposite of what I meant to say.

Gary still continued to call me “C-student.” My Mom and Dad finally reprimanded him, and forbid him to call me that anymore. He stopped calling me C-student, but instead picked up another nickname for me. He called me “Gamma student.” For the longest time, I did not understand what “Gamma student” meant. About 15 years later when I was in pharmacy school, and we were learning the positions of certain chemical groups on the carbon chain that I realized Gamma also represented “C.” God damn that Gary!

I Can’t Do What I Can’t Do

It was hard to follow in the footsteps of my brother. He was the perfect son. The son who was Valedictorian of his high school class, received a full ride to UCLA, and was planning to become a dentist. Because I knew I could never be like him, I felt I let my parents down. The harder my Dad pushed for me to succeed academically, the more I decided not to go down that route. For this reason I decided to pursue sports. I knew that thriving in sports was something I could do, and Gary could not.

Pump and GO!

Most of the time, I was pretty easy going and happy go lucky. I did a lot of dangerous and immoral things that could of gotten me killed or sent me to jail for that matter. In gymnastics, I loved to do dangerous stunts where the only options were nailing it perfectly or getting seriously injured. Every time I did something dangerous, I got a great thrill from it. In college, I would ride my motorcycle like a skateboard, going about 80-90 miles on the freeway. The pumping adrenaline rush was something that I really enjoyed, and I would go to no end to obtain that feeling.

Time Changes

It seemed that there was more diversity when Gary went to school. However, four years later, when I entered school, most of my class was predominately Black and Latino. My brother seemed to identify more with the whites. On the other hand, I felt more comfortable with the other minority groups. The Blacks and Latinos never called me a "Jap," it was always the white jocks. It is weird. Even though I considered myself very liberal back in my youth, I feel I have become more conservative with age. Most of my Latino and black friends did not attend college. We have drifted apart and I do not keep in touch with any of my minority friends from high school. By going to a predominately white college, I feel I have assimilated with the whites.

He Kicks You, Kick em Back...But Harder

Unlike Gary who was such a pacifist, and my Dad constantly telling me “never to fight,” I could not control myself to follow that. One time, in middle school, a white boy was laughingly singing a derogatory song of the Japanese. While he was singing the song, he made his eyes slanted looking with his fingers. I was so enraged by his actions. I got a football and chucked it straight at his head. He wasn't expecting getting hit in the face with a football because he was closing his eyes to try and mimic the stereotypical Asian eyes. Throwing a football at an arrogant middle school kid's face is not half as bad of the other fights I got in. I got in so many fights that in fact, my Dad gave up the hope of me being passive like Gary. I think that he was actually proud that I would stand up for what I thought was right. One day, I came home with a black eye and dried blood on my nose. I knew I was going to get in trouble. But instead surprisingly, he tells me, “Stanley, if you going to get in fights, you should fight the right way.” He proceeded to enroll me in Judo through the Buddhist Church. I was surprised at the fact that he was actually encouraging me to defend myself. On the days I got in a fight at school, my Dad would ask me, “Okay, so what did the white guy do to you?” When I showed him what moves the guy did, Dad actually gave me pointers on defense. I was first surprised Dad knew how to fight and actually felt we were bonding in some weird way. Showing me to fight was like my Dad's way of showing affection. As I got older I felt that I got a lot closer to my Dad.

Oops! Don't Mess With Me!

I had a lot of regrets for my foolish impulsive behavior in my youth. In church, I did some really bad things. One time I was sitting in the back of church next to David Noda. I can remember David was being a smart as*, and was challenging me. While everyone was supposed to be singing a church hymn, I slugged him and he went crashing to the wall and broke a picture frame. The next thing I knew, everyone stopped singing and all were staring at me with David hunched over holding his head. My Mom and Mrs. Noda had to pitch in to pay for the damages. Funny thing is that David is a very active member in that same church today.

That Kitazawa Boy

Years later when I graduated from pharmacy school and became a pharmacist; Mrs. Noda was suffering from Alzheimer's. She only seemed to remember David as a high school student. David was well over thirty years old, and she would still tell him things like, "study hard, don't do drugs, be good in school, oh and stay away from that Kitazawa Boy!" I felt bad that the only thing she remembered as she is suffering from Alzheimer's disease is to "stay away from that Kitazawa Boy!" David told me that she always tells him this every time he leaves to go to work. I guess pushing him in the wall made a lasting impact on Mrs. Noda.

That was only a minor thing I did, compared to the other things I never want to repeat. One time, word got out on the really bad things I did in church. All the

Fujinkai (elderly ladies active in the church) were gossiping on how bad that “Kitazawa Boy” was. I was my *O-baa-chan’s* (grandmother) favorite grandson. She was a founding member of the church. She actually stopped going to the women meetings because she was annoyed at how everyone would say nasty things about me. I feel bad now, because most of the things they were saying were true. My *O-baa-chan* was really loyal to me, and I feel guilty to this day for being reason why she quit the church.

The Daruma

Because I was not scholastically inclined, my Dad gave me a *daruma*. A *daruma* doll is a little red round doll that is weighted on the bottom. Every time you tip it over, it bounces back up due to the weight. On the bottom, my Dad wrote in Japanese, “you fall down 1,000 times and you get up 1,001 times”. I remember that I took the doll to college with me. I would be 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning and I would be studying for a test that same morning. I would get these panic attacks before a test. I’d start worrying and keep saying to myself that I was going to fail the exam. I would take a study break by smoking a cigarette, walking down the neighborhood in Stockton looking at this *daruma* doll. In a way, looking at this *daruma* gave me strength and support. I never told my Dad about my late night walks holding the *daruma*. To this day, I still have it, but sadly the paper he wrote on the bottom has deteriorated.

Change in Pride

When I was little, I used to play Army with my friends. I remember saying, "I want to be an American soldier!" But my friends who were white and Mexican would tell me, "No, you can't because you're a Jap." I wondered what they meant by me being a Jap? I thought I was American. As time went on, I saw war movies with the Japanese as the enemy. Then, I realized that the enemy looked like me. I did not want to look like the enemy. I remember that in school, I would never take a *bento bako* (Japanese lunch box) for lunch. I knew that people would make fun of me. The only time I ever brought a *bento bako* was in Japanese school. Everyone brought a *bento bako*. Though time went on and I got older, I became very proud of my ethnicity. In college I use to flaunt being Japanese. I would sew the Japanese war flags patches on my pants and jacket. I even had a Japanese car, a Datsun. On the back of my car I had a Japanese flag sticker. My Dad was embarrassed by my display of Japanese patches and flag.

The Underdog

It was my nature growing up to root for the underdog. When I saw a kid being beat up or made fun of, I would always take their side in things. I remember I saw white kids making fun of a *F.O.B.* (fresh off the boat) Japanese boy who had a *bento bako* for lunch. I went in and told them to leave him alone. There are many times where sticking up for the underdog forced me to fight. I guess the years in Judo helped for a good cause.

Strength

I had different relationships with my Mom and Dad. I remember when I was in pharmacy school, this chemotherapy course was very tough. It was three in morning and I started panicking. I was twenty six years old, a senior in pharmacy school, and I subconsciously automatically thought “oh Mom, please help me?” I couldn't believe that I was twenty-six years old and I was still calling on my Mom to help me. It was then I realized that I always looked to Mom for strength and support.

School First

When I graduated high school, there was a time when I didn't want to go to college. I honestly didn't think that it was important. I really wanted to go to fight in the Vietnam War. I thought that becoming a soldier was something to be proud of. I thought it was equivalent to going to represent the U.S. in the Olympics. When Dad found out I was planning to join the Army, he freaked out. When he was raised in Japan, the education system was very militaristic and racist. Dad believed the idea of killing people was very barbaric and it did not solve anything. That was the reason why he came returned to the United States, because he knew he wasn't military material. So he had my Uncle Ats convince me go to a community college for a year. If I didn't like it, then he said I could join the Army. But after a year at a community college, I actually liked it and decided to stay in school.

No Matter What Happens, I'll Care

I was a biology and physical education teacher. I liked teaching and I wanted to be a teacher for the rest of my life. But my friend Ron Yumori convinced me to apply to pharmacy school. So I applied to the University of the Pacific, and got accepted with a small scholarship. However I knew because it was a private school and I might not be able to afford it.

My Dad came up to me and asked, "So you going to go to UOP?"

"I don't know. It's very expensive. I think I'll just remain as a Biology and PE teacher," I said.

"No, how much is it? I'll get you through it."

"Dad, you know that there is an extra zero in the tuition? We don't have that kind of money."

"No, I'll help you get through school."

From that point, I knew that Dad really cared for me. I never thought that he would back me up. Here was a man when I was little, would be laughing with a big smile on his face with his friends. Then when he leaves the living room and sees me, he automatically changes into a stern strict face. This was also the man who used to always tell me, "You're the black sheep of the family. Don't *hajikaku* (bring shame). Look how Gary brought our name up, you're going to bring it down to the gutter." I never thought he liked me. With his help, I was able to get through school, and become the successful pharmacist I am now. I realized that even if he never told me that he loved me, deep down I know he really did. It was just the Japanese way of not showing your love and affection to your kids.

Returning Favors

My two daughters decided to go to Pitzer College. I thought to myself, Pitzer is really expensive, but since my Dad did what he could to put me through college, I want to do the same to them. My father is still in me. His morals, his spirit, and his love stay with me in every aspect of my life.

Gary Noriyaki Kitazawa is the oldest son of the Kitazawa family, born on September 17th, 1947. He is married and has a successful periodontal practice in Los Angeles.

Those Good Old Days!

Growing up in Pacoima was the good old days. We were not rich and my Dad worked furiously hard to support our family. He woke up daily at four in the morning to carry out his job as a gardener. In the summer time when the temperature reached 100 degrees, he would wake up even earlier to care for other's yards to try and avoid the heat. He would return home around dinnertime hot, sweaty, and grumpy with a bright tomato sunburn. We always had food on the table. As a *Sansei* (third generation) Japanese American, growing up in Pacoima, I feel I lived a pretty good life. I was the oldest of three siblings, with a younger brother, Stanley, and younger sister, Sharon. Because I was eleven years older than Sharon, I never fully got to know her until I was out of college. She was still in elementary school when I left for UCLA.

The Vampire in Me

On the other hand, since I was only four years older than Stanley we grew up together as brothers do. We shared a small room, and of course being boys, we had differences that resulted in disagreements and even fistfights. When I look back at my relationship with Stan in my youth, I can only say in hindsight that I was very callous. I regret a lot of things I said to the poor guy. At this point in time I feel

embarrassed and guilty when recalling those childhood years. Stan did not provoke me to be so nasty. Truthfully, my mean streak was out of jealousy. I used to think that Mom and Dad liked Stan better. I felt that there was this sibling rivalry of who was the better son. The days Stan would come home and bring Mom flowers, she would exclaim in her soft quiet voice, "Oh Stanley, they're beautiful!" That tone of voice she used, aggravated me. I wanted to be the one to give her flowers and have her exclaim "Oh Gary!" I wanted to have the feeling that my parents liked me more than Stan.

The Enabler

Dad always had a short temper. He overreacted a lot, and we would on many occasions not see eye to eye. He would yell and curse when Stan and I would fight or do something stupid. Stanley was always good at reasoning and calming Dad down. Every time Dad was scolding us, little three-year-old Sharon would run to the closet and grab Dad's belt. Right when Dad was cooling down, Sharon would show up handing him the belt. "Well, can't let a good belt go to waste," reasoned Dad, and he'd give us each a hard whipping. Thus, her nickname as the "Enabler" was born. Because she was the youngest, Sharon always had a special place in the family.

Stanley was the jock and jokester of the family. Dad whipped him a lot more than me. Stan was very athletic and was good at parrying the belt. Every time Dad would try and beat him with the belt, he would ward it off with his foot. Short-tempered Dad got so frustrated that at one point, Dad grabbed Stan's foot and got him.

Lives His Own Life

Stanley never liked to take anything seriously. That guy was always cracking jokes and forever fooling around. He would pack his day to the fullest, burning candles at both ends. He had an unbelievably large amount of energy. Since we shared a room, I would be studying and he would come home late from school. Then the next thing I know it would be midnight and there he was going out again with his fishing gear. "God this man never sleeps," I would think all the time. Stan also had a lot of courage. He was mischievous and naughty yet some how always able to get away with things without consequences. He never took insults from anyone. When a white person would make fun of him, he did quite the opposite of how I would handle the situation. Instead of being passive and nonviolent, he'd literally beat the living sh*t out of the guy. Stan always stood for justice and fair treatment. The things he would do to fight back was something I secretly wished to, but never had the strength or courage to carry out.

Study, Study, STUDY

I was very different from Stan. He had more of "kid at heart personality" and I was really into school, reading, and learning. Even though I liked school, I did not consider myself a nerd. As the oldest, I felt that it was my place in the family to succeed and do well in school. Dad seemed to be more lenient with me. He was very old fashioned, and told me how I could honor the family name through my success in school. Education was utmost important to Dad.

REVENGE!!!!!! No Violence Though

During the time that I was attending grade, junior and high school, almost everyone was a minority. There was about 45% white. The three major minorities consisted of Black, Latino, and Asian. Even though I was not the only minority in school, there was racism against Japanese Americans. I chose to ignore the taunts of the white children my age. My first encounter with racism was when I was about seven or eight. After the school's annual award ceremony, my Dad and Mom were proud that Stan and I both received certificates. I received one for academic achievement, while Stan received one for perfect attendance. My Dad decided to celebrate by going out to a diner for hamburgers. Such outings were rare and it was considered a great treat to go out to eat. When we went in and sat down in the diner, no one came to take our order. After we waited for twenty minutes, a big buff white man came out and told us "We don't serve '*Japs*' here. Get out!" My Dad was a pacifist. Unlike Stan, who would of given him a punch in the face if he were sixteen instead of four at the time, Dad simply agreed to the man's wishes and left quietly. At that point, I adopted Dad's morals in playing the more passive role. He would constantly tell me, "Just ignore it all. If the whites give you a hard time, take revenge by beating them through grades in school." My way to cope with the taunts was to beat them mentally. My success in school was a motivation for me to take revenge on the others who ridiculed me because of my race.

Can I Take Back What I Did?

I did not feel that impacted by the racism because I chose to repress it. I feel that the racism was caused through the media portrayal of the Japanese. In movies, the Japanese were portrayed as slimy, sneaky, and treacherous. That was no role model for anyone children to look up to. That was the reason why when I was growing up, I am ashamed to say that I was embarrassed of being Japanese. When teachers would say my Japanese middle name when calling roll, it made me feel like an alien. I thought people were snickering behind my back. I really feel bad that I was embarrassed of my father. His accent, the ragged gardening truck, his big straw hat, I could not bear to have people at school to know that this was my father. On the days my Dad did not have to garden he would be kind enough to drive us to school. Embarrassed, I would always jump out of the truck at a stop sign that was two blocks away from school. One day I forgot my lunch pail when I jumped out of the car. Luckily Stanley and Sharon were in the car too, so they could of given it to me at school. But my Dad got very angry this time so he stopped and got out of the truck and yelled "Gary, *baka da ro*," (you are stupid) while waving my lunch pail. Everyone walking to school turned to look at my Dad, and I was so ashamed that I sprinted all the way to school. When I recount this now, I am remorseful at how selfish I was.

Dad was a Mystery?

Dad was hard to get close to; it was not within his nature or cultural custom. He was very traditional Japanese and “*samurai*” like. He was very hardheaded. If we showed any sign of affection or friendship he would take it as an insult. We had to look to him with respect. I believe that the imprint of closeness is made at a certain age. It was difficult for both of us to feel close, and this barrier stood till I reached adulthood. Mom was always there and I looked to her for strength and support.

Do Your Best, DON'T FAIL

His big emphasis throughout my life was education. In Dad’s philosophy, “Do what makes you happy and successful in life.” Failure was not an option to him. I completely understood how we must not fail. Money came very hard for us; Dad worked long hours and even dug in through his retirement money to get us all through school. Stan, Sharon, and I knew that we could not fail because it would not be right. Dad sacrificed everything just to create a better life for his children.

Be the Boss of Your Life

Dad was a very practical man. I had always wanted to become a marine biologist, forest ranger, or animator. He told me, “That sounds good, but can you put food on the table with that?” My Mom advised me to “become a dentist first then you can study marine biology as a hobby.” Mom and Dad were right about how I must find a practical job to make a living. “With your job, you have to be more than average. You should be the best, where you are high up in the structure. There you

can maintain your family. You don't want to always be worried about being laid off. You have to be the own boss of your job.”

A Piece Remains in our Heart

As I grew older, I began to understand my Dad. When I look back, I view certain things I wish I could have told him, but never had the chance to. I never told him how much I loved and appreciated everything he had done for me. I also always wondered if he knew how much I respected and appreciated him. After his death, his friend told me how proud he was of each of his kids. From this revelation, I felt closure. Deep down inside we both knew that it was never verbalized but implied how much we cared and loved each other. There are a lot of things that I wished I could of told Dad. He was always there for us, and he remains a part in each of us.

Sharon Aiko Kitazawa is the youngest daughter in the Kitazawa family. Born October 6th, 1958, she attended UC Berkeley, majored in art history. After college, she went to Art Center in Pasadena and is a freelance illustrator.

My Dear Brothers

I am the youngest of my siblings. Having two older brothers with a pretty big age difference, I sometimes wish we could have been closer in age. It seems like my parents ran out of steam when they had me, and that my two other brothers were able to do more things. My eldest brother, Gary was never around. Since he was eleven years older than me, I never got to know him well until he was out of college. On the other hand, my next brother, Stan was only seven years apart, and he was around the house a lot more than Gary. I felt closer to Stan. He would always do weird things to make me laugh. That man is such a jokester in the family. I would get so embarrassed and annoyed on how he would intimidate my dates. Since he was a gymnast, he was really buffed and strong. When my date would come to pick me up, there was Stan in the living room, wearing a cut off sleeve shirt with his muscles bulging sharpening kitchen knives. Despite his over protectiveness, I really liked how he would always stick up for the underdog. He did not like it when someone was not treated right, and was always willing to stand up for the other person to make a point. But he was never a bully, only if they did something to him.

That Stan!

I remember that I was a friend with Mrs. Noda's daughter, Peggy. Mrs. Noda became very upset that we were friends. Because of her impression of Stan, "That Kitazawa Boy who punched my son," she thought that I would also be a bad influence on Peggy.

One time, Gary and I went to this summer camp to demonstrate this telescope to the kids. The kids were not from the San Fernando Valley and yet they were coming up us saying, "Heyy, you know Stan? What's he like?" Stan had a reputation at the camp from the kids as the guy who never got caught.

Gary the Nerd

I never really knew Gary until I was in high school. He came back from college, and was studying to get into dentistry school. I always thought he was a nerd. Everyday I come home and see him locked away in his room studying. As I was growing up though, I always noticed that Dad favored Gary out of all of us.

Aki?

Because I went to school a decade after Stan and Gary, a lot of things had changed. I remember coming home from school one day and Dad asked what I learned.

I told him, " I learned to say *aki*."

My Dad got mad and yelled, "What do you mean *aki*?"

"When they say my name, I say *aki*." (*here* in Spanish)

After that conversation, the next thing I knew, I was going to another school. The school I was first enrolled had become predominately Hispanic who could not speak English. Because the teachers were giving the all lessons in Spanish, my Dad freaked out and transferred me to a school in a rich white area.

How My Life Was So Different

In my time, the racism died off. No one really looked at each other based on race. When I was going to school, I was not picked on, but everyone just knew the Japanese people because there were only five of us in the whole school from the San Fernando Valley. I would dread certain days, like the bombing of Pearl Harbor Day. Just because I looked the part, people would say ignorant things like "Oh you dropped the bomb on us." It would feel uncomfortable, but World War II was long over when I went to school. The kids would just make assumptions. I remember when I played in the sandbox, the school kids say "Lets plays Japs versus Americans. The Japs are over there and the Americans are here." Even though I was included with the Americans, I don't think the kids looked at me different for being Japanese. The school kids just knew we fought against the Japanese, but never looked at me for being Japanese, and the cause of the war. Being Japanese, and knowing you are different from the whites was something I was just aware of periodically.

How I grew up as a kid is completely different now. There is all this interest in multiculturalism. Even though I preferred eating Japanese food, I brought a sandwich to fit in with the rest of the class. I didn't want to stand out, and I knew if I brought sushi, people would find that weird that you are eating seaweed or raw fish.

I would always get embarrassed at the beginning of the school year, when I would have a new teacher. When they called roll, I knew when they were going to call my name because there was always a pause. "Sharon... Ki...kittazwasss?... I'll just call you Sharon K." They could never pronounce my name and it would annoy me because my last name is pronounced exactly how it's spelled.

Different Relations

My school experience was way different compared to Gary and Stan. I also thought that my relationship with Dad was different as well. For one thing, he never hit me. He saw his uncle beating his aunt, and from that point on, Dad didn't believe in hitting women. The only time I was hit was when he slapped me with his chopsticks at the dinner table. After, he was really upset at doing that and yelled at me saying that I drove him to do that. My Dad and I clashed a lot. I really did not like his old fashioned traditional Japanese ideals. It was a generational clash. Stan and Gary knew not to talk back or speak their opinions to Dad or else they would get whipped. Me, on the other hand, I was more rebellious. I talked back to him a lot and was very outspoken. Sometimes he would say racist things, and I wouldn't like

it. So I would tell him off to show how I didn't appreciate his remarks, which would lead to yelling and arguing with each other.

The Black Sheep

I decided to go to UC Berkeley and majored in art sciences. I also followed the hippie movement and turned into a vegetarian while up there. My Dad was annoyed that I went against his wishes and majored in art rather than science or math. "You are the black sheep of the family. Gary and Stanley never gave me this much trouble before," he would constantly tell me. To Dad, if you did something questionable, it was not a bad reflection on you, but on all your family and all Japanese people.

Culture Difference

I think the reason we clashed so much was this cultural difference. Because Dad's mom died and his grandparents in Japan raised him, his morals were a generation behind. Dad was a man of his time. While growing up with him, he seemed like a Neanderthal believing these ideals. But it wasn't till later that I found out when taking an Asian Studies class that those were the morals and basis that Japan uses to bring up. He was also very open-minded and unusual because he opposed the war, even when he was brought up on a militarist educational system. He had his own opinions, and questioned the morality of authority at times. He believed that war did not solve problems, but created more atrocities.

When you are young like 18 years old, you believe that parents have all the answers because they are adults. And now that I reach the age of fifty, I find that Dad was probably as young and clueless in life as I am now. But it is what we, as humans must rise to the challenge to try and find the meaning in life. Everyone had complaints of their parents, but we must understand that they have been here a generation longer than us. This makes us more sophisticated and the possibilities we want to do may have never entered their mind.

The Hobby of a Japanese American Man.

After recreating stories of my father, aunt, and uncle, I really wanted to create a little excerpt of my Ji-Chan's life. He had a love for books and knowledge. This story is my recreation of Ji-Chan's life, from the stories told by my father.

He loved to read books. Anything he loved to obtain knowledge. In Japan, his favorite genre of writing was Russian Literature, authors like Chekov. People thought he was a communist because he owned Russian literature books. Books were expensive, so in order to buy them, he would even skip meals to save enough money. Never did he buy the paper back. Always, he bought the beautifully engraved hardbound book. On rainy days, he'd sit in his nice comfy green chair and relax with a book or write his own poetry. As a gardener, he would always find books thrown in the trash. It was sacrilege to him when one throws a book away. Always he would save the precious book and bring it home to read. Books were important to him. The saved books from trash destruction now lie in my bookshelf at home. Those books are the imprints he left on Earth.