

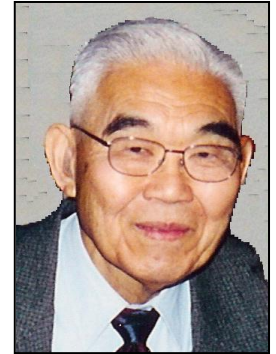
# *Leaders of the Community: Leaders of the Florin JACL*

*by Andy Noguchi & Twila Tomita*

**George Shigeto Furukawa** (December 19, 1920 to April 26, 2010): A steady rock of an individual describes Mr. George Furukawa in his decades of humble community service as President of the Florin JACL (1963-1965) through the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and as temple President and komon religious leader of the Buddhist Church of Florin. George passed away on April 26<sup>th</sup> at the age of 89 suffering from the effects of spinal osteoporosis.

A native of the Lodi area, George and his family were incarcerated in Rohwer, Arkansas during World War II. He later had the great fortune to meet Myrtle Tanaka from Florin and they married in 1949. George had a successful career as an auto mechanic at Swift Dodge and later the California Highway Patrol, retiring in 1986.

George was a member of the selfless Nisei generation of the Florin JACL serving the community for well over 50 years. He welcomed the younger Sansei during the 1980s and 1990s. As Twila Tomita, Florin JACL Historian shares, "George was always supportive of Sansei activism and always made us feel welcome. I consider myself lucky to have been George's friend."



Since George was so familiar with the Florin Buddhist Church facilities, he and his wife Myrtle always helped us when we had events there. They were a mainstay of the the Florin JACL Scholarship fundraiser from the old dance days to the Spaghetti dinner/bingo night, often being among the last helpers to leave at night. Even while battling painful osteoporosis, George still came out to advise and lend a hand at many community events.

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**Kern Kono** (December 30, 1923 to May 18, 2010): "Stepping up to the plate" during the crucial 1980s and 1990s Japanese American redress campaigns, Kern Kono served as the Florin JACL's Redress Treasurer for many years. Kern passed away on May 18<sup>th</sup> at the age of 86.



A native of the Sacramento area, he graduated from Sacramento High School and then Sacramento City College. During World War II, Kern served in the highly-respected Military Intelligence Service (MIS). Kern and his wife Grace were married for 58 years.

After the war, they owned a small grocery store in Florin serving the local community for 11 years. Florin JACL Chapter President Marielle Tsukamoto tells the story of how Kern hired her as a young girl in the 1950s to work in the store. Marielle readily admits she didn't exactly know what to do but greatly appreciated Kern's kindness in hiring her and perhaps wanting her help for Grace who was soon expecting their first child. Kern later worked for and retired from the State of California for 28 years.

In the 1980s, Kern joined the Florin JACL Board as its Redress Treasurer, recruited by the late Mary Tsukamoto. The extensive local grass roots educational, fundraising, and lobbying effort needed a capable person to track the finances. Kern Kono was the one who stepped forward through the passage of the 1988 Civil Liberties Act and later pushes to secure Congressional funding for reparations during the 1990s. .

Kern continued his dedicated community service in the Sacramento Japanese United Methodist Church (SJUMC), including the Garden Angels; Nisei VFW Post #8985; and the Florin JACL. He and wife Grace, friends Tommy and Frances Kushi, and the late Henry and Etsu Yui got together many times to prepare the mailing of the Florin JACL quarterly newsletter.