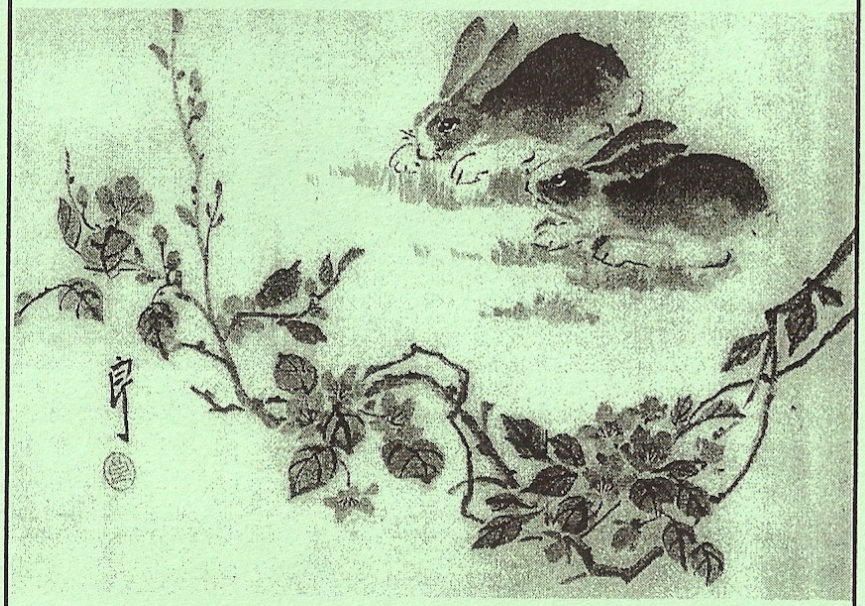
Nisei Stories of *Faith*



"O Lord, how many are your works!
In wisdom you have made them all. The earth is full of your creatures."
~ Psalm 104:24

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known as the "Japanese Billy Sunday" tell why there must be something higher and better than what we see here on earth. Frank returned on the following night and when he heard the altar call, it was as if a fog lifted in his spirit.

"I just got up out of the chair and went forward," Frank said. "Everybody, including my family, was shocked. They said, 'You feeling all right?' 'I'm feeling fine,' I said."

Frank doesn't pray like a scared Boy Scout anymore. He prays more like his mother — consistently and for others, not just himself. A yellow sheet of paper by his bed is covered with over a hundred names of those he prays for regularly. One person asked if Frank would pray for him even though he was a Catholic. Frank said, "I don't care what you are. You need healing, too."

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God is no longer just the God of last resort.

Frank's son, Leigh, can't remember a time when his father didn't keep a prayer list. Those who were children when their names appeared on his list are now in their 50s. Because of his father's example, Leigh has started his own list of people to pray for.

For Frank, God is no longer just the God of last resort. He is someone who is, and has always been, near to him.

When you go through deep waters and great trouble,
I will be with you.

Isaiah 43:2b

A Mirror of My Father

by Cyril Nishimoto

We stood in front of a large bathroom mirror with foamy white beards of Noxzema shaving cream covering the stubble and peach fuzz on our faces. My dad worked his gray metal hand-held shaver up and down his face, and I copied him stroke for stroke with my razor-less one, until our fresh, smooth skin was completely exposed. Holding hot hand towels briefly to our medicated flesh, we wiped ourselves clean, refreshed and ready to face a new day.

My dad not only showed me how to shave, he taught me how to catch a baseball, tie a necktie, and drive a car. He also gave me my first Bible and by his self-sacrificing love for me, my family, and people in need, showed me the truth in it about God our Father and Jesus His Son.

Being a man of few words, when my dad spoke, his words carried a lot of weight. About two years before his death, I asked him, "What words of advice would you want to leave with your children?" He gave me just three words, "Pray to Jesus." My dad was a man of prayer.

Those three powerful words came alive to me the day a blood clot traveled from my dad's heart to his brain and put him into a coma. I was living in New York, too far away from him in Gardena to be of much help. But I prayed to Jesus for him. And I got friends to pray, too.

On the eighth day, my father contracted pneumonia. He could hardly breathe. The doctors thought he might not last the night. They gave us the choice of either keeping him on a respirator or giving him morphine and letting him go. In this darkest of hours, God encouraged me in an unexpected way.

While looking for something in my files, I found an old folder of letters from my dad. The words in one letter jumped out at me: "We must pray for Rev. Haruyama's miraculous healing. If God wills, he will be healed."

Justin Haruyama, my pastor at the time, was dying of liver cancer. If my dad could encourage me to pray for someone dying from an incurable disease, I certainly could pray for my father who was "only" in a coma. He gave me the hope I needed to keep praying to Jesus for him.

And Jesus kept my father alive so that I could see him. I flew home and went alone to the ICU. I found him lying flat, eyes closed, with many tubes attached to his face and body as a respirator kept him breathing. The doctor encouraged me to talk to my Kibei Nisei father in his native language. So I went over to his side, put my hand in his, and said in Japanese, "Dad. It's Cyril. I came from New York."

I could feel the strong grip of his hand as I told him I had been praying for him. I thanked him for the letter which had encouraged me to keep praying for him. I let him know that God was passing on to me the

mission in life He had given him. He was squeezing my hand off and on, so I was almost certain he heard me. I knew that Jesus had brought me to his side for what I did next.

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He gave me just three words, "Pray to Jesus."

I put my other hand on his head and prayed that Jesus would heal any damage to his brain, any pneumonia or disease, and make him conscious. There was no visible change, just his strong grip. But I felt I had done what the Lord sent me to do. I just stood there holding his hand, feeling him intermittently squeeze mine. I said, "*Aishite'ru yo.*" I love you. "*Wakatte'ru, wakatte'ru.*" I understand what you're trying to say.

Before I left, there was one more thing to do. When Jesus healed people, he often gave commands such as "Stretch out your hand" or "Take up your pallet and walk." I thought, "Oh, no. I can't do that with people around." But following the Lord's lead, and being alone, I said in a loud voice, "Wake up!" Well, he didn't open his eyes or sit up or do anything. He just kept squeezing my hand.

But that afternoon, for the first time in eleven days, my dad responded to his doctor. He squeezed the doctor's hand on command and fluttered his eyelids when asked to open his eyes. The Lord had brought him out of the coma. The doctor called it a "small miracle."

For a few days, my father's vital signs were strong and his white blood cell count improved. He nodded or shook his head in answer to questions we asked. I sang his favorite hymns to him, including "Jesus Loves Me," which moved him so that even his tightly shut eyes produced a tear. The Lord gave my family and me time to tell Dad things we could only tell him privately. And then after three days, the Lord took him Home.

Although I was deeply saddened, I knew the Lord had answered the prayer I had been praying all along—that He would bring my dad out of his coma so that my family and I could say good-bye to him. And He did. And we did say good-bye—for now.

As he did with his shaver, without saying a word, my dad taught me something valuable—how the Lord's love and power can enter the world when we pray. So, just as the Son of God did only what he learned from his Father, I'm doing what I've learned from my dad—I'm praying to Jesus, for long periods daily. And I—and the world around me—will never be the same.

"With quiet strength, you held me
With enduring wisdom, you counseled me
With wordless eloquence, you preached to me
Life's Truth by example."
Father and Son mirrored by father and son.

Legacy for a Preacher's Son
IN MEMORY OF HARUMI NISHIMOTO

Contributors

CARYN TAKA FUGAMI grew up in Venice, California, and graduated from UCLA with degrees in sociology and urban planning. After spending two decades in the San Francisco Bay Area, she and her husband, Clyde, relocated to Long Beach, where Caryn serves as part-time administrator for her church, Catalyst Christian Community. She has a background in journalism, and loves the chai latte at Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf.

NAOMI HIRAHARA is a freelance writer and journalist who served for several years as editor of The Rafu Shimpo. She is the author of numerous nonfiction and fiction books. Most recently she won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for her book, *Snakeskin Shamisen,* the third in her trilogy of Mas Arai mysteries. She serves as consultant and mentor to the Nisei Stories of Faith project.

TERESA TAKAKI MATSUSHIMA was born in Chicago, raised in Gardena, and graduated from UCLA and UCSF with degrees in nursing. A Torrance resident, she works as a school nurse and attends Gardena Valley Baptist Church, where she serves on the Mexico medical missions team. Married thirty years to the most patient guy on the planet, she praises God that her two kids are morphing into responsible young adults with soft hearts for the Lord. She loves to knit, play ukulele, thrift store shop, and talk story over a cup of hot green tea.

COLEEN NAKAMURA was born and raised in San Francisco, and transplanted to Southern California in 1990. Her first "real" writing project dates back to her early teens, when she wrote, edited, and published a Japanese American community senior center newsletter using an IBM Selectric II typewriter, lots of White-Out, and a gooey Gestetner machine. A dormant artist slowly coming alive through the prodding encouragement of many friends and prophetic words, she works at the USC Davis School of Gerontology as a Family Consultant for the Caregiver Resource Center, helping caregivers of family members with brain-impairing conditions.

CYRIL NISHIMOTO is a "Gardena boy," born-and-raised, but not typical. A graduate of Yale and Columbia Law School, he pursued his dream of helping people of Japanese ancestry in need by co-founding and directing Japanese American Social Services, Inc in New York. Following God's call, he returned to the L.A. area to serve as Executive Director of Iwa, a Christian organization that develops new insights and materials to help people of Japanese and Asian ancestry come to know Christ as never before. Attending Gardena Valley Baptist Church, he enjoys running, jazz fusion, post-impressionist art, the Dodgers and Lakers, and his nine nieces and nephews.

SUSAN TANITA NOMURA has more relatives than I.Q., (we're talking extended family, not immediate). She blames both clans, the Tanitas and the Endows, for her foodie attitudes, her addiction to sports, and for her awareness of God's love. Susan has three sons, two in college and one in law school, who return so often to Pasadena with dirty laundry and hungry stomachs that she doesn't consider herself an empty-nester. Susan also has a caring husband who believes in her more than she does herself.

RYO TERASAKI started her art career as a hobby and found painting so fascinating she returned to college to pursue it. She earned a teaching credential in Fine Arts for Adult School and Community College and has taught oil and Oriental brush painting at Downey and Bellflower Adult Schools, Rio Hondo College, and Coastline College. Her greatest joy is passing on her love and knowledge of painting, which she did for thirty-five years, including painting alongside her nine grandchildren.

DORIS TOMA, a native of Honolulu, migrated to Los Angeles where she took root, married her husband, Paul, and became the mother of two and then grandmother of four. A long-time member of New Life Christian Church, she "dabbles" with a paintbrush and water colors, a hobby she took up after she retired, and continues to seek interests to add to her dabble list.