

Life in LAMORINDA

Lafayette Author Pursues Peace One Heart at a Time

By Jennifer Wake



Lafayette resident and Hiroshima survivor Takashi Tanemori stands with guide dog Yuki outside of Serika Japanese Restaurant in Orinda's Theater Square

Photo Jennifer Wake

On Aug. 6, 1945, Lafayette resident Takashi Thomas Tanemori was only 8 years old when he left his home and began to play hide and seek with his friends outside of his elementary school in Hiroshima, Japan. Minutes before school began, sirens sounded. The blast left Tanemori buried in the school's burning rubble.

After a gruesome exodus with his father, eldest sister and younger brother to Kotachi Village, 63 miles outside of Hi-

roshima, the remaining family members found themselves ostracized from relatives. Living in a one-room shack, Tanemori's two other sisters, who had been living in a nearby village, soon joined them.

His father, who was against the violence of the war, died from radiation exposure nearly one month later, after making several return trips to Hiroshima to search for Tanemori's mother and baby sister. They were never found. The day after his father died, Tanemori's eldest sister lost her battle as well.

Following a ten-year struggle to survive, Tanemori — orphaned and hell-bent on revenge — immigrated to the United States in 1955, landing in a migrant labor camp outside of Fresno. Not long after, he found himself fighting for his life in a mental institution, subjected to frequent spinal taps and other painful pro-

cedures as doctors researched the effects of his radiation exposure. Through the tenderness of one of the nurses, Mary Furr, he was released and found peace.

Throughout his life, Tanemori has strived to live by his father's guiding principles: "Be strong and never be defeated by your own weaknesses; Be true to yourself; Do not be satisfied with yesterday's accomplishments; and Rise to new height each day."

He went on to earn two master's degrees in theology and spent many years working as a minister in the Baptist church, and later served as an official emissary of California to the Pacific Rim promoting commerce with Japan, sponsored by California's State Export Program.

Now age 69, Tanemori has published his first book, "Hiroshima: Bridge to Forgiveness," (Multicultural Books, 2007), which offers readers a glimpse into Japanese culture, the complexities of post-war life in a small Japanese village, and the hurdles Japanese immigrants faced when coming to the United States.

"The purpose of the book was to fulfill a promise I made to my father the night before he died," Tanemori said. "He told me to live my life for the benefit of others; my book shows how I saw hope in the path of Hiroshima."



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The book not only tells a tale of survival of this young Japanese boy, but weaves a shining thread throughout its pages — of strength, discovery, isolation, and forgiveness. Not forgiveness for the bombing of Hiroshima, but forgiveness of a more intimate nature: The forgiveness between brother and sister, between heart and soul.

"The human soul is stronger than any nuclear bomb," Tanemori writes in his book. "The dramatic and emotionally charged nature of the story is inspirational testimony. It is my hope that this historical presentation may bring urgently required understanding that may lead us, as citizens of the world, to become more honest with ourselves and with our own history."

Tanemori will be at the Lafayette Book Store on Nov. 18 at 3 p.m. for a book signing. "Hiroshima: Bridge to Forgiveness" can also be purchased online at Amazon.com.



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A Dog's Life

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"A handful of dog owners used to meet at this spot 30 years ago," he reminisces. "There have been a lot of changes to the park since then." Moraga Parks and Rec Director Jay Ingram says, "Rancho Laguna is a de facto dog park; it's not really sanctioned by the Town but we haven't had any problems." Leash laws are enforced at Rancho Laguna from 9:00am to one hour before dusk or 7:00pm during Daylight Savings Time.

Rancho Laguna Park Only
PETS MUST BE ON A LEASH AND UNDER CONTROL AFTER 9 A.M. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BEING OFF LEASH 1 HOUR BEFORE DUSK DURING STANDARD TIME AND AFTER 7 P.M. DURING DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME. DOGS NOT ALLOWED IN TOT LOT AREAS.
Dog leash policy posted at Rancho Laguna

As parents of school-age children are often known as "Andrew's Mom," or "Isabel's Dad," so too do dog owners identify each other by their dogs. "If I run into someone at the store without their dog, I don't always recognize them," laughs David.

And just as not all people get along, neither do all dogs. But for the most part, there hasn't been much serious fighting. "We're self-selecting," David explains with a smile, "people with aggressive dogs are weeded out." You're probably more at risk from a rambunctious canine who may smell a doggie treat hidden in your pocket: "You learn to bend your knees," he laughs, "in case you get hit." Among park-goers there is a general consensus that most of the dogs and people at Rancho

Laguna are well-behaved and there are very few problems.

Ingram says the Public Works department has not received many complaints. "People are really good about following the rules, obeying the leash laws and picking up after their pets. We've had a few complaints about dogs being off-leash during the day and helping themselves to picnic fare that doesn't belong to them...the guys that mow the lawn are not wild about tennis balls being left in the grass; they have to pick them up or they go flying when mowed over!"

Lafayette resident Susie, whose striking black Giant Schnauzer Callie-Elizabeth sports a snazzy red collar and plays around with a frisbee, agrees that everyone gets along very well. If someone forgets to bring a plastic bag, "we're good at sharing," she says. There are no bag dispensers at the park because Public Works doesn't have sufficient staff to maintain them. "We tried it at the Commons," said Ingram, "we asked people to donate bags, but most of the time the PVC pipe 'dispenser' was empty, and often the bags were just blowing around the park."

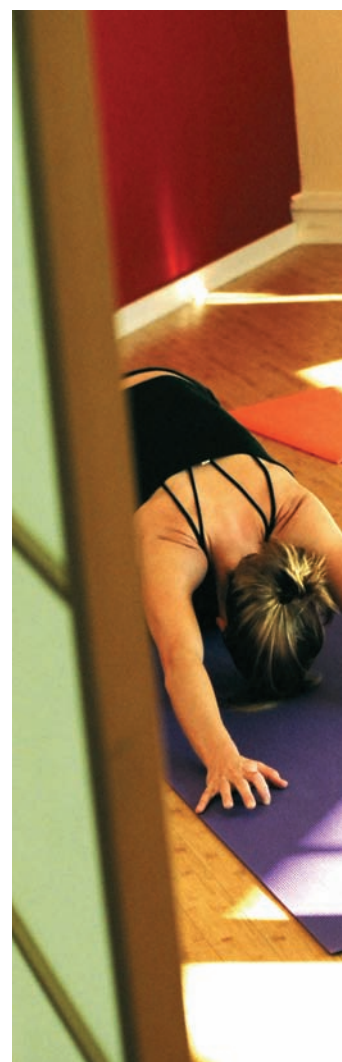
Susie only learned about the dog park early last summer. "I was walking at the Reservoir, and somebody mentioned it." She doesn't mind the fifteen minute drive to Moraga, but says, "It would be nice if we had a dog park in Lafayette. I hear rumors every now and then, but

nothing ever happens."

There is, in fact, a group of dog owners in Lafayette who are trying to establish a dog park. There are some serious obstacles in their path, both financial and political, but they have been seeking support through public outreach — you may have seen their booth at the Lafayette Art

and Wine Festival. For more information, check out their website at www.lafayettedog.org. This site also offers some valuable tips on dog park etiquette.

Rancho Laguna Park is located at the end of Camino Pablo in Moraga (watch for the new speed bumps on your way).



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