

# It Was A Day To Remember For Turlock Japanese Elder Citizen

The Japanese community of Cortez turned out this weekend to honor the man who helped lease the land and start the schools which made the valley settlement possible.

Upon Nisaburo Aibara the Japanese government conferred the highest medal a civilian can earn, the ruby Medal of the Order of the Sacred Treasure. At 98, Aibara stood erect and smiling as the medal was pinned to his chest by Motomura Zenji of the Japanese consulate in San Francisco.

## Church Ceremony

Some 140 persons witnessed the ceremony in the Buddhist Church of Cortez and afterwards attended the champagne reception and buffet dinner at the new Japanese American Citizens League hall. Many came from Denver, Montana or Los Angeles to be present for the occasion.

Aibara, who now lives at 326 S. Center St. in Turlock, joined in singing a Japanese song during the festivities and accepted a lei of red carnations flown from Hawaii. It was placed over his shoulders by Karleen Kanishiro, daughter of the former Misa Yokoi of Turlock, who now lives in Hawaii.

Many of those attending had been pupils of Aibara during the 19 years when he taught a school for Japanese youth, starting in 1922. But few of them recalled vividly the hardships and heartaches which led the Japanese government to single Aibara out for recognition.

## Outstanding Service

Officially, the Order of the Sacred Treasure was given for outstanding service to his people. Behind it, in an attitude which seems long ago and far away in 1968, is the story of a

people fighting for the right to make their home on American soil.

The oldest member of the national JACL was born in Yamana-nashi Ken, Japan, on Jan. 1, 1870. By the Japanese way of counting age, he will be 100 next January. Trained at the School of Veterinary Medicine in Tokyo, he practiced in his own country before coming to San Francisco in 1896.

In 1906, he came to Modesto, and in 1913 moved to Turlock. As the number of Japanese families increased, Aibara organized the Stanislaus County Japanese Association. He became its president and acted as liaison between the Caucasians and Japanese.

## Propose Roadblocks

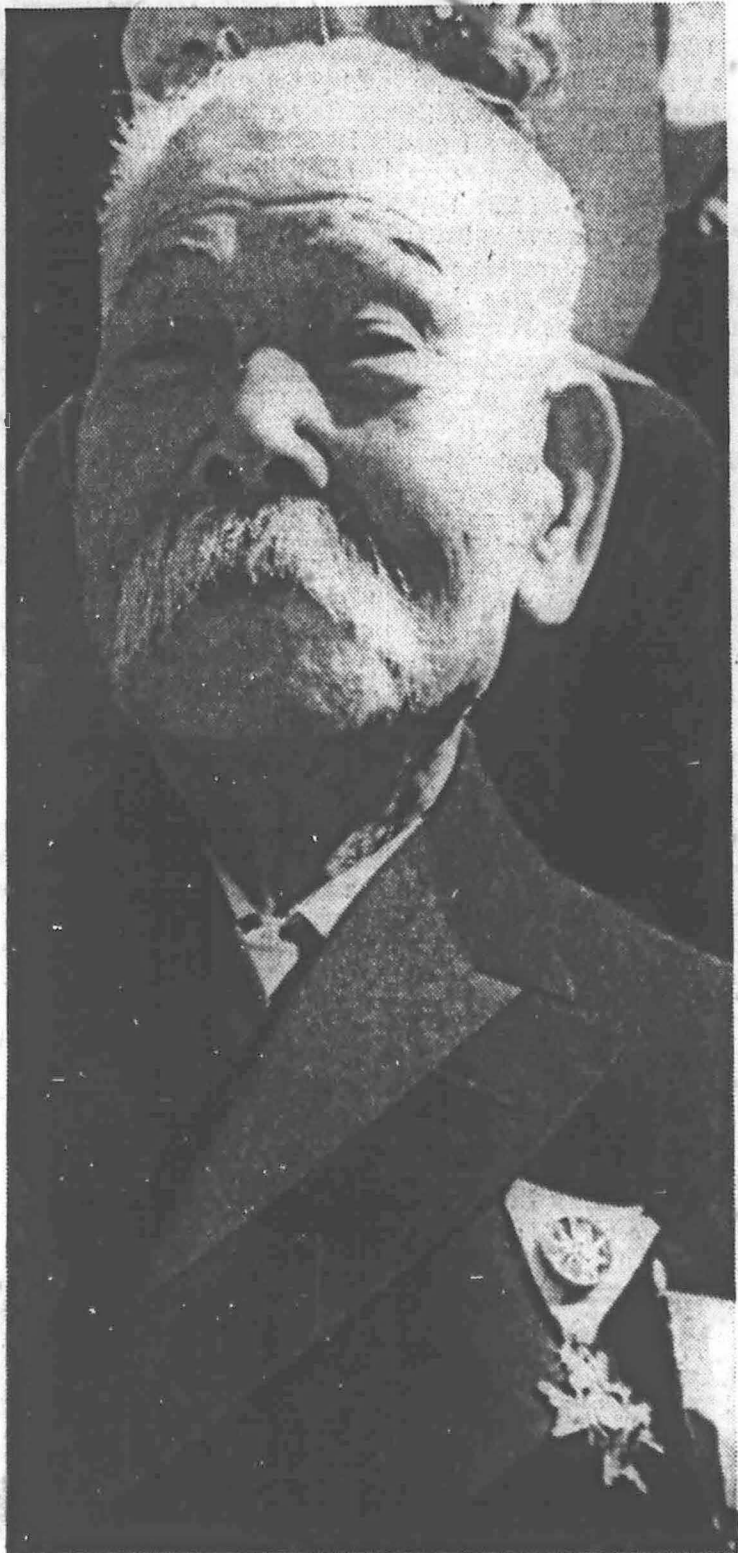
Those were the days, according to newspapers of that era, when campaigns were aimed at keeping Japanese from settling in California. Stories of 1919 reported speakers who warned white civilization was threatened by "peaceful invasion" of the Japanese. Retail grocers of California, meeting at Fresno, proposed an alien tax as a method of stopping settlement. The Turlock Board of Trade recommended no Japanese be allowed on land.

The Farmer's Union recommended barring Asiatics from citizenship and excluding picture brides. The organization feared, in the pe-1920's, that without citizenship exclusion, in a few years Japanese "would swallow up the white races in California".

## Work Quietly

Against this background, Aibara and other Japanese leaders went quietly about the business of allowing Japanese fam-

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**NISABURO AIBARA**  
Strong and straight at 98

# A Day To Remember

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families to make a living.

Japanese were not permitted to own land, but Aibara formed the California Cantaloupe Corp.. As its president, he leased land through the corporation to Japanese farmers. Japanese corporations secured 99-year leases on 3,000 acres near Vernalis and other lands.

In 1918 there were 50 Japanese families in the area. By 1919, the number had risen to 250 families.

By 1920, Aibara was cooperating with the mayor of Turlock to solve misunderstandings between the Caucasian and Japanese groups. Two years later he taught at the newly-started school for Japanese youth.

## Rocking Chair

As Japanese-American guests gathered Saturday and presented a rocking chair to Aibara, remembrance of the early-day bitterness was dim. Even the memories of the World War II years were faded among the now respected and valued citi-

zens. All could wholeheartedly join in the sentiments expressed by Takuo Togawa of Los Angeles in a tune which concluded the festivities, "Song for a Happy Occasion."

In addition to the Order of the Sacred Treasure, Aibara was presented a scroll from the Japanese Department of Agriculture by Iwa Suki Rikimaru. Mitsue Takahashi had done the printing.

Toastmaster for the event was Yonezo Yoshida, and Toyojiro Tomiye represented the many friends of the honoree.

Tsuneo (Buddy) Iwata of Livingston was in charge of arrangements. Bill and Esther Noda were assisted with the champagne reception by Ayako Yoshida, Harry Akune, and Paul Yamamoto. Other arrangements were undertaken by Albert Morimoto, Ken Miyamoto, Ben Kumimoto, Caz Takahashi, Kazumi Miyamoto, Harry Kajiooka and James Yoshino. Flower arrangements were done by Kikuyo Shiojiguchi and her daughter, Mrs. Sam Kuwahara.