

# **The Saibara Colony Webster, Texas**

**George J. Hirasaki**

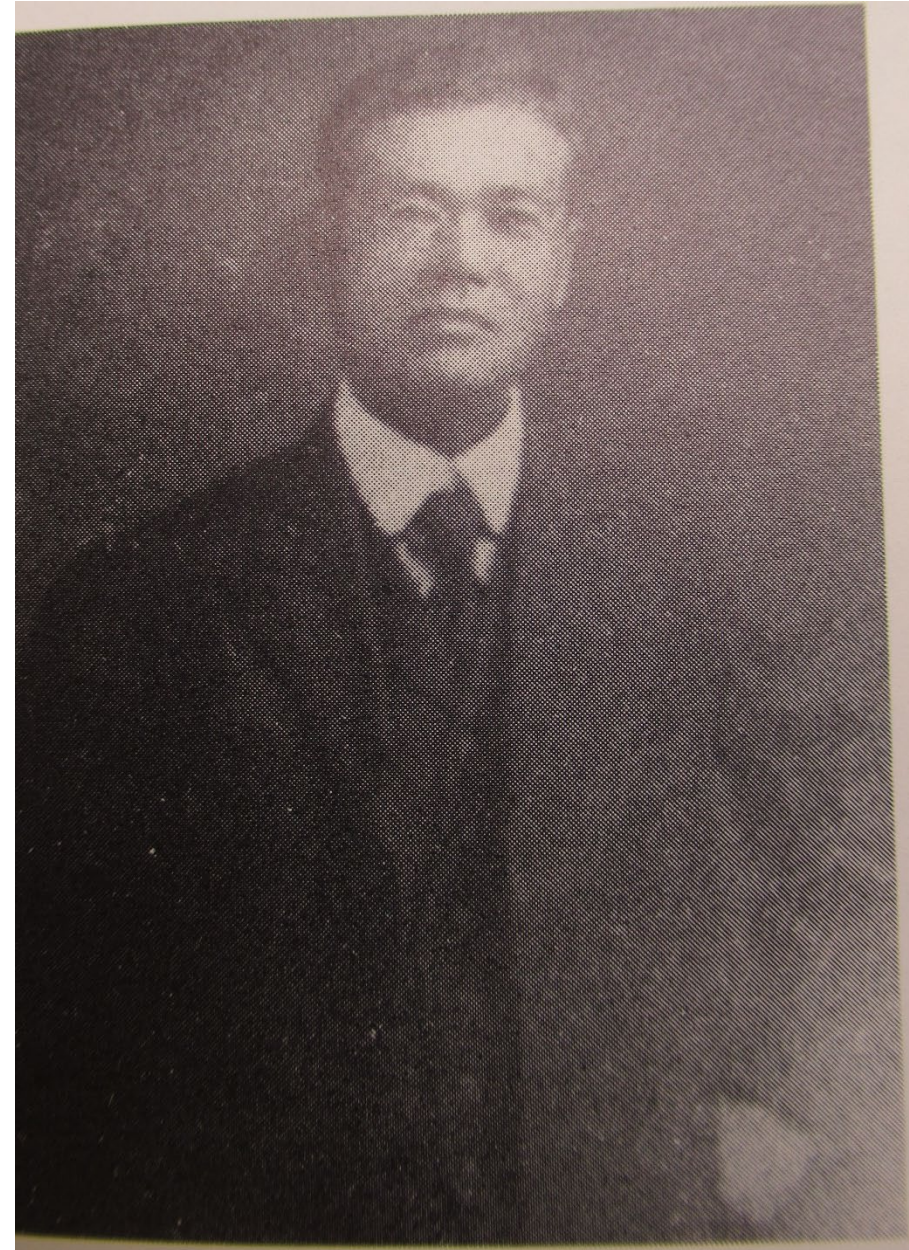
**JACL meeting, June 23, 2019**

**Walls, T.K., (1987, 1996), *The Japanese Texans*, The University of Texas, INSTITUTE OF TEXAN CULTURES, at San Antonio**

**Allton, J.H., Brackett, P.M., and Ray, D., (1993), *THE LITTLE WHITE CHURCH ON NASA ROAD 1*, Webster Presbyterian Church; Webster, Texas 77598**

# Seito Saibara

- **Born in 1861 on Shikoku Island**
- **Critical of the Meiji government**
- **Practiced law**
- **At 37 elected to the Japanese Diet**
- **Converted to Christianity**
- **President of Kyoto's Doshisha U.**
- **1902 to US to study at Hartford Theological Seminary in Conn.**
- **Decided to establish a Japanese rice farming colony in 1903**
- **Asked his wife, Taiko and son, Kiyoaki to join him.**
- **Wife agreed, son said he wanted to finish his engineering studies. Seito order his son to come.**
- **Rinei Onishi brought 300 pounds of shinriki or "God Power" seed rice to Texas.**



# Kiyooki Saibara

- **Obedied his father and came to Texas**
- **In few years, Kiyooki was ready to marry.**
- **His father made arrangements with family of Shimoyo Iwasaki.**
- **They met in San Francisco**
- **They married at the Webster Presbyterian Church in 1909**



*Kiyooki Saibara (far left) and friends*

# Shimoyo (Iwasaki) Saibara

- **Born in Sendai, 1885**
- **Died in Webster June 27, 1935**
- **She came to us, Shimoyo Iwasaki, fresh from Kassui College, (a Mission School) lovey and sweet as the beautiful cherry blossoms of her own Japan. She came to us with the lantern of high courage in her hand, her faith unshaken-leaving behind family, friends, customs, country, but bringing with her the fine traditions of her illustrious ancestors, the samurai. These she combined with what she considered the best of American traditions and customs and became what she aspired to be from the time her feet touched American soil, a credit to America. Mary V. Allen**



# Saibara Family Home

**Seito Saibara standing in front of his new residence in Webster about 1904. Seito's son, Kiyooki and his bride, Shimoyo, also lived in this home.**



*Seito Saibara's house near Webster*

**Seito Saibara, wearing a straw hat, standing  
besides his 600-foot deep water well about 1904.**



**Kiyooki Saibara (forth from left) standing with workers in a rice field owned by his father, Seito Siabara**



*Saibara rice farm near Webster, c. 1904; Kiyooki Saibara is fourth from left.*

# Rice Farming



*Japanese rice workers*



# Harvest Time



*Shocking rice*

# Thrashing Rice



*Seito Saibara (foreground) and son Kiyooki (on horse) during rice harvesting*

# The Lone Star Club

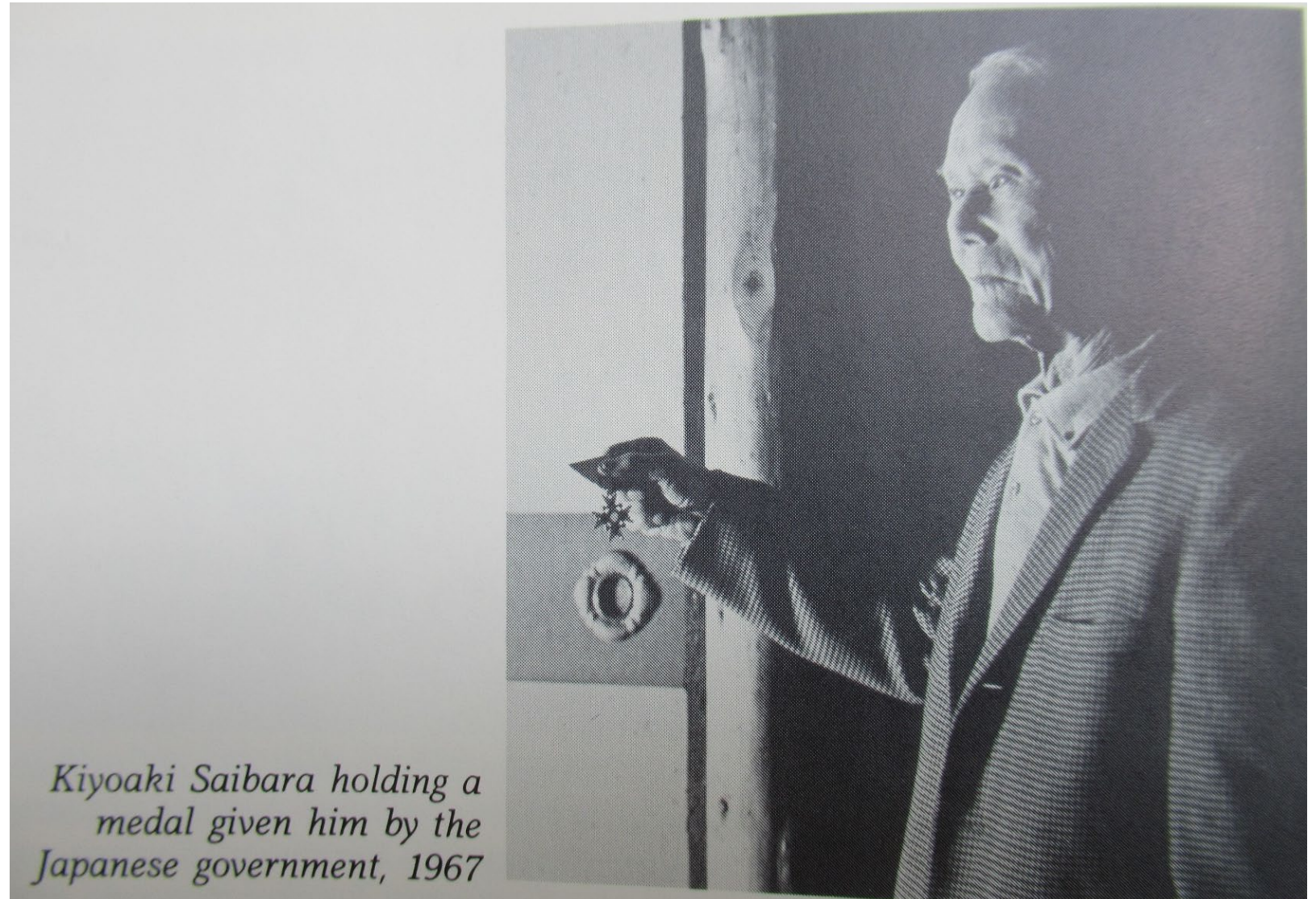


# A party in honor of Seito Saibara in 1932



# Kiyooki Saibara, 1967

In 1953, Kiyooki Saibara became the first Japanese man in Houston to become a naturalized American citizen. At the request of Emperor Hirohito, Mr. K. Saibara went to Japan in 1957 where he received the Order of Sacred Treasure for furthering Japanese-American relations.



*Kiyooki Saibara holding a medal given him by the Japanese government, 1967*

# 100 Years of Japanese Texans

March 28, 2004



# Saibara Family

Saibara Family. From left-to right, lady with white shirt & Glasses, Susan Saibara ( daughter of Edward Saibara, who is son of K. Saibara), man with sunglasses, black shirt & mustache- Jim Ferguson, husband of Judy Saibara, lady in blk/white check, Judy Saibara Ferguson (daughter of Robert and Rola Saibara), Man in back with sunglasses, Edward Saibara, man in front, with red tie, Paul Saibara, (son of Edward, brother of Susan), lady in front with glasses, purse strap on shoulder, Mari Saibara, wife of Warren (deceased), Warren is son of K. Saibara, Lady with pearls, Marjorie Saibara, sister of Judy, children in front, daughters of Paul Saibara, Katy , Emily , and Andrew Saibara .



# Fairview Cemetery, League City, Texas

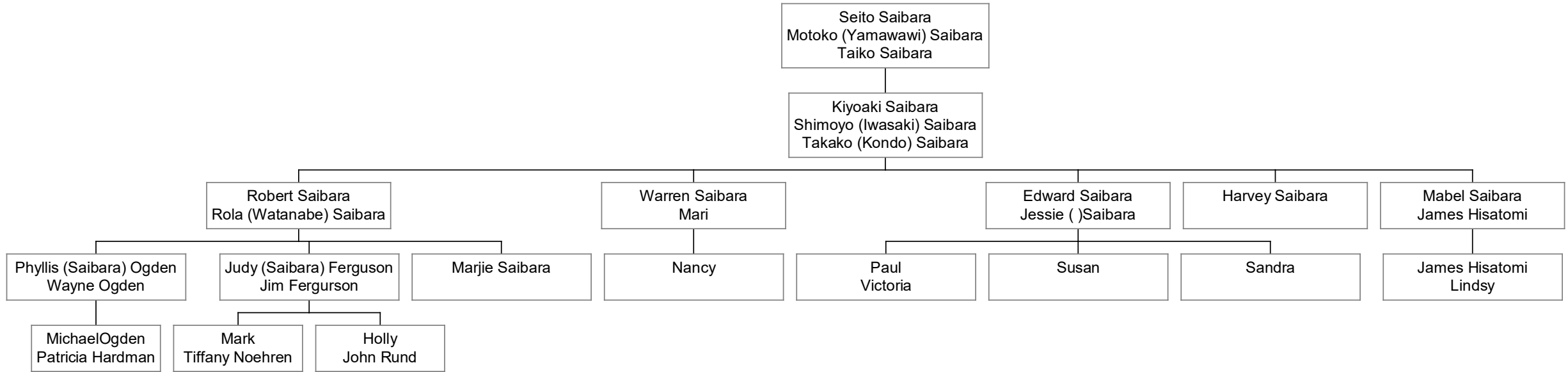




# Forrest Park East Cemetery, Kiyooki Saibara



## Seito Saibara Family Tree





John Glenn climbs into his Mercury capsule, Friendship 7, on February 20, 1962. "Godspeed John Glenn", and then liftoff for the first American to orbit the Earth.

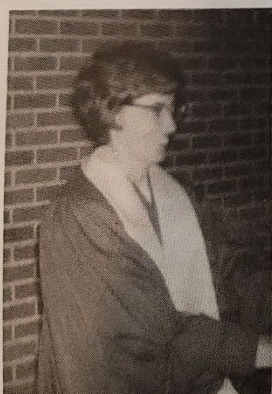
### JOHN GLENN AND THE EMPEROR

*Ernie Dimaline was pastor from 1964-1967. While he was pastor at Webster, two of the church's astronauts were killed within a year. He accompanied Jeannie Bassett and Martha Chaffee to Arlington Cemetery for graveside services. In an interview in the 1970's, the Reverend Ernie Dimaline shares a story about John Glenn:*

I remember the time I first preached as a candidate. The church was packed, and as people began to file out and shake hands with me, one man suddenly stood before me, and I had an impact of a personality. I didn't recognize him, but there was just this impact of a person there. If I was an artist, I think I would have painted red all around him. This was the kind of vitality of the man. Then suddenly he smiled as I hesitated, and he said, "John Glenn."

The one thing I remember about John, among many things since I'm talking about him, was the story he told about when he was going to Japan. It was after his flight, and he was going as a kind of good will ambassador to Japan. Mr. Kiyooki Saibara, the elderly Japanese gentleman who had been such a fine elder in Webster church, spoke to him and

said, "Colonel Glenn, when you get to Japan, if you should meet the Emperor, would you give him my regards?" Of course John Glenn sort of smiled. Here was the little Japanese rice farmer way over here in Texas asking him to give the Emperor of Japan his regards. Well John got to Japan and he did meet the Emperor and he thought well I'll just try this, and he said to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, do you know a Mr. K. Saibara in Webster, Texas?" And the Emperor's immediate response was a flashing smile and he said, "How is my dear friend, Mr. Saibara?" John said that he would never again look down upon an individual. It turned out that Mr. Saibara had done a great deal to cement American-Japanese relations after the war and most of the ambassadors who came from Japan would stop by Webster first and meet Mr. Saibara and get his feelings about things in the United States and relations in the United States before they went to Washington. This was rather surprising to John. Later they arranged for Mr. Saibara to go to Japan to meet the Emperor personally and to be given a medal of honor from the Emperor.



Annie Glenn playing organ for worship service.

**Mr. Kiyooki Saibara, the elderly Japanese gentleman who had been such a fine elder in Webster church, spoke to him and said, "Colonel Glenn, when you get to Japan, if you should meet with the Emperor, would you give him my regards? Of course John Glenn sort of smiled. Here was this little Japanese rice farmer way over here in Texas asking him to give the Emperor of Japan his regards. Well John got to Japan and he did meet the Emperor and he thought well I'll just try this and he said to the Emperor, "Your Majesty, do you know a Mr. K. Saibara in Webster, Texas?" And the Emperor's immediate response was a flashing smile and he said, "How is my dear friend, Mr. Saibara?"**