



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Legacy Business Registry Case Report

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 7, 2018

Filing Date: October 11, 2018
Case No.: 2018-014198LBR
Business Name: Paper Tree
Business Address: 1743 Buchanan Street
Zoning: Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District
50-X Height and Bulk District
Japantown Special Use District
Block/Lot: 0685/038
Applicant: Linda T. Mihara
1743 Buchan Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown, District 5
Staff Contact: Shelley Caltagirone - (415) 558-6625
shelley.caltagirone@sfgov.org
Reviewed By: Tim Frye – (415) 575-6822
tim.frye@sfgov.org

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BUSINESS DESCRIPTION

Paper Tree LLC opened in August of 1968 as a Japanese origami paper and art supply store in Japantown, at 22 Peace Plaza, Japan Center. Paper tree remained at the Peace Plaza location until July of 1974, when it permanently relocated to its current location at 1743 Buchanan Street. Throughout its 50 years in business, Paper Tree has continued to be a local and international destination for origami enthusiasts and paper lovers. The store sells many authentic imported Japanese art supplies as well as handmade cards and other crafts by local artists.

Paper Tree has a multi-generational history sharing Japanese art and culture through origami. Tokinobu Mihara, the grandfather of the current owners, immigrated to the United States from Japan in the mid-1900s. Tokinobu Mihara was incarcerated in a Japanese internment camp, where he became blind due. Upon release, he authored two of the first books on origami written in English. In addition, he wrote the first Romanized English- Japanese dictionary and a guide to help first generation Japanese Americans gain citizenship.

Paper Tree continues to maintain Tokinobu Mihara's legacy in the United States. Paper Tree was opened by Tokinobu Mihara's son and his wife, Nobuo and Shizuko Mihara. In 2013, co-ownership was granted to the couple's daughters Linda and Vicky, yet the parents still retain part ownership of the business. Paper Tree is one of only four remaining family run businesses in San Francisco's Japantown.

Paper Tree has helped continue Japanese culture in the San Francisco region since its opening in 1968. The goods that are sold, art displayed, and classes that are held at the store help maintain the cultural tradition of Japanese origami. The store is made up of a balance between being a space for the arts and creativity as

well as traditional Japanese culture.

The Mirah family-business has been an anchor in Japantown for decades. The business provides support to the many Japantown festivals, provides volunteers, monetary donations, and advertising for various Japantown community organizations and administers Japanese language and cultural outreach opportunities. Paper Tree's programming serves people of all ages, including youth at Kinmon Gakeun School, and seniors at Kimochi, the elder care nutritional program.

Paper Tree's storefront at 1743 Buchanan has remained relatively unchanged during the 44 years it has been at the Buchanan Mall location. The storefront signage features the subtitle "The Origami Store", with a paper crane logo symbolizing peace.

The business is located in the Buchanan Street Mall between Sutter and Post Streets in the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District. It is within the Japantown Special Use District, and Within ¼ Mile of an Existing Fringe Financial Service Special Use District, and within a 50-X Height and Bulk District.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Review Criteria

1. *When was business founded?*

The business was founded in 1968.

2. *Does the business qualify for listing on the Legacy Business Registry? If so, how?*

Yes. Paper Tree qualifies for listing on the Legacy Business Registry because it meets all of the eligibility Criteria:

- i. Paper Tree has operated continuously in San Francisco for 50 years.
 - ii. Paper Tree has contributed to the history and identity of the Japantown neighborhood and to Japanese culture within San Francisco.
 - iii. Paper Tree is committed to maintaining the physical features, craft, art form and traditions that define the business.
3. *Is the business associated with a culturally significant art/craft/cuisine/tradition?*
Yes. The business is associated with Japanese and Japanese-American history, culture, art, craft and tradition.
 4. *Is the business or its building associated with significant events, persons, and/or architecture?*

Persons

Yes. Paper Tree is associated with Tokinobu Mihara, a Japanese-American who was detained in a Japanese Internment Camp during World War II. After losing his sight during internment, Tokinobu Mihara proceeded to write the first book on origami written in English and the first Romanized Japanese-English Dictionary. He wrote an instructional book guiding first generation Japanese-Americans towards American citizenship. In addition to his work advancing Japanese culture in the United States, he was an advocate for the sight-impaired and helped spread the use of guide dogs to the blind in Japan.

5. *Is the property associated with the business listed on a local, state, or federal historic resource registry?*

No. The property has a Planning Department Historic Resource status of “B” (Properties Requiring Further Consultation and Review). The building was constructed in 1974, not making it age eligible as a historic resource under CEQA. However, property exists within the Japantown Neighborhood Commercial District and within the Japantown Cultural District.

6. *Is the business mentioned in a local historic context statement?*

Yes. The business is listed as a cultural resource in the Japantown Cultural Heritage and Economic Sustainability Strategy. The strategy was unanimously adopted by the Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors in 2013 to develop a vision for the neighborhood by focusing on the both economic development and preserving and enhancing the historic and cultural assets.

7. *Has the business been cited in published literature, newspapers, journals, etc.?*

Yes. Paper Tree has been featured in the San Francisco Chronicle, The New York Times, The Guardian, National Geographic and many other travel guides and television/film journalism pieces.

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business

Location(s) associated with the business:

- 1743 Buchanan Street

Recommended by Applicant

- A space dedicated for people to foster their creativity via paper
- A space to purchase high-quality Japanese paper and art supplies
- Class offerings
- Store signage featuring a crane
- Wooden shipping crates from Tokinobu Mihara’s original import business

Additional Recommended by Staff

- None



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Historic Preservation Commission Draft Resolution No.

HEARING DATE: NOVEMBER 7, 2018

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ADOPTING FINDINGS RECOMMENDING TO THE SMALL BUSINESS COMMISSION APPROVAL OF THE LEGACY BUSINESS REGISTRY NOMINATION FOR PAPER TREE CURRENTLY LOCATED AT 1743 BUCHANAN STREET, (BLOCK/LOT 0685/038).

WHEREAS, in accordance with Administrative Code Section 2A.242, the Office of Small Business maintains a registry of Legacy Businesses in San Francisco (the "Registry") to recognize that longstanding, community-serving businesses can be valuable cultural assets of the City and to be a tool for providing educational and promotional assistance to Legacy Businesses to encourage their continued viability and success; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years; and

WHEREAS, the subject business has contributed to the City's history and identity; and

WHEREAS, the subject business is committed to maintaining the traditions that define the business; and

WHEREAS, at a duly noticed public hearing held on November 7, 2018, the Historic Preservation Commission reviewed documents, correspondence and heard oral testimony on the Legacy Business Registry nomination.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby recommends that Paper Tree qualifies for the Legacy Business Registry under Administrative Code Section 2A.242(b)(2) as it has operated for 30 or more years and has continued to contribute to the community.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby recommends safeguarding of the below listed physical features and traditions for Paper Tree.

Location(s):

- 1743 Buchanan Street

Physical Features or Traditions that Define the Business:

- A space dedicated for people to foster their creativity via paper
- A space to purchase high-quality Japanese paper and art supplies
- Class offerings
- Store signage featuring a crane
- Wooden shipping crates from Tokinobu Mihara's original import business

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission's findings and recommendations** are made solely for the purpose of evaluating the subject business's eligibility for the Legacy Business Registry, and the Historic Preservation Commission makes no finding that the subject property or any of its features constitutes a historical resource pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the **Historic Preservation Commission** hereby directs its Commission Secretary to transmit this Resolution and other pertinent materials in the case file 2018-014198LBR to the Office of Small Business.

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was ADOPTED by the Historic Preservation Commission on November 7, 2018.

Jonas P. Ionin
Commission Secretary

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ADOPTED:



SAN FRANCISCO

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO
LONDON N. BREED, MAYOR

OFFICE OF SMALL BUSINESS
REGINA DICK-ENDRIZZI, DIRECTOR

Legacy Business Registry

Application Review Sheet

Application No.: LBR-2018-19-012
Business Name: Paper Tree
Business Address: 1743 Buchanan Street
District: District 5
Applicant: Linda T. Mihara, Manager and Part Owner
Nomination Date: August 10, 2018
Nominated By: Supervisor Vallie Brown

CRITERION 1: Has the applicant has operated in San Francisco for 30 or more years, with no break in San Francisco operations exceeding two years? ☒ Yes ☐ No

22 Peace Plaza, Japan Center from 1968 to 1974 (6 years)
1743 Buchanan Street from 1974 to Present (44 years)

CRITERION 2: Has the applicant contributed to the neighborhood's history and/or the identity of a particular neighborhood or community? ☒ Yes ☐ No

CRITERION 3: Is the applicant committed to maintaining the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms? ☒ Yes ☐ No

NOTES: N/A

DELIVERY DATE TO HPC: October 11, 2018

Richard Kurylo
Manager, Legacy Business Program



Board of Supervisor
District 5



City and County of San Francisco

Vallie Brown

Friday, August 10th, 2018

Office of Small Business
Small Business Commission
City Hall, Suite 110
San Francisco, CA 94102

To whom it may concern:

I am writing to nominate Paper Tree at 1743 Buchanan Street for the Legacy Business Registry Program. Through classes, authentic Japanese art supplies, and the celebrated art form of origami, Paper Tree is a great source for San Franciscans and visitors to foster their creativity via paper.

Founded in 1968, Paper Tree is currently celebrating its 50th year of business. Paper Tree is currently owned and operated by two generations of the Mihara family. Originally opened by Nobuo and Shizuko Mihara, husband and wife, the store is now co-owned and run daily by sisters and artists, Linda Mihara and Vicky Mihara Avery. Significantly, Tokinobu Mihara, the grandfather of Linda and Vicky, was interred during WWII; after leaving camp, he wrote the first book on origami written in English. According to his family, Tokinobu Mihara is a part of the legacy of Paper Tree, and his passion for Japanese culture, art and creative expression is honored through the philosophy of the store.

Paper Tree has seen Japantown through redevelopment, watching the Japanese American community change and disperse dramatically. Despite these changes, the Mihara family and Paper Tree continues to be a pillar of the Japantown community. The business has supported many festivals including Nihonmachi Street Fair, Sansei Live, and the Cherry Blossom Festival. Paper Tree has also used its resources for Kimochi, the elder care nutritional program, as well as other non-profits. The family business has been well-recognized within the community for its longevity and contributions.

I am proud to nominate Paper Tree for the Legacy Business Registry Program. The proprietors can be reached at (415) 921-7100. Should you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to my office at (415) 554-7630 or BrownStaff@sfgov.org. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Supervisor Vallie Brown
Board of Supervisors
City & County of San Francisco

Section One:

Business / Applicant Information. Provide the following information:

- The name, mailing address, and other contact information of the business;
- The name of the person who owns the business. For businesses with multiple owners, identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business;
- The name, title, and contact information of the applicant;
- The business's San Francisco Business Account Number and entity number with the Secretary of State, if applicable.

NAME OF BUSINESS:		
Paper Tree LLC		
BUSINESS OWNER(S) (identify the person(s) with the highest ownership stake in the business)		
Nobuo Mihara Shizuko Mihara Linda Mihara Vicky Mihara Avery		
CURRENT BUSINESS ADDRESS:		TELEPHONE:
1743 Buchanan Street San Francisco, CA 94115-3208		415 921-7100
		EMAIL:
		info@paper-tree.com
WEBSITE:	FACEBOOK PAGE:	YELP PAGE
www.paper-tree.com	@papertreeSF	Paper Tree

APPLICANT'S NAME		
Linda T. Mihara	<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as Business
APPLICANT'S TITLE		
Part Owner, Manager		
APPLICANT'S ADDRESS:		TELEPHONE:
[REDACTED]		[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]		EMAIL:
		[REDACTED]

SAN FRANCISCO BUSINESS ACCOUNT NUMBER:	SECRETARY OF STATE ENTITY NUMBER (if applicable):
1070870	46-3280765

OFFICIAL USE: Completed by OSB Staff	
NAME OF NOMINATOR:	DATE OF NOMINATION:

Section Two:

Business Location(s).

List the business address of the original San Francisco location, the start date of business, and the dates of operation at the original location. Check the box indicating whether the original location of the business in San Francisco is the founding location of the business. If the business moved from its original location and has had additional addresses in San Francisco, identify all other addresses and the dates of operation at each address. For businesses with more than one location, list the additional locations in section three of the narrative.

ORIGINAL SAN FRANCISCO ADDRESS:	ZIP CODE:	START DATE OF BUSINESS
22 Peace Plaza, Japan Center, San Francisco, CA	94115	08/1968
IS THIS LOCATION THE FOUNDING LOCATION OF THE BUSINESS?	DATES OF OPERATION AT THIS LOCATON	
<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	08/1968-07/1974	

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
1743 Buchanan Street, San Francisco, CA	94115-3208	Start: 08/1974 End: Present

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

OTHER ADDRESSES (if applicable):	ZIP CODE:	DATES OF OPERATION
		Start: End:

Section Three:

Disclosure Statement.

San Francisco Taxes, Business Registration, Licenses, Labor Laws and Public Information Release.

This section is verification that all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses are current and complete, and there are no current violations of San Francisco labor laws. This information will be verified and a business deemed not current in with all San Francisco taxes, business registration, and licenses, or has current violations of San Francisco labor laws, will not be eligible to apply for the Business Assistance Grant.

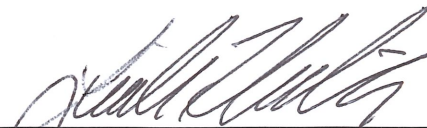
In addition, we are required to inform you that all information provided in the application will become subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act.

Please read the following statements and check each to indicate that you agree with the statement. Then sign below in the space provided.

- ☐ I am authorized to submit this application on behalf of the business.
- ☐ I attest that the business is current on all of its San Francisco tax obligations.
- ☐ I attest that the business's business registration and any applicable regulatory license(s) are current.
- ☐ I attest that the Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) has not determined that the business is currently in violation of any of the City's labor laws, and that the business does not owe any outstanding penalties or payments ordered by the OLSE.
- ☐ I understand that documents submitted with this application may be made available to the public for inspection and copying pursuant to the California Public Records Act and San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance.
- ☐ I hereby acknowledge and authorize that all photographs and images submitted as part of the application may be used by the City without compensation.
- ☐ I understand that the Small Business Commission may revoke the placement of the business on the Registry if it finds that the business no longer qualifies, and that placement on the Registry does not entitle the business to a grant of City funds.

Linda T. Mihara

09/09/2018



Name (Print):

Date:

Signature:

PAPER TREE

Section 4: Written Historical Narrative

CRITERION 1

a. Provide a short history of the business from the date the business opened in San Francisco to the present day, including the ownership history. For businesses with multiple locations, include the history of the original location in San Francisco (including whether it was the business's founding and or headquarterd location) and the opening dates and locations of all other locations.

Paper Tree opened its doors in August 1968. The original location of the store was within the current Japan Center Malls, in the East Building, located at 22 Peace Plaza in historic San Francisco Japantown. The business is known for its wide, international collection of origami paper, Japanese art supplies and other paper products. The high-end standards of their goods has made Paper Tree a gathering spot for artists, origami folders and tourists. San Franciscans across the city recognize it as a mecca for paper supplies; and their quality has been recognized and enjoyed by thousands over their long history.

Opened in 1968, Paper Tree is currently celebrating its 50th year of business. The current address of the location, at 1743 Buchanan Street, became the permanent location of Paper Tree in May of 1974. The Buchanan Street Mall storefront is the only location of the business. When the store originally opened, it specialized in selling high quality Japanese paper, origami, and other handcrafted goods. After the move to the Buchanan Street Mall address, initially the focus on the store shifted towards office supplies. However, when a nearby Office Depot opened its doors, the Paper Tree business was threatened. At that point, the store reverted to specializing in the fine Japanese goods and papers they currently sell.

The store was opened by Nobuo and Shizuko Mihara, husband and wife and second generation San Franciscans. The Mihara family has always retained ownership of the store, starting with just Mom and Pop. Now, daughters Linda and Vicky Mihara are co-owners of the store and run daily operations. The Mihara family has long been involved in the art of origami – Tokinobu Mihara published one of the first origami books in English in the 1950s. Today, both Linda Mihara and Vicky Mihara Avery are award-winning origami artists spreading their knowledge not only through their features in books and shows, but also through classes held at the store. Thus, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren continue the tradition of teaching and sharing origami internationally.

Over the years, the art of over 50 of the world's best origami artists have been exhibited in the store's many display cases, creating a mini museum of these extravagant hidden treasures within Japantown.

b. Describe any circumstances that required the business to cease operations in San Francisco for more than six months?

Not applicable.

c. Is the business a family-owned business? If so, give the generational history of the business.

Yes, Paper Tree is a family owned business which is currently owned and operated by two generations of the Mihara family. The daughters Linda and Vicky became co-owners and currently operate the store, but parents Nobuo and Shizuko are both still alive and hold part ownership.

A history of the business ownership is as follows:

1968 to 2013: Nobuo Mihara and Shizuko Mihara

2013 to Present: Nobuo Mihara, Shizuko Mihara, Linda Mihara and Vicky Mihara Avery

d. Describe the ownership history when the business ownership is not the original owner or a family-owned business.

Not applicable. The original owners of Paper Tree remain the current owners.

e. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30 years, the applicant will need to provide documentation of the existence of the business prior to current ownership to verify it has been in operation for 30+ years. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

f. Note any other special features of the business location, such as, if the property associated with the business is listed on a local, state, or federal historic resources registry.

The historic resources status of the building at 1741-1743 Buchanan Street is listed by the Planning Department as Category B ("Unknown / Age Eligible") with regard to the California Environmental Quality Act. The landscape of San Francisco Japantown is unique and widely recognized with the famous Peace Plaza and Pagoda just one block from Paper Tree. Other than that, Paper Tree is not registered with any other historic registry.

CRITERION 2

a. Describe the business's contribution to the history and/or identity of the neighborhood, community or San Francisco.

Paper Tree contributes significantly to the Japantown neighborhood and to Japanese culture within San Francisco.

Paper Tree is family-owned and operated and is celebrating its 50th year as a retail store in Japantown. The company sells origami papers, artisan papers, books, art supplies, gifts, and cards. Services include private classes or parties in store or at the customer's venue, school field trips, design and creation of artwork, design services and props, commercial origami for stop motion or film, exhibits, installations and corporate events.

Paper Tree and its products and services help to continue the tradition of origami and maintain the legacy of Japanese art through classes held at the store, including origami folding, Japanese gift-wrapping and other Japanese art forms. All their work is Japanese inspired.

b. Is the business (or has been) associated with significant events in the neighborhood, the city, or the business industry?

Paper Tree has supported many Japantown festivals including decades of participation in the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festivals, Nihonmachi Street Fairs, and Sansei Live, to name a few. The festivals are a primary way to facilitate the relationship between Paper Tree and the community.

The business is directly involved with the World Tree of Hope, now in its 13th year, placed in San Francisco's City Hall every December. This is a partner project with the LGBT community's Rainbow World Fund, where the tree is adorned with thousands of origami cranes with wishes for the world written on the wings. The San Francisco Giants also have invited Linda and Vicky to demonstrate origami for their Japanese Heritage Nights.

c. Has the business ever been referenced in an historical context? Such as in a business trade publication, media, or historical documents?

Paper Tree has been interviewed by many magazines including the New York Times and Via Magazine (AAA's travel magazine). The store has also been featured in travel guides and television/film journalism. Paper Tree has appeared in the film Infinity & Chashu Ramen (2013). In 2014, National Geographic filmed an episode of Going Deep with David Rees that investigated how to make perfect paper airplane by learning origami techniques. Vicky is an expert in Japanese style gift wrapping and has appeared on the Martha Stewart Show, Good Morning America, and the Carol Duvall Show. There is a complete listing of articles which Paper Tree has appeared in on their blog: <https://paper-tree.com/blogs/blog?page=2>.

As one of only four remaining family run businesses in San Francisco's Japantown, Paper Tree has been widely lauded in travel guides as a destination for visitors. Paper Tree is regularly referenced in the Nichi Bei Weekly, the San Francisco Japanese American nonprofit educational news organization, and the Mihara family is often asked to give comments for Nichi Bei stories.

d. Is the business associated with a significant or historical person?

Paper Tree has been visited by many famous celebrities during their tours of San Francisco. Most notably, John Lennon and Yoko Ono visited the store in 1972. Other celebrities that have visited include Tony Bennett, Patton Oswalt, the band Heart, Lee Oskar, Adam Savage and Harry Anderson.

Tokinobu Mihara, the grandfather of Linda and Vicky, was an important community leader because of the strides he made not only in origami teaching, but increasing accessibility for the blind. He emigrated from Japan in the mid 1900s and made his living through an import and publishing business from Japan called Oriental Culture Book Company. The family continued this business for many years prior to the founding of Paper Tree. Before WWII, Tokinobu was also the editor of New World Sun. In 1942, Tokinobu Mihara was incarcerated through Executive Order 9066 at Heart Mountain Detention Center in Wyoming. While at the detention center, his preexisting glaucoma worsened drastically and he received no proper medical care. By the end of WWII, Tokinobu was left blind. After leaving the detention center, he wrote several books about his experiences, as well as two of the first books on origami written in English. Mr. Mihara was also responsible for the very first Romanized English-Japanese dictionary, as well as a book that gave information to Issei (first generation Japanese Americans) on how to gain U.S. Citizenship. Moreover, he taught English lessons to monolingual Issei out of his home. Mihara was an astounding advocate for the sight-impaired and helped to bring the use of guide dogs to the blind in Japan. The significance of Tokinobu Mihara is today part of the legacy of Paper Tree, and his passion for Japanese culture, art and creative expression is honored through the philosophy of the store.

e. How does the business demonstrate its commitment to the community?

The Mihara family and the San Francisco Japantown community are synonymous. The family has always been heavily involved in Japantown both as individuals and channeled through the business.

The business has supported many festivals of Japantown including the Nihonmachi Street Fair, Sansei Live, and of course the Cherry Blossom Festival. Multiple members of the Mihara family have been part of the Cherry Blossom Festival in various roles since its founding in 1968, including Nobuo J. Mihara as co-chair of the festival and sisters Linda and Vicky organizing and hosting the origami exhibit and demonstrating origami at the festival.

Paper Tree supports many community organizations through advertising and in-kind donations, as well as hands-on volunteering. They support Nihonmachi Little Friends, Buddhist Church of SF, Kimochi Senior Services, Hokka Nichi Bei Kai, Kinmon Gakuen (Golden Gate Institute), Nichi Bei Foundation and the Japanese Bilingual Bicultural programs, to name a few. Linda Mihara also submits artwork to the Bowl the Planet, the silent auction fundraiser that supports the Center For Ecosystem Survival.

Shizuko Mihara worked as the principal of Kinmon Gakuen, the Japanese language and culture school founded in 1911 that still teaches children to this day. This has led to a strong

relationship between the Japanese American community of San Francisco and the Paper Tree family.

Paper Tree has also used its resources to do printing for Kimochi, the elder care nutritional program, as well as other nonprofits. All this has fostered a sense of community within the walls of Paper Tree, which often acts an informal gathering spot and even an unofficial visitor information center.

f. Provide a description of the community the business serves.

Paper Tree serves people from all around the world, and part of this international customer base is due to the historic neighborhood in which Paper Tree is located. San Francisco Japantown is one of only three remaining Japantowns in the United States and is the oldest. Founded in 1906, Japantown is a beacon for the Japanese American population of Northern California and beyond due to its landmarks such as the Peace Pagoda in the Peace Plaza; the Buchanan Street Mall; the four remaining multi-generational, family-owned small businesses; and the Ruth Asawa Origami Fountains where some of the dough sculptures adorning the benches were created by Vicky and Linda as children. Paper Tree has seen Japantown through redevelopment and has watched the community change and disperse. However, through the incremental spreading of the San Francisco Japanese American population, Paper Tree has remained a destination and gathering place that is authentic to the family- and community-run character of the neighborhood.

Paper Tree serves all ages, helping people with a passion for origami and Japanese art find the materials that will best help create their art. The display cases that feature art of various origami artists has a distinct emphasis on young people whose folding careers are just starting out. Paper Tree is open Monday, Wednesday through Friday from 10:30 to 5:30, 10:00 to 5:30 on Saturdays, and 11:00 to 4:00 on Sundays. It is closed on Tuesdays. On busy weekends, such as for the Nihonmachi Street Fair, the store changes its hours to accommodate the crowds.

g. Is the business associated with a culturally significant building/structure/site/object/interior?

Though the building is not formally associated with any culturally significant structures, it is placed on the Buchanan Street Mall, directly across from the Ruth Asawa Origami fountains and adjacent to the Peace Plaza and Pagoda. The emphasis on Japanese American culture and values is reflected in and around the Paper Tree storefront.

h. How would the community be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, shut down, etc.?

Any change to the business ownership or location would severely affect the access to Japanese culture within San Francisco that Paper Tree provides. Simply put, there would be much less really high quality Japanese paper and art supplies, as these materials are hard to come by —

especially when they are internationally imported. This would also impact the spaces nationally available for origami artists to create and exhibit their work.

CRITERION 3

a. Describe the business and the essential features that define its character.

Paper Tree is a local and international destination for paper lovers. The store sells not just Japanese origami paper and sheet paper, but also handmade cards crafted by local San Francisco Japanese American artists, a wide book selection and a myriad of Japanese themed gifts. The character of the Paper Tree store is made up of a balance for the arts and creativity, and traditional Japanese culture. The authentic Japanese art supplies, the origami paper imported from Japan and the handmade cards made by local artists have created a space that is dedicated as a great source for people to foster their creativity via paper.

b. How does the business demonstrate a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business, and which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the businesses historical character? (e.g., business model, goods and services, craft, culinary, or art forms)

Paper Tree and the products they carry help to continue the tradition of origami by through the goods they sell. They also help maintain the legacy of Japanese art through classes held at the store. They have taught not only origami folding, but also Japanese gift-wrapping and other Japanese art forms. All their work is Japanese inspired. The business's commitment to the community, to their family and to Japanese traditions all simultaneously work together to make Paper Tree a special place.

c. How has the business demonstrated a commitment to maintaining the special physical features that define the business? Describe any special exterior and interior physical characteristics of the space occupied by the business (e.g. signage, murals, architectural details, neon signs, etc.).

The storefront of Paper Tree has changed as little as possible in the 44 years it has been on Buchanan Street, and the owners are insistent that the store front will never change. The Buchanan Mall was designed with a streetwide vision to create an atmosphere of a traditional Japanese road, and maintaining the markers of a long-standing family business is part of that. The signage for Paper Tree subtitled the shop "The Origami Store" and the sign features a paper crane. The paper crane logo is meant to be eye-catching as not only the most recognizable figure within origami, but also as a symbol of peace. For the 50th anniversary, Linda Mihara will transition the crane from its current purple color to gold, and the color is subject to change again in the future to celebrate the long-lasting prosperity of the business.

One notable feature of the interior are the wooden shipping crates that were part of the original import business founded by Tokinobu Mihara. The crates have been maintained as part of the shop to honor the family's ancestors and the legacy of Japanese American history.

d. When the current ownership is not the original owner and has owned the business for less than 30years; the applicant will need to provide documentation that demonstrates the current owner has maintained the physical features or traditions that define the business, including craft, culinary, or art forms. Please use the list of supplemental documents and/or materials as a guide to help demonstrate the existence of the business prior to current ownership.

Not applicable.

PAPER TREE

Section 5: Photographs



- PAPER TREE MOVES TO ITS OWN BUILDING ON THE BUCHANAN MALL IN 1974

Paper Tree Exterior (2015)



Paper Tree Interior (2018)



Paper Tree Interior (2018)

PAPER TREE OPENS IN THE JAPAN CENTER IN 1968



Paper Tree Exterior (1968)



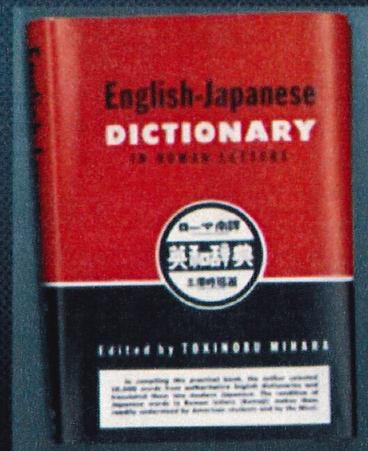
Paper Tree Interior (1968)



Grandpa's Origami Books!

Paper Tree Interior (1968)

TOKINOBU MIHARA



Tokinobu Mihara and guide-dog (left).
First Romanized Japanese-English dictionary (right).





















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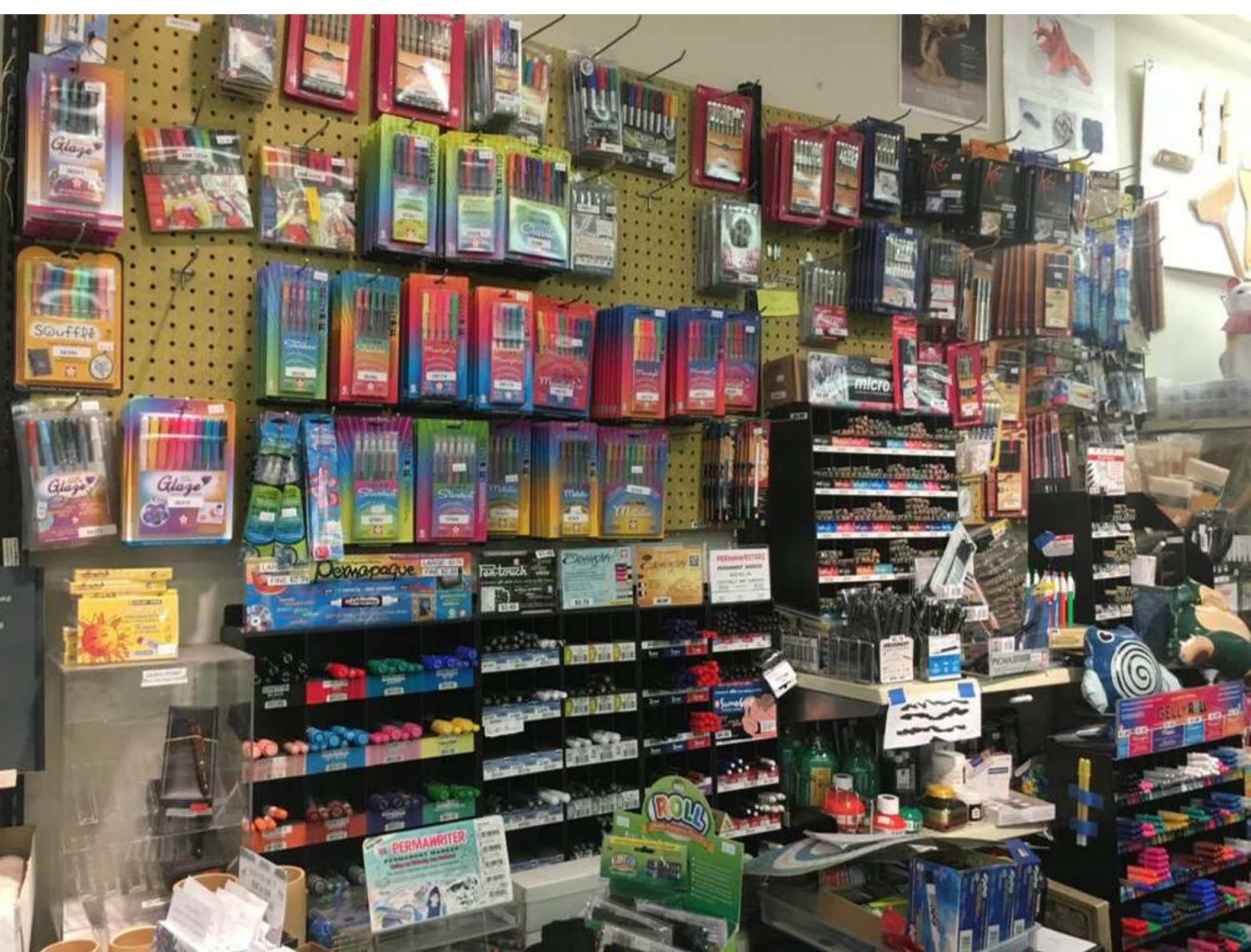
The Way of the Brush

THE WAY OF THE BRUSH

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ORIGAMI ART

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[Nichi Bei](#)

a mixed plate of Japanese American news and culture

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Animals Out of Paper: Origami Play

February 4, 2010 By [Vivien Kim Thorp, Nichi Bei Weekly](#)

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In “Animals Out of Paper,” a three-man play now showing at the SF Playhouse (533 Sutter St., San Francisco), *origami* is front, center and all over the stage. Paper hippos, horses, cacti and complex geometric shapes are hanging from the ceiling, propped up on tables and lining the kitchen shelves. *Origami* is framed like art on the wall. It’s been turned into a working lamp and even fashioned into a life-size dress.

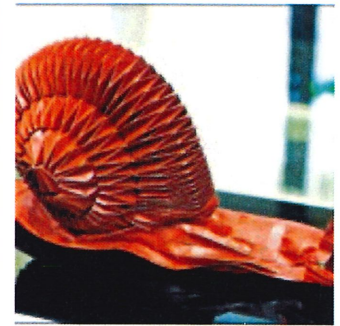
Written by Rajiv Joseph and directed by Amy Glazer, this dramatic comedy involves *origami* at every level. Along with providing a colorful backdrop and witty props, *origami* is the central point connecting the play’s three characters — a renowned *origami* expert, a high school calculus teacher and his troubled but brilliant student. *Origami* also serves as a metaphor for life: The crease marks left by folds in paper are made akin to the indelible marks that life and loss leave on the human heart.

Like the paper shapes scattered across the stage, the play’s characters are complex beings, even when the opposite may seem true. Ilana (Lorri Holt), the central character, is a world-class *origami* artist whose life is falling apart. She’s lost her marriage. She’s lost her dog. And she can’t seem to form so much as a crease in a commissioned medical project involving the human heart. Andy (David Deblinger), a schoolteacher and *origami* enthusiast, is her number one fan. And when he brings Suresh (Aly Mawji), a rebellious *origami* prodigy, to be her apprentice, the plot unfolds in a surprising way.

“It’s all twisted into something so far from what it used to be,” Ilana says of *origami*. “I guess it could unfold and become flat again. But it would never be what it was. When it was untouched. Folds leave scars.”

Originally produced in New York in 2008, “Animals Out of Paper” made its West Coast premier in San Francisco this January. While props for the play’s East Coast run were collected via an open call for *origami*, materials for the its West Coast incarnation were made especially by local experts.

Linda Tomoko Mihara, who manages Paper Tree in San Francisco’s Japantown, created many of the play’s key pieces, including two rabbits, some modular *origami*, hearts and a framed configuration of cranes. In addition, Mihara served as the *origami* coach for the actors and also as the play’s *origami* consultant, calling on international *origami* luminaries such as Robert J. Lang, Bernie Peyton, Jeremy Shafer and Meenakshi Mukerji.



‘Escargot’ — Eric Joisel, France’s top origami artist, folded this snail, on display in the Paper Tree’s gallery. Photo by Vivien Kim Thorp

“Each of us is known for something different,” Mihara says of the various *origami* experts, who all reside in Northern California, “So we decided among us who would do what based on their specialty.” Together they created the complex pieces that feature prominently in the script, including a Madagascar Hissing Cockroach, an Amazonian toad, a dancing Tyrannosaurus Rex and multi-colored polyhedrons.

For Mihara, who has been creating *origami* since she was 5 years old, this was the first time her art was presented alongside theater. “I’ve been involved in a lot of community projects, and many projects with Robert Lang,” Mihara says. “I’ve done two commercials for TV that involved *origami* and an installation, but this is the first stage play.”

A passion for *origami* runs in Mihara’s family. Her grandparents, Tokinobu and Hideko Mihara, wrote the first book on *origami* that was published in English in the United States, “*Origami: Japanese Art of Paper Folding*” (1959). Her sister, Vicky Mihara Avery, an expert in Japanese gift-wrapping, appeared as a guest on “The Martha Stewart Show” in 2006. And her parents have now been running the Paper Tree, an *origami* supply store, for 43 years.

Mihara said the portrayal of the *origami* experts is very accurate. “It’s really an interesting slice of life because the writer, Rajiv, actually did some excellent research when it comes to *origami*,” she says. She also added that it felt great to have the art of *origami* acknowledged in such a way on stage.

The original idea for the play emerged after Joseph, who lives in New York, sat next to a woman folding *origami* on a Greyhound bus. In conversation, she explained that she had often taught *origami* to children. “She said most children like *origami*, but every once in a while you come across a special child,” Joseph told the audience after last Saturday’s matinee. “They see a fold before it happens.”

For his research, Joseph attended OrigamiUSA’s national convention in New York along with 900 *origami* artists and enthusiasts. He also befriended filmmaker Vanessa Gould, who was then shooting “Between the Folds” (2008), a documentary about the science and art of *origami*. “She was enormously helpful to me,” says Joseph, “and we became good friends — two people who both lived in Brooklyn, who were both making artistic projects about *origami*.”

Lang, who Joseph first learned of in a “New Yorker” article (Feb. 19, 2007), inspired aspects of Ilana’s character — including the medical device she is struggling to create, which Lang actually designed. During his research, Joseph found many of the practical applications of *origami*, such as air bags, the mesh heart sleeve and telescopes, fascinating. However, it was the “interconnected community of *origamists* around the country and the world” that he found most moving.

“Animals Out of Paper” will be at the SF Playhouse through Saturday, Feb. 27, 2010. For more information or to purchase tickets, call (415) 677-9596 or visit www.sfplayhouse.org. Tickets are \$40. Another Joseph play, “Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo,” which premiered in 2009, will be at the Mark Taper Forum (www.centertheatregroup.org) in Los Angeles from April 14 through May 30.

In addition to selling *origami* paper, supplies and books, Paper Tree (1743 Buchanan St.) has a small gallery space in the front of the store. The current exhibit, “Primates!” features work by Lang and other top *origami* creators, including Brian Chan, Joseph Wu and Sy Chen. The orangutans, gorillas and assorted simians will be on display through April 2010. For Paper Tree’s hours, call (415) 921-7100 or go to www.paper-tree.com.

More work by Mihara and Lang can also be seen on their Websites, www.origamihara.com and www.langorigami.com.

Filed Under: [Arts & Entertainment](#) Tagged With: [art](#), [origami](#), [play](#)

ORIGAMI, THE ART: Supporting the community and embracing a wider audience

April 15, 2011 By [BETH HILLMAN, Nichi Bei Weekly Contributor](#)

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Since the first Festival, the Mihara family — owners of Paper Tree, a paper specialty store — have offered free *origami* instruction as part of the Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival. The Mihara sisters, Linda and Vicky, have fond memories of teaching children to fold paper at the Festival — starting when they were kids themselves. Paper Tree, one of the oldest businesses in San Francisco's Japantown, is family run, and to the Mihara sisters, participating in the Festival is an important part of their commitment to the Japanese American community.

Nichi Bei Weekly: What's your role in the Cherry Blossom Festival?

Vicky Mihara Avery: We organize and host the *origami* exhibition and demonstration. We're the only ones who do an active demonstration with the public. We have different Northern California groups in, and they give their time to teach people, and they enjoy teaching and sharing *origami*...

Linda Mihara: Paper Tree provides the paper. We also have an exhibit in the same room. We've been doing it since the beginning. At that time, the emphasis was on kids teaching kids.

NBW: How did your family get involved in the Festival?

VMA: Our family has been in Japantown since the early 1900s. They had an import business, which my parents were involved in, and they imported Japanese goods. At one point, my dad didn't want to travel anymore, so they opened up a retail store, Paper Tree.



FAMILY OF FOLDERS — Linda Mihara (left) and sister Vicky Mihara Avery of Paper Tree share the art of origami with festival goers. photo courtesy of Vicky Mihara Avery

LM: So we've been a part of the community for a long time. Having been here since the beginning of the Festival, we were all behind it 100 percent. Our parents would go to all the groups, and my mom started the Tiny Tot contest, and continued to do the *origami*. It's a tradition that we've maintained.

NBW: *How has the Festival changed since you first started?*

VMA: It's certainly gotten bigger. In the beginning it was contained in the Japan Center because this area wasn't filled. It was created for the merchants to draw more people to come here, and then it just developed, and got bigger and bigger. And Japanese groups do make their way to come here during the Festival.

LM: Not only has it gotten bigger, but I've seen a change in the volunteers that have supported it, all the heads of the committees. A lot of the *Issei* unfortunately are long gone, so I'm seeing a transition to the *Sansei* and *Yonsei* heading the committees, which is neat to see. But it's also a little difficult, because it's a lot of work no matter which committee you're on.

VMA: It's what you hope for; you want the younger generation to come in and help. It's good to see kids involved.

NBW: *Linda, can you talk about your memories of being Cherry Blossom queen?*

LM: For the longest time, I didn't want to do it.

VMA: They were bugging me, and I said, "No, make Linda do it."

LM: One day I woke up and decided, I think it would be great to run. Being the only candidate who was born and raised in Japantown, it was a big deal to me, and I thought it was a great opportunity. The pageant was a great experience, pretty nerve-wracking. I did *origami* as my talent, with a nice *origami* presentation, which was kind of cool. Culturally, it was important to do that, also because I enjoy it. A great surprise that I won, and the whole community was behind me, and I felt the support for the whole year. I got to go to Japan, and that year the queen was invited to compete in the international contest, which is held in Sao Paulo, Brazil. There was a queen from Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, Toronto, Hawai'i. We went and competed against the girls from South America... The girl from Los Angeles won the title, and I won first runner up, so I got to go to Japan for another trip, and we got to meet Prime Minister Suzuki and be on national TV.

NBW: *What are some other favorite Festival memories?*

LM: You even drove a car in the Parade one year!

VMA: I did, huh. The funny thing is, I'm more of a tomboy, I was driving race cars, so one year, we had a nice Nissan 280Z, so I drove it in the Parade. Being here in Japantown, we do a lot for the Festival — the *origami*, she's a former queen — so when people needed to talk to someone, a lot of press would come to us. So we've had some opportunities to be on TV. I just have a strong memory of us sitting at a table when we started, just us as kids teaching kids, when the Festival was just starting to get under way. Just having a great time! Our family was so committed to the Festival that — it's the busiest time for merchants — but at one point, when my mom was doing the Tiny Tots contest and my dad was in charge of the festival, we actually closed the store because we were all so involved. It's the time you want to be

open, but we closed the store for a couple of years in a row. It's nice to continue the Festival and we hope to continue it on and on. We know it's inevitable that the Japan Center will be renovated, but if they do, they'll be in construction for three years, which means that the Festival will be impacted for three years, and the merchants will be displaced.

NBW: *Why is the Festival important to you?*

LM: To me, I consider this community my home and my family. Having the added element of it being a celebration of Japanese culture, and having been handed down the art of *origami* is something I enjoy doing and sharing. It's twofold: It's supporting the community, and it's a time when people outside the community can come in and learn more about Japanese culture.

VMA: The other element is that it allows a lot of nonprofits related to the JA community to participate — selling food at the bazaar, or presenting *ikebana*, dancing. It brings them back to the community. People have moved to other parts of the Bay Area, but they come back for the Festival.

LM: It's amazing how much energy the community puts forth to make this happen... It's fun because so many people get involved. Our friends really do enjoy sharing *origami*.

NBW: *What's your favorite Festival food?*

LM: I always have to get two things: *Imagawayaki* and the beef skewers from Nihonmachi Little Friends.

VMA: I have to get the Sakura Popcorn, a sweet salty popcorn with *furikake* and *senbei* in it. I was in the group that helped develop the recipe, and it's so good. And I have to say whatever Troop 29 is selling, because my son is in it.

NBW: *What's your favorite Festival event, other than origami?*

LM: *Bonsai*. I always look to see what the oldest tree is. Two years ago the oldest tree was 1,000 years old. They always surprise me.

VMA: I have to say the Parade because it's a fun thing to see. You know people in the Parade, and it's also very colorful.

Filed Under: [Community News](#), [National News](#), [Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival](#) Tagged With: [Cherry Blossom Festival](#), [NCCBF](#), [NCCBF Queen Program](#), [origami](#), [Queen Program](#)

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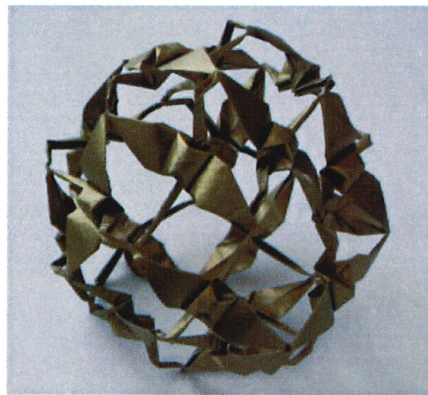
YOU ARE HERE: [HOME](#) / [FEATURED](#) / INVITING PEOPLE INTO THE FOLD: SISTERS ADVANCE THE ART OF ORIGAMI

INVITING PEOPLE INTO THE FOLD: Sisters advance the art of origami

April 1, 2016 by [TOMO HIRAI](#), *Nichi Bei Weekly*

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Raised around the art of origami, Linda Mihara and Vicky Mihara Avery have unfolded the public's fascination with making art from a single sheet of paper. Recognized as paperfolders, the Mihara sisters have helped establish the art of origami both nationally and internationally. Most recently, Linda Mihara co-curated "Origami Living World" at the National History Museum in Taipei, which is on display through April 17.



"The Peace Sphere," folded by Linda Mihara from one sheet of paper. photo by Linda Mihara

Vicky Mihara Avery is a recognized origami teacher. She was awarded the Michael Shall Volunteer Recognition Award in 2000 from OrigamiUSA, a New York-based nonprofit devoted to sharing and preserving the art of paperfolding, and was acknowledged by the Mingei International Museum in San Diego, Calif. for her work in what she said was the first major origami exhibition held in an American museum.

Linda Mihara was awarded the Asian Pacific American Heritage Award in 2015 by the Asian Pacific American Heritage Foundation of San Francisco, as well as awards from the California State Fair's Fine Art competition under the Fiber category. She also folded the origami American flag that was displayed at the Smithsonian American Art Museum's "The Art of Gaman" exhibit in 2010.

The Nichi Bei Weekly connected with the sisters via e-mail.

Nichi Bei Weekly: Your family has a history within origami in the United States. Can you tell us how it got started and how it influenced you?

Vicky Mihara Avery: Our grandparents Tokinobu Mihara and Hideko Mihara created an import business to bring Japanese goods to the U.S. ... As an educator, he wanted to share some Japanese culture with American children and created two volumes of origami instructions — one of the first English-published books on the art of paperfolding.

Linda Mihara: Grandpa's origami books included actual origami figures and our origami paper. Both were sold at various Japanese retail locations around the country. Over the years, these origami books have been on display at origami exhibits, and now some people recognize them and tell me that it was their very first origami book.

VMH: As the first company to import origami paper in the early '50s to the U.S. from Japan, my sister and I always had paper to play with. Our parents decided to discontinue the import company and open Paper Tree — a retail store — in the newly created Japan Center which ... opened in 1968. The merchants and community leaders created the Cherry Blossom Festival to bring attention to the community and to share the many aspects of Japanese art, food and culture. Linda and I sat at a table outside ... and taught other children how to fold, and it just kept expanding from there.

LM: When Vicky and I taught during those early days of the festival, I learned how wonderful it was to teach origami. As a child, it was fun to teach an adult something new and fun. As an adult, to be able to share it, especially to first timers, is a feeling of satisfaction that never gets old. I feel we carry on Grandpa's legacy by continuing to teach origami at the Cherry Blossom Festivals.

NBW: Is there any kind of ranking system or recognition of status for origami artists?

VMA: The key to be recognized in the "origami community" is to create and publish an original model. Teachers and artists are also recognized, but not as highly as an origami creator.

LM: I agree with Vicky here. There is no 'school' where degrees are given to determine rank like they do in Japan for traditional arts. Origami artists or designers receive recognition through their body of work, whether it is seen at an exhibit, sold in an art gallery, or published in their origami book.

Origami has now reached a level where it needs recognition as a fine art. Having curated origami exhibits both here and abroad, many who view these origami models are not only surprised, but fascinated with the artistry and skill some artists possess. As more and more museums open their doors to origami exhibits, viewers will be able to see how far origami has come from the traditional crane.



SISTER ACT —
(At left): Vicky Mihara Avery, left, and Linda Mihara, in front of one of sculptress Ruth Asawa's Origami Fountains in San Francisco's Japantown, have helped to popularize and innovate origami, through various works. photo courtesy of Vicky Mihara Avery,

NBW: What goes into developing new works or shapes?

VMA: Linda can better answer this one because she is considered to be a fantastic "creator." For me, I have created two box shapes by playing and exploring folds with a piece of paper, but I'm not in the category of creators. My forte is teaching and lecturing about origami.

LM: When I design an origami piece, I first determine a key characteristic that the model must possess, such as an elephant's trunk or a rabbit's long ears. After the basic shape is realized, I begin to fold, adding small details and build the model. It can be a bit of trial and error, or a happy accident that creates something entirely different.

NBW: What is it like to work on origami professionally? How do commissioned pieces differ from personal pieces?

VMA: Folding origami for a professional commission is the easy part. The hard part is the ability to work with a client to achieve their goals and needs. We need to help finalize concepts, meet deadlines, get permission to use a particular origami model, and engage other folders for mass folding when needed.

LM: Working on big projects like TV commercials or large installations are fun and rewarding. I've done work for Web, print and TV, and each project challenges me as an origami designer. With these projects, it's important to achieve what the director wants and it must be exact, clean work. You have to be a problem solver, and be able to adapt to changing demands. This also applies to other commission work.

NBW: How prevalent is origami today? Have you ever encountered origami somewhere you never expected to see it?

VMA: In the early days, origami paper was laboriously created by hand-brushing colors onto paper. Now, automatic, computerized equipment produce millions of packages a year. Origami is more popular than ever!

LM: I see origami elements everywhere. But I was surprised to see the development of origami with the Vietnamese and South American communities. They have embraced the art and formed clubs in a very short period of time

NBW: What are some of the most interesting or complex designs you have created in the past?

LM: There are two complex designs and one fun/interesting one. The Peace Sphere — a sphere of 18 cranes folded from a single sheet of paper. It is an extension of an old origami technique from the 1700s, where cranes are folded from a single sheet of paper, with cuts, but no glue. The second is the Kimono Jacket — my first wearable piece folded from a single sheet of paper. The fun/interesting piece is my Dollar Bill Bull-folded from a \$1 bill and features 'eyes,' which appear in the bill's design.

NBW: Where can people learn more about origami?

VMA: There are many YouTube videos — not all of them are good, but many are enthusiastic teachers. Visit our Website (www.paper-tree.com) for links for more information. Local origami groups meet at libraries all across the country. Visit www.origami-usa.org to see a list of regional groups.

The Mihara sisters and other origami artists will participate in the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival

Saturday and Sunday, April 9, 10, 16 and 17 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Japanese American Citizens League National Headquarters, 1765 Sutter St., in San Francisco's Japantown. People can also catch them at the Cupertino Cherry Blossom Festival, Saturday, April 23 and Sunday, April 24 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Cupertino Memorial Park, 10185 N Stelling Road, Cupertino, Calif.

Filed Under: [Featured](#), [Featured Articles](#), [Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival](#), [Special Issues](#), [Uncategorized](#) Tagged With: [japantown](#), [Nihonmachi](#), [origami](#), [SF's Japantown](#)

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Alexander Windsor says:

July 19, 2016 at 10:14 pm



hi i would like to contact Vicky to share some of my advance origami talents"I live in Belize"
My name is Alexander Windsor i live in the Cayo district, santiago juan layout for more information please
contact me at mr.rowlandwindsor@gmail.com

Reply

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■ ART

Sculptures That Write

'You can't just make art. You have to live it.'

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■ TREASURES

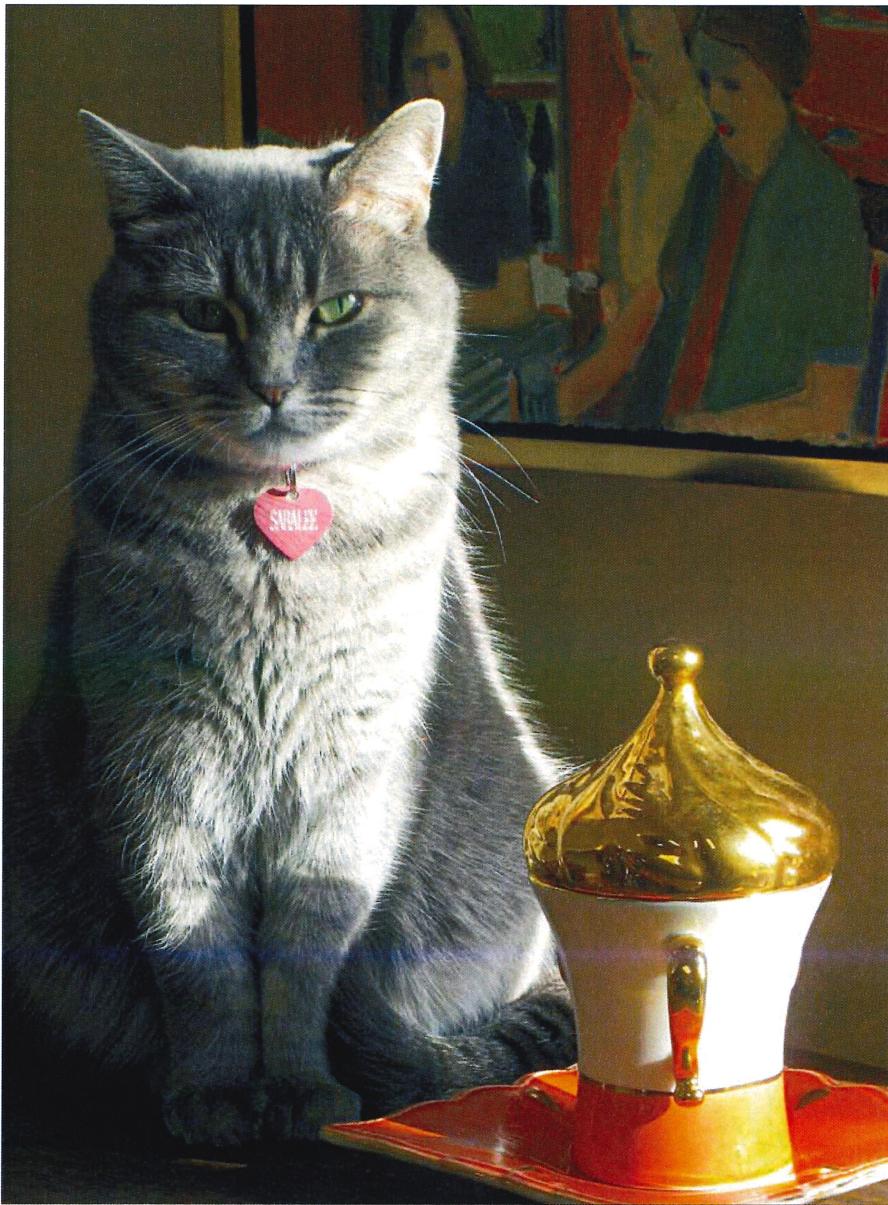
Origami in Japantown

An ancient art amid the cherry blossoms

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THE NEW FILLMORE

SAN FRANCISCO ■ APRIL 2017



DICKIE SPRITZER

NOBODY DOESN'T LIKE SARALEE

A neighborhood cat with a pink heart around her neck proclaiming her name was Saralee became a local celebrity a few years ago. She lived her early life mostly under the house and on the streets, and became a mother many times over while she was still merely a kitten herself. As her babies found homes, she grew up and became related to many people in the neighborhood. When another orphaned kitten adopted local author Thomas McNamee, he set about doing research. The result is his latest book, *The Inner Life of Cats*.

A COUNTRY CAT MOVES TO THE FILLMORE | PAGE 10

Women's Clinic Facing Budget Cuts

'Freakout stage' as clients fear loss of medical care

FEDERAL THREATS to cut funding for health care — particularly family planning services for women — have already hit a target close to home.

The Women's Community Clinic, at 1833 Fillmore Street, recently lost a \$250,000 federal grant it had depended on for years and is now facing the biggest budget shortfall in its 18-year history.

At the same time, the financial squeeze has increased the demand for services.

"Women are streaming into the clinic for birth control and other types of care because they genuinely fear they soon won't be able to get it," said Tara Medve, development and communications director of the clinic. "People are in the freakout stage. There's been a huge rise in fear and anxiety."

The clinic is scrambling to find alternative funding sources and has launched an intensive fundraising campaign that runs through the middle of the month.

"We are doing everything we can to reassure and support our clients during this scary and uncertain time," said Carlina Hansen, the clinic's executive director.

The Fillmore clinic provides primary medical care and mental health care to low-income women and girls 12 and older. It currently serves about 5,000 clients each year, 90 percent of whom earn \$25,000 or less. In addition to providing medical services, the clinic also runs a number of community health programs.

The administration's proposed targets — cuts to the Affordable Care Act, Medicaid and especially to Title X — pose additional threats to the clinic's ability to function. If an initiative to eliminate Title X funds takes effect, the clinic stands to lose an additional \$150,000 from its operating budget, Hansen said.

The Women's Community Clinic has launched an emergency campaign to raise \$250,000 from individuals, foundations and corporate sponsors by April 14. For more information, visit the website at womenscommunityclinic.org.



The clinic at 1833 Fillmore.

The Ancient Art of Origami

Japantown's Paper Tree teaches the art of folding paper — and helps preserve a part of Japanese culture

By FRAN MORELAND JOHNS

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in creating a bit of art to make your home the envy of the neighborhood, here's how: Pick up a 6-by-6-foot piece of paper at Paper Tree, located at 1743 Buchanan in Japantown. Fold it carefully about a thousand times or so in precisely the proper manner and *voilà* — a dragon such as few have ever seen.

You may want to practice on something slightly less elaborate. But a glimpse of "Ryujin 3.2," the dragon created by one of the world's most highly skilled origami artists, now on display at the Paper Tree, is definitely an inspiration.

Origami is the ancient art of folding paper into limitless shapes. While other cultures have adapted paper-folding into various traditions, it is most closely associated with Japanese culture and heritage. It was the aspiration to honor and perpetuate this cultural tradition that led Nobuo and Shizuko Mihara to found Paper Tree in 1968. The shop is one of only a handful of family owned and run businesses remaining in Japantown.

NOBUO MIHARA was 11 when he was interned with his father Tokinobu Mihara at Heart Mountain Relocation Center in Wyoming in the spring of 1942. With his grandparents already on buses headed for the camp, U.S. military troops came to take Nobuo, his 9-year-old brother Sam and his parents to join them. His grandfather would lose his sight because of inadequate treatment and die in the camp. The rest of the family was released from Heart Mountain after the war. They came home to find their stored possessions had been looted and stolen.

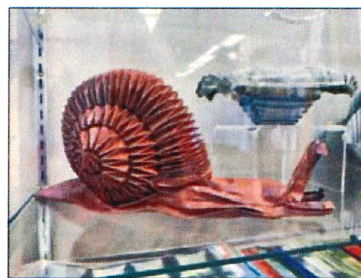
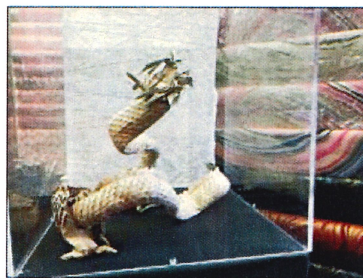
Undeterred, Tokinobu Mihara rebuilt his family's life and made significant contributions to his heritage and to his adopted country. The Miharas owned a publishing and import business — Oriental Culture Books, based in Japantown — and published the first English translation of the Japanese-American dictionary. In the 1950s, they published one of the first origami books in English.

TODAY, PAPER TREE carries on the tradition. Nobuo and Shizuko Mihara can usually be found in the store, along with their daughter Linda. Another daughter, Vicky, runs an origami business in Berkeley. Their son Roger, now



Linda Mihara shows off some of the examples of origami artistry on display in Japantown's Paper Tree.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DICKIE SPRITZER



retired, is the only child who did not choose an origami career. Paper Tree is filled with books offering remarkable examples of origami art, plus a wide assortment of paper for everything from small crafts to shoji screens, and related supplies such as Kami cords — shiny, twine-like ribbons made of foil-wrapped paper and used for decorating money envelopes or tying special gifts. There are also assortments of Yuzen — beautiful papers with patterns similar to those of the traditional Japanese dress.

The shop also hosts regular classes and sponsors the origami portion of the Cherry Blossom Festival every April. Since their childhood, when they sat outside the store demonstrating origami, Linda and Vicky Mihara have taught the art of delicate folding. According to Linda, who says she was

hugely influenced by her grandfather, he saw teaching origami to new generations as a way to preserve an historic element of Japanese culture.

"My first teaching experience was in fourth grade at Raphael Weill Elementary School, which is now Rosa Parks Elementary," Linda Mihara says. "I liked to sit and fold during recess, and one day the teacher asked if I would teach the others in our class." Their teaching tradition continues. Linda and Vicky still teach classes on both sides of the bay and can be found demonstrating origami at festivals.

Among the extraordinary pieces on display at the shop are a black and white tiger, designed by Hideo Komatsu and folded by Steve Zheng, and Linda Mihara's "Peace Sphere," comprised of 18 cranes folded and

shaped into a circle from a single sheet of paper with a few specific cuts. Linda also recently completed the world's largest origami birthday cake, commissioned in celebration of the first (paper) anniversary of Great Wolf Lodge Indoor Waterpark and Resort in Anaheim. The cake stands nine feet tall and features animals from the Pacific Northwest, including origami wolves, bears and beavers.

DESPITE THE COMPLEXITY of the elaborate examples on display in Paper Tree, Linda Mihara believes anyone can learn to create origami masterpieces. She teaches groups of 7- to 10-year-olds, as well as adult students — and cites one local folder, now 91, who first learned the craft in his 80s.

NOVEMBER, 2017

LOCAL // BAY AREA & STATE

Wishers hang their hopes on SF City Hall's holiday tree

Steve Rubenstein

Nov. 27, 2017 | Updated: Nov. 27, 2017 5:33 p.m.



Volunteers watch as Jeff Cotter of the Rainbow World Fund attaches a branch atop the “World Tree of Hope” at City Hall.

Photo: Michael Short, Special to The Chronicle

Not everyone who wishes for something at Christmas is wishing for world peace. Some people are wishing for something more useful.

“I wish it will snow in the morning so nobody does not have to go to school for two weeks,” wrote one wisher.

That wish and 17,000 others — the majority having to do with the people of the world coming to their senses — have been scribbled onto slips of paper, folded into the shape of birds and hung on San Francisco’s official holiday tree in City Hall.

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Like the season itself, it's a tree with a lot of hope and no guarantees. That's how Christmas works.

"It's powerful to put your wishes and prayers out there," said Jeff Cotter, founder and executive director of the Rainbow World Fund, the humanitarian foundation in San Francisco that assembles the tree every year. "But we can't promise they're going to come true."



Volunteers with Salesforce.com draw pictures and write wishes on paper that will be folded into origami cranes and installed on the Rainbow World Fund "World Tree of Hope" at City Hall in San Francisco, CA, on Monday November 27, 2017.

Photo: Michael Short, Special to The Chronicle

It's the 12th season for the majestic 23-foot-tall tree, which stands at the entrance to the Board of Supervisors chambers, a place where things sometimes happen that no one wishes for.

Anyone can write a wish and fold a bird. All you need is a square piece of Japanese origami paper and a lot of patience. The patience is necessary because the first dozen or so attempts will not look like birds, despite the wishes of most origami beginners.

You can also dash off a wish on the foundation's website. Cotter and his staff will fold it into a bird for you, because Christmas is a time to do nice things for other people. The limit is 100 words per wish.

More than that requires two birds.

Among the wishes this year were ones urging an end to war, an end to hunger and an end to ads on the Pandora online music service. The score on those is 0 for 3.

The City Hall tree, unlike most trees, is made of plastic and metal. It is assembled like a layer cake, with giant steel hoops. Before the wishes get hung on it, the tree looks a little like the frame for hoop skirts worn in "Gone With the Wind."

The official tree lighting is next Monday at 6 p.m. Mayor Ed Lee wrote on a bird that he wanted civic pride and respect in San Francisco, and is scheduled to show up for the ceremony to see if that comes about.



Folded origami cranes are seen on the Rainbow World Fund "World Tree of Hope" at City Hall in San Francisco, CA, on Monday November 27, 2017.
Photo: Michael Short, Special to The Chronicle

Putting the tree together is plenty complicated. Birds from previous years are saved and rehung. All birds must be strung with metal wire and sent to a special plant in San Leandro. There, each one is dipped into a vat of fireproofing solution. It costs Cotter \$500 a year to fireproof the paper birds, but that's part of the deal with the city. Seventeen thousand paper birds are just as flammable as they are inspirational.

After that, a final step remains. Each paper bird is pressed by head bird presser Karen Kai with a beautician's hair-straightening iron.

"First the wings," Kai said. "Then the head and the tail and you're ready to go."

A lot of famous people have scribbled wishes that did their time in the tree. Barack Obama asked for a kinder world, Joan Baez asked for organized nonviolence, Shirley Temple Black asked for people to think. Naturalist Jane Goodall fired off a long request on behalf of the environment, harmony, health and happiness that came in at 44 words over the limit but, because she was Jane Goodall, she got her wish to have a long wish.

Hillary Clinton, in her wish just before the presidential election, selflessly asked for marriage equality instead of for victory at the polls. She got the first wish.

"With wishes, there are no guarantees," explained Cotter. "That's not our department."

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MARCH 27, 2018

The Guardian

San Francisco's Japantown: vibrant, on-trend and fighting for its future

Japanese people started moving to J-Town after the city's 1906 earthquake and the area still reflects its roots with festivals, food stops and arty stores but its small businesses face a battle against a real-estate boom



'J-Town buzzes most weekends, its main plaza a meeting point for throngs of techies, teens and twentysomethings.'

Photograph: Alamy

Alec Scott

Tue 27 Mar 2018 01.30 EDT

An elderly Japanese-American man is pruning the tiny pines in concrete planters on a pedestrianised section of the outdoor Buchanan Street Mall, ignoring the teens hunting invisible Pokémon around him and the drone buzzing overhead. San Francisco's storied Japantown is where aspects of Japanese culture have taken root in America but it's also, in this tech-mad, trendy city, a neighbourhood that not only keeps up with the latest trends but sometimes sets them.

Japantown (J-Town) is not as picturesque as the tourist magnet of Chinatown, that's several big hills east of here - but it has its own story to tell. The Japanese moved to this area after the 1906 earthquake, when the areas where they then lived burned down. J-Town has had to weather two other cataclysms: the internment of its 5,000 inhabitants during the second world war and an urban renewal scheme in the 1960s that saw most of its original buildings bulldozed.



The Peace Plaza, focal point for the community's many festivals.
Photograph: Archel Arindaeng

“My family was displaced by the scheme,” says Richard Hashimoto, the current head of the Japantown Merchants’ Association. “Many never came back. We went from 36 [city] blocks to nine. And, with the current tech-driven real-estate boom in the city, the mom-and-pop businesses that did make it have another struggle.”

Look east on J-Town’s main drag, Post Street, and this threat is made real by, looming in the distance, the nearly completed Salesforce Tower, the 61-storey block that is now San Francisco’s tallest building.

Still, J-Town buzzes most weekends, its main plaza a meeting point for throngs of techies, teens and twentysomethings, some dressed as anime stock characters or J-Pop stars, most taking place-establishing selfies at the concrete Peace Pagoda off Geary Boulevard. This is the focal point for the community’s many festivals, its sumo, taiko, cosplay, origami, tofu and cherry blossom festivals, as well as several events this year celebrating the 50th anniversary of the construction of Japan Center, the mall that flanks the Peace Plaza. (On 28 March, the plaza will hold a celebration of the neighbourhood’s oldest businesses, and there’ll be a party to mark the mall’s anniversary in October.)

Designed by Japanese-American architect Minoru Yamasaki (best-known for New York’s ill-fated World Trade Center towers), the plaza has long-time tenants that include a manga-filled bookstore, Kinokuniya; a communal Japanese-style bathhouse, the Kabuki Springs and Spa, with shiatsu-specialising masseurs; and two stores, Daiso and Ichiban Kan, selling cute and high-design items at low cost: bento lunch boxes, say, or moulds that transform balls of sticky rice into panda heads.



Dashi ramen at Hinodeya. Photograph: Archel Arindaeng

Queues for the Japan Center's new, on-trend arrivals tend to be long: Uji Time Desserts offers tofu- and black-sesame-flavoured soft-serve ice-cream in fish-shaped waffle cones, while Marufuku Ramen adds a gourmet gloss to the soup that is a working-class staple in Japan. Outside the mall, another new ramen house, Hinodeya, a small Japanese chain's first foray into America, sells a *dashi* (fish broth) version in an elegant room.

Attached to the mall is the 225-room Kabuki Hotel (doubles from £135), which the mainly West Coast-based boutique chain Joie de Vivre recently took over, giving it a \$35m rework. Ask for a south-facing room, since the views they afford over Golden Gate park are especially fine.



Double room at the Kabuki Hotel

J-Town's other food highlights can be hit on a snack-fuelled walking tour from Edible Excursions, led by local insiders. It moves from consuming sweet potato lattes at art-filled YakiniQ cafe on Post Street) to seaweed salads and *gyoza* dumplings at Super Mira Market, to sweet *mochi* - rice-flour pods with sweet fillings - at Benkyodo, a family business that has been based here since 1906.

Benkyodo sits on a bonsai tree-filled pedestrianised stretch of Buchanan Street, just across the road from the Japan Center, with two other destination shops. **Paper Tree, an origami shop, exhibits the work of master makers - a scarab beetle, a dragon, an electric-green frog - with the origami motto: "No cuts, only folds."** And Soko Hardware offers wares ranging from paper moons to traditional Japanese wood-cutting saws, from singing, spritzing toilets to ceramic kitchenware you'd only want to top with equally pretty food. When the

store was founded in 1925, the Ashizawa family gave it the Japanese name for San Francisco, Soko, and, after their internment in the war, they returned to the area to carry on.



Paper Tree

A few storefronts down from Soko is the National Japanese American Historical Society, which last year put on several exhibitions to mark the 75th anniversary of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt ordering the removal of Japanese-Americans to camps.

“Persistence is our story,” Hashimoto says. “The challenge for our small family businesses is both with rising real-estate costs and seeing if the next generation will carry on the business.”

The Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival is on 14-15 and 21-22 April

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**LINDA TOMOKO
MIHARA**

2015 APA Heritage Award

In celebration of the 11th Anniversary of the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration in San Francisco, I am pleased to honor Linda Tomoko Mihara for your outstanding achievements as an origami artist and your dedication to share your talents with the Asian Pacific American Community. The Office of the Assessor-Recorder extends best wishes on all of your future endeavors.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "C. Chu".

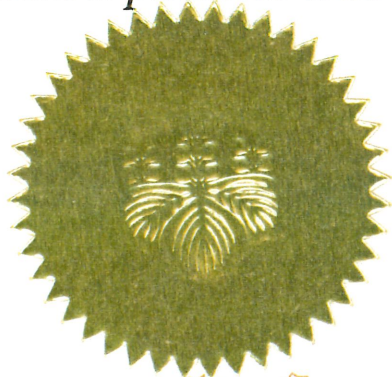
Carmen Chu
Assessor-Recorder of San Francisco
May 4, 2015

Certificate of Recognition

The Consul General of Japan in San Francisco hereby recognizes

Ms. Linda Tomoko Mihara

for her extensive and longtime dedication to the traditional Japanese art of Origami, and for helping her community by donating her award-winning works of art to organizations such as the Asian Pacific American Heritage Foundation. In appreciation of her distinguished achievements and contributions, this Certificate of Recognition is presented with our deepest respect and gratitude.



May 6th, 2015

Masato Watanabe

Consul General of Japan in San Francisco

CARRYING ON 2016

110TH ANNIVERSARY OF
SAN FRANCISCO JAPANTOWN
★ 1906 - 2016 ★



In tribute to Japanese American family-owned businesses

Mihara's Paper Tree

NATIONAL
JAPANESE
AMERICAN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

NJAHIS



ANNUAL
AWARDS
TRIBUTE

Sunday, May 1, 2016
MIS Historic Learning Center
Building 640, Crissy Field
Presidio of San Francisco

"On" - obligation, a profound responsibility that transcends generations, to honor those who left a heritage of hard work, determination and big dreams!