The Records of an Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance, 1907-1924

Collection number: BANC PIC 1993.028--fALB

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Collection Summary

Collection Title: The records of an unbroken friendship but the mortal severance
Date: 1907-1924
Collection Number: BANC PIC 1993.028--fALB
Creator: Kato, Taizo, d. 1924
Extent: Circa 410 photographs of various sizes, compiled in album measuring 24 x 38 cm.; circa 30 loose items (photographic prints, drivers licenses, U.S. registration cards) of various sizes; 1 panorama photograph, 26 x 123 cm.81 digital objects
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Languages Represented: Collection materials are in English

Access
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Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], The records of an unbroken friendship but the mortal severance, 1907-1924, BANC PIC 1993.028--fALB, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Digital Representations Available
Digital representations of selected original pictorial materials are available in the list of materials below. Digital image files were prepared from selected Library originals by the Library Photographic Service. Library originals were copied onto 35mm color transparency film; the film was scanned and transferred to Kodak Photo CD (by Custom Process); and the Photo CD
The Records of an Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance, 1907-24.

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Acquisition Information
The Records of an Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance album and related photographs were purchased in 1993. The panorama photograph was purchased in 1996.

Scope and Content
The Records of an Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance album contains approximately 410 photographs apparently created as a memorial to Taizo Kato, a Japanese-American who died in 1924 at the age of 36. The album title implies that it was compiled by one or more of Kato's friends. The collection also contains circa 30 loose photographs and other items and one photographic panorama.

Kato was an amateur photographer and painter, and several of the photographs refer to his involvement with these practices. Although only four of the prints bear either Kato’s signature or embossed stamp, it is possible that a large percentage of the work in the album is his. There is at least one self-portrait by Kato. With Kamejiro Sawa, Kato was the proprietor of a Los Angeles photo, art and stationery goods business. This business, named The Korin, is featured in some of the photographs. Sawa is likely one of the friends appearing throughout the album, and may have been the compiler of the album as loose items in the collection include his United States registration card and two of his driver's licenses.

The majority of the photographs in the album are portraits and snapshots of Kato and his friends and family. They convey a strong sense of intimacy between the subjects and provide a rich glimpse of Japanese-American culture of early twentieth century California. In addition to these more personal subjects, the album also features portraits and snapshots of individuals such as President Woodrow Wilson, Hollywood celebrities Douglas Fairbanks, William S. Hart and Sessue Hayakawa, and the model Antonio Corsi.

Photographs of outdoor recreation are omnipresent. Activities featured include picnicking, hiking, boating, driving, motorcycling, carriage rides, hunting, angling and flying. Another common subject is the arts, as many prints feature painters, paintings, photographers, sculpture, models and actors. Several photographs of pets are also included. Among the identifiable California locations shown in the photographs are the Los Angeles area, Mission Santa Barbara, Mission San Gabriel, White Point, Yosemite, the San Diego area, and San Francisco. Several unidentified landscapes, coastal scenes and other views of nature are likely of California locations as well. Other probable locations include England, Japan and--as the print is of a bullfight--Latin America or Spain. On the front of a photograph of a group of students is written the name Rowell (or Powell?) High School.

The overall impression afforded by the album is one of a closely knit group of friends and family members who enjoyed a lifestyle of travel, recreation and the arts, and who deeply valued the memories of their time together. The few photographs of Kato's gravestone enhance the memorial aspect of the album.

The album contains approximately 100 pages, 20 of which remain unused. Several prints have come unglued or were removed from their original locations and thus are lacking. The front cover of the album reads "T. Kato." Besides Kato, the only other identifiable photographer is T. Akashi, whose studio name appears on one print. As the prints are not accompanied by captions, and as they are glued by their backs to the album pages (thus preventing access to any possible verso captions), precise dating and subject identification is difficult.

The panorama photograph pictures the attendees of Taizo Kato's funeral, dated "Taisho 13, January 9th."
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Scope and Content Note

Taizo Kato
The Records of An Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance, 1907-24.

BANC PIC 1993.028:[Page 63]--fALB

Taizo Kato's funeral, January 9th, 1924 (1 of 4) BANC PIC 1993.028:F1--fALB

Taizo Kato's funeral, January 9th, 1924 (2 of 4) BANC PIC 1993.028:F2--fALB

Taizo Kato's funeral, January 9th, 1924 (3 of 4) BANC PIC 1993.028:F3--fALB

Taizo Kato's funeral, January 9th, 1924 (4 of 4) BANC PIC 1993.028:F4--fALB

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The Records of An Unbroken Friendship but the Mortal Severance, 1907-24.

BANC PIC 1993.028:[Page 77]--fALB