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Tackling adoption not issue for Fujita **Cowboys linebacker proud of Japanese upbringing, rich history** *TODD ARCHER Staff Writer*

IRVING - The boy in the next cabin was confused. In front of him was a chubby kid with blond hair and green eyes.

"Hi, I'm **Scott Fujita**. I'm Japanese."

Some 22 years later and no longer chubby, **Fujita** still swears he is Japanese, and he is still met with some odd stares from teammates.

In June 1979, Rod and Helen **Fujita** adopted their second son, **Scott**, who was born six weeks earlier at Ventura County (Calif.) Hospital. Rod still remembers the phone call telling him another son was here. They didn't have nine months to prepare, so they borrowed a crib from a neighbor.

"Because of the physical differences, he was going to realize he didn't look like me at all," Rod said. "A lot of people tell their kids, 'When you were born, we did this.' My wife and I would say, 'When we adopted you, we did this.'"

Growing up in California, **Scott** celebrated Japanese holidays and went to Japanese festivals with his family. He remembers eating rice at every meal and using chopsticks. **Scott** didn't know what a baked potato was until he was 8. His grandparents had an immaculate backyard with bonsai trees and an elevated sitting room.

"The thing is, I don't remember not knowing I was adopted from as far back as I remember," **Fujita** said.

Rod and Helen, who is white, tried to have their own children but couldn't. They adopted Jason in 1975 and immediately put their names in for another child. **Scott** knows little about his biological parents, but he holds no grudge.

He's interested to learn more for family medical history, especially when he and his wife, Jaclyn, start having children. If he were to meet his biological mother, he would say, "Thank you."

"I could've been an abortion statistic," he said.

The Fujitas could feel the stares of people but never found themselves subjected to any hate. Friends would tease **Scott**, and he would tease back.

"Never once did I feel like I didn't fit in," **Fujita** said. "My friends would say, 'Who's your real mom?' and I'd say, 'I'm living with my real mom and my real dad. People would say, 'This is Rod and Helen and their adopted son.' I don't look at it that way. They're my parents and always will be.'"

On Sunday at Washington, **Fujita** will make his sixth start for the Cowboys. He made perhaps the biggest play of the season against his former team, Kansas City, sacking QB Trent Green and forcing a fumble that was returned 59 yards.

His father was at the game. So was his uncle. Rod was also at Texas Stadium with Helen for the Detroit and Denver games.

"Whenever **Scott** made a tackle, we'd stand up and yell, and this one guy put two and two together," Rod said. "At the end of the game, he came up and asked us if we were **Scott's** parents."

If the man had time, he would have heard an amazing story.

Rod was born in an internment camp near the Hela River in Arizona, while his father, Nagao, was fighting for the all-Japanese 442nd Infantry Regiment in Italy. His mother, Lillie served as a teacher in the camps.

Rod does not remember what it was like in the internment camp. **Scott** has seen pictures online and has asked his grandmother questions.

"It's funny, in my whole life I've never seen someone make good out of a bad situations like she did and the family did," **Scott** said. "No ill feelings toward the government to this day. She just has such a positive frame of mind. To me, it looked terrible, but you never hear a crack in her voice."

After the war, Nagao **Fujita** became the first bilingual attorney in Ventura County. He spoke five languages. And he doted on his grandsons. He died in 1987 when **Scott** was 8.

"Just an incredibly generous man," **Scott** said.

Rod **Fujita** was a star football player at Oxnard High School before attending the University of the Pacific. He taught history and anthropology at Westlake and Thousand Oaks high schools for more than 30 years. He also coached freshman and JV football.

"**Scott** would come to practice and sort of imitate the players and do some of the drills they were doing," Rod said.

When **Scott** was young, the Fujitas would go to Cal Lutheran in Thousand Oaks in July and August to watch Cowboys training camp.

"Bill Bates let me carry his helmet and shoulder pads," **Scott** said. "I probably went to five or six practices, and I'd wait there as the players went by. 'Hey, Mr. Bates, let me carry your pads,' and then I'd walk off the field with him. He was a friendly guy. He took that extra time that to a 6 or 7 year old. Wearing a helmet, sweat dripping all over the place, meant a lot."

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