Redress groups urge cooperation

by J.K. Yamamoto
LOS ANGELES—Representatives of organizations seeking redress through Congress and the courts gave progress reports on their respective efforts Oct. 5 at a program jointly sponsored by JACL and the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations (NCCR).

Bert Nakano, national spokesperson for NCCR, told the audience at Venice Japanese Community Center that the joint program began in September and is committed on all fronts to win redress...We can be proud that as a community, diverse as it is in our approaches, we have all come together in the interests of and for the good of all Japanese Americans.

Stressing that other minorities are also combating racism, Nakano said, "Our movement cannot and must not be separated from this broader movement for justice. It is critical that the way we proceed would be narrow and hypocritical."

NCCR has "participated in various Japanese-American, pan-Asian, Black, Latino and other communities...in mutual support and understanding of their struggles," said Nakano, giving as an example his people's support of an upcoming anti-apartheid rally. This in turn leads to support for redress from other communities, he said.

Concerns About Bill

Nakano also raised NCCR's concerns about provisions not covered in the redress bills introduced to Congress earlier this year. He recommended that:

1. Reparations be tax-exempt and not jeopardize eligibility for other forms of government aid;
2. Application procedures be revised and clarified;
3. The definition of eligibility include anyone forced to leave the West Coast, whether interned or not;
4. The allocation bill be comprised at least in part of former evacuees or their descendents, with money earmarked in advance by guidelines specifying how it is to be spent;
5. All government announcements outlining eligibility, payment procedures, terms, and the like be in multiple languages.

Class Action Suit

Joyce Okinaka, speaking for the National Council on Japanese American Redress (NCJAR), which filed a multi-billion dollar suit against the government in 1983, emphasized that NCJAR's legal action is not inconsistent with or mutually exclusive from the decision of NCCR and JACL to go to Congress for redress.

"So long as there are different avenues of redress that are given to the people of the U.S. by the Constitution...it's absolutely critical that every avenue be explored and exhausted."

The suit was dismissed in May 1984 by U.S. District Judge Louis Oberdorfer, who ruled that the statute of limitations had already expired. NCJAR's appeal was not heard until last month in Washington, D.C.

While she did not predict the outcome of the appeal, she said she would "like to see it appealed to the Supreme Court...It's a matter of poetic justice for the Supreme Court to have to hear this class action suit, because it was through the Supreme Court that the government lied when they talked about Japanese Americans having committed acts of treason and sabotage."

If the appeal fails, "one of the possibilities is trying to obtain enabling legislation through the Congress. That would get over certain procedural obstacles, including the statute of limitations," said Attorney Peter Irons briefly commented on NCJAR's suit. "Skelly Wright and Ruth Ginsburg, two of the judges who heard the appeal in September, said, 'you can't get two better judges for concern about civil rights and justice.'"

Wright "played an enormous role in protecting the rights of the Japanese Americans during the 50s and 70s" and Ginsburg "has demonstrated that the judicial branch will not stand for any further dilatory action by the Administration."

The injunction granted last month recommended a preliminary hearing on the case to be held in late October. Aguilar decided that the matter would be resolved and the decision made permanent on Oct. 5.

"The U.S. Attorney's attempt to appeal this decision is using the same delaying tactics that Attorney General [Edwin] Meese so often decry as being an obstacle to justice and costs the U.S. taxpayer thousands of dollars," Matsui said.

"The appeal process is an obvious attempt by the Administration to circumvent its lawful obligation to release these funds. Judge Aguilar's decision clearly indicates that the judicial branch will not stand for any further dilatory action by the Administration."

The injunction granted last month recommended a preliminary hearing on the case to be held in late October. Aguilar decided that the matter would be resolved and the decision made permanent on Oct. 5. If the funds are not released immediately as ordered by Judge Aguilar, our last resort will be to file a contempt of court charge," Matsui said. "I sincerely hope that the Administration will comply with the law."
Asian American literary scholar dies

LANSONG, Mich.—Dorothy Yoshimori, a champion of Asian Pacific American causes at Michigan State University, died Oct. 6 from a series of cardiac arrests after being admitted to Lansing General Hospital for a liver disorder. She was 54.

An associate professor of American thought and language, the Maui-born Yoshimori joined the department as an assistant professor in 1975. Department chair Henry Silverman said she underestimated the seriousness of the illness she had had for about two weeks.

"We tried to take her to the hospital last week and she didn't want to go," he said. "She wanted to teach her classes. She was that kind of teacher. She was very anxious to fulfill her responsibilities.

Yoshimori, a graduate of the University of Chicago, Univ. of Hawaii, and UC Berkeley, was a scholar of 19th-century American literature, especially the works of Herman Melville, but she was even more well known as an advocate of Asian Pacific American awareness at MSU.

She was a founding member of the Asian Pacific American Women's Assn. in East Lansing in 1981, serving as chair until 1983. She was also instrumental in creating an Asian Pacific American student liaison at MSU. She worked to dispel myths about Asian Pacifics, meeting with university and government leaders and responding by letter to news reports she considered inaccurate. She was also involved in the Modern Language Association, chairing a number of sessions on Asian American literature.

Articles by Yoshimori appeared in MELUS, the journal of the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature in the U.S. Subjects of her studies include writers John Okada, Hisaye Yamamoto, Wakako Yamauchi, and (in papers yet to be published) Yoshio Mori. She edited and wrote the introduction to two plays by Frank Chin, The Chicken-coop, Chinaman and Year of the Dragon, for University of Washington Press.

She is survived by her son, five sisters, two brothers, and her mother. A memorial service was held Oct. 11 at the MSU Alumni Chapel.

Contributions can be made to the Dorothy Yoshimori Scholarship Fund, MSU Development, 1407 S. Harrison, East Lansing, MI 48824.

—From a report by Lansing State Journal

Publisher allowed to leave Taiwan

MONTEREY PARK, Calif.—Lee Yaping, who was arrested by Taiwan authorities last month for allegedly publishing Communist Chinese propaganda in her Monterey Park-based newspaper, has received permission to leave Taiwan, according to the editor of her newspaper.

Anthony Yuen, editor of the Chinese-language International Daily News, said Oct. 18 that Lee plans to return to Los Angeles, but he was not sure whether she would be allowed to return to Taiwan in the future. Lee is a Taiwan citizen with immigrant status in the U.S.

The arrest of Lee, who was charged with printing an interview with China's ambassador to the U.S. and other items deemed favorable to the Communists, was assailed by the State Dept. and members of Congress as an infringement of her right to free speech in the U.S. Taiwan authorities later stressed that she had distributed her publication in Taiwan, where it is banned.

She was subsequently released with a two-year term of "protective guidance."

—From a report by Los Angeles Times

SANTA ROSA, Calif.—A Japanese American community museum, MELUS, the journal of the American National Museum's Association for Campus & Community Museums, was executive director of the ASIAN AMERICAN MEDIA CENTER, Inc.

The focus will be a bronze bust of Kanaye Nagasawa of Fountaingrove, presented to Friends of the Society for the Study of Asian American Literature and Film. Nagasawa, a resident of the city, died in 1981, serving as chair until 1983.

The bust was presented as thanks for President Reagan's words before the Japanese Diet on Nov. 11, 1983.

In 1985, a young samurai student, Kanaye Nagasawa, left Japan to learn what made the West economically strong and technologically advanced. Ten years later he founded a small winery at Santa Rosa, called Fountaingrove Round Barn and Winery.

Some soon known as the Grape King of California. Nagasawa came to California to learn, and stayed to enrich our lives. Both of our countries owe much to this Japanese warrior-turned-businessman.

As a delegation from Kagoshima, as well as members of Kagoshima Kenjinkai throughout California, will attend. Demonstrations of Japanese arts will be provided by musician Kimie Gutzman, dancers from Hanayagi School, flower arrangers from Sogetsu and Ike-no-bou schools, origami by Ryo Yori and Holly Ryall, martial arts groups led by Walt Peterson and Manuel Abada, Jr., and tea ceremonies by Urashige, Kage-san and Omote Tesenke schools.

Info: Fern Harger, Friends of Kagoshima, (707) 590-6008; Dayton Lum痣is, museum director, 579-1500.

Check to: Museum Development, MSU Development, 1407 S. Harrison, East Lansing, MI 48824.

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Grape King to be remembered

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By Any Other Name

EAST WIND

Bill Marutani

I HAVE A photograph of the camp in which I spent a few months in 1942 after we had been transferred from Finsnedale, California. It is of the camp in Tule Lake. In planning to have it framed and hung up on my office walls—as a constant reminder how fragile the protection of the U.S. Constitution can be when our leaders lose faith in its meaning and strength—I grappled for a title for the photograph. “Tule Lake Relocation Center”? Looking at the photograph and remembering what it was that forcibly sent me there and all that it stood for, I could not, in honesty, accept such a title. For it was a label, an euphemism, that was selected by those who participated in my uprooting and incarceration. For example, if they had taken it one step further and called these camps “re-treats” or “rest camps,” should we go along and adopt such terms?

Hardly.

VARIOUS GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, at various times, referred to these camps as “concentration camps.” In one of his early communications, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt referred to them as such. In 1944, Justice Owen Roberts of the U.S. Supreme Court, in Korematsu v. United States, wrote:

“I am of the opinion that a citizen seeking for the photograph. “Tule Lake Relocation Center”? Looking at the photograph and remembering what it was that forcibly sent me there and all that it stood for, I could not, in honesty, accept such a title. For it was a label, an euphemism, that was selected by those who participated in my uprooting and incarceration. For example, if they had taken it one step further and called these camps “re-treats” or “rest camps,” should we go along and adopt such terms?

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“I am of the opinion that a citizen seeking

in the incarceration by the three men convicted and imprisoned for defying Executive Order 9066, and Yasui’s clear and concise answers to the many questions evolved by the film, was reason enough to travel to Salinas for the event.

But the symposium itself, following an excellent Japanese dinner prepared by Mrs. Margaret Tanda, was really one of the most educational events presented by an institution of higher learning.

Continued on Next Page

When I answer (very politely, of course) that the release came too late, or I didn’t have time to correct the poor grammar and sloppy, year-old draft, he better, I have found that that response usually invites more verbal abuse, so I have taken to sticking, “Well, maybe it’ll be in the next issue.”

Sometimes I’ll just pass it on. “Look, if you’ve got problems with the organization, call up Ron at Headquarters and talk to him.” I even give them Ron’s phone number. And to think, I never get a word of thanks from our national director for directing calls from interested members his way. Life isn’t fair.

But even complaints are strange. Recently, FC’s reduction to 8 pages has made space a valuable item. So, in case you haven’t noticed, I haven’t been writing a column every week. The response has been flattering and uncompromising.

Missed your column, Bob. Run out of ideas?" "How come you don’t write your serious columns any more?" Along with, “How come you don’t write your monthly column any more?” And even better, "Don’t you have anything more interesting to write about than air conditioning?"

Well, I did start a couple of columns on how the contributors could make my life easier. Now that’s pretty serious, isn’t it? I thought JK and I could start writing columns on how to write a good, tight press release, followed by one on how to write a good, concise press release. It didn’t really sound too insulting and condescending, not to mention space-consuming. And when Bill Marutani wrote about the lack of writing skills among today’s college graduates (Sept 27 FC), I decided 2 articles on this topic would not be conducive to contributions.

I do want to comment on the Judge’s column, however. I think he should either get new glasses or lower his expectations. As a judge, he should be able to do a written opinion. ‘That’s the truth of the matter. And as I look back on it—although at the time I argued the case, I am amazed that the Supreme Court ever approved it.” (Emphasis added.)

And most recently, on April 12, 1982, when President Ronald Reagan issued Proclamation 4987, he declared:

THAT IN 1966, former Associate Justice Tom Clark of the Supreme Court was quoted as follows:

I made a lot of mistakes in my life. One is my part in the evaucation of the Japanese from California to the internment camps at Tule Lake. No federal penitentiary so treats its adult prisoners. Here were the children and babies as well. To reach the unheated latrines, which were the center of the blocks of four, the children had to crawl under the walls...One week later (who, me?), the ones who have the courage to say “No” will be made, all would benefit. A lot safer.”

Yeah.” I thought aloud, “it could be fun. There are the silent ones who don’t say anything and then write what they really think later (who, me?). The ones who wish to avoid substantive discussion and embarrassing questions by deftly changing subjects. And these types exist throughout the organization, not only on the National Board.”

So I was feeling pretty good about this approach. After all, if

in spite of struggle and toil, in spite of exclusion and incarceration, peoples whose roots lie in Asia and the Pacific Islands have brought forth myriad contributions to this country—in the arts and literature, science, industry, commerce, government, and agriculture. (Emphasis added.)

And SO, IF there be any who would deny the label “concentration camps” or our then­situation as anything other than an incarceration,” various people in government—from President Roosevelt then, to the current president—have made a number of people in between—openly and honestly called a “spade” a “spade.”

And having been there, we know.
On Page 8

Getting On In Years

FROM THE FRINGING PAN: Bill Hosokawa

As the saying goes, considering the alternative I'm happy to be among the old geezers that lots of folks seem to be concerned about these days. It is almost impossible to pick up a magazine without finding an article about aging and the getting old, what to do if you do, the bad things an aging population is doing to the Social Security system, how to pick a de­lightful retirement home, the importance of writing a will, ad infinitum.

Prime time television is flooded with programs on the same subjects. Perhaps you've heard that "A wrong is a wrong, and until it is rectified it is still a wrong.

Among the other interesting speakers was Samuel James Barnes, who said, "I can't believe we took citizens of our country and put them in intern­ment camps," adding that he was at the symposium to say, "How wrong I was at the time in support­ing the internment, and how wrong our government was!"

A number of JACL chapters are located near institutions of higher learning and they can easily organize forums, symposiums and other educational events to inform the public about the tragedy of the internment. I earnestly hope they will do so.

And to Minoru Yasui I say, thank you for showing us the way. Min. Gambare, and continue to lead us to success!

SEAN KIERTZ
Santa Rosa, Calif.

Half-Truths and Fictions

What pods and fortunes good Mr. Ken Masugi so Sept. 20 PICO is his secret burden the fact he is Japanese and 100% American and laden with the hubris of an academ­ician, a guardian of truths? By Zeus, he flings thunderbolts of extravagant half-truths and fictions at the Abyssinian Jesse Jackson with rhetorical enough to make Aristotle wince.

A radical because he opposes closed institutions and minds? Perhaps Mr. Jackson is saying truths Mr. Masugi and others don't want to hear. For a most radical manifesto, I would suggest Mr. Masugi, chairman of Claremont College's U.S. Constitution Bicentennial Committee, reread the Declaration of Independence which legalizes the overthrow of the Government—pretty strong stuff.

Like the Jew, Mr. Jackson has racial burdens—the memory of the African Holocaust, slavery—justified by this nation and the "law" (Constitution) until 1864 and deferment of full civil rights until 1964.

This letter is not an apology for Mr. Jackson but to remind our­selfs that I was privi­leged of his own experience. No one can eliminate prejudices—just recognize them." (E.R. Murrow, "Grayce Ellsworth, Maine"

Ready to Help Out

Thank you for your excellent coverage of redress events/activities progress in general. I look forward each week to receiving your copy of the Pacific Citizen for the latest update. I do not wish to bother you but I would like to be well informed.

I'm a Sansei. While growing up, I heard the story of being sent off to camp in Arkansas from my parents, but I never really real­ized what an injustice that had been carried out. In making the best of a bad situation, they never really stressed what a terrible time it was. Having read the articles in the Pacific Citizen I am trying to contact the person who wrote the "En­d of the Business" on public tele­vision has made me realize the tragedy of that generation and everyone else involved. It is ironic how a country founded on the principles of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" turned its back on people who were trying to get away from all those historical injustices.

K. Sansei

Touchdown For Redress

At the 1978 National Council meeting in Salt Lake City, JACL made a decision to seek redress for the exclusion, removal and de­privation of Japanese Americans.

In 1980 the proposal program was an acknowledged prior­ity among JACL's programs. We were committed to $42,000,000 in general fund cuts, and $63,700 in personnel cost reductions. Originally the list included proposed reductions of $25,000 in program expenditures also, but this was disallowed.

The National Board, at its September quarterly meeting, was asked to make prudent decisions to reduce budget expend­itures affecting personnel, re­gressive tax cuts, and to allocate fund, among other things. The crux of the matter is the implementation of the Legislative Education Committee (LEC) budget.

The LEC requested $100,000 in order to set up the machinery that would administer the political arm of JACL. In the proposal drawn by the LEC, meeting in tandem with the National Board, were budget items for an executive director and an associate director for 6 months. No rent or secretarial help was included, on the assump­tion that these costs would be ab­sorbed by JACL's general budget.

At the same time, the National Board was faced with the short­age of redress pledges and membership income, the Endow­ment Fund loan repayment de­mands, and a "laundry list" of budgetary cuts was painfully wrung out by a committee work­ing with the President and the Na­tional Director. The proposal included $42,000 in general fund cuts, and $63,700 in personnel cost reductions. Originally the list in­cluded proposed reductions of $25,000 in program expenditures also, but this was disallowed.

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Political Action Committee (PAC's) are generally set up to be providers. Strangely, we are see­ing a role reversal in which the LEC seeks funding from JACL, a non-profit organization.

But the non-profit personnel cat­egory will be bearing the brunt of reductions. The implication is that there will be less time and help available from staff.

The converse of the LEC is the lobbying affiliate of JACL with the activation of LEC, a major fund drive was initiated that gathered in the income of the insurance, use 501 (h), without separate staffing, or delay the pressure to be said could be improved if pledges would be doubled, or sent in quarterly, or increased by other means, volun­tarily, but in large enough num­bers. Donations should be made unrestricted to remain tax deductible.

Looking Ahead

In the year ahead to the Chicago national convention in July 1986, the PAC's are due for a $6,000 reduction and convention work­shop budget requests must be sub­mitted by chairman immediately to Yash Nakashima, Vice President of Conventions, at Na­tional Headquarters.

The next National Board meet­ing is expected to be held in the upcoming year in Chicago to coincide with an LEC fundrais­er. Reports, questions, comments and input may be possible in per­son at future conventions, by chair­persons, by requesting time on the agenda.
Los Angeles/295-5204

Glen T. Umemoto
1431 Armacost Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90012; (213) 628-4945

Los Angeles — Nineteen years ago in the spring of 1967, the Japan American Citizens' League of Southern California was established. JACL is the oldest Japanese American civic organization in America. It is a nonpartisan, nonsectarian, nonreligious, nonprofit organization. Its mission is to be a forum for the betterment of Japanese American communities and the enhancement of the understanding of Asian American culture.

A JACL statistics report shows that there are currently over 170,000 JACL members nationwide. In Southern California, there are over 6,000 JACL members.

JACL is divided into five districts: Northwest, Northern California, Southern California, Desert/SW, and Mountain. There are also 50 chapters throughout the United States.

The Southern California chapter holds a general membership meeting followed by a potluck dinner at the clubhouse on the second Saturday of every month. According to the report, the chapter has a membership of over 600 members.

JACL also sponsors a variety of events throughout the year, including a scholarship program to provide financial assistance to students pursuing higher education.

In addition, the chapter organizes social events such as picnics, potlucks, and holiday gatherings. They also sponsor cultural and educational programs to promote understanding of Japanese American history and culture.

The chapter encourages all Japanese Americans to join and become active in the organization. Membership provides a sense of community, support, and opportunities to engage with others who share similar interests and values.

For more information on how to join JACL or to participate in their events, visit their website or contact them directly.
Nothing More to Dream

by David Mas Masumoto

I picture the haunting Depression photograph by Dorothea Lange—the Dust Bowl farmer slouched behind the wheel of his old car, leaving his home in a desperate search for work. His land is gone and his farm is lost, the devastation revealed in his face: Dark shadows frame his features, wrinkles cut deep into his weathered flesh. Behind his staring eyes I see the dreams of full harvests shattered, only a bleak hope of the promised land in the West remains alive, flickering within.

Welcome to California and farming, 1985.

We are deep into the summer harvest, the annual return of searing heat, labor and sweat. For small, family farmers like myself, a depression endures, a general depression in agriculture as it once did. The powerful economic forces acting on us, and journalists will report in shorthand terms to explain our plight: overextended, highly leveraged, foreign competition. But, in a word, we’re obsolete.

Many believe that those who are failing are dumb, inefficient farmers, simple-minded folk who would have failed in any venture. But if you look around, especially at the young farmers in trouble, you may be shocked to find the high percentage with college degrees and training.

I graduated from UC Berkeley with honors, have a master’s degree from UC Davis, and was a Regent’s Fellow. If anything, though, I am dumb in one way. I still believed.

I believe in an obsolete work ethic—the simple idea that with hard work you will be rewarded. Yet I thought that I had learned a lesson from the last few years. You have to mix a good helping of cold, rational business thinking with that hard work. I, like many farmers, did that this past season, and the results remain the same: collapsed fruit prices.

The work ethic no longer functions as it once did. The powerful myth that so many of us believed in, the legacy of a family farm that I inherited, the dreams that drove a Dust Bowl farmer West—all have collapsed, and our spiritual fiber has been left in shreds. A vacuum now drains us, an empty harvest fills the summer. No matter how deeply rooted our dreams may lie, not all of us can farm. But I won’t cry at the funeral; rather, I fear what might replace my aging dreams: Will I slip into a Yuppie mentality based on status and material accumulation?

A fundamental change is unfolding in the Central Valley of California. Some farms will survive, but a different sort of agriculture will emerge. I am just a casualty of this current battle, but, unlike the Dust Bowl farmer, I don’t even have the hope of promised lands to dream of. That’s the underlying meaning of obscurity: nothing more to dream.

In the summer of ’85 a belief in work and spiritual justice has been rendered useless. And, as we go under, it is more than farmers that will be bankrupt.

Masumoto farms 30 acres of peaches and grapes with his father in Del Rey, outside Fresno. He is a winner of the Civil Rights National Japanese American Literature Contest and author of Silent Strength, a collection of short stories on the JA farm community. This article originally appeared in the L.A. Times.

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LEC Financial Report

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<tr>
<td>1985/1986</td>
<td>June-Aug</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. OFFICES / FACILITIES</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. MEETINGS / TRAVEL</td>
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<td>C. FUND DRIVE EXPENSES</td>
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<td>D. MATERIAL PROCUREMENT</td>
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<td>E. LOBBY EXPENSES</td>
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<td>F. MISCELLANEOUS</td>
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Total Expenses: $130,000

Redress Pledges

- **No. 3—Oct. 7, 1986**: $3,510.00
- **JACL (for 1986 Pledge)**: $35,000
- **Marin Grand Total**: $213,090.04
- **JACL $1,315 for 1983 & 1984 pledges**.

Pac Southwest...

- **442. Energy**: Examination in which negative energy on the LEC food drive must be re-examined for the 99th time and money for redress must be raised for the 7th time and money to redress must be raised. Together we may drop the ball we have been waiting for.

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- **Annual**: $30.00.

LEC:...
Tropical Nature.

Zoology, Harvard University, na, Calif., was a nature photographer, slide; reminiscences or an including Miyata's field notebook contributions to the archives can be sent to the author (with Adrian Forsyth) of ecdotes. In a Montana fishing accident in 1972, well known herpetologist, and coauthor, world class fly fisherman, ichiro Miyata, who was raised in California, went to Harvard University, the income to be

Michigan

Fund administered and enforced.

Miyata Memorial Fund established CAMBRIDGE, Mass.—The Ken ichiro Miyata Memorial Fund has been established at Harvard University, the income to be used for undergraduate and graduate field research in herpetology. Miyata, who was raised in Ovi capital, was a naturalist, photographer, world class fly fisherman, well known herpetologist, and coauthor (with Adrian Forsyth) of Tropical Nature. He died at age 92 in a Montana fishing accident in October 1972.

An archive of memorabilia, including Miyata’s field notebook and herpetological slides, is being developed for Harvard’s Museum of Comparative Zoology. Those who knew Miyata are invited to send slides, reminiscences or anecdotes.

Donations to the fund and contributions to the archives can be sent to: Dr. James J. McCarthy, Director, Museum of Comparative Zoology, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138.

REDDY

Continued from Front Page

"knows more about discrimination than virtually anyone in the country," Irons said. "To the extent that judges make a difference, the class action suit certainly got a break.

Forum Nobles Cases

As far as his own area of expertise— the 79 nobles cases of Minoru Yasui, Fred Korematsu and Gordon Hirabayashi, "Irons said that Hirabayashi’s case "promises to be the most important in terms of its potential impact on the redress movement.

While all three plaintiffs charged that the government suppressed and falsified evidence in order to prove its case against JA to the Supreme Court during WW2, Hirabayashi’s case, which went to trial in Seattle in June, was the only one in which witnesses gave testimony, "The government responded by dredging up the most incredible racism that you could imagine. The government put witnesses on the stand to defend the wartime internment," said Irons. "The government has even argued that there was evidence of espionage and sabotage by Japanese Americans... It appals me that the government can put on this kind of defense with a straight face.

He expressed confidence that the presiding judge, Donald Voor­ nees, "will write an opinion which completely demolishes the government’s claim, 40 years after the internment, that military neces­ sity required the evacuation."

Like Okinaka and Nakano, Irons emphasizes the need to "use every forum that we have access to" and to build "bridges and coalitions to other groups and unions, all kinds of community organiza­ tions" in order to promote redress.

LEC Campaign

Yasui presented the legislative strategy being pursued by 230
discussion (see last week’s PC). Stres­ sing the importance of reaching legislators on a personal level, he noted that Sen. Ted Stevens (R. Alaska), a co-sponsor of redress bill S 1062, had Nisei schoolmates while at UCLA—schoolmates who

AA leadership conference to be held: A

WASHINGTON — The National Asian American Leadership Conference, sponsored by Asian American Voter Coalition in cooperation with Asian American Fund, will be held Nov. 7-8 at the Hyatt Regency.

The conference objectives are to exchange ideas and experiences from 1984 voter registra­ tion and education activities; inform Asian Americans of how to participate in the national political parties; organize a workshop and training session for those interested in running for public office; and provide a communica­ tion network with regard to employment opportunities in the public and private sector.

Activities include a White House briefing and tour Nov. 7; a session with representatives of the Democratic and Republican national committees and a ban­ quet honoring members of Congress who are honorary Asian American Fund board members on Nov. 8; and a national conven­ tion of Asian American Voters Coalition on November 1.

Registration is $900 advance, $700 on site, including two luncheons and the banquet, $30 in ad­ vance, $25 on site for conference only (s30 for students).

Send checks payable to Asian American Coalition to: Terri Schroeder, 1625 K St. N.W., Suite 1010, Washington, D.C. 20006, Info: (202) 638-7194.

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Mayan/Youratan Exploration $2,495 Nov 12
Mida, Chichen Itza, Uxmal and Kabah/12 meals/$214

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Akune: The JA in ‘ER’

by J.K. Yamamoto

With the cancellation of the CBS comedy “ER,” actress Shuko Akune has parted company with Maria Amarda, the Filipino American actress from the long-running play of the same name.

Although Akune had long aspired to be a stage actress, she had never planned to work on network television. “It was a fluke,” she says.

She describes herself as a “Nisei-han,” born in Nebraska to a Kibei father and an Issei mother, both of whom were working as chicken sexers at the time. When she was three, they moved to Chicago and opened a cleaners.

Because of her “very Issei, traditional” mother and her father, who was more sympathetic but wanted her to get an education, she did not pursue an acting career at first. But eventually she dropped out of college and entered the Chicago theater community, working as a waitress to support herself.

“If just tore them up,” she says of her parents’ reaction. But ironically, she thinks it was from her parents that she got the determination that enabled her to reach her goal.

Her stage credits include the role of Yoko Kuzukago in Nicholas Theatre Co.’s “Primary English Class” (in which all of the characters’ last names meant “wastebaskets” in different language), and the title role in Play Productions’ “Josephine the Mouse Singer,” an avant garde play about a “mouse who wanted to sing and didn’t want to work.”

She joined Organic Theater Co., whose plays included the acclaimed “Bleacher Bums,” partly because she was intrigued by the group’s racially mixed casting. Her first play with them was “Dr. Rat,” a musical about laboratory experiments. She jokes that she was being typecast—not as an Asian, but as a rodent.

She was first cast as Maria when Organic Theater did the play “ER” (Emergency Room). “It wasn’t intended to be a comedy,” she recalls, but “the first week we filled the house with various hospital organizations, and they about died…laughing.”

“So ‘ER’ was developed into a comedy, becoming a phenomenal success that ran four years (with Akune as Maria for two and a half years). The play got a rave review from L.A. Times critic Dan Sullivan and was eventually developed into a series to be taped in Hollywood.

Although told that all of the parts would probably go to L.A. or New York actors, all of the original cast auditioned for the part. Akune, along with Bruce Young as Fred the Cop, were retained in the TV version. (The play continued until this past summer, with Cheryl Hama-da taking Akune’s place.) She remembers that Elliot Geller, star of the TV version, asked during rehearsal, “Have you ever done this before?” When she replied in the negative, he said, “Yeah, me too.” She was relieved to hear that Gould, despite his extensive movie experience, was also nerved about his first TV series.

In playing a Filipino character, Akune felt “it’s important to do your homework.” In addition to drawing on her own experience—“I grew up with Filipino girls, Chinese, Japanese. We all ate at each other’s homes”—she would also “do character studies” of people around her, learning their dialects and mannerisms.

“I have not heard any backlash…The Filipino community in Chicago loved it,” she says. “They encouraged us, and they were happy to see an Asian actor working.” She adds that her role carried a special responsibility “because there are so very few Filipinos portrayed on TV.”

The fan mail she gets from Asian American children shows her that she has been a role model of sorts, presenting “a new type of field for them.”

Her character took center stage in an episode where she meets her father, who had run off after she was born, for the first time. He turned out to be an Englishman, played by Christopher Hewitt. Akune says Maria was abruptly given mixed ancestry in that particular episode.

In terms of social issues, Akune thinks “ER” tried something new by pairing Maria with Fred the Cop, who is black. The one time Akune worked in an Asian guest star—Keone Young as a computer technician—Akune suggested script changes that would make the character less stereotyped, such as eliminating a part where he yells “Banana!”

Her concern about Asian American images has not been confined to her work on “ER.” With the help of Stuart and Carolyn Gordon of Organic Theater, she founded Mina Sama-No Theatre Co., Chicago’s only Asian American theater group, in 1982. The one-time Akune and Gould means the company belongs to everyone. “The ‘No’ is possessive and has nothing to do with them personally.”

Currently the group’s president and business director, she has remained on the board of directors since moving to L.A. “Every time I go back home, I’m recruiting more people,” she says, and while on the West Coast, she is “making contacts for the company through word of mouth.”

Whereas she goes back to Chicago, “My pop and I take the karaoke and Mina Sama No and go to the Heiwa Terrace (a new citizens’ housing project).” Dad is like the Mitch Miller of Japanese music. We take a mike around… the Isseis sing and they love it.

“They’re just thrilled to have us come by… We’re not professional, but we’re community. That’s what the difference is.”

One of Mina Sama-No’s biggest projects was a 1984 stage adaptation of the folk tale “Urasinha Tarô” produced by Akune, directed by Mare Rita and done largely in pantomime with music by Keith Uchima. “The Isseis loved it,” as did many others, she says.

Akune credits such local community groups as Chicago JACL, which offered a few doors down from her parents’ cleaning business, for supporting Mina Sama-No.

One of their latest projects is “Autumn and Spring,” a work written by Uchima, now the group’s executive director.

Despite her fondness for Chicago, Akune has remained in L.A., appearing in “Brotherhood” on Showtime and “He’s the Mayor” on ABC. She would someday like to— and possibly be seen in— “Asian-oriented shows that can be done in a fashion like ‘The Cosby Show.’”

Although TV networks still “don’t like to see variety,” she feels that Asian artists can and should “present an alternative… something creating different things.”