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Friday, March 15, 1991

News

California bill would protect redress money

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—A bill was recently introduced in the California State Legislature to ensure that the state won't be able to claim any portion of Japanese American redress payments by restricting public assistance benefits.

Senate Bill 353 was authored by Sen. Patrick Johnston (D-Stockton), who had authored legislation in 1988 that exempted federal redress payments from state income tax, and declared that such payments would not affect a person's eligibility for Medi-Cal or public assistance.

The recent bill, however, responds to some reported inconsistencies in the implementation of the law. It appears that the state can still claim all or a portion of the federal redress payments in certain circumstances.

"I am extremely disappointed that the intent of the legislature has not been carried out," said Sen. Johnston. "I still do not believe that the government should compensate an individual for a past injustice with one hand, and with the other hand, take the money away."

Currently, the state may issue a claim against the redress payment after the death of a Medi-Cal recipient through the Medi-Cal Recovery Act. Once the redress payments pass into a person's estate, the state is able to put a lien against the estate to recover past Medi-Cal claims.

Although the money is exempt during a person's lifetime, it is not exempt in death. Senate Bill 353 would exclude redress payments from the Medi-Cal Recovery Act. It would prohibit the state from attaching redress payments for overpayment of Medi-Cal benefits.

Further, Johnston points out that although redress payments are exempt as cash for purposes of qualifying for Medi-Cal, goods purchased with these moneys

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Washington state war dead honored

SEATTLE—Sen. Daniel K. Inouye and the Seattle Nisei Veterans Committee will dedicate a memorial to honor Washington state's Japanese war dead at a ceremony scheduled for Saturday, March 23, at 2 p.m. at Nisei Veterans Memorial Hall, 1212 S. King Street.

The ceremony will feature the unveiling of a memorial exhibit of photographs and biographical summaries of all but two of the 62 Japanese American war dead of the state.

A booklet called "Uncommon American Patriots," written by Dr. Francis M. Fukuhara, a former commander of the Nisei Veterans Committee, will be distributed to attendees. INOUE

Further information on the event is available by contacting Teresa Mori, 206/725-4955.



PROFILE

NAME: Jude Narita
BORN: Long Beach, Calif.
OCCUPATION: actress/writer, teacher
UPCOMING: Performs best known work, "Coming of Age, Song for a Samsel," at the Japan America Theatre, 244 S. San Pedro St., Los Angeles, Saturday, May 25. Information: 213/680-3700.



Jude Narita:

Acting, naturally

By Richard Suenaga

She reaches down the Well of Souls—for the grit, the flaws, the feelings, the tugging range of human emotions—then pulls them up and peaks them into performance.

Acting performance. It is, Jude Narita says, *The Moment*. When it all comes together on stage. And for her it seems so simple.

"Nothing is tough about acting. It just happens for me. It's when I feel the most alive. Time just stands still when it works."

"I'm an actress because I have to be," Narita says. "I am an artist who has something to say—about truth, honesty, something about the human condition."

All of that acting talent was recently on stage at the East West Theatre in Hollywood where Narita was starring in an adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's classic "Hedda Gabler."

Of her work in "Hedda" Los Angeles Times critic Robert Koehler described Narita's acting with phrases like "tour de force" and "Olympian acting chops."

You might say Narita was born to act. Well, almost. She started when

See ACTRESS/page 6

Matsui campaigns

SACRAMENTO—Congressman Robert T. Matsui told members of the Democratic Party that they must work to re-earn the respect and support of the state's 43 percent minorities.

Speaking before the Democratic Party's state convention March 2 here, Matsui, who is running for the U.S. Senate in 1992, warned the party that its failure to win suburban and rural areas has resulted in losses in races for governor, senator and president in past elections.

"In order to win in 1992, I believe we must reclaim our

historic role as a catalyst for economic progress," Matsui said. "... Unless we as Democrats come to some basic realizations about the changing values of our state, embrace an economic reform agenda, and offer our multi-cultural society opportunities for economic growth and empowerment, we will lose election after election."

The Matsui campaign continues to seek support throughout the state, according to Paul Iwasaki, former JACL Washington representative and now assisting with the congressman's campaign.

More redress workshops

WASHINGTON, D.C.—More redress workshops have been announced by the Department of Justice.

Sessions will be held in the Pacific Northwest area in Spokane and Seattle, Wash., and in Portland, Ore.

Members of the Japanese American community will be offered one-on-one assistance with their redress cases.

The workshops will be led by a team of representatives from the Office of Redress which will provide answers to questions on individual case status and required documentation.

Here are workshop locations and dates:

• March 19, Highland Park United Methodist Church, 611 South Garfield, Spokane, Wash., 12 noon to 4 p.m.

• March 20, Epworth United Methodist Church, 1333 South East 28th St., Portland, Ore., 4 to 8 p.m.

• March 21, St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 1610 South King St., Seattle, Wash., 4 to 8 p.m.

More redress workshops will be scheduled around the country at later dates.

Agenda

JACL

Salt Lake

The chapter announces its 1991 Utah Asian Festival, to be held May 4 at the Salt Palace. The format of the festival will feature cultural demonstrations, displays and ethnic foods.

The event will include a bike race/ride at Mill Creek Canyon Saturday, April 27, and a Miss Asia Utah contest scheduled for March 30. Joanne Hirase will represent the Japanese community in the contest. An Asian film festival will also be held in conjunction with the University of Utah.

In other chapter news, Salt Lake City will be the site for America Japan Week, May 25 through June 1. The event is a festival of Japanese activities being held in the U.S. for the first time. Featured will be parades, exhibits, demonstrations events. More than 1,800 Japanese participants are expected to participate.

Wasatch Front North, Utah

The chapter recently announced new officers. They are:

George Sugihara, president; Tate Koga, vice president and redress monitor; Dick Kishimoto, membership chairman; Roy Taketa, Japanese Asian Affairs chairman; Min Hamada, treasurer; Fugie Kunimoto, social chairman; Elsie Akisada, co-social chairman; and Marion Hori, secretary.

Arizona

The chapter has scheduled a variety of events in the near future. Among them are the scholarship awards banquet, to be held April 21 at the Fountain Suite Resort, Greenway Road and I-17, in Phoenix; Japan Week, May 1-10; and the Japan-U.S. Conference on Women's issues, May 5-11, at the Crescent Hotel, Phoenix.

Chicago

More than 1,200 people attended the Asian American Coalition of Chicago's Lunar New Year Celebration, Feb. 23, at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare Hotel.

The event brings together the largest pan-Asian gathering of the year—the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Korean, Cambodian, Filipino, Thai, Laotian, Hmong, Indian, Pakistani, Indonesian and Burmese communities.

This year, the Chinese American community hosted the event.

The event and the organization's goal is to unify the different Asian American communities and increase the visibility of Asian Americans as a rapidly growing and important political community.

Elected officials and political candidates are invited to come to the event, and this year, among the elected officials who gave welcomes were Gov. Jim Edgar, Mayor Richard Daley and U.S. Sen. Paul Simon.

Among the honored guests were the consul generals from the People's Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Thailand.

Keynote speaker was Dr. Chang Lin-Tien, chancellor of the University of California at Berkeley.

See AGENDA/page 5



OFFICIALS—Gathering for first meeting were Washington state Asian elected officers, from left, Lloyd Hara, Gene Matsusaka, Dolores Sibonga, Martha Choe, Art Wang, Cheryl Chow, Clarence Moriaki, Gary Locke, Nemesio Domingo, Ben Kodama and Gene Liddell.

Washington state Asians meet

OLYMPIA—More than 200 friends, supporters and state officials recently attended the first annual legislative reception for Asian elected officials of Washington state.

The group was formed to increase visibility of Asian Americans in politics and to create an understanding of the issues facing the Asian American community.

The organization's first goal was to meet with the governor to express concerns regarding more appointments of Asians as directors, judges and members of boards and commissions; state assistance to investigate the possibility of building multi-purpose centers and

language and dietary needs of Asian elderly; and additional funding for bilingual education and magnet programs.

Rep. Art Wang, chairman of the House Revenue Committee, emceed the event.

The highlight of the event was the introductions of 10 of the 21 elected Asian American officials by Rep. Gary Locke, chairman of the Appropriations Committee.

Present were Cheryl Chow and Dolores Sibonga, Seattle City Council members; Lloyd Hara, Seattle city treasurer; Clarence Moriaki, Tukwila City Council member; Nemesio Domingo, Renton School Board member; Ben Kodama, Highline School Board member; Gene Matsusaka,

Tacoma School Board Member; Gene Liddell, Lacey mayor pro-tem; and Wang.

Martha Choe, candidate for Seattle City Council, was also present.

Not present were Teugio Nakamura, Warden fire commissioner; Pauline Yamashita, Tacoma Civil Service Commission member; Richard Hau, Forks City Council member; Alan Sugiyama, Seattle School Board member; Wayne Tanaka, Bellevue School Board member; Judges Warren Chan, Richard Ishikawa and Liem Eng Tsui, King County superior court judges; Mark Chow, Seattle District Court Judge; and C. Kimi Kondo and Ron Mamiya, Seattle Municipal Court judges.

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CALENDAR

(Continued from page 1)

April 17—Stanford University's Asian American Speakers Series: "Hate Crime on the Rise?"—Dr. Alan Seld (APAC), Dennis Hayashi (Asian Law Caucus), Chong Chong (U.S. Asian, SF State), B. p.m., Asian American Activities Center, Old Union Clubhouse; info: Don Fujita 415-497-6250 or Ed Morimoto 497-1172.

April 24—Stanford University's Asian American Speakers Series: "Hate Crime on the Rise?"—Dr. Alan Seld (APAC), Dennis Hayashi (Asian Law Caucus), Chong Chong (U.S. Asian, SF State), B. p.m., Asian American Activities Center, Old Union Clubhouse; info: Don Fujita 415-497-6250 or Ed Morimoto 497-1172.

April 28—Contra Costa JACL Ladies Day, "Japanese Style Gift Wrapping." (Bring small box & paper), 2-3:30 p.m., Japanese Free Methodist Church, 5305 Potrero Ave., El Cerrito; info: Natsuko Irie 415-237-8730.

May 4—Japanese Evangelical Missionary Society (JEMS) women's luncheon, 5:30-7 p.m., San Lorenzo Japanese Christian Church, 415-661-7786.

May 4—Stanford University's Asian American Speakers Series: "Breaking the Glass Ceiling"—Henry Der, Bill Wong & Other Panelists, 8 p.m., Asian American Activities Center, Old Union Clubhouse; info: Don Fujita 415-497-6250 or Ed Morimoto 497-1172.

• LOS ANGELES AREA

May 12—Asian American Women's Network 10th Anniversary Woman Warrior Awards dinner, Bonaventure Hotel, 10 p.m., Japanese Free Methodist Church, 5305 Potrero Ave., El Cerrito; info: Natsuko Irie 415-237-8730.

AGENDA

(Continued from page 3)

Riverside

Guest speaker Jimmy Tokeshi, PSWDC regional director, delivered his speech on anti-Asian violence, terrorism, and the human rights implications of the Persian Gulf war "by proxy" as he was unable to attend because of illness. Douglas Urata scrambled at the last minute to pick up the text and read it for the Riverside JACL installation dinner Feb. 10 at the University of California Riverside campus.

Among the major events this year for the chapter are the annual Sendai Festival and scholarships. Support for UC-Riverside's Asian Pacific American Heritage Week program in mid-February, bone marrow testing for the Japanese American registry and the Aki Masaharu tenure case at Cal Poly Pomona was also encouraged. Urata also swore in the new chapter officers led by Michiko Yoshimura, who is serving her second term after a lapse of several years and succeeds Meiko Inaba. Also sworn in were:

Henry Nakakihira, vice president; Lorna Nakamura, Katherine Kumamoto, co-treasurers; Lily Taka, recording secretary; Beverly Inaba, corresponding secretary; Meiko Inaba, membership; Irene Ogasawara, newsletter; Mable Bristol, newsletter; Sumi Harada, Sunshine; William Takano, LEC; Dr. Gen Ogata, 1000 Club; Dr. Junji Kumamoto, redress & civil rights; Douglas Urata, PSWDC rep., insurance; Douglas Kano, Mark Takano, at-large.

Ventura

Chapter members and guests recently gathered at Harbortown Hotel to hear guest speaker, Dr. Harry Kitano, professor of social welfare and endowed chair, Japanese American Studies, UCLA, discuss differing values that shape individuals and the affect they have on the individual, family and society.

The chapter also installed new officers. They are Stan Mukai, Chuck Kuniyoshi, Sumiko Kato, Ken Nakano, Jean Kuniyoshi, Mori Abe, Joanne Nakano, Ellen Matsuo, Anne Asakura, Harry Kajihara, Janet Kajihara, Mizu Ogata and Yas Umeda.

The chapter also recognized Ventura County Supervisor John K. Flynn with an appreciation plaque. Flynn supported JACL's redress pursuit by persuading his fellow supervisors to support it.

The evening concluded with drawings for door prizes and all attendees left with a bag full of locally grown vegetables donated by agribusiness friends.

April 7—Visions for Kairo benefit dinner, Hyatt Regency, Los Angeles; School Board member Warren Furutani, special guest; Music Co., entertainment; info: Margaret Endo, 213-263-5693.

April 17—West L.A. JACL Auxiliary/Venice Japanese Community Center Queen's Luncheon, 12n, Venice Community Center; info: 213-8210-3237.

April 27—East San Gabriel Valley Japanese Community Center Queen's Luncheon, ESOVACC, info: Julie Tsunehi 213-626-1365 days, 728-6167 eve or Center.

Reunions: 1991

Berkeley Japanese Women Alumni, May 4—Luncheon reunion of classmates and friends, Alumni House, Contact: Tokyo Toppa, 2332 California St., Berkeley, CA 94703, 415-848-6362.

Fourth All-Imperial Valley, April 19-20—Reunion, Saturday, April 20, New Holiday Inn, 19000 S. Vermont, Torrance, CA. Cost is \$27 per person, dinner, 7:30 p.m. info: George Komatsu, 1313 W. 140th St., Gardena, CA 90247, 213-327-9812, Imperial Valley Golf Classic, Royal Vista Country Club on Friday, April 19, 1 p.m.

Laguna School, June 30—Reunion of former Bel/Montebello area residents and students, 11:30 a.m., Ginza Garden Restaurant, 1636 W. Redondo Beach, Gardena, RSVP \$15 lunch—Tel Hoshi, 1135 N. Pollock St., South San Gabriel, CA 91770, info: Ayako Takemoto Nakata, 215-630-3448; Rose Maruki Kikuchi, 213-721-6954; Mush Komaki, 714/776-3395.

Military Intelligence Service Language School, Oct. 29-Nov. 2—50th Anniversary Reunion, Oct. 29-31 at San Francisco, Miyako Hotel; Nov. 1-2 at Monterey

818/960-2566. (Orientation meeting—Mar. 17, 2 p.m. at Center.)

May 21—Deadline for nominations of individuals/organizations whose achievements helped introduce or preserve aspects of JA cultural heritage requested by Japanese American Historical Society; for forms, contact Iku Kinyama, JAHSSC, P.O. Box 3184, Torrance, CA 90510, 213-226-0608 or 213-226-6861. Four \$500 awards to be presented Sept. 28 at Shogun-La Restaurant.

Aug. 10-18—51st annual Nisei Week Festival, Little Tokyo. Info: 213-867-7193.

Hyatt Regency / Defense Language Institute, Presidio of Monterey, Calif.: pre-registration Aug. 15; info: P.O. Box 2350, San Jose, CA 95109.

Poston Block 17 Camp Reunion, late October—Details to be announced. Former Block 17 residents can contact the following for information & future mailings: Los Angeles—Bill Nishijima, (213) 327-9702; San Luis Obispo/Santa Maria—Louise Eason, (805) 489-3332; Santa Clara Valley/Gilroy—Mitsuo Sakai, (408) 842-8316; San Benito County—Mooch Fujita, (408) 779-4654; and San Francisco/Bay—Lois Yonemoto, (415) 221-6642.

Poston III Reunion, May 3-5—in San Diego. Mailing info: Yuki Kamamoto (619) 239-0896 before noon; booklet info: Tom Ozaki (619) 479-7582; display info: Ben Sagawa (619) 482-1736.

Tri-State Buddhist Temple's 75th Anniversary, July 4-6—a combination 75th Year Anniversary/Reunion in Denver. Contact Reunion Committee, 1947 Lawrence St., Denver, CO 80202.

YSSC (Yuba-Sutter-Butte-Colusa) Counties, Sept. 27-29—Third Nikkei Reunion slated. Info: Marie Sasaki, 936 Chestnut St., Yuba City, CA 95991.



ORGANIZERS—David Mas Masumoto, chairman of the Fresno Assembly Center Project, and Elisa Kamimoto, curator of the Fresno Metropolitan Museum, pose in front of exhibit at recent reception.

Fresno

A capacity crowd attended the recent Fresno Assembly Center Memorial Project reception held at the Fresno Fairgrounds.

Former internees as well as the general public, viewed the "Wall of Names" listing the heads of households and their families who were interned there prior to being evacuated to Jerome, Ark., for the duration of WWII.

The Fresno Assembly Center opened in April of 1942 and housed more than 5,000 internees. It closed in October of 1942.

David Masumoto, program chairman, acknowledge the individuals and organizations for their support in sponsoring the memorial project: Paul Saito, landscape architect who di-

rected the memorial garden construction; Ron Miller, general manager of the Fresno District Fair; Elisa Kamimoto, curator of the Fresno Metropolitan Museum and Fresno JACL board member; the CC Nikkei Foundation; the Fresno Metropolitan Museum; and Brian Tatarian, Fresno District Fair Board.

Rev. Roger Morimoto of the United Japanese Christian Church chaired a discussion about life at the Fresno Assembly Center with former internees Nori Masuda and Jane Shoji of Fresno and Lisa Sano, samsen/onsai representative.

Dr. Kikuo Taira also spoke and members of the audience joined in on the discussion as well.

Honolulu

The board of directors recently formed the chapter's first Legislative Action Committee to initiate and monitor legislative activities related to civil rights, ethnic minorities, education and culture.

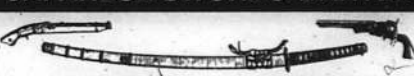
Recently, the chapter has been active in the State House and Senate, instrumental in introducing an education bill for a civil rights curriculum and a bill that would fund a film on the history and culture of Americans of Japanese ancestry in Hawaii.

In addition, the chapter is involved with lobbying efforts as well

as monitoring legislation related to foreign investment. During the 1990 legislative session, the chapter helped to defeat proposed alien laws that would have prohibited resident aliens from purchasing residential and agricultural lands in Hawaii.

In other matters, the chapter re-elected William M. Kaneko as president. Other officers are: Alicyn Hukida, first vice president; Julie Ushio, second vice president; Gordon Lee, third vice president; Bob Inuma, treasurer; Jinny Shinamoto, secretary; and Clayton Ikei, legal counsel.

JAPANESE SWORDS WANTED



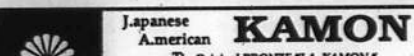
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Personally speaking

► **Charlotte Sato, 39**, special assistant attorney general with the California Department of Justice, has been appointed to the department executive staff by Attorney General Dan Lungren. She was a legislative assistant and counsel to then-Congressman Dan Lungren after he was first elected in 1978. She entered into private practice in 1982 in Claremont, Calif., and continued her career as program manager for the Episcopal Service Alliance in 1987 and 1988, an organization dedicated to assisting recent immigrants to the U.S. during the federal government's immigration amnesty program. She received her bachelor's degree in Political Science from UCLA in 1973 and graduated from USC Law School in 1978.

► **Tina Kagi**, a Spokane resident attending the University of Idaho, had a role as the guest columnist Oct. 14 in *The Spokesman-Review* and *Spokane Chronicle* on redress and that the government's apology was too late for many Japanese Americans. She recalled her grandfather's internment and post WWII experiences as silent embarrassment, living everything he owned, and now 92 years old will likely pass away before his apology arrives. "The American government should have made an apology to these people, without a check, long ago. At least some of them would be alive to have the traitor status they have won as a badge of shame for so many years renounced," she felt. Several days later, **Idaho Governor Cecil D. Andrus** responded personally to Tina: "Your grandfather has to be a very special man to have survived the indignities he suffered and gone on to raise such a fine family. . . . When his time to leave this earth comes, his great legacy of courage and integrity will remain as an example for all of us."

► The Japanese Canadian architectural firm of **Raymond Moriyama/Ted Teshima**, Toronto, will design a \$12 million performing arts center in Guelph, Ont., having been selected from over 30 contenders. The center will be a cultural civic complex. Moriyama, who designed the Ontario Science Center, Metro Toronto Library and the Canadian Embassy in Tokyo (now under construction), has been professionally recognized for his achievements.

► **Joyce Iwaki Shatsky** has been appointed by Yu-Ai Kai as its representative on the SSI outreach project. Yu-Ai Kai will under the direction of the parent organization, Outreach and Escort Inc. (O & E) of Santa Clara County. O&E received funding for this new program under a federal grant and will work closely with Social Security Administration. Joyce did her undergraduate studies at UCLA and received her masters degree in social welfare from San Jose State University.

► **Theodore H. Okishi**, professor of mechanical engineering, chairs the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Iowa State University. He returned to ISU in 1967 after a year as a U.S. Army research engineer at the NASA Lewis Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio, and another year as a Corps of Engineers hydraulic engineer at the Combined Intelligence Center in Saigon, South Vietnam. His research has focused on experimental studies of turbomachinery fluid dynamics.

BILL

(Continued from page 1)

can be considered nonexempt property. The new bill states that any goods purchased with redress money would also be considered exempt property.

Further, in the case where a spouse receives his or her deceased spouse's redress money directly from the federal government, the money is considered exempt for purposes of qualifying for Medicaid. However, if a spouse is alive and receives the money, and subsequently dies, and the money is inherited by the surviving spouse, the money is no longer considered exempt because it is then considered an inheritance, not redress money. Senate Bill 353 reaffirms that the money is exempt regardless of whether the spouse was dead or alive at the time of the

► **Jeanne Kim** of the Asian Pacific American Legal Center's (APALC) Downtown Immigrant Advocates project has recently joined the APALC staff as the Outreach Coordinator for their campaign to educate the Asian Pacific communities to combat employment discrimination. Her first assignment will focus on recent changes in U.S. labor law.

► Three prominent Puysall Valley JACLers have recently made the local press: **H. Del Tanabe**, chapter president, is serving on the advisory board of the Pierce County (Wash.) aging and long-term care committee. Department of Human Services. . . **Bob Mizukami**, current 1000 Club chair, was appointed to the Pierce College Foundation Board. . . **Joseph Kosal**, chapter recording secretary, was elected president of the Tacoma Buddhist Church.



PHIL MATSUMURA
Community service honor

► **Phil Matsumura**, longtime San Jose community leader, will be honored at a dinner at the San Jose Hyatt House Mediterranean Center on March 29. He has been described as one of the most civic-minded individuals in the community. Sponsoring organizations are the Adult Buddhist Association, Community Youth Service, Fuji Towers, San Jose Buddhist Church, San Jose JACL, Young Japanese Adults, and the Zebras.

► **Tomio Taki, 56**, Keio University graduate in 1958 and chairman of Takiyoh, Inc. (U.S. corp.), was named to the Whittier College board of trustees for a three-year term. The parent company in Japan is a 230-year-old family business now involved with ready-made fashions, food, chemical products, carpeting, housing and real estate. Taki moved to the U.S. in 1978.

► **Katie Hironaka** was among 12 Santa Clara County residents awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. "Good Neighbor Award," sponsored by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Association of Santa Clara Valley. Recipients of the annual awards are community members who exemplify the spirit of volunteerism. She was honored for her involvement in the Japanese American community. For the past 15 years, she has served on the board of the San Jose Chapter of JACL and a founder of the Nisei Singles along with a singles club for the younger generation and she is also a member of the Yu-Ai Kai Board of Directors.

receipt of the money.

According to Johnston, the Department of Health Services changed its policy three times regarding the handling of redress payments for Medi-Cal recipients, resulting in confusion.

EAST WIND

(Continued from page 4)

tion ran into financial difficulties, the federal deposit insurance limit of \$100,000 was ignored so that all depositors, regardless of the amount they had with the ailing bank, were guaranteed return of their monies.

MY CONSERVATISM, developed back in that farm community in the Pacific Northwest, somehow tells me that the same rules should apply to all segments of our society. Across the board.

ACTRESS

(Continued from page 1)

just toddling around in Long Beach, Calif.—or, really, dancing around, listening to music, feeling the rhythm, loving to perform.

She was acting by the 8th grade, in school and community theater. By 16 she tried out for a role in "The Sand Pebbles." She didn't get the role but she met director Robert Wise and actor Mako.

She did the usual stunts in "West Side Story" and "Flower Drum Song." When she was 18, she danced with an Asian revue in the Latin Quarter in New York, and just hung out at the Village as actors did in those days.

Narita did the usual knocking on doors and took requisite biocultural instruction from acting guru Lee Strasberg and Stella Adler.

One of her first breaks came when she got a role in "The Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel," a Jon Voight production.

But what she is best known for is her one-woman stage show called "Coming Into Passion, Song for a Samsen."

Narita wrote the piece as a way of showing real Asian women with real experiences. The portrayals are wide ranging, performed with sensitivity, dignity and humor. Among the characters are a tough, street-wise Japanese American teenager trying to deal with her cultural identity, and others—a Vietnamese prostitute, Hiroshima children who survived the atomic bomb, a Filipino mail-order bride and a Nisei woman interned during World War II. Through it all, Narita focuses on the human spirit—Asian, yes, but basic to all. She talks about humanity and human values. "I've taken (my show) everywhere,

to middle America, and the response has been wonderful," she says. "If it's truthful and not dogmatic it works."

She is, then, fulfilled—creatively, emotionally—secure in her art. She maintains high standards and doesn't feel the need to bend them to reach the right role. She doesn't seem to anguish the blood and bone of her characterizations, but digs down deeply nonetheless and plucks out something real and human. She has come to learn the toughest role of all: herself. And that's a comfort level she enjoys and shares—uncommonly—with colleagues and young, aspiring Asian writers and actors.

Because she feels strongly about saying something—hopefully positive in one way or another—about the human condition, she says her experience with "Hedda Gabler" was bittersweet. Despite good reviews, she had problems with the production.

An actor opens channels, shows the individual, the human comes through. Hedda is difficult. Hedda is different. It didn't contain a message I cared for.

"Hedda is considered a strong role. But (author) Ibsen had a loveless marriage and was afraid of relationships. He wrote a honest commentary of his times, but Hedda is a non-nurturing role. She's neurotic; ruthless."

The experience, though, has given her new insight into the

classics. Narita says she no longer has a kind of blind awe of them. "The classics are an individual thing," she says. Shakespeare is in a class by himself, Strindberg, too, and Shaw liked women."

She'll know next time, she adds.

These kinds of experiences have helped Narita with her strong sense of what being an actress means.

"Talent is a small percent of what makes an artist good. You have to have tenacity, you have to be focused and disciplined. For some, it's a gift, like a pure voice. But what I've learned is not to give in on my performance—to be an artist."

"I will always know how to put up a show, how to write, produce it, act in it. I feel very competent, secure."

For Narita, the art of acting also gives her a sense of giving. In her one-woman show, she always talks to members of the audience after the show. She likes to encourage other Asian actresses.

She often conducts workshops to help women writers and actresses with their work. "I'm in a unique position. I'm working as an actress and I'm also teaching. I'll be at five colleges this month. I like to help Asian women with their productions, make them better. I think I have a good eye, I can encourage them, help them with their writing, producing, acting."

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