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CALENDAR PAGE 10

#3058/ Vol. 142, No. 10 ISSN: 0030-8579

JUNE 2-15, 2006

Conquering the Floating World

The Southern California native broke into kabuki. Now other traditional actors are bobbing their heads to MP3s and hip-hop.

By LYNDALIN
Assistant Editor

With every furrow of his brow and fiery sidelong gaze, porcelain skinned Nakamura Gankyo infuses new energy into the ancient art of kabuki. As Sawaichi, the blind man tortured by the question of his wife's fidelity, he is alternately despondent and remorseful — every inch the epitome of regal theater idol.

Except his real name is Ken Kanesaka, a 25-year-old native of Huntington Beach, Calif., who was swallowed up into the world of kabuki as a toddler and reborn as a dashing kabuki actor — the first Japanese American to break into this cloistered theater world.



OLD SCHOOL PLAYBOY:

Ken Kanesaka as Sanzan Nagoya, a very handsome playboy type who appears as a ghost to his lover.

Nisei-han (2.5 generation) blood flows in his veins, which some critics call an affront to the deep-rooted traditions of kabuki. For centuries, kabuki star begat other stars through a direct bloodline, giving the art form — which uses classical Japanese language — an air of mystery. Then Ken entered their world from stage left not speaking a word of Japanese and loving, of all things, golf and

hiking.

"I think children always love a fantasy world or a world of make-believe where they can disappear into," said Ken via e-mail from Japan. His earliest memory of the ancient theater art came from videotapes, which he studied intently. While his peers made fruitless jabs at cultural activities

See KABUKI/Page 4

U.S. Senate Passes Immigration Bill

Senate Bill 2611 is far friendlier than the more controversial House bill, but some APA groups are saying it's not so different.

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

Legislation to secure U.S. borders and offer millions of illegal immigrants access to the American dream cleared the Senate May 25.

The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006 (SB 2611) passed with a 62-36 vote, clearing the way for compromise talks with the House and its more conservative measure — with no guarantee of success.

Reaction has been mixed amongst Asian Pacific American groups. The legislation includes a provision that would help reunify families separated because of a backlog in visa applications to the State Department.

The proposal, which was introduced by U.S. Sens. Daniel Akaka and Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, as an amendment to the Senate's immigration reform bill, was approved unanimously May 18. The legislation will help children of Filipino World War II veterans immigrate to

'Congress cannot, with one hand, provide a solution to some and, with the other hand, drive others further into the shadows.'

— Eun Sook Lee, NAKASEC

the United States. Family-sponsored immigrants from the Philippines have the longest wait times in the world before visas are scheduled to become available to them. The average wait for Filipinos to receive a visa is 20 years.

"The Filipino Veterans from

See SB 2611/Page 6

Are AA Girls Part of American History?

Parents and activists are outraged that the American Girl historical doll collection continues to lack an AA doll.

By CAROLINE AOYAGI-STOM
Executive Editor

Drive over to The Grove shopping complex in mid-town Los Angeles, home of the new American Girl store, and be prepared to fight for a parking spot and bide away time in endless lines. FAO Schwarz has nothing on this store; endless rows of dolls, books, and accessories are lined wall to wall.

This is the home where millions of young girls have dragged their

parents, some unwittingly, to buy their ultimate play toy: an American Girl doll. But for Asian American girls looking for the elusive doll that can represent what they see in the

See AMERICAN GIRL/Page 12



The American Girl's 'Jess' doll.

Looking at the Entire Legacy of a Man, Even the Tarnishes

A veteran Congressman and beloved alumnus of the University of Washington lives on through a bronze monument modeled in his likeness. Does present day context absolve Scoop Jackson from his WWII legacy?

By LYNDALIN
Assistant Editor

Henry M. "Scoop" Jackson's image etched in stone contains dual identities. The late Washington state senator's bust hewed out of bronze was recently brought out to the open after years of obscurity at the



Scoop's bust now stands outdoors.

University of Washington. One part of history illuminates his hard-line position against Japanese Americans during World War II,

another calls attention to Jackson's softened feature as a man who later atoned and championed civil rights.

Above all, many say, the bust is modeled after a human being.

University officials hope Jackson's transformation in the context of social justice will find a more prominent location in students' minds. In a leafy area in front of the school of international studies, also named after the late Democratic senator, Anand

Yang stopped a few students breezing by to ask about Jackson's identity.

See JACKSON/Page 4

FROM THE MIDWEST Making a Point at Patriots Point

By BILL YOSHINO
MDC Regional Director

The sight of a steady flow of excited visitors eagerly streaming onto the USS Yorktown, a World War II aircraft carrier, contrasted with the purpose of a visit John Tateishi and I recently made to the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in



See YOSHINO/Page 6

Amache Camp Gets Formal Landmark Designation

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

GRANADA, Colo.—The pilgrimage to the Granada Relocation Center was exceptionally poignant this year as it marked the former internment camp's designation as a national landmark.

The site was formally dedicated May 20 as a National Historic Landmark by Ken Snyder, regional superintendent of the National Park Service.

"This is an important day for all — it's a culmination of more than 20 years of work from the Japanese American community in Denver and the town of



Rev. Kanya Okamoto leads a prayer.

Granada," said Derek Okubo, the son of an Amache detainee. "It's a story I hope will continue the

See AMACHE/Page 2

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Leadership for a New
Generation



JACL National Convention
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SPRING CAMPAIGN Staying Connected in an Interconnected World

By SHELDON ARAKAKI

This past January, I had the opportunity to visit the *Pacific Citizen's* new home in Little Tokyo as the new PNW district representative at the annual advisory board meeting.

There I met a very committed and incredibly hardworking four-person award winning newspaper team who publishes a 12-page issue every two weeks except for December when they produce that humongous Holiday Issue. Like the rest of the JACL, they do so much with tight budgets and resources.

I saw and heard first hand how much effort goes into producing this editorially independent but national publication of the Japanese American Citizens League. And I can only say after this experience that I appreciate the P.C. even more when it arrives in my mail.

The staff receives hundreds of unsolicited stories and press releases EACH week. Caroline and Lynda have to sort through these and keep on top of major stories and breaking news to produce an issue that follows the P.C.'s vision to report and educate "on national issues affecting the JACL, the Japanese American community and the larger Asian American community."

You see this with recent stories ranging from the JACL signing onto amicus briefs in lawsuits challenging the domestic spying program, to the story about two veterans of different wars — one Nisei and the other Yonsei — and their remembrances, to APA groups rallying against immigration bill HR 4437, to controversy at Yale University surrounding



the April edition of *Rumpus* and its depiction of APAs and the APA students fighting back.

And just as the JA community, now in its fifth generation, sees demographic forces changing the face of the community, the P.C. too has evolved over the past few years, changing its design, covering stories that other AA publications haven't covered, adding the "Memoirs of a Non-Geisha" column written by a voice from a younger generation and running more in-depth full-page arts and entertainment features.

And last year, the P.C. took another step forward and used the funds raised from the 2005 Spring Campaign to extend its reach and audience by establishing the P.C. Web site (www.pacificcitizen.org).

This year the P.C. wants to take its outreach even further by taking the P.C. Web site to the next level and adding more functionality and features. If you are like me and read newspapers from all over the country and the world on the Internet, you know the P.C. needs to address content AND distribution channels in this ever interconnected world of ours to remain relevant — especially with the younger generations, our future.

So if you haven't given before to the P.C. Spring Campaign, send a \$20 bill in an envelope, or write a check for \$25, \$50 or join me on the Wall of Fame at \$150. And if you have given in past campaigns, but have not yet given in this campaign, please consider adding an extra \$25 over your last donation.

But hurry. Summer solstice is just around the corner. Thank you for your support. ■

Sheldon Arakaki currently serves on the P.C. editorial board representing the PNW district.



HONORING THE PAST:
Participants of the Amache pilgrimage also celebrated the camp's official landmark status.

PHOTO: AMBER CARLILE

AMACHE

(Continued from page 1)

healing process across racial and generational lines. Our desire is that we all can learn from this experience to avoid similar mistakes in the future."

The local JA community has worked with the town of Granada for the past two decades to preserve and maintain the site for educational purposes.

The former internment camp-site on the plains of southeastern Colorado housed more than 10,000 people of Japanese ancestry during World War II.

The camp, 17 miles east of Lamar, included 550 buildings on 640 acres. Nothing is left but the concrete foundations of the barracks. A camp cemetery includes a memorial near the graves of 11

children who died in Camp Amache.

Okubo's late father, Henry, and other Americans were imprisoned at the camp between spring 1942 and January 1946. At one point, it held nearly 7,600 people — the 10th-largest community in Colorado.

"My parents, their families and thousands of other innocent Japanese Americans were patriots during World War II and after," Okubo said. "Despite being stripped of their rights, homes and businesses, thousands of them defined themselves by not allowing this injustice to stop them from succeeding in this country."

The site, officially called the Granada Relocation Center, became known as Camp Amache for the daughter of a Cheyenne Indian chief. ■

Letters to the Editor

We Should Never Forget Mitsuye Endo

In any list of the most important members of the Nisei generation, the name of Mitsuye Endo should be near the top. Of those who took their cases to the U.S. Supreme Court in the dark days of wartime incarceration, she brought to the Court the purest possible embodiment of the legal cause that was the most important for Japanese Americans to win.

And win she did. The prize: the principle that the War Powers confer no implied authority to incarcerate an admittedly loyal citizen who, because loyal, presents no threat of espionage or sabotage.

Surely, the pronouncement of the Court that December day in 1944 was not as sweeping a statement of principle as she or her lawyers would have wanted. It did not, for example, return her to California to regain the job that she had lost. And certainly, it was not as pointed a statement of right as two of the justices would have wished to announce — that the exclusion and incarceration were an unconscionable act of racism and unconstitutional (Justice Murphy); that the detention and incarceration were a violation of Due Process (Justice Roberts).

The Court's holding was narrow enough for the members of the Court (which the same December day denied relief to Fred Korematsu by a vote of six to three) to vouchsafe without dissent, but it was broad enough to provide JAs a moral vindication they took with them when they emerged from incarceration into their new lives, untainted by governmental stigmata of distrust, or unfounded suspicion of disloyalty.

Miss Endo's long-ago victory in the Supreme Court would endure for a generation's time as the only

legal success that JAs would enjoy in attempting to right the wrong of wartime incarceration. But as legal successes go, it was enough.

With the measure of freedom wrung from her victory, Nisei who may never have known her name, steeled in determination that the darkness of the past would not hold them back, forged the inheritance that is now ours.

In those years, Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi, who as a young woman had emerged from obscurity to win this victory for all of us, returned to a private life of her own choosing in a different place and time. We who knew her only by her name have thus been unable to celebrate her, but none of us should ever forget her. ■

Robert Mukai
Davis, Calif.

CORRECTION

In the May 19-June 1 article, "Carving Out the Omaha School System Along Racial Lines," the name of the legislature was identified as the Omaha Legislature. The correct name is the Nebraska Legislature.

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* "Voices" reflect the active, public discussion within JACL of a wide range of ideas and issues, though they may not reflect the viewpoint of the editorial board of the *Pacific Citizen*.

* "Short expressions" on public issues, usually one or two paragraphs, should include signature, address and daytime phone number. Because of space limitations, letters are subject to abridgement. Although we are unable to print all the letters we receive, we appreciate the interest and views of those who take the time to send us their comments.

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Calling All Interns!

Wanted: part-time summer intern for the *Pacific Citizen*.

Reward: working with an enthusiastic staff and gaining experience in a workplace environment.

The *Pacific Citizen* newspaper, the national publication of the Japanese American Citizens League, is currently looking for someone to work at its Los Angeles office part-time, including some evenings and weekends.

Various duties include reporting, researching, rewriting of press releases and production duties. Knowledge of the Asian American community and the JACL a plus.

College or grad students currently majoring in English or Journalism preferred, but not required. Applicants should also have a California driver's license.

The application deadline is June 19.

If interested, please send a resume and a writing sample to the *Pacific Citizen*, 250 E. 1st Street, Suite 301, Los Angeles, CA 90012 or email: editor@pacificcitizen.org, attention: Caroline Aoyagi-Stom. ■

National Newsbytes

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

Wen Ho Lee Case May Be Settled

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Supreme Court delayed a May 22 decision on whether to take up a fight over reporters' confidential sources, because a former Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist's lawsuit may be settled.

A lawyer for former nuclear weapons scientist Wen Ho Lee told the court in a letter last week "there have been recent settlement discussions with the government in the underlying case," in which Lee accused the government of violating his rights under the Privacy Act.

Lee was never charged with espionage. He was arrested in December 1999 and charged with unlawfully copying material.

He spent 279 days in solitary confinement before pleading guilty in September 2000 to a single count of downloading data to computer tape. The government dropped 58 other counts and U.S. District Judge James Parker apologized to Lee.

Commission Passes Ordinance to Help Preserve San Francisco's Japantown

SAN FRANCISCO—The city's Planning Commission on May 25 unanimously approved two Japantown ordinances to help protect its cultural character.

The ordinances establish controls and procedures governing any change of use within that district and sets up a Japantown special use district area generally bounded by Bush Street, Geary Boulevard, Laguna Street and Fillmore Street.

The next step will be the San Francisco Board of Supervisors' Land Use Committee slated for June 7.

Civil Rights Groups Urge Lawmakers to Act on Voting Rights Act Reauthorization Bill

WASHINGTON—Civil rights groups are pushing lawmakers to reauthorize three additional key provisions in the Voting Rights Act set to expire in August 2007.

The House Judiciary Committee on May 10 passed HR 9, the Fannie Lou Hammer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006.

This legislation, which has been introduced in both the House and the Senate (SB 2703), would reauthorize and restore expiring portions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. ■

APAs in the News

By Pacific Citizen Staff

Hawaii Reverend, Wife Honored with Their Own Day



Rev. Hosho and Mrs. Mieko Shindo were honored by members of the Kona Hongwanji Mission in Kealahou. Rev. Shindo left the Buddhist Temple in Hawaii after almost 20 years of service to become the resident minister of the Salinas Buddhist Temple and visiting minister at Monterey Buddhist Temple in

California. Mrs. Shindo taught Japanese language school at the temple.

Mayor Harry Kim of the County of Hawaii, declared May 21 as Rev. & Mrs. Shindo Day on the Big Island.

JACler Honored for Outstanding Service in Public Safety

Brian Moriguchi of the San Fernando Valley JACL was recognized at the Third Annual Asian Pacific Islander American Heritage Month Celebration May 19 hosted by Calif. Assembly Member Judy Chu.

Moriguchi was honored for his contributions in public safety.

Clovis Star Debater Vies for National Championship



Elizabeth Takahashi of Clovis, Calif. will compete at the National Speech Championship in Dallas, Texas June 18-23. She was selected to represent Central California after a three-day National Forensic League qualifying tournament.

Takahashi, the daughter of Chuck and Alyce Takahashi, qualified for the national tournament in two separate events: original oratory and Lincoln-Douglas debate.

Chandler Takes Command

Capt. Donald R. Chandler recently took command of the Amphibious Base in Little Creek, Virginia. The change of command was made official in a May 11 ceremony. Chandler's personal decorations include the Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal and other unit and service awards. ■

New Orleans' APA Community Protests Landfill

By P.C. Staff and Associated Press

Hundreds of Vietnamese American families in New Orleans whose lives and livelihoods were torn apart by last year's hurricanes fear their shambled homes will be subject to another disaster — but this one is not so natural.

Some 7.2 million tons of hurricane debris needs to be dumped but the Chef Menteur landfill can only accept 2.6 million tons, according to a *New York Times* report. More than 1,000 Vietnamese American families live less than two miles from the edge of a new landfill, which opened on April 26.

The local Vietnamese American community, APA groups and environmentalists protested the landfill and accused local and federal officials of ignoring regulations. In response, Mayor Ray Nagin ordered a temporary closure to run tests.

Vietnamese Americans fear the dumpsite will affect their water supply.

The state and the Army Corps of Engineers, which is handling cleanup in the city, say that without the dump, the cleanup would take much longer.

The dumpsite also abuts a wildlife refuge and is unequipped to handle dangerous waste. The project has been denied two non-

"What is clear is that these are shaky foundations on which to ground a controversial and potentially hazardous policy decision ... — Rep. Honda



PHOTO: FLOYD MORI

Residents try to rebuild their homes in March. The new landfill near their community will be yet another battle for the downtrodden.

emergency permits in the last decade, according to a statement by Congressman Mike Honda.

The state has agreed to do some extra monitoring of groundwater, Dr. Brown said. But it has determined "there's nothing toxic, nothing hazardous," he continued. "There will be no impact" on the community, which is sometimes called Versailles.

But Congressman Honda, chairman of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), and member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, issued a May 24 letter to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers urging that a proposed New Orleans landfill opposed by the city's Vietnamese American community not be opened.

"The arguments against Chef Menteur are sufficient grounds to keep the site closed," said Honda in a letter. "Arguments in favor of the site seem far less compelling."

"The site may or may not hasten clean up. What is clear is that these are shaky foundations on which to ground a controversial and potentially hazardous policy decision without extensive environmental studies or public input."

The letter was co-signed by U.S. Representatives Neil Abercrombie, D-Hawaii, Xavier Becerra, D-Calif., Ed Case, D-Hawaii, Al Green, D-Texas, Zoe Lofgren, D-Calif., and Madeline Bordallo, D-Guam.

For now, New Orleans' Vietnamese Americans are gearing up for another battle after the storms. ■

JACL Continues to Criticize Adidas Over Racist Sneakers

The JACL sent a May 15 letter to Rob Langstaff, president of Adidas America, expressing the organization's concern about Adidas' response to the marketing of its Y1-Huf sneaker, the Ray Fong sneaker, which caricatured an Asian face.

The Portland JACL brought the matter to the attention of national JACL.

Calling Adidas' response to the outcry of protest from the Asian Pacific American community as "cavalier," JACL Executive Director John Tateishi noted that nearly a month passed before Adidas made the decision to withdraw the sneakers from stores. Initially refusing to remove the shoes when the APA community protested the racist image, Adidas



Adidas Y1 Huf with Ray Fong.

announced 27 days later that it had made a decision to withdraw the shoes in response to the community.

Tateishi accused Adidas of being "disingenuous" by its comments that they were pulling the shoes from the shelves in response to the community's protests.

The JACL expressed concern that no one in the entire chain of command had the sensitivity to recognize that the designer shoe had a racist image and is offensive to APAs. The fact that the image was created by San Francisco-based artist Barry McGee does not excuse the use of such a blatantly racist image, said Tateishi.

"Did no one at Adidas even begin to understand how offensive this image would be to Asian Americans? That Barry McGee may not be the best person to judge what he views as a playful self-portrait as something that would offend other Asian Americans?" the JACL letter to Langstaff asks.

Tateishi has asked for a meeting with Langstaff. ■

Pelosi and Woolsey Secure \$250,000 for Historic Angel Island

By Pacific Citizen Staff

Angel Island, the "Ellis Island of the West," has received federal funding for much needed revitalization work.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi, D-San Francisco, and Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, D-Petaluma, secured \$250,000 in federal funding for the renovation of the Angel Island Immigration Station Hospital Building.

The funding, awarded through the Save America's Treasures program and included in the fiscal year 2007 Interior Appropriations bill, will be used to rehabilitate the historic hospital building, which will serve as a museum and genealogical research facility.

The hospital building was transformed into barracks for the U.S. Army during World War II.

The hospital renovation is part of

a larger effort to preserve the Angel Island Immigration Station. Last year, Woolsey and Pelosi led a successful effort to pass legislation (H.R. 606) authorizing \$15 million for the preservation of the Angel Island Immigration Station.

From 1910 to 1940, Angel Island was the first stop for many immigrants who came to the West Coast. On the island these immigrants, most of Asian descent, were not greeted with open arms. For many, it was like a prison — the windows were barred, sleeping quarters were overcrowded and interrogations were a way of life.

"The story of Angel Island is one that is too often lost between the pages of our nation's history," said Pelosi. "I am proud to be part of restoring the 'Ellis Island of the West,' because it helps preserve the rich history of immigration to America for future generations."

said Woolsey.

The spending bill was approved by the House last month and must now be approved by the Senate before a final version is passed by both chambers and then sent to the President for his signature. ■

QUICK FACTS

- Angel Island was officially incorporated into the California State Park system in 1963.

- In 1997, the Angel Island Immigration Station was designated as a National Historic Landmark.

- In 2000, Angel Island was placed on "America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places" list and became an official project of Save America's Treasures, a joint program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the White House Millennium Council.

KABUKI

(Continued from page 1)

before quitting altogether, young Ken, for hours, would practice acting out plays with very adult themes of love, betrayal and suicide.

"My world, when I was younger, was the world of kabuki. I could be a villain, or a hero, and I think that is what attracted me the most," added Ken.

The cultural seed was planted at an early age for Ken who started dance lessons in Los Angeles at three while accompanying his sister to classical Japanese dance classes. Through the sea of female students, who she knew would abandon dance to start families and careers, Madame Bando Mitsuihiko saw longevity and passion in Ken.



MASTER AND DISCIPLE: 'The National Living Treasure' Nakamura Ganjiro III (left) and Nakamura Gankyo aka Ken Kanesaka.

Her vision proved prescient. Ken is currently the youngest member of Japan's Grand Kabuki Chikamatsuza and he counts a kabuki living legend as his mentor and namesake.

Will the Real Kabuki Actor Please Stand Up?

"Kabuki was known to be the 'floating world.' It was a place where commoners could escape to, and it was a world of dreams. It is this floating world that still gives hope and a place to escape," said Ken.

For awhile, his "real" world was dictated by a linear path and choreographed with a steady percussion of white-collar success. A drum major in his high school marching band and a good student, he entered the University of California at Los Angeles to start his career as a lawyer.

There was one catch.

"I hated to read books, and sit there studying," so during his sophomore year he decided to resurrect his childhood dream to study abroad at the University of Tokyo. Really, he just wanted to live and breathe his culture and dance in the homeland. Then one day, his dance teacher told him about a kabuki training school in Osaka.

You may never become a kabuki actor, the dance teacher told Ken, but the training would benefit your dancing.

So without telling anyone, Ken followed his dreams to Osaka to take entrance exams and endure interviews just to train in the ancient art.

"When I was accepted, I packed my things, informed Tokyo University that I was quitting, which was unheard of in Japan — Tokyo University is on the same level as Harvard ...," he said, "I sent my parents a letter informing them of the change of address."

In two years, he graduated at the top of his class, despite the language barrier.

And the way he tells it, being

embraced by the most famous kabuki actor in the world was as natural as the flow of water from melting snow.

"Upon graduating, the 'National Living Treasure' Nakamura Ganjiro III (now Sakata Tojiro IV) told me that if I wanted to study kabuki more, why don't we study together. I was the first non-Japanese citizen to be accepted into the kabuki theater in its 405 or so year history."

Suddenly American English newspapers made its debut in the dressing rooms.

"There are other young actors who sip their coffee, listen to their iPods. Others talk about the new clubs opening up and of course the latest hip hop artists."

Ken was given the stage name of Nakamura Gankyo — "gan" inher-

ited from his teacher and "kyo" from Kyoto.

"My teacher told me that since his family is from Kyoto and his style of acting is Kyoto, I am now a Kyoto actor. Also, since my name-taking was in Kyoto, I should never forget where I started out in my kabuki life."

Celebrating Heritage

Those who have seen him perform are mesmerized.

"He transcends being my brother," said Kevin Kanesaka, a lawyer based in New York.

But kabuki life isn't all glamorous. As the youngest student, Ken cleans his teacher's dressing room and cleans props and make-up. Between performances, he squeezes in lessons in classical dance, *Jyu uta* (a singing style), tea ceremony, flower arrangement and Japanese percussion.

"Within the theater itself, I was also told that *gaijin dakara* (because you are a foreigner) that my work is dirty," said Ken. "However, I can honestly say that it is because of these people, that I had to work harder. I had to make sure that my work is 10-times better than my peers ..."

"As far as I can recall, he has always been motivated," said Kari Kanesaka, his mom. "When he was little, he would practice by himself for hours. Even in college, he would practice at least one hour a day in his studio."

"I believe Ken's vision is to make [kabuki] relevant to the coming generations without losing the beauty and form of the tradition," said his sister Sheri Kanesaka, an L.A. based lawyer.

Through Ken, a bridge is formed between two worlds.

"My grandmother has also told me that if traditions stop here then what is the purpose of us learning it to begin with?" said Ken. "Japanese American heritage is about creating dreams and traditions for the next generation." ■

JACKSON

(Continued from page 1)

ty and legacy.

There were a few blank looks and guesses, but the answer was always no.

"We need to use this as a teaching moment," said Yang, director of the Jackson School of International Studies.

A larger than life regional figure, Jackson served nearly 43 years in the House of Representatives and the Senate. He even made two unsuccessful bids for the U.S. presidency. But his Congressional career was fraught with controversy. He entered Congress at 28 as its youngest member and spent his first two terms in the House dealing with WWII.

Jackson strongly supported the wartime removal and internment of JAs, he opposed JAs in the Armed Services and later resisted the return of JAs after the war, said Yang.

In 1943, Jackson and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce expressed interest in potentially using Japanese internees as forced labor to address the wartime shortage in farm labor.

Later as a close friend of Sen. Daniel Inouye, Jackson came around and was part of a group who supported the Senate bill for reparations.

Jackson, a University of Washington alumnus, was also criticized for his hawkish position on the Vietnam War and Central America in the Iran Contra Affair. His Congressional career ended in 1983 when he died from an aortic aneurysm, but his tarnished legacy kept the oversized bust, a gift from the Jackson Foundation in 1984, in the shadows of a fourth floor alcove for over two decades.

In more recent years, Jackson's daughter asked for the bust to be moved outdoors, as it was intended.

"Back in 1942, Scoop's position was reprehensible," said Yang. "That's only part of the legacy. The

POINT/Counterpoint: Celebrating Scoop



"People can evolve and policy can evolve over time."

— Jeffrey Hattori, Seattle JACL

"I have no qualms about honoring Henry Jackson for his contribution to the University of Washington, but to exalt his commitment to human rights is ignorant and disrespectful."

— Shingo Yamazaki, University of Washington student

senator also championed higher education and social welfare programs ... but that doesn't mean we're going to gloss over history."

University officials met with the Asian Pacific American community last year to talk about the move. School officials also plan to host a classroom discussion about Jackson's personal transformation.

"We didn't have a problem with them moving the bust," said Jeffrey Hattori of Seattle JACL. "We spent most of the time talking about how we can use Senator Jackson's career as it evolved in terms of his position on internment, and have an honest conversation with students about social justice."

"People can evolve and policy can evolve over time," Hattori added.

JACL Executive Director John Tateishi said the Jackson he knew was a strong supporter of redress.

"In much the way Earl Warren changed his views from World War II to the civil rights movement, Scoop Jackson seemed to have changed and certainly was a strong supporter of redress," said Tateishi. "We all pay for our sins of the past at some points in our lives. I think there's a lesson in Scoop Jackson in this regard, a man hardened in his views of Japanese Americans and, like so many, caught up in the fervor of World War II's climate. I don't think that fact should ever be forgotten or glossed over. He was what he was. But I think an important part of

the lesson of Scoop Jackson was that he changed over the years, softened his views to the point that he was in some ways the antithesis of who he was some 40 years earlier."

But not all are convinced. Shingo Yamazaki, a sophomore at the university, says he has mixed feelings about the bust. The plaque beneath the sculpture lists Jackson's "commitment to quality education, human rights and the importance of creating new generations of leaders and specialists in international affairs."

The "human rights" part sticks uneasily with him.

"I have no qualms about honoring Henry Jackson for his contribution to the University of Washington, but to exalt his commitment to human rights is ignorant and disrespectful," said Yamazaki.

Jackson, who himself earned the nickname "Scoop" from a then popular cartoon character, also has a U.S. Navy submarine, a high school and wilderness area named after him.

For a brief time after his death, the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport was renamed after him, but even then fear of economic loss forced airport officials to change it back. ■

A celebration of Henry "Scoop" Jackson at the University of Washington is slated to take place June 3.

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• TED NAMBA •

12 Reasons Why You Will Always Remember Attending JACL 2006



Six months back, I was asked to write an article for the *Pacific Citizen's* Holiday Issue, "Top 10 Reasons to Visit Arizona for the 2006 Biennial Convention." Well, as I transition from being newbie convention chair to past chair, I will title my final convention article: "12 Reasons Why You Will Always Remember JACL 2006."

12. Taking the "behind the scenes" tour of Wild Horse Pass with Ginger Sunbird Martin, cultural theme manager at the resort. The best thing about Wild Horse Pass is not the casino, pool, restaurant, spa, golf courses, etc. but instead, how the beautiful Native American influence may be experienced throughout the resort.

11. Browsing through the exhibits hall. Since we are in Arizona this biennium, there will be interesting exhibits about both Poston and Gila. You will enjoy the beautiful watercolors of Chizuko Judy Sugita de Queiroz that symbolize her memories as a child at Poston.

10. Meeting six really great authors who have written terrific books about the JA camp experience: Jay Feldman's "Suitcase Sefton and the American Dream," Delphine Hirasuna's "Art of Gaman," Toshi Ito's "Endure," Cynthia Kadohata's "Weedflower," Kimberly and Kaleigh Komatsu's "In America's Shade," and Joan Loveridge-Sanbonmatsu's "Imperial Valley Nisei Women: Transcending Poston."

9. Unique workshops related to the Southwest. The latest change may involve substituting Native Seeds with a Southwestern Style cooking class.

8. The Youth Luncheon will be extra special as there will be twice

as many people attending this year's Youth Luncheon and the youth are working extra hard to prepare a great event and have selected an excellent recipient for their annual Vision Award. Remember the theme for JACL 2006 is "Phoenix Rising: Leadership for a New Generation."

7. The Arizona premiere of "Camp Dance." I still smile to myself when I recall seeing "Camp Dance" in San Francisco last June. This is a truly wonderful musical that will be even more special since this live performance will be presented at Gila, less than 15 miles from where one of the ten internment camps was located.

6. The Awards Luncheon will be suspenseful as everyone wants to know who will receive the George Inagaki Chapter Citizenship Award and JACLer of the Biennium Award.

5. You will be dazzled by all the cool, free stuff you will receive at convention. This year's goodie bag will be one of the best ones ever! Also, Arizona chapter members have donated gifts to everyone attending the Youth Luncheon, Awards Luncheon and Sayonara Banquet. This is in addition to the usual corporate gifts presented at these events.

4. The Welcome Mixer will surely be memorable with local Arizona chapter comedian Bob Kubota as emcee. There will be a deejay, line dancing, entertainment, contests and the youth will have the "Moonshine Room" to hold their own private mixer.

3. Shopping at the silent auction prior to the Sayonara Banquet will be fun as the JACL National Youth/Student Council is working hard to make this a special event.

So far, they have received some beautiful artwork, clothing, sports memorabilia (e.g. basketballs autographed by Jerry West and Steve Nash, a Brooks Robinson bat, Gaylord Perry baseball) and much more.

Remember that all proceeds from this silent auction go directly to benefit JACL youth so make sure you take the time to check out the auction items the youth have collected. If you would like to contribute an item for this special auction, please contact a National Youth/Student Council member or your district governor to arrange delivery of the item to convention.

2. Gila Dedication and tour of the Gila Monument will be a special visit as we have a chance to remember our past. We must understand that the Gila Monument is located on the reservation so it is not possible to go to this site unless one has a permit. Being out at the Gila Monument site with Mas Inoshita and Jim Kubota will be a priceless experience for everyone.

1. The Sayonara Banquet will be the highlight of convention as the Akimel Ballroom will be gorgeous, dinner will be excellent, the program will be special and we will all remember how we connected with old friends, made some great new friends and say farewell to one another until JACL 2008 in Utah, where my friend, Silvana Watanabe will have the opportunity to become a newbie convention chair!

Honorable Harry Honda said it best in a recent email to me: "you will miss a lot if you are not at JACL 2006 Convention!"

See you at convention! ■

Ted Namba is the chairperson of the 2006 national JACL convention in Arizona.

Honoring the Brave



PHOTO COURTESY OF BACON SAKATANI

Mary Jane Mayemura makes a floral tribute for her son, Jimmie, who was killed in action during the Korean War.

Family members of veterans killed in action paid tribute to the brave at the Japanese American War Memorial Court during Memorial Day services held at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo.

Also honored were: Sgt. Paul Nakamura, Sgt. Deyson Cariaga, Sgt. Mike Sonoda Jr., SSG Daniel Tsue, Sgt. Steve Sakoda along with Japanese Americans who gave their lives in service to our country in all wars.

The memorial was presented by the Japanese American Korean War Veterans, the Japanese American Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee and the Americans of Japanese Ancestry, WWII. ■

Korean War Vets Launch Fundraiser for Hershey Miyamura Tribute

By Pacific Citizen Staff

Even in civilian life, Hiroshi "Hershey" Miyamura is in a class by himself.

The city of Gallup, New Mexico — where Miyamura calls home — is constructing a series of individual column type monuments dedicated to the veterans of all wars.

Of course, Miyamura will have a separate individual column solely dedicated to honor his heroism.

Miyamura is the only Japanese American in the Korean War to receive the nation's highest combat award, the Medal of Honor.

His first brush with battle came at the end of World War II when he served with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. When the Korean War began June 25, 1950, Miyamura

For Hershey

Tax deductible contributions should be made out to "JAKWV," and mailed to: Sam Shimoguchi, 12557 Allin St., Los Angeles, CA 90066. Write "For Hershey" on the check.

Info: Sam Shimoguchi 310/822-6688; Carl Miyagishima 323/256-8451 or Robert M. Wada 714/992-5461

was recalled into active duty and sent to Korea as a machine gun squad leader in Company H, 7th Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division.

At Taejon-Ni, when being overrun by the Chinese Communist forces, Miyamura ordered his men to retreat while he held off the enemy with a machine gun, bayonet and his own hands. He killed more than 50 of his enemies before being wounded and captured. He spent 28 months as a prisoner of war.

Together with the Japanese American Korean War Veterans (JAKWV), the city of Gallup is initiating a fund raising project with a goal of \$30,000 to ensure the separate Miyamura monument will be built.

"Time is important as we wish to see that the monument is built without delay and assure us Hershey and his wife Terry will have the opportunity to witness the anticipated dedication of the monument," said Sam Shimoguchi, JAKWV co-chairman.

Any excess funds raised will be used to offset the Korean War Vets' expenses to complete an additional monument in the Japanese American National War Memorial Court at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Los Angeles, Calif.

This additional monument will honor those Americans of Japanese heritage who died while serving our nation during the sinking of the USS Maine, fighting on the Island of Grenada, in Iraq and for others killed in action.

"We humbly solicit your contribution for such a worthy cause in which the heroic action of a Japanese American is going to be perpetuated for a city's local hometown hero," said JAKWV Co-Chairman Carl Miyagishima. ■

Convention Registration Form

(Return with payment)

Name (Please print)	Last	First	MI	Age
Address				
City				
State				
Zip Code				
Daytime Telephone Number				
Evening Telephone Number				
E-mail address				
Chapter				
Category	<input type="checkbox"/> Delegate	<input type="checkbox"/> Booster	<input type="checkbox"/> Millennium Club	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Alternate	<input type="checkbox"/> 1000 Club	<input type="checkbox"/> National Board/Staff	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Youth	<input type="checkbox"/> 1000 Club Life	<input type="checkbox"/> Masaoka Fellow	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)			

Mail Check and this form together to: JACL 2006 - Registration
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Note: Registration will not be processed without accompanying payment (check or charge card). This form is for convention registration only and NOT for hotel reservations, which should be made directly with the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Spa and Resort at Gila River, Phoenix, Arizona. If you are registering for more than one person, please use additional forms or copies.

Registration Fees

CONVENTION PACKAGE REGISTRATION
(includes Individual Events listed below)

Early bird deadline has passed.

<input type="checkbox"/> Regular Package	Rate	\$250	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Package		\$125	\$

(A reduced registration fee for Youth/Students who are 25 years of age or younger or currently enrolled in a college, trade school or university. Youth Package includes all of the events in the Regular Convention Package.)

INDIVIDUAL EVENTS (all included in package registration)

<input type="checkbox"/> Workshops	\$30	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Welcome Mixer	\$60	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Awards Luncheon	\$60	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Sayonara Banquet	\$110	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Youth Luncheon	\$60	\$

SPECIAL EVENTS (not included in Regular Package Registration)

<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Dance Dinner & Show	\$95	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp Dance Show Only	\$30	\$
<input type="checkbox"/> Golf Tournament	\$85	\$

(Join the AZ Nikkei Golf Club at the Whirlwind Golf Course on June 25, 2006)



Convention Package	\$
Individual Events	\$
Special Events	\$
Total	\$

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SPEED SKATING

Ohno 'Taking a Break' from Skating, Says He May Never Return

SEATTLE—Short track speed skating world and Olympic champion **Apolo Anton Ohno** said May 24 he may be done with competitive skating.

"No world championships. I'm taking a break," Ohno said minutes before he threw out the ceremonial first pitch at a Seattle Mariners game.

Ohno was flanked on the mound by five fellow winter Olympians from Washington state.

"I've accomplished everything I wanted to in my sport. And it's been great," said Ohno, a Seattle native.

He said if he does return for his third Olympics, to be held in 2010 in nearby Vancouver, British Columbia, it may be as something other than a competitor.

"I'd like to go as a goodwill ambassador, to represent my country and my sport, to do something bigger than winning medals," he said. "To reach more people's hearts, you know? It'd be cool."

Ohno, who celebrated his 24th birthday recently with family in Seattle, said he has been living in Los Angeles since the end of the Turin Olympics in February. There, he won a gold medal in the 500 meters, and two bronze medals, in the 1,000 meters and on the 5,000-meter relay team. That gave him five medals in the last two Olympics.

He opted out of the recent short track world championships in

Minneapolis.

His recent Southern California living is a contrast to the previous seven years Ohno spent living in the dorms of the United States Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

A welcomed contrast, that is.

"I am living in L.A., exploring the entertainment industry. I love being on film," he said.

"I have no acting skills — but I've never had training in acting either," he said, laughing.

Ohno received the loudest ovation from the 21,991 in attendance at Safeco Field among the Olympians who took the field before the Mariners' game against the Baltimore Orioles. He then threw a passable pitch to Seattle's Willie Bloomquist. Ohno said it was his second time throwing out a ceremonial pitch before a Mariners game, the other time being in 2003.

Bloomquist then joined Ohno, downhill skier Scott Macartney of Redmond, luger Christian Niccum



Short track speed skating world and Olympic champion Apolo Anton Ohno throws out the first pitch at a recent Seattle Mariners game. Ohno said he may be done with competitive skating. "No world championships. I'm taking a break," Ohno said minutes before he threw out the ceremonial first pitch. (AP Photo/John Froschauer)

of Woodinville, women's hockey player Kelly Stephens of Shoreline, speed skater Kristine Holzer from Gonzaga University in Spokane, and cross-country skier Sarah Konrad from the University of Washington on the mound for picture taking. ■

GOLF

Hee-Won Han Beats Meena Lee in Four-hole Playoff at Corning

CORNING, N.Y.—**Hee-Won Han** just shrugged and smiled.

"Three times second place, that's pretty good, but I don't like that," she said. "I wanted to win."

After tying for second the previous two weeks on the LPGA Tour, Han finally won one May 28. She parred the fourth hole of a sudden-death playoff after **Meena Lee** made bogey and captured the Corning Classic.

It was Han's first win of the year and fifth overall, and three have come in six playoffs. Lee, who finished second here for the second straight year, lost it when her second shot at the par-4 eighth hole bounced badly away from the green and she couldn't recover.

"I never thought about winning. I just didn't think of that at all," said Lee, who gained the lead with birdies at 16 and 17 en route to a 6-under-par 66, then watched Han tie her with a pair of birdies on the final two holes of regulation. "I'm satisfied with how I played. It's just that I think I made one big mistake."

With Han safely on the green in two and staring at par, Lee played an aggressive chip onto the green that bounced twice and nearly hit the flag before rolling 18 feet past. When she missed the putt coming back, Han two-putted from 15 feet to win the fourth playoff in Corning's 28-year history.

"I was pretty nervous out there," said Han, who shot a career-low 62 here on the third round last year. "I really wanted to win something."

The victory was worth \$180,000, boosting Han to third place on this year's money list at just over \$700,000.

And it dealt Lee a critical setback. Because she won the Fields Open in February — in a playoff over rookie **Seon Hwa Lee** — Lee was exempt from qualifying for the U.S. Open in late June. But she did not submit her application prior to the deadline for one of the four majors on the schedule and now must win one of the next three tournaments to get in.

Lee declined to discuss the matter.

Though Han and Lee are close friends — they practiced together last week and Lee considers Han her mentor — this remained strictly business because Han was aware of Lee's plight.

"I'm not that good of a person," Han said with a smile. "I really needed a win."

Both parred the first extra hole, No. 18, Han with a nice-up-and-down after her second shot landed in a greenside bunker.

After both parred No. 8, they went back to 18, and Han got a lucky bounce when her tee shot struck a

tree on the right side of the fairway and caromed back onto the fairway. Lee drove under the right trees but managed to save par.

"I just kept it positive," Han said.

Lee, who self-destructed last year with a double-bogey at 18 and lost to **Jimin Kang** by two strokes, came from six shots behind third-round leader **Jeong Jang** and appeared to be a winner until Han rallied.

"I kind of figured that somebody might be coming after me," Lee said.

Han, who started the round at 11 under, rolled in a putt from inside 12 feet that briefly seemed to stop at the lip before dropping softly into the hole to get to 14 under at 17. She then used driver on the tough par-4 18th hole, hit her second shot to 3 feet and made birdie for a 68 to force the playoff just moments after Lee had finished her 66.

"I got a little lucky," Han said. "I just started the last two weeks to play pretty good." ■

BASEBALL

Giants Call Up Ishikawa from Double-A Connecticut

SAN FRANCISCO—The San Francisco Giants called up infielder **Travis Ishikawa** from their Double-A team May 26 to add another infielder with first baseman Lance Niekro on the disabled list.

Ishikawa was in the starting lineup at first base and batting eighth for the May 26 series opener against the Colorado Rockies. He is expected to stick around until Niekro returns this week.

Ishikawa was batting .256 with three home runs, 13 RBIs, seven doubles and a triple in 32 games in Double-A ball.

"I'm excited to go out and play the way I have the last 15 years or so," Ishikawa said. "Felipe (Alou) said, 'Catch the ball when it's thrown at you and mix in a few hits.'" ■

Stories by P.C. Staff and
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Japanese American
Citizen's League

APA Youths Cope with Studies — and a Model Minority Myth

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

At 17, Heayeon Lee's thoughts often wander to her impending high school graduation, trendy fashions and the latest object of her affection.

Lee also worries about her grades. The Rincon High School senior is barely passing her government class; she would rather splash paint on canvas than try to decipher U.S. foreign policy.

The teen shatters the stereotype that all Asian Pacific American students belong to a problem-free population of high achievers. That myth has been tossed at Lee before.

"You're Asian, how could you not know that?" Lee said a teacher once blurted out when she admitted not knowing the answer to a math problem. Lee, who also uses Michelle as her first name, said she is more fond of art than of numbers. She wants to be an art teacher someday.

Members of Tucson's Asian community know that the "model minority" label doesn't apply to everyone in their diverse population, and they work to dispel misconceptions through programs aimed at young people such as Lee.

In the Tucson Unified School District, which enrolls most of the city's schoolchildren, 1,600 APA students, combined, speak more than 20 languages. Among those languages are Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean and Filipino.

Although APAs make up just 2.7 percent of Tucson Unified School District's more than 60,000 students, their needs are no less serious, said Maria Hooker, director of the Pan Asian Studies Department. "There are a lot of students who succeed, but there are a lot of students who have trouble making it."

Hooker's department acts as an advocate for students and works with community groups to tackle some of the obstacles that keep the youngsters from thriving. Most of the hurdles are related to family language and culture, Hooker noted.

Some APA children, including some who were born and raised here, have a difficult time in school because they speak an Asian lan-

guage at home and their English vocabulary is limited, she said.

And students who struggle academically can't count on parental help with homework and other school-related matters, because the school system is foreign to the adults.

Many Asian immigrants stay away from schools because they see their involvement as interfering with teachers, said Hooker, who is Korean American.

Hooker often explains to parents that here they are expected to get involved in their children's education. But not all can, she said, particularly recent immigrants who must hold two

jobs to survive.

As Hooker and others work to change cultural perceptions, APA youths who need a little extra help get it from the Pan Asian Community Alliance of Tucson. The group operates a center where students of all ages get homework help after school.

Lee, who moved from South Korea to this country seven years ago, is among the students who stop in frequently. The teen said she tries not to be bothered by the misperceptions that many have of her community. "I just laugh it off," she said.

The oldest of three children, Lee faces all the youthful angst of most people her age. And being an immigrant child who learned English as a second language has posed other challenges as well.

Dorothy Lew, the alliance's executive director, said that as the American-born child of Chinese immigrants, she can identify with the struggles of Lee and the other youths she has met over the years.

Lew recalled that as a young student, like many of the Asian youths who visit the center, she lacked a rich English vocabulary because she always spoke Chinese with her parents and grandparents. And she still remembers the parental pressure that pushed her to work hard in school.

"My family used to say, 'If you fail, you will embarrass yourself and you will embarrass your family,'" Lew said. ■

'There are a lot of students who succeed, but there are a lot of students who have trouble making it.'

— Maria Hooker
Director, Tucson School District Pan Asian Department

• YUMI SAKUGAWA •
MEMOIRS OF A NON-GEISHA



Gay or Asian? All of the Above

I know a Filipina lesbian my age who invites her long-term girlfriend over to family events, where her extended family openly joke about sexually transmitted diseases and the logistics of lesbian sex. Unfortunately, situations like this are more the exception than the rule. As Asian American movies, literature and personal anecdotes have taught us, homosexuality and Asian parents usually do not mix very well.

In my AA literature class, we read a good deal of short stories about unhappy, repressed Asian families who are bad at expressing affection for each other. As my professor rhetorically asked several times during lectures, "Why is it that relationships between Asian fathers and sons are always so problematic?"

Add homosexuality to the relationship and you have a whole new can of worms to deal with.

For some reason or another, I've come to befriend a lot of gay Asian males in college. While I clearly suck at having any meaningful romantic connections with heterosexual men, I seem to be really good at forming long-lasting friendships with gay Asian males. As horribly clichéd as it sounds, these boys are my confidantes for stupid boy talk, great shopping advice and late night boba runs. I would venture to say that life without them would be a little less fabulous.

My heart goes out to them because even in a post-"Will and Grace" world, they oftentimes have to repress the core of who they are when they are at home. I've heard too many stories from friends who run away from home, have parents tell them to watch out for homosexuals as if they are in the same category as drug addicts, and choose to stay in the closet around family members for fear that they will kick them out, withdraw emotional support and stop paying for their college tuition.

One of my favorite people in the world, who is a second-generation Chinese American, is unafraid to flirt openly with straight men, dance

around in public wearing a skirt and sing a lot of musical numbers while walking on campus. I was shocked to learn that someone so flamboyantly confident would have parents who don't know that he is gay. Apparently, he is a lot more quiet and subdued when he is around his own family.

I know another gay Vietnamese American my age who, upon coming out to his parents, was almost kicked out and temporarily ran away from home even though he was the kind of good Asian kid who brought home straight A's and was generally the obedient son. He is currently in a long-term relationship with another Asian boy, where they have to sneak around making phone calls to each other just so their respective parents don't find out.

My heart goes out to my gay Asian male friends, and all the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender sisters and brothers in our AA community who still have so much homophobia to deal with not only in mainstream society, but within their own families.

Don't get me wrong, though. I don't want to make this a doom and

gloom story about the impossibility of homosexuality existing within Asian families. Things are slowly changing.

I have faith in our generation of young AAs who are more open-minded, are lucky enough to have movies like "Saving Face," go dancing on gay Asian nights in West Hollywood clubs and organize spoken-word events at local coffee-houses for the LGBT community.

While our hearts may be broken by family and friends who do not completely understand, we are still unafraid to create a safer, more accepting community for the next generation of young AAs that will follow us.

Just imagine. Two AA lesbians getting married and adopting kids. Or a proud AA father who is unashamed and supporting of his gay son. It shouldn't have to be such impossible scenarios for this generation and the next.

That would be quite awesome. Or as my very gay friend would put it, *fabulous*. ■

Yumi Sakugawa is currently an Art major attending UCLA.

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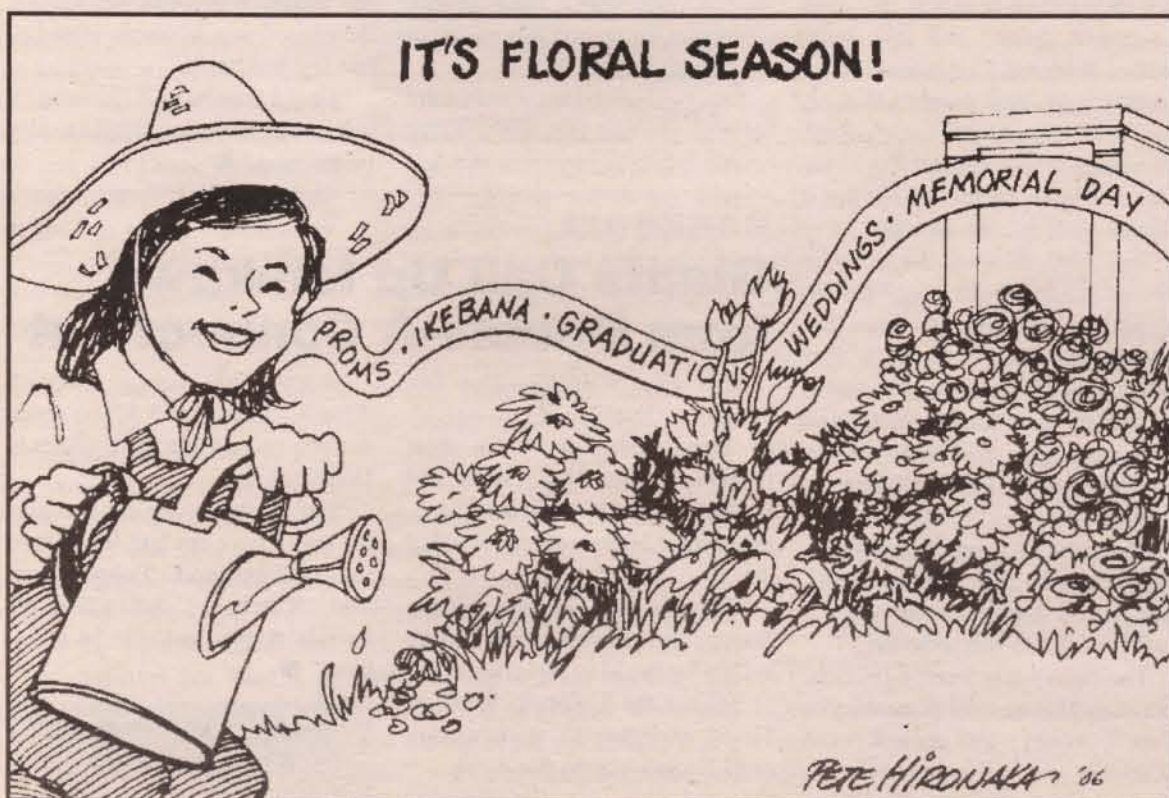


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PHOTOS COURTESY AMERICAN KNEES PRODUCTIONS

COMMUNICATION BREAKDOWN:
Allison Sie, Chris Tashima
and Joan Chen talk
Americanese.

The critically acclaimed film
is Eric Byler's sophomore
effort based on a novel,
"American Knees."

With 'Americanese,' One Step Back, Two Steps Forward for APA Film

By STEWART DAVID IKEDA
Special to the Pacific Citizen

Much has been made about a recent upwelling of almost-breakthrough indie films by or about Asian Americans, receiving ever-increasing general notice and fair distribution to find their way onto our local Blockbuster shelves.

Now, kicking off the annual flurry of spring AA film events after its triumphant debut at a leading industry festival, the newest film by Eric Byler may be poised to propel APA film several steps forward into the ever-multiplying mainstream of U.S. film.

For its world premiere at Austin's famed South by Southwest (after Sundance, SXSW is the major, indie multimedia schmooze-fest), Byler's "Americanese" hit the ground running, capturing both the audience award for narrative and a special jury prize for outstanding ensemble cast.

This dual recognition at a non-ethnic festival speaks volumes about what may be in store for "Americanese," as well as its strengths. The strong, moody narrative is adapted (somewhat loosely, with the author's blessing) from Shawn Wong's novel, "American Knees," which had enjoyed some literary crossover success itself. The ensemble cast led by Chris Tashima is nothing short of stellar.

Tashima plays Raymond, a handsome, successful but brooding ethnic studies professor wrestling with a mid-life crisis and trapped at the center of a steamy, tormented love triangle. Joan Chen, as the haunted Betty, is a standout.

The ensemble's jury prize is notable not only given the packed competition, but for decades now one of Hollywood's main rationales why APAs have been kept from leading roles has been a supposed dearth of acting talent, and a presumption that general audiences couldn't identify with them.

The film's popularity is also a triumph for Byler, whose first film, "Charlotte Sometimes," was a rich and skilled but quiet arthouse film.

"Americanese" features an exploration of some similar thematic and tonal ground to that debut film, but *augmented*. Focusing again on a tormented love triangle including a Hapa love interest, it makes that interrogation of Hapa/APA schisms in our community explicit.

AUTHENTIC ENOUGH FOR YOU

At the same time, its pedigree — its "authenticity" (dubious criterion as that is) — is unassailable. Based on a contemporary classic of AA fiction, "Americanese" may in fact be the most "authentic" and authoritative representation of "APIA consciousness" ever to be filmed in a feature.

Raymond's role as an AA studies professor, the professional situations, the settings, and the thoroughly multicultural backdrop reflects the reality and social flavor of the "new California" and its "American Asian cities" better than any film I can recall seeing.

Not to put too fine a point on it (because it's far from the film's most impressive achievement), but as a former ethnic studies professor (called in as an academic consultant on the picture, by the way), I can tell you: "Americanese" is extremely gratifying for us Asian Americanists.

It's not *only* the thrill of seeing an AA studies professor as the handsome, romantic lead who "gets, loses, and gets the girl." Rather than slow the dramatic action with pedantic dialogue, the film's smallest references and details of *mis-en-scène* represent volumes about the history and diversity of "the community." There's a pleasurable "Where's Waldo?" aspect, in picking up on little background references and objects, canonical and contemporary — *No-No Boy* and *Making Waves* here, posters and jewelry and Secret Asian Man comics there.

ONE STEP BACK

One of the most refreshing things about "Americanese" is that it's about and features AA *grown-ups*. It portrays and stars APAs who are in that middle distance — neither the ultra-hip (hop), young, annoyingly gorgeous, fashionista tweenies through 20-somethings targeted by MTV, nor the crusty old FOBs of more old-school, historical "grandpa and the railroad (plantation, concentration camp, laundry)" stories.

Rather, the film takes a step back to reflect a bit on the roots of Asian America.

And like some of the film's younger characters, many AAs today take for granted the political history, not to mention things like now commonplace ethnic studies

classes. This "generation gap," along with the "(H)apa gap," play out realistically in the world of the film, as they do in ours.

TWO FILMS, TWO MARKETS

"Americanese" is as Byler insists, "first and foremost a romance," and one fraught with real tension and problems, just like ours — whoever we are and whomever we love. As such, it nudges APA film another step beyond simplistic ethnic representation and race identity explorations that our young filmmakers have long considered a burden on creativity and reaching wider, general audiences like those at SXSW.

It's an interesting side-note that although the SXSW success and the upcoming APA festivals will keep him hopping with "Americanese," Byler is in fact touring simultaneously with *two* films. What was supposed to be his second feature, "TRE," was half-finished when financing came through for American Knees and "TRE" was temporarily put on the backburner.

Maybe, just maybe, "Americanese" will attain that most elusive of AAs' artistic and social aspirations: to break through with a great story, deep drama and populate a world of lead characters, round and real, who just happen to be AA.

Who happen to be, in short, normal. ■

On the Web:

www.americanesethemovie.com

Stewart Ikeda is the author of *What the Scarecrow Said* and vice president of IMDiversity, Inc.

PACIFIC CITIZEN

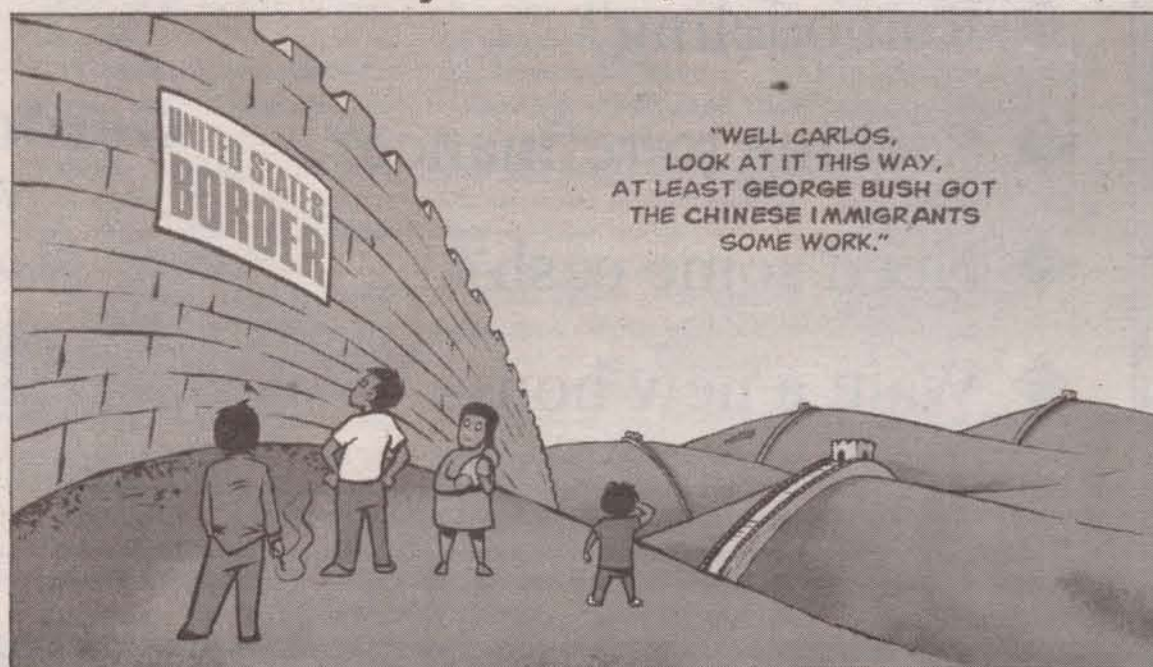
National business and Professional Directory

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SECRET ASIAN MAN By Tak

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Calendar

National

CHANDLER, Ariz.

June 21-24—JACL National Convention; Sheraton Wild Horse Pass Resort. Info: www.azjacl.org.

SAN FRANCISCO

Oct. 2—3rd Annual National JACL Golf Tournament, "Swing for Justice"; Harding Park Golf Course, 99 Harding Road; \$200 before July 1 and \$250 after; entry fee includes golf cart, bento lunch, tee prizes and dinner; sponsorships are available; field is limited to 144 spots; committee is also looking for golf stories from camp, e-mail to Mas Hashimoto at hashi79@earthlink.net. Info: co-chairs, Jason Higashi, 707/837-9932, jltjh@comcast.net or Jim Craig, 916/652-0093, thayajoyce@sbcglobal.net.

East Coast

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Mon., June 5—Workshop, "Baseball: A Shared Legacy on Both Sides of the Pacific"; 6:30 p.m.; Japan Information and Culture Center, 1155 21st St. NW; featuring Alexander Shear, Gary Mukai and Kerry Nakagawa; free but reservations are required. RSVP: JicRsvpSpring06@embjapan.org.

Intermountain

DELTA, Utah

Mon.-Fri., June 12-16—Training class for teachers, "Specialized History: WWII and the Internment of Japanese Americans"; 8-5 p.m.; Millard District Office, 285 E. 450 N; \$250 (shared lodging) due at registration; registration form available at www.usoe.k12.ut.us/curr/soc.st/prof_dev/workshops.html; includes a field trip to Topaz. Info: Robert Austin, 801/538-7708, robert.austin@schools.utah.gov or Elaine Jones, 801/538-7977, elaine.jones@schools.utah.gov.

TWIN FALLS, Idaho

Thurs.-Fri., July 6-7—Workshop, Civil Liberties in Wartime; College of Southern Idaho; a two-day symposium, spanning from JA cases in



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAS HASHIMOTO

The National JACL Golf Committee invites you to participate in the 3rd Annual National JACL Golf Tournament. The NCWNPD committee (from left): Nikki Hikari; Marcia Hashimoto; Patty Wada; Jason Higashi; Pat Nakashima; Thaya and Jim Craig; Dean Suzuki; and Mas Hashimoto. Absent are Floyd Mori; Tom Nishi; Tom Murayama; and Ron Sakaue.

WWII to current challenges of balancing national security and protection of civil liberties; 2 day symposium is free and open to the public; Boise State Univ. registration available to earn college credit; will feature Prof. Roger Daniels, author of "Concentration Camps, North America and JACL PNW Regional Director Karen Yoshitomi; Minidoka Pilgrimage will follow on July 8-9. Info: www.minidoka.org.

Sat.-Sun., July 8-9—Minidoka Pilgrimage; participants will visit the grounds of the Minidoka Internment National Monument as well as tour an original barrack; participants will also have an opportunity to take part in workshop sessions; pilgrimage package with bus from Seattle is \$200/\$150 seniors 75 or older, package without bus is \$75/\$65 for seniors; fees include Fri. dinner, Sat. lunch and dinner, and Sun. lunch; buses will leave from Bellevue Community College on Friday morning. Info: Alan Momohara, minidokapilgrimage@comcast.net.

Pacific Northwest

PORTLAND

Through June 10—Exhibit, Kimono: Tradition in the Modern Age; Tues.-Sat. 11-3 p.m., Sun. 12-3 p.m., April 9 1-3 p.m.; Oregon Nikkei Legacy

Center, 121 NW 2nd Ave.; featuring discussion of kimono design, past and present, kimono demonstrations and reception with refreshments; \$3 admission fee, free to ONLC members. Info: Katrina Gilkey, 503/224-1458.

Northern California

BERKELEY

June 3, 4, 10, 11—Exhibit, Lewis Suzuki's existing and new paintings; 2240 Grant St.; 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

MANZANAR

June 10-Aug. 25—Exhibit, "Enemy Alien Files"; June 10, authors John Christgau and Stephen Fox will present a 90-minute program on the Alien Enemy Control program; Saturday program will also feature a book signing, a discussion with Grace Shimizu and the debut performance of "Zip," by John Christgau; events are free. Info: Manzanar National Historic Site, 760/878-2194, ext. 2710 or www.nps.gov/manz.

SAN FRANCISCO

Sat., June 3 through Aug. 31—Exhibit, "J-Town 4Ever"; NJAHS Peace Gallery, 1684 Post St.; gallery hours are M-F noon-5 p.m. and the first Sat. of each month from noon-5 p.m.; featuring old and new silkscreen prints of Japantown; presented by JAM workshop and NJAHS. Info:

Francis Wong, 415/921-5007.

Fri., June 9—Preserving California Japantowns Symposium; 9-4:30 p.m.; Miyako Hotel, Japantown; one-day symposium will bring together experts and practitioners of historic and cultural preservation, community development, and documentation of California's Japantowns. Info: Naomi Funahashi, 415/567-5505.

Sat., July 15—JACL Youth Fishing Derby; San Pablo Dam Reservoir; for youth ages 8-12; lunch and snacks will be provided for the youth; free but limited to first 30 whose parents complete and submit an application and release form; Nisei Fishing Club will provide rods, reels and bait; a minibus will leave from Japantown at 7 a.m. to shuttle the youth; families are encouraged to make it a family event and to bring a dish to share with the volunteers; applications are available at the Paper Tree, 1743 Buchanan or SF JACL, 415/273-1015. Please leave your name, address and telephone number.

SAN LORENZO

Sat.-Sun., June 10-11—Eden Township JACL Bazaar; Sat. 3-8 p.m., Sun. 11-7 p.m.; Eden Community Center, 710 Elgin St.; food, games, bingo and raffle prizes. Info: Ron Sakaue, 510/276-0752.

Southern California

LA CANADA FLINTRIDGE

June 16-18—36th Annual Bonsai Show; Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Dr.; 9-4 p.m. daily; bonsai demonstrations will be featured on Sat. and Sun. at 11 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.; free with admission to the gardens. Info: www.descanso-bonsai.com.

LOS ANGELES

June 18-20—Conference, "Next Big Bang: The Explosion of Asian American Theatre"; keynote address by Roberta Uno with other panelists: Philip Kan Gotanda, Jessica Hagedorn, Dan Kwong and Tisa Chang; showcase performances June 19-20 will be at the Aratani/Japan America Theatre at 8:30 p.m.; tickets are \$10 and open to the public through the East West Players Box Office, 213/625-7000; conference registration fee is \$300; to register visit

www.nextbigbang.org or call East West Players.

Feb. 16-18, 2007—All Vets Reunion; New Otani Hotel, Little Tokyo; open to all JA veterans from all wars and conflicts; Maj. Gen. Rodney Kobayashi will be a luncheon keynote speaker. Info: Sam Shimoguchi, 310/822-6688, samkuni@verizon.net; Victor Muraoka, 818/368-4113.

v.muraoka@verizon.net or Bob Hayamizu, 323/292-3165.

PASADENA

Mon., June 12—Discussion and book signing, "There Will Never Be Another You" by Carolyn See; 7 p.m.; Vroman's, 695 E. Colorado Blvd. Info: 626/449-5320.

SIMI VALLEY

Sat., July 15—Japan America Society of Southern California 97th Anniversary Dinner & Gala Celebration; 5 p.m. silent auction, 7 p.m. dinner and program; The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Air Force One Pavilion; 40 Presidential Dr.; "Bridging the Skies Across the Pacific" will honor ANA Airways, American Airlines, Japan Airlines, Northwest Airlines and United Airlines. Info: JASSC, 213/627-6217, ext. 205 or info@jas-socal.org.

TORRANCE

Sat., Sept. 16—PSW JACL Annual Awards Dinner; 5 p.m. registration, 6 p.m. dinner; Torrance Holiday Inn. Info: PSW Office, 213/626-4471 or office@jacpsw.org.

Nevada

LAS VEGAS

Oct. 17-19—Manzanar High School Reunion; California Hotel; Tues. Welcome Mixer 6:30 p.m. in the Ohana Room; Wed. slot tournament and buffet dinner and program. Info and applications: Henry Nakano, 714/871-8179, Sam Ono, 310/327-5568, Cappy Iwasaki, 714/637-1412, Shig Kuwahara, 626/289-7892 or Victor Muraoka, 818/368-4113.

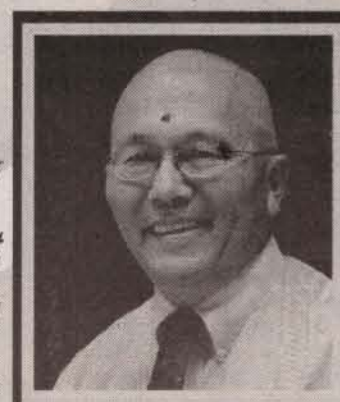
Oct. 27-29—JACL Singles Convention; Plaza Hotel; featuring a golf tournament, workshops and dinner dance; hosted by the Las Vegas JACL. ■

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In Memoriam - 2006

All the towns are in California except as noted.

Chong, Katherine, 67, West Covina, April 6; survived by husband, Frank; daughters, Lori and Cindy; son, Gary; son-in-law, Dana; and 1 gc.

Dobashi, Takako, 86, Yorba Linda, Mar. 26; survived by daughter, Judy Shirley; brothers, Donald (Mary) and Bobby (Debbie); sisters-in-law, Yoneko Iwatsuru, Joyce Ozeki and Mae Ozeki; 12 gc.; and 12 ggc.

Endow, Nancy Chizuko, 83, Lomita, April 24; survived by son, Henry (Naomi); daughter, Lillian Nishihara; and 6 gc.

Foose, Hisako, 76, Los Angeles, April 3; survived by sons, Matthew (Georgina Juarez) and Joseph; 2 gc.; sisters, Keiko Inouye, Hisako Yamanouchi, Terue Kaku and Masako Koshiro; and brother, Ted Matsunari.

Fujiwara, Shigeru, 73, Laguna Beach, April 18; survived by wife, Ruby; daughters, Gail and Jill (Noah) Han; sons, Mark (Jane Yamashiro) and Rodney; sisters, Helen Yamamoto and Betty (Yoshinari) Tsukahara; and brothers, Jack (Pat), Ike (Edna) and Mike (Jan).

Gleeson, Paige Kiyoko Kathleen, 9, Huntington Beach, April 20; survived by parents, David and Lynn; sister, Paiton; and grandparents, Mamoru and Susan Kanda and Mary and Bill Gleeson.

Hanamoto, Haruo, 78, Monterey Park, April 13; survived by wife, Takeko; sons, Michael (Cherilynn) and Steve; daughter, Cindy (Dr. Ryushi) Saisho; and 5 gc.

Hattori, Takahiro, 99, Los Angeles, Mar. 31; survived by wife, Satsuko; daughters, Nancy, Emerly Gueron and Irene (Ronald) Takaragawa; son, Floyd; 4 gc.; and sister, Yaeko (Sam) Sakamoto.

Hiraike, Susumu, 79, Los Angeles, April 6; survived by brother, Sam (Reiko); and sister, Asako (Jim) Doi.

Hori, Yoshinobu, 78, Oxnard, April 5; survived by wife, Kazue; brother, Koichiro (Aiko); and sister, Toshiye (Yoshihiko) Sugii.

Hosaka, George, 82, Reedley, April 12; survived by sons, Kirk, Dave and Todd; 1 gc.; daughter-in-law, Layne; sisters, Aya Yamakoshi

This compilation appears on a space-available basis at no cost. Printed obituaries from your newspaper are welcome. "Death Notices," which appear in a timely manner at request of the family or funeral director, are published at the rate of \$18 per column inch. Text is reworded as necessary.

and Sayo Kubo; and son-in-law, Dr. Sumio Kubo.

Hosaka, Mary, 90, Valencia, April 16; survived by sons, Douglas and Edmund (Darlene); 1 gc.; and sister, Alice Masuda.

Ike, Kazuo, 94, Gardena, April 11; survived by sons, Jerry (Susan) and Ted; daughters, Judy (Henry) Kumagai and Valerie (Randy) Kitani; 10 gc.; brother-in-law, Kenichi Kuroiwa; and sisters-in-law, Kay Kuroiwa, Sue Sugano and Shirley (Atsushi) Sayama.

Itatani, Kiyomi, 84, April 4; survived by husband, Masayoshi; daughter, Meiko (Marshall); sons, Robert (Carol) and Nelson (Patricia); 6 gc.; and 2 ggc.

Kadoya, Asako, 92, Los Angeles, April 14; survived by daughters, Janette (Raymond) Aguado and Grace; 1 gc.; brother, Toyo Sasaki; and sisters, Betty (Jiro) Kadoya and June (George) Noda.

Kaneko, Kiku Kay, 94, Hacienda Heights, April 7; survived by daughters, Carolyn (Norman) Kimura and Marilyn (George) Chogyoji; son, Jay (Linda); 5 gc.; and 4 ggc.

Kato, Ichiro B., Lexington, Ky., May 3; survived by wife, Mitzi; daughter, Diane Kuzma; son, Dennis; 5 gc.; brothers, Mitsuo, Masao, Toshio and Takeo; and sisters, Ruth Takeuchi and Sue Sugimoto.

Kawamoto, Masami, 82, Covina, April 12; survived by sons, Howard (Louise), Edwin (Julie) and Marvin; 4 gc.; brother, Michio (Yumiko); and sister, Yoshie (Tom) Sasamoto.

Kawano, Kengo, 75, Bellingham, Wash.; survived by brother, Paul (Toshi) and partner, Jo Jean Kos.

Kawashiri, Tomiko, 82, Lomita, April 5; survived by daughters, Keiko (John) Weems and Vickie (Ken) Ihara; 5 gc.; sisters, Fumiko Kuromi and Chiyeko Iwasaki; brother, George Fujimoto; and sisters-in-law, Mitsuko (George) Higashi and

Marge Fujimoto.

Kenmotsu, Mieko, 89, Port Hueneme, Mar. 22; survived by daughters, Dorene (Jim) Tsukida, Marion (Victor) Hosford and Sue Ann (Chris) Butler; son, Ray; brother, Kenzo (Harumi) and Shoni Sakoda; 4 gc.; and sister-in-law, Alice Sakoda.

Kimura, Toshio, 61, Monterey Park, April 21; survived by wife, Grace; daughter, Shelley Kimura; brother, Sadao (Faye); and sister-in-law, Sherri Maeshima.

Matsuishi, Michiye, 89, Los Angeles, April 14; survived by sons, Dr. Richard (Peggy), Dr. Edward (Beverly) and Ronald (Yae); daughters, Agness Yoshikawa and Anna (Dr. Gordon) Pattison; 9 gc.; and 6 ggc.

Matsumoto, Yoshiro, 82, Cerritos, April 13; survived by wife, Tokiko; daughter, Janice (Garret) Lee; 2 gc.; brother, Willard; sister, Alyce Yoshino; and sister-in-law, Yoshiko Yokomizo.

Miwa, Jack L., 76, Spokane, Wash., May 7; Air Force (ret.); survived by sister, Marian (Roy) Ota and Hannah (John) Asahara.

Miyashita, Kaz, 88, Whittier, May 7; survived by children, David, Jean and Carole; son-in-law, C. John Martinez; and brother, Masao (Sakae).

Miyata, Tasuye, 89, West Los Angeles, April 20; survived by daughter, Laraine; sons, Gregory (Irene) and Rod (Chris); 2 gc.; and brother-in-law, Lloyd Nakayama.

Nakamura, Emiko, 88, Los Angeles, April 24; survived by son, Robert (Jaye); daughter, Kathryn; and 2 gc.

Naruo, Shima, 87, San Ramon, April 13; survived by husband, Taka; sons, Richard and Gerry; 3 gc.; 1 ggc.; and sisters, Mine Shigematsu, Yoshi Tanisawa and Shizu Iwahashi.

Nishino, Ken, 90, Hemet, Mar. 31; served 8 years as mayor of Hemet; WWII veteran, MIS; survived by wife, Aiko; sons, Dr. Alan and Gilbert; daughters, Judy Gonzalez and Janet Bissett; 14 gc.; 6 ggc.; and brothers, James and Tosh.

Ogura, Tomoyo, 87, Arcadia, April 24; survived by son, Richard (Rebecca); daughter, Joyce (Paul) Reid; 7 gc.; 2 ggc.; and sister, Yuki Hamano.

Okazaki, Toshi, 94, April 14; survived by sisters, Yoshi Takiguchi and Hiro Kato; son Curtis Higuchi; 5 gc.; and 7 ggc.

Okeya, Hideyuki, 86, Los Angeles, April 16; survived by wife, Sueko; daughters, Donna (Peter) Shire, Peggy (Rob) Yamamoto and Bette (Royce Ito) Okeya; son, Butch (Carol); 9 gc.; and sister, Aiko Shimamura.

Oki, Virginia Toyoko, 89, Los Angeles, April 16; survived by brother, Saburo; sister, Sally Tanaka; and sister-in-law, Betty Oki.

Osajima, Yukiko, 96, April 5; survived by sister, Mieko; sons, Tatsuo (Geraldine) and Yasuo (BJ Watanabe); daughter, Fumiko (Jim) Larkin; 8 gc.; 7 ggc.; and 1 gggc.

Saito, Kazuo, 88, Gardena, April 24; survived by wife, Kiyomi; son, Clark (Judy); daughters, Lorraine, Barbara (Tom) Ige, Elaine (David) Bennett, Geri (Reed) Sadahiro and Yohko (David) Takehara; 6 gc.; and 4 ggc.

Sakai, Yukio, 76, April 13; survived by wife Yoshiko; daughter, Carol (Scott) Yamanaka-Sakai; son, Raymond; brother, Kay (Cherry); sisters, Bette (George) Yamamoto and Jane Price; and sister-in-law, Grace Sakai.

Smith, Yoshiko (Yamamoto), 78, Laguna Hills, April 7; survived by sons, Vincent (Nancy) and Michael (Rebecca); and daughters, Amy (Clifford) Savolskis and Naomi (Ron) Francis.

Suzukawa, Helen, 80, Santa Paula, May 7; survived by husband, Cliff; daughters, Jeanie and Jan; 1 gc.; and brothers, James and Charles.

Taniguchi, Katsumi, 86, April 10; WWII veteran; survived by wife, Hideko; and sister, Minako Sakai.

Terao, John Y., 60, April 19; survived by wife, June (Honda); daughters, Jaimie and Jennifer; mother, Kay; sister, Charlene Lau; mother-in-law, Chiyeko Honda; and brothers-in-law, Edward Miyasato, Stephen Lau and Kenny and Glenn Honda.

Uyeda, Paul, 55, South Pasadena, April 1; survived by wife, Peggy; daughter, Kimberly; son, Douglas; parents, John and Louise; brother, Eric (Marilyn); and father and mother-in-law, Harry and Fuki Oka.

Watanabe, Shu, 103, Los Angeles, April 5; survived by daughter, Leslie Kawakami; son-in-law, John Sato; 4 gc.; 6 ggc.; and 2 gggc.

Yamamoto, Kenneth S., Monterey Park, April 13; survived by wife, Masako; daughter, Janet (Louis) Zarcehn; son, John (Yuka); 2 gc.; and brother, William (MaryAnn).

Yamamoto, Yoshiko Hayashi, 94, Spokane, Wash., Nov. 24; survived by daughter, Jan Miyamae; son, Don; 3 gc.; and 3 ggc.



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AMERICAN GIRL

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mirror every day, sadly they'll have no such luck.

Since the American Girl company introduced their historical doll collection, a collection that purports to tell the history of America through its dolls, an African American doll, Mexican American doll, and a Native American doll have been added to the 10 doll collection. Now some AA parents and activists are asking: isn't it about time that an AA doll was added?

"Most Americans are unaware that Asian Pacific Americans have been in what is now the United States since the 1500s. Had American Girl done their homework, they would have learned how justified it is to produce an APA doll," said Christina Fa, a Sacramento activist and pediatrician who is part of a group of AAs pressing American Girl to add an AA doll to the collection.

Sumeia Williams, a Vietnamese adoptee currently living in North Carolina, like many mothers heard the calls to buy an American Girl doll from her then 10-year-old daughter. She logged onto the company's Web site but noticed the glaring lack of an AA doll, and decided not to let her daughter have an American Girl. She's still glad she didn't give in.

"I also wasn't about to be sucked in by an 'American Doll' that so poorly represented part of my daughter's heritage," said Williams whose daughter is half Vietnamese and half Lebanese. "Though she doesn't understand now, I would hope that she later becomes more



AMERICAN GIRLS: Since the historical doll collection was introduced, (l-r) 'Josefina,' 'Kaya,' and 'Addy' have been added. Some say, missing still is an Asian American doll.

aware and concerned for Asian American issues. Buying American Girl dolls as they are now teaches her nothing about her empowerment as a consumer, as an Asian American or as a woman but to accept what the market has to offer."

So far American Girl's historical collection features ten 18-inch fictional heroines that portray significant moments in America's past, events that helped shape the United States and brings history to millions of children. The collection includes: Addy, an African American slave from the Civil War era, added in 1993; Josefina, a Mexican American doll from the 1800s, introduced in 1997; and in 2002 Kaya appeared, an American Indian doll from 1764.

So where are the AAs?

"Having a line of historical character dolls, with their own backstories ... leads to seeing the dolls ... as archetypal at best and stereotypical at worst," said Jason Sperber, of Bakersfield, Calif. who is the father

of a multiracial AA daughter. "So, when the question of adding an Asian American doll to the line arises, one part of me says, of course! We all want representation, and I'm the father of a young Asian American daughter. But I worry, will a corporate entity like a toy company think that one is enough, that one experience is representative, that they don't have to do more, have more?"

So far there are no plans in the works to add an AA doll, said Stephanie Spanos, spokesperson for American Girl.

"We literally get hundreds of requests each year to add dolls to our collection. An Asian doll is just one of many requests," she said, adding that any new doll can take two to three years to develop. The current top requested doll is a Jewish boy doll. "We look at those requests and appreciate the enthusiasm but as of now we can't promise anything."

American Girl, a company founded

in 1985 and currently owned by Mattel, Inc., is one of the most popular doll companies in the United States. In addition to their doll collections and accessories, the company produces books and the *American Girl* magazine. Last year the company sold 11 million dolls.

Although there are no current plans to add an AA doll, Spanos noted that in their contemporary doll collection, there is a biracial doll named "Jess" who is half Japanese American and half Irish American. "Jess" was selected as this year's "American Girl of the Year" and was featured recently on the cover of the *American Girl* magazine.

"Jess is very popular. She's a reflection of what's going on in the country," said Spanos.

And in response to the numerous requests to add new dolls that come in each year, the American Girl Company also introduced a "Just Like You" doll line, she said, where girls can select from 23 different combinations of skin, hair, and eye choices to make their own customized dolls.

But having a biracial doll does not change the need for an AA doll, say activists and parents.

"While I feel Hapas (my daughter being one) are an important and legitimate part of the Asian American community, it still poorly represents its diversity," said Williams.

"I noticed that the Jess doll was made the doll of the year. In the back of my mind, I wonder if that wasn't a weak attempt to appease the Asian American community. Is it possible that they heard some of the complaints? Surely, they can do

better than that," she added.

"Of course, a part of me is like, yes! A Hapa doll!" said Sperber but added, "I wonder why her mixed-race background didn't figure more. And as far as the actual look of the doll ... I wouldn't have known the doll was Hapa."

"As far as 'should we embrace the doll' goes — it's still a corporate commercial product. Shouldn't the question be, why should we want one? Do we need validation from a giant corporation that is only interested in figuring out how to get our market share?"

In addition to the criticisms from the AA community, in 2005 the Mexican American community vocally protested a Mexican American doll in the contemporary collection that they believed included demeaning references to the neighborhood she is from.

And so far AA parents and activists say American Girl has not responded appropriately to their requests and will continue to demand that an AA doll be added to the historical collection.

"American Girl's response remains superficial and insensitive," said Fa. "They call themselves a different kind of doll company, but are just like the others when it comes to racism."

"I think there should definitely be not only an Asian doll, but a Hawaiian, Japanese, Korean and Chinese dolls. Why should we settle for 'generic Asian' when specific ethnicity's have made contributions to American history?" said Williams. "The lack of recognition is an insult to Asian immigrants who helped to build America into what it is today." ■

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