The Legendary Nisei Racers

The Oka brothers display their 'Best Appearing Car' award at Carrell speedway in 1948. Pictured above (l-r) Yam Oka, Harry Oka, Tom McLaughlin, and Chickie Hirashima.

Nisei hot rod racers of the 1920s and 1930s made their mark in a racing world surprisingly free of discrimination.

By CAROLINE AOYAGI-STOM
Executive Editor

California's Murdoc Dry Lake was the place to be for the hot-rodders of the 1920s and 1930s. On the dry, flat lakebeds that stretched for endless miles stripped-down Fords and Chevys would be pimped for showcasing while adrenaline junky hot rod drivers would compete for the fastest clicked speed. Here is where the legends of racing were born, including famed Nisei racers like Yam Oka, Tsuneo "Tunney" Shioko, Frank Morimoto, Danny Sakai, and Takao "Chickie" Hirashima. But like the thick dusts of the lakebeds, the stories of their record setting speed times and their innovatively modified roadsters are gone.

See NISEI RACERS/Page 6

A League of Their Own

Scrapes, dislocations and their own way of a good game.

By LYNDA LIN
Assistant Editor

"It's war out there every weekend," said Binh Nguyen, a commissioner and founder of BAFL, the first Asian Pacific American flag football league created by young APAs in 2005 who just wanted to play the game. "It's war out there every weekend," said Binh Nguyen, a commissioner and founder of BAFL, the first Asian Pacific American flag football league created by young APAs in 2005 who just wanted to play the game.

Young APAs battle each other on the field in a Boston league.

See CAMPAIGN/Page 2

SPRING CAMPAIGN
Keeping the P.C. Competitive

By GIL ASAKAWA
Pacific Citizen Chair

I don't know what the weather is like where you live, but here in Denver, it's almost 70 degrees, and gorgeous. That combined with the new, earlier launch of Daylight Savings Time.

See CAMPAIGN/Page 2

A Newfound Friendship Ends in Tragedy

On a mission to locate the heroic 442nd veterans who saved their father during WWII, the Hardwick sisters found a friend in veteran Jim Tazoi. Sadly he died in a tragic car accident less than a week later.

By CAROLINE AOYAGI-STOM
Executive Editor

The three-page handwritten note along with the pamphlet-sized book Susan Hardwick found in her mailbox one recent Saturday morning was the sunder of letters. The package was from 442nd veteran Jim Tazoi, an 87-year-old Nisei from Utah she had recently befriended. Earlier that same day.
CAMPAIGN
(Continued from page 1)
seems to herald the arrival of Spring with its usual clarity. Springtime is also when the Pacific Citizen has launched for several years its springtime "Change of Address" campaign, which raises funds that go directly to the operational budget of the P.C. It’s the time of year when you’re probably thinking of the faithful readers of the P.C., can you show your support for the award-winning newspaper?
I’ve said this before: The P.C. is perhaps the most familiar link that most JACL members have to the organization. Many of you don’t attend chapter meetings or events; don’t go to big dinners and Saturday night meetings, or pack up a family for a week’s worth of JACL meetings at the national conventions. Believe me, I know—it’s hard when you have busy lives.
Many of you, on the other hand, are deeply involved and are integral to the ongoing operations of JACL at local and national levels. That’s great! JACL needs both types of people.
Whether you’re one type or the other, please consider sharing in the mission of JACL and protecting the civil rights of all people in the U.S.
JACL members are all connected through the Pacific Citizen, the newspaper that’s been the voice of the organization since the start. It’s the one-way-all learning about what’s happening at the national level of the JACL that often isn’t covered by the media or the mass media across the country that affects our civil rights and the civil rights of others.
Unfortunately, many of the issues that affect us simply are not covered in the Spring Campaign. That’s why the P.C. is so important. It brings you the news that other sources don’t—or can’t.
And in the past year, the P.C.’s newsprint version has been enhanced with the addition of the Web site at www.pacificcitizen.org. If you haven’t visited the site, you should.
I just been redesigned to a sleek, clean, professional layout, and the small and hard-working staff of the P.C. has upgraded it with cool, multimedia features, even including video footage — the kind of thing you’d expect to find in a "dead-faced" "dead-tree" version of the P.C.
It’s checkful of the best of the print edition (not every story is posted on the Web site, so the P.C. can remain a powerful reward of membership), and it’s got links to other Asian Pacific Island Web sites, and of course, to the Web sites of various JACL chapters.
You can even submit your Spring Campaign donation online using the secure form provided. If you’d rather do it the old-fashioned way, you can download a printable form to fill out and snail-mail in with your donation.

Letters to the Editor

Reader Chastises AsianWeek’s Eng
In the Feb. 23 issue of AsianWeek, Kevin Eng wrote, "Why I Hate Blacks." Eng lacks life experience and personal integrity and is doing a disservice to African Americans, and he is doing a disservice to himself.
Eng also cited an excerpt from a book that was written more than a hundred years ago by U.S. history to be available a platform for his ignorance. His own prejudices, which his book is one of this, and we share their pain. African Americans have destroyed many social barriers and eliminated discriminatory laws that have appeared against Asians and other minorities to enjoy and prosper. Too bad Eng does not understand the lead and were reinforced by cultural and racial differences that affect us.
I was in his shoes, what would I be doing? Then, I remember a lesson from my high school social studies class. As a young American, I believed that I was doing the right thing by saluting those who fought for the Union, and I believe he is practicing what I learned years ago.

Korean War Vet Supports Watada
I am a Korean War veteran. I was sent to Korea during the height of the Korean War in August 1950. I have long agonized over the stand taken by 1st Lt. Ehren Watadas. I do not understand why you would be doing? Then, I remember a lesson from my high school social studies class. As a young American, I believed that I was doing the right thing by saluting those who fought for the Union, and I believe he is practicing what I learned years ago.

Korean War veteran

WATADA’S DILEMMA
While I support 1st Lt. Ehren Watadas protest on how the war in Iraq was started, I do not feel that he has justified his refusal to deploy to Iraq. If a firearm finds that a house has been set fire by an arsonist he should protest the union but he is still obligated by his profession to help put the fire out.

Motives for the current war in Iraq are different from those used to start the war. Having destroyed the existing government, the current goals are to hopefully establish a stable government. Unfortunately, the Islamic insurgents want otherwise and the Sunni and Shiites are adding fuel to the fire in their power struggle.

Anti-war protesters try to quell the situation in Vietnam, but each country is different. The way the war was started should be protested, but perhaps not with the help of the insurgents and holding the terrorists responsible.
Pulling out of Iraq without revoking in the past ten years in the old-fashioned "dead-tree" version of the P.C.

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Diversity:

Our People Make a Difference
In our quest to hire the best, Securitas USA is committed to Exemplify Diversity and of Equal Opportunities for individuals of all backgrounds. Securitas USA proudly supports diversity in the workplace and extends the same benefits, opportunities, and benefits available in the areas of:

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Securitas Security Services USA, Inc.
(Seurities USA)

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- Sales & Marketing
- Administrative Support

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Securitas Security Services USA, Inc.
(Seurities USA)
By Pacific Citizen Staff

First National Asian American Theater Festival to Run in June

NEW YORK—The first ever National Asian American Theater Festival is kicking off in the Big Apple June 11-24. The event will feature performances from more than 25 APA performing arts companies and solo artists from across the nation. The festival will celebrate the important contributions Asian American artists make to the cultural landscape of the nation.

Second Man Pleads Guilty in Attack on Asian Teens

NEW YORK—A second man has pleaded guilty to a hate crime for the racially motivated beatings of two Asian American teens who were attacked last August.

Paul Hevey, a 21-year-old college student, and 19-year-old Kevin Brown were scheduled to begin the week of July 16 for charges of missing movement and conduct unbecoming an officer — the same charges Watada, 28, had initially faced. However, Watada could be sentenced to six years in prison and be dishonorably discharged.

Pretrial motions have been set for May 20-21, with the court-martial scheduled to begin the week of July 16, according to the office of Eric Seitz, Watada’s Honolulu-based lawyer.

Seitz has said he will seek to have the charges dismissed as a violation of the Constitution’s protection against double jeopardy. On Feb. 28, he said he would likely file motions by April.

Hevey pleaded guilty March 9 to two counts of third-degree assault as a hate crime. He faces five years probation and 75 hours of community service.

State House Passes Bill to Increase Unmarried Partner Benefits

HONOLULU—Same-sex partners and family members who live together could receive similar health benefits as married couples under a bill passed March 8 in the state House.

The bill extends state and county health coverage to couples who aren’t legally allowed to marry. The measure passed a 34-6 vote, with 11 representatives absent. It now advances to the state Senate.

The measure was proposed as a replacement for legislation that would have allowed gay couples to enter into civil unions.

Survivors of WWII U.S. firebombing of Tokyo Sue Japanese

TOKYO—Survivors of the U.S. firebombing of Tokyo during World War II and bereaved family members sued the Japanese government March 9 for $10.3 million, alleging it did not assist victims in the aftermath.

They are the first group of its kind seeking damages from a wartime air raid in Japan, Japanese media said. The raid on March 10, 1945, incinerated wide areas of the capital and killed 100,000 in a single night of fire.

The 112 plaintiffs in the lawsuit allege the government did not provide aid to raid victims and accused Japan of starting the war and inviting the attack by refusing to surrender.

AsianWeek’s Why I Hate Blacks’ Columnist is Fired

SAN FRANCISCO—The writer of the controversial AsianWeek column was fired in late February.

AsianWeek Editor-at-Large Ted Fang said at a community meeting that the paper is cutting ties with 22-year-old Kenneth Eng, whose recent piece, "Why I Hate Black People" caused an uproar across the nation.

Fang’s controversial column appeared in the Feb. 23 edition of the 27-year-old AsianWeek, which considers itself the "voice of the Asian American community." On a March 5 appearance on "The Big Story with John Gibson," Eng said he was not sorry for his column.

State Programs Could be In Jeopardy

LANSONG, Mich.—Eight of 45 state programs or statues reviewed could be in jeopardy or in need of changes because of a new state law banning some public affirmative action practices, according to a report adopted March 7 by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.

They are connected to the state’s own spending for Spanish speaking women and minority business owners, foster care and special needs adoptions, higher education and collective bargaining programs.

Proposed, approved by voters in November, bars the use of race and gender preferences in university admissions and government hiring. The law took effect Dec. 23.

Honda Introduces Bill Supporting Korean Victims of Immigration Fraud

Washington, D.C.—Rep. Mike Honda introduced HR 1397, a piece of legislation that would provide relief to a group of Korean victims of immigration fraud.

Many victims and families are still suffering the consequences of an immigration supervisor who accepted $500,000 in bribes from immigration brokers in exchange for green cards that he later illegally authorized.


Filipino American Veterans Lobby Congresswoman for Benefits

Hirono plans to introduce a companion bill to the Senate Military Reunification Bill in the House.

Alaska first introduced the bill last year and the Senate passed it after attaching the measure to its immigration reform legislation. But the Senate and House couldn’t agree on a compromise bill, and the legislation was never enacted.

The benefits bill also had trouble making it through Congress. Family-sponsored immigrants from the Philippines have the longest wait times in the world before they’re allowed to obtain visas because of the large number of applicants. The average wait for Filipinos to receive a visa is 20 years. About 200,000 Filipinos served in World War II.

Art A. Calesta, president of the Hawaii chapter of World War II Filipino-American Veterans, said there are about 7,000 Filipino American veterans in the United States, including some 2,000 in Hawaii, who don’t receive the same pension benefits as their American counterparts. There are another 18,000 in the Philippines, he said.

By MELANTHIA MITCHELL Associated Press

SEATTLE—A second court-martial is scheduled to begin July 16 for an Army lieutenant who refused to go to Iraq with his Fort Lewis-based Stryker brigade and spoke out against the Bush administration.

The first military trial for 1st Lt. Ehren Watada ended in mistrial after three days when the judge said he didn’t believe Watada fully understood a prior agreement he’d signed and that would have cut his sentence to four years.

On Feb. 23, the Army refiled charges of missing movement and conduct unbecoming an officer — the same charges Watada, 28, had initially faced. However, Watada could be sentenced to six years in prison and be dishonorably discharged.

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Seitz has said he will seek to have the charges dismissed as a violation of the Constitution’s protection against double jeopardy. On Feb. 28, he said he would likely file motions by April.

He said he and Watada still hope to reach some sort of an agreement with the military, but as of yet have had no communication with the Army, other than e-mails listing the court dates.

“Our understanding is that they want to continue with this and we’re happy to obligate,” Wets said.

Prosecutors would not comment on the case, said Fort Lewis spokesman Joseph Pick. However, recently said that double jeopardy was not a factor in the case because Watada’s first trial “had not reached a position of finality.”

“As far as I’m aware we are mov-
By Pacific Citizen Staff

Gary Yamauchi Takes Oath of Office as City of Alhambra’s Mayor

Alhambra City Councilperson Gary Yamauchi has taken on oath of office as the city’s new mayor.

Elected in November 2004, Yamauchi also runs the successful Asian American-owned subsidiary business services in Southern California, Tri-Star Vending. The company’s success led it to being named “APB Business of the Year” of the 40th Assembly District. Through his association with Father Gregory Boyle of Homeboy Industries, his company also won the distinction of Homeboy’s first-ever “Employee of the Year” award.

Nguyen is Head of the Calif. State Lottery

Linh Nguyen, 33, of Sacramento, has been appointed chief deputy director for the California State Lottery. He has served as deputy director for bust.

UCSF Names New Chief of Gynecologic Oncology

John K. Chan, MD, assumed the post of chief doctor of the Division of Gynecologic Oncology, Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproduction at the UCSF School of Medicine.

As chief of gynecologic oncology, Chan will oversee all of the division’s clinical, research and educational activities.

Chan is currently an assistant professor at Stanford University. Also a clinical and translational scientist, Chan recently has focused his research on ovarian cancer.

Secretary of Labor Chao Honored with the National Legislative Award

The League of United Latin American Citizens recognized Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao with the 2005-2006 National Legislative Awards Gala.

The Legislative awards were established to recognize individuals who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to support issues important to the Latino Community. Attendees included members of Congress, ambassadors, federal officials and Hispanic leaders to honor the award recipients.

APAs in the News

By Pacific Citizen Staff

By Yamauchi

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FRIENDSHIP (Continued from page 1)

morning Susan had learned of Jim’s tragic death in a car accident.

July 16th was the day before the package had arrived, Susan, 61, and her sister Janet Hardwick Brown, 64, had the 13th anniversary of their brother’s World War II veteran. For the past several months, the Hardwick sisters have been trying to locate members of the 442nd to thank them for rescuing their father Sgt. Bill Hardwick, a member of the “Lost Battalion.” Jim was one of the dozen vets they have managed to find so far.

“It crushes me. I would have loved to have met him,” said Susan from her home in Indiana a few days after learning of Jim’s passing. “He sounded so wonderful, his contributions to our family and the great contributions to his community.”

After a recent story appeared in the Pacific Citizen about the Hardwick sisters’ efforts to locate the 442nd, Jim and his younger brother Taichi Tazoi decided to try to get in touch with Janet and Susan. Taichi, who lives in Anahiem, California, began exchanging e-mails with the Hardwick sisters Feb. 25 and would relate all the messages by phone to his older brother.

Jim had even sent an autographed book about his life to the sisters with the hope that they could continue corresponding and eventually meet.

Tragically, Jim was killed March 2 while parking his car at a restaurant to meet his son. His wife Kimiko suffered serious injuries but is currently recovering from the accident.

“He was my best friend...it really hurt me,” said Taichi. “81. My older brother was so nice, he had just the right class.”

In late February, Taichi contacted the Hardwick sisters via e-mail. “Janet was the second person I had ever e-mailed,” he said. “In one phone call to Jim, Taichi mentioned that Janet and Susan had found an oral interview on the Internet Jim had done a few years back.

“I told my brother, ‘Now the sisters know how much you are...’” Taichi said with a sad chuckle. We were like that, he said, always joking around with each other.

Unfortunately, Jim never got to meet the Hardwick sisters.

“He wanted to meet them so bad... the feeling was so mutual too,” said Taichi. “Now the meeting will have to be in another place.”

Janet, who lives in North Carolina, felt a profound sadness in the memory of Jim’s death. “We feel [the family’s] loss so deeply, we only knew him for a short time.”

In Jim’s last letter to the Hardwick sisters dated Feb. 28 he talks about his experiences fighting in the 442nd and of being on that same mountain where his father Sgt. Hardwick was eventually rescued.

“It’s strange but a feeling like a needle in a haystack,” Jim writes, and indicates his interest in speaking with the sisters further. “I would love to hear from you and Janet. Maybe a phone call...

Jim had been in the National Guard prior to WWII and decided to volunteer for the famed 442nd Regiment soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On Oct. 27, 1944, Jim set out to the Vosges Mountains along with his fellow Japanese American soldiers to rescue the men of the “Lost Battalion.”

On Oct. 29 Jim was shot twice, once in his left chest just above the heart, and would have to be hospitalized for eight months. Although the doctors were able to save him they were unable to take out all of the shrapnel that had entered his body.

In an interview with KUED Jim recalled: “I’ve still got a couple of pieces of shrapnel lodged in my leg and one piece of shrapnel about the size of a quarter and another about the size of a dime... It’s been 66 years now and I think I still carry those two pieces of shrapnel.”

For his heroics, Jim was honored with the Distinguished Service Cross, Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Cross of Valor from the Italian government.

“Jim was certainly, absolutely hero,” said Janet. “He was humble, brave, he almost doesn’t believe he’s done anything extraordinary, but he did.”

After Jim was discharged from the Army he married and married his long

month sweetheart Kimiko and had three boys.

“If I would have known that the AGC express my deepest sympathy for the loss of a model husband and father,” said Floyd Mori, JACL national director. “It is the couragous history of Jim’s father, Bill Hardwick, that allows the Japanese American community to hold their head high and participate as fully as we do in the democratic process. His story is a part of all of us and will remain for future generations.”

Taichi hopes to keep in touch with the Hardwick sisters, especially because it meant so much to his older brother.

“If I’m sure I’ll stay in contact,” said Jim.

For Susan and Janet, the short time they spent getting to know Jim was particularly meaningful.

“Anytime we actually contact someone who helped rescue our father, the feeling is indescribable. How could you possibly repay people?” Janet.

To read about the Hardwick sisters’ efforts to locate the 442nd veterans, http://www.pacificcitizen.org/con­tent/2005/05/18/area­story/index.htm.
CASIC Announces Internship Program

The Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment (CAUSE) recently kicked off the 2007 California Asian American Internship Program (CAUSE) at the 2007 California Asian American Conference in Sacramento, actively participating in community events. In addition, interns serve as chair of the CASIC Leadership Academy participants will receive an internship placement in the offices of elected officials throughout Southern California, participate in the Annual Legislative Leadership Conference in Sacramento, actively engaging in civic issues and develop leadership skills through collaboration on a group research project focused on APA issues, register new voters and participate in local APA community events. In addition, interns work on various projects, including serving as community leaders. The CASIC Internship Program is designed to provide recent college graduates an opportunity to work in the field of public affairs.

The deadline to submit an application for summer's program is May 25. College students and graduates who have completed at least one year of college are encouraged to apply. The internship application brochure and application can be downloaded online at www.causeusa.org in the Programs section. For more information or to request the brochure and the application by phone, contact the CAUSE office at 626/356-9838.

The first Japanese American to be forcibly removed from their homes and sent to World War II internment camps came from Bainbridge Island, Washington. In total, 237 JA residents lived on Bainbridge Island from 1930 to 1934. This year is the 65th anniversary of that painful day and a special commemoration will take place on March 6 at the site of the former Eagledale ferry landing. In addition there will be a public tour of the first phase of construction for the Bainbridge Island Nikkei Memorial.

In 1942 Bainbridge Island JAs were given six days to gather only what they could carry and were taken by U.S. Army soldiers to the Arkansas Delta. Many never returned, said Ben Wong, Regional Public Affairs Manager for the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. "It's a little bit known, but the program was founded in 1989, mainly for children of Japanese industry executives because we were always fighting,'" Sachi said. With interest in the program growing, the School of Education at Mississippi and Tennessee requested funding to help train Nikkei who returned to Bainbridge Island after the outbreak of WWII. This year is the 65th anniversary of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Monument Act of 2007 on Feb. 6. The bill — sponsored by Rep. Jay Inslee, D-Bainbridge Island — would make the Bainbridge Island "Nidoto Nai Yoni — Let it not happen again" Memorial site a satellite unit of the Minidoka Internment National Monument and part of the National Parks Service. The measure awaits action by the U.S. Senate and President Bush. To date, the memorial project has raised more than $2.4 million — $1 million for land and $1.4 million for development. The first phase of construction was completed this year. The second phase — a 227-foot long stone-and-wood story wall, one foot for each Nikkei who lived on Bainbridge Island during the outbreak of WWII — will begin construction this year. Figure phases include a 5,000 sq. ft. interpretive center and a 150-foot long departure pier, one foot for each Nikkei who returned to Bainbridge Island after WWII. Parking is extremely limited at the ceremony site. Carpooling is strongly requested. Public service directly to the site will be provided by the Bainbridge Island School District. For information, contact Clarence Mortowski at 206/855-9038 or clarence.mortowski@mail.house.gov.

Information:
- Ceremony and public tour of memorial — March 30, 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the site of the former Eagledale ferry landing
- Open House and Reception — March 30, 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. at Bainbridge Island City Hall

Asian American Justice Center Releases Groundbreaking Report on Adult Literacy Education in Immigrant Communities

NEW YORK - The Asian American Justice Center today released a comprehensive report detailing strategic investments and approaches that can transform this critical educational arena.

Adult Literacy Education in Immigrant Communities: Identifying Policy and Program Priorities for Helping Newcomers Learn English, was published with support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and draws heavily on testimony from more than 50 ESOL practitioners and experts from immigrant, adult literacy, education, labor, business, government and faith-based groups. Irene Lee, senior associate at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, noted that increased immigration, poorly funded ESOL programs, and a severe lack of understanding of the necessity by lawmakers and the public at large are at the heart of the problem.

"Stronger networks for information sharing are needed to build supportive communities that strengthen families — and effective communications strategies supporting ESOL programs and the development of ESOL programs are a key to implementing this effort," she said. "We also need to develop private sector support for ESOL programs." Cecilia Mullin, vice president of the Office of Research, Advocacy and Legislation at the National Council of La Raza, which contributed to the study, noted that four million American citizens stand to benefit from ESOL programs.

"Interestingly, a significant portion of this population consists of native-born Americans — including new immigrants and refugees and first generation Japanese, and other communities," the report can be ordered by contacting Pang Hou hei Mau at 202/206-2300 ext. 122 or online at advancingequality.org.

Japanese High School in Sweetwater Graduates Final Class

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

SWEETWATER, Tenn. — Japan's first accredited high school in the United States graduated its final class and will be closing after years of slipping enrollment and attributing to heightened security after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Tennessee Mogi Gakuin High School is a three-year private academic founded in 1989, mainly for children of Japanese industry executives who moved to the U.S.

The boarding school, with an emphasis on English language instruction, was housed at the 144-acre site of a former military academy and is now up for sale.

Twenty-six seniors returned from Japan this week for the March 9 graduation ceremony after completing their course in the U.S. They reflected on how their education in the rural hills about 40 miles southeast of Knoxville.

"The first year was difficult because we were always fighting," Mayu Tezuka, 18, said. "But the last year was the happy life." Sachi Tominaga, 18, said the quiet, pastoral setting of the school became so comfortable that she was bored by the crowds and noise of her native Nagasaki.

"I'm sad because no more Japanese (students) can experience this kind of thing," said Machiko Tezuka, Mayu's mother. "That's a very good experience for them.

The school once had a peak enrollment of 194 students, but administrators said it dropped after Sept. 11. Visas became harder to obtain and more Japanese parents were reluctant to send their children overseas. The school's board of directors decided in 2004 to close the school with its final class. A closing ceremony and gathering for students, parents and staff took place March 10. The school is leaving a monument to the city in thanks for the hospitality of local residents.

"The students' spirit "was nurtured here in Sweetwater... from the local people to the teachers," English teacher Hirohisa Okumura said.

More than 160 Japanese companies, including Nissan Motor Corp., employ about 40,000 Tennesseeese. In January the Japanese government announced its plans to move its long-time consulate from New Orleans to cover Japanese interests in Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.
have largely been swept away and forgotten, until recently. From his earliest childhood memories, Tom Shigekuni, 77, of Torrance, Calif. recalls his older brother Tunney around their garage as Tunney told stories, Tom Shigekuni, 77, of Torrance, Calif. recalls his older brother Tunney always being surrounded by his beloved roadsters and his racing buddies like the renowned Vic Edelbrock, Sr. and Bobby Meeks. As a 10-year-old kid Tom would follow his older brother around their garage as Tunney worked on his cars and modified his engines.

"I was always watching and listening. I learned a whole lot about engines, about racing. Tunney was always around Vic Edelbrock, Sr. . . . they were like brothers," he recalled. "I don't know what I was [about racing] but Tunney was always involved with the sport.

Nisei Mas Okamura, 87, identified the legendary Nisei racers of the 1920s and 1930s and he himself honed his Muscle Dry Lake skills after World War II. With his partner Shoji Yamada they would set a number of records in classic cars and sedan class. The Russetta Timing Association clocked their highest speeds at 122 miles per hour.

"When I got out of the service I hopped-up every engine I could get my hands on. I've worked on a Model T since I was 12. I got my driver's license when I was 14 years old," said Mas with a chuckle from his home in Mar Vista, Calif. "I've always liked mechanical things."

Writer Tom Madigan spent over eight years researching the story of the Nisei racers and published his piece in The Rodder's Journal. A former editor of Hot Rod magazine, Madigan came across their story while researching another book. He was amazed to see so many Japanese names in the racing record books from the 1930s.

"I was very interested in the internment. I tried to visualize losing everything, instantly." For the Nisei racers, "one day they're on the dry lakes just normal guys racing then the following day they're the enemy," he said.

In their day-to-day world the Nisei racers faced the anti-racism sentiment prevalent in those early years, but they were just good racers. When they grounded their cars they treated as equals, fellow racers didn't care about the color of their skin, only that they were just good racers and the speed to compete with the races.

And in an era where people were very conscious of race, many of the JA racers were members of prestigious racing clubs like the Road Runners, the Thrillers, and the Screwdriver's Club. The Nisei racers had no problems getting into the best racing clubs," said Tom, whose brother Tunney was a member of the Road Runners. "Bad things were happening but this group of people was supportive of the Nisei. All that mattered was racing. They didn't care what you looked like.

"There was no prejudice on the dry lakes. Everyone raced and everyone was friends. JA racers were just good racers. If you're a racer, you're a racer. At the dry lakes that's all they cared about," said Madigan.

With the world facing the prospect of another World War, the military took over Muscle Dry Lake and the racers were banned from racing in the area in November 1941. With the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor the following month the JA community would be forever changed. Tom, Tunney, and their family were rounded up like the other JAs and sent off to WWII internment camps. The Shigekuni family would end up in Amarillo, Colorado.

Still, the racers did their best to stick together. Vic Sr. helped as his good friends were sent off first to the Santa Anita Assembly Center and then Amache. Of all his visits to Santa Anita Vic offered to take care of and maintain Tunney's precious 1941 Mercury racing engine. When the Shigekuni brothers came home after four years, the engine was still as good as new.

"During the whole evacuation time [Vic] took care of it. He agreed to turn [the engine] every few months." said Tom.

As a young man in the early 1930s, his passions were fast cars and his girlfriend Yuri. He owned a 1927 Ford Model-T, which he worked on at every opportunity. He modified the engine in order to earn bragging rights for the fastest hot rod on the Muscle Dry Lake race beds … Even in his later years, his life-long love of cars remained strong.

"If you don't follow the rules you're not just disrespecting the team, you're disrespecting the league," said Mau. To promote the new football league, they made flyers to distribute at universities and boba shops. The reactions they received were always positive.

"We step out there for the love of the game," said Mau.

BAFL (Continued from page 1)

mushroomed into a full-fledged league of about 300 players on 13 teams all vying for their team names to get permanently etched onto the BAFL trophy. Each player on the winning team also receives individual trophies and bragging rights, of course.

"This isn't backyard football - the rules are strict, the competition is intense and injuries are guaranteed. In flag football the players usually stop when a player's flag is yanked off, but in BAFL's world it's a full contact sport where players push and at times fight. Now those kids are 17-18 years old, and some of them are 40. We have people from different social economic backgrounds who come here and are forced to play by the rules. It really breaks down barriers."

Since the league inception in 2005, the commissioners have seen the players mature and evolve as well. Some of the Nisei racers sacrificed their lives and volunteered to serve in the U.S. military during WWII. Nisei racers Yama Okuma, Hishimura, and Motimoto were a part of the famed 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the most decorated unit for its size in U.S. military history.

"At Motomoto's funeral this past May, his grandson Andy Seshiki spoke about his grandfather's love of cars and racing."

"As a young man in the early 1930s, his passions were fast cars and his girlfriend Yuri. He owned a 1927 Ford Model-T, which he worked on at every opportunity. He modified the engine in order to earn bragging rights for the fastest hot rod on the Muscle Dry Lake race beds … Even in his later years, his life-long love of cars remained strong. At the age of 81, grandpa purchased a hybrid Honda and joined an electric car club." After the War many of the same Nisei racers could be seen racing on the dry lakes and the newly popular circular tracks of Southern California. Racers Okuma and his brother Harry, Fred Ige and Hishimura simply continued where they had left off.

The Nisei drivers also furthered their engine construction knowledge by using his masterful skills as a mechanic to earn his way to an Indy 500 win. In 1960, he was the crew chief for driver Jim Rathmann when he took the coveted prize. Hishimura passed away in 1980 and was inducted into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame in 1998.

Nisei racer Larry Shinoda became a renowned car designer, helping to create the 1963 Corvette Stingray, the M28 Camaro and the Boss 302 Mustang. Many today may not know Shinoda by name but they know his cars.

Mas Okamura kept up his interest in racing after serving in the Military Intelligence Service during WWII. As soon as he came home he hopped-up his four-cylinder Ford Model-A and headed to Muscle Dry Lake, winning a number of first place finishes.

Eventually, Okamura turned his love of cars into a business and opened up his own wheel alignment shop in Santa Monica, Calif. "Sano Wheel & Brake" — and his son continues to operate it today. Whenever a hot rod is brought in, his son calls him to come and help work on them.

"We were all comrades [on the Dry Lakes]. We were just buddies," said Mas about his racing days. "There was no discrimination during all those years. It was just a bunch of good guys."


Fellow racers like Yam aka and his brother Harry, Fred Ige and Hishimura would use his masterful skills as a mechanic to earn his way to an Indy 500 win. In 1960, he was the crew chief for driver Jim Rathmann when he took the coveted prize. Hishimura passed away in 1980 and was inducted into the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Hall of Fame in 1998. Nisei racer Larry Shinoda became a renowned car designer, helping to create the 1963 Corvette Stingray, the M28 Camaro and the Boss 302 Mustang. Many today may not know Shinoda by name but they know his cars.


At each other and fight. Now those rowdy teens have matured and have earned leadership positions," added Nguyen.

Many of these teens are from tough neighborhoods and at times have difficulties conforming to rules, have severe penalties. Weight requirements (minimum) because no one wants to look like a “badass” woman who would exceed. It’s too rough for girls," said Tolokie. "There’s a lot of hitting and kicking and scraping of the knees."

But far from, she is the only girl to catch a pass.

"[Nguyen] said, "Go straight. Go five yards and turn left." I was like, wait what's five yards? Your left or mine?" said Tolokie, who caught on her pass on the second try. "It was very nerve wracking. They always threaten to throw me in again."

For the Love of the Community Too

In the Boston area, the APA community is growing rapidly and BAFL’s popularity has given the commissioners the opportunity to give back. They are planning on donating $3,000 from membership dues ($40 per person per season) to the Asian American Boston Film Festival.

"We're making inroads into the community and giving back," said Nguyen. "It's an outlet for players. We have kids who are 17-18 years old, and someone who's 40. We have people from different social economic backgrounds who come here and are forced to play by the rules. It really breaks down barriers."

Since the league inception in 2005, the commissioners have seen the players mature and evolve as well.

"The first year, the teams were filled with rowdy teens. They'd yell www.bostonasianfootball.com at each other and fight. Now those rowdy teens have matured and have earned leadership positions," added Nguyen.

For more information: www.bostonasianfootball.com
HOCKEY
Another Kariya Wins Finnish League's Scoring Title

HELSINKI, Finland—A Canadian hockey player named Kariya won the Finnish league’s scoring title for the second time in three years — and once again his name isn’t Paul.

Martin Kariya, the NHL star’s 25-year-old brother, finished the regular season for the fifth-place Blues of Espoo on March 6 with 18 goals and 43 assists for 61 points in 51 games.

That feat matched 29-year-old sibling Steve Kariya’s scoring title from 2005. He had 24 goals and 35 assists for 59 points in 55 games.

“Paul said congratulations to me over the phone,” Martin Kariya said.

“Obviously, he’s very happy for me and it's something special that we both won this scoring title now. It’s not that big a deal for me, but having Steve and myself engraved on the same trophy is something to look back on for a long time.”

Steve Kariya played briefly for the Vancouver Canucks, but Martin Kariya is still looking for a chance to join his 32-year-old brother Paul in the NHL.

“Paul is such a world class player, and he has proved that at every level anyone would just dream having Steve and myself around,” Martin Kariya said.

“I have had an unbelievable career anyone would just dream of,” Steve Kariya said. "I would like the opportunity Paul has, but we’re just as happy playing in Europe in these great leagues.”

Martin Kariya, a forward found by the Blues in Norway, also was voted the second-best player in the league by sports writers.

Steve Kariya moved to Swedish league team Frolunda this season, and next season Martin Kariya will move to the Zurich Lions in the more lucrative Swiss league.

BASEBALL

Kaz Matsui Comfortable at Long Last

TUCSON, Arizona—Kaz Matsui is comfortable in a Colorado uniform.

“I wasn’t Kaz Matsui in New York, I’m not sure why, but I wasn’t the player I really am,” the 31-year-old Japanese said through his interpreter.

The fourth-year veteran of U.S. Major League Baseball second baseman never lived up to the hype after signing a $210 million, three-year contract in 2003 with the Mets, who traded him to Colorado last summer.

After spending two months in the top-level of the American minor leagues, Matsui hit .345 in 32 games for the Rockies, compiling a .392 on-base percentage and swinging eight bases in nine attempts.

That was enough to convince Colorado to make re-signing the switch-hitter a top priority and make Jamey Carroll a utility man. It also was enough to show Matsui that he could still make it in the top level of American baseball.

So, he didn’t even think about returning to Japan or going anywhere else and re-signed with the Rockies for $1.5 million.

Along with newcomer Willy Taveras in center field, Matsui gives the Rockies something they’ve long lacked: speed at the top of the order.

“What Kaz brings is dynamic speed, game-changing speed,” general manager Dan O'Dowd said.

Matsui insists he’s up to the task. And he thinks he’s in the perfect spot, at last.

Matsui played for the Seibu Lions from 1995 until he was signed by the Mets. Colorado manager Clint Hurdle said the glare of the New York baseball spotlight may not have let Matsui, a former shortstop, find his own place at second base in the U.S. championships in Cleveland last month.

At the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, Ohno won gold in the 1,500.

Ohno Returns and Wins World Title

MILAN, Italy—Five-time Olympic medalist Apolo Anton Ohno returned to international competition March 9 and won the 1,500 meters at the World Short Track Speedskating Championships.

The American won with a time of 2 minutes, 33.939 seconds. Nicola Rodigari of Italy was second in 2:33.841, and Olympic champion Ahn Hyun-soo of South Korea third in 2:33.818.

Ohno took nearly a yearlong break after winning the 500 and taking two bronzes at the Turin Games in 2006. He started training again only two months ago and was the eighth national title of his career at the U.S. championships in Cleveland last month.

At the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, Ohno won gold in the 1,500.

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HOMETOWN TRIBUTE HONORS MINETA; HIGHWAY 85 COULD BE RENAMED IN HIS HONOR

More than 1,000 friends, community members, and dignitaries hold a hometown tribute for former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta in San Jose recently. Speakers included actor George Takei, Congressman Mike Honda, and Sen. Daniel Inouye. During the ceremony, Sen. Elaine Alquist and Assemblywoman Sally Lieber announced that a resolution had recently been introduced to rename Highway 85 in honor of Mineta.

The San Jose airport is already named after Mineta and after learning of the plans to rename Highway 85 he joked: "If you get a ticket on Highway 85, don't call me!"

Proceeds from the event will go towards archiving Mineta's historic papers and artifacts at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles and will also benefit the Japanese American Museum in San Jose. Pictured here (l-r) are: Mineta, Makoto Yamama, Takei and Congressman Honda.

VOICES

Sequel: ‘Letters from Iwo Jima’

T HE LAST TIME this column mentioned “Iwo Jima,” it was connected to an important date in Japanese-American history — Feb. 19, 1942, when President Roosevelt signed E.O. 9066, that led to the evacuation of some 110,000 persons of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast to inland concentration camps.

On the same date in 1945, the Marines landed on Iwo Jima, some 650 miles south of Tokyo, that was the costliest Marines Corps campaign in the Pacific. What was expected to be a 14-day offensive for the force of 70,000 Americans against Japan took 36 days and ended with 5,901 killed and 17,372 wounded.

The entire Japanese garrison of 22,000 army and navy troops died in battle except for prisoners of war. The Daily Variety review of Clint Eastwood’s “Letters from Iwo Jima” says only 216 survived.

... At the All Veterans Reunion for Americans of Japanese Heritage last month, my tabulatee was Beans Sagio of Chino Hills, a WWII medic at Fort Lewis General Hospital who worked in the PW ward caring for German, Italian and Japanese prisoners of war. He brought along some of those war-time letters to the Japanese PW patients from Iwo Jima.

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In Eric Byler’s “Tre,” it’s all about the sensation of touch and the chemical reactions it unleashes. Early on, the question is posed: can you imagine someone you love betraying you with someone else for 10 seconds? So in a drug addled moment lit by a weak beam from a flashlight, Tre (Daniel Cariaga) decides to try — he touches Kakela’s (Kimberly-Rose Wolter) hand and counts to 10.

The screen sizzles with currents of energy between Tre and his best friend’s fiancé and the dynamics of four friends living under the same roof is forever changed.

“I wanted to capture the surprise, the discovery of attraction that sometimes comes with the sensation of touch,” said Byler, 35, by phone from Washington, D.C., where he is currently leading a revolution (more on that later).

In “Tre” truth and lies slide back and forth between intersecting lives like in Byler’s 2002 breakout film “Charlotte Sometimes.” He calls this one a mini sequel and revisits some similar themes of love and infidelity that made his name so synonymous with controversy (remember the boycott campaign because the Asian American guy in the film didn’t get the girl?).

The filmmaker, who identifies as Hapa, is inspired by truth in everyday life. You know, the kind of truth that was “inherited from the sexual revolution — prolonged periods of courtship and emotional train wrecks,” he said.

“Apart Charlotte Sometimes,” I was just dying to make movies,” said Byler, who has since worked on three projects he couldn’t turn down, “Americanese,” a PBS pilot called “My Life Disoriented” and “Tre.” He also worked on a script for a Showtime miniseries called “Infidelity,” which has not yet been made.

He called this period of creativity a “fever of kinetic energy” and “the last gasp of my 20s.” “Charlotte Sometimes” was a breakthrough, but there was another story knocking around Byler’s mind — a darker version of the idyllic love formed between “Charlotte Sometimes” actors Michael Idemoto and Eugenia Yuan. He had developed a darker character for Idemoto who in the original script went closer to the edge of psychological breakdown, but the actor brought his own sense of dignity to the film that precluded the ending, so Byler threw out the last 15 pages of the script and filmed an impromptu ending.

“I was wise enough to let things develop organically and capture truth rather than fiction,” said Byler. “Tre was a part of my psyche.”

Tre, on the other hand, is the kind of character armchair psychologists would spend hours trying to peel away the protective layers. He is also the kind of guy you would avoid eye contact with if he were walking towards you. Tattooed and armed with an acidic tongue, he cuts down his victims and then dominates them.

“Tre is a character who always doubted that if they’re worthy of love. He’s aggressive and manipulative because he has an innate sense of competing for love,” said Byler. “He builds up this self-doubt fortress to protect himself but in his heart of hearts, he fears that he is unworthy of love.”

When Tre and Kakela touch, the tension explodes and leads up to a surprise ending that will leave you breathless.

“At some screenings, no matter how intrusive [Tre’s] questions got, people would still laugh. Then we knew that it was an audience of anti-romantics,” said Byler, who again left the ending for the actor to determine.

Since “Charlotte Sometimes,” APA filmmakers approached Byler to say the film influenced them to look deeper than the color of their skin and intergenerational conflicts. Byler calls it the “license to look inwards.”

He will be screening “Tre” at the upcoming San Francisco International Asian American Film Festival where it is up for a Best Narrative Film award, but he will also be taking part in a fundraiser for APA for Progress, a national organization that encourages electoral empowerment.

Byler was spurred into action by the now infamous “Macaca” slur that rolled off of the tongue of then Virginia Sen. George Allen during his recent reelection campaign. The filmmaker was in Los Angeles at the time, but he returned to his home to start a grassroots revolution, which will be the subject of his next project — a documentary.

“Representation in the media is good, but representation in politics is better,” said Byler.
Ruth Asawa holds a form-within-form sculpture. JANM is hosting an exhibition of her work through May 27.


Southern California


JAPAN Through May 27—Meet the Author, Jim O'Shannessy, 2-4 p.m. Manga and the Resisters, 7 p.m.; $25/adults, $20/students. Info: www.jacl.org.

Nevada

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Los Angeles

SACRAMENTO Mar. 24—One-Day Food and Rummage Sale; Cedarbrook Baptist Temple, 216 E. 24th St. Info: 916/692-1509.

Northern California


San Francisco

SACRAMENTO King of Prussia Presbyterian Church, 230 17th St. NW; the exhibition features 46 of Hirayama's paintings; $5/adults, $3/seniors, members and children under 12 are free. Info: 213/687-4918 or www.orecuisine.org.


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The following is a listing of all members and past members of the Pacific Citizen. These listings are compiled by Pacific Citizen staff members.

Notable Names

NAMBA LAW OFFICES

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TUNA CANYON DETENTION CENTER
(Continued from page 1)

"We were to speak only English, which was hard for my parents because they only spoke Japanese," said Sumi, now 78. In a moment of frustration, Sumi's mom, Nobu, started speaking her native language and was swiftly silenced with a bayonet pressed against her neck.

"I said English," said the American GI.

"It was very scary, but those were the conditions at that time," said Sumi.

From 1941-43, Tokiji was one of the nearly 3,000 prisoners of various nationalities — most were Issei men — labeled as "enemy aliens" and imprisoned at Tuna Canyon to await trial.

Some prisoners were quickly cleared, returned to their families and shipped off to internment camps, but others were held for years.

Today, the rolling hills of the 18-hole golf course located at 6433 La Tuna Canyon Road speak nothing of the site's dark past and community leaders want to commemorate the history of Tuna Canyon with a permanent monument and California State Historic Landmark status.

Historic landmark designation would not affect the future use of the land, but it would provide a permanent place to remember the site's unique history. Especially now since new owners want to buy the land, tear down the golf course and build condominiums, said Lloyd Him, president of the Little Ladders Historical Society.

Memorializing a Grave Injustice
The Little Landers Historical Society — led by Him and Paul Tsuneishi — along with the Historical Society of the Crescenta Valley are spearheading the campaign for historical monument status.

"I think [historical designation] would be helpful. It's a part of history," said Claire Nakashima, a Nisei who was 18 years old when two FBI officers took her father, Fumajiro Harada, from their Boyle Heights home in February 1942.

By the time the FBI came to their door, Fumajiro was already prepared because other Issei men had already been arrested. Fumajiro owned a farm supply store and a restaurant, but the family thinks it was his involvement in kendo that made him an FBI target.

A month later Claire, her mother Kimino, and younger brother Henry traveled to Tuna Canyon to visit their father. Most families were not allowed to set foot in the camp, but with inside help, they were able to tour the facilities. It was a clean and well-kept facility, said Claire.

"I think he was showing us to ease our minds," she added.

Claire and her family would eventually go to Manzanar while Fumajiro was transferred to another camp in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

"Most people didn’t have a clue to what was really going on. I didn’t," said Hitt. "You would expect that of those born after 1945 but even those who lived in town at the time ignored what was going on because of what the government led them to believe. People who were children at the time said that their parents told them not to look when they drove by."

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