THE ATOMIC CAFÉ
A historic building in L.A.’s Little Tokyo will be razed to accommodate a new Metro station.

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The Ongoing Fight Against Defamation

By Priscilla Ouchida
JACL National Director

When JACL was founded in 1929, the community was eye-deep in anti-Asian racism. “Yellow peril” had a strong foothold in American culture, and British author Sax Rohmer had launched his Dr. Fu Manchu character, which continues to serve as a prototype for an evil criminal genius. Who would James Bond be without his Dr. No or Flash Gordon without his Ming the Merciless? To add insult to injury, the villains were often portrayed in “yellow face” by white actors.

These stereotypes continue to surface today — UCLA student Alexandra Wallace’s rant against the “hordes” of Asians in the library or a recent episode of CBS’ “How I Met Your Mother” in which the whole cast portrayed extreme Asian stereotypes. Why does JACL care?

Treatting stereotypes as comedy is not “harmless.” When Jay Leno makes a joke designating Koreans as dog eaters, Asian children get bullied in school for being dog eaters. An incident surfaced a few days ago in the NFL about behavior in the Miami Dolphins’ locker room where professional football players used stereotype “comedy” to bully their Japanese American athletic trainer. When national media legitimizes stereotypes, there is a harmful trickle-down effect.

Unfortunately, in the past two years, anti-defamation has become a growth program in JACL. A new incident crosses my desk every other week. In October 2013, Jimmy Kimmel aired a skit on his late-night show in which a child promoted the killing of all Chinese — the show invited international protests. Kimmel was followed by the Kate Perry “Gangsta” performance at the November 2013 American Music Awards. Just as we finished lauding a great episode of “Hawaii Five-O” on CBS that delved into the incarceration of Japanese Americans at the Honoluli confinement site, we were back to have a discussion on “How I Met Your Mother” that fanned on almost every known anti-Asian stereotype.

Underfunded JACL’s program addresses bullying, hate crimes and defamation. The program is one of many programs that are categorized as “Social Advocacy.” If we polled the membership, the program would probably not rise to the top of the list of Top 10 — it should because it is a critical program that impacts the everyday lives of our children and our community. Stereotypes and defamation are the tinder for racism.

As JACL continues its work with media networks, the organization has an opportunity to stand up against stereotypes and defamation. While we have the TV networks’ ears, we should take our message to the next level and invest in the opportunity that has been presented to us.

PACIFIC CITIZEN LAUNCHES 2014 SPRING CAMPAIGN

The Pacific Citizen is excited to announce the start of our annual 2014 Spring Campaign! All donations are 100% used to help fund vital resources, staff and equipment to keep the P.C. open and able to provide you the Asian American news you need to know.

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NIKKEI VOICE

FOOD IS THE FOUNDATION OF JA CULTURE

By Gil Asakawa

My friends — and my "friends" on social media — know that I’m a foodie. I love food: good food, fast food, ethnic food, cheap eats, greasy diner food, fine dining and, most of all, Japanese food. And I post photos of food online to prove how much I love it.

Especially for ethnic communities, cuisine is a cultural gateway and an archive for our shared identity, stored in taste buds. I love the range of Japanese food most of all because of the culture the cuisine encompasses, from the most austere "Washoku" — the traditional style of Japanese food that was recently named by UNESCO to the "List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" — to Japanese American street treats like Spam musubi.

I submit that the strongest link between Japanese and Japanese Americans is in rice. We seem genetically imprinted with the knowledge of cooking rice (many of us still use the knuckle rule to measure how much water goes in the cooker) and, of course, we all eat rice. And not to be prejudiced, but we prefer white rice over brown, jasmine or other more exotic strains.

We complain ("monnik") if we’re served rice that doesn’t have the right clumpy texture so we can pick it up with chopsticks. None of this Uncle Ben’s crap. My mom used to make a face and call that stuff "porro-porro" rice because it wasn’t sticky and needed a fork — or gasp! a spoon — to eat it.

We love the crunchy, brown bits of rice at the bottom of the cooker, and we love using leftovers to make comfort food — fried rice with bacon, frozen vegetables, eggs, soy sauce and whatever else is lying around.

We eat rice with ketchup — my mom adds small bits of chicken and some veggies and calls it chicken rice. We mix a raw egg with soy sauce and drizzle it over hot rice. OK, maybe in today’s health-conscious era I’m the only one.

I know who still does that once in a while, but then again, I also love sate over rice.

And rice isn’t the only gastronomic tie that binds Japanese Americans together.

JA culture is a fascinating cross-cultural mashup. We get some of these crazy ideas from the fertile minds of multiple ethnicities in Hawaii. Spam musubi, one such invention, combines the U.S. military’s canned meat with rice and nori seaweed to make an Americanized cousin to sushi. A favorite dish at many Hawaiian restaurants and some stateide JAs diners is Loco Moco, which is a hamburger patty draped with a fried egg or two, served atop a mound of rice and covered with brown gravy.

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FOR THE RECORD

THE CURIOUS CASE AT NSA

By John Tateishi

"Curiouser and curiouser," says Alice as things become topsy-turvy in Wonderland. And that pretty much sums up the case of Edward Snowden and the NSA.

At first, I wondered why Snowden was placed on America’s Most Wanted list (and at No. 1, no less) when it was the NSA, in my view, that had committed the greater transgression by its secret program of collecting phone and email/Internet records of American citizens, USA Patriot Act or no.

Shouldn’t it have been the NSA that was on the carpet for violating the privacy rights of American citizens? We may have gotten used to having our civil liberties chipped away during the Bush-Cheney terror-chasing years, but really, this breach of our private lives is too much. It’s more than merely troubling.

Granted, the nation’s intelligence services need some latitude to sniff out potential terrorists, but there’s always a cautionary tale to the boogeyman out there somewhere mentality that was so pervasive in the Bush Administration.

Maybe it was hoping for too much that President Obama would use his exceptional intelligence to see beyond the let’s-get-em attitude that comes from dark corners in the minds of some in Washington and on the fringes as well.

But as we began to learn just how damaging some of the information released by Snowden was, I for one began to rethink the whole sorry mess. Some files, it turns out, have seriously compromised U.S. intelligence, we’re told, and irreparably damaged our relationships with some of our allies. This I believe.

So, maybe Snowden deserves — as the government wants — to be hounded down like an animal wherever he is (Russia for now).

Or maybe, just maybe, Snowden is nothing more than an honest whistle-blower who thought he was doing the right thing (as any good citizen would and should do) by reporting and exposing what most of us would see as governmental misdeeds.

After all, the snoops at the NSA were snooping on our private lives by collecting the metadata of millions of American citizens.

Honestly, the vast majority of us have nothing worth snooping into. I’m sure, so why bother? Isn’t this casting as awfully wide not just to include even the litllest of fish? On the other hand, maybe those who have lost in their hearts may get a little nervous knowing that someone or something out there somewhere has those nasty emails and photos of you stored in a safely kept cyber vault, hidden from peeping eyes. Safe, that is, until some clever hacker (probably a 12 year old) finds his or her way in and penetrates the invisible firewalls surrounding all that metadata. That would be a good time for you to begin to worry. On the other hand, that may be years from now, and who knows, you may even want those photos of a younger you back so you can admire who you used to be!

So, who’s to blame, and who’s in the right? Not to worry, says four-star Army Gen. Keith Alexander, who is in charge of U.S. Cyber Command and responsible for the NSA program.

In a “60 Minutes” interview on CBS, he assured the American public that this most secret of agencies does nothing more than collect the data and never actually listens to telephone conversations or reads emails. They look for patterns of phone numbers because they’ve figured out how terrorist cells work, explaining that call patterns are one of the best sources for detecting possible terrorist activities.

Really? Did he actually reveal how the NSA knows for and finds terrorists, how it prevents (and has prevented) potential attacks? Any smart (or even dim-witted) terrorist learned from that interview to take certain measures to avoid detection. Hard to believe it’s that simple to find out how our most secret agency conducts business. Granted, Alexander may have been playing a game at it, which I’m inclined to think.

>> See NSA on page 12
Japanese American Organizations Honor Adm. Harris B. Harris Jr. in Hawaii

By JACL National Staff


During the dinner, Adm. Harris shared his reflections of growing up in the American South of the 1960s with a Japanese mother who emphasized the need for Harris to embrace his Japanese roots. Adm. Harris credited JACL and its work in the 1960s and 70s with paving the way — culturally and politically — for modern Japanese American leaders, as well as for enabling his own rise in the military.

Event highlights included performances by John Ikuta Aoiro, the 2006 Miss Aoiro Hawaii contestant in the Merrie Monarch Hula Festival, and a video presentation on the admiral’s background and accomplishments. On behalf of the City of Honolulu, Councilwomen Ann Kobayashi and Carol Fukunaga presented Adm. Harris with a certificate to recognize his many accomplishments and officially welcomed him to the Islands. Hawaii News Now anchor Lisa Kubota served as mistress of ceremonies.

In attendance were former Hawaii Gov. George Ariyoshi, Sen. Suzanne Chun-Oakland (D-Hawaii) and Speaker of the House in the Hawaii State Legislature Joseph Souki, also in attendance were National JACL President David Lin and National board members Michelle Amato, Sheldon Arakaki, Carol Kawamoto, David Kawamoto, Chip Lanneau and Craig Tomiyoshi.

The dinner was sponsored by National JACL, the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, Go For Broke National Education Center, 442nd Veterans Club, 100th Infantry Battalion World War II Veterans Club, Honolulu Chamber of Commerce, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, National Veterans Network and the JACL Honolulu Chapter. The MIS Veterans Club, Japanese Women’s Society Foundation and Honolulu Japanese Junior Chamber of Commerce were also represented.

The dinner concluded with a presentation by JACL National Director Priscilla Ouchi and Adm. Harris of an original Gyotaku painting of a tuna fish created by local artist Naido Hasegawa.

The trip, which was not funded by JACL, provided an opportunity for board members to tour the Honolulu Inoculation camp, which is under consideration for National Park status, and to meet with the Hawaii JACL Chapter, National board members visited Honolulu with the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, which discovered the site in 1998.

Honolulu, located on property currently owned by Monomoto, is the largest of the eight Japanese American incarceration sites that were located in Hawaii. More than 1,200 individuals — primarily members of the Japanese American community as well as German Americans, Italian Americans and prisoners of war — were confined to Honokaa between 1943 and 1945. In 2008, Congress directed the National Park Service to conduct a special resource study of the Honolulu Gulch and other associated sites within the Hawaii National Park System.

National JACL has been working with the National Park Service to move the project forward.

Forty-Fifth Annual Manzanar Pilgrimage Set for April 26

LOS ANGELES — The 45th Annual Manzanar Pilgrimage, sponsored by the Manzanar Committee, is scheduled for noon on Saturday, April 26 at the Manzanar National Historic Site.

Each year, hundreds of students, teachers, community members, clergy and former internees attend the pilgrimage. Planning is under way for the afternoon event as well as for the Manzanar at Dunk program, which is scheduled to take place from 5-8 p.m. that same evening at Lone Pine High School.

Manzanar at Dunk is co-sponsored by the Nikkei Student Union at California State University Fullerton, California State University, Long Beach, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the University of California, San Diego.

Through a creative presentation, small group discussions and an open mic session, Manzanar at Dunk participants will have the opportunity to learn about the experiences of those incarcerated in the camps. Participants will also be able to interact with former internees in attendance to hear their personal stories, share their own experiences and discuss the relevance of the concentration camp experience to present-day events and issues.

Further details about the Pilgrimage and the Manzanar at Dunk program will be announced at a later date.

Pilgrimage participants are advised to bring their own lunch, drinks and additional snacks, as there are no facilities to purchase food at the Manzanar National Historic Site (restaurants and fast food outlets are located in Lone Pine and Independence, which are nearby). Water will be provided at the site.

The Manzanar Committee is dedicated to educating and raising public awareness about the incarceration and violation of civil rights of persons of Japanese ancestry during World War II and to the continuing struggle of all peoples whose Constitutional rights are in danger.

A nonprofit organization that has sponsored the annual Manzanar Pilgrimage since 1969 along with other educational programs, the Manzanar Committee has also played a key role in the establishment and continued development of the Manzanar National Historic Site.

The Manzanar National Historic Site is located on U.S. Hwy 395 in California’s Owens Valley, between the towns of Lone Pine and Independence, approximately 230 miles north of Los Angeles.

Lone Pine High School is located at 593 S. Main St. (U.S. Hwy 395) in Lone Pine, nine miles south of the Manzanar National Historic Site, across the street from McDonald’s.

For more information on the 45th Annual Pilgrimage, e-mail info@manzanarcommittee.org, call (310) 662-5103 or check the committee’s blog at http://blog.manzanarcommittee.org.
APAs in the News

Miyako Schanely Becomes First Japanese American Woman Promoted to General Officer


Schanely, a resident of Black River, N.Y., joins Brig. Gen. Douglas R. Satterfield, Col. Todd Arnold and Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald Plubacker as members of the 412th TEC command group. The 412th TEC is one of only two theater engineer commands in the Army.

Schanely is a graduate of the Engineer Officer Basic and Advanced Course, the Combined Arms and Services Staff School, the Army Command and General Staff College, the Army War College and Advanced Joint Professional Military Education.

Jane Chu Nominated as Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama intends to nominate Jane Chu as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Chu has been president and CEO of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, Mo., a $326 million project financed at the height of the recession and finalized in 2011 utilizing private funds. If confirmed, Chu would fill a position that has been left vacant for more than a year.

“Jane’s lifelong passion for the arts and her background in philanthropy have made her a powerful advocate for artists and arts education in Kansas City,” said Obama. “She knows firsthand how art can open minds, transform lives and revitalize communities and believes deeply in the importance of the arts to our national culture. I’m proud to nominate her as chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.”

Japan’s Yuzuru Hanyu Wins an Olympic Gold Medal in Men’s Figure Skating

SOCHI, RUSSIA — Japan’s Yuzuru Hanyu, 19, made history on Feb. 14 when he finished first in Men’s Figure Skating at the Winter Games. Hanyu becomes Japan’s first-ever gold medalist in men’s figure skating and the first Asian man to win Olympic gold in that sport.

After skating a record-setting short program the previous evening, Hanyu stumbled on several jumps during his free skate. However, due to the mistakes of Canada’s Patrick Chan, who entered the games as the gold-medal favorite, Hanyu emerged victorious, largely helped by his nearly 4-point lead going into the final free skate.

Hanyu, who is coached by former Olympic silver medalist Brian Orser of Canada, is from Sendai, Japan, a town devastated by the 2011 tsunami and earthquake.

“This medal can’t help the recovery in the region,” he said. “I feel helpless here. I still feel like I’m not making a contribution. As an Olympic gold medalist, I think this can help as a starting point of what perhaps I can do.”

Kent Sasaki Reappointed to the California Building Standards Commission

SACRAMENTO — Kent Sasaki, 49, of Walnut Creek, Calif., was reappointed on Feb. 12 by Gov. Jerry Brown to the California Building Standards Commission, where he has served since 2012.

Sasaki, who earned a master’s degree in engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, is an engineer and chief executive officer of Skanska, a Swedish general contractor.

Joy Higa Appointed to State Teachers’ Retirement Board

SACRAMENTO — Manhattan Beach, Calif., resident Joy Higa, 46, has been appointed to the California State Teachers’ Retirement Board by Gov. Jerry Brown, the governor’s office announced Jan. 27.

The 12-member board administers CalSTRS (California State Teachers’ Retirement System). The board is responsible for selecting the policies and rules for the system and ensuring benefits are paid by the system in accordance with the law.

Higa has held various positions at UnitedHealth Group since 2006 and also served in multiple positions at the California State Controller’s Office from 2004-06.

This position requires Senate confirmation, and the compensation is $100 per diem. Higa is a Democrat.

DOR Resolution Passed by California Assembly

SACRAMENTO — ACR (Assembly Concurrent Resolution) 85, a bill officially declaring Feb. 19 as a Day of Remembrance in order to increase public awareness of Executive Order 9066, which forced nearly 120,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry from their homes and into federal detention camps throughout the West, was approved by a voice vote during an Assembly floor session on Feb. 18.

The bill was introduced by Assemblymembers Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) and Marko Yamada (D-Davis), the only Japanese American members of the California Legislature. Assemblymembers who co-authors of the bill include Rob Bonta (D-Oakland), Ed Chau (D-Monterey Park), Paul Fong (D-San Jose), Richard Pan (D-Sacramento), Phil Ting (D-San Francisco) and Das Williams (D-Santa Barbara), Sens. Ted Lieu (D-Torrance), Carol Liu (D-Glendale) and Leland Yee (D-San Francisco) also co-authored the bill. All are members of the API Legislative Caucus.

Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942. It immediately authorized the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, where most spent the war behind barbed wire and under armed guard in remote areas — without due justice.

Following personal remarks by various assemblymembers about the Nikkei wartime experience, Muratsuchi thanked his colleagues for their support.

The resolution passed without debate.

Go For Broke Launches Student Essay Contest

The Go For Broke National Education Center is inviting high school and college students to share a meaningful Nisei soldier story for its upcoming essay contest. Twenty winners will be chosen and given two tickets to Go For Broke’s 25th Anniversary Evening of Aloha Gala Dinner, which will be held in the fall at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel and Suites in Los Angeles. This year, a total of $4,000 in cash prizes is also available.

“We are excited about expanding the student essay contest this year to include monetary prizes,” said Don Nose, president of the Go For Broke National Education Center. “It has proven to be an effective way to get a broad cross section of young people involved and passionate about the Japanese American WWII veteran story. We look forward with great anticipation to reading their submissions.”

To enter, applicants must submit a 250- to 500-word essay in response to one of three topics about the Nisei soldier experience. Topics include: 1) Describe a Nisei soldier experience or story, and explain why it is meaningful to you; 2) Explain how the Nisei Soldier experience is relevant to today’s generation; and 3) Discuss your ideas about how to preserve the legacy of the Nisei soldier.

Contest officials will notify all winners via email on July 31. To submit your entry by email, send a Microsoft Word or PDF document to community@goforbroke.org by Monday, June 30. Applicants must specify their school name, grade or year and phone number.

Masaru Kent Kawai Appointed to Torrance Water Commission

TORRANCE, CALIF. — Masaru Kent Kawai, current president of the South Bay JACL Chapter, is one of seven individuals appointed Feb. 1 to the Torrance Water Commission. Kawai’s term expires in January 2018.

Kawai, who currently works as a physics and earth science teacher at Long Beach Polytechnic High School, has served as president of the South Bay chapter since 2006. Kawai also serves as head of the Nominations Committee for National JACL. Kawai, received his bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering from California State University, Northridge. In 2009, Kawai also became head instructor of the Gardena JCI Kentos Dojo.

The objectives of the Water Commission are to make recommendations for assuring high-quality, noninterruptible water service at the lowest possible cost. To this end, a major focus of the commission centers around working with staff to implement major capital improvements, as provided for in the Water System Master Plan. In addition, the commission advises the City Council regarding water policy/legislative matters.

Kawai joins Chair Linden Nishigana on the seven-member commission. Nishigana will serve until Jan. 31, 2016.
LITTLE TOKYO BRACES FOR THE DEMOLITION OF FORMER JAPANESE AMERICAN-OWNED ATOMIC CAFÉ

Metro will demolish the historic brick building on First and Alameda Streets in Little Tokyo, the former site of the Atomic Café, a post-WWII Japanese American-owned restaurant and punk mecca, and the Troy Café, the birthplace of Chicano rock band Quetzal.

By Nales J. Ko
Reporter

Before she was “Atomic Nancy,” Nancy Sekizawa was a normal child who would nap in a booth while her parents served customers in their Little Tokyo restaurant, the Atomic Café.

“She could say that I was a J-town girl,” said Sekizawa of growing up in Los Angeles’ Japantown. “That’s all I really knew. I was going to school, and then I would go to Little Tokyo or Atomic Café to work with my parents.” Minoru and Ito Matoba opened Atomic Café in 1946, shortly after World War II and the mass unjust incarceration that swept up Ito Matoba and some 120,000 people of Japanese descent.

After being displaced twice, the café made a final relocation in 1961 to a modest brick building with large plate-glass windows on First and Alameda Streets, the current location of Senior Fish.

Sekizawa, now 60, recalls how her family restaurant was one of the few in that era with a jukebox. In the daytime, Nisei and Little Tokyo businesspersons would gobble up Atomic Café noodles or other restaurant fare. Unknowingly grooming her to become Atomic Nancy, Sekizawa’s father would give his daughter, then 3 or 4 years old, stacks of discarded 45s from the jukebox.

After her father had a stroke in the mid-1970s, Sekizawa took over the café operations, jamming the jukebox with punk rock music. “My mom was really liberal. She really liked anything pretty much,” Sekizawa said. “She would react, ’Oh, God! That sounds really good!’ And it would be something from, like, Sid Vicious.”

In the late 1970s and early ’80s, the Atomic Café became a mecca for punk and rock bands. The unlikely nightclub lured in patrons such as the Ramones, Sid Vicious, Devo, David Bowie, the Go-Gos and Blondie, to name a few. The Atomic Café heir

The Atomic Café, last located at First and Alameda Streets in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo, closed shop on Thanksgiving Day in 1989.
would come the L.A. Weekly to see which bands were playing in the area to get an estimate of the expected late-night crowd.

But the Atomic Café's eclectic Seiburg jukebox played its last tune when the restaurant finally closed on Thanksgiving Day of 1995. "It was so sad when we had to close the doors, just knowing that my family struggled," Sekizawa said. "I didn't really want to fight it because I felt like it was all done, we had done it."

Sekizawa, who became a drug treatment counselor, plans to return to the former site of the Atomic Café on Feb. 22 for a fundraiser that aims to help preserve the cultural and musical history of the building.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority will demolish the building in the late summer or early fall to build a 1.2-mile underground light-rail system that connects the Gold Line to the Seventh Street station. Thanks to Little Tokyo community leaders, who have been actively involved since the project's inception, the story of Atomic Café will be memorialized.

"We will continue to work with the community to ensure their concerns and ideas are addressed," said Metro spokesman Rick Jager. "In fact, we are planning on some type of a graphic illustration at the station, noting the cultural historical significance of the location in years past. We may even use some of the old tile work on the existing building in that graphic illustration at the station."

The $3.6 billion Metro Regional Connector project is slated to open in 2020. The current occupant, Senior Fish, was given 30 days to vacate the historic building.

"Under Metro policy, they are entitled to relocation assistance and payments," Jager said. "However, Senior Fish has not shared their relocation plans with Metro.

There are a number of eligible payments that they could be entitled to receive, and they have 16 months after relocating to make a claim. However, they will need to be forthcoming with information in order for us to process a claim."

In addition to telling the story of Atomic Café, the history of the subsequent business, Troy Café, will also be commemorated. Owned by Sean Carillo and Bibbe Hansen (mother of Channing and musician Beck), Troy Café during the 1990s was the training ground for Chiu’s managers.

"I used to go there," said Evelyn Yoshinuma, Little Tokyo Service Center community organizing director, of visiting the Troy Café. "The reason was it was a friend called me up and said her son and his friends were going to perform at this place in Little Tokyo. We were really good friends, so I went, and it was packed. It’s funny because the group that played ended up being Questlove."

To help tell the history of the Atomic and Troy cafés, the L.A. nonprofit organization Art in Place and Pacifica Media to complete a short documentary. Both, originally from Northern California, can draw on their firsthand experiences at Troy Café.

"When I moved down to L.A. in 1994 is when the Troy Café was going really strong, and I lived downtown about seven blocks away so it’s a loft," Beck said. "The Troy Café was what I always — when I was younger — imagined a cafe should be like."

Nakamura says they are hoping to receive grants in order to complete the film.

"I think really we wanted to show that there’s all this history," he said. "The Troy Café and the Atomic Café inspired other artists and was just this hub of arts and culture. I think it’s really a important story, and recently there has been some media attention. But I think they’re more interested in the punk side of it. And we really want to make sure that the Little Tokyo community element, the fact that Atomic Café was established by a Nisei couple after the war — I think that’s been lost in all the media attention."

Nakamura and Beck plan to film additional interviews and footage at the Feb. 22 fundraiser at the former site of their family business to gain records for a new generation of Little Tokyo patrons.

"You know a lot of people still call me Atomic Nancy, even my age people," Sekizawa said, breaking into a laugh. "But younger people don’t even know who the hell I am."

A few days before her return to Atomic Café, Sekizawa told the Pacific Citizen that she was up until 2 a.m. practicing on her harmonica.

"All of the things I remember, growing up as a little kid, whatever was in the jukebox at that time, whatever was really popular, I’ll be playing all that," she said.

Her daughter, Zen, who also used to sleep in the Atomic Café booths as a child, will be at the event to cheer on Atomic Nancy.

"She grew up with the music. A lot of times I said, ‘I’m sorry, I exposed you to so much weirdness. She says, ‘Are you kidding, mom? That was the greatest part of my life. I’m going. Oh wow! All right!’"

For more information about the efforts to commemorate Atomic Café and Troy Café, visit www.facebook.com/RememberAtomicTroy.
HIGHLIGHTING MODERN LOVE IN ‘WEDDING PALACE’

Director Christine Yoo brings her award-winning Korea-U.S. independent co-production to the big-screen and talks about her unique filming experience.

By Connie K. Ho
Contributor

Almost 35 percent of married couples meet online, according to a study by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. With that statistic in mind, the romantic comedy “Wedding Palace” tackles the issue of modern love and technology in a comedic way. Starring Hye-Jung Kang (2003’s “Oldboy”) and Brian Tee (2006’s “The Fast and the Furious: Tokyo Drift”), the Korea-U.S. independent co-production has gone on to garner awards on the 2013 film festival circuit, including the Golden Angel Award — Best Asian American Film at the Chinese American Film Festival and the Director’s Award at the Atlanta Korean Film Festival. Director Christine Yoo spoke recently with the Pacific Citizen on her experience making the film and what’s next for “Wedding Palace.”

Pacific Citizen: What made you interested in telling this story?
Christine Yoo: I was just inspired to do it really from my own family experience. I guess, I come from a very large, extended family on both my mother and my father’s side. But particularly from my mom’s side, everyone is really close, and Koreans are usually all up in your business. I wanted to do something that had that feeling.

Pacific Citizen: The story is broadcast-al, taking place in the United States and Korea. What was the experience like filming in Koreatown in California and Seoul, Korea?
Christine Yoo: Originally in the U.S., I had wanted to shoot in Memphis because that’s actually where I’m from, and the story I felt was always a Memphis story in a lot of ways. But just because of practicality, when you get down to logistics, we filmed in Los Angeles.

I live in Los Angeles with one of the largest Korean American populations. And the story is about a young Korean American man who works in the ad business, and he travels to Korea on business. I felt that that was just something a lot of people do these days, just in terms of being an international or global citizen of the world. I’ve traveled to Korea a lot, and I wanted to do something that was reflective of that experience.

Pacific Citizen: Growing up in Memphis, have you lived in a lot of other cities in the U.S.?
Christine Yoo: I was born in Buffalo, N.Y., actually, and then I did most of my growing up in Iowa City, until sixth grade. Then my family moved to Memphis between sixth and seventh grade. I grew up in the South, and when I went to school, I went to a boarding school on the East Coast, just outside of Boston. When I originally was in college, my first couple of years I did in New...
I did in New York, and then I ended up getting the film bug and then transferred to USC. I’ve been fortunate to have a lot of experiences in different regions in the U.S.

Pacific Citizen: And what has the response to the film been like from viewers?
Christine Yoo: Overall, I would have to say it’s been very positive. We’ve actually found that the film has a broader audience than just the Asian American audience. The film had its theatrical release this past fall, and we found that a lot of Hispanics and African-Americans and Caucasians responded to it. We’ve really found a broad audience base, and I think that people have just been responding to the comedy. And I think that everybody can kind of relate to the whole wacky, dysfunctional family thing.

Pacific Citizen: We also saw that there’s a contest happening now until March 14. Winners who submit photos of a viewing party as well as a short essay or short video featuring their thoughts of “Wedding Palace” are eligible to win the grand prize of a $250 iTunes gift card, a Hite Jinro premium gift pack, “A Korean Kitchen” cookbook, a traditional cloth painting and a “Wedding Palace” DVD signed by you. The contest is sponsored by Hit Jinro, the Korea Tourism Organization, Mutual Publishing and GoGo Entertainment. Tell us a little more about the competition.
Christine Yoo: It’s taken this movie a long time — it hasn’t been easy for us to do the film. So, I was really happy that the movie is now being widely seen. One of the ways that the film initially came together was through sponsorships from some Korean companies, so we were excited to have this contest as a way to sort of have fun with the movie’s fans. We’ve really been fortunate that some people have seen the movie twice, and so we just wanted to give something back to the fans, too, and create a fun experience. Nowadays when people watch movies On Demand or on their iPad, they watch it alone, and this is a movie that I always wanted or I always visualized people watching it together. Hopefully, it’ll encourage people to get together with friends and family to watch it.

Pacific Citizen: Any other comments for your fans?
Christine Yoo: I hope that people watch the film and, also especially for fellow Asian Americans, I really hope that they do continue to support the movie because it’s really very tough to get anything Asian American related off the ground. And if we don’t support what we do, nobody is going to support us. I really encourage people to try to embrace the efforts that artists are putting out there. I was really fortunate that I had an opportunity to work with a lot of super talented people and I’m just really excited that I worked with some established actors but I also worked with some new faces that I hope people will come to discover. For me, that was one of the best parts of making the movie.

“Wedding Palace” is now available On Demand, on DVD and online for viewing. Find Wedding Palace on Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/weddingpalaceGO) and Twitter (https://twitter.com/weddingpalacego) for updates. Visit the movie’s official website at www.WeddingPalaceMovie.com for more information on the competition.

2013 Spring Campaign Winner

Congratulations to Ted and Michelle Namba of Arizona!

They are the grand-prize winners of the P.C’s 2013 Spring Campaign drawing for a five-day Carnival Cruise for two courtesy of the National JACL Credit Union.

Donate today to the P.C’s 2014 Spring Campaign to enter for a chance to win a monthly drawing!

PACIFIC CITIZEN

Subscriptions are due by March 31st. For Pacific Citizen information please 22 issues/year (one in December/Jan issue): Single copy is $4.00 plus sales tax. Order of survival for those that lose their jobs.
JACC’s Hinamatsuri Festival
LOS ANGELES, CA
March 1, 1-4 p.m.
Japanese American Cultural and Community Center
244 S. Pedro St.
Cost: $20/General admission; $10/JACC members
The spring season of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center’s “On the Veranda” Series opens with Hinamatsuri: Girl’s Day. The festival will feature the Ogawara-Ryu Tea School, crafts and the traditional doll exhibition.
Info: Visit www.jacc.org or call Wakana Kimura at (213) 628-2725.

San Jose Girls Day Festival
SAN JOSE, CA
March 2, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.
Japanese American Museum of San Jose
336 N. Fifth St.
Cost: $5/Nonmembers; $3/Students and seniors
Free/Children and members
The Japanese Doll Festival will feature traditional Hina Matsuri dolls, unique exhibits and arts and crafts.
Info: Visit www.jamsj.org or call (408) 294-3138.

The CAAM Fest 2014
SAN FRANCISCO, OAKLAND, BERKELEY
March 13-23
Cost: $12/Advanced general admission; $11/Students, seniors and disabled; $10/CAAM members
The 11-day CAAM Fest 2014, presented by the Center for Asian American Media, highlights satirical creations from around the world. The festival kicks off and culminates with director Ham Tran’s film “How to Fight in Six Inch Heels.”
Info: Visit www.jamsj.org or call (408) 294-3138.

JAMH Hosts Live Japanese Tattoo Demonstrations
LOS ANGELES, CA
March 8, 1-4:30 p.m.
Japanese American National Museum
100 N. Central Ave.
Cost: $9/General admission; $5/Students and youth
Artists from the exhibit “Perseverance: Japanese Tradition in Modern World” will conduct live tattoos, including the tebori technique. The exhibit is by Kip Fulbeck and curated by Takashi Kitamura.
Info: Visit www.jaman.org or call (213) 625-0414.

Miso Tasting Workshop
LOS ANGELES, CA
April 19, 1-3 p.m.
JACC, South Gallery
244 S. San Pedro St.
Cost: $25/General admission; $20/JACC members
Miyakos Oriental Foods presents the “On the Veranda: Miso Tasting” workshop, where guests can taste a variety of miso dishes and test their cooking skills.
Info: Visit www.jacc.org or call (213) 628-2725.

Judo Dojo Rummage Sale
LOS ANGELES, CA
March 1, 9 a.m.-8 p.m.
Japanese American Bank and Trust
11345 Olympic Blvd.
The Sawtelle Judo Dojo rummage sale will raise money for students traveling to the Jr. National Judo Championships in Hawaii on July 4-6.
Info: Email Lori Quen at lori@rakkodesigns.com or call (310) 999-4585.

ADVERTISE HERE
Events in the calendar section are listed based on space availability. Place a “Spotlight” ad with photos of your event for maximum exposure.

FOR MORE INFO:
nalea@pacificcitizen.org
(800) 966-6167
Obituaries

MARY ‘MOLLY’ KITAJIMA

Mary ‘Molly’ Kitajima passed away on the morning of Jan. 25, 2014, surrounded by her family, friends and loved ones. Molly was 89 years old.

Molly was born on Oct. 25, 1925, in the Surrey and Delta regions of British Columbia, Canada. Molly enjoyed poker games, golfing and traditional Japanese taiko drumming — which she performed well into her later senior years — with Heiwa and Onami Taiko.

Molly’s service was held at Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church (SACBC) in Union City, Calif., on Saturday, Feb. 15 at 1 p.m. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Molly’s name to SACBC’s Umezono Gardens Senior Home at 32965 Alvarado-Niles Road, Union City, Calif. 94587.

Mary ‘Molly’ Kitajima, 89, Torrance, CA; Jan. 11; survived by her sister, Debra Nakahara; her brother, Dean Kitajima; her nephews, John, Steve and Myron Kitajima; and her nieces, Melanie Kitajima and Cecilia Kitajima. Also survived by her sister-in-law, screenwriter Faye Dunaway; and her brother-in-law, actor Henry Fonda.

Tribute

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GWU Students Clean the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Following a JAPA Speakers Bureau engagement at George Washington University, students visited the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism on Jan. 18.

Following a plenary session, students were taken to the memorial by a docent from the Japanese American Veterans Association. After the tour, a student and her mother, Adrienne Coulter, volunteered to organize a clean-up of GWU students to clean the memorial as a community service.

The students, who are freshmen from San Francisco, along with Alex Gross, a freshman from Spokane, and Diana Moore, a freshman from Rockville, Md., visited the memorial on Feb. 1, where they picked up trash and raked the leaves. 

Adrienne Coulter and the GWU team plan to clean the memorial on a regular basis.

In a small report to the JAPA Speakers Bureau, Alyssa Coulter said, “We enjoyed helping the community by being able to clean up the memorial. It looks great and I am glad that people visiting will get to see it in a clean condition.”

Professor Dona Mier, who invited the JAPA speakers to talk to her class at GWU, said that it was “thriving to have this important (Japanese American) history with her class and is proud of her students’ community spirit.”

Various officials from Japanese American organizations also expressed their appreciation to the GWU students and mentors.

JAPA President Gerald Yamada told the GWU team that the Japanese American community appreciated “this considerable initiative … I am glad you recognized the need and took action.”

Said Dan Matthews, chairman of the board of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, to Morris: “Your leadership with your student is largely responsible for this wonderful moment,” and told the students that “I wish you a day in Japan.”

And Craig Uchida, chairman of the board of the National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, to Morris: “Your leadership with your students is largely responsible for this wonderful moment,” and told the students that “I wish you a day in Japan.”

The NFAP transferred ownership of the memorial to the federal government in 2003. The National Park Service has responsibility to maintain the memorial. The NPS cleans the memorial as needed, and when necessary, the NPS does not clean the memorial as needed.

NFAP and JACL have sponsored or supported the project.

NSA >> continued from page 3

Whatever.

But the nagging fact remains that if the NSA is allowed to probe secretly into our lives, whether by legal or judicial authority, the result is a loss of our right to privacy and our right of free expression. This loss is no-where being violated by this NSA program because they talk.

As such, as they will, I’m comfortable with the thought that the government can carry out this metal detecting and get away with it without so much as a whimper from the civil rights community. The ACLU filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of the NSA program (and I hope that at the next court it joins that suit as an amicus, but otherwise there is no action taken from the civil rights community).

Frankly, in this regard I don’t see how the NSA programs or don’t complaint about the NSA programs, but I’m curious to know what the ACLU thinks of this.

This is how we protect our right to privacy as Americans. If a sampling of civil rights concerns in this country is a real concern, then the ACLU and the JACL should be on the horn of the civil rights community.

“Curiosity and curiosity” says Alice.

John Tats is a former JACL national director.

FOOD >> continued from page 3

To add to the cultural diversity, I make an albóndiga salad that mixes Mexican corn chips with soy sauce and ginger, and people of all races call them “taco chips.”

A food culture doesn’t even keep pace with Japanese cuisine.

Chop Suey, a Chinese-American invention, is mixed on a white plate in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo. It’s an art and a cuisine that exhibits how Japanese Americans have contributed to a national cuisine. One of the greatest concerns is that our community’s “going out” food choice is a Chinese restaurant.

While other Americans think of China as production centers, we know Chinese restaurants to be a part of our community. What I should recommend or suggest is the traditional pasties or Japanese cooking. As the idea of them is more than “taco” and the same, this is a great salad with many ingredients.

Sure, we love to eat fancy and when we can afford, but it’s a more enjoyable and easy to make. The worst part is that most people imagine when they think of a Japanese dish.

What are some of your favorite Japanese American family or community foods? Send me an email with your dish’s name and your family stories about food, and I will be happy to share my photos, because if you’re like me, you can help me out before you even ask.

Gil Asakawa is a current member of the F.C. Editorial Board and former F.C. Board Chair. His blog is at www.nitkatok.com, and he also is the Japanese expert for Answers.com at www.japaneseanswers.com