Frank Watanabe is finally awarded the Nisei Soldiers of WWII Congressional Gold Medal after a fire nearly extinguished that honor forever.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE WATANABE FAMILY
JAVA TO SPONSOR DAY OF AFFIRMATION FOR NISEI SOLDIERS

July 15 will forever commemorate the legacy created by Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. military during World War II.

By Gerald Yamada, JACL President

The executive council of the Japanese American Veterans Assn. approved a proposal to designate July 15, starting in 2020, as a Day of Affirmation to commemorate the legacy created by the valor and sacrifices made by Japanese Americans who served in the U.S. military during World War II.

I have long felt that the Japanese American community needed to have a special occasion to acknowledge what was accomplished by those who choose to put country first while their family and friends were imprisoned in America’s war relocation internment camps.

July 15 was selected because on July 15, 1946, President Harry Truman received the returning 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team at the White House Ellipse at Noon in the rain. President Truman praised their battlefield accomplishments by saying, “You fought the enemy abroad, and you fought prejudice at home, and you won. Keep up that fight, and we will continue to win.”

The president affirmed the decision made by the Japanese American soldiers to serve their country and fight for its ideals, as well as demonstrate loyalty as their way to combat the prejudice that they faced at home.

The legacy of the Nisei soldiers must also be credited for making redress a reality. Being reminded of that legacy is what changed President Ronald Reagan’s decision not to veto, but to sign the Civil Liberties Act of 1988 (aka “redress legislation” or “HR 442”) into law.

Just before President Reagan signed the redress legislation, he stated that “HR 442 was so fittingly named in honor of the 442nd (Regimental Combat Team).” When he signed the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, he stated, “Here we admit a wrong. Here we affirm our commitment as a Nation to equal justice under the law.” This affirmation is inscribed in the National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in World War II, located in Washington, D.C. JAVA wants the Day of Affirmation to be the opportunity for our community to remember and express our appreciation for how the legacy created by the Nisei soldiers has benefited and will continue to benefit our community’s efforts to fight prejudice and promote equal justice under the law.

On July 15, 2020, JAVA is planning to lay a wreath at the World War II National Memorial in Washington, D.C., at Noon to honor all of the Japanese Americans who served during WWII. The memorial is located within sight of the White House Ellipse.

The honor guard each year will consist of Japanese American veterans of WWII or lineal descendants or ancestors of Japanese Americans who served during WWII. JAVA will create on its website — JAVA@wildapricot.org — a simple application process so that interested persons can volunteer to be considered to be part of the honor guard.

On July 15, 2021, JAVA has reserved the National Museum of the United States Army for a gala event to honor the Nisei soldiers, in addition to the wreath-laying ceremony at the World War II National Memorial earlier that day. Tours of the museum will be a part of the evening event. A dinner committee is already being organized for this event. JAVA members and friends are asked to mark their calendars for these two events.

For more information, contact JAVA Potomac@gmail.com.
If there is one thing that all Americans today can agree upon in these especially divisive times, it is the unimpeachable loyalty and dedication to country of our World War II Nisei veterans.

To appreciate the gravity of the sacrifices made by the Nisei veterans, you might visit the Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism During World War II in Washington, D.C. Alongside the panels listing the 10 War Relocation Authority concentration camps are panels listing the 810 Japanese American soldiers who gave their lives in service.

The Go For Broke Monument in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo neighborhood lists the 16,131 Nisei soldiers who served in the 100th Infantry Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, Military Intelligence Service, 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, 232nd Combat Engineer Company and the 1399 Engineer Construction Battalion.

Both of these sites do well to honor the history and sacrifices of WWII Nisei veterans. I would urge anyone visiting Washington, D.C., to visit the memorial during the day to make sure you can catch every detail, but return at night, when the memorial takes on a serenity and peacefulness unrivaled by almost any other monument in a city full of them.

Only then can you truly feel the full gravity of what faced the Japanese American community during WWII and the battles fought by the Nisei soldiers — both at the battlefront and the home front.

Although we as a country have done much to recognize all of those who served during WWII, and even the Korean War soon after, that has not always been the case.

The Vietnam War was a tragedy both for the Vietnamese but also for the American soldiers we went to fight that war. Like the Nisei veterans, the Vietnam vets also fought a battle at home upon their return.

We have recognized our mistakes since and do much to recognize those returning from the more recent Gulf War and the ongoing war on terrorism. Sometimes that recognition can ring hollow. Does everyone standing and applauding at a baseball game really address the challenges faced by veterans upon their return?

Prior to coming to JACL, I worked at a medical shelter for the homeless in Washington, D.C. Roughly 15 percent of our clients were veterans. In the general population, veterans make up only 7.3 percent, according to the most recent census estimate.

In the most recent homeless count by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, only 8.6 percent of veterans were homeless. The fact that veterans were requiring the services at my previous workplace meant we were not only failing them in preventing them from being homeless, but also failing to provide adequate health care services, leading them to require stays at our facility.

Japanese Americans have always been supportive of our veterans, most of all our WWII vets, as well as those who have served since.

For JACL, we have an additional imperative to support our veterans. As a civil rights organization, it is the right of veterans to be treated with dignity by our country, and we, as an organization, must work to preserve that right.

So, as you pause this year on Veterans Day, or perhaps at your next sporting event when everyone rises to recognize the service of men and women in attendance and on the Jumbotron, make sure that those are just the dots connecting what should be a regular recognition of our veterans.

Fight for improved funding and services from our Department of Veterans Affairs, as well as continued reform of that agency. Hold our politicians accountable to provide the oversight of these programs, and not just show up for the Veterans Day services once a year.

When we tell of what it means to be Japanese American and why we fight for civil rights, the story of our Japanese American veterans is a vital part of that story.

Also, take the time to stop and contemplate the sacrifices others have made because of their love of country, and ask yourself if you are taking full advantage of the opportunities given to you to make this country better.

We don’t all have to serve in the armed services to demonstrate our patriotism and love of country, but we must always find ways to celebrate and live out our nation’s ideals so that we might all strive to be better Americans for a greater America for everyone.

David Inoue is executive director of the JACL. He is based in the organization’s Washington, D.C. office.

### NIKKEI VOICE

### CAN WE TALK? ABOUT ‘MISS SAIGON’?

By Gil Asakawa

Let me say right upfront: I don’t like “Miss Saigon.”

The musical has been a megahit staple of the stage since it made its debut in London in 1989 and then Broadway in 1991. It ran for a decade in New York and was revived in 2017. Touring versions have crisscrossed the U.S., including a stop in Denver in September.

“Miss Saigon” makes lots of money for its producers and the theaters that can accommodate its production pomp and dramatic musical thrills, but the story is the same as a century ago, and it seems even more outrageously anachronistic and out-of-step today, in the MeToo era, and with our heightened awareness of racial stereotypes, especially of Asians.

The musical is about cultural and physical imperialism, white privilege and savior complexes, as well as unabashed misogyny and sexism, written with a condescending attitude towards Asian women and ineffectual, impotent Asian men.

In one much-publicized fiasco during a Madison, Wis., stop of this current tour, the theater agreed to schedule a community panel discussion about the stereotype, then canceled it at the last minute, pouring fuel on the fire of protest. (It should be noted that the New York producers of the tour were all for the community panel discussion, but the theater canceled it.)

So, when the Denver Center for the Performing Arts announced it was bringing “Miss Saigon” for a two-week run, a group of Asian American Pacific Islander community members met with DCPA management to share our concerns. To our surprise, they were open to our comments and willing to work with the community to find ways to make “Miss Saigon” a learning experience for audience members.

For starters, they published accurate portrayals of Vietnamese refugees from our community in interview articles on its website and program book, telling their stories.

We suggested a talk-back panel discussion with local Vietnamese community members, and the DCPA countered that they could schedule an unprecedented series of talk-backs during the production and include members of the cast and crew in addition to community members.

“Miss Saigon” DCPA posters

PHOTO: GIL ASAKAWA

> See SAIGON on page 4
PHOTO: WATSONVILLE-SC JACL

Dr. Masako Miura with her son, Hans Goto, and the proclamation given to her by the City Council of Watsonville, Calif.

Dr. Masako Miura, 105, with her son, Hans Goto, and the proclamation given to her by the City Council of Watsonville, Calif., honored Dr. Masako Miura with an official proclamation on Oct. 22 to celebrate her birthday and honor her lifetime work as a physician and U.S. government civil servant. Signed by Watsonville Mayor Fran Ord (Monterey) for soldiers, veterans, retirees and their dependents.

Dr. Masako Miura with her by the City Council of Watsonville, Calif., honored Dr. Masako Miura with an official proclamation on Oct. 22 to celebrate her birthday and honor her lifetime work as a physician and U.S. government civil servant. Signed by Watsonville Mayor Fran Ord (Monterey) for soldiers, veterans, retirees and their dependents.

SAIGON » continued

I also helped research facts about Vietnam, the war, its aftermath, pop culture trivia and movies and books for more information, which the DCPA printed on a triptych of huge poster boards that audience members clustered around and read before the curtain calls. I don’t like “Miss Saigon.” But it’s unrealistic to think that we can make the musical go away and be put on a shelf to turn to dust. All of the DCPA’s efforts allowed room for dialogue around the troubling issues that still pervade the production. And that, to me, is a big win — just to be able to have the conversation.

So, can we talk?

**NOVELIST ANDREW LAM, M.D., PUTS FOCUS ON 442 RCT**

The retinal surgeon moonlights to spotlight a fictional Nisei soldier.

_By P.C. Staff_

The first question one has to ask when talking over the phone to author Andrew Lam is, "Do I have the right Andrew Lam?"

That’s because there is another Andrew Lam — who happens to be Vietnamese American — who has also gained renown as a writer.

The author of the novel "Repentance," which was released last spring, however, is not only a different Andrew Lam, he also is younger, Chinese American, lives near the East Coast and is a physician — a retinal surgeon, to be precise.

"More than once, someone has come to a book talk or one of my patient’s has come with one of his books for me to sign," Dr. Lam laughed. Although they have yet to cross paths, he says he’d love to meet the other Andrew Lam.

(At an odd sort of way, though, Lam is actually someone one would not want to meet professionally. That’s because those who come to see him are referred by other doctors who can’t help their patients, meaning one would have a very serious condition, such as a detached retina.)

Referring to his literary namesake, whom he described as a "full-time writer," this Andrew Lam spends the bulk of his workday practicing medicine and serving as an assistant professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School and Tufts University School of Medicine.

Nevertheless, Lam, 43, has managed to write three books in his spare time, with "Repentance" (Tiny Fox Press, 283 pp., ISBN: 978-1-946501-12-7, $15.95) having been preceded by "Saving Sight," a non-fiction book about being an eye surgeon, and "Two Sons of China," another work of historical fiction.

"I basically write about World War II and history," Lam told the Pacific Citizen. "As a writer, my main goal is to basically shine a light on aspects of our history that aren't necessarily well-known but deserve to be." Lam added, "I knew about them just from history, but I knew about them just from history, but I didn’t actually get a chance to meet them before, and then I met Lam and his work and his writing really inspired me to write a book about the 442nd, and then I met many veterans. One day I was in church, and there was a guy sitting down next to me, and I was in the 442nd."

"I knew about them just from history, but getting to know them personally — meeting them — was very valuable," Lam continued. "So, when I decided to start a book on the 442nd, my goal was to get more mainstream Americans to know their story."

"Repentance" is the journey — with a surprise twist or two — of a superstar Nisei heart surgeon named Daniel Tokunaga who has a fraught relationship with his Nisei father, a heroic 442nd veteran who is hiding a decades-old secret, as well as a less overtly strained relationship with his Japanese American mother, who has a secret past of her own.

As Tokunaga tries to reconcile his relationship with his parents, he must also take steps to salvage his marriage to a white American woman who has spent most of their marriage doing the heavy lifting of raising their now-grown offspring because Daniel put his work first, causing her to let die her own career aspirations. Daniel’s upbringing, not surprisingly, had a direct effect on his relationship with his wife.

"I visited him, and he showed me all his memorabilia, which was a real treat," Lam said. "He endorsed the book, which was great, but he passed away, unfortunately, in 2015, so he never got to see the final, final version."

"He’s probably the person who I feel most connected to who was actually a veteran," Lam continued. "I could have no doubt be happy to learn that, according to Lam, sales of the book have thus far exceeded its publisher’s expectations."

"I just love the fact that people are reading it and learning so much about the 442nd and the Japanese American experience during the war," he said.

Although not autobiographical, Lam drew on his own experience as a surgeon and family man to lend credibity to the character of the novel’s protagonist.

> See NOVELIST on page 8

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**SAKAI, KIYOMURA AND SATO TELL A ‘442’ TALE VIA GRAPHIC NOVEL**

Published earlier this year, "442" is a graphic novel from writers Koji Steven Sakai and Phinneas Kiyomura and illustrator Rob Sato. The 80-page graphic novel originated via Lynnwood, Wash.-based Stela, which has been described as Netflix for graphic novels delivered to one’s digital device.

According to Sakai, Stela approached him about doing a project, and he pitched five ideas — one on zombies, an action story, a superhero story, a drama — and, because he likes to include at least one Asian American story when opportunities like that come up, one on the 442nd and the Rescue of the Lost Battalion.

"To my surprise, that’s the one they took," Sakai said. "Part of the deal with them was that I had all of the other rights outside of it because I wanted more people to see the story."

According to Sakai, illustrator Sato “works perfectly because his grandfather was a member of the 442nd, so he had a connection.”

To read "442," it will cost $9.99 for a monthly Stela subscription. Or, the printed version can be purchased for $9.99 via Amazon.com. (Be sure to visit PacificCitizen.org first and click on the Amazon banner before you order!)
GO FOR GOLD: DELAYED RECOGNITION FOR A VET’S FAMILY’S QUEST

Modest in life, a passed-over Frank Watanabe is finally recognized after his death.

By P.C. Staff

(Open quote)

By P.C. Staff

Frank Watanabe with his parents, Risaku and Teruyo Watanabe

The Watanabe family in 2011 for Frank and Margaret’s 50th wedding anniversary

Margaret and Frank Watanabe on their wedding day, March 10, 1961

Young Frank Watanabe

Alysa Sakkas offers remarks upon accepting her father’s Congressional Gold Medal. Also present during the posthumous award ceremony were Congressman Ro Khanna (left) and Consul General of Japan in San Francisco Tomochika Uyama.

Nisei Soldiers of WWII Congressional Gold Medal

Frank Watanabe makes a speech at a JACL Detroit chapter event.

Frank Watanabe served as chairman to the 1964 JACL National Convention. He is pictured here in an article from the Pacific Citizen.

Frank Watanabe with parents, Risaku and Teruyo Watanabe

Margaret and Frank Watanabe on their wedding day, March 10, 1961

Young Frank Watanabe

Alysa Sakkas offers remarks upon accepting her father’s Congressional Gold Medal. Also present during the posthumous award ceremony were Congressman Ro Khanna (left) and Consul General of Japan in San Francisco Tomochika Uyama.

Nisei Soldiers of WWII Congressional Gold Medal

Frank Watanabe makes a speech at a JACL Detroit chapter event.

Frank Watanabe served as chairman to the 1964 JACL National Convention. He is pictured here in an article from the Pacific Citizen.

By P.C. Staff

(Open quote)
Now on display
@ MIS Historic Learning Center
Dislocation & Divergence: Causes & Consequences of EO 9066
Open on Weekends: 12-5 PM
Wed-Fri: Group Tours by appointment
640 Mason Street, Crissy Field West,
Presidio of San Francisco,
San Francisco CA 94129
415-921-5007, njahs@njahs.org

The story...
On the eve of war with Japan on November 1, 1941, the US Army secretly recruited 59 Japanese American (Nisei) and 2 Caucasian soldiers for the coming war. Trained in the utmost secrecy as military linguists, these enlisted men comprised of the first class at Building 640 at Crissy Field in the Presidio of San Francisco. From its humble beginnings, the MIS grew to over 4,000 graduates, and evolved in the today’s renowned Defense Language Institute and Foreign Language Center at the Presidio of Monterey.

Serving in every major battle and campaign in the Pacific Theatre of War, while their families languished behind barbed wire in America’s concentration camps pursuant to Executive Order 9066, the Nisei MIS were credited for shortening the war by two years.

During the Occupation of Japan, the MIS worked to establish a lasting democracy and peace. For their role, the MIS have been honored with a Presidential Unit Citation in 2000, and with a Congressional Gold Medal in 2011 along with veterans of the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

The place.
Set in the breathtaking Presidio of San Francisco (a designated National Historic Landmark District of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, National Park Service), Building 640 stands as a place of historic significance. Spearheaded by the National Japanese American Historical Society, Inc. (NJAHS) together with the National Park Service and The Presidio Trust, and bolstered by grass roots support from the JACL, and veterans groups, this effort has saved the building site. In 2013, we opened our doors to this new adaptive reuse project—an interactive MIS Historic Learning Center devoted to the MIS legacy of peace and reconciliation. To date, the campaign has raised $5 million in private and public support.

Today NJAHS seeks matching private dollars to ensure its long-term viability.

What you can do...
Honor the legacy and make a contribution to the MIS Historic Learning Center. Gifts beginning at $2,500 and up will be recognized on the new Commemorative Donor Wall. Naming Opportunities are also available.

Join us to realize the dream!
To learn more,
Call 415-921-5007
visit www.njahs.org/mis
or email: njahs@njahs.org

Where it all began...
at the Presidio of San Francisco
Sakkas said her father, however, didn’t want to join the MIS. “He told us that during the testing, he would purposely try to score low because he was really hoping to get a different assignment,” she laughed. He did not get his wish.

Watanabe nevertheless completed the MIS training, going on active duty on Aug. 31, 1945. WWII, meantime, would officially end on Sept. 2, 1945.

“He used to say he was in the first graduating class of the Defense Language Institute in Monterey,” Sakkas said. Watanabe was honorably discharged on Dec. 5, 1946. It wasn’t a long stint — but serve he did.

After leaving the Army, Watanabe returned to Michigan’s University of Detroit and earned his bachelor’s degree. He then attended Wayne State University to obtain his master’s degree in mechanical engineering and went on to work for Kelsey-Hayes Corp., where he worked on the research end for that company.

“He probably would have stayed with them for his entire career,” said Sakkas, “but they were swallowed up in a merger, and he lost his job in the process.”

Watanabe eventually found work at firms such as American Motors Corp. Bendix Corp., Rockwell International and the Ford Motor Co., where he was employed when he retired.

In 1961, he and Margaret Ueki were married. They later lived in Livonia, Mich., and raised their two daughters, Alysa and Kari. Watanabe was active in the Detroit JACL chapter, even serving as its president one year and chairman of the 1964 JACL National Convention.

When they were old enough, the sisters both moved to California, where they would spend their summers with relatives. According to Sakkas, after her father retired, Margaret said, “Now that you’re retired, what are we doing in Michigan, when both of our daughters live in California and we have two grandkids who live in California?”

Watanabe, however, loved Michigan and its four seasons and thought his family would return.

“My dad said, ‘Eventually, they’re going to move back to this house.’ And I said, ‘No, you’re not,’ said Sakkas. So, the Watanabe’s moved back to California in the early 2000s and found a house in Cupertino, when it was relatively more affordable than today.

In 2010, President Barack Obama signed into law a bill that would award the Congressional Gold Medal collectively to the Nisei who served in 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and MIS during WWII.

Sakkas remembers talking about that development with her father: “So, when I heard about the Congressional Gold Medal was awarded, I asked him, ‘Are you going to get one?’ and he said, ‘No, no one’s notified me.’”

Sakkas insisted that he must be eligible, but her father played it off. She remembers him saying that maybe he didn’t serve long enough.

“He just kind of left it at that,” Sakkas said. Aguiñaldo corroborated that conversation. “When my sister told him she wanted to research it, he said, ‘Aw, it’s so long ago, who cares? Nobody’s going to care,’” Aguiñaldo said.

When Watanabe was approaching his 88th birthday or beiju, Sakkas decided to collect some memorabilia to celebrate it, and she contacted the Defense Language Institute. She thought, perhaps, she might be able to get a copy of his diploma.

She was taken aback to learn it had no records from the first two years of the Institute. Watanabe did mention, in passing, that there had been a fire that destroyed the records of many veterans. “I didn’t pursue it any further,” she said.

According to Sakkas, her father was very conscientious about his health and made sure to exercise to maintain it. But a couple of years after his 88th birthday, he encountered some health problems and needed in-home care.

“One of my friends said, ‘Your dad was a veteran. Well, my dad was a veteran, and he gets 40 hours of in-home care paid for. You should really look into whether your father is eligible for anything,’ Sakkas recalled.

When she inquired with the Department of Veterans Affairs to see if Watanabe was eligible for any benefits, however, she was told it had no record of him ever having served in the military.

“I told my dad, ‘The VA doesn’t even have any record of your service,’” Sakkas said. But Watanabe did know exactly where his discharge documents were. Therefore, Sakkas sent a copy to the VA and was told that the records between a certain time period and part of the alphabet were lost in the 1973 fire. It therefore appears as authentic the copy of Watanabe’s DD214.

“It dawned on me that that was the fire guy (from the Defense Language Institute) who cared about this. I don’t care about it, so he taps someone on the shoulder and says, ‘OK, you can call her now.’”

In retrospect, Sakkas realizes that her father’s situation, i.e., not being recognized because of the records fire from 1973 was unusual, but not necessarily unique, might prove valuable to other veterans.

“My hope is that there are other people who find out that they have relatives who should have received this award but did not,” Sakkas said.

One remaining mystery is her father’s first name. Although he mainly went by his middle name, he was born Frank Watanabe. “You’re the only one who cared about this. I don’t care about it, so he taps someone on the shoulder and says, ‘OK, you can call her now,’” Sakkas said.

Meanwhile, Sakkas looked for her father’s birth certificate, where it’s spelled Shunzo Watanabe, with his first name is spelled Shunzo. But Sakkas found that in a book on Japanese American veterans and engraved on a wall at the Defense Language Institute in San Francisco is the name Shunzo F. Watanabe.

Unlike the outcome on the Gold Medal, the reasons behind the mysterious spellings may never be completely solved.

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Frank Watanabe (seated at center) is pictured with the 1964 JACL National Convention board.

Frank Watanabe became a mechanical engineer following his service in the MIS.

NOVELIST continued from page 5

“Since I’m a doctor, I knew I could benefit from showing the realism of being a surgeon because I not only know what it’s like to be in the OR to deal with complications but also what it’s like to be in a family where one of the spouses has a very demanding job.”

Prescription for Success

For Lam, writing historical fiction is a creative outlet that uses different parts of his brain than what he uses for his medical endeavors. But he has bigger goals than just telling random stories.

“The ultimate goal, of course, is to share history with people, especially people who wouldn’t necessarily want to pick up a nonfiction book,” he said. “I like historical fiction because it entertains, but it also reaches an audience that wouldn’t necessarily think that they’d be interested in history, for example.

“The other thing that I realized long ago when I started writing is that in historical fiction, the story is paramount,” Lam continued.

“You can have all the greatest history in the world, but if the story isn’t compelling and the characters are not compelling, then nobody is going to read it, and it’s not going to be a success.”

The saga of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team is, in and of itself, as compelling a story as anyone could ask for. Researching that history and combining it with compelling characters took time to be done right. For example, in the 442nd’s famed Rescue of the Lost Battalion in the Vosges Mountains in France in October 1944, Lam noted how shrapnel from trees hit by artillery bursts could be as deadly as bullets.

He also cited how Internet tools like Google Earth could give one a realistic picture of the terrain of places like the French town of Bruyères, where the 442nd fought, as well as the mountains.

“The Internet was enormously helpful because you can literally get a Google Earth map of Bruyères and the mountains, and also connect that with the people who have been in those situations, i.e., not being recognized because of the records fire from 1973 was unusual, but not necessarily unique, might prove valuable to other veterans.

“My hope is that there are other people who find out that they have relatives who should have received this award but did not,” Sakkas said.

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stress disorder, while invisible, can manifest as depression, psychosis or anxiety in ways that can be as devastating as an actual physical wound.

“PTSD can literally change people’s personality,” he said.

As for his next writing project, Lam was cagey about what the subject matter will be. “I learned after I wrote my first book (‘Saving Sight’) not to mention what my next book is going to be because you don’t know when that’s going to come out,” he said. Lam did allow, however, that it may be similar to his first book, which was nonfiction.

And, should Hollywood come a-knockin’ to see about adapting his novel into a motion picture in this post-“Crazy Rich Asians” era, Lam wouldn’t slam the door in a producer’s face. But as an ophthalmologist, he knows it’s better to keep his eyes focused on reality.

“I’ve already been through the process with my other novel (‘Two Sons of China’),” he said. “The stark reality is that even if your book gets optioned for a film, the odds of it being made are extremely slim.”
REIMAGINE EVERYTHING

WHY AARP CARES

By Ron Mori

I am very fortunate to be surrounded by dedicated individuals and teams working on all things related to aging and caregiving at AARP. One area very close to my heart is caregiving. AARP is striving to make it easier for older people to live independently and remain in their homes and communities where they prefer to be, surrounded by family and friends.

By providing planning resources and additional forms of support to family caregivers, AARP hopes to create a country where people can continue to live in their homes and communities for as long as they choose.

To help achieve this, AARP is supporting the millions of family caregivers who provide unpaid care to their loved ones with resources and tools. AARP also continues advocating for and providing better quality, affordable and accessible services to help older people live independently and the family caregivers who help them.

Who Is a Caregiver?

A “family caregiver” is defined as an adult age 18 or older who is providing unpaid short-term or long-term care to a parent, spouse, friend or other adult loved one who needs help with everyday activities and personal tasks such as transportation, managing finances, scheduling appointments, shopping, bathing, dressing, preparing meals, wound care and/or medication management.

Family and friends are the backbone of America’s care system, providing the bulk of care for older people in the U.S. as they strive to live independently. If you are not currently a family caregiver, at some point in your life you either will be a caregiver or need a caregiver.

Family caregiving is harder and more complicated than ever as families have increasing demands on their time. Many family caregivers don’t think of themselves as caregivers — they see themselves as sons, daughters, spouses and friends just doing what families do for each other.

Today, family caregivers are asked to carry out health care tasks that would make a first-year nursing student tremble (like wound care, tube feedings) without adequate training.

The job of caregiving that family members do for free can be harder than a job in the paid workforce. Workplace policies that support employee caregivers can also benefit companies by enhancing productivity and enabling workers to keep up with their duties. Almost 3 out of 4 workers age 40 and older say that allowing work flexibility for caregiving would help improve work/life balance.

Emotional and Financial Impact of Caregiving

Family caregivers are at risk of emotional, health and financial problems:

• 38 percent of family caregivers report high emotional stress from the demands of caregiving.
• Nearly half (46 percent) of higher-hour (21 or more hours per week) caregivers report high levels of emotional stress.
• More than half (55 percent) of family caregivers report being overwhelmed by the amount of care their family member needs.

New AARP guides available now

» See AARP on page 12
VETERANS OF YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW... THANK YOU!!!

From JACL, Idaho Falls chapter
Kido, Suzy, 80, SeaTac, WA, Aug. 30.

Kojima, Yoshiho, 90, Newport Beach, CA, June 18; a Korean War veteran, he is survived by his wife, Seiko; daughters, Peggy Chiaki (Scott) Correia and Lisa Hitomi (Will) Gordon; brother, Kyoichi (Yoko) Kojima; sister-in-law, Asako (Kanetoshi) Inoue; gc: 2.

Kondo, George, 71, Burien, WA, June 6; he was predeceased by his brother, Roy; he is survived by his siblings, Lorraine (Calvin) Hoshitaka and Charles (Marianne) Kondo; he is also survived by nieces and a nephew.

Kono, Yoshio, 95, Sacramento, CA; he is survived by his wife, Mieko; and his children, Gayle and Robert.

Miyashita, Mitsuo, 89, Honolulu, HI, Aug. 23; an Army veteran, he is survived by his daughter, Jean Miyashita-Saipa’ia (‘i Saipa’ia); gc: 2.

Miyashita, Lily Haruko, 97, Los Angeles, CA, Aug. 17; she was predeceased by her husband, Izuo; she is survived by her children, Albert (Moni) and Carolyn (Edmundo) Soto; gc: 3; ggc: 1.

Moriyama, Sam Susumu, 96, Pasadena, CA, Aug. 12; he is survived by his wife, Kimiko; sons, Jeffrey (Michelle) and (survey (Karlyn) Moriyama); gc: 7.

Murayama, Hiroko, 78, Gardena, CA, Aug. 6; she is survived by her brother; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Nagao, Masato Joe, 95, Gardena, CA, Aug. 5; he was predeceased by his wife, Sadako; he is survived by his daughter, Miki Nagao; gc: 1.

Nakagawa, Fumiko, 94, Los Angeles, CA, Aug. 30; she is survived by her husband, Isamu “Sam” daughter, Donna Nakagawa Higa; gc: 1.

Nishi, Yoshiko, 97, Fresno, CA, Sept. 11.

Nishimoto, Molly, 98, Gardena, CA, Aug. 22; she is survived by her children, Connie Megumi (Edwin) Gohata, Heber Minouru (Linda), Cyril Nozomu Nishimoto and Phoebe Jun (Michael) Nishimoto; she is survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 9; ggc: 3.

Nitahara, Frances Tsuneko, 88, Wahiawa, HI, July 28.

Nomura, Hisako, 90, Los Angeles, CA, Aug. 31; she is survived by her husband, George; son, Craig; siblings, Haj (Kayoko) Shimada and Sachiko “Susie” Nakada; gc: 2; ggc: 1.

Sadamitsu, Mitsuye Mitzi, 94, Los Angeles, CA, Sept. 17; she is survived by her children, Lynn Emi (Eddie) Limoto and Mark (Kathy) Sadamitsu; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 2.

Sugita, Midori, 90, Torrance, CA, Oct. 5; she is survived by her daughter, Katsuyo (Bert) Roberts; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 2.

Takara, Steve Yukio, 80, Los Angeles, CA, Sept. 18; he is survived by his wife, Keiko; children, Kristine (Scott) Barrella, Tim (Traci) Takara and David (Sung Hee) Takara; sister, Patsuko (Herbert) Miyamoto; gc: 7.

Takeda, Chiyouko, 88, San Jose, CA, Sept. 26; during WWII her family and she were incarcerated at the Gila River WRA Center No. 1; she was predeceased by her husband, Herbert, and siblings, Aki (Ed) Yoshioka, James Kogura, Katsu (Mits) Kumamoto and Tachi (Grace) Kogura; she is survived by her children, Tim (Vivian) Takeda, Leslie (Gary) Morrison, Alan (Nancy) Takeda and Steven (Dian) Takeda; grandchildren, Frances (Henry) Watanabe, Al (Jan) Kogura and Bill Kogura; gc: 6.

Tanioka, Cedric Tsugio, 74, Honolulu, HI, Aug. 4; he is survived by his children, Carie Anne, Dore, Guy, Jordan and Taylor; siblings, Michael and Leburta; gc: 2.
SHANE SATO RETURNS WITH VOL. II OF ‘GO FOR BROKE SPIRIT’
A sister tome contains more vet portraits for the ages.

By P.C. Staff

Since publishing “The Go for Broke Spirit: Portraits of Courage” two years ago (Pacific Citizen, Nov. 3, 2017), photographer Shane Sato has been busy — and not just promoting that photographic collection of portraits of Japanese American World War II veterans and others who embodied the “go for broke” ethos they exemplified.

In addition to his marriage to Claire Hur, Sato has been busy promoting that first book but also finishing the second, a sister book titled, “The Go for Broke Spirit: Portraits of Legacy,” copies of which just arrived from the printer and includes unseen photos as well as more recent portraits.

Sato, who describes himself as a half-kotonk, half-buddhahead Sansei, said the response to Volume One was “very positive.” In that collection, each portrait was accompanied on the facing page with text that encapsulated the subject’s story. “Everyone likes the photos, and they all think the stories are very good,” Sato said.

“The Go for Broke Spirit: Portraits of Legacy” shares the same mission as its predecessor, said Sato, and that’s it just not about the veterans or to discuss history. “It’s to get the next generation involved and open up the conversation, which my family and I never did,” he said.

“The only thing my family ever talked about was go to school, get a job, be successful, become a doctor or lawyer, which obviously never happened,” Sato said.

Sato never really got much from his family in the way of their experiences as Americans of Japanese ancestry, which for his Hawaii-born father included owning and operating Sam Sato Bowling Supply and for his mother, the former Mary Yasuda, working for the city. They met at the long-defunct but fondly remembered Holiday Bowl in L.A.’s Crenshaw District.

“All the way back to Los Angeles at that time knew my dad,” Sato said, adding, “The only thing my dad told me about his childhood was, ‘Don’t do what I did. Do something else.’”

Later in life, Sato realized his mother was equally reticent about her past, which included living at the Poston 3 WRA Center. Not even direct questions elicited much of a response.

“My mom never talked about camp,” he said. “They never talked about injustice. I had no idea what redress was.”

Asked to speculate why, Sato said he’ll never know why his folks never opened up about the past. While producing his books, he noticed the same was true with other Japanese American families.

“Talking with a lot of these veterans and veterans’ families, it’s the same story,” he said.

“It could have been a shameful time for them. It could have been a shameful time for them. It could have been a shameful time for them. ‘Don’t do what I did. Do something else.’”

Still, it left a void that Sato was compelled to fill — and producing this second volume of portraits was like a soothing balm for him.

“My parents would tell me, ‘It’s not important’ all the time. Don’t worry about our past, and so I believed them,” Sato said. “But in reality, their past was very important, and I didn’t realize until much later in life that they were wrong. So now, I try and tell those stories because many, many Sanseis don’t know about their family history, nor do they know about the war necessarily. They know about internment, but they don’t know necessarily what their families had to go through because, again, their families didn’t talk about it.”

Like with the first book, which Robert Horsting helped promote and produce, he again collaborated with Sato for Vol. II to write the aforementioned profiles that accompany each portrait.

“Just like before, we took different ones if we had a personal relationship or some kind of angle to a particular story, depending on who the veteran was,” he said.

Over the past two years since the first volume was released, Sato traveled to Chicago, Colorado, New York, Utah and Washington, D.C., to collect more portraits for inclusion in his latest offering.

One unexpected development Sato had to deal with was the tariffs imposed by President Donald Trump upon China, where the book was printed. Because of that, Sato said the price has not yet been settled. “It’ll be at least $55,” he said.

The trade tensions may also have even caused the book to be red-flagged this time around by Chinese authorities, who thought it might be some sort of pro-Trump book.

“My broker had to explain to them that they (the veterans in the book) fought for America, but they also fought against the government for the injustice that happened to them,” Sato said. “They could not understand that. They just did not get it. But we were able to get the book through. I found that kind of funny.”

Through Nov. 24, Sato’s portraits will be on display at the JACC’s George J. Doizaki Gallery in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo. Included will be some newer portraits not in either book, with veterans from the Korean and Vietnam Wars, as well as America’s long-running conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

While it has been a personal and financial sacrifice for Sato to make the books, one difference in the producing the second book that Sato noticed was less reluctance by the veterans compared with 15 years or more years ago.

“Getting them to do the photo shoot and open up was much, much easier,” he said.

To that point, Sato has a humorous story about a vet in Hawaii who was looking through the first book.

“‘How come I’m not in this book?’” he asked.

Someone had to tell him that Sato asked him three times if he would pose for a portrait, to no avail. Chagrined, the vet said, “I didn’t know it was gonna be good!”


AARP — continued from page 9

• Nearly 4 in 10 (38 percent) of family caregivers report a moderate (20 percent) to high degree (18 percent) of financial strain as a result of providing care.

• It has been estimated that U.S. businesses lose more than $25 billion annually in lost productivity due to absenteeism among full-time working caregivers. The estimate grows to above $28 billion when part-time working caregivers are included.

• Caregiving can be an all-consuming experience that leaves the caregiver exhausted and lonely. But it can also be an enormously meaningful accomplishment.

AARP Resources

AARP has tools, information and support available for family caregivers. The AARP Caregiving Resource Center (www.aarp.org/caregiving) provides an easy way to join an online community of other family caregivers, learn about local services, get helpful information and connect with others who understand caregiving challenges.

Our newest guide is our Military Caregiving Guide for Veterans, Service Members and Their Families. This 44-page guide, developed in collaboration with the Elizabeth Dole Foundation, addresses the unique issues faced by the 5.5 military caregivers in the U.S. and provides information and resources, glossary of terms, and checklists to help them find and organize more support.

You can download the Military Caregiving Guide at AARP.org.

Ron Mori is a member of the Washington, D.C., JACL chapter and manager of community, states and national affairs — multicultural leadership for AARP.