The Discovery of a Long-Lost Aunt Leads a Family on a Journey of Exploration.

SECRET HARVESTS
A Hidden Story of Separation and the Resilience of a Family Farm

A ‘SECRET’ NO MORE

The Discovery of a Long-Lost Aunt Leads a Family on a Journey of Exploration.

Remembering a Topaz Life Lost: James Wakasa

Berkeley JACL Hosts the Grateful Crane Ensemble.
CINCINNATI AND DAYTON JACL Chapters Hold Installation Dinner

The evening event also included a hate crime/hate incident.

As a result, other invited installation dinner guests included two FBI agents and a U.S. assistant prosecutor. Agent Ferry Yi of the Cincinnati Division, gave a hate crime presentation and participated in a Q & A discussion, telling the audience that hate crimes are one of the FBI’s top priorities. Yi shared that a hate crime is “a criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by the individual’s bias against a race, religion, disability, ethnic/ national origin, sexual orientation, gender or gender identity.” She also said that there are hate crime incidents that may not be classified as a crime, but is still vital to notify the police and the FBI so that they can investigate.

“We all came away with a better understanding of what are hate crimes and hate incidents, as well as how to notify these when we come across such acts,” said Cincinnati President Sato. “The Cincinnati chapter will make a summary of the event in ‘The Grains of Rice’ (our publication) to disseminate the information and will be working with the Japan America Society of Greater Cincinnati to keep our ears and eyes open for future incidents.”

**Letter to the Editor**

*The JACL resolution relating to the recognition of and apology to Tule Lake resisters was passed forty years ago, but little has happened that we know of to keep their promise.*

Led by the JACL, during and many decades after World War II, former Tule Lake Resisters have been stigmatized as the “trouble makers.”

On Aug. 1, 2019, the progressive membership of the JACL, at their National Convention in Salt Lake City, passed a resolution offering a sincere apology to former Tule Lake Resisters for their acts of resistance and dissent. Also, the resisters suffered shame and stigma during and after the war due to JACL’s attitudes and treatment toward individuals unfairly labeled “disloyal.”

The JACL resolution further resolved that all JACL chapters gain a greater understanding of the issues surrounding the imprisonment, mistreatment and resistance of Tule Lake Resisters; further resolved to include a Tule Lake narrative in an updated JACL Curriculum Guide in both printed and online format and for the syllabus for Teacher Training Workshops; and further resolved that the National Council will recognize Tule Lake Resisters at an appropriate public ceremony during the 2020-21 biennium.

The curriculum guide shows 415 words describing the facts around Question 27 and 28, although the FBI so that they can investigate. As a result, other invited installation dinner guests included two FBI agents and a U.S. assistant prosecutor. Agent Ferry Yi of the Cincinnati Division, gave a hate crime presentation and participated in a Q & A discussion, telling the audience that hate crimes are one of the FBI’s top priorities.

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I wrote my last column on the need to take action on gun violence, and yes, here is yet another column about the same topic. It’s been barely a few weeks since the mass shooting at a school in Tennessee, followed by another at a Louisville church. Both occurred in communities where it would seem everyone is friendly to one another, but also in communities, or states, where gun ownership is a fact of life. And yet, we’ve already moved on as a nation.

There is no talk about mass shootings, of the children and their teachers killed while at their Christian school, and yet, we’ve moved on as a nation.

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

FOR THE BRAIN

MUSIC: AN EXERCISE FOR THE BRAIN

By Judd Matsunaga, Esq.

Throughout human history, ancient cultures venerated the act of creating sounds and strongly believed that music frequencies can produce healing effects. Ancient mythologies looked at sound not merely as pleasurable entertainment but also as a healing and therapeutically energetic force.

Though we can’t see it, everything in the material world vibrates at a frequency. Sound is vibration in space and time. Musicians tune their instruments to a specific pitch in order to literally be “in tune” with each other. We’ve all seen the opera singer shatter a glass by singing a note at the exact pitch that resonates with the glass.

The idea that targeted frequencies can have a resonant effect on us, physically and psychologically, is not as outlandish as it may first sound. I grew up on the original “Star Trek” (the ones with George Takei playing Sulu, helmsman of the starship USS Enterprise). Every episode had Dr. McCoy waving an electrical device that made a sound pitch over someone’s body to heal it.

Instead, the new gun fear is that it could be anyone in any random situation that gets shot. Yes, you could be the next victim.

In just the past few weeks, we have seen a new epidemic of shootings. Ralph Yarl, a 16-year-old boy in Kansas City, Mo., was shot twice, all because he went to the wrong house to pick up his siblings.

Heather Ruth and Payton Washington, two teen cheerleaders in Texas, were shot for attempting to get into the wrong car, one they thought was their own. Waldes Thomas and Diamond D’arville, Instacart delivery drivers in south Florida, had their car shot at when they went to the wrong address. And most tragically, Kaylin Gillis died when she and her boyfriend pulled into the wrong driveway in rural upstate New York and were shot at by the property owner. It may be a different type of shooting, just as random, but maybe it is creating a greater sense of impact that these are people getting shot at for no good reason, but someone with a gun decided to use it rather than use common sense that maybe there isn’t a need to actually pull the trigger. Too many guns are going into the hands of people who are not trained in how to handle them.

Typically, these recent shootings are referred to as accidental, the victims being in the wrong place at the wrong time. They don’t have any connection to the shooters in the mass shooting incidents. Maybe the subconscious reaction to mass shootings is that it would never be me. Independence Day shootings are different — the shooter has no connection to the victims, other than the victim somehow mistakenly crossed the shooter.

Statistically, I know that my risk of being a victim of gun violence remains very low, just as my risk of being in a car accident or having our house burned down are also highly unlikely. However, in the United States, the risk for children and teens being killed by a gun is higher than their risk of being killed in an auto accident.

Car owners are generally required to be responsible enough to hold car insurance. Homeowners are required by their mortgage company to purchase homeowners insurance, and renters typically protect their belongings with renters insurance. And yet, we have no expectation of responsibility from gun owners. How is that different than a driver’s license in many jurisdictions. If you don’t like the gun laws in the state you live in, just go to another with lax gun laws to get your assault rifle, no questions asked.

When someone purchases a gun, it is with one intent: to someday use it to end the life of someone. In some cases, that may be justified self-defense, but increasingly, we are seeing cases where there is no plausible claim of self-defense.

Our Second Amendment to the Constitution may now be interpreted to guarantee the right of gun ownership, but the Second Amendment says nothing about the right to take a life or the attempt to do so. While the Constitution is the established law of our land, we do have one other founding document, the Declaration of Independence. Perhaps the most famous line is “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”

The impact of gun violence and fear on the survival of these “unalienable Rights” in favor of the right of gun ownership. Above all, people like Kaylin Gillis have lost their right to life, the first of those rights, supposedly protected by our government, and the sole purpose of the government in the eyes of our Declaration of Independence, the document upon which our nation was separated from the tyranny of England. Now, we are subjected to the tyranny of gun owners.

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

LEGAL-EASE: AN ATTORNEY’S PERSPECTIVE

MUSIC: An Exercise for the Brain

Evidently, microscopically, cells emit sounds, as if they’re singing to their neighbors. “By using an atomic force microscope to listen to the specific sound that a cell emits, we can identify its unique sonic signature,” says Dr. James Gimzewski of UCLA. This research, called “sonocytology,” finds unhealthy cells through their sonic signatures and then plays their own destructive sounds back to them until they are destroyed through the law of resonance.

The use of sound as opposed to chemotherapy and more invasive surgery would truly be a paradigm shift in cancer treatment. Dr. Anthony Holland, in his TEDx talk called “Shattering Cancer With Resonant Frequencies,” said, “I believe the future of children’s cancer hospitals will be a different place. They will be a place where children gather and make new friends, they probably won’t even know they are sick. They’ll draw pictures, color in their books and play with their toys, all while unaware that above them a beautiful, blue plate chandelier is emanating healing, pulsing fields shattering their cancer painlessly, and nontraumatically, one cell at a time.”

“But Judd, that’s too far into the future. Can music help me now?” YES. Listening to music can also be considered an exercise for the mind. Music is actually one of the most powerful stimulants to the brain, and when you’re listening to music, your brain is highly engaged in the sound. If you play instruments, even better! You’re exercising not just the brain but also the body.

Music is even more important if you want to prevent premature aging of the brain. Many people think they only need to worry about memory once they’re older, but because of their habits and diets, they might start to notice problems way too soon. Listening to music can help prevent memory problems and improve your hearing.

Dr. Masaru Emoto, a Japanese scientist and author of the bestselling book “The Hidden Messages in Water,” discovered that water can be encoded with vibrational information. Dr. Emoto pointed out that the human body is mainly water, and apparently, water loves beautiful, harmonious frequencies.

In one of his studies, called the WaterDiscovery Project, what water can do was startling. They discovered that water can have different frequencies as it changes from water vapor to liquid to ice, and that different types of sound produce different crystalline patterns in water.

When exposed to Mozart’s “Symphony No. 40,” distilled water samples produced 0.032 nm symmetrical crystals. On the other hand, distilled water that had been exposed to heavy metal music produced distorted formations.

“I believe that music was created to bring our vibration back to its intrinsic state. It’s human nature to create music that readjusts the vibrations distorted by history. That’s why I’m so certain that music is a form of healing before it is an art,” he said. “It can become a matter of life and death if we allow our ‘life force’ to become compromised by the chaotic noise and toxicity of the modern world.”

In November 2018 study from Japan concluded that music played at certain frequencies may carry spiritual or healing benefits for their listeners. Music is so powerful, and doing something as simple as listening to it can boost your memory and prevent stress! Stress is one of the main causes of memory loss. When people are stressed and frustrated, they tend to lose concentration and memory. Music can dramatically improve brain function.

You can also use music to reduce stress! Stress is one of the main causes of memory loss. When people are stressed and frustrated, they tend to lose concentration and memory. Music can dramatically improve brain function.

However, it is not just any song! A happy tune can immediately put you out of a bad mood and brighten your mind. Some songs can stimulate the brain and make you more alert, which will improve your attention span and focus while learning new information.

You can even find specific playlists to use when completing most demanding services, so it’s worth checking it out whenever you notice that you require an energy boost. Having a “Happy” playlist in a lower volume while doing something related to memory can also bring positive results. Happy songs can drastically improve your mood, reduce stress and enhance alertness.

In conclusion, scientific research has discovered that five songs in particular, across a number of genres, have been shown to trigger dopamine release and subsequently increase your happiness. Here are the five songs (source: www.inc.com, “Science Says Listening to These 5 Songs Will Make You Remarkably Happy,” Jan. 5, 2017):

1. “Clair de Lune” by Debussy
2. “Adagio for Strings” by Barber
3. “Piano Sonata No. 17 in D Minor” (”The Tempest”) by Beethoven
4. “First Breath After Coma” by Explosions in the Sky
5. “Adagio for Strings” by Tiesto.

Judd Matsunaga is the founding attorney of Elder Law Services of California, a law firm that specializes in Medi-Cal Planning, Estate Planning and Probate. He can be contacted at (310) 348-2995 or judd@elderslawcalifornia.com. The opinions expressed in this article are the author’s own and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Pacific Citizen or constitute legal or tax advice and should not be treated as such.
In the beginning when Aiden and our family encountered so much silence from the JA community, we were not sure if we were being rejected or accepted. I remember that whenever I had to speak in front of a JA audience about our journey, I was afraid to make eye contact with people, not wanting to see their looks of disapproval and disdain. I searched out people I knew who would smile or cry with me. Those connecting with my emotions felt like my “village.”

When churches and temples began to have events lifting up the LGBTQ+ voices, as well as other voices of families and allies, I began to feel safer in faith spaces. Being rejected by the world has made me more cautious in certain settings, but the more the silence is broken, the more I am willing to venture out.

Just in the last month, Aiden and I have spoken at Wesley United Methodist Church in San Jose. Also, I have been able to attend LGBTQ+ events sponsored by three Methodist churches: Faith UMC, West LA UMC and Centenary UMC, along with Gardena Buddhist Church’s premiere of “A Profound Silence.” Silence can be chilling . . . visibility can bring a ray of hope.

I can relate to how fear can paralyze us from speaking up. Fear stopped me from getting support and resources when Aiden first came out. Reaching out to others or often standing up in the middle of a questions-and-answer session, vulnerably sharing my fears and hopes took courage.

I still remember the trembling of my hands and the quivering in my voice at the start of our journey. But reaching out for support led us to people and organizations that helped to turn my fear into optimism and possibilities. Those in the religious community have helped me to heal from my feelings of unworthiness.

My husband owns a hair salon, Vogue Hair Design, in Montebello. In the beginning, when Aiden was transitioning, Tad said it was hard to talk about all the changes that were happening to our family. Would he say the right things? Would his clients accept him or would they leave his salon?

But slowly, he gathered up the nerve to talk about his journey. He found that some people were curious to learn more about his experience as the father of a transgender son, and some people even shared that they had someone in their family that was transgender.

But there was one person who didn’t agree because of their religion. However, that one person, for reasons unknown, changed the way they thought. Was it because Tad had the courage to talk about Aiden? Or was this part of his client’s journey of acceptance and knowing the father of a transgender person brought a personal face to the issues. Whatever the reason, my husband had not been silent . . . and I believe that made all the difference.

Thank you to all the churches and temples who are no longer being silent, but lifting up their voices to tell our family and so many other families that they are not alone. They are welcome and they are loved. You are making a difference too . . .

To check out “A Profound Silence,” please visit www.gardena buddhistchurch.org/ichi-mi.

Marsha Aizumi is an advocate for the LGBTQ+ community and author of the book “Two Spirits, One Heart: A Mother, Her Transgender Son and Their Journey to Love and Acceptance.”
REMEMBERING A TOPAZ LIFE LOST

A memorial event is held in San Francisco to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the murder of James Wakasa.

By Emily Murase, Contributor

Under bright skies in San Francisco Japantown, delicate cherry blossom petals swirled around the 80th remembrance of the murder of James Hatsumuki Wakasa at Peace Plaza on April 11. Organized by the Wakasa Memorial Committee in partnership with the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, which oversees the venue, the event drew dozens of survivors and descendants of Topaz and other U.S. concentration camps, as well as their families and friends who wished to pay tribute to wartime survivors and veterans.

Due to President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s signing of Executive Order 9066, which required the removal of individuals of Japanese descent from the West Coast, 8,000 San Francisco residents were forcibly removed to Topaz, Utah, a remote, barren location during World War II. According to Lisa Barr of the Utah Division of State History, an additional 3,000 people from Washington, Oregon and Hawaii were also assigned to the primitive prison camp.

There, in the harsh Utah desert, the incarcerees suffered immeasurable hardships, and many did not survive. As a backdrop for the commemoration event, the Wakasa Memorial Committee created banners of quilt squares to display, with each square commemorating an incarceree or veteran whose life was lost during wartime.

Wakasa, an Issei, immigrated to the U.S. in 1903 to pursue a culinary career after attending Keio University in Japan. On April 11, 1943, Wakasa, 63, was walking his dog after dinner when he was killed by a bullet to the chest that was fired by Pvt. 1st Class Gerald Philpott, 19, a military police sentry who was in a guard tower, according to Topaz veteran and researcher Nancy Ukai. Philpott was court-martialed but acquitted of all charges, unknown to the Topaz incarcerees.

Grief-stricken incarcerees asked that a memorial service be held at the location where Wakasa was killed. Fearing organized unrest and possible riots, prison authorities denied the request and ordered the memorial to be held at a different location. According to local news reports, more than 2,000 incarcerees attended the April 19, 1943, service.

The remembrance event opened with an indigenous land acknowledgement by Topaz-born Wakasa Memorial Committee member Masako Takahashi, followed by an interfaith tribute to Wakasa, incarcerees and veterans of Topaz and other incarceration sites.

Rev. Masato Kawahatsu and his wife, Alice, performed a purification blessing in the Konko tradition, and Topaz descendant Rev. Michael Yoshii, the celebrated pastor of Buen Vista United Methodist Church (retired), spoke about the collective trauma suffered by the Topaz incarcerees who also demonstrated tremendous resilience.

Rev. Yoshii explained that Wakasa’s funeral was the joint effort of six members of the clergy representing a diverse group of faiths, and featured the hymn “Rock of Ages,” which was sung in Japanese by Kaoru Inoue.

The hymn refers to seeking refuge in God as a rock during hardship and remains particularly timely to this day, the week of Easter and the resurrection of Christ.

Following the interfaith blessing was musician/poet/educator Lewis Jordan’s live performance of “Rock of Ages,” the very same hymn that was featured at Wakasa’s funeral 80 years ago.

A few short days after Wakasa’s funeral, outraged and grief-stricken incarcerees erected a tribute in tribute to Wakasa a nearly six-foot-tall stone monument, estimated to weigh half a ton, on the very spot of his murder. When it was discovered by prison authorities, the monument was ordered to be taken down immediately.

However, in a secret that was only unearthed in 2020 when, according to John Ota, writing for “EastWind,” archaeologists Jeff Burton and Mary Farrell, following a hand-drawn map that Ukai found in the National Archives, discovered that the memorial stone had not been destroyed and was instead buried on the Topaz grounds, undisturbed for 77 years.

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A purification blessing was conducted by Rev. Masato and Alice Kawahatus.

By Emily Murase, Contributor

The Wakasa commemoration took place in San Francisco Japantown’s Peace Plaza.

Topaz survivors and friends gather during the 80th anniversary commemoration of the murder of James Wakasa in San Francisco.

The Wakasa Committee tribute to veterans

The Wakasa Committee created banners of quilt squares to display, with each square commemorating an incarceree or veteran whose life was lost during wartime.

A paper heart for James Wakasa

The remembrance event was held in San Francisco to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the murder of James Wakasa.

A close-up of James Wakasa’s quilt square

PHOTOS: EMILY MURASE

A memorial event is held in San Francisco to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the murder of James Wakasa.

A funeral ceremony photo of James Wakasa’s memorial service at Topaz on April 19, 1943

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The discovery of a long-lost aunt leads to an exploration of stories that reveals family secrets in author/farmer David Mas Masumoto’s ‘Secret Harvests.’

By Alan Oda, Contributor

‘Every family has secrets,’ says David Mas Masumoto, ‘secrets that need to be told.’

His latest book, ‘Secret Harvests,’ is about a relative whom he had not previously met, but more significantly, an aunt that was presumed dead many years previously. Masumoto tells of the bewilderment of learning about his long-lost relative, leading to the exploration of stories and tales revealing the secrets of her and her family, surrounding an almost anonymous life. The author, along with artist Patricia Wakida, were featured in a March 18 conversation held at the Tateuchi Democracy Forum, presented by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, to discuss the new book.

Masumoto is as famous for his authorship as he is for his organic produce, grown on the family farm (www.masumoto.com) in Fresno, Calif. His award-winning sustainable farming also includes nectarines, apricots and seedless grapes; the family’s famous Sun Crest peaches are described as ‘one of the last truly remaining juicy peaches.’

PBS also broadcast the documentary “Changing Season on the Masumoto Family Farm,” based on the narrative of his family’s agricultural succession. The farm planted its roots in 1948 after Mas’ father, Takashi “Joe” Masumoto, returned to the Central Valley after being forcibly incarcerated in an Arizona concentration camp during World War II. Mas Masumoto attended the University of California, Berkeley, not planning on following in his father’s footsteps. But after studying sociology and then learning about its connection to the ecosystem and the earth, he returned home to embrace and cultivate the family business.

As a writer, he has written 12 books, including the newly published “Secret Harvests.” Masumoto is also a columnist for the Sacramento Bee and the Fresno Bee.

In speaking about how being a farmer helps with his writing and vice-versa, Masumoto embraces each and has found a way to interconnect them both. “They are intertwined and woven together,” Masumoto said. “Farming allows me the time and solitude to think, reflect and write. Especially with our perennial crops, I have a wonderful dormant winter season with writing during long nights and cold days. It’s perfect for an author to drill deeper into topics. I also write a lot about family and nature and at the same time I can be literally out in the real world of nature daily. . . . Writing has provided me with a wonderful entry point into the world of growing food.”

Masumoto also explored new ways to work the farm and build upon the multitude of relationships needed to successfully sustain efficient operations while understanding the power of human contact and emotions as part of how to nurture his crops.

“Writing allows time for reflection and a hope to put things in context,” he said. “The true value of food is not based solely on the price you get from a sale. It’s also about the experiences that surround food — in most cases, food is a communal act and embodies family, tradition, community and people. It’s what good writing can do, too. . . . The art of storytelling has thrust our farm into a different universe, and I’ve been fortunate to build a relationship between words and produce, between our physical labors and the spiritual world of growing life.”

Masumoto’s latest offering, “Secret Harvests,” unearths his own intergenerational family story, peeling back layers to cultivate new light on his own identity and that of his family all while sustaining his connection to his farmland.

A ‘SECRET’ NO MORE

Artist Patricia Wakida created block prints to illustrate David Mas Masumoto’s Aunt Shizuko for “Secret Harvests.”

David Mas Masumoto with his Aunt Shizuko

Author and farmer David Mas Masumoto addresses the audience at JANM’s Tateuchi Democracy Forum.

PHOTOS: ALAN ODA
He begins by telling of his meeting with his then-94-year-old Aunt Shizuko after a surprise call from a local funeral home. Masumoto learned that his aunt was in its hospice care program, just a few miles away from his family's farm. Shizuko Sugimoto was mentally disabled due to childhood meningitis and was separated from her family when they realized they could no longer provide the needed care and support for her while they were incarcerated with other Japanese Americans during WWII.

Sugimoto became a “ward” of the State of California, which led to 70 years of moving around state mental institutions — the family completely unaware that she was still alive until her final years.

Masumoto chronicles his Aunt Shizuko's life, based on documented history and delving into his family archives using “creative nonfiction” storytelling. He tells many stories describing the tragedy, loss and resilience of war-era Japanese Americans, but also documents the dubious history of care for the mentally disabled due to systemic failures. He said, explaining that she awakened from a stroke (after her 34 block prints that are featured in her 34 block prints which are used to create her artworks.

Describing his use of the aforementioned creative nonfiction storytelling, Masumoto said “when you don’t have [all of] the facts, you have to use a bit of your imagination, your emotions.” There was very little written documentation to work with, “but that was because my grandparents were illiterate. Does that mean their story doesn’t count?”

“So, you can’t make stuff up. It’d be easier if I’d written a novel, but I’m a bad novelist,” Masumoto continued. “That began a journey to discover this mystery . . . it wasn’t a problem to be solved.”

Masumoto uses the imagery of ghosts to describe his collective upbringing. “Ghosts are the ancestors I live with, I farm with,” he said, with the ghost of Shizuko being the focus of the story. “She experienced generational trauma that I inherited.” Throughout the writing of the book, Masumoto said he kept asking questions — “We live with ghosts that actually want to talk to you.”

Acclaimed artist Wakida, who joined Masumoto at the JANM book discussion event, was then chosen by Masumoto to illustrate the book. Wakida, a Yonsei (fourth-generation Japanese American) artist, is herself a writer about Japanese American history and culture. She has served as a community developer, working with JANM, the Denso history project, the Oakland Museum of California and the Topaz Museum. Wakida now owns a linoleum block and letterpress business, which involves hand carving and creating unique artistry using her 100-year-old printing equipment.

“David asked me in 2018 to work on this project. I created 34 (hand-carved) block prints for the book,” said Wakida. She used drawings and photographs for much of her work but noted “some of the chapters weren’t that superobvious” when it came to the artwork, requiring some creativity. “I used my husband and son to pose as models to create some of what eventually became wooden, linoleum blocks.”

Through her artwork, Wakida said, “I wanted to make Shizuko visible. I wanted to make her wholly, totally vibrant. David gave me full freedom with my work.”

Wakida took particular care in creating the cover image. “There were no photos of Shizuko as an adult. I knew the women of the time dressed in bonnets to keep them from sexual harassment,” she said. “I tried to make Shizuko as beautiful as she could be. I felt it was a way to honor her even though she herself couldn’t tell her story.”

“I never gave (Wakida) an idea of what she should do,” said Masumoto. “I sometimes changed my writing based on the imagery she created.” He said the book was a challenging project, noting “it went through 65 drafts. It got better, these projects evolve through the work . . . we [continually] add to our own stories.”

Masumoto then told of his first meeting with his Aunt Shizuko. “She was comatose (after her stroke) when she arrived at the assisted care center, and they nursed her back to life,” he said, explaining that she awakened from her coma after three months. When he met her, Masumoto said her first words were “where have you been?”

“We were strangers, yet “the first thing she did was kick me in the leg because she wanted her shoes tied,” Masumoto recalled. Shizuko was known for “her feistiness, her energy. She loved to go around to the staff and punch them. She had a spirit about her.” He recalled his aunt also “loved hot coffee. She’d then fling her Styrofoam cup over her shoulder against the wall. She wasn’t very Japanese . . . Marie Kondo wouldn’t have liked her.”

“She wasn’t perfect, but she seemed to love an imperfect life,” said Masumoto. “We share the same spirit with our farm. Beauty is found in the imperfect, the incomplete . . . life as the impermanent.”

As he wrote the book, Masumoto said, “I was very ignorant about disabilities. [I learned] we are disabled by our society, not our bodies.” Being Japanese made Shizuko’s life even more difficult, stating she was once labeled as “Mongoloid,” an outdated and degrading term once used to describe Down’s Syndrome. “Shizuko’s life wasn’t a failure, it’s the multiplicity of systemic failures. She strove to live with her disability, she wasn’t a failure,” he said.

Shizuko Sugimoto died in 2013, a year and a half after waking from her coma. “Stories don’t end. Her passing was the beginning of piecing together her story,” said Masumoto. “It brought the family together as I asked questions. It solidified the bonds of family. I also had to respect some of this was what they wanted to forget. The story continues. “The Japanese use the term shikata ga nai, ‘it can’t be helped.’ What does this really mean? It’s such a common term used by families. For Shizuko, it was both a blessing and a curse,” said Masumoto, an apt term to describe the life of his aunt.

When asked about what he wants his readers to take away from the book, Masumoto said, “Start asking questions about your own family. Every family has secrets, not all of it is (family) dirt. It’s the power of language. ‘Secrets’ can simply be questions left unasked. It’s not a one-time thing. It’s about sharing.”

“Secret Harvests” is now available via the JANM online store (janmstore.com/collections/books-media) and other popular retailers.
BERKELEY JACL TAKES A ‘SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY’ AT FREIGHT AND SALVAGE

The chapter hosts a special performance by the Grateful Crane Ensemble of Los Angeles.

By Sandra Doi,
Berkeley JACL Board Member

On an unusually sunny Saturday morning, Berkeley JACL chapter members and guests took a “Sentimental Journey” at Freight and Salvage music hall in Downtown Berkeley on March 18. More than 120-plus members, guests and JA community members from as far as Sonoma, Loomis and Los Angeles enjoyed a musical performance by the Grateful Crane Ensemble of Los Angeles that incorporated song, music and an endearing mix of nostalgic stories, memories and Nikkei references.

The Berkeley JACL and J-Sei supported this event, and through the organizing efforts of board member Nancy Ukai, BJACL gifted free tickets to all Nisei guests. The chapter was especially pleased to see many in attendance with their extended Sansei and Yonsei family and friends.

The Grateful Crane Ensemble of Los Angeles featured four singers during their performance: Jason Fong, Haruye Ioka, Keiko Kawashima and Merv Maruyama. Accompanying them were Lisa Jo on piano and Danny Yamamoto (of the band Hiroshima) on drums. The group simply and elegantly played music spanning decades of the Nisei experience, described in three separate time periods that all Nikkei can easily identify as “before the war, during the war and after the war.”

Written by Soji Kashiwagi to show gratitude for the Nisei, the show is full of references that any growing up in or adjacent to a Nikkei household will fondly recall.

There are many shared experiences that are interwoven throughout the show, such as the inclusion of “Haru ga Kita,” the song every Issei taught their English-speaking grandchild about the coming of spring, and the invoking of words the audience all laughingly shouted out, which all our parents instilled in us, such as Mottai-nai, monku’monku and shigata ga nai.

The group also called out many businesses and experiences long gone (Benkyodo Mochi shop) that defined many of our shared childhood lives. Ioka and Maruyama’s perfect comedic mimicry of grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts brought much laughter and evoked heart-felt memories.

I was personally delighted to find out that the Kashiwagi family had roots in Loomis, Calif., where my own family originated, and that the senior Mr. Kashiwagi was an author and playwright (“Starting From Loomis and Other Stories” Nikkei in the Americas), and that Mrs. Kashiwagi still lives in Berkeley. Their son, Soji, was born in Oakland and raised in San Francisco, where he has produced a number of Nikkei-oriented original performance pieces.

Another delight was to meet another Nisei from Loomis, Nob Nimura, who at age 95 astounded us with his memory. When I inquired about his Loomis Ace Hardware jacket, and whether he knew my family, he said, “Dois, Block 40, your dad is Steve, right, but we called him Josh back then.”

Mr. Nimura not only knew my dad, though he confessed he was in the rival group of boys, but he golfs every week with my cousin, he was incarcerated with my entire family and apparently, one of my aunt’s taught him to jitterbug. My Yonsei son, Nick, was fascinated.

There are still two more opportunities to catch this unique show: in Watsonville in August and in the San Jose area. The Nisei who attend are truly treasures of our community, and I hope all consider bringing along your Sansei, Yonsei and beyond family.

They may be astounded at how many cultural touchpoints we share, and this show does an admirable job of helping to recall them. And you never know. You might connect with an old-time family friend and be gifted with amazing stories of your own.


The San Jose show will be at the San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin. For ticket information, contact Reiko Iwanaga at atyrequest@yahoo.com.

For more information on the Grateful Crane Ensemble, visit https://www.gratefulcrane.com/index.html.
**EXPERIENCE » continued from page 4**

Megumi Thurston (far left) with her new Kakehashi friends

**PHOTO: COURTESY OF MEGUMI THURSTON.**

**THE POWER OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE**

By JR Fujita

Since a young age, I have volunteered for many organizations such as church, sports clubs, walks and runs, youth and a variety of disease-related events. My volunteer role has varied over the years. In more recent times, I enjoy serving in leadership positions and volunteering with family and close friends. I appreciate opportunities when I can utilize my experience and skills, while making a difference and giving back to the community for a good cause. I also enjoy learning something new or developing a new skill while volunteering. I have served on a board of directors, advisory board and held multiple leadership positions on committees and work groups.

My personal experience has also informed my work at AARP and how I support others that want to volunteer. With so many volunteer opportunities available, finding the right match is important. A great match is one that you find enjoyable, fulfilling and rewarding. Having a thorough onboarding experience, feeling needed and valued and having fun while volunteering are also important elements of the volunteer experience. Volunteers often select causes they are passionate about or from word of mouth. Volunteering should not be a chore, but rather an activity you enjoy doing — and when it is convenient for you, on your own schedule.

AARP's Create the Good (creategood.aarp.org) offers many volunteer opportunities including in-person, virtual and hybrid positions for a variety of organizations. By registering, you can receive notifications when new volunteer opportunities are available in your area. You can also get ideas, inspiration and information from the monthly newsletter, access to project guides and helpful articles. Create the Good connects you with ideas to help you get inspired in your community — service projects can be big or small. You can also contact your local AARP office at (888) 687-2277 — many may need volunteers to help with community events, workshops, tax preparation, reading to elementary school students, office support, online programs and volunteer advocates to use their voices to help improve local, state and national laws for older adults and their families.

We celebrate National Volunteer Week, April 17-21. National Volunteer Week was first established in 1974 by Presidential Proclamation to recognize and celebrate the service of millions of Americans. To all who have volunteered or will volunteer — THANK YOU! Your service and contributions are much appreciated. Without volunteers, many organizations and community events are not possible.

**JR Fujita is a senior state and community engagement specialist for AARP California and is based in Sacramento.**

**THIS HAORI DRAWS INSPIRATION FROM TRADITIONAL SUMMER FESTIVALS**

By Kacie Yamamoto

When AKASHI KAMA founder Alec Nakashima sets out to create something, picturing a scenario around the piece is essential. For the brand's new Haori shirt, it was the celebration and festivity surrounding traditional Japanese Obon garments that initially sparked inspiration.

Obon, a Japanese holiday traditionally held throughout the summer months of the year, is home to one of Japan's largest festival seasons. Festivals with customs like lantern floating, Obon dances and fireworks are commonplace throughout the summer months of the year, is a long-sleeve garment inspired heavily from their relaxed, roomy silhouettes. It follows the release of the brand’s signature Noragi Jacket, a blazeresque garment inspired by historical Japanese workwear clothing that's been featured in "GQ" and other publications.

Each Haori shirt is made in Los Angeles from Japanese cotton. Produced from a mill outside of Osaka, this traditional fabric, called double gauze, has the softness of linen while simultaneously being able to hold each of the rich colors the garment comes in.

By nature of the occasions the Haori is designed around, the short-sleeve, breathable Haori shirts are inherently a more casual garment. Almost a cousin of the Noragi, the Haori fulfills a need in the brand’s collection — serving as the perfect piece for the hotter weather during the spring-summer pocket Obon sits in.

Nakashima chuckles when describing how hot he got trying to wear one of the brand's Noragi to Obon in past years. "A long-sleeve garment was not a great idea in July," he said. Designed by Nikkeijin, a Japanese word referring to people who are ethnically Japanese who emigrated to other countries, the Haori serves as another example of AKASHI KAMA’s expertise in blending traditional influences with American style to create pieces for anyone to wear.

“Think our audience really has done a great job of understanding and appreciating the symmetry of the two sides of our brand and our aesthetics,” Nakashima said. “I want us to continue to make that a focus.”

The Haori shirt will be restocked in spring 2023 on AKASHI KAMA’s website at www.akashi-kama.com.

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**LIVING TRUSTS | WILLS | POWERS OF ATTORNEY**
CALENDAR

NATIONAL

JACL National Convention
Los Angeles, CA
July 19-23
Doubletree by Hilton Hotel
120 S. Los Angeles St.
Price: Registration Required/Virtual Rates Also Available
Come join JACL at its annual National Convention, which will be held in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo this July! This year’s theme, “Rooted in Community,” encompasses the cultural exploration into the area’s community organizations, museums, history, shopping and food, as well as continues to build on last year’s theme “Strengthening Our Community Through Action.” This year’s convab will include a welcome reception at the Terasaki Budokan, Youth Awards Luncheon, Sayonara Banquet at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center, David Ono’s “Defining Courage” and a Tamlyn Tomita-ta reading of “Question 27, Question 28,” as well as workshops, plenaries and National Council sessions.
Info: For more information and to register, visit www.jacl.org.

PSW

Kodomo no Hi (Children’s Day) Celebration 2023
Los Angeles, CA
April 29; 10:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
JACC Campus
244 S. San Pedro St.
Price: Free
JACC will hold its Kodomo no Hi celebration with activities including family workshops, kids corner, food and retail vendors, entertainment and film screenings. Children’s Day, officially observed on May 5, has been a day to celebrate the “children” of Japan since ancient times. Don’t miss this great family event!

NCWNP

Story Circle of the Japanese Diaspora: WE Never Die
San Francisco, CA
May 20; Noon
Virtual Event
Price: Free
First Voice presents the third annual Story Circle of the Japanese Diaspora: WE Never Die, an online celebration of life created and conceived by America’s first nationally recognized Asian American storyteller, Brenda Wong Aoki, and Asian American jazz pioneer composer Mark Izu. The event is a healing ritual to celebrate the eternal spirit within.

PNW

‘Parallel Barbed Wire’ Exhibit
Powell, WY
Now Open
Heart Mountain Interpretive Center
1539 Road 19
This new exhibit features the remarkable stories of Heart Mountain incarcerated Clarence Matsumura and Holocaust survivor Solly Ganor. Matsumura served in the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion and rescued Ganor. The exhibit details their remarkable friendship throughout their lives.
Info: Visit www.heartmountain.org for exhibit information and further details.

MDC

A World A’Fair (Dayton International Festival)
Xenia, OH
May 5-7
Greene County Expo
1120 Fairgrounds Road
Come join the Dayton JACL chapter, which has participated in this event for more than 45 years, as it helps celebrate the Dayton International Festival. Come experience the culture of more than 30 countries in this event that will also offer food, beverages, family fun and cultural exhibits and demonstrations.
Info: Contact Don Hayashi at hayashidon@gmail.com or call (937) 890-2729.

Pan-Asian Voter Empowerment
Asian American Action Day 2023
Springfield, IL
May 9 (Buses leave at 6 a.m., lobby from 10 a.m.-2 p.m., rally in the Rotunda at 2 p.m. and return to Chicago by 7 p.m.)
State Capitol in Springfield
Take part in Asian American Action Day in Springfield is an opportunity for individuals to speak with elected officials and directly influence legislation. All participants must attend a Lobby Day 101 training prior to AAA Day. Transportation and food will be provided.
Info: For more information on training days and additional event questions, please contact Rebecca Ozaki at rebecca@pacificcitizen.org. To register, visit bit.ly/AAADay2023 by May 2.

EDC

Boston Red Sox AAPI Celebration
Boston, MA
May 3; 7 p.m.
 Fenway Park
Price: Tickets vary
Come see the Boston Red Sox take on the Toronto Blue Jays at this AAPI Celebration event presented in conjunction with Quincy Asian Resources and Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center.
Info: For information and tickets, visit https://www.mlb.com/redsox/tickets/promotions/themes/apic Celebration.

Boston, MA
Thu July 16
Museum of Fine Arts
465 Huntington Ave.
Taking a new approach to the work of Katsumi Kusakabe (1870-1849), this major exhibit explores the impact on other artists—both during his lifetime and beyond—and brings together more than 90 woodblock prints, paintings and illustrated books by Kusakabe.

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Go to our website: https://www.pacificcitizen.org/subscriptions/
Or send with check to: The Pacific Citizen 123 S. Oxnard St., #306a, Los Angeles, CA 90012
Akagi, Noboru 94, Honolulu, HI; Jan. 15; M.D., Keio University School of Medicine; founder, Atea Taiheiji Kendo Club; president, Kendo Federation; recipient, Korosho (Distinguished Service Award) from the All Japan Kendo Federation.

Iseda, Minako ‘Minnie,’ 90, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 1; she is survived by her children, Tracy Kiyohiro and Bonnie (Robert) Inai; brother, Noboru (Lily) Kamibayashi; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 4; ggc: 6.

Komura, Yoshiro, Sacramento, CA, July 27, 2022. He is survived by his sister and brother-in-law, Keiko and Paul Duax; and many relatives.

Kurata, George Satoru, 89, Westminister, CA, July 4, 2022; he was predeceased by his daughter, Lisa Sato; he is survived by his wife, Eleanor; children, Kyle (Helen) Kurata and Laura (Kevin) Dolan; son-in-law, Garret Sato; gc: 6.

Kuwano, Suzanne, 77, Santa Monica, CA, July 7, 2022; she is survived by her children, Jill and John Kuwano; sister-in-law, Mari (Joe) Sato; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 1.

Misono, Nobu, 106, Los Angeles, CA, Feb. 20; he was predeceased by his wife, George Sukenari Misono, and daughter, Helen Hisako Yamaguchi; she is survived by her daughter, Mary Misono; gc: 4 and ggc.

Momoki, Shinji, 70, San Jose, CA, July 11, 2022; he is survived by his daughters, Eva and Shirley; siblings, Naoko, Yoshihito and Kiyotsugu; he is also survived by nieces and a nephew.

Mura, Miyoko, 85, La Palma, CA, Feb. 18; she is survived by her husband, Hideo Mura; sister, Namiyo Ashioka; siblings-in-law, Tsuyoshi (Mie) and Isao (Carol) Mura, Lily Kiyomi Watanabe and Keiko (Roy) Kinoshita; she is also survived by many nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Murakami, Dorothy Kashiko, 97, Pearl City, HI, Dec. 31, 2022.


Murata, Sachiko, 96, Anaheim, CA, Feb. 27; she was predeceased by her husband, Paul Seichi Murata; she is survived by her children, Steven (Jeanne) Murata, Karen (Navid Delghani) Murata and Penny Murata.; siblings, May Saso, Jean Hirojii, Barbars Cogburn and Seito (Nancy) Gytokou; sister-in-law, May Gytokou; she is also survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 5.

Nomiyama, Takashi, 96, Culver City, CA, Oct. 1, 2022; he is survived by his wife; daughters Janice (Richard) Wong, and Grace (Marc) Nomiyama Marchicelli; gc: 2; and nieces, nephews and other relatives.

Ogawa, Donald, 70, Caldwell, ID, Sept. 27, 2022; he is survived by his mother, Lilly Yamaki; step-mother Judy Ogawa; siblings Ed Ogawa, Jeff Zmuda (Cheryl), June Ogawa, Kapi Zmuda and Wendi Zmuda-Scott; daughter, Melissa McGladri (Randie); grandchildren and other relatives.

Sakaniwa, Kempie, 97, Los Angeles, CA, March 7; his activities included coaching and managing with North Venice Little League, Nisei Athletic Union and Crescent Bay Optimist League and Venice Bulldogs Pop Warner; he was predeceased by 6 siblings; he is survived by many nephews and nieces.

Sawai, Miyako, 94, Littleton, CO, Jan. 28.

Shigematsu, Jean, 86, Los Angeles, CA, Jan. 17; she is survived by her sons, David and Ronald (Grace) Shigematsu; she is also survived by nieces, nephews and other relatives; gc: 3; ggc: 3.

Shigeno, Cheryl Lyn, 70, Portland, OR, Feb. 18; he was predeceased by his brother, Dennis Shigeno; she is survived by her siblings, Bonnie Sumida, Debbie Bellinghausen (Michael) and Thomas Shigeno; she is also survived by a nephew, nieces and a grandniece.

Tanaka, Raymond, 80, Honolulu, HI, Jan. 27; veteran, Army; he is survived by his wife, Jeanette; children, Troy (Beth) and Ruth (Gordon) Tanaka-Gum; siblings, Michael (Mai), Doris Niijama, Nancy (Susumu) Hashimoto and Evelyn Tanaka; gc: 4.

Tateishi, Jean, 83, Portland, OR, Dec. 7, 2022; during World War II, her family and she were sent to the Portland Assembly Center and later incarcerated at the Minidoka WRA Center in ID; she was active with the Oregon Buddhist Temple and Veleka Club; she was predeceased by her sister, Julia Ninomiya; she is survived by cousins Jayne Minamoto and Janet Kondo.

Yamaguchi, Hisako, 86, Pittsburgh, PA, Oct. 23, 2022; she is survived by her daughter, Elsbeth Guzman; gc: 2; ggc: 3.

Yamagushi, Minako 'Minnie,' 90, Los Angeles, CA, Aug. 25, 2022; she was predeceased by her husband, Kho; she is survived by her son, Gerald Iseda, she is also survived by many other relatives and close friends.
Farrell was a featured speaker at the San Francisco memorial event. When Farrell and her partner, Burton, discovered the long-buried stone monument, Takahashi, who leads the Henri and Tomoye Takahashi Foundation, offered to assist in the professional excavation and preservation of the stone. However, the privately owned Topaz Museum declined the offer and instead, without input from the Japanese American community, unearthed the monument using untrained methods, thereby damaging the stone.

The Wakasa Memorial Committee advocates for placing the Wakasa Memorial Stone and the Topaz Concentration Camp under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, rather than private ownership, as is the case currently.

In her remarks, Farrell explained, “The stone has a lot to say. It shows that the Topaz prisoners did not accept the narrative that Wakasa’s shooting was a ‘justified military action’ as alleged by prison authorities. ... The Issei went to a lot of trouble to build, then bury the monument.” Farrell urged the community to advocate to the NPS to sponsor a community archaeology project at Topaz, similar to previous efforts conducted at the Manzanar National Historic Site, where survivors, descendants, family members and friends can work together to uncover remnants of the life the incarcerated experienced there. She also explained that such projects facilitate community healing for the generations of harm caused by the wartime incarceration.

Another featured speaker was Topaz-born Dr. Patrick Hayashi, who retired as associate president of the University of California system. In describing the monument, Hayashi stated: “The first time I saw the monument ... I thought it was beautiful. On the outside — it is plain and simple, solid and strong, just like our parents and grandparents. But on the inside, it is rich, complex and deep. “My mother’s spirit lives there. The monument embodies not just my mother’s spirit, but the spirit of all the people who were imprisoned in Topaz,” Hayashi continued.

In his remarks, Hayashi also criticized the handling of the memorial stone and mourned the controversy that has ensued since its excavation, but concluded, “Today, we pledge to fight together to make sure that what happened to Mr. Wakasa will never happen again — not to us, not to our community, not to anyone.”

Ukai, the final speaker, spoke about her journey as a founding member of the Wakasa Memorial Committee. She has dedicated her efforts to gather information about James Wakasa. Recently, she traveled to Wakasa’s hometown of Takahama in Ishikawa Prefecture, where she was welcomed warmly by local families. Ukai discovered many new supporters of the effort to remember Wakasa. In fact, upon her return to the U.S., she brought with her folded origami cranes and paper flowers that were made by those supporters to share at the memorial services.

The memorial concluded with survivors and descendants of Topaz and other U.S. concentration camps making offerings of paper flowers to the Wakasa altar.

In many ways, the remembrance event demonstrated the resilience of the many incarcerated individuals and families, including James Wakasa, not unlike the cherry blossom trees on the San Francisco Japantown Peace Plaza that have survived a year of strong elements but have continued to bring joy to generations of residents and visitors alike.

The hourlong San Francisco Wakasa remembrance ceremony can be viewed on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-0iH-GQikLB.

Emily Murase, whose father was incarcerated in Poston, writes from San Francisco Japantown and serves as executive director of the Japantown Task Force.

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