A Korean War Veteran Returns to Japan’s Misawa Air Base After 73 Years.

Norio Uyematsu stands in front of a U.S. Air Force F-4 Phantom at Misawa Air Base in Aomori Prefecture. On a plaque below the fighter jet, it reads, “This aircraft is dedicated to the friendship between the Japanese and American peoples. May it live forever. Dedicated on September 6, 1981.”

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA
Dear Editor,

Over four years ago, the JACL passed a resolution offering an apology to Tule Lake Resisters and promised to take further actions that have not been realized. On April 20, 2023, an email by Yukio Kawaratani and Kyoko Oda, addressed to JACL leaders and members and published in the Pacific Citizen, reminded them of these obligations, but no response was received nor actions taken. We have provided below the exact text of the closing of the adopted JACL apology resolution for JACL leaders and members to read and respond by taking actions to fulfill their promised obligations.

"NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the National Council of the Japanese American Citizens League that in the spirit of reconciliation, forgiveness, and community unity, a sincere apology is offered to those imprisoned in the Tule Lake Segregation Center for non-violent acts of resistance and dissent, who suffered shame due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the other three resolution commitments have not been fulfilled. Recommended ways these three obligations could possibly be fulfilled by the JACL are as follows:

At the JACL National Convention in Little Tokyo this summer, a workshop titled "Who were the Tule Lake Resisters" was held by a panel of five distinguished community members highly versed on the Tule Lake Resister experience. Richard Katsuda was the moderator, and the other four members were Kyoko Oda, Soji Kashiwagi, Yukio Kawaratani and Stan Shikuma. The very informative workshop, with over 50 attendees, was filmed, and we strongly recommend it be distributed to all JACL chapters to help them gain a greater understanding of the issues regarding Tule Lake Resisters.

We are heartened that the JACL has recently started to work on the Tule Lake narrative to update the Curriculum Guide and has invited the panel members from the Tule Lake Resisters workshop and the Tule Lake Committee to participate. It is important that the JACL and representatives of the Tule Lake Resisters and Tule Lake Committee have a meeting of the minds in order to provide an accurate and authentic narrative.

National Council recognition of Tule Lake Resisters at an appropriate public ceremony still needs to be accomplished. Possibilities may be the July 2024 Tule Lake Pilgrimage that will have over 400 inspired and interested attendees or at a large banquet in Los Angeles, as the greatest numbers of Japanese Americans and JACL members live in Southern California.

It has been over four years since the apology resolution was passed, so the JACL should expeditiously strive to meet its promised commitments.

Sincerely,

Yukio Kawaratani and Kyoko Oda,
San Fernando Valley JACL Members and
Former Tule Lake Inmates"
JACSC NAMES ROB BUSCHER AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium has appointed Rob Buscher as the new executive director of the JACSC.

“We have found in Rob a leader who brings considerable experience in the leadership of nonprofit arts organizations. As a scholar, curator and filmmaker, he is a consummate storyteller who is passionately committed to telling the stories and preserving the history of Japanese Americans. He comes to us with a vision for the future of JACSC that has resonated strongly with us,” said Ann Burroughs, chair of JACSC. Buscher will take up his new role on Nov. 6.

“I am honored and humbled to take on this position at what I see as a critical juncture in our community’s story. In the coming decade, we will likely lose the majority of our remaining incarceration survivors, whose lived experiences and personal testimonies have been the foundation of the pilgrimage movement and other efforts to memorialize the wartime incarceration. We must continue to educate future generations about the grave injustices endured by our Japanese American community during the wartime and the tremendous resilience demonstrated by our success in the postwar era,” said Rob Buscher. “To do this work effectively, we will need to find new ways to tell these stories in the absence of our survivors, so that their legacy can be preserved and shared with Americans of all backgrounds. As we navigate this next difficult chapter, I believe JACSC can play an important role in convening its member organizations around a shared vision for how to take this work forward.”

The JACSC is comprised of organizations committed to collectively preserving, protecting and interpreting the history of the World War II experiences of Japanese Americans and elevating the related social justice lessons that inform current issues today. Members include War Relocation Authority confinement sites, as well as historical organizations, endowments, museums, commissions, educational institutions and individuals.

A mixed-race Yonsei based in Philadelphia, Buscher is deeply embedded in the East Coast Japanese American and broader Asian American and Pacific Islander communities where he has lived and worked since 2010. Born and raised in rural/suburban Connecticut, Buscher moved to Philadelphia after five years abroad in the United Kingdom and Japan, where he completed his B.A. in communications at Richmond the American International University in London and M.A. in Japan Studies at the University of London. Joining the board of the Philadelphia chapter of the JACL in 2012, he has served as chapter president since 2018 and held other positions in the JACL National Council, including editorial board chair of the Pacific Citizen newspaper from 2019-22.

As a film and media specialist, Buscher has held leadership positions in nonprofit arts organizations for over a decade, including the Philadelphia Asian American Film Festival that he helmed for six seasons as festival director. He has also pursued a secondary career in academia that he started in 2012 as a part-time lecturer in Japan Studies at Arcadia University.

In 2017, Buscher joined the faculty of University of Pennsylvania’s Asian American Studies Program, where he currently teaches courses on Asian American Cinema and Asian American Activism. His recent research focuses largely on the postwar resettlement of Japanese Americans into the Greater Philadelphia region, and the role that arts and culture have played in historic Japanese American community movements.

Buscher’s family was forcibly removed from their farm and home during the war, and for decades his family has self-relocated during the so-called “voluntary evacuation,” his great-grandparents, Obachaan and her siblings were spared from the indignity of wartime incarceration. However, losing everything they worked to establish over several decades, they were forced to rebuild their lives in the outer suburbs of Ogden, Utah, like so many other families during the postwar era. Through extended family who were incarcerated during the war, Buscher has personal ties to Rohnert, Minidoka and Crystal City.


For more information about the JACSC, visit www.jacsc.org/whoweare.
Once a month, members of the Buddhahead Breakfast Club meet to eat at King’s Hawaiian Bakery & Restaurant, a tradition that began more than 20 years ago.

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

**BUDDHAHEAD BREAKFAST CLUB: Pancakes, Eggs and Camaraderie**

Monthly meeting serves hearty helping of friendship, fellowship and nostalgia.

By P.C. Staff

On a recent Friday morning at King’s Hawaiian in Torrance, Calif., some of the customers undoubtedly looked at the large gathering of older, mostly Japanese American men who had taken over a section of the famous bakery and restaurant and wondered to themselves: “Who are these guys?”

The more eagle-eyed among the curious might have noticed the custom T-shirts worn by many in the group and gotten a partial answer:

They were witnessing the monthly meeting of the BBC.

No, not that BBC. This BBC stands for the Buddhahead Breakfast Club. According to the main organizer, Chris Segawa, this BBC is all about common experiences, friendship, camaraderie — and, of course, breakfast.

Segawa said that the Buddhahead Breakfast Club started more than 20 years ago with eight original members who decided to get together informally once a month for breakfast. What they had in common was a shared Japanese American — or Japanese American adjacent — background, ties to Los Angeles County’s South Bay area and, in many instances, military service during the Vietnam War.

Over time, word began to spread. “It just kept growing and growing,” Segawa said. As the Buddhahead Breakfast Club grew, it had to change locations several times. Fortunately, King’s Hawaiian Bakery & Restaurant turned out to be the ideal place: It was large enough to handle up to 50 or more BBC attendees, and its “aloha” menu was tailor-made for, well, Buddhaheads.

Now, there’s a list of nearly 80 regulars. Attendance is by invitation only because of the increased head count. Segawa calls everyone on the list the night before as a reminder and to see who is coming. At a recent gathering, Don Bannai, original member Sam Ito, David Miyoshi and Sunny Tesaki all gathered at Kings Hawaiian.

And thanks to the artistry of one of the original members, Richard Mikami, even though they have their own T-shirt — and what makes even an unofficial group more “official” than having a T-shirt? — it remains informal and congenial. There’s also the therapeutic aspect to something as simple as getting together once a month and having breakfast.

“Back in the day, we used to fight,” Segawa admitted. “The Westside against the Eastside, and we were Gardena guys. Now, we sit down and eat together. . . . It’s been a real good thing for everybody.”

(Editor’s Note: To view a short video of a recent Buddhahead Breakfast Club meeting, visit tinyurl.com/4dzaxewb.)

**BBC Quartet Take Part in Honor Flight**

Decades after serving, Vietnam War vets find healing with a visit to the nation’s capital.

The physical scars that many Vietnam War veterans had to endure were no different than soldiers of any war might endure, be it pieces of shrapnel in one’s body or lost limbs, lost mobility, lost eyesight or lost hearing. The psychic and emotional scars, however, were different.

It’s been a scenario of diminishing returns. When World War II vets returned, they were feted with parades and accolades. When Korean War vets returned, a war-weary nation responded with indifference. When Vietnam vets came home, many faced outright hostility and rage — and were perfectly fine with shrinking from the spotlight, taking pains to keep their service under wraps to avoid painful and awkward questions and conversations over a profoundly unpopular war.

With time, however, things changed. America was finally ready to reconcile and embrace its Vietnam War veterans. Honor Flight, a charity that began as a way to honor still-living WWII veterans with a trip to Washington, D.C., realized that vets who served during the Vietnam War era also deserved a homecoming they never got.

So, Buddhahead Breakfast Club members Gil Ishizu, Jim Iwaki, John Masaki and Ken Mui took part in the Oct. 13-15 Honor Flight to the nation’s capital to visit the memorials built to honor their service, as well as sites like Arlington National Cemetery. “I didn’t know what to expect,” said Masaki, who related that Don Suehiro — another BBC regular — had taken part in Honor Flight and raved about it.

According to Suehiro, all it took was going online and filling out and submitting an application. “You did not have to go to ‘Nam. You just had to be a veteran,” Masaki added. As it turned out, Ishizu, Iwaki, Masaki and Mui all took Suehiro’s advice and applied — and got the nod, along with 32 other veterans of different wars, each accompanied by a guardian.

Masaki also explained that part of the experience was a “couple of major surprises” — sorry, no spoilers — that just about brought him to his knees. “It was quite a tear-jerking affair for me.”

For his part, Ishizu recalled meeting the two 97-year-olds who were part of this Honor Flight session, one a WWII vet, the other a Korean War vet. It was for him meaningful to “listen to the other people talk and share experiences. I think that was the biggest part.”

Masaki summed up his Honor Flight experience thusly: “It was one fabulous trip.”

— P.C. Staff

Military veterans and their guardians while aboard the aircraft that took them to Washington, D.C., to visit the various war memorials, courtesy of Honor Flight.

PHOTOS: GIL ISHUZU

Kenny Mui and his daughter, Leslie, who served as his Honor Flight guardian, stand before the wall at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C.

PHOTOS: GIL ISHUZU
By Tech. Sgt. Jao'Torey Johnson, 35th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

MISAWA AIR BASE, JAPAN — Young men found themselves thrust into the heart of the war, a relentless battleground where the scorching summer sun bore down on them, and the rumble of distant artillery echoed through the unforgiving landscape. Each step was a gamble with fate. Nights were fraught with terror. Camaraderie of fellow soldiers was the only solace amidst the chaos. The Korean War was a crucible that tested the limits of human endurance and brotherhood, leaving an indelible mark on the souls of many. This was the service Norio Uyematsu signed up for, but he had yet to learn how much it would impact him.

Uyematsu’s journey began in the quiet town of Brigham City, Utah. It was 1948, and the young man had just graduated from Box Elder High School. Uyematsu, like many others of his generation, felt the patriotic call to serve his country. At just 17 years old, he enlisted in the U.S. Army in January 1949, setting the course for a remarkable life.

His service started with an unexpected turn when he shipped out. Uyematsu initially received orders to Okinawa, Japan, but history had other plans. The invasion of communist North Korea into South Korea sent shockwaves throughout the world. Everything abruptly changed.

In July 1950, Uyematsu found himself diverted from Okinawa and assigned to the 865th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Self-Propelled Unit at Camp Haugen in Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture. The unit was diverted from Okinawa and assigned to the 865th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Automatic Weapons Self-Propelled Unit at Camp Haugen in Hachinohe, Aomori Prefecture. The unit was recently to Misawa Air Base in 1950, as a thank you to the base for their hospitality.

Members of the 521st MIS 10X Corp Korea on March 31, 1952. Pictured (top row, from left) are William Sur, Richard Fujimoto and Bob Yamasaki and (front, from left) Norio Uyematsu and Akio Sawada.

Photo: Patti Hirahara

In 2022, at the age of 91, Uyematsu, of Anaheim, Calif., was recognized by California Congressman Lou Correa (D-46th District) for his service as a Japanese American Korean War veteran, is a testament to his motto, “You must endure for, but he had yet to learn how much it would impact him.

As a corporal, I still can picture mothers with missing limbs,” Uyematsu recalled. “The city of Misawa was very small, at that time, with unpaved dirt streets. The people in Misawa were very cordial, and they were surprised to see a Japanese American in a U.S. Army uniform.”

Uyematsu’s mission took on a deeper meaning as he witnessed the resilience of the Japanese people. He understood that his service was not just about safeguarding a base; it was about standing as a symbol of support for those in need.

In July 1951, Uyematsu was once again called to action, but this time in the heart of the Korean War. He found himself assigned to the 521st Military Intelligence Service Platoon, and his journey to Korea began. He served in the grueling war with dedication and honor.

As the years passed, his life continued to be marked on history. Forward in times of crisis, leaving a deep-rooted mark on history. His story is one that should never be forgotten, a reminder of the sacrifices made by the brave men and women who stepped forward in times of crisis, leaving a deep-rooted mark on history.

“I am fortunate to be able to continue to tell the story of those Japanese Americans who served in the Korean War,” Uyematsu concluded. “There are not many of us left, but our service did make a difference.”

Norio’s Story

In recognition of Veterans Day, Norio Uyematsu, a Japanese American Korean War veteran, is honored at Misawa Air Base for his U.S. military service 73 years ago.

Norio Uyematsu returns recently to Misawa Air Base in Aomori Prefecture for the first time in 73 years.

Photo: Patti Hirahara

Japanese American Korean War veteran Norio Uyematsu receives Congressional Record recognition from Congressman Lou Correa on Veterans Day 2022 and recorded on Nov. 16, 2022.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

U.S. Air Force Technical Sgt. Jao’Torey Johnson, public affairs, Misawa Air Base, receives a commemorative signed photo statue from Norio Uyematsu, as well as his recorded memories of his time on base at Misawa in 1950, as a thank you to the base for their hospitality.

PHOTO: PATTI HIRAHARA

DEFINING COURAGE

Celebrate the Legacy of True American Heroes*

Defining Courage is a journey into the legacy of the Nisei Soldier, Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in the segregated units of the 100th IB, 442nd RCT, MIS, and 522nd FAB. Considered the greatest fighting units in American military history, most have never heard their extraordinary stories.

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF NORIO UYEMATSU
GFBNEC ROLLS DICE ON ITS FUTURE
The 22nd Evening of Aloha Honors Vets, Bets on Expansion Plan.

By P.C. Staff

On the surface, Sept. 23’s annual fundraising gala for the Go for Broke National Education Center at a tony downtown Los Angeles hotel was as celebratory, festive and heartfelt as any of the 21 Evenings of Aloha that preceded it.

The food was as tasty as ever, thanks to Roy’s Restaurant chain founder Roy Yamaguchi, who created the menu, and chef Andreas Nieto, who led the Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites culinary team.

The master of ceremony duties by Chris Komai — filling in for KABC-TV Channel 7 news anchor David Ono — were handled with aplomb.

The presentation and retiring of flags by the 100th Battalion/442nd Infantry Regiment color guard were handled with precision, the music was cheery, the videos were inspiring and the words from such speakers as GFBNEC Board of Directors Chair George Henning, Rep. Mark Takano (D–Calif.), comedienne and GFBNEC volunteer Sierra Kato, former Alhambra Mayor Jeff Koji Maloney, Dr. Maya Hernandez and, of course, GFBNEC CEO and President Mitchell T. Maki were all first-rate.

But as one attendee noted, it seemed there were fewer in the audience than in previous years.

This time there were only three veterans — Ed Nakamura (Military Intelligence Service), Yosh Nakamura (442nd) and Toke Yoshihashi (100th/442nd), all centenarian-adjacent — who took the stage to accept the audience’s applause and adulation.

The lower turnout wasn’t imaginary. In an interview with Pacific Citizen conducted a few days after the event, Maki noted that there were 450 people in attendance. “Five years ago, we had 1,000. When veterans pass, their families don’t always stick around. So, there are challenges for us as we push forward and as we begin to redefine and recreate ourselves to make ourselves relevant for the next generation.”

In a way, it’s completely understandable when you are an organization whose raison d’être is to celebrate and memorialize American soldiers from a small ethnic group who served with particular distinction in a war that ended nearly eight decades ago.

That the day would arrive when there were no more 442 or MIS veterans to fete was something everyone knew was inevitable. That time, sadly, is nearly here.

“We are in a transition at Go for Broke National Education Center just because the veterans are leaving us so quickly,” said Maki.

Although an undeniable truth, GFBNEC is nevertheless taking action to belie the bromide “old soldiers never die, they just fade away!’

Inspired by the gambling expression from which it derives its name, Go for Broke is staking its future to not fade away on a construction project called First Street North, which will run along Temple Street between Judge John Aiso Street to the west and Alameda Street to the east, with an elbow of construction running south along Aiso Street. It will break ground in early 2024.

As explained by Maloney at the Evening of Aloha, the First Street North project is a partnership among GFBNEC, the Little Tokyo Service Center and the City of Los Angeles that will transform the parking lot that surrounds the Go for Broke Monument, built in 1999, with a “new multipurpose, multistory building” that “will include 330,000 square feet of indoor space over five levels with a floor of subterranean parking.

It will include 248 units of badly needed affordable housing. We plan to also house several legacy J-town businesses, including Fugetsu-Do and an additional theater for East-West Players.”

Previous reporting has stated that half of the units were to be reserved for low-income families, with one-third reserved for “veterans experiencing homelessness.”

Maloney added that part of the project will also mean Go for Broke National Education Center will “take possession of a 10,000-square-foot operating space, which includes a multipurpose room for presentations and community meetings, a state-of-the-art conference room and a temporary exhibit space, and I think most exciting, an outdoor courtyard that will be designed to give the proper honor to every person whose name is inscribed on our Monument.”

According to Maki, completion of this long-discussed project will be late 2026 at the earliest, spring 2027 at the latest.
That the redevelopment will benefit the area is fitting. It was once part of historic Little Tokyo until the City of Los Angeles utilized eminent domain several decades ago to take over the land — and then used the real estate for parking.

In his remarks at Evening of Aloha, Maloney also said, “Our intent has always been to build an interpretive center next to it [the Go for Broke Monument] and to construct an additional commemorative wall that would honor the names of an additional 16,000 Japanese American Service members who served but didn’t get shipped overseas during World War II.”

Published reports have LTSC and GFBNEC paying $1 a year to rent the land. Funding will come from various sources, including government grants and funding.

For Maki, who has been at the helm at GFBNEC for the past seven years, the shrinking numbers of Nisei veterans has been the impetus to take steps now to ensure a viable future for the organization.

“We’re at a point where the story is not going to live on simply because it’s a great story,” Maki said. “So, we’ve made a concerted effort to say, if we really believe that this is not just a great Japanese American story, but a great American story, then we need to really start to push this story outside of the JA community and make it relevant to members of other communities.”

Maki pointed to GFBNEC’s Torchbearer program — described on its website as a group of “engaged young adults who are locally involved and committed to the Go For Broke spirit and legacy” with local partners in other regions of the nation — and its Go for Broke Journalism Institute, which began in 2022, as avenues by which the organization’s mission can continue and expand, both within the Japanese American community and beyond it.

“We’re starting to see the fruits of that, and what’s amazing to me is when you hear young people from other communities, who may not have even heard this story before, get excited about it, and identify with it,” he said.

With the recent opening of the Terasaki Budokan, the launch of the Japanese American National Museum’s $65 million Our Promise campaign and the past summer’s opening of the Little Tokyo/Arts District Metro stop named for the late Norman Mineta, Little Tokyo is undergoing changes that should maintain and sustain the historic heart of Los Angeles’ Japanese American community.

Now, with the plans by Go for Broke National Education Center ready to begin, the stage is set for a transformative Little Tokyo renaissance.

But for Maki, it’s all about ensuring that the service and sacrifices of a previous generation are remembered by their heirs. “I think we honor their legacy by helping young people remember that the opportunities that they have today are due to the sacrifices that were made yesterday.”

(Edited by desea reeves for the 22nd Evening of Aloha on YouTube, visit tinyurl.com/2s47ecar. To learn more about the Go for Broke Journalism Institute on YouTube, visit tinyurl.com/bdedfrcw.)
ARIZONA ANIMATOR DRAWS ON FAMILY LORE FOR PROJECT

‘Purple Heart for Effect’ tells the story of Brad Uyeda’s grandfather’s 442nd service.

By P.C. Staff

Like many others during the Covid-19 lockdown that began in March 2020, Phoenix, Ariz.-based animator Brad Uyeda, who was born and raised in Fresno, Calif., decided to work on something that had been in his thoughts for several years, a project that, under normal circumstances, he might not have been able to put his focus.

The result was a feature-length script and a short, animated movie inspired by stories Uyeda learned about his grandfather, Masatsugu Uyeda, who was incarcerated at the War Relocation Authority Center in Poston, Ariz., and later volunteered to serve in the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

There was something compelling about that narrative that piqued the grandson’s interest in the World War II military service of his grandfather, a member of K Co. He began researching not just his grandfather’s story but that of those Nisei who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during WWII.

The result was “Purple Heart for Effect,” which runs one minute, 36 seconds and is a “proof of concept” that he hopes will help it become a feature-length project. Before that could happen, however, he would need to spend a year working on the short in his spare time.

“I drew every single frame by hand with a light table like the classics they did back at Disney in the old school days. Everything is hand drawn. It’s all me,” Uyeda told The Pacific Citizen.

For Uyeda, time was of the essence. He needed to “get it done” in time to help Japanese language speakers understand the story.

While the short is an achievement of its own, Uyeda and Hanami know that this is just the beginning of what will likely be a long journey, one that will include raising more funds. But it looks at crowdfunding, which has become popular in recent years, as an avenue of last resort.

“I’m hoping that I could reach the Japanese American community,” Uyeda said, adding that he has been working with Japanese American organizations in Arizona, including having “Purple Heart for Effect” screen during the Arizona Japanese Film Festival in November.

“My ultimate goal is, I want the Japanese American community to really, if they can participate, if they can help fund it, I’d like it to be funded by our community if that is possible. . . . I just want to reach as many Japanese Americans as I can to let them know that this project of ours is happening.”

Send a Gift Subscription!
David Akira Itami devoted his life to service to the United States. Why, then, is he forgotten in this country and honored in Japan? His biography reveals the complex issues — then and now — that have governed his case.

Itami was one of approximately 6,000 Japanese Americans (Nisei) who served in the Military Intelligence Service of the U.S. Army during World War II. His work was especially valued because he was a Kibei Nisei — one of those Japanese Americans who spent several years of their childhood living in Japan. He was born in Oakland, Calif., in 1911 but was sent, just before his second birthday, to live with his paternal aunt in Kajiki, a small coastal town in Kagoshima Prefecture. After attending the local grade school, he went on to study at the Daito Bunka Gakuin (Academy of Greater East Asian Culture) in Tokyo. But because of his mother’s failing health, he had to return to the States in 1931. He was 19 years old.

Itami’s life now took a very different direction. His first duty was to learn English. Fortunately, he was able to do this remarkably quickly. After taking a job at a salmon cannery in Alaska, where he exercised his first leadership role by helping the Asian immigrant community negotiate their summer wages, he returned to California and settled in Los Angeles. It did not take him long to transition to a position of influence in the Japanese American community.

First, he taught Japanese language classes at the Nishi Hongwanji Buddhist Temple and took courses at Los Angeles City College. Then, in 1934, he found employment on the editorial staff of the bilingual newspaper Kashu Mainichi Shinbun/ The Japan-California Daily News. Itami denounced his Japanese citizenship in 1935, but he never renounced his Asian heritage. He helped establish a Japanese American literary magazine, worked on educational programming for the Kibei division of the JACL and in 1940 became editor of a news magazine written by and for Kibeis.

It was his dream that the Kibei Nisei who served in the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) could provide a bridge between Japan and the United States. But he alienated himself from leftist members of the Kibei Nisei community when he wrote that the United States had more to fear from Russia than Japan. This alienation turned to open hostility in October 1940, when Itami used his authority as vp of JACL’s Kibei Division to expel some of its Communist members.

He continued to be the acknowledged head of this division, however, even when the MIS leadership changed and its new and powerful anti-Axis Committee demanded that Kibeis and Isseis sever all contact with Japan. Things escalated when Japan launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. On the evening of Dec. 7, more than 5,500 Issei severed all contact with Japan.

Two days after Kashu Mainichi suspended publication, Itami was among 85 Los Angeles Japanese Americans to join an advance work party for the MIS. He became the first volunteer for the arrival of detainees at the Owens Valley Reception Center in Manzanar, Calif. Thousands would enter the camp in the days that followed, including Itami’s wife and 4-year-old daughter. There, Itami served as executive officer of the block leaders council and translated and transcribed the camp newspaper into Japanese.

He continued to believe that it was the duty of all loyal Nisei to accept their forced incarceration as part of their contribution to the American war effort. That May, he wrote a second letter to Time Magazine, praising Manzanar and saying that conditions there were “just about the best that we can expect under the circumstances.” He declared that the federal officials who served as camp administrators were “very courteous and considerate toward all of us” and that “under the snow-covered High Sierra mountains our life is just wonderful . . .”

But Itami remained at the camp only seven months. In October, Col. Kai Rasmussen, commander of the Military Intelligence Service Language School at Camp Savage, Minn., came to Manzanar to recruit Japanese language instructors. He immediately hired Itami and two other Nisei as civilian instructors; the three men left Manzanar as the first very volunteers from relocation centers to be recruited by the U.S. military. Itami’s departure was noted with disfavor by two opposing factions at the camp: hostile anti-Axis JACL members and a small, but violent, pro-Japan faction.

The language program at Camp Savage was a daunting one. Japanese linguists were needed to serve the Army, Itami taught there until March 1944. Then, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was sent to Washington, D.C., to work for the MIS and deciphering Japanese codes. The MIS faced a unique situation in the war with Japan.

Itami was discharged from the Army on April 10, 1946, but he remained a War Department civilian employee. That April, he and three other Kibeis from the Allied Power’s Translation and Interpretation Section were assigned to monitor the work of the Japanese interpreters at the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

These trials did not adjourn until Nov. 12, 1948. Itami was particularly adept at explaining subtle distinctions in language. At the trials, he stepped in not only to correct language misperceptions, but also to silence those who minimized the testimony of Japan’s former wartime leader, Gen. Hideki Tojo.

Once the intensive labor of the trials was over, however, Itami fell into a deep depression. On Dec. 26, 1950, he died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He was 39 years old.

Itami might have been forgotten as just another war casualty — until novelist Toyoko Yamasaki took an interest in his case and published his story in 1983 in the novel “Futatsu No Sokoku” (“Two Homelands”). (An abridged English translation appeared in 2000.) It was turned into a yearlong TV series in 1984 and a two-part TV film in 2019.

Yamasaki portrayed her hero’s disillusionment with America’s conduct of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and America’s continued anti-Japanese fervor as major reasons he reconsidered Itami’s daughter, Michi, who was 12 at the time of her father’s death, offered another reason for his depression.

“I think that being a Kibei . . . was difficult for him, as he did not belong to any group,” she said. “Nisei did not have the same kind of identity that the Kibei had; they were different from themselves. Also, he was alienated from other Kibeis because he was too intelligent to believe the propaganda of the Japanese military government at the time.”

Today, it is Japan, and not America, that honors Itami. In Kijiki, a memorial was erected at the site of his childhood home. And the college he attended as a young man named a large assembly hall in his honor.

The Nisei in America, however, successfully banned the 1984 film “Two Homelands” from being shown in the continental United States because they were deep into negotiations for redress and reparations for their forced internment during the war. As a result, they had — and continue to have — little interest in celebrating a Kibei who proclaimed their voluntary internment an act of American patriotism, despite its spectacular wartime achievements.

Beverley Driver Eddy is a retired professor at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pa.
CALENDAR

NATIONAL

Irei – A National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration
Los Angeles, CA
JANM
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: $5
The new public exhibit, completed by architect Bill K. Kuroki, will open on November 12, 2023. The exhibit tells the story of the 120,000 Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II. The museum will offer free admission on the first Thursday of every month. Info: Visit https://www.janm.org for more information.

PSW
Okaeri LGBTQ+ Conference
Los Angeles, CA
Nov. 10-12
JACCC
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: $25-$50
This conference is a celebration of LGBTQ+ individuals and organizations. The conference will feature keynote speakers, panels, workshops, and a social aspect. Info: Visit www.okaeri-losangeles.org/conference-2023 for more information.

NCWNP
Nihonmachi Little Friends’ 48th Anniversary Celebration
San Francisco, CA
Nov. 17; 5-7 p.m.
Nihonmachi Little Friends
1830 Sutter St.
Price: $125
This event celebrates the 48th anniversary of the Nihonmachi Little Friends, a group dedicated to preserving Japanese culture in the community. The event includes a buffet dinner, program, and live entertainment. Info: Visit www.nihonmachi-littlefriends.org for more information.

Rutash Awaawh Through Line Exhibit
New York, NY
Oct. 24-29
Whitney Museum of American Art
95 Gansevoort St.
Price: $20-
This exhibit highlights the arts created by Inmates of the line in Wasam’s work. Organized and inspired by the artist’s approach to art, the presentation contains more than 100 works, various of which are on display for the first time. Info: Visit www.whitney.org/ for more information.

Toshiko Takaeezu: Shaping Abstraction
Exhibit
Boston, MA
Thru September 2024
Museum of Fine Arts
465 Huntington Ave.
Price: $24
This exhibit showcases Takaeezu’s work, including her famous art, the presentation comprises more than 100 works, many of which are on display for the first time. Info: Visit www.mfa.org/ for more information.

EDC
JAVAt&NJAMF’s Veterans Day Ceremony
Washington, D.C.
Nov. 11; 2 p.m. EST
National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in WWII
Intersection of New Jersey Avenue, Louisiana Avenue and D Street
Price: Free
Join JAVAt & NJAMF for its annual Veterans Day Program that will feature keynote speaker U.S. Army Maj. Michael H. Yamamoto, who is currently assigned to the Joint Communications Support Element (A). The event is to honor the J3, director of operations, since July 2022. The program will be in-person and streamed virtually via Facebook. Info: Visit www.javat.org/ for more information.

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FOR MORE INFO:
pc@pacificcitizen.org
(213) 620-1767
Obituary

In Memoriam

Abe, Spencer Tsutomu, 79, Selma, CA, Oct. 4.

Chikahisa, Henry ‘Hank,’ 91, Fullerton, CA, Sept. 12, during WWII, his family and he were incarcerated at the Poston WRA Center in AZ; graduate, UCLA; he was predeceased by his siblings, James, Carl, Ray, Paul and Margie Park; he is survived by his wife, Patti Yamagata Chikahisa; their children, David (Patty), Cindy and Carrie (Jeff) Iwasaki; sister, Helen Sakaki; sisters-in-law, Evelyn Chikahisa, Frances Chikahisa and Irene Yamagata-Bermudez; brother-in-law, Ken (Edna) Yamagata; and several grandchildren.

Iwamoto, Brent, 44, Monterey Park, CA, April 9; he is survived by his parents, Daniel and Ruby; brother, Ryan (Kathryn) Iwamoto; uncle and aunt, Gary and Gloria Yoshizumi; aunt, Diane Iwamoto; he is also survived by many cousins and friends.

Kubo, Chizuko, 95, Reedley, CA, April 11; she was predeceased by her husband, Yas; siblings, Sam Takeda, Mieko Takeda, Junji Takeda, Sumi Okuma, Kazu Loy and David Takeda; she is survived by her son, John; daughter-in-law, Gina; brother, Joe (Ruby) Takeda; she is also survived by many nieces and nephews.

Fujino, Arlene, 79, and several grandchildren.

CA, Oct. 4.

Abe, Spencer Tsutomu, 79, Selma, CA, Oct. 4.

CA, May 5; she was predeceased by her husband, Noboru; she was accustomed to, and rural life opposed to an urban environment.

The next destination was the WRA internment camp, Poston II located in Arizona, where she experienced a trauma that stayed with her for her lifetime. One night, her family was locked in their unit by six other internees opposed to the Japanese American Citizens League’s (JACL) pro-U.S. government stance. Her father, the wartime president of the National JACL, was severely beaten with handmade ironwood clubs for 45 minutes while the family could only watch. Following the assault due to safety concerns for the family, they were moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. After the war, the family relocated to Los Angeles, where Rosalind completed high school.

In 1953, Rosalind married Edison Uno and had their first daughter, Dorothea, and in 1957 their second daughter, Rosalind. While Edison left law school due to a heart attack and pursued administrative positions. Rosalind was a fulltime homemaker and mother of that era. Elizabeth recalls her mother hanging laundry out in the backyard with Rosanne in the laundry cart, making grilled cheese sandwiches, and watching soap operas in the afternoon. While somewhat idyllic, Edison's health condition was ever-present.

As the decade rolled out with the advent of the civil rights movement and as Edison became more politically active on many fronts, Rosalind also grew committed to the civil rights movement and as Edison became more politically active on many fronts, Rosalind also grew committed to the movement.

Throughout her life, Rosalind was an avid sports fan. As a “49er Faithful,” she hosted 49ers watch parties for family and friends for many seasons, and she continued to cheer for them throughout the pandemic period. She was also very invested in the Golden State Warriors, which brought back memories of her own experience playing high school basketball with her team, the Vandals. Since 2020, Rosalind missed volunteering at Frank McCoppin and instead occupied her time working on jigsaw puzzles, baking cookies, and watching hundreds of home renovations on HGTV.

Rosalind was the matriarch of her extended family, and central to a vast network of friends and neighbors. She will be remembered for her infectious smile, her dry wit, and her love for cooking and sharing meals with family and friends over the years.

Rosalind enjoyed many varied interests during her life. She was an avid reader, and when her daughters were in school she often read the assigned books from their English classes. She enjoyed Agatha Christie mysteries, books featuring cats and dogs as main characters, in addition to more serious literature. Rosalind expressed her interest in Japanese culture and traditions in many ways. She maintained a lush garden that included a flowering cherry tree, crab apple tree, and Japanese maples. She took Ikebana classes for many years, and devoted much time to watching Japanese travel and cultural documentaries on NHK. She also continued her mother’s tradition of celebrating the New Year with traditional Japanese dishes with a slight American twist to include potato salad, spare ribs, and honey glazed ham, shared with many family and friends over the years.

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HAWAII HOCHI PUBLISHES NISEI VETS BOOK FOR CHILDREN

‘Heroes — The Nisei Soldiers of World War II’ is a family affair.

Just in time for the holidays, Hawaii Hochi has announced the publication of “Heroes — The Nisei Soldiers of World War II.”

Authored by Marian Kurashiki Kubota and her daughter, Carolyn Kubota Morinishi, and illustrated by Kim Yoshie Kubota and Melissa Misaye Morinishi, “Heroes — The Nisei Soldiers of World War II” was written for the upper-elementary/middle-school-age range with the intent to convey the saga of the American military service by second-generation Japanese Americans during WWII, primarily those who served in the Military Intelligence Service and the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

A statement from the publisher reads: “We feel very strongly that the stories of these soldiers need to be told to the younger generations. Each succeeding generation, the impact of these stories could be lost. The last chapter of this book suggests ways that kids can help perpetuate the soldiers’ legacy, and the appendix provides many books and websites for further research.”

The 100-page full-color book retails for $20, not including tax, postage and handling. An order form can be downloaded to be printed out at tinyurl.com/5ehxyjk5. The publisher notes that the book may be purchased in larger numbers at a lower cost for 501(c)(3) nonprofits and veterans organizations.

For more information on that “wholesale” price, email Vince Watabu at vince@thehawaiihochi.com or call (808) 288-0324.