Kakehashi 2024 participants walk the white-walled streets of Yanai, famous for its picturesque merchant homes, all of which are decorated with red paper goldfish lanterns. PHOTO: COURTESY OF NOAH HARAMOTO/ZARIA GUIGNARD

SoCal JACL Chapters Hold Installations.

Nikkei travel to Japan to strengthen their connections to Japanese culture.
JACL 2024 National Convention Registration Now Open
This year’s gathering will take place from July 10-14 in Philadelphia.

By JACL National

Join JACL at its 54th National Convention in Philadelphia from July 10-14. Registration is now open to attend this year’s gathering, which is set to take place at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown. Centering on the theme “LIFT: Looking Into the Future Together,” this collective and futuristic convention will be jam-packed with activities and events.

Along with partners OCA-National and APIAVote, the convention will feature joint programming and networking that will include a special election-year “APIAVote Presidential Town Hall,” a forum for AAPIs to push for issues in political campaigns and the media. This is also an important election year for the JACL National Board, so the organization’s National Council will be making important decisions on future leadership and platform for change. In addition, 2024 marks just five years until JACL’s historic 100-year anniversary in 2029.

JACL continues to plan for its future, which will be a prevalent topic in its convention programming, and the annual Sayonara Gala will feature its Centennial Education Fund Campaign, which concludes at year’s end.

The early bird registration deadline date is May 12. Full registration, which includes access to all five days of convention programming, National Council sessions, plenaries, Welcome Reception, awards luncheon, Town Hall event, Sayonara Gala and additional programming events and access to the Whova convention app, ends on June 18. There will be no virtual registration this year.

JACL looks forward to seeing you in Philly!

For details on this year’s annual convention, visit tinyurl.com/dis4yi.
All Americans Should Have Access to Affordable Internet Service

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

As we all know, one of the impacts of Covid was the rise in awareness of the importance of internet connectivity. Even with the return to in-person activities both in the workplace and our personal lives, virtual meetings are now a normal part of our lives. More than before, our children’s schoolwork is often supplemented with online videos, and assignments are completed online.

In our personal lives, my children’s music lessons are even held virtually sometimes, and Zoom even has a different setting to accommodate the differing audio of music vs. conversation. Our reliance upon the internet is fully set.

Unfortunately, this is an election year, and there is a perception that the beneficiaries of this program vote for a certain party, Congress has been unable to pass additional funding. As a result, funding will run out in April, and subscribers have already been notified that they will be unable to continue to receive their subscriptions.

There are two problems in high-speed internet access, availability and affordability or accessibility. This is similar to problems with health care, an area with which I am more familiar from my background. For many end users, due to accessibility or affordability, they do not use high-speed internet. It may be available for them to subscribe to, but they choose not to due to the cost.

In health care, this would be like an individual living next to a highly regarded academic medical center who doesn’t get treated for a health issue because they can’t afford to see the doctor. Ostensibly, health insurance should pay for their health care. In a way, the Affordable Connectivity Program has served as an insurance program for people to get subsidized broadband service.

On the other hand, by opening up the accessibility and affordability of high-speed internet, we revealed the places that face the problem of availability to a greater extent. People believing they have access to the internet but are unable to find that they couldn’t find a reliable service to subscribe to.

As I have written before, this is the problem several areas of San Francisco Japantown face where only copper line-based DSL service is available at the modern-day equivalent of dial-up modem speeds relative to the maximum speeds available through cable or fiber optic. This is a problem that will take years to resolve as this is truly the infrastructure part of the legislation, but hopefully those capital dollars will be flowing to localities such as Japantown to ensure that everyone has available broadband connectivity.

In the meantime, we need to continue to ensure that everyone who can receive reliable broadband service can also access it. Congress must act to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable broadband so that no one is left behind. I urge all our readers to take a moment to call your member of Congress and urge them to fund the Affordable Connectivity Program immediately through the end of the current year.

David Inoue is executive director of the JACL.
Filmmaker Dave Boyle learned Japanese for his LDS mission.

By Gil Asakawa, P.C. Contributor

Ninja have always been popular fodder for action movies in Japan, though usually in the historical context of samurai-era stories. Now, a new Netflix series, “House of Ninjas,” has brought ninjas to modern times, and since its Feb. 15 debut has been ranked No. 1 in 16 countries and regions around the world, reached the Top 10 list in 92 countries and currently sits atop the global list of non-English TV shows on the streaming service.

“House of Ninjas” is an eight-episode action drama about a clan of ninja, or shinobi, that fought evil until a tragedy caused the family to retire to live a menial existence. But the government’s secret “Bureau of Ninja Affairs” convinces the Tawara family to get back in the battle against a mysterious foe that turns out to be a rival shinobi clan from the ancient past.

The series was filmed in Japan, with Japanese actors and a Japanese script, though it’s dubbed and subtitled into various languages including English. In Japan, it’s called “Shinobi no Ie,” or “House of Shinobi,” the preferred term by many Japanese instead of “ninja” that’s more familiar to us in the West.

It was filmed on location, including at the famed Toto Studios in Tokyo. But not everyone involved in the series is Japanese. The series’ showrunner is Dave Boyle, a 42-year-old white guy from Utah.

But Boyle is no stranger to Japan, or even Japanese American and Asian American themes in films. As a director, writer and producer, his credits include titles such as “Big Dreams Little Tokyo” (2006), a partially autobiographical comedy starring himself, about an American who wants to work in Japanese business; a family comedy “White on Rice” (2009) about a Japanese salariman who comes to the U.S. after a divorce; three films starring JA singer-songwriter Goh Nakamura, “Surrogate Valentine” (2011), “Daylight Savings” (2012) and “I Will Make You Mine” (2020); as well as a well-received noir mystery about a Japanese author who comes to the U.S. and become caught up in a murder.

All this cross-pollination with Japan has been a natural arc of Boyle’s career.

“House of Ninjas” is an eight-episode action drama from showrunner Dave Boyle.

“It started with a little bit of a coincidence,” Boyle said. “I come from a Mormon family, and you know, Mormon folks when you turn 18, you get sent on a mission. You don’t choose where you go or anything, and I was sent to Sydney, Australia, on a Japanese-speaking mission. So, I was assigned to learn to speak Japanese, and then I found that I really, really enjoyed studying the language and learning about Japanese culture.”

The experience changed his life.

“When I came back and returned to ordinary life and started working on my film career, my first tiny, scrappy, little indie film that I made with my friends, called ‘Big Dreams Little Tokyo’ was very directly about that experience, sort of about the experience of trying to learn a foreign language or fit into another culture.”

He has certainly accomplished that with “House of Ninjas.” When Netflix was approached by Japanese actor Kento Kaku, whose career in movies and television began in 2007, the year after “Big Dreams Little Tokyo,” with an idea for a new series about a modern-day family of ninja, Netflix reached out to Boyle.

He initially signed on to flesh out Kaku’s ideas and place them into a narrative. “The first thing I did was write what they call a show bible that lays out the world of the show, the characters, and it’s sort of a guidepost of what the show is,” Boyle explained. “Kento was totally onboard, really happy with what I had done. Originally, that was going to be the limit of my involvement. And then more and more, my responsibility grew.”

Before long, Boyle wrote the script for the pilot and supervised the writing for the rest of the series, as well as directed the first three episodes and the season finale, while two other directors handled the other episodes. “And so, there was definitely a team effort.”

Still, he noted, “I was the primary decision maker.” As the show’s “head honcho” (a term lifted by American GIs after World War II from the Japanese hanchō or “team leader”), Boyle was in Japan for 18 months working on the series.

“Oh, it was just incredible,” he said. “I would ride my bike every day to the studio past the statue of Godzilla, past the mural of the Seven Samurai, and park my bike and go into work.”

The music is “expressing sort of a longing and a sadness, but the songs themselves are really fun. We’re trying to make a fun, fast-paced show, but also there is a little bit of a core of sadness at the center of it.”

“All of the details wrapped together make for a supremely entertaining family drama at its center.”

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SoCal JACL Chapters Install 2024 Officers, Board Members
San Fernando Valley and Ventura County chapters usher in the Year of the Dragon.

By P.C. Staff

“Aware of the responsibility to which I have been elected and conscious of the role which the Japanese American Citizens League must play in our community and our nation, I do swear that I will discharge the duties of my office conscientiously and to the best of my ability. I will continue to further the purposes and mission of the JACL and to serve my fellow citizens in this country, the United States of America.”

With that oath, JACL chapters across the nation have installed their respective officers and board members in recent weeks. Following is a report on installation luncheons of two Southern California JACL chapters: San Fernando Valley JACL and Ventura County JACL.

San Fernando Valley JACL

On a brilliantly sunny Jan. 21, the San Fernando Valley JACL chapter held its 82nd installation luncheon at the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center in Pacoima, Calif. The program kicked off with taiko, courtesy of the SFV Taiko Group.

The new board consists of May Wood, incoming president, with the remaining board of directors as follows: Linda Tanaka, Nancy Takayama (outgoing president), Marcia Mahoney, Barbara Okita, Lana Kobayashi, Kiyo Fukumoto, Nancy Gohata, Jean-Paul deGuzman, Tomo Hattori, Michiko Tokunaga Kus, Mitzi Kushida, Geri Shiraki and Patty Takayama.

The program began with a welcome by deGuzman, who introduced JACL Pacific Southwest District Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa, who later administered the JACL’s oath of office for the incoming board. Other special guests recognized by deGuzman included 2021 Nisei Week Queen Kaitlyn Emiko Chu, 2023 Miss Tomodachi Nancy Irimi Chin and 2022 Miss Tomodachi Lana Kobayashi, Kiyo Fukumoto, Nancy Gohata, Jean-Paul deGuzman, Tomo Hattori, Michiko Tokunaga Kus, Mitzi Kushida, Geri Shiraki and Patty Takayama.

Oda and Kay Oda, representing the San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center board; Rev. Paul Iwata, representing Sunrise Japanese Foursquare Church; Linnae McKeever, president, San Fernando Valley Hongwanji Buddhist Temple; Margaret Takimoto, chair, SFJVACC future planning committee; LAPD Foothill Division officers Jesse Ojeda and Esther Alvarez; and Kiyoko Watanabe of the San Fernando Japanese Language Institute.

deGuzman also introduced Ariel Imamoto, the current JACL Norman Y. Mineta Fellow, who shared with the audience the report of Pacific Southwest District Youth Representative Lana Kobayashi, who was unable to attend the installation. Nancy Takayama introduced the luncheon’s keynote speaker, Bill Watanabe.

He began with a quip. “They say that life is like a roll of toilet paper. It seems to go around faster as you get to the end,” Watanabe said to audience chuckles. “I know for me, it’s going around pretty quickly.”

Watanabe shared his family’s stories, which exemplified the experiences and complicated differences within the Japanese American community that still resonate in the present. Prior to being removed from their home, his father and older brothers buried family heirlooms, including a katana, on the farmland they were leasing. Years later, they were unable to relocate what they had buried.

In his remarks, he noted that years before he would spend 31 years at the Little Tokyo Service Center as its founder and executive director — he retired in 2012 — he was a “San Fernando Valley boy” whose parents were farmers at the corner of “Laurel Canyon and Mountain View Street” on land owned by a Mr. Meichtry.

Watanabe praised Meichtry for driving from Pacoima to Manzanar to deliver “Mrs. Meichtry’s delicious fried chicken dinner” a couple of months after the Watanabes — along with thousands of other Nikkei families — were incarcerated at the Manzanar War Relocation Authority Center after World War II began. At his father’s request, Watanabe said Meichtry made a couple more trips to bring up some furniture to help furnish their barrack. “That’s the kind of guy that he was.”

Also, the Watanabes were transferred to another concentration camp — Tule Lake — after his Issei father, who was ineligible to become a naturalized U.S. citizen and didn’t want to become “stuck without a country,” answered “no and no” to key questions on an infamous loyalty questionnaire.

Meantime, his Kibe Nisei mother, “who was a U.S. citizen, she didn’t know whether the family would be split apart from her husband and what would happen with the kids, So, she renounced her U.S. citizenship in the hopes of keeping the family together — and so, she was without a country because she was not a Japanese citizen.”

Watanabe also related how his mother had three brothers, two of whom joined the pro-Japan Hoshi Dan group and one, Tomio Fujiyama, who joined the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. “If they all got together over lunch during the war, it would have been interesting to be a fly on that wall,” he shared, as he speculated. After the war ended and Watanabe’s parents contemplated moving to the Philippines, Brazil or Japan, some factors came into play that persuaded them to stay in America: a letter from Japanese relatives that essentially said, “Don’t come, it’s terrible here, we’re starving — and if you come, it’s going to be worse”; and a mentor to his father who acknowledged America’s flaws, but also noted that “America is also a land of great opportunity.”

“Then, the U.S. government did something positive,” Watanabe said. “The war in Europe just ended. So, the United States of America is a land of great opportunity.”

Watanabe closed by encouraging those in the audience to work on a family history if they had not already done so. “If you still have grandparents or parents or uncles or cousins who might have some stories or recollections of your family here in the valley, it’d be good to record it and write it down,” he said.

After Yoshikawa administered the installation of the chapter’s new board, Nancy Takayama said a few words, reflecting on the past 20-plus years of her involvement with JACL and the Japanese American community and thanking all those who had helped her with during that time. She introduced the new chapter president, May Wood, who noted that JACL should not just move forward, but “move forward with love and compassion.”

“Meet the new board! Learn about us! Help us help you!”

May Wood, incoming chapter president

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON
BRIDGING CONNECTIONS: KAKEHASHI 2024

Nikkei from across the U.S. journey to Japan to develop and strengthen their connections to Japanese culture.

By Kakehashi 2024 Participants

In January, 71 Nikkei and three chaperones traveled from the U.S. to Japan to participate in Kakehashi 2024, where they visited numerous historical and educational sites, experienced traditional and cultural activities and participated in lectures and workshops with the goal of building a mutual understanding between the U.S. and Japan for future friendship and cooperation. Divided into three groups, participants began their trip in Tokyo and then traveled on to Hiroshima and Okinawa, depending on their group destination assignment. This “once-in-a-lifetime dream trip” to Japan was made possible thanks to coordination by the JACL and the Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE) and supported by funding from the Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Following are personal trip reflections from several of this year’s participants.

ASHLEY BUCHER, Group B Chaperone

Anyone identifying as Japanese living outside of Japan has probably felt some degree of disconnectedness. Whether it’s longing for the comforts of home, grieving loss of culture due to your family’s assimilation or feeling like you don’t fit in where you live, separation from your family’s homeland can affect your sense of self and place in the world. Trying to navigate this Nikkei diaspora by yourself can be especially lonely. Thankfully, being in community with people who have similar experiences can provide solace, strength and space to feel at home in who you are.

Through the Kakehashi Project, our mighty group came together in Japan and fostered community in just nine short days. We were a diverse bunch, hailing from New York to Hawaii; identifying as mixed Japanese American, full Japanese American and Japanese American by adoption; ranging from freshmen in college to young professionals in the midst of our 20s. With open hearts and minds, we set out on this once-in-a-lifetime experience to discover as much as we could about Japan, ourselves and each other.

After a couple days in Tokyo, Group B flew to Iwakuni, a small city in Yamaguchi prefecture. We wandered the drizzly streets in search of okonomiyaki (happy to report we were successful), and some of us got up early the next day to catch a glimpse of the famed Kintaikyō Bridge at dusk.

As we made our way to the Museum of Japanese Emigration to Hawaii, we were welcomed with sweeping views of rice fields, mountains and the Seto Inland Sea. The museum is located in the beautiful town and island of Ōshima, a laid-back spot also known as the Hawaii of Setouchi and famous for its soy sauce in enormous wooden vests. The intense, umami aroma of shoyu enticed us to indulge in omiyage to bring home and some shoyu ice cream for the road.

That evening, our participants set off to their respective host families’ homes all around Ōshima. I had the chance to visit a few of them the next day as they experienced Ōshima life — harvesting mikan, learning the art of bento, frying up okonomiyaki. The families’ hospitality was unlike anything I’ve ever seen as I watched them curate intentional experiences and welcome participants into their lives with open arms.

They were thoughtful toward us visitors, too, offering mikan to try, giving us a tour of the 100-year-old home they restored, setting up mats to sit on and passing out homemade mikan jelly. After a quick two days, we said tearful goodbyes and promised to see each other again, waving to the families from the bus until they were out of sight.

Our last stop before we reunited with the rest of our cohort was Hiroshima. We walked through the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum as well as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, taking in the horrors and devastation of the atomic bomb on Aug. 6, 1945. Later that night, a few of us came back to the park to see it lit differently and reflect more.

Looking back, I am overflowing with gratitude for this rare opportunity to be in community with so many young Japanese Americans. Countless vulnerable conversations were had about our family histories, mixed identities, cultures and traditions and so much more. I’m honored to have been welcomed by Group B to join in these experiences and have played a small, small part in their trip. Thank you to Cheyenne Cheng, Bridget Keaveny and David Inoue, and to our dedicated JICE coordinators Mayumi Iida and Keisuke Matsuzawa for making any of this possible.

どうもありがとうございます！
Group C shares some American dances as a thank you to their host families in Suō-Oshima.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SPENCER UEMURA

SPENCER UEMURA,
Group C Chaperone

In mid-January, I had a taste of what I call “Japanese American heaven.” Traveling along with about 70 young adult Nikkei from across the country, I had the unique privilege of supervising 24 of them as we developed and strengthened connections to Japanese culture and between ourselves as Japanese Americans. For one very full week, our itinerary was as jam-packed with learning opportunities as our suitcases would be filled with souvenirs at the end of the trip.

Our first days were in Tokyo, where we visited the Tokyo National Museum and had a few brief meetings with government officials. Our next few days were spent in Yamaguchi prefecture on the island of Suō-Oshima. Not surprisingly, it also has close ties to Hawaii through the large proportion of residents who immigrated there around the turn of the 20th century.

Our group visited the local Museum of Japanese Immigration to Hawaii, and kind volunteers pored through records to help many of us learn new information about our ancestors who immigrated to Hawaii. Of course, a major highlight for the participants was a short homestay experience on Suō-Oshima, which involved cooking (and eating!) local foods, sightseeing and talking about Japanese and Japanese American culture. After leaving Yamaguchi prefecture, we had a short visit to Hiroshima to visit the Hiroshima Peace Museum before spending our final days in Tokyo.

While the places we visited and the things we did were impactful on their own, for me the thoughtfulness, determination, community investment, curiosity, kindness and humor. Within a short period of time, we had gone from strangers to a small community of friends, a microcosm of the support and care that thrives in many Japanese American spaces.

One repeated theme that arose in conversations about JA community involvement were the barriers to leadership, the organizational hierarchies that have dampened their voices. There were stories of unacknowledged feedback even when it had been requested and a feeling of dismissal from some of the groups that aim to represent them. Sometimes in the Veneration of age and experience, we may miss the wisdom coming from all around. And that is a lesson for all.

A few weeks ago, I watched “What the Constitution Means to Me” at the Portland Center Stage. Through anecdotes, personal stories and historical context, the play explored how young people engage with and interpret the Constitution, as well as their role in shaping the future of the country. The main character offers an admonishment toward the end of the play, as paraphrased below. May it serve as a reminder to keep our ears open and listen to the younger voices. May we take heed especially as they draw necessary attention to things like climate change, gun violence prevention and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

“Young people are not waiting for us to pave the way for them. They are out there, shining a light on the issues that matter, and it’s up to us to follow their lead and support them in creating a better future for all.”
Suō-Ōshima, where our host families welcomed family histories at the Museum of Japanese made goldfish lanterns, taste-tested shoyu ice. We visited the white-walled streets of Yanai, and with the majority, they were welcomed with self-conscious and a lack of ownership of being Japanese.

Searching to build a stronger connection to Japan, I was excited for the opportunity to participate in the Kakehashi Program to build an internal bridge to my Japanese identity. During the trip, I felt more connected to Japan through eating familiar foods, hearing certain Japanese sayings, seeing Buddhist temples and feeling a sense of belonging in a country I had never even been to. I realized, despite language, there were still a lot of things that my parents and grandparents had passed down that made me Japanese. When the Special Adviser to the Prime Minister said, “I hope Japan can be a second home to you,” I felt welcomed and a sense of belonging. The other unique aspect of Kakehashi for me was traveling to my ancestral homeland for the first time with 70 other young Japanese Americans. I am grateful for all the people I met on this trip and every conversation we had, from debating our Japanese noodle rankings to talking about our Nikkei identity and shared experiences.

At the end of the trip, one of our supervisors said, “There is no right way to be Japanese American.” After hearing this, I had a sense of ease and peace after years of trying to prove I am American or prove I am Japanese. I realized, yes, there is no right way to be Japanese American and that I could just be and feel fortunate for being both.

After the trip, I continued to reflect on my experience and realized how healing it was for me. The purpose of the Kakehashi program is to build a bridge between Japan and the United States. What I did not expect was how many smaller bridges would be built during the trip. I found that building these smaller bridges among each other and internally was truly healing.

GENE NAONO
Group A Participant

I am extremely grateful that I was able to participate in the program, as it not only provided me a more nuanced perspective of my own identity, but it also allowed me to meet and connect with many young adults with impressive résumés and the same sentiment of wanting to develop their worldview as a Japanese American. If there are any young JAs who are interested in wanting to extend both their personal and professional network in Japan, I would wholly recommend the Kakehashi trip experience. The trip was a relatively short one where we spent four days in Tokyo and three days in Okinawa. However, during this short duration, I have come to realize many things about Okinawa and the Japanese American identity in relation to the U.S. and Japan.

First, I want to touch on the incredible richness of Okinawa’s history and the different influences that continue to be exerted within its culture. Through my homestay experience at Uechi-san household, I learned about the dominant Chinese and Ryukyu Kingdom influences that linger today in society, now under Japanese leadership and American military influence. The Okinawa leg of the trip left such a strong impression on me that I tried by best in putting the deep complexities I felt in a simple haiku (Japanese and English versions):

リユクウブフォ 陸地のしはるけ Finding out identity 気づけたよ Stronger than ever

There is no place like Okinawa. Hearing the stories and history of Okinawa oddly empowered me to further try and understand my own identity. Many native Okinawans are trying their best to find their foothold in identity and culture, and I stand in solidarity with them as I believe that their effort in trying to find the fragile balance of the mixture can be shared with Nikkeijin’s sentiments in their own journey of self-realization.

Next, I want to pivot and talk about how I came out as a different person from the person I was before the trip. Prior to the trip, I knew that I wanted to dig deeper into my Japanese roots and see if there are any more connections and opportunities that I could find for self-growth. What I did not know was that this Kakehashi project trip could pull so much out of me. From attending courtesy calls of high-ranking Japanese government officials to hearing a lecture from Glen Fukushima, a well-established Japanese American, I began to wonder why any organization would be interested in sponsoring this trip for an individual like myself. The name of the project had the answer in itself, Kakehashi — bridging the gap. Japanese Americans can be ethnically Japanese, but we are very much so American, in the sense that we have assimilated and adopted the American way of life and thinking.

I was aware that American and Japanese philosophies differed, but this trip has helped me understand how much of a gap there is between the two. As Japanese Americans become more sparse with time, the duty to step up to the plate and become the “kakehashi” between the two countries becomes imperative for the success of both nations. The two cultures (American and Japanese) each have their own strengths and weaknesses, and it is critical that Japanese Americans are able to extract the positive aspects and foster a future that incorporates the best of both worlds.

I plan on continuing my education at UC Berkeley studying civil engineering with an emphasis on transportation engineering/planning. Visiting Japan has given me newfound appreciation for the possibilities of sophisticat- ed transit systems here in the U.S. It is one of my ambitions to stay connected with Japanese American and Japanese organizations while I develop my career as a civil engineer.

SOPHIA SAITO AND KYLE MASUKAWA
Group C Participants

Participating in the Kakehashi Project was a transformative experience that exceeded all expectations. Going into this program, we were excited to travel to Japan and build deeper connections to our ancestral homeland; however, we never imagined how impactful this experience would be. Our group, Group C, traveled alongside Group B to Yamaguchi prefecture. While in Yamaguchi, our days were filled with exploration, creativity and connection. We visited the white-walled streets of Yanai, made goldfish lanterns, taste-tested shoyu ice cream at a local shoyu factory and traced our family histories at the Museum of Japanese Emigration to Hawaii.

After an activity-packed day, we arrived in Suō-Ōshima, where our host families welcomed us and immediately made us feel at home. Our homestays involved immersive experiences from mastering new recipes to teaching each other games, exploring the island and even delving into our creative sides, learning the intricate art of calligraphy and making Hina dolls from old kimonos. The homestay experience was unforgettable, providing us with insights into daily life and heightening our appreciation for Japanese culture.

It was apparent that in the few days we spent together, strong bonds were formed between participants and families. We were able to communicate through language barriers and share pieces of ourselves with one another, bridging the Suō-Ōshima and Nikkei communities together.

The final leg of our trip took place in Hiroshima, where we visited the Peace Memorial Park, the Atomic Bomb Dome and the Peace Memorial Museum. At the park, we left paper cranes as a symbol of peace before we explored the museum, which was filled with remnants of life before the bombing, images of the aftermath and art from survivors. The museum deepened our understanding of the extensive impact the bombing had on Hiroshima and showed us that despite the hardships, the community endured, embodying the essence of gaman. While the activities and sightseeing played a significant role in our learning and appreciation, the most impactful part of Kakehashi was the supportive community that emerged amongst the 2024 cohort. As Nikkei, our shared experiences bonded us, but even when personal experiences or feelings didn’t align with the majority, they were welcomed with curiosity, empathy and understanding.

Bus conversations, led by our amazing leader Spencer (Uemura), became a safe space for open dialogue and reflection, which can be hard to find in daily life. The varied stories shared within our group served as a powerful reminder that there is no “right” way to be Japanese American and that the beauty of the Nikkei community lies in its diversity. The community that emerged from these conversations became a huge source of support as we worked to embrace the intricacies of our own experiences. We leave this journey recognizing the multitude of ways that individuals connect with their heritage and navigate their identities.

While it is difficult to articulate the profound effect this program has had on each of us, the memories that we made, the sites that we saw, the stories that we heard and the community we built all undoubtedly shaped our perspectives and are valuable experiences that we will carry with us for the rest of our lives.

Part II of Kakehashi reflections will be featured in the Pacific Citizen's next issue.
With food and the formalities out of the way, it was time for some fun, via a game in which the audience was divided into teams and asked to identify the business or product based on a logo sans wording.

Ventura County JACL

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley was again the site of the Ventura County JACL chapter’s 44th installation luncheon, which took place on a blustery cool Jan. 28.

PSW Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa administered the JACL Installation Oath to the incoming Ventura County JACL board, comprised of incumbents Megan Gately and Lily Anne Welty Tamai (co-presidents); Jessica Wan and Janice McCormick (co-vp); Anne Chilcott (secretary) and Ken Nakano (treasurer), who are also the cemetery restoration coordinators; Betty Katsura (book club coordinator); and Akemi Ketchum, Samantha Wyllis-Quinionez, Janice Tanaka, Jessica Wan (co-vm), Mark Chilcott, Ken Nakano (treasurer), Joanne Nakano, Megan Gately (co-president), Lily Tamai (co-president) and PSW Gov. Ryan Yoshikawa. Out of frame: Janice McCormick (co-vm)

The luncheon’s guest speaker was Dean Kato, chairman of the California Strawberry Festival. A special guest was Michelle Sevilia, the communications director for Assemblymember Steven Bennett of District 28. Following the installation ceremony, she gave out recognitions from Bennett’s office to the officers and incoming board members.

Early in the luncheon, former JACL National President Ken Inouye, who has been a stalwart JACL member active with the SELANOCO JACL chapter for decades, went to the lectern and shared a short anecdote about the projected photo of President Reagan taken during the signing ceremony for HR 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

Pointing to the picture, he noted that standing next to the late Harry Kajihara, who was serving as JACL’s national president at the time, was Rep. Bill Lowery, a Republican who represented the San Diego area. Inouye recalled meeting with Lowery prior to the bill’s enactment by Reagan.

“When I said, ‘Would you pass the redress bill?’ he looked at me in the face, and he said, ‘I can’t. I don’t have enough of your kind in my district.’ You don’t have enough Americans? He didn’t vote for the bill.”

That Lowery appeared in the picture was a mistake — “They invited the wrong guy,” Inouye said. Instead, it should have been Rep. Mike Lowry, a Democrat representing Washington state who was one of Congress’ early proponents for Japanese American redress and who later served as the state’s governor.

“So, when you see this picture, you’ll see a lot of historical Japanese American people, people that we all know and love. But there’s always that one ironic moment when you have somebody that shows up that just didn’t belong. I just wanted to share that with you,” Inouye said, garnering laughs from the audience.

Tamai introduced Kato, who was born and raised in Oxnard, Calif., and has been active with the California Strawberry Festival since 1984. Over the decades, the festival’s trajectory has been upward, despite the challenges and setbacks — including unpredictable weather events and a global pandemic — that can occur in the course of mounting such a time- and labor-intensive undertaking.

One constant, of course, is strawberries, which Kato said are Ventura County’s No. 1 crop, having produced $725 million in sales in 2022, most of that attributable to an area called the Oxnard Plain, which boasts the climate and soil needed to grow the popular fruit.

“Seventy-five percent of the strawberries in America are from California,” Kato said. “Ninety-hour strawberries in America are from Ventura County, also had certificates of recognition presented on Jan. 28 by Michelle Sevilia, director of communications for Assemblymember Steven Bennett of District 30.

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PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

Thank You for Your JACL Membership!

We’re grateful to have some of the most engaged and committed members around! Because of your loyal support, we have more premium membership upgrades and generous additional gifts than ever. We’re also appreciative for those who renew year after year (some for 50 years or more!) and for our increase in new members. Your dedication is essential to our ongoing mission for social justice, education, and community!

Thank you! – JACL Membership Department

Not a member? Join us today! 
Visit jacl.org/member or contact us at mbo@jacl.org
**NATIONAL**

Irei — A National Monument for the WWII Japanese American Incarceration

Los Angeles, CA
April 14; 11:30 a.m.
San Jose Buddhist Church Betsuin
64 N. Fifth St.
Price: $10 Includes Lunch
This presentation will focus on building a place or culture in which people with dementia and their caregivers can feel empowered, supported and included in society and want to remain within the community that normalizes dementia.

Info: To register by the March 31 deadline, email kazuko@2024@gmail.com.

Northern California Cherry Blossom Festival 2024
San Francisco, CA
April 13-14 and April 20-21
San Francisco Japantown
Sutter Street
Price: Free
This festival is one of California’s most prominent celebrations of Asian traditions and the largest Cherry Blossom Festival on the West Coast. All are welcome to join in the festivities as the city celebrates Japanese and Japanese American culture. There will be food, entertainment, exhibits, and much more to enjoy!


Theater: ‘Larry the Musical: An American Journey’
San Francisco, CA
Thru April 14
Brava Main Stage
2781 24th St.
Price: Ticket Prices Vary
This musical pays homage to Larry Itliong’s remarkable legacy as a labor activist in California’s Central Valley. It breathe life into Itliong’s extraordinary journey, illuminating the pivotal role of the Filipino American community in shaping his leadership.


Japanese Heritage Night With the San Francisco Giants
San Francisco, CA
May 17; 7:15 p.m.
Oracle Park
24 Willie Mays Plaza
Price: Starting at $32 for JCCCN Members
Join the JCCCN at Japanese Heritage Night as the San Francisco Giants take on the Colorado Rockies. This year’s special event giveaway is an exclusive Giants Cherry Blossom Jersey, which will be available with your electronic ticket. The evening will also feature special pregame entertainment that will highlight local cultural performances.

Info: Visit www.jccnc.org/japanese-heritage-night-2024/.

**PSW**

The Seventh Annual VJAMM Commemoration
Venice, CA
April 18; 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Northwest corner of Venice and Lincoln Boulevards
Price: Free
The Venice Japanese American Memorial Monument Committee celebrates seven years of the memorial monument, which reminds visitors of the 1,000 persons of Japanese ancestry who were forcibly removed from Venice, Santa Monica and Malibu in April 1942. Following the commemoration, there will be the annual VJAMM fundraiser at Hama Sushi in Venice from 4 p.m.


‘Giant Robot Biennale 5’
Los Angeles, CA
March 2-Sept. 1
100 N. Central Ave.
Price: Museum Admission
This recurring art exhibition partnered with Eric Nakamura, founder of Giant Robot, highlights creative works celebrating the ethos of Giant Robot.


‘J. T. Sata: Immigrant Modernist’
Los Angeles, CA
Thru Apr 6; 1-3 p.m.

University of Oregon
White Stag Building
70 N.W. Couch St.
Price: Free; but Registration Is Encouraged
Join the Minnori Yasui Legacy Project and the Japanese American Museum of Oregon for the 2024 Minnori Yasui Day, which was designated in 2016 by Oregon’s legislature to honor the state’s only Presidential Medal of Freedom Awarded’s tireless fight for equality, justice, democracy and civil rights. The event will also discuss the challenges democracy faces today, as well as explore strategies for protecting our democratic values.


‘Craft, Community and Care: The Art and Legacy of Bob Shimabukuro’
Portland, OR
Thru April 14
Japanese American Museum of Oregon
411 N.W. Flanders St. (entrance on Fourth Avenue)
Price: Museum Admission
This exhibit explores the life of Okinawan American activist, artist and writer Bob Shimabukuro, who was instrumental in the Pacific Northwest’s Japanese American redress movement, as well as an acclaimed woodworker and furniture maker known for his design of the Portland restaurant Tanuki. He also served as editorial columnist for the Pacific Citizen and the International Examiner in Seattle.


**PNW**

Chinese Characters Across Asia: Continuity and Transformation in Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese Seattle, WA
April 3; 7:30-8:30 p.m.
In-Person and Zoom Livestream
University of Washington
Kane Hall 210
Price: Free; Reservation Required
Professor Zev Handel will explain how the building blocks of the Chinese script were adapted to represent the words and sounds of Japanese via their transformation into the scripts known as kanji and kana.

Info: Visit https://www.washington.edu for more information and to register.

‘Advancing Democracy in the Face of Second Sunsets’
Portland, OR
April 6; 1-3 p.m.

**MDC**

Japanese American Veterans Memorial Program
Minneapolis, MN
May 16; 10-11 a.m.
Fort Snelling National Cemetery
7601 34th Ave. S
Save the date for this important event that will honor more than 100 local Japanese American veterans. Volunteers are needed for various tasks in preparation for the event.

Info: For more information, email chitradulasa@jctjol.org.

**EDC**

National Cherry Blossom Festival Washington, D.C.
Thru April 14
Tidal Basin
Price: Various Event Ticket Prices; Fees available.
This celebrated springtime event features a Cherry Blossom Parade, art installations, fashion show, kite festival, cultural events and much more!

Info: Visit nationalcherryblossomfestival.org.

Vista Philharmonic Orchestra Featuring Midori
Groton, MA
April 6; 7:30 p.m.
Groton Hill Music Center
122 Old Ayer Road
Price: Ticket Prices Vary
Maestro Bruce Hangen welcomes violinist Midori in a concert that will feature works from the classical and romantic repertoire.

Info: Visit https://grotonhill.org/concerts/vista-philharmonic/.
MEMORIAM

Utah Judicial Giant Raymond Uno Has Died at 93

Incarcerated as a boy in Heart Mountain, he also served as JACL national president.

By P.C.Staff

Raymond Sonji Uno, an Ogden, Utah-born Nisei who spent part of his boyhood in an American concentration camp but whose accomplishments included becoming a civil rights advocate, serving as Utah’s first minority judge and in 1970, the youngest person ever elected to the office of national president of the Japanese American Citizens League, died March 8 at Salt Lake City’s Veteran’s Hospital. He was 93.

Larry Oda, who served as JACL national president from 2006-07 and currently serves again in the same capacity, said, “Ray was our longest-lived national president, having served in 1970-72, and was a fixture at many of our activities. He was instrumental in forming the Past Presidents Council to have the past presidents stay involved in the well-being of the organization. I’ll miss him.

“We have lost a truly great man,” said Japanese American National Museum President and CEO Ann Burroughs.

“His story is a testament to the resilience of the Nisei generation and the impact that they have had on American society as a whole,” she added. “Ray was a true leader in his community and a role model for all of us.

Seeking a life of service, Uno enlisted in the Army in 1948 and was assigned to the 319th Military Intelligence Language School and later was transferred to Japan, where he served with the American Expeditionary Forces to France in World War I, and before he died at 47 while incarcerated with his family at the Heart Mountain War Relocation Authority Center in Wyoming on Jan. 21, 1943, the elder Uno had become Utah’s first Japanese national to become a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1936. This was thanks to an act of Congress that allowed aliens ineligible for naturalization to gain citizen status as long as the person had enlisted in the U.S. Army before April 6, 1917, and served before the Nov. 11, 1918, Armistice, had been honorably discharged and was a U.S. resident.

In his memoir, Uno wrote that his family had moved to California’s San Gabriel Valley in 1939 when his father “got a job as the secretary of the Japanese Association of San Gabriel Valley.” The lives of the Uno family forever changed, along with those of tens of thousands of other ethnic Japanese living along the West Coast, after Imperial Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

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“Ray’s path to a judicial position began in 1963, when he was appointed to the position of referee of the Juvenile Court in Utah, followed by an appointment as Utah’s deputy county attorney — in both cases Uno being the first ethnic minority to hold those positions.

“I was appointed an assistant Utah attorney general by Utah Attorney General Phil Hansen and served from 1965-69,” he wrote. Stepping away from the AG’s office, he went into private practice from 1969-76, forming the firm Madsen, Uno and Cummings.

Ray Uno wins presidency

Page one story from the July 24, 1970, Pacific Citizen about Uno’s election as JACL national president PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

It was during that time Uno was elected JACL national president in Chicago in July 1970. Prior to that, he had participated in JACL as the Salt Lake City JACL chapter president, as well as the youth commissioner of the now-defunct Jr. JACL. His accomplishment — becoming elected JACL’s leader at age 39 and defeating Dr. Tom Taketa and Henry Kaneagae in JACL’s first three-way race for the office — was overshadowed by shock and tragedy when Dr. Tom Taketa, a Jr. JACL member, was slain in her room at the Palmer House hotel. Her roommate, Ranko Yamada, was also attacked but survived after being horn-blown.

In May 1976, even though a “judgeship was not even close to anything I was thinking about at the time,” Uno wrote that Salt Lake City Mayor Ted Wilson had tapped him for the Salt Lake County bench. In 1984, he won the race for Third District Court and retired as its senior judge in 1990. Nevertheless, he wrote that he was “able to keep abreast of what was happening judicially because after I retired, I became a Senior Judge and heard cases until 2003.”

Of his time serving as a judge, Uno wrote, “My 25 years on the bench were some of my most exciting, challenging, rewarding and stressful times of my life; particularly, during my term as a district court judge. It was the crown jewel of my life on this earth, and I would not exchange it for any price.”

In 1991, when the Utah Minority Bar Assn. was founded, Uno served as its first president. The government of Japan would in 2012 recognize him when the consul general of Japan in Denver awarded him a Foreign Minister’s Commendation for promoting mutual understanding between Japan and the U.S.

Of his parents, Uno wrote: “I owe a lot to my mother, Osako Teraoka Uno, who lived a long and fruitful life.” She died in 1995 at 101, having lived with her son for the last 36 years of her life. Uno noted that before his father died, he had been “very active in community in the camp. He was member of the Draft Board, active in the USO and other community things.”

Uno was also predeceased by his brother, Wallace Ichiro (Wally) Uno, and sister, Yuki Alma Tomomatsu. His survivors include his wife, Yoshiko, and his five sons, Tab (Bobby), Kai (Sheri), Mark (Kris), Sean and Lance and grandchildren Drue, Taylor, Summer, Sam, KT and Jax.

A celebration of life for Uno is slated for 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m. on April 20 at the University of Utah Eccles Alumni House.
TECH DIALOGUES: HOW TO CUT THE CABLE CORD?

By Ryan Kawamoto

Are you ready to ditch the cable and join the ever-growing cord-cutter team? Here, Senior Planet answers the essential questions you must consider before returning that cable box to your current TV provider company.

Why Cut the Cord?

The most common reason that pushes people to cut the traditional cable cord is how expensive cable bills have become. Cable TV prices now average more than $200 monthly, including all the fees for DVR, an extra cable box and taxes. Moreover, though they offer hundreds of channels, people typically only watch a handful of them.

In contrast, when it comes to streaming services, you only pay for the services you use. Plus, you can easily cancel or resume a service subscription anytime.

Other reasons to cut the cord include the convenience and availability of streaming services. Fewer ads, access to original content unavailable on cable and a vast library of on-demand content.

What Equipment Do I Need to Cut the Cord?

Most households already have everything necessary to cut the cord. To ditch the cable, you only need the following:

- A reliable internet service — a mere internet speed of 25Mbps is enough to stream 4K quality content.
- A smart TV or streaming device — if your TV can connect to the internet, it is a Smart TV and can stream. For TVs that cannot connect to the internet, you can use a streaming device. These devices connect to the internet and are plugged into your TV via an HDMI port, allowing you to stream.

An optional piece of equipment worth listing here is an indoor HD antenna, which allows you to watch local channels for free in high definition.

Which Streaming Services Should I Get?

Before answering the question of which streaming service you should get, you should examine your viewing habits and preferences. Write down a list of all the channels, TV programs or shows you cannot live without. And be sure to include all the members of your household in the activity for a smooth transition!

If you’re a fan of shows, movies and channels in other languages, certain streaming platforms offer international packages that you can add on to your base subscription.

Most streaming services also have the option to turn on subtitles, or even dialogue audio tracks, in your preferred language.

Once you have a clear idea of your must-have programs and channels, you can compare and decide which streaming services work best for your household.

Types of Streaming Services

Streaming services can be grouped into four categories depending on the type of content they provide:

- **Free** — You can cut the cord and not pay for any streaming service. Free streaming services are ad-supported and often offer a mix of unpopular live channels, on-demand classic TV shows and movies and a few original contents.
- **On-demand** — In this category, each streaming service costs $5.99-$22.99 per month and offers a vast library of ad-free and high-quality content, including numerous blockbusters, mainstream movies, TV shows, documentaries and original content exclusive to the service.
- **Live** — Services in this category are more expensive but still less than regular cable. They can range from $20-$76.99, depending on the service and the number of live channels.
- **Sports** — If you only care about live sports, certain streaming services provide a wide range of live sports events to fill the needs of any sports buff.

Is Cutting the Cord Worth It?

For most people, yes! However, only you can answer this question, given everybody’s unique situation. Many on-demand streaming options offer free trials, so you can test it out if it’s right for you (just be sure you know when the trial ends).

A common mistake most people make once they cut the cord is signing up for multiple streaming services for specific shows and then forgetting to cancel the service once the TV show they are interested in is over or on a break.

For more information, we invite you to access our free weekly virtual programming online at www.seniorplanet.org or call our toll-free national hotline at (888) 713-3495, open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. ET.

Ryan Kawamoto is a regional program manager for Older Adults Technology Services from AARP, a national nonprofit behind the award-winning Senior Planet program that brings together older adults to find ways to learn, work, create, exercise and thrive in today’s digital age. A longer version of this article was originally published on www.seniorplanet.org by Senior Planet’s resident “Techspert” Jonathan Ushindi Zaluke.