



PACIFIC CITIZEN

CELEBRATING
95
Years

VETERANS ISSUE



Pictured are a sampling of the more than 100 Japanese American and JA-adjacent veterans individuals who served during the Vietnam War and recorded oral histories for the Japanese American Vietnam Era Archives.

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RECOLLECTIONS
FOR THE FUTURE**

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442 Saga as a
Podcast.

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GFBNEC Holds
Annual Aloha
Gala Dinner.

ROAD TRIP LOOMS FOR NISEI SOLDIERS.

'I Am an American' will share uniquely American saga nationwide beginning in 2026

By George Toshio Johnston, Senior Editor

A new traveling exhibition focusing on the contributions of the nearly 33,000 Army personnel of Japanese heritage during World War II was formally announced in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 18.

The exhibition is scheduled to commence an 11-city, five-yearlong national tour with San Francisco's Presidio MIS Historic Learning Center as its first stop in February 2026.

Titled "I Am an American: The Nisei Soldier Experience," its main focus will be on the Nisei who served in the 100th Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Military Intelligence Service in WWII. It is being produced by the National Museum of the United States Army, the Army Historical Foundation and the National Veterans Network.

According to NVN Executive Director Christine Sato-Yamazaki, "I Am an American's" title was inspired by the sign with those words, famously seen in Dorothea Lange's photo of Tatsuro Matsuda's Wan-



This National Archives photo was taken by Dorothea Lange in 1942 and shows the sign put outside the shop owned by Tatsuro Matsuda in Oakland, Calif. PHOTO: NATIONAL ARCHIVES

to Shokai storefront in Oakland, Calif. And, though the exhibition is "about the 100th, the 442 and the MIS" and "their patriotism and their loyalty," she added, "This exhibit is going to present the national story of what happened to Japanese Americans during WWII."

Sato-Yamazaki says that the exhibition is divided into five thematic areas. After seeing the initial "I Am an American" statement, visitors will begin with the Hawaii section, where they will learn about what life was like for Nisei from Hawaii. The next section will be about the 10 War Relocation Authority Centers and the soldiers who came from the camps. In the next section, called "Two-Front War," visitors will learn about the 100th, the 442nd and the MIS.

That will be followed by the section titled "The Price of War," which will focus on the courage and sacrifice of the Nisei soldiers that includes the 21 Medal of Honor recipients, as well as other soldiers, such as medics and a Nisei member of Women's Army Corps. The fifth and final section will be about the legacy created by the Nisei veterans and will include how their service helped lead to the desegregation of the American military and the success of redress.

The three other known cities that "I Am an American" will travel to are Honolulu, Portland, Ore., and Los Angeles. The duration of the display at each venue will be six months. The locations for the remaining cities will be announced at a later date.

In addition to Sato-Yamazaki, also attending at the announcement, held in Room 454 of the Cannon House Office Building, were National Museum of the United States Army Director Tammy Call, retired Army Gen. Eric Shinseki, Reps. Jill Tokuda (D-Hawaii) and Mark Takano (D-Calif.), White House Senior Adviser for Public Engagement Kota Mizutani and former California Assemblymember and JACL National

President and Executive Director Floyd Mori. Also present from the JACL D.C. chapter were John Tobe and Edson Mori.

As for the NVN's main role in the project, Sato-Yamazaki said it will serve as the principal fundraiser for this project. "This is a \$1.2 million project, and we've raised \$700,000 so far," she said, noting that right now the NVN is seeking sponsorships from individuals.

Overall, the mission of the "I Am an American" exhibition is educational, said Sato-Yamazaki. "That's the reason why this traveling exhibit is so important, because we're going to be educating all these Americans who never learned it in school," she told the Pacific Citizen. "It's not in the textbook, and they're going to learn the story for the first time. And that's really the power of what this traveling exhibit will do when it travels across the country."

— Ariel Imamoto assisted with this article.

(Editor's Note: To learn more about the "I Am an American: The Nisei Soldier's Experience" traveling exhibition, visit nvnvets.org/nisei-soldier-traveling-exhibit/.)



Pictured (from left) are Kota Mizutani, Rep. Jill Tokuda, Rep. Mark Takano, Floyd Mori, Eric Shinseki, Christine Sato Yamazaki and Tammy Call.

PHOTO: ARIEL IMAMOTO

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— Gil Asakawa



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BBC TO TELL 442 SAGA AS A PODCAST

The pubcaster enlists writer Iris Yamashita to tell a timeless story of sacrifice, honor and engagement.

By George Toshio Johnston,
Senior Editor

Next month, the British Broadcasting System will be releasing a new, six-part audio drama for its millions of listeners worldwide. Its subject matter: the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

According to the series' producer, Catherine Bailey, the first episode of "Purple Heart Warriors" will drop on Dec. 9 via the BBC World Service on its traditional radio airwaves and as a podcast on BBC Sounds. The title is, of course, a nod to the 100th Battalion, the predecessor to the 442nd, which got nicknamed the Purple Heart battalion for the staggering number of Purple Hearts its members were awarded.

Bailey, a London-based independent producer, was tapped to tell the story of the World War II-era segregated U.S. Army unit, comprised mostly of second-generation Japanese Americans from Hawaii and the U.S. mainland, by commissioning editor Simon Pitts. Although she was immediately taken by the story, she had no prior knowledge of the 442nd — and was confident that most of her countrymen were also unaware of the it. "I can pretty much say that I don't know anybody that would know this story this side of the pond," she told the *Pacific Citizen*.

For Bailey, it was a positive to be able to tell a novel story in a novel way to the Beeb's multitudes of listeners. "I thought, 'Well, first of all, it's an extraordinary story,'" she said. Her next thought: "How on earth do we do it?" This, despite having by her own count having produced

more than 500 hours of programming for the BBC.

"I didn't know any Japanese actors, I didn't know any Japanese writers and I felt daunted by it, to be honest," she said.

Fortunately, Bailey found an ally: Academy Award-nominated writer Iris Yamashita, who penned the screenplay for the 2006 motion picture "Letters From Iwo Jima."

"Best thing I ever did," said Bailey. "I absolutely loved working with her."

"I was living in Los Angeles when she approached me," said Yamashita via Zoom, a reference to how she has since moved to Porto, Portugal. In addition to scriptwriting, she has also written for the stage and embarked on a career as a mystery writer. Her titles include her newest, "Village in the Dark," and "City Under One Roof," which was nominated for a Barry Award (for crime novels) and an Anthony Award (for mystery writers).

But "old-style" radio dramas? That was new to Yamashita. With the guidance of a veteran producer in the genre in Bailey, however, she was up for the challenge of exercising a different muscle. "I thought, 'Well, yeah, I could have a crack at this, I can give it a go.'"

That was in 2023. Over a six-month period, Bailey and Yamashita worked on the scripts, with Yamashita doing her research, using books like Orville Shirey's "Americans: The Story of the 442nd Combat Team" and resources like Densho's oral histories from those who served

Akie Kotabe records his role as Ken Morioka in London for "Purple Heart Warriors."

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CATHERINE BAILEY



in the 442, plus people who told her their personal stories. All this while Yamashita was in the process of moving to Europe.

Bailey, meantime, had a cast to assemble. Asked how important it was to actually use actors of Japanese ancestry for the Japanese and Japanese American roles, Bailey had a one-word answer: "essential." Elaborating, she said, "Well, you wouldn't dream of casting anybody that wasn't. . . . You wouldn't be able to get away with it for a start, but you just wouldn't."

Enlisting the help of actress Tamlyn Tomita, Bailey was able to gather a cast of ethnic-appropriate talent from the U.S, with Bailey working on finding Japanese British acting talent. (Yes, there is such a thing.) Cast members included Aaron Ikeda (Nui Louie, Mr. Okimura), Kurt Kanazawa (Sonny), Conrad Lihilihi (Boxer, Crooner), Derek Mio (Barry, Capt. Kim), Tomita (Mrs. Tanaka, Baachan), Clyde Kusatsu (Grandpa Allen) — and in the lead role of Ken Morioka, Akie Kotabe, a Shin-Nisei born in Michigan, raised in Missouri and Texas and now a holder of a British passport.

Kotabe, who pronounces his first name "Ah-Key," emphasis on the second syllable, had originally been tapped to play a character named Shorty. Then he got promoted to

"Purple Heart Warriors" writer Iris Yamashita in London during the radio drama's recording session



Zoom session screenshot of Iris Yamashita in Porto, Portugal, holding up a copy of her latest mystery novel, "Village in the Dark."

PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



the lead character of Ken. As for the story the series tells, he said, "It has a good kind of call-to-action message that resonated with me." And, thanks to his years of living and working as an actor in Los Angeles, he had had some prior knowledge of the 442.

"I was really surprised how many of the cast had some connection to the 442, with their grandparents or an uncle or somebody in their family who actually served in the 442," Yamashita said. A case in point was Hawaii-born veteran character actor Kusatsu. "My uncle was in the 100th Battalion, and my father, of course, was in the 442nd," he said. After the war, his uncle, Tommy Kakesako, and his brother started Kakesako Brothers Jewelry on Alakea Street in Honolulu. "They were there for a very, very long time."

The recording process was a bit of a challenge, with sessions taking place over the summer at Salami Studios in North Hollywood, Calif., and in London. Yamashita, who was en route to Portugal, was able to attend the London sessions in person. "Simultaneously recording in two different countries/time zones was a unique experience," she noted in an email. And, according to Bailey, they found in actor Will Sharpe ("The White Lotus") someone to serve as the narrator for the series.

Back to the writing, Bailey said one of the challenges they faced was how to tell this story. For Yamashita, she had to figure out which approach to take. "I had thought of two different ways of telling it. I thought your normal war story where you have the old man looking into his past," she said. But she also had an "out-of-the-box" approach that she pitched, one that involved what she called "some time-jumping." That was the route they chose to take.

"Purple Heart Warriors" begins

in present-day Little Tokyo. Ken is a young, complacent guy, uninterested in politics or history and who personally knows nothing about WWII. That complacency is shaken when Ken essentially becomes his grandfather — and finds himself detained in a concentration camp for Japanese Americans, circa 1943.

It's only then that Ken learns about what his grandfather and that generation endured and sacrificed for him and his generation. For Bailey and Yamashita, that was the deeper message they wanted to convey that is relevant for today. "Why were these people fighting?" Bailey asked. "They were fighting for their own identity, but they were also fighting for democracy, and they were fighting for a free country."

"We can't forget the past," said Yamashita. "Otherwise, we'll keep making the same mistakes of the past."

For Bailey, one of the messages she hopes "Purple Heart Warriors" conveys is getting the younger generations to engage. "The message is to wake up and stop being complacent about the world and take an active interest, just like these young men did in the war when they fought for freedom and democracy.

For Kusatsu, despite his decades of acting experiences, performing in a radio play/podcast was a first, despite having a résumé that includes voice acting for animation. That his first foray into this genre tells the story of the 442 makes it extra special.

"I think it's a very positive thing. It's a constant update on a story that should not be ever forgotten," he said. "Everything is much more relevant these days, and each part of the story needs to be retold and retold and retold. And if it's going to be through the BBC as radio play, then that's great."



Clyde Kusatsu records his role as Grandpa Allen for "Purple Heart Warriors."



(From left) Actors Aaron Ikeda, Tamlyn Tomita and Clyde Kusatsu

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF AARON IKEDA



Masaru Taira, in uniform, at Camp Shelby, Miss.



Masaru Taira's high school ID card from his junior year



Pvt. Masaru Taira



Wilfred Taira visits the Follonica, Italy, gravesite of his younger brother, Masaru Taira, who was killed in action on July 4, 1944.



This studio photo of brothers Masaru and Wilfred Taira, flanked by their parents, with youngest sister, Blanche, was hurriedly arranged before the brothers shipped out to Camp Shelby. "This photo was in the family but sudan for as long as I can remember," Linda Taira said. "I think seeing the family photo — with all its pain and poignancy — every time I went to my grandparents' house piqued my curiosity. I never found out much about it, until years later after many family members were gone. I felt driven to find out what happened to Masaru and piece together his story, eventually leading me 80 years after his death to visit where he was killed in Italy."

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LINDA TAIRA

FINDING PVT. TAIRA

In Linda Taira's quest to learn more about her uncle, help comes from an unexpected source.

By George Toshio Johnston,
Senior Editor

Here is what we know about Masaru Taira. A Nisei, he was born in the territory of Hawaii to Kame and Kamado Taira, who emigrated there from Okinawa Prefecture in 1907. Masaru had 12 siblings, 11 of whom reached adulthood. (His parents went on to found the Pacific Bakery in Honolulu — completely unrelated to that other Taira family, also from Hawaii, that operates King's Hawaiian Bakery and Restaurant in Torrance, Calif., which is part of the ubersuccessful Irresistible Foods Group.)

After Japan's Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and after the United States joined what would become known as World War II, following his older brother, Wilfred, Masaru Taira enlisted in the Army, joining several of his high school classmates. Like thousands of his fellow Nisei from Hawaii and the U.S. mainland, Taira was placed in the segregated 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and went through basic training at Camp Shelby, Miss.

Later, after getting assigned to L Co., his cohort and he were shipped to Europe to fight for the Allies with their fellow Americans. In Livorno, in the Tuscany region of Italy, Taira and his comrades in arms got their

orders: relieve the 100th Battalion and take Hill 140. Take it they did, over the course of a grueling five-day battle, from July 3-7. It would prove to be one of the bloodiest battles of the Italian Campaign. But that was something the 19-year-old would never know.

Pvt. Masaru Taira was killed in action on July 4, 1944. He was 19.



If one is old enough, the name Linda Taira may sound familiar. An award-winning, Hawaii-born TV journalist, she was first seen professionally years ago at the local level on Seattle's KING TV, then on CNN and CBS, doing standups in front of iconic locations like the U.S. Capitol. After leaving journalism, she worked in public relations, including stints at PBS and the Boeing Co. Now, she operates her own company, Taira-Welch Communications.

As for her Japanese American community bona fides, Taira serves on the board of directors of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center in Little Tokyo and, in 2015, she was among those selected to be a part of the Japanese American Leadership Delegation.

There are also her parents: her late father (and Masaru's younger brother) Walter Taira, who himself served in the military during the Korean War, where he was awarded a Purple Heart after being severely wounded and

who later also served in Vietnam; and her mother, Hisako, now 95, originally from Tokyo. (Walter Taira was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 2010 and would also in 2022 be posthumously awarded the Ambassador for Peace medal from the South Korean government.)

But decades before her professional career began, going back to her childhood, she had heard family stories about an uncle who died during WWII. That uncle was, of course, Masaru Taira. "All I knew was, I heard he was killed in action in Italy in WWII," said Taira. "And then I was so shocked later on, as I grew older — I found out he died on July 4, 1944."

Masaru Taira's death was a devastating blow to her grandparents and his siblings. For older brother Wilfred Taira, a Silver Star winner, Masaru's death was a topic of which he would say almost nothing. "There are stories, but I can never confirm it, that his brother, a medic, was there and saw his brother die," Linda Taira said.

As the years passed, those stories about her uncle stayed with her. It would take years, decades, for the pieces to fall into place such that she could pay her respects to an uncle she could never know in person.

On May 18, following the biannual Spit and Polish of Little Tokyo's Japanese American National War Memorial Court, organized by the Veterans Memorial Court Alliance, Taira, at the invitation of VMCA board member Les Higa, gave a presentation to young people not too far removed from the age Masaru Taira was when he was killed. Three weeks earlier, she told them, she had been in Italy, where she visited the site where he fell.

It was the culmination, Taira told the assembled young adults, of her more than 40-year-old idea to someday, somehow, honor his memory. It was, she told the *Pacific Citizen*, destiny — but when it happens, destiny works to a timeline that no mortal may hope to know or understand.



Like many, Linda Taira had begun to grow alarmed at the backlash against the Black Lives Matter

movement and, more specifically, the May 2020 killing of George Floyd, plus the spike in anti-Asian violence that accompanied the Covid-19 pandemic. "I remember that sense of the country at that time and the racism coming back," she told *Pacific Citizen*. "It was the first time I really started thinking, I think I have a story that I want to tell." That story, of course, was about her uncle and his selfless service to the nation that had incarcerated fellow Japanese Americans living on the mainland's West Coast.

There were, however, obstacles to Taira's quest that had to be overcome.

"As I looked more at what I had, I realized I needed to fill in a lot of gaps in my own knowledge," Taira said. Unfortunately, most of the people who could have told her more details about Masaru Taira had all passed away.

Nevertheless, Linda Taira began doing more detailed research, and among the tools she had were a trove of letters Masaru Taira had written to his sundry siblings.

"Masaru was a prolific letter writer," Taira said. "I have all



A closeup of the plaques placed by Toscana 44



Linda Taira with the plaques, placed on a small boulder by members of the Italian Facebook group Toscana 44, honoring the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, the 36th Division, the 100th Battalion and her uncle, Pvt. Masaru Taira



Linda Taira addresses those gathered in a room at the JACCC to hear her tell the story of her search to find Hill 140 in Italy's Tuscany region, where her uncle, Pvt. Masaru Taira, was killed during WWII.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



(From left) Kaelyn Yoshizawa, Kelsey Ikemoto and Allyson Nagatsuka at the May 18 Spit and Polish at Little Tokyo's Japanese American National War Memorial Court before hearing Linda Taira's presentation inside the JACCC about her journey to find the site where her uncle, Masaru Taira, was killed during WWII on July 4, 1944, at 19 years old.



A member of Toscana 44, wearing a period U.S. Army uniform, raises a 48-star U.S. flag.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF LINDA TAIRA

the letters he wrote from the time he left Hawaii for Camp Shelby, at Camp Shelby, and a few letters he wrote from Italy." He wrote to his many brothers and sisters. With each one, she said Masaru "opened up a different dimension of his personality."

"And so, I was able to get a lot of color of what was going on in his mind, and some were a little bit more about what was going on in basic training, and some of it was more about what he was thinking."

In the July 4, 2021, edition of *USA Today*, she was able express her thoughts about the meaning of her uncle's abbreviated life in an opinion piece.

Meantime, there was another development in her research that would lead her to the spot where her uncle lost his life: Facebook.

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For all the criticism social media has received in recent years, be it the spread of misinformation, lies and hate, damage to young people's self-esteem, creating unrealistic and unhealthy aspirations and expectations of success and wealth — there are also legitimate, aboveboard examples where social media has played a role in disseminating useful information, giving voice to the disenfranchised, shining light on issues that might otherwise go unnoticed or connecting far-flung people with specific interests.

For Taira, it was the latter examples than proved to be an unexpected but critical boon for her journey. In her internet research about her uncle, Facebook proved to be a game-changer.

Taira said, "I think Facebook knows your algorithm, so they knew I was interested. I kept coming up with this group, and their name is Toscana 44. In Italian, Toscana

means Tuscany, 44 means 1944, so I started following their page.

"They're a group of young guys. They're in their 20s and 30s, and they are interested in the Italian Campaign, which is World War II, as it was fought in Italy, from South to North."

Yes, thanks to Facebook and members of Toscana 44 — all of whom are fascinated by the story of the 442 — Linda Taira had found the key to helping her unlock how she would visit the site where Masaru Taira was killed in 1944.

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Although the saying "timing is everything" is usually applied to standup comedians, it was equally apropos to Linda Taira's quest. In this case, it was the intersection of her concerns about living in this fraught time in American society, her personal interest to learn more about her uncle and living in a time when a vehicle like Facebook allowed her to connect with others in a different continent who also had a similar interest, namely what happened during WWII in the Tuscany region of Italy.

"I think the stars aligned perfectly for me to understand with all the years of family history, but also with where we are and were at the time, I started looking into this as a nation and really getting a sense of appreciation," Taira told the *Pacific Citizen*. "And in some ways, I had to wait for these young men in Italy to reach an age when they were able to help set the stage at Hill 140 so that others like me could actually visit and walk."

One of the obstacles Taira would have faced that the men of Toscana 44 had already overcome: Hill 140 is privately owned. Fortunately, the

owner allows Toscana 44 members to access the property and the hill. "Without them, I could not have even known where to go," she said. She was also the first family member of someone who was killed there to visit the site — and they were always curious about the men who were killed in combat.

Upon reaching the vicinity of where it was believed Masaru Taira fell, the members of Toscana 44 had a surprise for their American visitor: a pair of metal plaques embedded into a small boulder. One dedicated to the memory "of those who fought to free this place," with the liberty torch emblem of the 442nd RCT, the Red Bull insignia of the 34th Infantry Division and the original coat of arms of the 100th Battalion, and one more honoring Masaru Taira.

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Having now achieved her goal of making a pilgrimage to the location where Pvt. Masaru Taira was killed, Linda Taira can reflect on that journey. For her, to stand at the top of Hill 140 and observe a moment of silence for him was the pinnacle of what she had sought. "I didn't even know that someday that would even be possible," she said. Although improbable and decades in the making, Linda Taira's journey to find and visit where Pvt. Masaru Taira fell turned out to be possible after all.

WATSONVILLE-SANTA CRUZ RECOGNIZES TOM GRAVES

By Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL

Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL member Tom Graves was recently awarded an honorary doctor of arts degree by his alma mater, Muhlenberg College, recognizing his longtime efforts to honor Nisei veterans and preserve their history. Tom and his wife, Becky Saeger, attended the commencement ceremony in Allentown, Pa.

After Dr. Tammie Takahashi, associate professor of religious studies and Asian Studies presented Graves with his doctoral hood, Muhlenberg College President Dr. Kathleen Harring spoke about Graves' accomplishments.

"Since your graduation in 1976 with a degree in social science, you have forged an extraordinary career path as a commercial photographer and educator, leaving an indelible mark on the artistic and historical landscapes of our nation," she said. "Your journey as a photographer has taken you across continents and into the hearts of unique communities. You've captured the essence of individuals and the pulse of industries, reflecting a profound understanding of human connection through imagery.

"Your pivotal work documenting the experience of World War II veterans is a testament to your deep commitment to preserving history," Harring continued. "For more than two decades, you meticulously photographed and interviewed hundreds of veterans, focusing specifically on America's Nisei veterans. Your award-winning book, "Twice Heroes: America's Nisei Veterans of WWII and Korea," not only honors their bravery but also sheds light on the challenges they faced, highlighting their perseverance and resilience.

"Through your activism and organizations like the Friends and Family of Nisei Veterans, you've ensured that vital American stories endure for future generations. As a speaker and advocate, you championed the Nisei experience on the international stage. Your work has been instrumental in confronting contemporary issues, using history as a lens to address present-day challenges of racism and national unity," she concluded.

In addition, Harring said Graves and Julieanna Richardson, a second doctoral awardee, "Exemplify key elements of our mission, among them their commitment to critical thinking, excellence of expression and understanding the diversity of the human experience."

Said Graves of his recognition, "The only thing better than the once-in-a-lifetime honor was meeting and telling the stories of many amazing Nisei veterans and their families." ■



Watsonville-Santa Cruz JACL member Tom Graves was honored recently by his alma mater, Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania.

JA VIETNAM VETS GET THEIR CLOSE-UP

Oral history project records reflections, recollections of (mostly) Sansei servicemen.

By George Toshio Johnston,
Senior Editor

Raw, revealing and reflective. Candid, crude and cathartic. Add to that insightful, rueful and nostalgic.

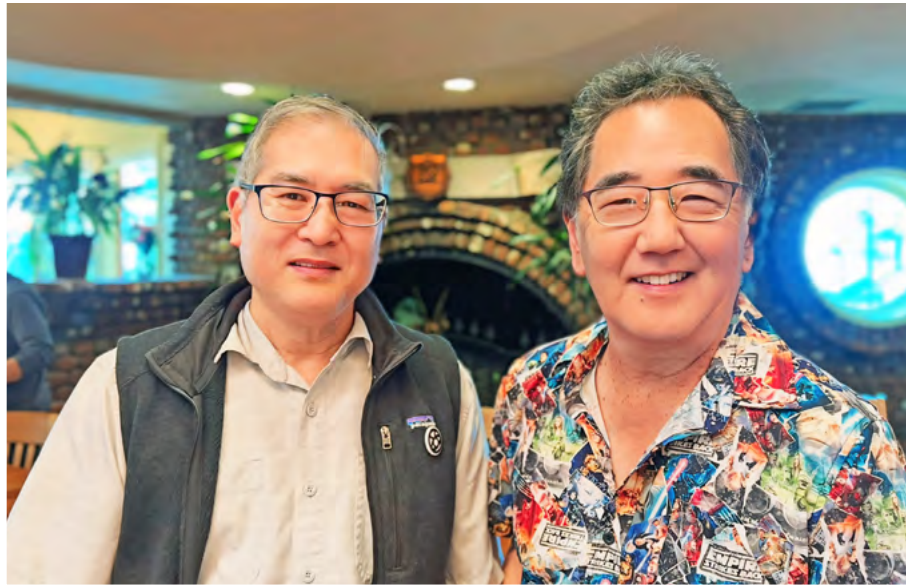
Those are some adjectives that come to mind when viewing and listening to the dozens of recorded-on-video oral histories of Japanese American men who served in the military during the Vietnam War. Those videos are produced by Japanese American Vietnam Era Archives/Asian American Community Media Project and reside within the Library of Congress American Folklife Center's Veterans History Project Collection.

Although a part of the aforementioned and much larger Veterans History Project, the focus of this particular aspect — mostly Sansei or Sansei adjacent — from JAVEA was inspired by similar oral history projects from other Japanese American community nonprofits like Densho and Go for Broke National Education Center.

Important as GFBNEC's Hanashi oral history project is, for example, its focus was on Nisei vets who served during World War II, either as members of the Military Intelligence Service or the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team. The two principals behind JAVEA — Don Bannai and George Wada, both also Sansei — began the undertaking knowing that members of their generation who had served during or survived the Vietnam War also had stories, recollections and ruminations that needed to be recorded for posterity. After all, many in that cohort are now in their 70s and 80s.

"These guys were the ones that established the Sansei culture," said Wada. "When I came along in the '70s, there was Asian American studies, dances and all this other stuff. They were the ones that created all that." Compared with compiling a record of the Nisei generation, however, getting the story of this slice of the Sansei was lacking, he said. "These guys were pretty much ignored."

Fortunately, there were a couple of extant entities that helped JAVEA get off the ground. One was Visual Communications' Digital Histories initiative, which began in 2003 as a means to support "underserved, ethnic-minority seniors in the Los Angeles-based Asian Pacific American community" by helping to train participants in the fundamentals of documentary filmmaking using modern technology. One of the benefits of VC's Digital Histories, according to Bannai, is that it gives people like George and himself the opportunity to learn about the tools



Japanese American Vietnam Era Archives co-founders George Wada and Don Bannai. In November 2022, they began the oral history project that comprised recording Japanese Americans and others in that age range who served in the military during the Vietnam War. More than 100 interviews have been conducted. PHOTO: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON

and craft of making the videos.

The other piece was the Buddhahead Breakfast Club (*see Nov. 3, 2023, Pacific Citizen*), which began two decades ago as a way for Japanese Americans who served during the Vietnam War to get together and in the present day, provided a pool of (mostly) willing subjects.

With those pieces in place, plus the timing, the trickle down of technology and the necessary teamwork between Bannai and Wada needed to produce the videos, JAVEA made its first recording in November 2022. They also had support from some members of the BBC.

"We're incredibly fortunate that we've got some cheerleaders, and I'm going to single out some by name: David Miyoshi, Ken Hayashi, Chris Segawa, who are Vietnam era vets," said Bannai. With their prompting and help, JAVEA became "official," getting nonprofit status under the umbrella of the nonprofit Asian American Community Media Project.

According to Wada, the Library of Congress provides the framework, i.e., questions, but modified "to adjust to the Japanese American community." For example, one question that gets asked is whether a vet spent time as a youngster "in camp," referring to the federally run concentration camps during WWII. It turns out that many did, with some having been born in a camp.

Thus far, more than 100 sessions have been recorded, with 52 having been posted to the Library of Congress website

and 46 sent and awaiting publication.

The duo also recognized the assistance of the City of Lomita, the City of Monterey Park and the Monterey Park Historic Society Museum for providing space for the recording sessions. As for the division of labor, all of the interviews have been conducted by Wada, with Bannai noting that "interviewing is more art than science." "I'm more the technical side," Wada said. Don, meantime, is more on the "business" side. "He's very good with people. I'm an engineer."

Some veterans, however, have nevertheless resisted Bannai's requests to be recorded. "Some of them don't want to revisit that time period because they've compartmentalized it," Bannai said. "They've moved on."

As noted, the timing for the JAVEA project was right. Each vet, it seems, needed to be at the right stage of life to be able to look back and reassess their lives as active duty military, including combat, from decades ago. "One of the things that is real interesting to us is how many people never talked about their experience," Bannai said.

Adding to that, Wada said, "I would say it's one-hundred percent cathartic for every one of them because there are common responses. 'I've never talked about this before.' 'I've never explained this to my family.' That, to me, is the most amazing part."

Another common theme was whether to serve. "Every person, every male in that generation had to somehow deal with the draft, make a choice," said Wada. "Do they go to school to get a deferment? Make decisions to move to Canada — or do I join the Air Force or Navy instead of going Army? Our goal is to have a complete picture of everyone in that generation."

Bannai noted also the unspoken familial pressure some vets felt, having had fathers or uncles who served in the 442nd. For some, there was no question: They had to go to Vietnam.

Now, there is also a sense of urgency that Wada and Bannai share, knowing that "these guys are starting to pass away."

As for their ongoing commitment to JAVEA/AACOMP, Bannai said, "We didn't think we were going to be doing it this long." Wada added, "We're not spring chickens, either, right?"

At this point, they are keeping their involvement open ended. For now, though, they are continuing with producing more oral histories as word about this project disseminates across the JA Vietnam veterans community. ■

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Editor's Note: Below is a sampling of links to JAVEA/AACOMP interviews that have been loaded onto the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project website.



Dennis Ishiki
tinyurl.com/mvfe5j2u



Kazuo Hosozawa
tinyurl.com/23b47wa9

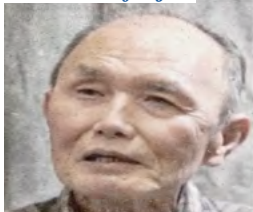


Gilbert Ishizu
tinyurl.com/3x7zfenr

Michael M. Nozawa
tinyurl.com/knbc92ue



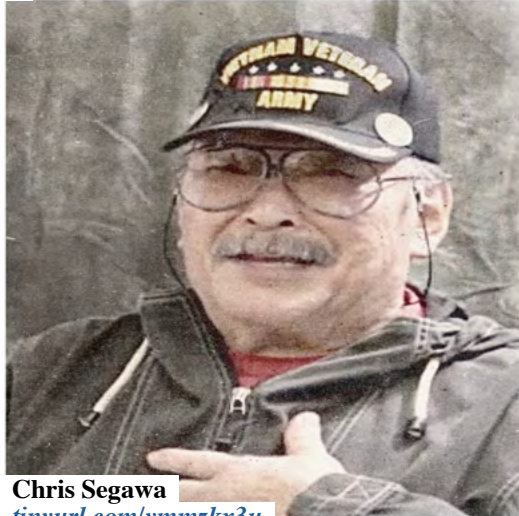
Eugene Yano
tinyurl.com/ynrvzdjs



Dave D. Iwata
tinyurl.com/29sa5aja



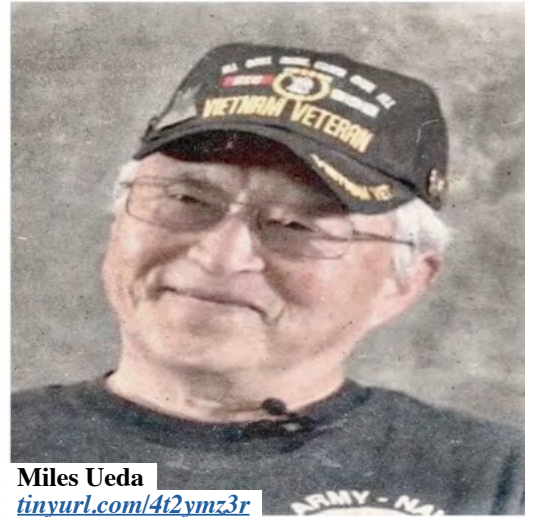
Jimmy Iwaki
tinyurl.com/yk7m654m



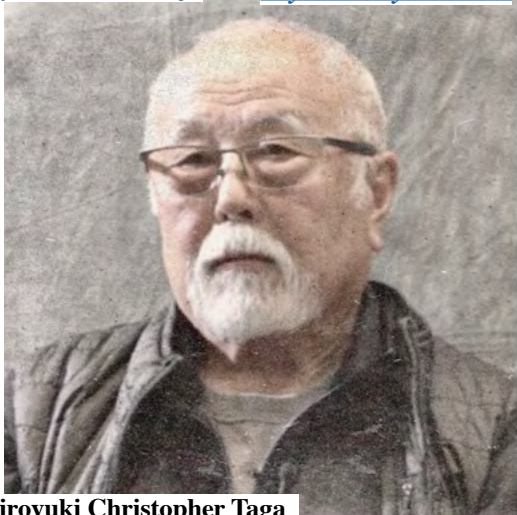
Chris Segawa
tinyurl.com/vmmzcx3u



Seitaro Miyano
tinyurl.com/yhkce4ev



Miles Ueda
tinyurl.com/4t2ymz3r



Hiroyuki Christopher Taga
tinyurl.com/3kj35xzu



Kenneth Kengo Kaino
tinyurl.com/nh7wrea7



William Hideo Kamio
tinyurl.com/ye2pr5n5



Yukikazu Ozaki
tinyurl.com/uc83sfsc



Donald Yoshitada
tinyurl.com/43u48w7p



Don Suehiro
tinyurl.com/y2e8yvtv

Not Pictured:

Kiyo Fukumoto
tinyurl.com/c8tez8jw

Leroy Kawai
tinyurl.com/nd782s43

Ronald K. Murakami
tinyurl.com/4u44fcn

Mark Ken Sasaki
tinyurl.com/47yr9rfy

Yasuo Steven Taketomo
tinyurl.com/bd656dnm

Bryan Lee Griebenow
tinyurl.com/4ece42yk

John G. Masaki
tinyurl.com/bdf85hk7

Michael W. Nakasone
tinyurl.com/4mryaz8

Yooji Ron Shintani
tinyurl.com/46yf4wnc

Ronald H. Tasaki
tinyurl.com/2s4hj3e5

Kenneth Sadao Hayashi
tinyurl.com/52cmvfd9

Kenneth K. Mui
tinyurl.com/9wuau5xm

Gary N. Sakata
tinyurl.com/46adnz7f

Cory Shiozaki
tinyurl.com/2we78nh9

Toshiro Yoshida
tinyurl.com/mu5sjabv

JACL CHEERS BIDEN'S APOLOGY TO NATIVE AMERICANS

By P.C. Staff

The Japanese American Citizens League issued a statement in support of President Joe Biden's Oct. 25 visit to Arizona's Gila River Indian Community, where he apologized for a 150-yearlong government policy of separating the children of Indigenous people from their families and putting them in boarding schools, a practice that didn't end until 1969.

"It's a sin on our soul," said Biden, according to the Associated Press. "Quite frankly, there's no excuse that this apology took 50 years to make."

In its statement, the JACL said it "applauds this historic action by the Biden administration and expresses our hope that this apology serves as just one step toward meaningful and long overdue restorative justice for the many

Indigenous communities in the United States."

The JACL also noted that Arizona was the site of the Gila River War Relocation Authority Center, where during World War II more than 13,000 people of Japanese ancestry were "unconstitutionally incarcerated." The camp was one of 10 operated by the federal government's WRA.

At the local level, Donna Cheung, civil rights chair of the Arizona chapter of the JACL commented: "From my perspective, a leader who acknowledges and rights a historical wrong reflects a strong, confident nation because such an admission reaffirms the moral centrality of the nation."

"The apology from a sitting U.S. president to First Nation communities is so significant because the U.S. was founded by displacing these communities. The existence of the U.S. is at a profound cost to Native Americans and that needs to be acknowledged also."

Biden's Oct. 25 apology echoed 1988's Civil Liberties Act, when President Ronald Reagan signed legislation in which the U.S. government formally apologized to ethnic Japanese — most of whom were U.S. citizens who were forcibly removed from the West Coast and incarcerated in concentration camps — and paid \$20,000 to each surviving internee.

To read the entire JACL statement, use this link: <https://jacl.org/statements/jacl-commends-the-biden-administrations-apology-for-indigenous-boarding-schools>

To read the Associated Press' coverage of Biden's visit to Arizona, use this link: <https://apnews.com/article/biden-indian-country-harris-arizona-election-0ac697174d60f8481924a09cbc0c6d51>

Keeping the Aloha Spirit Alive

Go for Broke National Education Center Holds Annual Gala

By George Toshio Johnston,
Senior Editor

Thanks to regulars like chef Roy Yamaguchi, namesake of Roy's restaurants and GFBNEC board of directors member, and newer faces like that of Spencer Taira of King's Hawaiian (grandson of its founder, Military Intelligence Service veteran Robert Taira), the aloha vibe and the spirit of gratitude were present and accounted for as the Go for Broke National Education Center held its 23rd annual Evening of Aloha Gala Dinner.

Also present and accounted for: five centenarians — give or take — who served their nation during World War II. Lauded by the audience for their astounding longevity at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites in downtown Los Angeles on Sept. 14 and participating in the onstage Roll Call were MIS veterans Edward Nakamura and Hachiro "Hutch" Mayewaki, 442nd Regimental Combat Team veterans Tokuji "Toke" Yoshihashi and Yoshio Nakamura and former Cadet Nurse Corps member Mary Tamura.

Reprising her role from 2023 as co-master of ceremonies was comedian-actress Sierra Katow and KABC Channel 7 newsman David Ono, who introduced Kendyl Sayuri Yokoyama to sing the national anthem and, later in the program, "The Impossible Dream."

Before Ono introduced George Henning, chair of the GFBNEC board of directors, he first prefaced a video message from Rep. Jill Tokuda (D-Hawaii), noting that she had two uncles — George Kakazu, who served in the 442nd RCT, and Ben Kakazu, who served in the 100th

Battalion — and that prior to her career in politics had served as the executive director of the Nisei Veterans Memorial Center on Maui.

When Tokuda's video ended, Henning spoke and recalled attending an Evening of Aloha dinner from more than 20 years ago. He then acknowledged past GFBNEC Executive Director and President Don Nose for his efforts in moving the organization into Little Tokyo and laying the groundwork for its current home.

Ono then introduced Rep. Mark Takano (D-Calif.), who in addition to serving as chairman of the Veterans Affairs Committee, had three great uncles who served with the 442nd, "one of whom was killed in action five months before the end of the war."

Takano, in an explanation to a Missing Soldier's Table appreciation, recalled, "When I first came to Congress, I met with Gen. Eric Shinseki, who reminded me that I would not be here in Congress today if it were not for the sacrifice of Nisei soldiers." After explaining the meanings behind the small round table with a white tablecloth, vase with a single red rose, empty chair and other items, he asked those in the audience to "raise a glass with me and toast in their honor for their ultimate sacrifice."

In addition to Takano, other special guests present included California Assembly member Albert Muratsuchi (D-Torrance), GFBNEC board member and City of Alhambra Councilmember Jeff Koji Maloney, Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles Kenko Sone and Kazuo



Go for Broke National Education Center President and CEO Mitchell Maki implores the audience at the 23rd Evening of Aloha Gala Dinner to continue its support of the organization.

Yakura, the first Japanese American Secret Service special agent.

Next in the program was a video tribute to veterans who had died in the year since the previous Evening of Aloha (see Nov. 3, 2023, *Pacific Citizen*), with live musical accompaniment by Daniel Ho, vocals for "Aloha 'Oe" by Keali'i Ceballos and interpretive dance by GFBNEC board of directors member Staci Kanani Toji of Hālau Hula Keali'i o Nālanī.

Afterward, Katow acknowledged that 2024 was the 25th anniversary of the Go for Broke Monument in Little Tokyo, an effort led by late 100th Battalion veteran Young Oak Kim, with "the construction expertise" of Bruce Kato. Noting that for a quarter century "this really beautiful

Rep. Mark Takano explains the symbolism of the missing soldier's table arrangement in front of him.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Spencer Taira of King's Hawaiian

Nieto, the second course (filet mignon and glazed Chilean sea bass) by Yamaguchi and the third course by King's Hawaiian pastry chef Heather Campbell.

Katow returned to the stage to introduce a video from Platinum Sponsor King's Hawaiian about its early days through its present-day success and growth, followed by Ono's introduction of another video about the latest endeavor from Silver Sponsor Yamaguchi, who has been selected as the new executive director for the Culinary Institute of the Pacific at University of Hawai'i Kapi'olani Community College in Honolulu.

Taira took to the stage to introduce the evening's next video. "It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2024 living Nisei veteran World War II photo tribute," he said. "It includes 40 Nisei veterans from seven states. Eleven veterans are 99 years old, five veterans who are 100 years old, six veterans are 101 years old, four veterans are 102 years of age, one at 103 years of age and, finally, one veteran who is 104 years old. Absolutely incredible." ➔

monument sort of stood alone in the middle of a giant asphalt parking lot in downtown L.A.," she segued to an event that happened earlier in the year, the groundbreaking of First Street North, which will transform not just that parking lot but also the surrounding area and become, among other things, the future home of GFBNEC (see April 26, 2024, *Pacific Citizen*).

With that came a video that provided backstory, context and plans for what should be completed by the end of 2026. Following the video, Katow made an appeal for audience members to make donations using the envelopes provided at each table to GFBNEC to help it reach the evening's goal of \$100,000.

The proceedings then took a break for dinner, with the first course prepared by the Westin Bonaventure's chef Andreas

Mary Tamura



Yoshio Nakamura (right) and his daughter, Linda Oberholtzer



Kendyl Sayuri Yokoyama (top) and Daniel Ho (right)



Hachiro "Hutch" Mayewaki



Yuko Kaifu of Japan House and Mami Sone, wife of Consul General of Japan in Los Angeles Kenko Sone

Following the video, Ono reintroduced Yokoyama to sing “The Impossible Dream,” which she dedicated to the Nisei veterans in the audience, her grandfather (who was incarcerated at Jerome and Tule Lake), her great uncles who fought in the war and her author grandmother, who was present at the event.

Next to the stage were Kendra Motoyasu, national vice chair of GFBNEC’s Torchbearer program, and actor Thomas Winter to introduce a video highlighting GFBNEC’s activities of the past several months, including its five-day “Hidden Histories of World War II” teachers workshop in Hawaii and the latest in its “Courage and Compassion” program, which brought GFBNEC to Boise, Idaho, as well as its participation in Glendale, Calif.’s Dec. 8, 2023, dedication of Sadao S. Munemori Memorial Square, named after the city’s native son who was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor as a member of the 442nd RCT (see Feb. 9, 2024, *Pacific Citizen*).

The video also updated both the GFBNEC’s Torchbearer program, aimed at educating the younger generations about the legacy of the Nisei veterans, and the third year of its Journalism Institute.

Katow then introduced a joshing

video of 442nd vet Yosh Nakamura, welcoming her co-host, Ono, into the Nakamura family in appreciation for his years of reporting Nisei veterans’ stories to wider audiences. “Yosh, you’re adopting the oldest adoptee in the history of the world — but I’ll take it,” Ono quipped.

The evening’s final speaker was GFBNEC’s President and CEO Mitchell Maki. “Tonight, we’ve been talking a lot about dreams and promises. The Nisei dream for a fair and equitable nation, the Nisei soldiers dream for liberty and justice for all,” said Maki, adding, “It’s no secret that our nation is going through a tremendous time of turmoil, a tremendous time of self-examination. There is so much division in our nation right now — and we are at risk of losing all of these dreams.”

Using that as a springboard, Maki called on the audience to continue supporting GFBNEC’s programs that others that evening had already alluded to: the “Courage and Compassion” and Torchbearer programs, its Journalism Institute and its traveling exhibitions. “Thank you, not only for your support, but thank you for believing in the work that we do,” he said before introducing the evening’s final video, a rendition of “God Bless America” featuring musicians Daniel Ho, kotoist June Kuramoto and vocals by Nisei vets Ed Nakamura, Yosh Nakamura and Toke Yoshihashi. ■



Edward Nakamura (foreground) accompanied by Sgt. Leylyn McArthur



Tokuji Yoshihashi

Twin Cities Chapter Reinstates Tradition to Honor Japanese American Veterans

By Twin Cities JACL

After a 14-year hiatus, the JACL Twin Cities chapter reinstated an annual tradition started in May 1999 by the Japanese American Veterans of Minnesota to honor, around Memorial Day, local Japanese American veterans who served in all wars from World War II and beyond.

This year’s theme, “Always Remembered, Forever Honored,” expressed the community’s gratitude for the sacrifices made by Japanese American soldiers during WWII and beyond in demonstrating unparalleled courage, patriotism and loyalty despite the challenges they faced.

The tribute was held on May 16 at Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis, Minn., with about 150 family members, friends, dignitaries and veterans in attendance. The program began with the FSNC Memorial Rifle Squad posting the colors, followed by local veterans Thomas Hara and George Murakami leading the Pledge of Allegiance.

The keynote speaker was U.S. Army Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, who retired in February after a distinguished 37-year military career, with overseas tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and South Korea. He rose quickly from a one-star to four-star general in six years. In his final assignment, Gen. Nakasone served as the director of the National Security Agency and commander of the U.S. Cyber Command.

“Today, we pay tribute not only to the countless brave souls who have sacrificed their lives in service to our nation, but also to the resilience and courage of Japanese Americans who have stood tall at every conflict since World War II,” Nakasone stated.

Gen. Nakasone also recognized Minnesota’s elected leaders, particularly Gov. Harold Stassen, who “played a notably positive and proactive role in welcoming Military Intelligence Service linguists to Minnesota during World War II.” He explained that the governor’s “leadership reflected an open and progressive stance that contrasted sharply with the attitudes and policies



Gen. Paul M. Nakasone (fifth from left) at Fort Snelling National Cemetery with program planning committee members (from left) Sally Sudo, Carolyn Nayematsu, Gloria Kumagai, Steve Ozone, Cheryl Hirata-Dulas, Karen Tanaka Lucas, Victor Ohno, Lani Bennett and Peggy Doi. (Not pictured is Vinicius Taguchi.)

PHOTO: RANDY KIRIHARA

seen in so many other states during this period.”

Steve Ozone served as the program emcee. Other speakers were Marcus Syverson, assistant director at FSNC; Col. Edwin (Bud) Nakasone (Ret.), JAVM president; and Lt. Toufong Lor, founder of the American Veterans Memorial Park in Cannon Falls, Minn. Rev. Debra Ting, interfaith minister from the Twin Cities Buddhist Sangha, delivered the invocation and benediction.

Following a moment of silence, the Honor Roll Call of the names of 131 local Japanese American veterans was read by Matt Abe, Lani Bennett, Peggy Doi, Mark Honda and Gloria Kumagai and accompanied by the ringing of the kansho ritual bell by Gail Wong. Each of their fathers served during World War II in either the Military Intelligence Service or the 100th Infantry Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team.

The program concluded with family members and volunteers placing a bouquet of flowers at each of the 99 gravesites of the Japanese American servicemen and women buried at FSNC.

Funding was provided by a grant from the Japanese American Community Foundation and contributions from the Twin Cities JACL and community donors.

To view a video link of the program, visit <https://youtu.be/LjPIFG4ecHc>. For a printed program link, visit <https://drive.google.com/file/d/15uo0c6bSizxx0wjCuqxWVnLw3FGdeX3t/view?usp=sharing>.



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TECH DIALOGUES

Tech Dialogues: Your Guide to Senior Planet Resources — Empowering Older Adults to Age With Attitude

By Ryan Kawamoto

Are you an older adult? Or do you have a *baachan*, loved one or friend who is an older adult? This article is here to assist you!

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- Montgomery County, Md.
- Denver
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or find a partner site near you at oats.org/licensing-map.

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For more information about any of the resources listed, we invite you to access our free weekly virtual programming online at seniorplanet.org or call our toll-free national hotline at (888) 713-3495, open Monday-Friday from 9 a.m.-8 p.m. ET and Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 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.



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GRANT UJIFUSA, JACL Redress Strategist, Dies at 82

Co-editor of 'Almanac of American Politics' helped guide Redress bill to the finish line.

By P.C. Staff

Grant Ujifusa, who served as co-editor of "The Almanac of American Politics" and the JACL-LEC's legislative strategy chair who helped with getting President Ronald Reagan's signature on the redress bill, aka the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, died Oct. 21 in Lafayette Hill, Pa. He was 82.

A statement sent via email to *Pacific Citizen* from his survivors reads: "Grant Ujifusa's family has always been deeply honored and blessed by his connection to and work on behalf of Japanese Americans. His dedication to redress and pride in his Japanese ancestry and family were matched by his friends and relationships in the Japanese American community."

"He lived a full professional and family life, and he was a one-of-a-kind character. Perhaps his favorite expression was one he learned from a Buddhist priest that served his family when he was a child: 'Where there is gratitude, there is civilization.'"

A Sansai, Ujifusa was born to Mary (Okugawa) and Tom Ujifusa on Jan. 4, 1942, in Worland, Wyo. — about 90 miles from the Heart Mountain War Relocation Authority Center — where his parents farmed sugar beets. Thus, neither his family nor he experienced the mass removal and incarceration

of Japanese Americans from the West Coast encountered from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066.

A 1965 graduate of Harvard University, which he attended on a scholarship, Ujifusa also earned a master's degree from Brandeis University and studied at Brown University. Early in his career, he worked in publishing for Gambit, Houghton Mifflin, Random House and Macmillan. He also worked for Reader's Digest.

In 1972, Ujifusa and Michael Barone co-founded "The Almanac of American Politics," which became an essential go-to resource not only for Washington, D.C., watchers, insiders, journalists and policy wonks but also for politicians themselves. As a result, his association with this tome gave him an outsize influence in political circles and an inside track to the goings-on within Congress and the federal government.

It was for this reason, as Ujifusa noted in an oral history recorded by Densho, that he was approached by JACL heavyweights Mike Masaoka and Minoru Yasui to help with navigating the labyrinth of Washington, D.C., politics to get the redress drive from Quixotic quest to real-world redemption that would end up on the desk of President Reagan, which he enacted on Aug. 10, 1988.

But it was also the emotional reaction



Grant Ujifusa

Ujifusa had to witnessing a hearing of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians that compelled him to lend his expertise to the redress movement, despite having no relatives who were incarcerated by the federal government.

According to the Densho oral history, Ujifusa related how he had attended the one-day hearing of the New York leg of the CWRIC's multicity hearings. "I stayed for the whole day. I took the day off from work. And like a lot of people there, I was crying."

Ujifusa added: "The total impact of the, of the emotional impact of the Commission hearings in New York I think convinced me." But he also recalled how his mother, who grew up in Colorado, had a parallel experience.

From Densho: "She worked very hard in high school in La Junta, Colo. She earned valedictorian, valedictorian honors. And the kids liked her, the kids in her class liked her. But the teachers and the administration and the school board announced that 'there would be no Jap speaking at graduation this year and, and we have a Jap valedictorian, so we're not going to have any speeches.' And that, that I remembered, and it hurt Mom. Mom didn't get a chance to go on to college. This meant a lot to her, and she was denied that."

Regarding his participation in the redress movement and its success, Ujifusa also told Densho: "I think it was the most important and most intense thing I ever did in my life. . . . I never went at anything with as much intensity and feeling as this."

In 2012, the government of Japan bestowed its Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays to Ujifusa in recognition of his work on redress.

In 2022, Ujifusa donated seed money to launch the Harry K. Honda Memorial Journalism Fund to help the *Pacific Citizen* and named to honor the decades-long work of its former editor, Harry Honda. His donation was intended to help the newspaper pay current and new contributing writers and freelancers and help defray general operational expenses incurred by the P.C. and its mission to produce in-depth feature stories and content that relates directly to the nation's Japanese American and Asian American communities.

For most of his career in publishing and investing, he and his wife lived in Chappaqua, N.Y., but had recently moved to the Philadelphia suburbs to be close to his grandchildren.

Ujifusa is survived by his wife, Amy Brooks Ujifusa; their sons, Steven Ujifusa (Alexandra Vinograd), Andrew Ujifusa (Jennifer) and John; and two grandsons (Isaac and Max); and sister, Susan Diamond.

Donations can be made in Ujifusa's memory to the Asia Society at tinyurl.com/58metc6y. To donate to the Harry K. Honda Memorial Journalism Fund in Ujifusa's memory, send an email to busmgr@pacificcitizen.org. ■

JACLers Remember Grant Ujifusa

"I was saddened to hear of longtime and influential JACL friend Grant Ujifusa's passing. He was most well-known for being instrumental in directing the Legislative Education Committee as its chief strategist. Through his work as the editor of 'The Almanac of American Politics,' his personal relationships and intimate knowledge of the hierarchies in all the legislators' offices proved to be very helpful in identifying the staff members of the members of Congress most in need of convincing to support the redress legislation. This tactic

was most helpful for Gracye Uyehara to engage those who had the most influence in each of the offices. Grant was one of the many folks whose personal involvement contributed to the eventual success of redress. My sincere condolences to the family."

— Larry Oda, JACL national president

"I first came to know of Grant Ujifusa as editor of 'The Almanac of American Politics.' As I was looking to move to Washington, D.C., to work in health policy and in my early years of legislative advocacy work, the 'Almanac' was the ultimate guidebook to navigating congressional offices. When I first met Grant, many years later, it was a great fanboy moment. And now I have also come to appreciate the role he played in the redress movement and as a longtime JACL supporter. He will be missed by so many here in Washington, D.C., and in our community."

— David Inoue, JACL executive director

"I will always remember Grant, who was a relatively younger leader in LEC, for his ongoing efforts to ensure that JACL remember and credit the older or departed LEC leaders — including my mother — for their contribution to the success of the redress campaign. Now that he has passed, we similarly need to remember his singular contribution to devising and guiding the successful redress lobbying effort."

— Paul Uyehara, EDC governor

"I had the honor of observing Grant Ujifusa as he served as the chief legislative strategist for the Legislative Education Committee (LEC — a separate legal entity, but significant partner of the Japanese American Citizens League) as the Japanese American community sought redress and reparations from the United States for the illegal imprisonment of over 25,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry in the period following the outbreak of World War II.

"Grant, along with LEC lobbyist Grace Uyehara, were instrumental in the eventual passage of the redress legislation. The entire Japanese American community is and will always be indebted to Grant and Grace for their contributions to the redress movement.

"I join the rest of the JACL community in offering our sincere condolences to the Ujifusa family for their loss."

— Ken Inouye, former JACL national president

"Grant Ujifusa was always among the most intense about redress. He never stopped. I hope he finds peace. Gassho."

— Ron Wakabayashi, JACL national director during redress

"The redress campaign was a 10-year battle fought across the social and political landscape of America, a battle spearheaded by the JACL but involving many people and groups. Among the many individuals who deserve recognition for their contributions to that effort, it goes without saying that Grant's contributions as the LEC strategist were vital and important in leading to the final outcome of the Civil Liberties Act. His involvement in the campaign was relatively short, but in those two or three years, he left his mark."

— John Tateishi, chair of the JACL's National Committee for Redress (1978), former JACL national director, national redress director, former principal redress lobbyist

TRIBUTE

JOEL SUZUKI



Joel Chiyoki Suzuki passed away at the age of 73 on March 22, 2024, at his home in San Diego. He was born in Alameda County (Oakland), Calif., on June 13, 1950. He grew up on Carleton Street in Berkeley, Calif., with his mother, Olive Yaye Takahashi, grandparents, Chiyokichi and Shizu, and 11 aunts and uncles.

He graduated from Berkeley High School and was a 1972 graduate from the University of California at Berkeley with a bachelor's degree in business

administration. Joel was a naval contract specialist from 1974 until his retirement in 2007. He was a member of the CFC Eagle Club, a federal employees and retirees charity campaign. He also was a board member on the River Scene Homeowners Association in San Diego.

He was passionate about music and played the saxophone in the UC Berkeley Straw Hat band and attended many alumni functions. He was also an avid bowler and had a 769 three-game scratch series as well as a 300 perfect game. Joel's hobby was trivia, and he attended over 700 events of Buzztime trivia competition and gatherings. As Joel's many trivia friends can attest, Joel was an excellent NTN and Buzztime Trivia player and good friend. Joel's moniker, LILJOL, appeared on NTN/Buzztime scoreboards any time he was playing.

He was predeceased by his mother, Olive Yaye Takahashi. He is also survived by seven first cousins on his mother's side of the family. Any memorial contributions can be made to his lifelong Berkeley Methodist United Church in his name. Please contact ddoi123456@gmail.com for information regarding his memorial/celebration of life.

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