

PACIFIC CITIZEN

Sonoe Inai (right), the widow of Army Pfc. Haruo Inai, received an American flag from Army 1st Lt. Jake Hearan (below) at the reinterment ceremony of her late husband on April 4 at Los Angeles National Cemetery.

PHOTOS: GEORGE T. JOHNSTON



SPECIAL VETERANS ISSUE



A FINAL JOURNEY

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First Street North
Project Nears
Completion.

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WWII Veteran
Yosh Nakamura
Celebrates 100.

NISEI WAR MEMORIAL COMMUNITY CENTER REOPENS IN SACRAMENTO

By Sacramento JACL

The Nisei War Memorial Community Center in Sacramento reopened and held a Memorial Wall Dedication on Sept. 13 that was attended by more than 100 community members.

Kicking off the event was a performance by Davis Bokuhatsu Taiko Dan, comprised of students from the University of California, Davis, followed by the presentation of colors and Pledge of Allegiance by Boy Scout Troop 250, led by Randy Imai. ACC Showstoppers provided the singing of the national anthem.

The event featured several speakers, including welcoming remarks from Sacramento JACL VP Debbie Eto, Sacramento JACL President Roger Fujii and past JACL National President Floyd Shimomura, who reflected upon his experiences with JACL and the Nisei Hall.

Charles Kobayashi, a past JACL Sacramento president, then spoke of the work that went into raising the funds to complete Phase One and then proceeded to honor the chapter's officers



Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (center) presented the Sacramento JACL with a certificate of merit during the Nisei Veterans Hall Memorial dedication. Pictured (from left) are Eric Guerra, Mayu Hagiwara and Sacramento JACL President Roger Fujii

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SACRAMENTO JACL

Fujii, Eto, Kathy Delmendo and Randy Fong and board members Esther Hokama, Janice Luczszak, Michael Luczszak and Joyce Ng for their efforts.

Also on hand at the ceremony to speak was Mayu Hagiwara, consul and director of the Japan Information and Cultural Center in San Francisco, and Sacramento Mayor Pro-Tem Eric Guerra, who talked about his relationship and respect for the farmers who, during World War II, lost their land and had to rebuild as a result of the forced incarceration. He praised the spirit and indomitable determination of the Japanese American community.

Finally, Assemblyman Al Muratsuchi (D-Torrance) spoke about his memories of being first elected to office and moving to Sacramento. The first place he stayed at was the Governor's Square apartments, which is located across the street from the Nisei War Memorial Community Center, and he used to walk by the Nisei War Memorial every day on his way to the Capitol building. He praised the Sacramento JACL for taking on this project and honored its members with a special certificate of merit.

The Sacramento JACL brought the historic hall back as a place to hold community gatherings and special events. ■

Military Veterans Participate in Nisei Week Parade

During August's Nisei Week Parade, Japanese American veterans who served in every major conflict in recent U.S. history marched down the streets of Little Tokyo in a united front of bravery, patriotism and service. The generational gathering also marked the 50th anniversary since the end of the Vietnam War.

Pictured (from left) are: **Front row:** Terry Weber (Navy), Vietnam; Wally Takata (Army), Korean War; David Miyoshi (Marines), Vietnam; Ken Hayashi (Army), Vietnam; Garry Tanaka (Army), Vietnam; Chris Segawa (Army), Vietnam; Keith Kawamoto (Army), Vietnam; **Row 2:** Ramiro Puentes (Army), Vietnam; Ray Fukumoto (Army), Vietnam; Cory Shiozaki (Army), Vietnam; Dennis



Yamamoto (Army), Vietnam; Don Nakamura (Army), Vietnam; Mayumi Kimura (Navy), post-9/11; **Row 3:** Fred Maldonado (Navy), Vietnam; Art Ishii (Air Force), Vietnam; Kenji Hatakeyama (Army), Vietnam; Ken Sasaki (Army), Vietnam; Edward Sugita (Army), Vietnam; Ron Kita

(U.S. National Guard), Vietnam; **Row 4:** Ernest Low (Navy), Vietnam; Richard Odagawa (Army), Vietnam; Les Higa (Army), Korea; **Row 5:** Ron Nakawatase (Army), Vietnam; Eddie Ohara (Army), Vietnam; Jack Lew (Army), Vietnam; Scott Takahashi (Army), Vietnam; Shunji Hosozawa

(Army), Vietnam; Ken Tanaka (Navy), Vietnam; James Ota (Air Force), Vietnam; Eddie Yorizane (Army), Vietnam; **Row 6:** Kiyo Fukumoto (Army), Vietnam; George Tanaka (Army), Vietnam; Tim Yoshinaga (Air Force), Gulf Wars; **Row 7:** Russell Nakaishi (California National Guard); Sonny Tasaki (Army), Vietnam; Bryant Ng (Air Force), Vietnam; Roger Yasunaga (Army), Vietnam; Larry Miyamura (Army), Vietnam; Mike Uyeda (Army), Gulf Wars; **Row 8:** Jin Kwan (Army), Vietnam; Yuji Toda (Navy), active duty; Ricky Taira (Army), Vietnam; Nolan Tanaka (Air Force), post-Vietnam; Don Suehiro (Army), Korea DMZ; Cliff Ishigaki (Marines), Vietnam; Ron Shintani (Army), Vietnam; Gregory Sugioka (Army), Vietnam. Not shown: Tyson Takeuchi (Army), active duty; David Sumida (Navy), Global War on Terror.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF DAVID MIYOSHI

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NY/SC ANNOUNCES ART CONTEST

The JACL's National Youth/Student Council has announced an art contest aimed at young people.

According to NY/SC Chair Remy Kageyama, the reasoning behind the contest was to "create more opportunities that not only engage our members but also showcase the talents and strengths of the youth in our community."

The prompt for the content of the art reads: "The Japanese American community has a long and complex history that continues to have an impact today. How do you envision the future of our community? Create a sticker that reflects your hopes, concerns or dreams for what lies ahead."

The winning entries will be used for the next set of NY/SC stickers.

Kageyama said that the art contest is in part inspired by the NY/SC's digital storytelling contest from 2020 (see tinyurl.com/2s476v8m).

According to Kageyama, the contest is open to anyone between the ages of 13-25. The deadline for submissions is 11:59 p.m. HT on Nov. 7. The winner will receive a \$150 Amazon gift card and a one-year JACL Youth Membership.

Entries (and questions) should be sent to MDC Youth Representative Eli Nishimura at mdcyouth@jac.org.

SUBMIT YOUR WORK FOR THE

NY/SC ART CONTEST

PROMPT

"The Japanese American community has a long and complex history that continues to have an impact today. How do you envision the future of our community? Create a sticker that reflects your hopes, concerns, or dreams for what lies ahead."

DUE NOV. 7, 2025
at 11:59PM HST

WIN

\$150 Amazon Gift Card
+
Free one-year JACL Youth Membership

You do not need to be a JACL member to participate

CRITERIA

- Between ages 13-25
- No usage of A.I.
- Should be creative, incorporate the prompt, well-formatted for sticker design
- Submit as a PDF with artist statement

Questions?
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Honoring All Japanese American Korean War Veterans

on the 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the beginning of the Korean War on June 25, 1950

Norio Uyematsu U.S. Army 521st Military Intelligence Service Platoon's unit was awarded the Meritorious Unit Commendation for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services in support of combat operations in Korea. Corporal Uyematsu was an interrogator of Prisoners of War.

At 94 years old, he continues to preserve the legacy of those that served and fought in the Korean War by donating his Post Korean War memorabilia to the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, speaking at JAVA's Veterans Day event in Washington DC in 2024, being named by the Orange County Register to its 125 Most Influential Persons in Orange County for 2024, being interviewed by the FDR Presidential Library for its 2025 Day of Remembrance, featured on ABC7 Salutes in April, honored by the Anaheim City Council in June, and sponsored the Korean War Veterans table at the "Go For Broke Evening of Aloha."



He was able to achieve his lifetime goal of having his family's resettlement story told through the Brigham City Museum's Japanese Pioneer exhibit in 2025 and to honor Earl G. Anderson who gave his family a second chance to have a normal life after they left camp and had no where to go. His story was also published on the front page of the Asahi Shimbun in Japan.

He worked with the Wasatch Front North JACL to host Brigham City, Utah's first "Day of Remembrance" which was a tremendous success this year. The event collaborated with the Salt Lake JACL and the Mount Olympus JACL chapters. Norio Uyematsu continues to be a member of the Salt Lake JACL.



March 2025 shows the area behind Little Tokyo's Go for Broke Monument and the progress of the construction for the First Street North project

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Medal of Honor obelisk on the June 7, 2025, 26th anniversary



100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team veteran Yosh Nakamura signs the beam for posterity.

Taken in September, this photograph shows the status quo of First Street North facing Judge John Aiso Street in Little Tokyo.



RG/FSN

orth Residences



FAST-FORWARDING TOWARD ITS FUTURE

As '26 approaches, GFBNEC and LTSC make astounding progress at First Street North.

By George Toshio Johnston,
P.C. Senior Editor

Ever since announcements* that the First Street North project — a transformative new development for Little Tokyo that may change the enclave's gravitational pull — were made a few years ago, with its official groundbreaking** having taken place on Feb. 13, 2024, astonishing progress has been made.

After construction on the long-gestating joint project among the Go for Broke National Education Center, the Little Tokyo Service Center and the City of Los Angeles commenced, it would be safe to say that someone who hadn't in recent years visited the area, surrounded by Judge John Aiso, E. Temple and S. Alameda Streets, would find that what used to mostly be a parking lot had utterly changed.

When completed, it will boast affordable housing units, office and retail space and will be the future, much-needed new home for GFBNEC and other community nonprofits. As for a timeline, according to LTSC's Tak Suzuki, "The south building is gonna be completed in the first quarter of next year, and then the north building is gonna be completed later in the summer."

With Little Tokyo having been put on last year's "11 Most Endangered Historic Places" and with continuing unease within some factions of the Little Tokyo community over the Little Tokyo-adjacent Fourth and Central Project***, the ramifications of First Street North (and the recent purchase of a Little Tokyo building on First Street by the Little Tokyo Community Impact fund****) make for a compelling, positive narrative about its future.

"I think we've all been concerned about Little Tokyo and whether it was going to survive," said Marshall Ozawa, who sits on the GFBNEC board. As for First Street North, he added, "It is a good thing for Little Tokyo."

Over the past several months, First Street North's rapid changes included June 7's 26th anniversary of the Go for Broke Monument that for more than 25 years had shared its presence

with asphalt and parked cars and, on June 17, a "beam-signing" ceremony.

And what exactly was this beam-signing ceremony? Arranged by GFBNEC and LTSC, it was an event at which a large wooden beam that was destined to become part of the new building could be signed with a black marker for posterity, never to be seen again — at least not by those who signed it.

For GFBNEC President and CEO Mitch Maki, the fact that First Street North is making great progress in its transformation from the parking lot that surrounded the monument to what it is becoming is a testament to the foresight of the Nisei who not only fought for their country and community in war but also a reminder that even more than a quarter-century ago, they had a vision for peace and the future.

"They built the monument in the middle of a parking lot," Maki told the *Pacific Citizen*. "Everybody thought they were crazy. 'Why are you doing this?' 'Nobody's coming to see it.' It took a little while, but you know, now we are having this major project."

For Ozawa, who had two uncles — Mike Tsuji and Robert Ichikawa — who served in the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team, writing a message on the beam was a tribute them and their comrades-in-arms, that their service connects the past to the present.

Ozawa believes that future visitors to First Street North who might not have seen the monument in the past will surely see it in the future and learn more about a vital part of American history.

For Scott Takahashi, who with his wife, Susan, wrote on the beam, his excitement is tempered. "This is huge," he told the *Pacific Citizen*. "I only wish that more of the vets were still around. . . . If they could see this now, they'd be so proud. It's just amazing." ■

To see a video of the beam-signing ceremony visit tinyurl.com/mr2uenmv.

* See tinyurl.com/2wx78h78.

** See tinyurl.com/yeaykkbz.

*** See tinyurl.com/yj62dem.

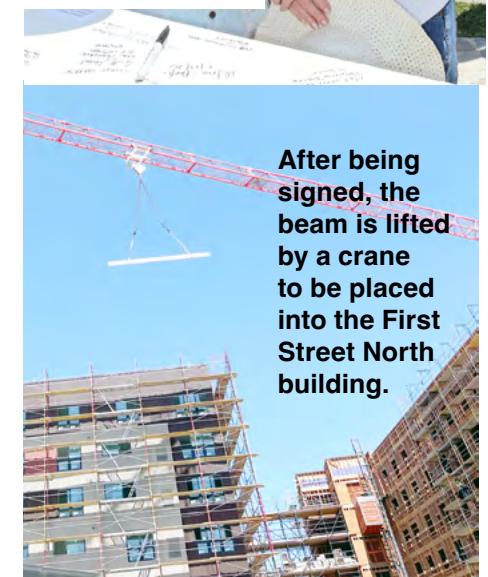
**** See tinyurl.com/yc5ajtew.



GFBNEC President and CEO Mitch Maki gestures while addressing those gathered at the June 17 beam-signing ceremony near the First Street North construction site.



Scott and Susan Takahashi at the beam-signing ceremony



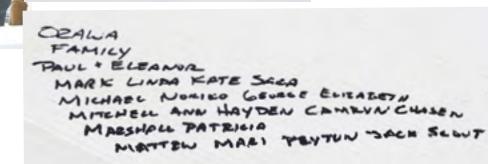
After being signed, the beam is lifted by a crane to be placed into the First Street North building.



GFBNEC board member Marshall Ozawa signs the beam to represent his family, below.



GFBNEC staffers at the June 17 beam-signing ceremony. Pictured (from left) are summer intern Noah Scott, Kurt Ikeda, Gina Nieto, Christina Tatsugawa, Janis Tanji Wong, Joyce Kwon, Erin Sato and Mitch Maki.



BIRTHDAY PARTY FOR THE AGES

The community unites to celebrate the centennial of WWII vet Yosh Nakamura.

By George Toshio Johnston,
P.C. Senior Editor

Cake. Certificates of recognition. Standing room only. Speeches, songs and accolades. Friends, family, dignitaries and admirers. Dancing women.

There was all that and more at Whittier's Liberty Community Plaza on June 30 when local favorite son Yosh Nakamura celebrated birthday 100.

"It's a great feeling for me to have you all behind me as a friend," Nakamura told the audience. "Thank you very much."

Hosted by Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn, the quantity and caliber of the turnout for Nakamura's birthday party was testament to the changes he lived through and the lives he touched over the course of his 10 decades.

That Nakamura was dressed for the event in his "uniform" — white Go for Broke shirt and red, white and blue garrison cap embroidered with "100/442" and with his Combat Infantryman's Badge pinned to it — also testament to his status as an Army veteran who fought in and survived World War II and a man who volunteered to serve his country at 18 while his family was incarcerated at Arizona's Gila River WRA Center, when his country doubted and mistrusted his loyalty and that of his fellow Americans of Japanese ancestry.

But the throng that showed up to express their love and admiration for Nakamura was there also for the other parts of his life beyond his military service: as a family man (husband to the late Aiko Grace Nakamura, née Shinoda, and a father of three); churchgoer; talented watercolor painter; graduate of the University of Southern California who earned a bachelor's degree and a master's degree in fine arts; Whittier High School teacher; and later, the first professor at Rio Hondo College, where he later became its first Fine Arts Department chair.

Hahn presented Nakamura with a plaque to commemorate the milestone. Reading from the inscription, she said: "To Yosh Nakamura, congratulations on reaching the centennial celebration of your birthday. The Board of Supervisors of the County of Los Angeles commends your valiant service in the United

States military during World War II and your dedication to our community."

Rep. Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.), who presented him with a framed reprint from the June 26, 2025, *Congressional Record* celebrating his centennial, said, "What I find particularly interesting is that during his service in Italy, Yosh's passion for the arts was awakened because he was surrounded by the works of Michaelangelo, Da Vinci, Raphael and the stunning Florentine architecture, and so he found a new source of inspiration and hope, and those experiences planted a little seed in him that led to a lifelong devotion to the arts."

Speaking later in the program on behalf of the Nakamura family was son Dan Nakamura. Guitarist-singer Harold Payne then performed "Quiet Hero," and the party closed with a performance by tap-dance troupe the Tappettes.

Hahn encapsulated the meaning of the day thusly: "We wouldn't have been here if it hadn't been for the members of the community who came to us and said, 'We need to celebrate an extraordinary man.'"

Special guests and speakers included Army Lt. Col. Victor Shen; Whittier City Councilmember Mary Ann Pacheco; former Whittier Mayor Allan Zolnekoff; South Whittier School District board of trustees member Jan Baird; former Whittier Union High School District VP Jeff Baird; and South Whittier School District board of trustees members Sylvia Macias and Elias Alvarado.

Also present were Rio Hondo College VP Rosaelva Lomeli; Rio Hondo College Student Trustee Carlo Flores-Olson; Field Deputy Christopher Kent, representing Assemblymember Blanca Pacheco (D-Dist. 64); Whittier Union High School District Superintendent Dr. Monica Oviedo; East Whittier City School District Board of Education President Christine Chacon Kennedy; Yorba Linda City Councilmember Peggy Huang; Army Maj. Gen. Peter Gravett (Ret.) and Army National Guard Col. Blanche Gravett (Ret.); Greater Los Angeles Chapter of the Association of the United States Army President Col. Pete Seitz (Ret.); Lt. Col. Jina Kim and Major Ryan Kam of the California Army National Guard; Air Force Lt. Col. Robert Johnson (Ret.), volunteer liaison officer with the French Consulate; Go for Broke National Education Center President and CEO Mitch Maki; Norwalk American Legion Post 359 Commander Angelo Maldonado; Whittier Art Gallery's Suzanna Grueser (president) and Lark Hickey-Frieze; Friends and Families of Nisei Veterans President Janet Ito; Japanese American Veterans Assn. Executive Council member David Iwata; and Rev. Dr. Loletta M. Barrett; and son Dan Nakamura. ■



Rep. Linda Sanchez holds up the plaque containing the text honoring Yosh Nakamura that appeared in the June 26, 2025, *Congressional Record*.



The Tappettes salute Yosh Nakamura.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Loyal *Pacific Citizen* subscriber Yosh Nakamura displays a copy of his favorite newspaper.

PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



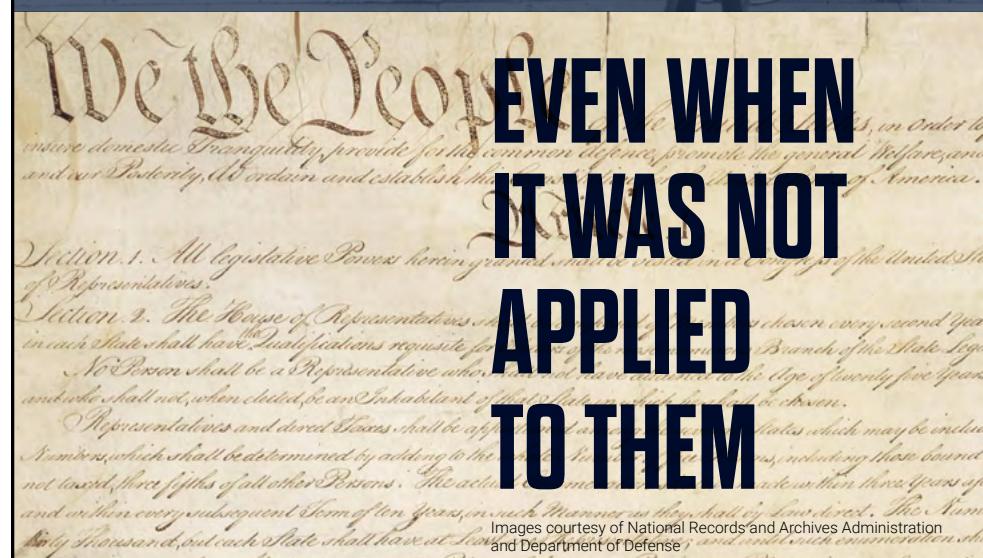
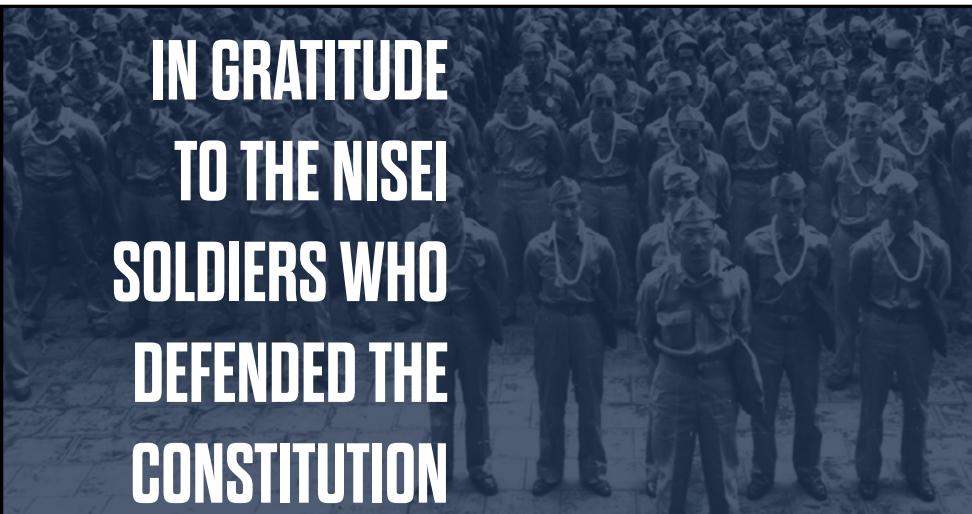
Yosh Nakamura's 100th birthday cake



Los Angeles County Supervisor Janice Hahn shows off the plaque presented to Yosh Nakamura for his 100th birthday.



Among the various speakers at Yosh Nakamura's 100th birthday were (clockwise from top left) former Whittier Mayor Allan Zolnekoff; Yorba Linda City Councilmember Peggy Huang; retired Air Force Lt. Col. Bob Johnson; Friends and Families of Nisei Veterans' Janet Ito; Go for Broke National Education Center's Mitch Maki; Army Lt. Col. Victor Shen; the Rev. Dr. Loletta M. Barrett; and son Dan Nakamura.



Images courtesy of National Records and Archives Administration and Department of Defense

GO FOR BROKE
NATIONAL EDUCATION CENTER

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PHOTOS: GEORGE TOSHIO JOHNSTON



Attending Haruo Inai's reinterment are (from left) Kurt Ikeda and Mitch Maki of Go for Broke National Education Center; Los Angeles National Cemetery Director Cuauhtemoc Meza; Brian Smith; Sasha Mori; Max Miller; Sonoe Inai; Len Pagarigan; and Cemetery Administrative Specialist Pablo Agrio.



Urn containing cremains of Haruo Inai before the April 4 reinterment.



Haruo Inai's CIB

THE FINAL, FINAL JOURNEY OF HARUO INAI

With providence, help from friends and the internet, Sasha Mori ensures that the remains of her uncle, a 100th Battalion veteran, find a place of honor.

By George Toshio Johnston,
P.C. Senior Editor

Although "final resting place" implies the site where one's earthly remains get put forever, it turns out that is not always so.

Consider the case of former Army Pfc. Haruo Inai, a decorated member of the segregated 100th Battalion's C Co., who died at 89 on Feb. 22, 2010. Although his cremated remains were interred a few weeks later on April 10 at Los Angeles' Evergreen Cemetery with deceased family members, some 15 years later, his urn would take an 18-mile journey to a different final resting place.

How and why that happened would also become a more than two-yearlong journey of a different sort for his niece, Sasha Mori, who, like her aunt and Haruo Inai's widow, Sonoe Inai, is a native of Japan. Mori's father was Sonoe's youngest brother.

One might, however, say that Mori's journey with regard to having the remains of her uncle moved from a gravesite that did not even include his name to a new final resting place at the Los Angeles National Cemetery in Westwood, Calif., began when she immigrated to the United States in the mid-1980s.

Like many native Japanese, when she first arrived, Mori did not know much about the Japanese American community of which her Uncle Haruo was a part. She knew even less about what many Japanese Americans experienced during World War II, not just the mass removal and incarceration but also the exemplary military service of the Nisei who fought in Europe as part of the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team or served in the Military Intelligence Service across the Pacific.

Over her decades of living in America, however, Mori did learn some of that history, though not from her uncle. "Haruo was a pretty private person," she told the *Pacific*

Citizen, and he shared with her nothing about his military service.

Although most in the so-called "Greatest Generation" have been generally characterized as being tight-lipped about their WWII service, they were Chatty Cathies compared with most of their taciturn Nisei cohort.

Stories of their Nisei wives and Sansei offspring not knowing the details of the military service of their spouses and fathers are not uncommon. That was Haruo Inai.

Nonetheless for Mori, that someone like her uncle, who earned the right to wear the Combat Infantryman's Badge and was awarded the Purple Heart after being gravely wounded

— the bullet that hit him on "29 Oct 44" (according to his honorable discharge papers), narrowly missing his heart and occurring during the bloody, high-casualty Rescue of the Lost Battalion — would end up in an unmarked grave as his final resting place just didn't sit right.

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Reconstructing the life of a man who didn't share much about it while he was alive 15 years after his death can be a tall order.

For Haruo Inai, there aren't many family photos of him, in uniform or from civilian life, just images from identification documents.

There is also no oral history that was recorded as part of the Go for Broke National Education Center's Hanashi project. He and Sonoe had no children who might have, in their later years, been able to glean some details about his life.

At 94, his wheelchair-bound widow, Sonoe Inai, whose English is limited, and whose stamina is likewise, as would be expected of someone of her age, doesn't seem to have much to share as far as any stories he may have told her — "may have" being the key words, since his *Nihongo* was as limited as her *Eigo*.

"Haruo's Japanese was also very broken

Japanese," said Mori, regarding how he and his wife communicated. "I guess when you live with the person for a long time, you kind of read from the body language, right?"

Furthermore, most of his fellow vets with whom he served and who might have been able to share something about him are, like Haruo Inai, deceased.

Nevertheless, there exist records that reveal some facts about his life. He was born in La Habra, Calif., and his formal education ended in the 10th grade in 1938 at Fullerton High School.

Before joining the Army, he was employed by the La Habra Citrus Assn. as a harvest hand, a lemon and orange picker. He stood 5-feet,

1-inch tall and weighed 125 pounds when he left the Army. He had three younger siblings: a brother, Tomio; a sister, Yasuko; and youngest brother Minoru, born in 1928. He died in 1930, on the same day as his mother, Tatsu, leaving Kumeji Inai a widower. Haruo's living siblings and Kumeji would be incarcerated together at the Poston War Relocation Authority Center.

According to the Final Accountability Roster for Poston, the three of them were sent there beginning in May 1942. In 1944, Tomio left for Poston for Fort Douglas, Utah, to join the Army; he would be assigned to the 442nd Regiment's H Co. and earn the rank of staff sergeant. In February 1945, Yasuko left camp for Chicago; Kumeji followed in August.

Haruo Inai, meantime, was inducted into the Army on Jan. 6, 1942, which explains why he didn't join his family at Poston. He received his honorable discharge on Nov. 9, 1945. In between, he served with the 100th Battalion in Rhineland, the Northern Apennines and the Po Valley.

In addition to earning the CIB and being

► See INAI on page 11



Photo of Haruo Inai from his U.S. passport



Haruo Inai's VA ID card



Wedding photo of Haruo and Sonoe Inai

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SASHA MORI



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INAI » continued from page 6



awarded the Purple Heart, Haruo Inai also received a Good Conduct Medal, Division Commendation and a Distinguished Unit Badge. Postwar, like scores of other Japanese American men, Inai made a living as a gardener in Los Angeles.

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To learn how Haruo Inai met and married Sonoe Tsuboi, one has to backtrack to his Issei father and piece together his story, too. Before emigrating to the U.S. in 1907 at around age 28, Kumeji Inai was born in 1879. One source has his birthplace in Shikoku (the smallest of mainland Japan's four main islands); another source — an article written by Henry Mori in the Aug. 29, 1958, issue of the *Pacific Citizen* — has him as an "Okayama native."

Regardless, Kumeji Inai used a *nakōdo*, or matchmaker, to help his son, Haruo Inai, find a Japanese wife. Here, it gets a bit convoluted. According to Sasha (not Henry) Mori, her father had heard about Haruo Inai's wife search via this same matchmaker. That of course begs the question: Why did Sasha's father, originally born Tomozo Tsuboi, have a matchmaker?

That is because he was "adopted" as an adult into the Mori family, a somewhat common practice in Japan known as *mukōyoshi* that can occur when a family without a male heir to continue the family line adopts an adult male, carefully vetted, from another family to become a member of the son-less family.

So, via his matchmaker, Tomozo Mori became involved in helping Haruo Inai find a wife — and that would be his older sister, Sonoe Tsuboi. A single woman, Sonoe was still living at her mother's home, where the second-eldest brother, who, under Japan's

patrilineal conventions, would become head of the family. (The original eldest brother was killed in the war.)

With her brother's wife and children in the house, Sonoe's options were limited. "She was totally becoming like [an] outsider," Mori said. Family members urged Sonoe to marry Haruo Inai and move to America for a new life with her new husband — and that was what happened.

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After moving to Los Angeles, Sasha Mori was, while also herself staying occupied with making a living, charged by her father to keep in touch with and help whenever possible his eldest sister — her Aunt Sonoe and her husband, Uncle Haruo Inai.

One of Sasha Mori's memories from 1989 that planted a seed that began her interest in her uncle's life came from a talk with her landlord, himself a WWII veteran. Once when Sonoe and Haruo came to visit Sasha, the landlord, who had been stationed in postwar Japan, struck up a conversation with Haruo to practice speaking some of the Japanese language he had picked up.

Instead, however, they spoke in English and with their military service in common, Haruo actually revealed a bit about what he had experienced in the 100th Battalion. Later, Mori's landlord told her that her uncle was "a brave man" who had been gravely wounded in the war and had been awarded the Purple Heart. "I did not know what 'Purple Heart' was but only knew it was something important," she recalled.

After Haruo's death in 2010, Sonoe Inai continued living in the Westminster, Calif., house where she and Haruo resided. Sasha Mori continued to keep in touch with her aunt. But as the years went by, it became evident to Mori that her aunt, who mostly kept to herself, needed to move to a place where she could get assistance just living her life.

February 2023 would be a turning point. That was when Sonoe would need to renew her driver's license, a chore that Mori had doubts her elderly aunt could successfully complete — or whether it was wise to do, even if she did pass the test. Instead, Mori convinced her aunt to move to a senior-care facility and sell her home.

In October 2022, Mori began that process by enlisting the help of her friend, Cindy Kawata, a real estate broker. That also started the process of going through Sonoe's — and Haruo's — belongings to see what should be kept or discarded. It was then when Kawata came across all of Haruo's military-related paraphernalia: documents, medals, ribbons, etc.

7—PACIFIC CITIZEN

Friday, Aug. 29, 1958

Los Angeles NEWSLETTER

By Henry Mori

Downtown Los Angeles JACL past chapter president, attorney Kei Uchima, has won an interesting land case involving a retired Issei farmer, Kumeji Inai of Westminster. A 78-year-old Okayama native, he first came to the United States in 1907. After working on the railroad and on various farms he saved enough for a down payment on a 15-acre plot 20 years later in Chino. He farmed for 10 years and then rented his property to one of his neighbors. They continued to produce on Inai's land until 1956 when the plaintiff (Inai) asked for a conveyance of the land. The other party had refused thus forcing Inai to file suit.

The two-year-old litigation apparently has come to an end this week when Superior Court Judge A.D. Mitchell of San Bernardino county rendered a decision in favor of Inai.

The defendants contended, according to Uchima, that since Inai had "been out of touch with his property for almost 20 years he had lost his rights to the land." Furthermore, under the now defunct California Alien Land Law, Inai never had title to the land, the defendants' counsel W. David Etchason reasoned.

However, Judge Mitchell sustained the position taken by Uchima that although the legal title was in the name of the defendants the true and equitable ownership of the land was in the plaintiff's. The land was bought for \$450 per acre by Inai in 1927 and worth \$2,000 per acre now.

This article from the Aug. 29, 1958, issue of the *Pacific Citizen* summarizes a real estate lawsuit involving property owned by Kumeji Inai, father of Haruo Inai.

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

It was the next turning point in Haruo Inai's posthumous journey: Sasha Mori made sure to save all of it, including his Purple Heart.

That same month, Mori and Sonoe Inai visited the Inai family gravesite at Evergreen Cemetery. It was there where she discovered something curious about the family plot: The headstone only listed Tatsu, Kumeji and Minoru Inai. Although his cremated remains were buried in the plot, no one would know because the name Haruo Inai was not inscribed on the stone. To Sasha Mori's mind, something had to be done.

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A devout Christian, Sasha decided to reach out to a member of her church who had served in the military for advice and to learn whether her late uncle was entitled to being interred — or reinterred, in this case — at a veterans cemetery.

The short answer: Yes. Also fortuitous:

Mori's church friend also introduced her to his friend, Gail Johnson, a Gold Star mother who lost her son in 2007, for help. She reached out to Cuauhtemoc Meza, aka Temoc, director of the Los Angeles National Cemetery, the large, scenic burial ground for U.S. military veterans just east of the 405 freeway in Westwood.

But just getting the greenlight was not enough.

Before anything could begin, there was the requisite paperwork that needed to be completed to do such things as obtaining permission to disinter Haruo's urn. Sonoe also wanted half of her late husband's remains to stay put, with the other half interred at LANC. Add to that the new job that Sasha had just started in spring of 2023; its demands would put any action on hold for two years.

By March 2025, things began moving again.

» See INAI on page 13



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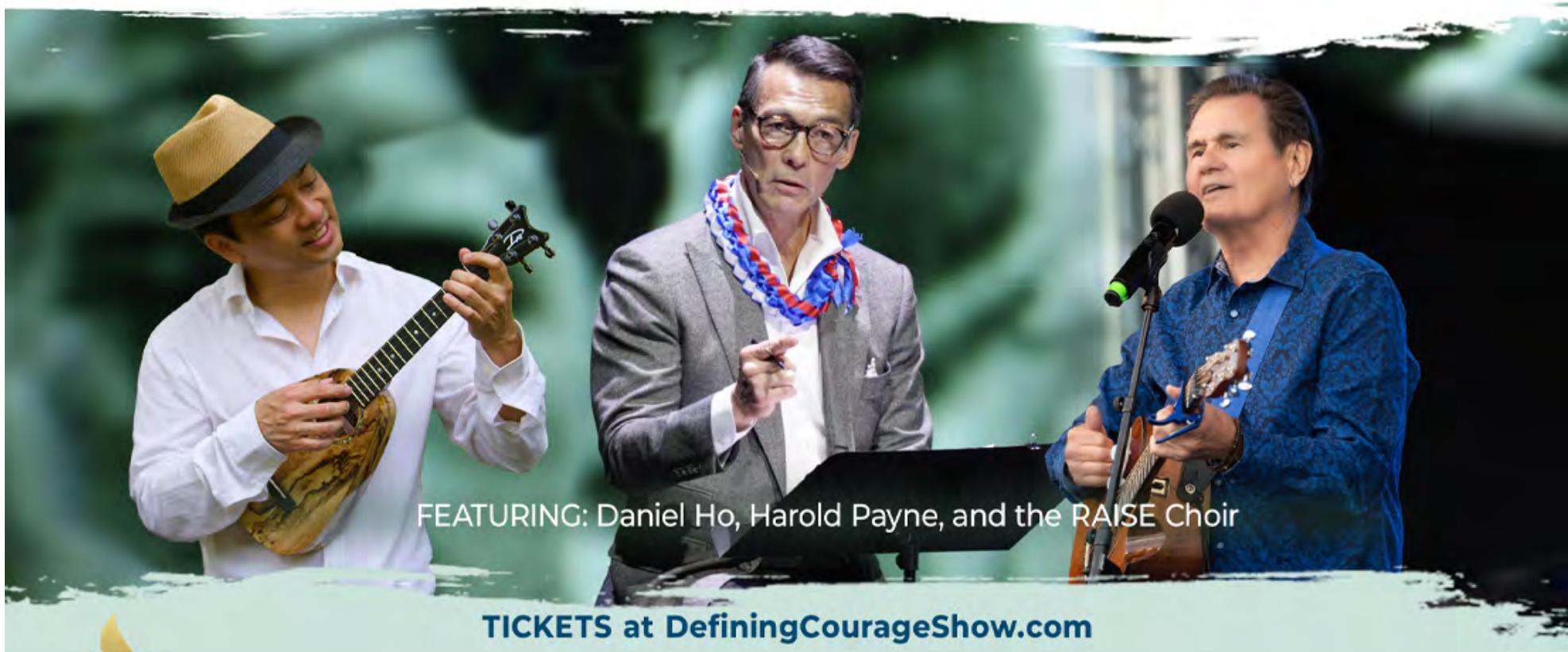


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INAI » continued from page 11

Mori was able to get a date for the service at the LANC chapel, followed by the reinterment on April 4.

Sonoe had also changed her mind about dividing her late husband's cremains, deciding that having his entire urn transferred would be OK, eliminating another possible impediment.

Sasha, meantime, decided to forgo the bagpipes for the service with a more personal touch: She would play the flute in a wind quartet, selected from the Palos Verdes Symphonic Band's First Responders in Music, of which she is a member.

Mori also took to her computer to do a little internet research about the 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and found a video news clip featuring Go for Broke National Education Center President and CEO Mitch Maki.

She then found his profile via LinkedIn and contacted him that way, inviting him to the service. Fortunately, even though Maki later told her that he typically doesn't check his LinkedIn account, he just happened to — and called Mori. Both he and GFBNEC Director of Programs and Engagement Kurt Ikeda accepted her invitation to attend the ceremony.

Mori's internet research also led her to the *Pacific Citizen*'s digital archive, where she found an article from the Nov. 25, 1944, issue. In an article with the headline that read "22 Japanese Americans Killed, 79 Wounded on French Front," she was stunned to see her

Haruo Inai's gravesite marker

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SASHA MORI



**wounded on Oct. 22 in France.
PFC. HARUO INAI, 24, (La Habra, Calif.), son of Kumeji Inai of 27-7-D, Poston, seriously wounded in France on Oct. 29.
PFC AVIDA ITO of 545 C**

Clip of a *Pacific Citizen* article from Nov. 25, 1944, listing a combat injury sustained by Haruo Inai.

PHOTO: PACIFIC CITIZEN DIGITAL ARCHIVE

uncle's name was listed among the wounded — and amazed to learn the newspaper was

still being published.

So it was that an invitation to Haruo Inai's

reinterment ceremony was also made to the *Pacific Citizen*.

In the months since her uncle's reinterment, complete with a stone marker, Mori has mulled over the sequence of events of that led to that point. Prior to wondering why her uncle's name was missing from the family plot's gravestone, Mori says she "did not know anything about the 442nd." Then, in her conversation with Maki, when he mentioned the Rescue of the Lost Battalion, her uncle's role in that and the wound he sustained, she told the *Pacific Citizen*: "I even did not know the words, but somehow the words sounded so heavy, and I thought, 'Oh, my God, I'm so embarrassed.'

"So then I started to look up the history," she continued. "And then I think that was the time I Google-searched Haruo's name with '442nd' and then found him in the *Pacific Citizen*. He was meant to be discovered by me."

Haruo Inai's honor was finally restored, and his final resting place had his name on a stone marker. One might even say that Inai was no longer *inai*.

Speaking on Memorial Day, not long after the reinterment ceremony, LANC's Meza addressed the gathering and said this about Haruo Inai:

"On April 18, 1945, Pfc. Haruo Inai was recognized for superior performance in the line of duty. Because of Pfc. Inai's actions and service to our country, we live free today. It's great Americans like him who are the reason why we have the liberties to do simple things in life." ■

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In MEMORIAM

(Editor's Note: Boldfaced names in blue in the PDF version of this page are active hyperlinks to published obituaries for the decedent.)

Adachi, 'Gina,' 61, Hilo, HI, June 14.

Arakaki, Richard Koei, 91, Aiea, HI, March 11.

Fujimoto, Janet 'Leiko' Kinoshita, 88, Hilo, HI, Aug. 20.

Fujimoto, Roy Yoshitaka, 78, Honolulu, HI, July 31.

Fujita, Donald Seiji, 77, Honolulu, HI, July 11.



Nishioka, Ruth 'Umeko' Kataoka, 98, Boise, ID, April 20.



Hashisaka, Norman Yukio, 99, Kauai, HI, Jan. 8.



Kajiya, Frank, 90, Aiea, HI, June 18.

Isa, Kazuko, 95, Mililani, HI, Aug. 2.

Nomura, Kimiko Inouye, 99, Los Angeles, CA, July 12.

Nomura, Edward 'Eddie' Afoa, 56, Savannah, GA Jan. 5.

Nomura, Roy Mark Yoshito, 90, St. Louis, MO, Feb. 21.

Ochi, Mickie, 95, San Francisco, CA July 24.

Okabayashi, Henry, 87, Sacramento, CA, Aug. 14.

Okamura, Eiko Amy, 59, Culver City, CA, June 24.



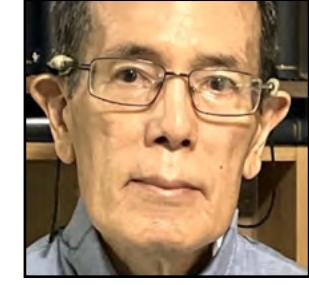
Marushige, Tadashi, 103, Honolulu, HI, April 7.

Motooka, Masao 'Masa,' 100, Wailuku, HI, July 19.

Nishioka, Judith A., 84, Marlton, NJ, Jan. 31.



Pawlaczek, Tsuyako, 97, Oceanside, CA, June 27.



Saito, Karen Toshie, 79, Seattle, WA, June 22.

Sato, Margaret 'Peggy,' 72, Salem, OR, Aug. 29.

Shibata, Victor Shozo, 82, Sacramento, CA, July 22.

News Briefs

Trump Meets Japan's New Prime Minister During Asia Trip, Inks Deals

In one of her first major tasks as Japan's new prime minister, Sanae Takaichi met President Donald Trump in his first trip to Northeast Asia during his current administration. His trip comes amid a long-running domestic government shutdown, simmering trade conflicts with the People's Republic of China over U.S. soybean imports and its stance on rare earth exports and North Korea running ballistic missile tests days before Trump's arrival. Prior to Trump's Tokyo arrival, he attended the regional Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Malaysia. In Tokyo, prior to Trump addressing U.S. and Japanese troops aboard the USS George Washington at Yokosuka Naval Base, with Takaichi and Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth present, the leaders of the two nations signed economic cooperation agreements that included pacts on rare earth minerals and natural gas, and \$550 billion in Japanese investments in the U.S. Next on Trump's itinerary was a visit to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in South Korea, where he was expected to meet South Korean President Lee Jae Myung and possibly Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Army Posthumously Promotes Varsity Victory Volunteers Killed in Action



Sgt. Daniel Betsui, Sgt. Jenhatsu Chinen, Sgt. Robert Murata, SSgt. Grover Nagaji, Pvt. Akio Nishikawa, Pfc. Hiroichi Tomita and Sgt. Howard Urabe — all seven born in the territory of Hawaii, all former cadets in the University of Hawaii's ROTC program until their expulsion because of their Japanese ancestry, all members who served as enlisted soldiers in the segregated 100th Battalion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and all killed in action while fighting for the United States during World War II — were all officially promoted to the rank of second lieutenant in late September by Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll. According to the office of Rep. Jill Tokuda (D-Hawaii), a 2024 request to the Army from the Hawaii Congressional Delegation was made to review the military records of the seven men to consider promoting their respective ranks posthumously to become commissioned officers. "This is about acknowledging the history of our Nisei veterans and honoring their sacrifice the way it should have been honored 80 years ago," Tokuda said. The University of Hawaii awarded all seven men posthumous bachelor's degrees in 2012. The Army's decision to grant these promotions was based on documentation and research provided by the University of Hawaii Army ROTC program.

Ichida, Hwang, Otera Recognized as 2025 Corporate Counsel Honorees

The Los Angeles Business Journal named Ayano Ichida, chief legal/general counsel of Aderans America Holdings Inc., as its Corporate Counsel of the Year (large private company). Also honored was Cristina Hwang, senior vp and associate general counsel at Hanmi Financial Corp., as Corporate Counsel of the Year (public company) and Steven Yutaka Otera, general counsel, Port of Los Angeles, as Corporate Counsel of the Year (nonprofit/government/municipal). The Los Angeles Angels have hired Kurt Kiyoshi Suzuki (see Page 8, April 16, 2010, Pacific Citizen, tinyurl.com/yc3d22t4) as the team's manager.

— P.C. Staff

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'In Memoriam' is a free listing that appears on a limited, space-available basis. Tributes honor your loved ones with text and photos and appear in a timely manner at the rate of \$25/column inch.

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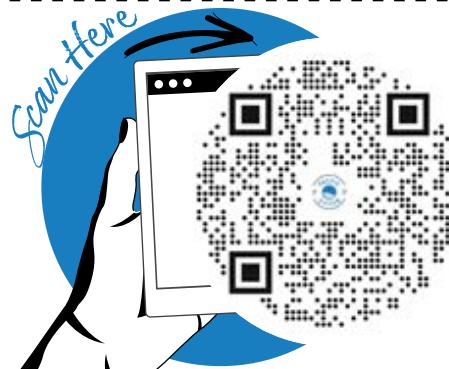
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