

Membership Application

Help us preserve our own history and the history of all generations of Japanese Americans. Membership donations (tax deductible) are needed to support the activities of the historical society. Membership is open to all. Won't you tell your friends and relatives about us, and get them to join?

Membership:

- () Renewal, Member # _____ () Student \$15 () Supporting \$50
() New () Regular \$25 () Contributing \$100
() Family \$35 () Patron \$500
() Life, one-time payment \$1,000

Name _____ Phone () _____

Address _____

City / State _____ Zip Code _____

Checks should be made payable to NJAHS. Please return application to the National Japanese American Historical Society, 1855 Folsom Street, #161, San Francisco, CA 94103.

* For proper recording, please remember to write in your member number. Your membership number is on the first line of your address label.

NATIONAL JAPANESE AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1855 Folsom Street #161
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 431-5007

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NJAHS FOCUS

VOLUME 6 No. 4

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■ NJAHS'S FUTURE

Special emphasis on the immediate and long range plans for NJAHS has highlighted our recent thinking. The prospect for both appears good.

The increase in women and Sansei membership has been dramatic. We are being called upon with increasing frequency for assistance in providing information as well as historical photos.

We provide an important service in a multi-ethnic multi-cultural America. We need to understand ourselves in order to better communicate with others.

We value the opportunity to reach a greater public audience. The Japanese American story is definitely reaching far beyond our ethnic community.

Comments received have been very helpful. We hope to improve further.

■ VIDEO CRITICISM

NJAHS was also asked to give inputs on the production of a documentary "Without Due Process: Japanese Americans and WW II."

A documentary which only relates the confusion which existed in America in the 1940's does very little to clarify the issue.

The Japanese American incarceration was a prime example of unchecked racism in modern America. It can happen again if we are not vigilant.

The failure to acknowledge this lesson is to ignore the obvious and worse, gives silent sanction to the gross miscarriage of justice toward Americans targeted for abuse.

Fortunately, Jerry Griffith, the producer of the video documentary, is very sensitive to Japanese American inputs and is willing to correct the shortcomings.

■ EXHIBITS

Women's

The highly successful exhibit at the Oakland Museum concluded on May 20th. According to the museum people this was one of the most successful projects ever seen in their many years of experience. The attendance at the accompanying programs was also unprecedented in interest and in community involvement.

Camps

Thousands of visitors saw the exhibit at San Francisco Japantown during the annual Cherry Blossom Festival week (4/20-29). Special showings were also conducted to many groups from out-of-town. The 90 panel (3 crates) exhibit is now available as a traveling exhibit.

Smithsonian

The Japanese American exhibit which opened on 10/1/87 at the National Museum of American History building has been attracting large crowds. The redress portion is being updated. We have been notified recently that the plan is to continue the exhibit until the year 2000.

■ ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of members will be held this year on July 14, 1990.

Half of the board (15) will be elected. The members will also be asked to amend the ByLaws to substitute the phrase "Advisory Council" in place of the present "Honorary Board." (Article XII)

Advisory Council members are more than just names. Their advice and input are eagerly sought, and they play an important role in the function of the organization.

■ CURRICULUM GUIDE

From the San Francisco School Board to publishers in Chicago and New York, NJAHS has received requests to supply them with appropriate photos to illustrate Japanese American history. We were glad to cooperate.

■ OLD PHOTOS

We continue to seek historical photos to add to our extensive photo archive (over 10,000 prints). We would love hearing from you.

■ NJAHS PUBLICATION

The bimonthly NJAHS publication began with the June 1985 issue and has continued uninterrupted.

Several members met recently to discuss the concept of an expanded publication.

A larger quarterly, instead of the present bimonthly publication, received a favorable reaction from the group.

As a historical society publication, concise historical articles of special interest to Japanese Americans will be given top priority. To realize this, reader participation will become essential. We need to be flooded with articles submitted by members.

A new format with increase in page size and in the number of pages is being considered. We hope to begin with 12 pages; and 16 pages should become a short term goal.

A new name to reflect more accurately the nature of the publication seems in order. How does "Nikkei Heritage" sound? The word Nikkei as used today has a cultural rather than a racial connotation.

We hope the new format will become a fact during 1990. c.i.u.

■ KANRIN MARU

A replica of the Kanrin maru, the first Japanese ship to carry Japan's diplomatic delegation to the United States in 1860, docked in San Francisco in March 1990.

In late April, NJAHS received an inquiry from a manager of the overseas department of the Matsushita Electric Co. in Osaka stating he was in San Francisco for the ceremony and was unsuccessful in his search for the gravesite of the three sailors from Kanrin maru that died in the U.S.

We were able to notify him immediately that in a small town of Colma a few miles south of San Francisco there is a stone monument sitting atop the gravesite of these three sailors at the "Japanese Cemetery."

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JAPANESE AMERICAN WOMEN
THREE GENERATIONS, 1890-1990

By Mei Nakano

with OKAASAN by Grace Shibata

This is the first comprehensive view of Japanese American history through the eyes of women. It is in three parts: Issei, Nisei, Sansei.

One important consequence for the immigrant Issei women was the liberation from the control of the dreaded mother-in-law. In the new land, however, without exception Issei women were required to provide labor for the family.

They also assumed the role of transmitting Japanese culture to their children, including arts and literature. The legacy of the Issei mother was principally in the critical task of preparing her children to survive in their new world.

The WWII years, ironically, delivered the Issei women from the drudgery of economic survival. Well past the mid-century mark, Issei women in camps took up the cultural pursuits for which they previously had little to no time.

A charming portrait of an Issei mother concludes the Issei part of the book. Mrs. Grace Shibata recalls her mother,

"Okaasan." It is a gem, told with poetic sensitivity and grace.

The Nisei section covers a full generation, from childhood to the senior years. "The Nisei female found her life constrained by the same dual evils of racism and sexism that had beleaguered her mother," says Nakano.

Many families could not afford to send them to college. In many cases, the female sibling worked to support the family while her brother attended college.

Of the four Japanese American Supreme Court cases, one was that of Mitsuye Endo (from Sacramento). Although she did not personally disobey the law and therefore was never imprisoned behind bars, she remained imprisoned in a concentration camp for three years. Her release officially released the remaining Japanese Americans in camps and made them free to return to their West Coast homes.

The post-war years brought a full matur-

ing of the Nisei women, and "an emerging realization that being a wife and a mother was not enough. While those were 'sacred duties,' they also had a duty to themselves," says Nakano.

An eventual redress was in the minds of many Nisei ever since the incarceration years. The force which unleashed the genuine redress effort was the publication of Michi Weglyns's YEARS OF INFAMY. Japanese Americans finally had a documented source upon which to base their campaign.

The most moving testimonies before the presidential commission (CWRIC) hearings were those given by Issei and Nisei women. Issei women had struggled to keep their families together after many of their husbands were snatched by the FBI and sent to unknown camps. The Nisei women had looked after their dispirited aging parents and at the same time entered motherhood or struggled to continue their education.

Most Sansei are college graduates. They are still somewhat subdued and con-

forming. Their education was job oriented. They exhibited a strong desire for upward mobility. Very few could speak Japanese. Their outmarriage is considerable, over 50 percent.

The Sansei women's determination to maintain and foster their Asian identity seems increasing, according to Nakano. This desire for affinity with Japanese culture is a surprise to most Nisei and a delight to the Issei. Survival is not a pressing motive for them.

Nakano sees the Sansei women as being engaged in the formation of a new American culture, a culture in which the positive characteristics of each separate culture are incorporated into the whole. "Their earlier ambivalent feelings about themselves as Japanese Americans seems to have settled into something touching on pride," says Nakano.

"They have yet to break down barriers to full participation," says Nakano. "They have, however, not yet hit their peak years."

c.i.u.

■ LOST BATTALION

The first edition copy of a book printed in Munich, Germany, in 1945 of an account of the 141st Infantry Regiment was donated to NJAHS by Harry Iwafuchi. He had received the book recently from his Texas friend.

This Texan was a platoon Sergeant in the 1st Bttn of the 141st Inf. Regiment rescued by the 100/442nd in the Voges Mountain in October 1944.

The rescue of the "Lost Battalion" was an unforgettable episode in the lives of those involved.

Due to heavy casualties from the long campaign, only 1200 men were on hand to attempt the rescue. Over 800 casualties, including 140 killed in action, were sustained by the 100/442nd to rescue 211 Texans. A full 25 percent of all Japanese American KIAs (killed in action) during WWII was in the rescue of the "Lost Battalion."

■ "COLOR OF HONOR"

This documentary by Loni Ding was edited down to 45 minutes from the original 90 minutes and shown in Japan by NHK.

■ IN MEMORIUM

Senator Spark M. Matsunaga died 4/15/90 from cancer. A week earlier he had cast his last vote on the floor of the Senate from a wheel chair. He was 73.

He was a graduate of the University of Hawaii and the Harvard Law School. He served in the 100th Infantry Battalion and in the Military Intelligence Service. He served 7 terms in the U.S. House of Representatives, and was a member of the U.S. Senate for 14 years.

Among his many memorable achievements in Congress were the establishment of the U.S. Institute for peace, a bill to name a national poet laureate, and the redress bill for Japanese Americans.

The NJAHS's photo exhibit, "U.S. Detention Camps, 1942-1946," on display at the San Francisco Cherry Blossom Festival in April 1990 was dedicated to the memory of Senator Spark Matsunaga.

■ DACHAU STORY

A Dachau inmate who remembers the Nisei soldiers who came to liberate them in April 1945 is being interviewed for inclusion into the revised "Yankee Samurai" documentary by Kay Schory.



Rich with 6-year-old son Tai

■ RICHARD TOKESHI

Richard, a Sansei, began as part-time in mid-December 1989. He is now a full-time NJAHS staff person as a project and membership coordinator.

He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from University of Illinois in 1969. He worked as a graphic designer for the University of Illinois Press, and then served in the U.S. Army as head draftsman for the Ranger Department.

He was a staffperson for the Japantown Art and Media Workshop in San Francisco. He was a staffperson for the Kimochi Senior Center in San Francisco just prior to his joining NJAHS.

Richard has been a volunteer and a participant for many of the community organizations in San Francisco Japantown.

■ "JAPAN" OR "NIHON"

"Japan" was a name unknown to her people when made into common usage by foreigners. It stuck. It is a corruption of the Chinese word for Japan brought back to Europe by Marco Polo in the 13th Century.

Japan missed an ideal opportunity to change the name to the one used by her own people—Nihon or Nippon. In the post WWII period, as the nation embarked upon a new course with a new constitution, discarding "Japan" for "Nihon" or "Nippon" would have been well understood by the world.

The answer from the Japanese, especially merchants, was typically Japanese. "We're well known as Japan. Changing the name would bring difficulty to foreigners."

Many countries have discarded their previous names. African and Southeast Asian countries are prime examples. China did not hesitate to change "Peking" to Beijing."

The choice between "Nippon" and "Nihon" is a dilemma to some. If there is a preference for "Nihon," it is because its corruption into an abbreviated epithet is phonetically not possible. c.i.u.