

Sharples/South Shore Middle School renamed 'Aki Kurose'

'A historic moment for JA community'

By Jeffrey Hattori, "Aki Kurose School" Committee

In a fitting tribute to an individual who believed in and promoted children and peace her entire life, the Seattle School Board voted to rename "Sharples/South Shore Middle School" to "Aki Kurose School," on Wednesday, November 3rd. Over 40 Kurose family members, supporters and friends attended the meeting. This was truly a historic moment for Seattle Schools and for the Japanese American community, for this action represented the first time a school has been named after a Nikkei and for a school teacher.

Because of the scheduled move of South Shore Middle School to Sharples in the fall of 1999, an opportunity arose to rename the school. Initiated in late May of this year by Leae "Mom" Wilson, long-time colleague of Aki Kurose and advocate of children, the JA's Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship Committee momentarily diverted its focus to join with "Mom" to organize the renaming effort. And with the support of the Kurose family, it was considered a very appropriate association between the school and Aki because of the school's diverse population of children.

Through the leadership of "Mom" and long-time JA's and past Seattle School Board member, Alan Sugiyama, the committee followed the School District's process for considering a name change and quickly engaged in a grassroots community wide effort to gar-



Al Sugiyama makes the case for renaming Sharples Middle School as Aki Kurose School to the school board. Kip Tokuda and Leae "Mom" Wilson listen.

Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship Fund nears goal

We are pleased to announce that the Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship Fund has now reached 80% or \$20,000 of its goal of \$25,000. This is in large part due to the tremendous generosity of each and every one of you...thank you very much! In addition to the goal of raising \$25,000, the Seattle Chapter JA's would like to begin awarding the Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship in early 2000. This means that we have only a few more months to raise

See "Kurose Memorial Scholarship Fund Drive" on page 3

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ner support. It was truly a refreshing and galvanizing experience, for the committee found nothing but enthusiastic and unconditional support. Often when organizing a community effort we encounter the question, "why?"; however, in this case, the unanimous response was, "how?" (as in, "how can I help?"). And it was because of this type of support and encouragement by all individuals and groups that over 1000 signatures, many from alumni of Sharples and South Shore, were gathered representing diverse support from just about every sector of the community.

On September 2, 1999 a presentation was made to the staff of Sharples/South Shore in support of the name change. Speakers that morning included: King County Executive Ron Sims, Seattle School Board Member Jan Kumasaka, King County Council Member Larry Gossett, Seattle City Council Member Richard McIver, 37th District State Representative Kip Tokuda, Sharples Alumni Theresa Mori, Community Activist Eddie Rye, and Assistant to Superintendent Joseph Olchefske, Sue Byers. And within two months of this presentation, the Seattle School Board voted in favor of what thousands believed in and supported.

Many thanks go to the Sharples/South Shore Principal, Bihoa Caldwell, the staff and students, and PTA President, Maureen O'Reilly, whose leadership and support ensured the name change. It has been suggested that a "Peace Crane" will become the school symbol to reflect and honor Aki.

Special thanks go to the tireless efforts of "Aki Kurose School" Committee members: Leae "Mom" Wilson, Alan Sugiyama, Kazzie Katayama, May Namba, Cherry Kinoshita, Chiz Norton, and Elaine Akagi. Most importantly, the committee thanks the Kurose family and the thousands of individuals who actively advocated and worked in support of honoring Aki Kurose.

What seemed like wishful thinking back in late May 1999 is now a reality. The values and spirit of an individual we love and respect, Aki Kurose, will endure for years to come with our youth and our community.

A view from the outside

by David Yamaguchi

Astronauts always comment on how wonderful it is to look at the earth from beyond it. In a smaller way, we occasionally have chances to view the Japanese American community and JACL through the eyes of those watching them from afar. One such opportunity came my way a few weeks ago by means of our chapter web site.



The site led a graduate student (a UW graduate) at an out-of-state university, to our basic information, and to query our availability to meet with representatives from the Osaka office of the Human Rights Association for Koreans in Japan. The student had met them during her one-year Japan research visit. At first, I politely declined, explaining that we are a limited-budget volunteer group with little international clout. But the Osakans persisted—they were going to be passing through Seattle anyway. If possible, they wanted to hear first hand how JAs had been able to accomplish the major historical milestones of Issei citizenship, repealing Asian Land Laws, Redress, a national museum, and recent monument activities. Since most of these events happened before my time, and since they would need us to converse in Japanese, I asked Ken Nakano to help me at a last-minute, informal dinner at an Ivar's.

Over salmon, our three visitors, plus a Seattle University student (a niece of one of the visitors) who doubled as a translator, explained that they call themselves *Zainichi* Koreans, written with the kanji for "staying" and "sun." They are the offspring of immigrants who took jobs in Japan during the decades leading up to WW2. They use "Zainichi" in the same way we use Nikkei to refer to ourselves. They explained that they are Nisei and Sansei.

But it was the parallel truths in what the *Zainichi* had to say next that surprised me. They explained how they are looked down on when they visit Korea for multiple reasons. They are the descendants of its rural, poor. Their Korean-language skills are impaired. They did not help rebuild that country after the war. At the same time, the *Zainichi* remarked that Koreans view them with envy because they live in wealthier Japan. They continued by describing how they feel little connection to Korea, unlike their Issei ancestors. They are in Japan to stay.

Accordingly, the *Zainichi* do not look to Korea for guidance and inspiration in how to live their lives. They look to us—JAs, especially the JACL. For the past several decades, they have watched us progress as a people and as an organization through the Japanese media. It was humbling to hear this, for their situation has been far tougher than ours. Most of their Nisei lack reparations for wartime mistreatment; their Sansei still lack citizenship and face blatant job discrimination. (See related articles in the May 24 and Sept. 13 *Post-Intelligencer*, www.seattle-pi.com).

I raise this dinner meeting as a roundabout way of making a few points closer to home: (1) New activities and connections are possible when we utilize the complementary skills of our own Nisei and Sansei. In this case, Jill Beppu's web site laid the groundwork for our meeting. (2) The external world is watching what we achieve, including the *Zainichi* Koreans, American college students, Japanese Latin Americans, and Jewish Americans among many such groups.

As a chapter, as an organization, and as a community, we are capable of great things, as is evidenced by this month's article on the Aki Kurose School name change. In the next ten years, much of the baseline story of JAs will be completed. What we manage to accomplish during this interval will depend on the degree to which we can set aside our egos and occasional intergenerational differences, and tackle the tasks before us.

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Community Calendar

[contact person in brackets]

Nov. 17, Board meeting, chapter office, 7 p.m., all welcome [Dave Y.].

Dec. 5, Lake Washington JACL installation dinner, Bellevue Inn, 5 p.m. [Rose Nohara, 425/455-8379].

Dec. 18, Mochi-tsuki, Japanese Congregational Church, place orders by 12/16, \$4.25/doz. [Tossie Yamashita, 206/329-4228; Tammy Kikuchi 206/322-3103].

Jan. 29, Seattle JACL installation banquet, Doubletree Suites, Tukwila.



Visitors from the Human Rights Assn. for Koreans in Japan; Ken Nakano, center.



Some of the "Aki Kurose School" supporters gather after the name-changing vote by the school board. From left: Al Sugiyama, Jeffrey Hattori, Elaine Akagi, Larry Matsuda, and Bi Hoa Caldwell (principal, South Shore Middle School).

Kurose Memorial Scholarship Fund Drive, continued from page 1

the remaining \$5,000. Please won't you help us one more time with a donation to help us reach our goal to honor and cultivate the spirit of Aki with our youth?

Please make checks payable to the:

Seattle Chapter JACL
PO Box 18558
Seattle, WA 98118

Attention: May Namba, Chair, Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship Committee

Please note in the memo section of your check: "Aki Kurose Scholarship." On behalf of the Aki Kurose Memorial Scholarship Committee...thank you very much!

Aki Kurose Scholarship Donations

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If you have not received a copy of the 1999 directory, please send your request for a copy to: May Namba, 2324 NW 94th, Seattle, WA 98117.

We apologize if your name was not in the directory or for any other errors that may have occurred during the printing process. If you have an unlisted telephone number, your name will not have been included in the directory.

For copies of the directory, please send a self-addressed label or your name and address on a piece of paper so it can be affixed onto the directory for mailing to you.

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Thank You!!!

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Seattle Chapter JACL is a non-profit, grassroots civil rights organization dedicated to empowering our local community through high-quality programs and strategic partnerships focusing on activism, education, and youth leadership development. As a chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League, we strive to be a leading Asian American advocacy group for civil and human rights while promoting and preserving the values and cultural heritage of Japanese Americans.

Our primary means of carrying out our mission is a monthly meeting, held at 7 p.m. on the third Wednesday of each month at the chapter office (316 Maynard Ave. S., Seattle) except August. All are welcome. (Those wishing to make presentations or be added to the meeting agenda should contact David Yamaguchi.)

Seattle Chapter JACL Newsletter

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Board members should submit materials to the editor (shimaito@foxinternet.net, fax 206-722-2044, 6621 S. Bangor St., Seattle, WA 98178) by the first Thursday of the month.

Non-board members and readers should send items for inclusion to David Yamaguchi, preferably in electronic format, by the last Thursday of the preceding month.

Calendar items emphasize chapter or community events not likely to be covered by community newspapers or by other newsletters. Business-card advertising space is available at a rate of \$10/issue or \$120/yr (circulation is about 1000).

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