

# KOKORO

THE HEART AND SOUL OF OUR COMMUNITY  
SAN MATEO CHAPTER JAPANESE AMERICAN CITIZENS LEAGUE JUNE 2008  
[WWW.SANMATEOJACL.ORG](http://WWW.SANMATEOJACL.ORG)  
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SAN MATEO JACL IS DEDICATED TO PROMOTING THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE JAPANESE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND TO PROTECTING AND ADVANCING THE HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS OF OUR MULTI-ETHNIC SOCIETY THROUGH EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS.

Articles must be submitted before the first Friday (one month prior to publication) and in electronic format [Microsoft WORD, New York font] to [katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com](mailto:katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com)

## THE JAPANESE IN HAWAII, part 2 of 2, by Dennis M. Ogawa and Glen Grant

These immigrants were the first of what would become wave after wave of Issei, the first generation. Each Issei group was as anxious as the next to find new wealth in Hawai'i. By 1924, so many Japanese had come to the islands that they constituted over 40% of the population. Working for low wages in the sugar and pineapple fields, day-after-day, year-after-year, hauling, cutting, slashing and burning cane, the Issei gave their muscles, blood and sweat to buttress the great plantation fortunes.

Their lives were contained within the boundaries of their plantation camps. Yet even in the midst of poverty, a sense of community, a sense of pride and permanency began to be articulated. Picture bride marriages were arranged to perpetuate the traditional Japanese family. Issei women, crossing an ocean to meet husbands they had never known, began not only to serve the home and give birth to the Nisei, the second generation, but to work alongside their husbands in the fields.

The early years of the Nisei were a complex period of cultural growth and "finding oneself." At home, the second generation learned filial piety, respect for the family and the simple virtues of Japanese behavior; at Japanese language school they learned to speak the language of their parents; and in American public school, from the radio and movies, from other non-Japanese of all races, they learned of justice, equality, opportunity and that unique blending of ethnic cultures and pidgin language known as the local lifestyle.

War interrupted the education of the Nisei, as it did almost all aspects of life in Hawai'i. The Japanese bombs that fell on Pearl Harbor that day in 1941 caused many sacrifices for Japanese Americans.

Sacrifices are made only with a commitment. After World War II, the Japanese American Nisei were committed to provide for themselves and their families a secure, equal place in the island society. The war had brought unprecedented changes in Hawai'i's political and economic structures and the Nisei sought to capitalize upon those changes. The educational level of the Nisei climbed as returning veterans took advantage of the GI Bill. A growing tourist industry in the post-war years offered jobs and business expansion. Nisei men and women swelled the ranks of professional occupations—doctors, lawyers, dentists, teachers or engineers.

In 1954, the Democratic party, comprised largely of Nisei politicians took control of both Houses of the Territorial Legislature. From then until the present, the Nisei would play a major political role in the emergence of a new Hawai'i.

Political success is in many ways the symbolic culmination of the Japanese American saga of the Issei's plantation experience, the wartime sacrifices, and the post-war striving for acceptance and success by the Nisei. But the Japanese American drama has not been totally played out. The Sansei and Yonsei, the third and fourth generations, are beginning their own chapter of the Japanese American story. They stand at the precipice of history, realizing that past accomplishments and cultural pride can sustain but cannot guide a generation. They search for new meanings and new values beyond their ethnic background, realizing their human values and outlooks are being blended into an evolving multicultural Hawai'i lifestyle.

## UNTOLD PRE-WWII STORIES SURFACE

An article by the above title, written by Momo Chang in the *Oakland Tribune*, recalled how sixty-six years ago Executive Order 9066 was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Preserving California's Japantowns project, directed by Donna Graves, is seeking to uncover more information on the 43 Japantowns scattered throughout the state.

Historic Japantowns still thrive in Los Angeles, San Jose, and San Francisco, but other locales, such as Oakland, were home to Nikkei populations. In Oakland, there had been more than 400 Japanese-owned businesses, places of worship, fish markets, community halls, and areas of cultural interest that together formed a vibrant life for its residents. Chang writes: "Project researchers found that the Japanese businesses were not concentrated in a traditional 'Japantown,' but spread throughout the city. Many Japanese Americans lived in West Oakland. . . . Using 1941 directories published by two Japanese newspapers, researchers found Japanese-owned nurseries, churches, corner groceries, shoe repair shops and more . . ."

The project is sponsored by the California Japanese American Community Leadership Council and funded by the California Civil Liberties Public Education Program. If you would like to see video clips related to the project, such as an oral history of retired dentist Leo Saito, 92, whose parents ran a shoe repair shop and cleaners prior to WWII, you may visit: [www.californiajapantowns.org](http://www.californiajapantowns.org).

## SENATE OKs BILL FOR U.S., FILIPINO VETS

The Senate approved in April omnibus veterans benefits legislation introduced by U.S. Sen. Daniel Akaka, D-Hawaii, that would increase veterans' benefits and establish pensions for Filipinos who served alongside Americans in World War II. The 96-1 vote sends the bill to the House. President Bush has not said he would veto the bill, but the White House and some Republicans wanted to strip out the pension for Filipino veterans because they said the money was better spent on soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Supporters said this bill would overturn a 60-year-old law to give 18,000 Filipino veterans of WWII who live abroad a roughly \$300-a-month pension. "The Filipino veterans of World War II fought bravely under U.S. military command, helping us win the war only to lose their veteran status by an act of Congress," said Sen. Akaka.

The Filipinos fought at Bataan and Corregidor and an estimated 60,000 walked with 15,000 Americans on the infamous "Bataan Death March." After the fall of the Philippines to the Japanese, many Filipinos were part of organized guerrilla units, fighting Japanese forces, according to an article titled "Senate approves Filipino vets bill" by Dennis Camire in the April 25, 2008 edition of the *Hawai'i Star Bulletin*.

## SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 21<sup>st</sup>!

September 21, 2008 will be the date of the annual San Mateo JACL Golf Tournament. The event raises money for scholarships to deserving high school students.

## LOOKING FOR CSM STUDENTS DURING THE INTERNMENT YEARS

Lewis Kawahara, an adjunct professor of Ethnic Studies at the College of San Mateo (CSM), is seeking persons of Japanese ancestry who attended CSM when Pearl Harbor was attacked and/or when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 (Feb. 1942). Most likely those persons who were attending CSM were not allowed to continue their college education nor were they able to graduate from CSM during that time. College of San Mateo should honor these people of Japanese ancestry and give them their degrees. This is only a symbolic gesture but the college has a chance to right a wrong and the time is long overdue. If you know of someone who was attending the College of San Mateo during this time, please contact Lewis at 650.378.7301 x19056 or e-mail [kawaharal@smccd.edu](mailto:kawaharal@smccd.edu).

## MINETA, SIMPSON JOIN FORCES TO BUILD LEARNING CENTER

Norm Mineta, who served in the Congress and cabinets of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, is a longtime friend of Alan Simpson, former Wyoming senator. Both are 77 years old, but in 1943, they were 12-year-old Boy Scouts who met "in a windswept corner of northwest Wyoming."

# **THE POSTON RESTORATION PROJECT**

***Help us save the site & build a museum!***

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## **...THE FACTS....**

1. Poston has the most remaining building of the 10 camps
2. The original buildings are rapidly deteriorating
3. Colorado River Indian Tribes have leased property to us
4. We are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) historical & educational organization

## **...OUR MISSION...**

- ◆ To restore the remaining buildings
- ◆ To relocate barracks that are still standing
- ◆ To build a museum & interpretive center
- ◆ To include a learning center & archive

## **...WE NEED...**

- ◆ Donations (tax-deductible)
- ◆ Artifacts (photos, papers, clothing, crafts, letters.....)
- ◆ Your stories! (videotaped oral histories)
- ◆ Volunteers (fundraising, research, work at Poston site)

***~All Contributions to the Poston Project are Tax Deductible~***

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The Poston Community Alliance, Inc is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization

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Mineta and his family had been relocated from San Jose and held in a concentration camp in Heart Mountain because they were Japanese American, according to an article “Mineta, ex-senator forged ties at internment camp” in the San Jose Mercury News [May 2, 2008] article by Frank Davies. Simpson remembers this as “a time of absolute confusion.” He is referring to the war hysteria following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor:

In Wyoming, people were fearful about the [concentration] camp, and signs in town warned, “Japs stay away.” Gov. Nels Smith warned federal authorities to make the camps secure or else there would be “Japs hanging from every pine tree in the state.”

But Simpson’s Scout leader told him the boys in the camp “were Scouts, just like us,” and took the troop there for jamborees. Simpson and Mineta shared a pup tent and became friends.

Now, the two are helping to raise \$5.5 million for an interactive learning center at the site of Heart Mountain Relocation Center, where Mineta and 11,000 other people were imprisoned behind barbed wire fences and armed guard towers. For more information, about Heart Mountain, its history, and plans for the learning center, go to Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation’s site at [www.heartmountain.net](http://www.heartmountain.net).



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