



Japanese American Citizens League Mile Hi Chapter Notes

Volume II, Issue X

November 2011

President's Message



Thank you to everyone that attended our October 22nd membership social. The event was a smashing success, and 13 people signed up as new members! I was very pleased to learn that we have a lot of members with fabulous singing voice!

I also want to thank everybody that attended the November 4th screening of "Vincent Who" at the University of Colorado-Auraria Campus. The room was packed with students and professionals from all walks of life. Curtis Chin, the writer and director of the documentary, stayed after the screening and conducted a Q & A with the audience. It was apparent that everybody was very passionate about civil rights. I am proud of the fact that Mile Hi JACL was one of the key sponsors of this screening, and am looking forward to doing more events with the local college students.

I've said this before, and I will say it again. Mile Hi JACL is a membership based organization, and we cannot do this without your support and involvement. I want to thank all of the volunteers that helped out with the membership social, the rummage sale, and the "Vincent Who" screening. As always, if you have any suggestions or ideas for future event, please do not hesitate to contact me at milehijacl@gmail.com. I hope to see all of you at our next event!

Sincerely,
Harry Budisidharta
Mile Hi JACL President

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Mile Hi JACL Quarterly Social

This quarter's Mile Hi JACL social was held on Saturday, October 22nd. We had 49 attendees, of which 13 signed up as new members. Welcome to all of our new members! We appreciate your support of the Mile Hi JACL and look forward to your involvement in our future activities. Also, we would like to extend our appreciation to Gladys & Frank Konishi and Toe & Frank Sakamoto for coordinating this event.

J-Spot and Young Buddhist Association (YBA) Host Line Dancing Event

J-Spot and the YBA hosted a joint line dancing event to help raise funds for the YBA's Sunshine Trip, an opportunity for YBA members to tour various Buddhist temples across the west coast. This family friendly event attracted people of all ages, and while promoting health through physical activity. The YBA was able to raise \$175 for their Sunshine Trip and J-Spot also collected \$150 in donations for future events. Special thanks to the YBA that prepared a delicious lunch for all of the participants, Judy Yamakishi and Vernon Lee who helped teach the dances, Gary Yamashita and Shannon Umetani for helping organize the event, and the Tri-State Denver Buddhist Temple for hosting the event.

Photos taken by Jessica Moy



The Congressional Gold Medal

by Ron Abo

From October 31 to November 3, 2011, I had the honor to accompany my father, Isamu Abo to Washington D.C. where he and his fellow warriors of the 100th Battallion/442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Military Intelligence Service were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal. My dad turned 94 on November 14, 2011, and I think this was the highlight of his life.



Isamu and Ron Abo at the WWII Memorial, Washington, D.C.

My father graduated from college in 1940, the first and only of his 7 siblings to do so. He enlisted in the Army on January 23, 1941 to avoid being drafted. After Pearl Harbor, he was shuttled around inland Army bases as a company clerk until 1944 when the 100th Battalion and the 442nd RCT was formed and activated to Italy. He was in Company D, in a machine gun squad in the famous battle to rescue the Lost Battalion in France and was wounded and sent to a field hospital. He returned to action along the French/Italian border until the war ended. After the war, he returned to be near his family in Idaho and farmed. In the early 1950's our family moved to Denver where he operated a gas station and garage until he retired in the late 1970's.

My father still doesn't talk about his war experience except for chronological accounts of where he was. I sat next to a Sansei my age who was representing his father who passed away 35 years ago. He didn't even know that his father fought in WWII until after he died. Someone once said to me that trying to describe war is impossible. Maybe the impossibility is the reason for the silence.

There were many times during the trip that I was overcome with emotion – listening to the speeches and learning of the deeds that these men accomplished. It is hard for me to fathom what they did and what they felt. These men fought with weapons and equipment, which by today's standards were primitive. They enlisted when their families were being incarcerated in concentration camps. I don't know if I could or would do what they did.

I had the opportunity to talk to a few of them. I sat next to James Yamane during the banquet. He was in Company I during the battle for the Lost Battalion. Company I was the first to reach the Lost Battalion after breaking through enemy lines. I read from previous accounts that Company I started with 185 men and 8 made it through without being killed or wounded. James was one of them. He chuckled when he told me he made it through the Lost Battalion battle, but was later wounded in Italy.

On the plane ride home, I sat next to George Sakato who is a Medal of Honor recipient. He was very humble. He said the reason that he joined the Army was that he was farming in 115 degree heat in Arizona and the Army seemed like a better alternative. He said that the action that earned him the Medal of Honor was born out of outrage and anger when his best friend suffered a direct hit from an artillery round. He said he was so mad that he climbed out of his foxhole and charged the enemy. By the time he had vented his rage, 32 German soldiers surrendered to him.

These were common men put in uncommon, frightening, life altering circumstances. They did what they had to do. They were loyal soldiers and they ended up doing the impossible. And when those who survived came home, they returned to lives that were forever changed. But they put together their lives, returned to school, raised families, engaged in successful jobs, businesses and careers, and gracefully got old. Through their actions and sacrifice, I am able to enjoy freedom and access to opportunities that might not otherwise be available to Japanese Americans.

The Congressional Gold Medal and Bronze Star Medal Honoring US Army's 100th Infantry Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team and MIS

By: Naomi Tashiro, Brighton, CO

I had the honor of escorting my Uncle Goro Sakaguchi to Washington DC to receive the Congressional Gold Medal and the Bronze Star Medal. This was awarded for his service in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. He was inducted into the Army along with his brother Ray in July of 1944. His brother Keizo volunteered the year before so he could be in the artillery division. Uncle Keizo was with the 522nd Artillery Battalion of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

Uncle Goro and Uncle Ray took basic training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi and were trained as rifleman. They were there for 5 months and in January of 1945 went to Camp Shanks, New York. There, they boarded a ship to Europe. They joined the 442nd when they were in Southern France. Sadly my Uncle Ray passed away last June before this award was approved.



The Congressional Gold Medal Ceremony was held at the U.S. Capitol, Emancipation Hall and was presented to the three units by Speaker of the House John Boehner. The Bronze Star Medal was held at the Washington Hilton and given by General Raymond T. Odierno, Chief of Staff, US Army.

This was a trip of a lifetime. Pride and emotions ran high for me as my Uncle was saluted, thanked and honored by passing travelers. The staff at the airlines ensured that they were announced at each gate. The captain of the plane announced these veterans on board and they were applauded. Traveling to each ceremony was a sight. The Honor Guard (The Old Guard) was in charge of caring for these veterans during their bus trips, at the WWII Memorial and the U.S. Capitol. At the WWII Memorial, the Honor Guard who helped us wanted a picture of my Uncle with him. He said with great emotion that it was more than an honor to meet and be a part of such an event.

Honor Flight was gracious to fly 7 of the Japanese American WWII Veterans from Colorado to Washington DC. In total there were 8 of the 1,200 veterans who traveled from Colorado. There were more than 3,000 family members in attendance.



The Archeology of Amache - An Update and an Invitation

By Bonnie J. Clark, Mile Hi Board Member and Director of the DU Amache Project

A Japanese American incarceration camp seems an unlikely place to do archaeology. For a discipline often associated with discoveries of the deep past, World War II seems rather young to catch the interest of archaeologists. In addition Amache, the camp located in the far southeastern corner of Colorado, was quickly dismantled almost as soon as it closed in 1945. To study its physical remains you need to look beyond the nearly complete lack of buildings to more subtle signs of life in the camp – building foundations, alignments of trees planted by internees, small lost and broken objects. When you learn to do so, aided by systematic study and modern technologies, the richness of the material record of the camp reveals itself. These physical remains are then brought to life by former internees, through their photographs and memories of a time that still has many lessons to teach us.



Water pipe planter at Amache

Take for example a feature discovered by the University of Denver (DU) students who studied the camp for one month in the summer of 2010. It didn't look like much when they found it, just a water pipe stuck into the ground in front of a barrack. But our studies of camp, both on the ground and with former internees, had alerted us to the common presence of entryway gardens at the camp. With a deep history in Japanese culture, entryway gardens were one way that internees changed the stark military landscape they were forced to inhabit into something more livable, more like home. Although a scavenged piece of construction material, the pipe was placed carefully, and looked like a planter. This, we thought, might be evidence of an otherwise invisible entryway garden. Our next step was to systematically

examine the area in front of the barrack with ground penetrating radar, a technology similar to sonar which reveals what is buried by soil. The radar images suggested we might find an intact garden in this location, so we proceeded with excavation.

Almost immediately we discovered a second planter, made from matching scavenged pipe, in an alignment along what would have been the walkway into the barrack. A wealth of other landscaping material was revealed through careful excavation – stones, shiny bits of abalone shell, and a brick door stoop. We were able to see the rotting remains of a tree once planted in the garden, still standing upright. Carefully crumbled and distributed throughout the soil of the garden and in the planters were bits of eggshell. We were lucky to be visited by a former internee that summer who remembered her neighbors amending the poor, sandy soil of the camp with eggshell and used tea leaves. Indeed analysis by specialists in soil chemistry of all of the gardens excavated that summer revealed a legacy of soil improvement. Other laboratory studies of this garden's soil revealed additional surprises, including seeds from both wild lettuce and morning glory. Under a microscope .

was found pollen from two flowering trees, one a dogwood and one from the family that includes cherry, plum, peach, apricot and almond.

Clearly we had found a garden, one that had been carefully designed and cared for. Saiichiro and Bun Hirota, originally from Los Angeles, lived in the barrack behind this garden in 1945. If this is their garden, they left behind a testament to skills shared with many internees, whether it was as tenders of growing things or as artists able to turn trash into beauty. Amache continues to amaze us with its overwhelming evidence of the quiet determination shown by those imprisoned at the camp. They did not choose to live there, but they did choose to not give up on making life better for themselves, their children, and their community.

The DU Amache project is excited to be returning in the summer of 2012 for another month of study at the camp between June 18 and July 14. We would like to extend a special invitation to Mile Hi JACL members to join us! We welcome visitors and volunteers, especially former Amache internees and their families. In addition, High School students who had family at Amache are encouraged to apply for an internship to participate with us for the four weeks of our study. For more information about these opportunities or the project as a whole, please visit our website at <http://portfolio.du.edu/amache> or contact me directly at (303) 871-2875 or via email: bclark@du.edu



2010 DU Amache crew of students, interns, and community volunteers



hooray for *chanbara!*

Join us for our December Open House
and screening of

Episode One: The Tale of Zatoichi

Introducing the adventures of a blind,
gambling masseur who also
happens to be a master swordsman!

Saturday, December 10th
at 10:00 am or noon

Japanese American Resource Center of Colorado
1255 Lawrence Street
Sakura Square – second level

Limited seating

Please RSVP to Dean Tsutsui at
gaco1001@qwestoffice.net or (303) 650-0708



JARCC @ Sakura Square

“What cannot be achieved in one lifetime will happen when one lifetime is joined to another.”

The Japanese American Citizens League is a national organization whose ongoing mission is to secure and maintain the civil rights of Japanese Americans and all others who are victimized by injustice and bigotry. The leaders and members of the JACL also work to promote cultural, educational and social values and preserve the heritage and legacy of the Japanese American community.

Not a Member of JACL?

Joining the Mile Hi JACL is a great way to get involved with the community and to help support our programs that educate our youth, develop leaders, and pass on our legacy from generation to generation. Membership benefits include (subject to change):

Associate Memberships are available for two years to individuals who are new to the Mile Hi JACL Chapter and includes:

- Mile Hi Chapter Newsletter
- Discounts to local chapter events (when applicable)

All other memberships include the above in addition to:

- Pacific Citizen, the JACL newspaper
- Scholarship Program
- JACL Credit Union Services
- VISA Affinity Card
- Hertz Rental Car Discounts
- Long Distance Calling Discounts
- Major Medical Insurance Program*
- Long Term Care Insurance*
- Catastrophic Major Medical Insurance*
- Medicare Supplement Insurance*

*Membership does not guarantee acceptance . The insurers have their own acceptance criteria.

If you would like to join, please complete the information below:

Membership Application

(12 month membership from the date of application)

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Associate (\$25) | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$65) | <input type="checkbox"/> Couple/Family (\$110) | <input type="checkbox"/> Thousand Club (\$100) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Century Club (\$175) | <input type="checkbox"/> Millennium Club (\$1,000) | <input type="checkbox"/> Student/Youth (\$30) - PC excluded | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Thousand Club Life (\$3,000) | | <input type="checkbox"/> Century Club Life (\$5,000) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse of 1000 or Century Club member (\$37) | | <input type="checkbox"/> Spouse of Millennium Club member (\$30) | |

Name: _____ Spouse (if applying): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____ Telephone: _____

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Member Name
Address
City, State Zip

