

KOKORO KARA

# HEART MOUNTAIN WYOMING FOUNDATION

*"from our heart"*

Summer 2017



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# What Does It Mean to be American?—Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi

The question of what it means to be American has resurfaced in light of the current national political climate. It is one that the Japanese American community first faced when the *Issei* arrived more than 100 years ago and again with Pearl Harbor and the incarceration. Today, that question differs for each of us depending on where we live, our ethnic and religious backgrounds, and commitment to the ideals that shaped our nation.

As we explore these issues during our July 28–30 Pilgrimage, we will also demonstrate the Foundation's progress over the last six years and highlight how our organization has achieved national significance (read the full story on pages 3–4). This year's theme, "The American Self: 75 Years After E.O. 9066," will be launched by two Educational Sessions on Friday morning. "Memories of Five Nisei: The Untold Stories of Former Prisoners" will be chaired by board member and Heart Mountain incarceree Sam Mihara. I'll always remember when Sam traveled to Washington, D.C. immediately after the 2011 Grand Opening expressing his desire to help the Foundation. He recalled the pain of being imprisoned and his memories of Cody and Powell. Yet after attending the opening of our Interpretive Center, he felt embraced by the local community and his fellow pilgrims. Sam epitomizes what it means to be an American by traveling around the country to talk about his incarceration experience. Many thanks to Sam for not letting this important history be forgotten.

"Rescued Heritage: Heart Mountain Artifacts and Estelle Ishigo's Works" will be led by Nancy Ukai and Bacon Sakatani, an Advisory Council member and Heart Mountain incarceree. Nancy and I met in 2015 when we helped lead a grassroots movement to halt the public auction of 450 artifacts made behind barbed wire. Given our connection and her enthusiasm for the artwork, she

will discuss the Heart Mountain objects saved from the auction block while Bacon will talk about his experiences with Estelle during and after camp. Thanks to Bacon for his lifelong commitment to keep these stories alive and his steadfast dedication to the Foundation (look at opposite page to see Bacon being honored by the Foundation at the April 2017 Santa Anita Reunion).

The historical trauma caused by the incarceration still lingers 75 years later, rippling from one generation to the next. We hope the Friday afternoon Multigenerational Discussion will allow visitors of all ages to share their experiences and thoughts on this period of American history.



Shirley Ann Higuchi

We are also excited to premiere "Facism," the latest documentary from David Ono and Jeff MacIntyre, featuring acclaimed artist Roger Shimomura and National Poetry Slam champion G Yamazawa. Roger, a former Minidoka incarceree, will unveil his original artwork at our Interpretive Center on Saturday afternoon. His work addresses sociopolitical issues of ethnicity by pairing seemingly contradictory images through figures in Japanese woodcut prints and contemporary and pop art. He recognizes and challenges the ironies and complexities

of wartime imprisonment by juxtaposing them with the current political climate and events in recent years. G, who gave a moving performance at our 2015 Pilgrimage, will join David and Jeff to host a separate Spoken Word/Video Workshop on the incarceration experience in concert with the Pilgrimage.

The Honorable Norman Y. Mineta and retired Senator Alan K. Simpson are pillars of support for the Foundation and have attended almost every Pilgrimage since the Grand Opening. They are wonderful mentors and their guidance helped me to not only understand the needs of the Japanese American community but those outside of it. Norm, in his capacity as an esteemed Heart Mountain advisor and Chair of Trustees for the Japanese American National Museum (JANM), will introduce keynote speaker Ann Burroughs, CEO/President of JANM. Ann, who was imprisoned as a young activist because of her anti-apartheid stance in her native South Africa, will now speak at the very site of Norm's confinement 75 years ago. I first met Ann at JANM during last fall's Town Hall when she was its interim director. Then as now, I was captivated by her generous spirit, understanding of the Japanese American community, and support of the All Camps Consortium initiative. I am thrilled that she is leading JANM and joining us at Heart Mountain this summer.

Our ability to be a successful and sustainable national organization is due to our talented staff and dedicated leadership. Our commitment to tell our story of the fragility of democracy is deeply rooted in the World War II Japanese American incarceration experience. Please join me at this year's Pilgrimage to share your stories and to be a part of the answer to: *What does it mean to be American?* 🇺🇸

*Shirley Ann Higuchi*



# Former Heart Mountain Incarceree Receives *Proclamation*

**F**or more than four decades, Bacon Sakatani has devoted his time and energy to organizing periodic reunions for those individuals who were held at the Pomona Fairgrounds and the Santa Anita Racetrack assembly centers before being sent to the Heart Mountain Relocation Camp.

He received a Proclamation issued by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation to recognize his work during the Santa Anita Racetrack reunion held on April 15, 2017 at the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, California. 🌸



Photo courtesy of Darrell Kunitomi

HMWF Board Member Takashi Hoshizaki presents the Proclamation to Bacon Sakatani.

## Proclamation

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 on February 19, 1942 which authorized the military to designate defense zones in the states of California, Oregon and Washington. Japanese Americans living within these zones were ordered to report to makeshift assembly centers, bringing only what they could carry.

Two assembly centers were established in Southern California: the Pomona Fairgrounds and the Santa Anita Racetrack. After enduring primitive living conditions in the assembly centers, Japanese Americans were transported to several remote facilities that the federal government termed "relocation centers," but which were in essence concentration camps under military guard. One such camp was the Heart Mountain Relocation Center located near the town of Cody, Wyoming.

For more than four decades, Bacon Sakatani has devoted his time, talent and energy to organizing periodic reunions for individuals who were held in those assembly centers and subsequently sent to Heart Mountain. In light of Bacon Sakatani's tireless work on behalf of former incarcerated, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation which oversees the Heart Mountain historic site and its interpretive learning center, wishes to recognize the dedicated service of Bacon Sakatani, a former Heart Mountain incarcerated and hereby **PROCLAIMS:**

**WHEREAS**, Bacon Sakatani has worked diligently for years organizing reunions for former Heart Mountain incarcerated confined at the Pomona Fairgrounds and Santa Anita Racetrack assembly centers, and

**WHEREAS**, Bacon Sakatani continues his valuable work in support of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation as a member of its advisory board and as a photographer and recorder of the Foundation's development and activities, and

**WHEREAS**, Bacon Sakatani continues his role as an inspirational leader for all those working to preserve the site and tell the story of Heart Mountain and the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans in 1942,

**NOW THEREFORE LET IT BE IT KNOWN**, that the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation Board of Directors honors Bacon Sakatani and expresses its sincere admiration and gratitude for his years of invaluable service to the Foundation, and the Japanese American Community.

# PILGRIMAGE

July 28–30 • Cody & Powell, Wyoming  
2017



## SPECIAL EXHIBITS

This year's Pilgrimage features an unprecedented three special exhibits which will be adorning the Interpretive Center's walls. Visual art is an excellent medium to explore the complicated idea of the "American Self" in layered, discernible, or sometimes less obvious imagery, proving the old adage "a picture is worth a thousand words." Duality is a characteristic that runs through our displays for this event: dual perspectives of incarceration through photography, dual representations of personal interactions with definitions of American identity and race, and dual identities of Heart Mountain barracks.

"Incarceration in Focus: A Comparative Look at the Photographs of Ansel Adams and Yoshio Okumoto," was made possible with the generous support of the Wyoming Arts Council, and is on display in our temporary gallery. Read more about this special exhibit on pages 11–12.

Roger Shimomura spent his earliest years behind barbed wire as an incarcerated with his family at the Minidoka site in Idaho after being forcibly removed from Seattle. The Interpretive Center will have the pleasure of displaying several pieces of art in an array of Shimomura's styles, from American pop



*Yellow No Same #4* by Roger Shimomura

art to Japanese woodblock art. His artwork is also inspired by wartime propaganda, which dehumanized the enemy but also played into the stereotypes, prejudices, and generalizations that accompany racism, xenophobia, and fear of the different and "unknown." Another source of motivation and material came from Shimomura's grandmother, who kept a diary throughout her life and gifted her thoughts to her grandson.

Shimomura's work represents the strength he gleans from adversity, taking all of the most hate-filled and misunderstood depictions of Asian Americans and reproducing them in a sophisticated, almost comic book-style look which allows penetration into popular culture, speaking a language everyone can understand. Shimomura laments that "[f]ar too many American-born citizens of Asian descent continue to be accepted as only 'American knockoffs.'" His paintings remind us that stereotypes and racism continue to exist, deep in the collective consciousness.

Stan Honda, a New York-based photographer and photojournalist explores the varied lives the Heart Mountain barracks have had since they were first constructed in 1942 in his photography exhibit "Moving Walls: Heart Mountain Barracks in the Big Horn Basin." Originally the living quarters of incarcerated Japanese Americans

## FRIDAY, JULY 28

9:30am–12:00pm

**Educational Sessions**

1:30–4:00pm

**Multigenerational  
Discussion**

6:30–10:00pm

**Dinner Banquet,  
featuring premiere of  
Spoken Word Videos,  
followed by Dessert  
Reception**



# American Self

## 75 YEARS AFTER EO 9066



during World War II, the structures later found (and continue to find) multiple uses by resourceful Wyomingites across the state. The project brings into focus key figures of 20th century Wyoming history through powerful images and narratives. Those figures include the incarcerated Japanese Americans; Wyoming farmers and ranchers; the changing landscape; and the barracks themselves.

Honda, a child of former incarcerated, says of his experience on this project: "Learning about the homesteaders and hearing their stories was fascinating. Documenting the people in their homes, of which many are former barracks buildings, was a truly memorable experience...the artifact that was the common physical experience of all the Japanese American incarcerated has taken on a new meaning for this community in northern Wyoming." The photographer has been collaborating with Los Angeles-based writer/filmmaker Sharon Yamato for the project of documenting these barracks and their various inhabitants. Honda's photographs will continue to be on display at the Interpretive Center throughout the autumn, accompanied by a premiere of Yamato's new documentary film in which the homesteaders and former incarcerated of the images are interviewed. More details will be advertised in late summer.

For more information about the Pilgrimage and to register, visit [www.heartmountain.org/pilgrimage](http://www.heartmountain.org/pilgrimage) or call the Interpretive Center at 307-754-8000.

**SATURDAY, JULY 29**

**10:00am–4:30pm**

**Presenters: Ann Burroughs, Norman Y. Mineta, Alan K. Simpson, & G Yamazawa**

**Special Exhibits: Roger Shimomura, Stan Honda, Yoshio Okumoto, & Ansel Adams**

**Documentary Film Premiere of "Facism" and Panel Discussion moderated by Jeff MacIntyre & David Ono**



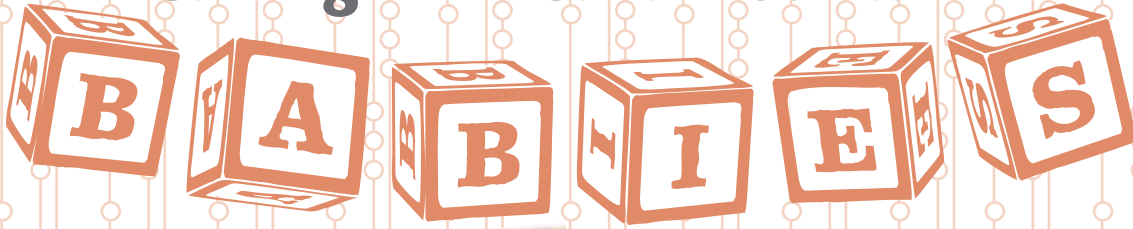
HMWF Board Member and Heart Mountain incarcerated Takashi Hoshizaki.



### SPOTLIGHT ON KEYNOTE

This year's keynote speaker will be Ann Burroughs, recently named CEO and President of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. Burroughs has ample experience in social justice beginning in her youth when she worked as an anti-apartheid activist in her native South Africa. Previously she has worked with and advised a variety of non-profit and governmental organizations with a focus on supporting democracy and community diversity. Burroughs will be introduced by retired Secretary of Commerce and Transportation and Heart Mountain incarcerated, Norman Y. Mineta. A speech by retired U.S. Senator Alan K. Simpson and a performance by National Poetry Slam Champion G Yamazawa will follow the keynote.

# Calling All Heart Mountain



“I should have been born in Los Angeles, California,” says Dale Kunitomi. “The outbreak of World War II dictated otherwise.” Instead, Kunitomi was one of 548 babies born at the hospital inside the Heart Mountain concentration camp. Many visitors to the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center are shocked at such a large number of births. Surely, they think, the hardships of camp life—not to mention the lack of privacy—would prevent incarcerated people from beginning or expanding families. And yet, life continued on, even in barracks behind barbed wire.

Giving birth and raising an infant at Heart Mountain was no easy task. Mothers in labor often had to walk all the way from their barracks to the camp hospital. Once there, they could only hope that the doctors had the proper tools. Disagreements between the older *Issei* doctors and their *Nisei* counterparts about how to run the hospital tore a rift between the medical staff. Because of this infighting, head obstetrician Dr. Motonori Kimura developed a habit of taking all the gynecological instruments home with him at the end of his shift.

Once babies were home, mothers had to plan carefully how much formula they would need. Bottles couldn't be refrigerated in the barracks, so ambulances would deliver them from the hospital every four hours. On top of all this, parents of newborns also had to deal with the cold, dust, and cramped quarters that were part of everyday life in the camp. 🌱

There are still hundreds of people around the world whose birth certificate reads “Heart Mountain, Wyoming,” a place that, thankfully, no longer exists.

## Are you one of these Heart Mountain babies?

If so, we invite you to join us at this year's  
Heart Mountain Pilgrimage, July 28-30.

In addition to all of the other activities, we will be taking  
a group picture of all attendees born here,  
and would like to see as many faces as possible!

Visit [heartmountain.org/pilgrimage](http://heartmountain.org/pilgrimage) to register and learn more.



# Lessons from Our Past

By Helen Yoshida

Seventy-five years later, the imprisonment of Japanese Americans during World War II continues to affect descendants of former incarcerated. With the anniversary of E.O. 9066, the “Lessons From Our Past” panel demonstrated parallels between 1942 and today during the Pro Bono Institute’s Annual Conference (PBI) on Thursday, March 9th.

The presentation was part of PBI’s effort to engage attorneys, law firms, and corporations with public interest issues and to be available for pro bono services to groups like the confinement sites. Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation (HMWF) Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi moderated the panel with Karen Narasaki and Carl Takei. Narasaki is the former president and executive director of Asian Americans Advancing Justice and a daughter of former incarcerated. While working for a national law firm she provided pro bono counsel for *Gordon Hirabayashi v. United States* and collaborated throughout her career with Hirabayashi, Min Yasui, and Fred Korematsu. Takei is an American Civil Liberties Union attorney focusing on prison privatization and immigration detention with familial ties to Tule Lake. Together, they shared how their personal histories connect to their civil rights work.

“Like many Japanese Americans in my generation, my work in social justice is born out of the fact that my parents were incarcerated during World War II,” said Narasaki. Her mother was 13 when her family was incarcerated in Minidoka. Her father was 16 when his family was shipped to Topaz. Her aunt’s father, a popular restaurant owner in California, lost everything because of the incarceration.

“When he got depressed in camp, he killed her mother and shot himself, leaving my Auntie Sharon, at the age of four or five, with her younger sister as orphans

[at Manzanar]. The War Department refused to let Sharon’s aunt take them to live with her in Colorado, forcing them to stay in the orphanage,” she said as conference attendees from law firms, legal departments, and public interest organizations wiped away tears.

Takei discussed how his grandparents’ wartime experience illustrated the irrationality of the incarceration.

“My grandmother was transferred out of Tule Lake because she was engaged to my grandfather, an Army sergeant stationed at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. He was in the 522nd battalion, which provided artillery support for the 442nd and was among those that liberated Dachau. While he fought in Europe, my grandmother returned to be incarcerated with her family, who were transferred to Amache in Colorado.”

When he visited the Dilley family detention facility in 2015, he saw parallels between today and what happened 75 years ago. Located in Texas, Dilley is part of a larger private prison network designed to incarcerate immigrants living in the United States.

“It tries very hard to look like a summer camp but the fact is that this is a prison that holds children. One of the most horrifying events I saw was the intake area. You can see rows and rows of children’s shoes because there are, literally, toddlers being held with their mothers in this detention facility,” said Takei.

Higuchi, whose parents met as children at Heart Mountain, spoke of lessons learned from the past.

“The silver lining is that relationships were formed out of this duress from terrible situations. And if they didn’t happen, I and others wouldn’t be here today,” she said.

Higuchi also dedicated the panel to Esther Lardent, her close friend and founder of the PBI who passed away last April after battling a long illness. Similar-

ly, Lardent’s parents met in a displaced person’s camp in Europe, where she was born. Her parents were the sole survivors of their respective families murdered at Auschwitz. A 2009 brainstorming meeting with Lardent on connecting the legal community with Heart Mountain launched the Foundation’s relationship with Walter Eggers, a partner at Holland and Hart whose firm has provided legal counsel to the Foundation for more than five years.

“The attorneys willing to take on [the cases of Hirabayashi, Yasui, Korematsu, and Endo] pro bono were a very important part of the story, defending the most unpopular and vulnerable groups and the Constitution,” said Narasaki. “We need attorneys who love the Constitution and have the courage to stand up and take unpopular clients in challenging times. As Min once explained, if we believe in America, if we believe in equal democracy, if we believe in law and justice, then each of us—when we see such errors being made—have an obligation to make every effort to correct those.”



An April 1943 snapshot of Bette Takei (née Sato), Carl Takei’s grandmother, at Tule Lake camp in California.

# Arthur & Estelle Ishigo: A Heart Mountain Love Story

By Dakota Russell

How do you know when it's love? It's always a tricky question, historically speaking. We talk up the great romances of the past, but can you prove how those people *really* felt? It's rare to discover a couple whose love for each other is absolutely clear, even when viewed from decades away; whose love helps them to transcend tragedy, and makes each person better just for being with the other. We're fortunate, in the history of Heart Mountain, to have at least one such couple: Arthur & Estelle Ishigo.

Estelle was born in 1899 in Oakland, California, to Bradford and Bertha Peck. Her parents were both over fifty when she arrived. Bradford was a piano tuner and a landscape painter. Bertha was an opera singer. Both worked occasionally as music teachers. Estelle always felt that her birth had been a mistake, and that her parents had never wanted a child, especially at such an advanced age. Estelle said she never knew her parents well, and was largely raised by a nurse. Despite this distance, Estelle inherited her mother and father's natural talents. She showed skill in drawing and painting early on and, by twelve, she had begun to master the violin.

In 1911, Estelle and her parents moved to Los Angeles, where she quickly grew into a more challenging teenager. Her parents, whom she believed had grown tired of her, sent her to live with a succession of relatives and family friends. One of these caretakers raped Estelle, and threatened to have her committed to an institution if she told anyone. She ran away and lived on the streets for a time. For six months in 1919, Estelle was briefly employed at Bell Telephone. She quit when she learned her mother had died, and returned home to care for her father. In 1921, he died as well, leaving Estelle alone in the world.

Shigeharu Ishigo, or Arthur, as he

came to be known, was born in San Francisco in 1902, the son of *Issei* parents. His father, Genzaburo, had come to the United States as a farm laborer seeking his fortune. Once he had established himself, he sent back to Japan for a wife, Chiyo. The couple had only two children, Arthur and a younger brother, before Chiyo died. Unable to care for both boys alone, Genzaburo gave Arthur's brother up to another family. Arthur, at about six years old, accompanied his father to a railroad camp in Oroville, California, where Genzaburo worked blasting and cutting into the mountains to build a track to Nevada.

After two years of railroad work, Genzaburo took Arthur to San Francisco and placed him in a Japanese boarding school, while he sought a way to return them back to the country of his birth. Genzaburo was suffering from lung disease, the effect of years spent blasting rock and breathing in the dust. He wanted to get Arthur back with his family, in case his illness should get worse. Genzaburo earned and borrowed money until he had enough to pay their passage to Japan.

Arthur felt out of place in his new home. He barely knew Japanese, so he couldn't go to school with other children. Instead, he was sent to study with a Buddhist priest, where he learned to read and write. Genzaburo died when Arthur was just fourteen. He left Arthur \$200, to return to the United States if he wished to. Though his grandfather disapproved, Arthur was determined to leave. Back in California, Arthur worked on farms and ranches until he became a man. In the early 1920s, with dreams of becoming an actor, he bought a motorcycle and drove to Hollywood.

After the deaths of her parents, Estelle adopted a new sort of family at the Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles. She



Photo courtesy of the American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming

Arthur & Estelle Ishigo, ca. 1928.

was accepted into the school alongside a number of promising Asian American artists. At Otis, Estelle encountered for the first time the Japanese American men of the Art Students League of Los Angeles: Hideo Date, Bob Kuwahara, and Benji Okubo. The young bohemians of the Art Students League exhibited at a gallery in Chinatown, and hung out in the Dragon's Den restaurant in the gallery's basement. Okubo and Tyrus Wong—a Chinese American member of the League—painted the restaurant's walls with fantastical Asian-inspired murals. Wong, who lived next door to Estelle, is best known today for creating the look of Walt Disney's *Bambi*, a project on which Kuwahara joined him.

Estelle immersed herself in the Japanese American culture of her classmates. She began taking Judo lessons and became a close friend and pupil of Nyogen Senzaki, the monk credited with popularizing Zen Buddhism in the West. Most importantly, though, Estelle's friends introduced her to a Paramount Studios janitor and struggling actor: Arthur Ishigo. Despite being brought up by old-fashioned parents in a time and place where interracial romance was taboo, Estelle described her initial meeting with Arthur as love at first sight.

It's difficult to say just how long the



courtship between Arthur and Estelle went on, but they quickly found themselves to be kindred souls. They both had spent much of their lives in the city, but shared a love of nature. Arthur was an avid fisherman, and Estelle shared her father's passion for drawing and painting landscapes. Together, they spent their weekends in the mountains and woods surrounding Los Angeles.

As they grew closer, Estelle and Arthur began to contemplate marriage, an impossibility under California's miscegenation laws. Undeterred, Estelle and Arthur slipped across the border in 1928 and were wed in Mexico. Their marriage only increased the discrimination they felt in Los Angeles. They tried to stay within the Japanese American community as much as possible. Their friends in the arts community were welcoming to them, as well. Estelle began teaching art classes for children. Arthur continued working at Paramount. Apparently giving up on his plans to become a leading man, he grew a long beard that reached down to his chest. Life may not have been perfect, but Estelle and Arthur were content.

Everything  
changed for  
the worse



Photo courtesy of the American Heritage Center,  
University of Wyoming

Estelle Ishigo at Heart Mountain.

in December of 1941, after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Arthur, along with all the Japanese Americans at Paramount, was dismissed the day after the attack. Shortly after, Estelle was fired from her job at the Hollywood Art Center because she had a Japanese last name. Stories began to circulate that the government planned to remove all Japanese Americans from the West Coast. Those rumors became a reality in the spring of 1942.

The Japanese Americans in Arthur and Estelle's Hollywood neighborhood were to be sent to the Pomona Fairgrounds, which the Army had converted into a temporary holding area, until permanent camps could be finished. Estelle refused to leave Arthur's side, and wrote the Army to ask if she could accompany him to the camp. She was assured that she could, but warned that she would be subject to the same rules as all other incarcerated.

On May 10, the date instructed, the Ishigos packed what they could carry and reported to a Hollywood church, joining a crowd of some 450 people. From there, they were bussed to Pomona, where they came face-to-face with the realities of life in a concentration camp: crowding, substandard housing, and a perimeter fenced in barbed wire. Because they weren't far from the city, though, their friends could still get passes to visit and bring them items they needed. Estelle busied herself by joining the movement to start a camp newspaper, the *Pomona Center News*. Arthur worked with some of the other performers to begin putting on plays and talent shows to lift the spirits of the incarcerated. Sometimes, Estelle would play her violin in these shows.

By August, the front page of the *Pomona Center News* read "Rumors Say We're Going to Wyoming." Trains began loading up 500 incarcerated at a time for the trip. Arthur and Estelle boarded the final train. Four nights passed. On the fifth day, they spotted the Heart Mountain concentration camp.

The Ishigos were assigned a small apartment, a 16 by 20 foot room at the

end of a barracks building in block 14 of the camp. Arthur and Estelle, in the roles they had now grown accustomed to, set about trying to improve things in the camp. Arthur took the job of boiler man for block 14. Every morning, he would wake up early to pile coal into the boiler in the latrine building, which provided hot water for the entire block. Then, he would begin the process of removing all the ash with a wheelbarrow. Because of the heat in the boiler room, Arthur almost never wore a shirt while on the job. His appearance caused a stir among the other incarcerated on his block, especially the teenage girls.

With his duties usually finished by mid-day, Arthur had plenty of time for other pursuits. He would often get permission to go down to the Shoshone River in the afternoons, taking his young neighbor, Shig Yabu, with him. Together, they would fish and hunt for castoff glass bottles to add to Arthur's collection. Arthur made pets of the wild animals he found around and outside of the camp, including a magpie that rode atop his shoulders and a young rattlesnake that lived in a cage outside his front door.

Arthur also took part in plays that were staged around camp. He asked his friends in Los Angeles to send him stage makeup but, with wartime rationing and shortages of nearly everything, all they could find to match his complexion was the leg makeup women wore to simulate nylons. On nights when he wasn't performing, Arthur would play his *shakuhachi*—a traditional bamboo flute—and tell stories about his childhood in California and Japan. Though he wore a brave face, Estelle could tell that the indignities of incarceration were weighing on Arthur. "He was different now than he used to be," she observed.

Estelle took advantage of her artistic talent and her race to get employment from the War Relocation Authority, the agency that managed the camp. She was given the position of Documentary Representative for Heart Mountain, charged with keeping a record of the Japanese American incarceration experience through her art. Though it only paid

the maximum incarcerated wage of \$19 a month, the position provided Estelle with an opportunity to do something subversive. She secretly planned to expose the injustices of the very government that employed her.

Estelle was also placed in charge of art-related community activities at the camp, most notably the reorganization of the Art Students League of Los Angeles into a new Heart Mountain League. Her old friends from the Otis Art Institute—Hideo Date, Bob Kuwahara, and Benji Okubo—had also been sent to Heart Mountain, and agreed to start teaching art classes in the camp. The first exhibit by the new Art Students League, held in a recreation hall in camp in December 1942, drew over 3,000 visitors.

Estelle also found time to play violin in several of the bands that formed at Heart Mountain. She even began her own quartet. Her primary work, though, continued to be documenting daily life in the camp. She collected every bit of scratch paper she could find, endlessly making drawings and taking notes. When asked why she was always working, she would reply, "Someone has to keep a record."

In this manner, Arthur and Estelle passed more than three years at Heart Mountain. In spite of the

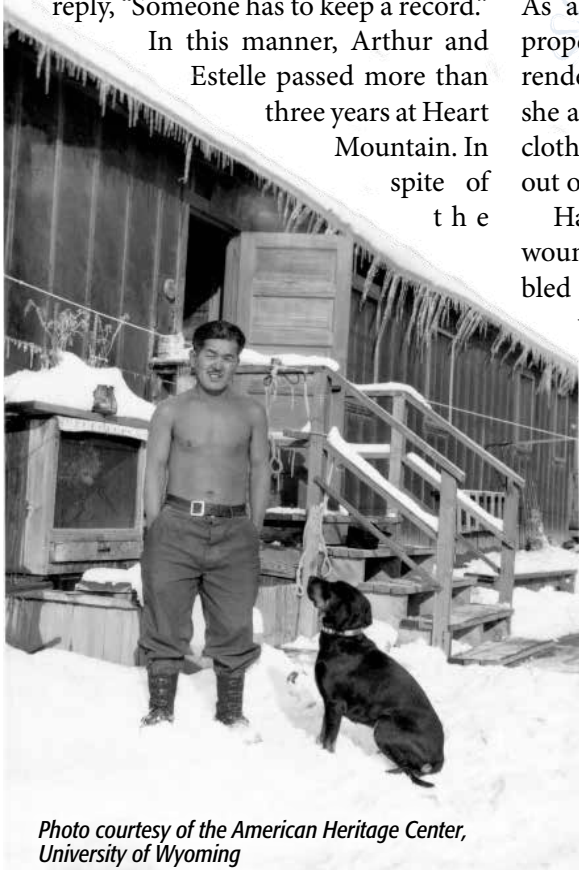


Photo courtesy of the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming

Arthur Ishigo at Heart Mountain.

hardships of incarceration, Heart Mountain was perhaps the most welcoming community that an interracial couple could hope to be part of in 1940s America. It gave both Arthur and Estelle a sense of purpose and meaning.

In the summer of 1945, the WRA announced that the camp would be closing, and encouraged incarcerated to make plans to leave. Japanese Americans had been allowed to return home to the Coast for several months now, but many stayed, as they had nothing to return home to. Homes, farms, and businesses, had been sold and lost. Arthur and Estelle realized that if they returned to California, they'd have to start over from nothing. When their fellow incarcerated asked about their travel plans, the Ishigos declared their intention to remain, and to die at Heart Mountain.

The government, of course, would not allow that. Arthur and Estelle waited for the very last train out of camp, which left in November 1945. Estelle was ordered to turn her drawings and paintings and writings over to the authorities. As a WRA employee, her art was the property of the government. She surrendered some of her work, but the rest she and Arthur slipped between layers of clothes in their suitcases and smuggled out of camp.

Having nowhere to go, the Ishigos wound up in one of the hastily assembled trailer camps that the WRA had set up back in California. They had to pay for rent and food here. With their only income coming from low-paying jobs at a fish cannery, Arthur and Estelle's chances for moving out of the camp were slim. The government eventually evicted them, again.

In 1947, Arthur managed to find work at the Los Angeles Airport. Estelle found an affordable apartment for them back in Hollywood, and resumed teaching art. Her most important work, though, still remained a secret. She was compiling the sketches and poems and stories she had

saved into a book, *Lone Heart Mountain*. The book would expose what life had been like for Japanese Americans in the camp, and would point an accusing finger directly at the U.S. government.

Then, the unthinkable happened. Arthur died suddenly, at the age of 55. "I'm alone," Estelle wrote, "with a cat and some potted plants, books, paints, easel..." Estelle sank into a deep depression. She ceased all work on her manuscript and became a recluse. It wasn't until the California Historical Society discovered and exhibited some of her work, in 1972, that she rallied enough to finish and publish her book. Estelle passed away in 1990. Her old friends from camp carried her ashes up to the summit of Heart Mountain and scattered them there, so that some small piece of her would always remain.

Arthur and Estelle Ishigo led lives full of adversity and tragedy. Nothing ever came easy for them, but their love made them strong—not just for each other, but for everyone around them. How do we know it was the real thing? We may never be able to measure it, but it seems obvious in every line of the short poem Estelle wrote for her late husband:

*To Arthur  
My beloved:*

*Let's go again to the pine forest  
Where the snow clouds drift  
And watch mountains fade in  
Veils of grey mist.  
When the bluejay & chipmunk  
Are still, let's go in the  
Moonlit breeze near a brook  
Where long shadows fall  
And fair wings whisper  
In the trees.*

*Estelle*

To learn more about Estelle and her artwork at Heart Mountain, join Nancy Ukai and Bacon Sakatani for the Educational Session "Rescued Heritage: Heart Mountain Artifacts & Estelle Ishigo's Works" on Friday, July 28, part of the 2017 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage. 🏞️





## Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee Honored in University of Wyoming Mock Trial

This April, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation partnered with the University of Wyoming College of Law to present a week of events highlighting the history of the Heart Mountain camp. The main event was the Spence Law Firm historical mock trial, held on April 10 in Laramie. Each year, UW law students research and argue a case inspired by historical events. This year's case imagined draft resister Frank Emi bringing a libel lawsuit against the editor of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*.

HMWF board member Darrell Kunitomi played Emi in the mock trial, and former incarcerated Grace Kubota Ybarra played her mother, Gloria Kubota. Board Secretary Aura Newlin served on the jury. Kunitomi, Ybarra, and Newlin also took part in two panel discussions on April 11, "Lessons From Heart Mountain" and "Parallels of the Past and Present: Exploring Executive Orders." HMWF board member Jack Ybarra also served as a panelist.

The trial and both panels were broadcast live to Northwest College in Powell and the UW Regional Outreach Center in Cody, where North-

west College instructors and Heart Mountain Interpretive Center staff were on hand to answer questions and to help tell the Heart Mountain story. Additionally, Museum Manager Dakota Russell spoke at the Park County Library in Cody on April 12, and Aura Newlin led a discussion of Eric Muller's book *Free to Die for Their Country* at the Powell Branch Library on April 13. Heart Mountain Week wrapped up with a day of free

admission to the Interpretive Center on April 14.

An undertaking like Heart Mountain Week could not have taken place without the hard work and support of the HMWF board and staff, as well as many partners in the community. The HMWF is grateful to the University of Wyoming, Northwest College, and the Park County Library System for all of their efforts in making Heart Mountain week a success! 🙏



Photo courtesy of Dylan Crouse

Grace Kubota Ybarra portrays her mother, Gloria Kubota, in the historical mock trial. (Above) Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee awaiting trial.



# INCARCERATION IN FOCUS

This past April our newest exhibit, “Incarceration in Focus” opened at the Interpretive Center. Side by side photographic displays of “camp” life adorn our temporary gallery walls, exploring incarceration from two viewpoints.

## Two Photographers, Two Perspectives

In 1943, Ansel Adams took his camera inside the barbed wire confines of the Manzanar concentration camp in California. Adams had, by this time, already cemented his legacy as the nation’s premier photographer, capturing stunning landscapes across the American West. He used his reputation to gain access to Manzanar, where the United States government was holding some ten thousand Japanese Americans it had forcibly removed from the West Coast.

At the same time, in a similar camp at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, Yoshio Okumoto was just beginning to embrace the art of photography. When the Japanese Navy bombed Pearl Harbor, Okumoto was working as a research assistant at Stanford University in California. He was sent

to Heart Mountain in the fall of 1942. Though all cameras had been confiscated from Japanese Americans before they were removed from the West Coast, Okumoto was one of several Heart Mountain photographers who acquired new photographic equipment while in camp.

Okumoto and Adams offer us two very different perspectives on the incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Adams, though sympathetic to the plight of the incarcerated, was just a visitor to the Manzanar camp. Okumoto saw Heart Mountain with an insider’s eye. Adams came with years of training and the best equipment money could buy. Okumoto was just discovering his hidden talent, and limited to what equipment he could obtain in the camp.

Adams and Okumoto both produced striking images of the incarceration experience. Among their images there are obvious differences. There are also remarkable similarities. Viewed together, these photographs remind us of an important truth: History should always be captured from multiple angles.

## Yoshio Okumoto (1903–1993)

Yoshio Okumoto was born in Hawaii to *Issei* parents. He left the islands in 1925, to earn a pre-medical degree at Stanford University in California. After graduating, Okumoto stayed at Stanford and worked in the Anatomy Department as a research assistant.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, University President Ray Lyman Wilbur was able to successfully delay the “evacuation” of Stanford’s Japanese American students and faculty until May 1942. In that month, Okumoto was forced to comply with the mandatory exclusion requirement and leave the West Coast.

A bachelor with no family on the mainland, Okumoto entered the Heart Mountain concentration camp alone. He was assigned a small barracks apartment, which he shared with two other men. He applied to work at the camp hospital, but was turned down. Stripped of his professional identity and isolated from his family, Okumoto reinvented himself as a photographer.

James Yonemura, one of Okumoto’s roommates, likely served as his





## A Comparative Look at the Photographs of Ansel Adams and Yoshio Okumoto

new mentor. Yonemura had been a photographer in Los Angeles before his cameras were confiscated by the government in the weeks after Pearl Harbor. At Heart Mountain, these restrictions were eventually lifted. Photographic equipment soon began to arrive in camp, either sent by friends or purchased by mail order. Yonemura and Okumoto were taking pictures as early as March 1943.

Many of the photographs the pair shot were commissioned portraits. Okumoto photographed numerous weddings and babies. The images he took for himself, though, were more candid and personal. Okumoto captured his fellow incarcerated in unguarded moments that Caucasian photographers never saw.

Even working without professional equipment, Okumoto's talent shines through. He noticed the small details that define everyday life, even in a concentration camp. He may not have had Ansel Adams's eye for composition, but his photos have an intimacy that even the famed photographer couldn't replicate.

Okumoto returned to the West Coast in January 1945, and resumed his work at Stanford. Occasionally,

he would still shoot portraits for his friends and coworkers. He died in 1993. This exhibit marks the first time his work has ever been shown publicly.

### Ansel Adams (1902–1984)

Ansel Adams's lifelong passion for photography began in 1916, following a trip to Yosemite National Park. The Sierra Nevada Mountains around Yosemite soon became the California native's muse. By the 1940s, his images of the mountains had made him one of America's most celebrated photographers.

In 1942, the United States government opened the Manzanar camp at the foothills of the Sierras. That fall, some ten thousand Japanese Americans were sent to the camp, to be confined there until the government decided they could return home. Adams, hearing of this, was "moved by the human story unfolding in the encirclement of desert and mountains..."

The government was reluctant to allow a photographer not on their payroll into the camp, but Adams's fame and his friendship with Manzanar Director Ralph Merritt

gained him access. He shot more than 200 photos at Manzanar, capturing not just the majesty of the natural landscape, but the efforts of Japanese Americans to build some sense of community there.

In his photographs and the book that accompanied them—*Born Free and Equal*—Adams portrays Manzanar as a sort of pioneer story. The incarcerated are brave and hearty souls, forced to eke out an existence in the vast desert. The harsh beauty of the landscape was always on Adams's mind, and frequently in his viewfinder.

Adams's critics note that by focusing on the incarcerated's struggle with the natural world, he missed the real story: a government's unjust imprisonment of its own citizens. It's unfair, though, to expect a single artist to capture the whole of this unprecedented event. Adams's Manzanar imagery illustrates his unique perspective, but we must also look to other photographers to see the complete picture. 🏠

*This exhibit will be on display throughout the summer, ending in August.*

# Referrals

By Sam Mihara, HMWF Board Member

Referrals have an important role in the development of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation (HMWF). In mid-2016, I spoke about the incarceration to a gathering of senior attorneys and judges in Los Angeles. In the audience was an attorney with the Los Angeles office of the firm Proskauer LLP. I had never heard of Proskauer and thought they must be new or small. Following my talk, the attorney came up to me and said, “That was an amazing story. I have heard about the World War II camps, but I had no idea there was such injustice.” A week later, I received a call from a member of Proskauer’s New York City office. He said, “My associate in Los Angeles referred me to you. Can you come to New York and give the same talk?”

I made plans to go to New York City following a board meeting in Washington, D.C. While back east, I made other contacts by calling Susan MacQueen of Long Island, a friend of HMWF board member Takashi Hoshizaki. Susan had some contacts in the New York area and referred me to a Long Island library and Hofstra University. Susan also searched online for other prospects, including Columbia University. As a result, I had six venues in New York and several more in Washington, Virginia and Princeton, totaling 10 venues in a week with only one plane ride! And it all started with a single referral from Los Angeles.



Sam Mihara

In late February, I visited Proskauer’s New York City offices in Times Square. When I entered the spacious street entrance, I was directed to a bank of eight elevators—one of them was exclusively for Proskauer. I went up to their lobby, which occupied the entire floor and featured views of the New York skyline on all sides. I was met by my host, who described their office, which occupies 14 floors and includes 200 attorneys. Their conference room featured a large television screen with live broadcast images of conference rooms in Chicago, Boston, New Orleans, Boca Raton, Los Angeles, and Paris. Following lunch, the room and screen were filled with many of the firm’s attorneys from throughout the country and France. After my presentation, several attorneys approached me and referred me to other organizations in the New York area, including several schools and law firms.

When I returned to my hotel room following my presentation, I saw an email from another large law firm. This firm was based in Memphis, Tennessee, and had been referred by someone in the New York audience. The Tennessee prospect asked me to speak and gave me a choice of several offices including Dallas. After checking my calendar, I called back and said “I am good for Dallas!” Then even more calls came asking me if I could speak

to the schools of the children of the New York attorneys. During my tour of New York, I gave a sold-out presentation to Japanese American related groups in New York, which was recorded by NHK TV. The president of the local Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) chapter, who was in the audience, later wrote to the head of the national JACL and recommended that I speak at their next national convention.

Last year, HMWF board member Kathy Saito Yuille referred me to several contacts in the Milwaukee area. I wound up being asked to give several speeches in that area. My cousin Kathy Nakamura of Chicago referred me to DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the United States. It was a very successful event. HMWF Board member Jack Ybarra made several inquiries in the San Jose area and is continuing to pursue leads. HMWF Board member Damany Fisher asked me to come to Massachusetts to speak at his school. Damany also referred me to Harvard, where I was directed to the Harvard Law School. That speech resulted in Harvard’s outstanding referral letter that opened the doors to many other venues. And I was asked to return to Harvard. HMWF board member Marc Sugiyama referred me to a school in Oakland where he is a board member. HMWF Board Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi referred Takashi, Shig Yabu and myself to the Smithsonian Institute for participation in a fully-booked Day of Remembrance event on February 19. And HMWF Advisory Council member Toshi Ito referred to Judge Lance Ito who will make a recommendation at an upcoming judicial conference in Monterey, California. Recently I gave a talk to the local Kiwanis chapter—they referred me to the district which has 50 chapters.

So the bottom line is that referrals work very well in all aspects of the growth of our Foundation. Whether the referral comes from members of the Board, Advisory Council, or relatives and friends of members, anyone can make referrals and broadcast the good work that we all do. The results are very rewarding for everyone. 🙏



Photo courtesy of George Hirose

Overflow audience at Japan America Society of New York.



# MEMBERSHIP MATTERS: Join Us or Renew Your Membership Today!

Member support is an ongoing commitment to the mission of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and to the daily operations of the Interpretive Center. We love our members—not only because you give annually to the HMWF, but also because you allow us to form stronger relationships over time. “It is heartening to see the growing community, both locally and nationally,” says Danielle Constein, Operations Manager. “The members who support us are the backbone of our organization and the foundation of the HMWF, continually helping us to reach our goals.”

You may have received a membership card reminder in the mail. As we continue to grow our membership, we will continue following up. If you are already a member, we cannot thank you enough for your support. If not, we would love if you would accept this invitation to take a more active role in the Heart Mountain family. Your membership helps us educate the public and tell the stories of those families who were confined at Heart Mountain during WWII and of those who have been affected by the Japanese American incarceration experience. It also helps you become more connected to the Foundation. To become a member or renew online, go to [www.shopheartmountain.org](http://www.shopheartmountain.org) or use the form below and mail it in—feel free to enclose a note!

## Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation Membership Benefits

### General Membership Benefits

(Valid for one year and renewable annually)

- Free Admission to the Interpretive Center
- Subscription to the newsletter
- Free admission to exhibit receptions and previews
- 10% discount on store purchases, on site or online

### Senior/Student (\$30)

- General Membership Benefits for 1

### Individual (\$35)

- General Membership Benefits for 1

### Family/Dual Membership (\$60)

- General Membership Benefits for 2 adults at the same address and children or grandchildren under the age of 18

### Friend (\$100)

Family/Dual Membership Benefits plus:

- 2 one-time-use guest passes

### Contributing (\$250)

Family/Dual Membership Benefits plus:

- 5 one-time-use-guest passes

### Sustaining (\$500)

Family/Dual Membership Benefits plus:

- 10 one-time-use guest passes
- Discount on use of multi-purpose room (by appt.)

### Heart Mountain Circle (\$1,000 - \$4,999)

Family/Dual Membership Benefits plus:

- 20 one-time-use guest passes
- Recognition on the Annual Giving Wall
- Discount on use of multi-purpose room (by appt.)
- Behind the scenes collections tours (by appt.)

### Kokoro Kara Circle (\$5,000 and above)

(Kokoro Kara—from the heart)

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- Any-time admission for 2 member-accompanied guests
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Photo: HMWF Okumoto Collection



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1539 Road 19  
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[www.HeartMountain.org](http://www.HeartMountain.org)

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Opportunities are available for Individual, Family, and Corporate Sponsorships. If you, your family, or your organization would like to become a sponsor, please notify Helen Yoshida ([heleny@heartmountain.org](mailto:heleny@heartmountain.org)) by June 26, 2017 at the latest.

\*\*\*All sponsors will be recognized online, in our printed booklet handed out during the event, and on a sign at the Pilgrimage.\*\*\*

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