



# KOKORO KARA

*"from our heart"*

SPRING 2019

HEART • MOUNTAIN • WYOMING • FOUNDATION



# HEART MOUNTAIN WYOMING FOUNDATION

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## Cover image:

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Honda stone situated on the path from the Interpretive Center to the guard tower at our National Historic Landmark Site. Read about the Honda stone in "Shinjiro Honda: A Poet Remembered in Stone" on page 23.

*Photo by Kate Wilson*

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## KOKORO KARA

Volume 8, Issue 2

**Editor/Designer:** Kate Wilson

### Have an idea for an article?

We're interested! Write to Kate Wilson with your story ideas—these could include a profile of a former incarcerated, a specific aspect of the Japanese American experience during/after the war, or an act of kindness from a non-incarcerated, just to name a few. [katew@heartmountain.org](mailto:katew@heartmountain.org)

### Change of address?

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# THE POWER OF ADVOCACY

CHAIR SHIRLEY ANN HIGUCHI

When you work so near the U.S. Capitol, it's easy to take it for granted. But when a group of leaders from Japanese American organizations visited House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's office in February, we all felt the power and grandeur of the location and the office (see page 7).

We were there on a mission—to save the latest round of funding for the Japanese American Confinement Site (JACS) grant program. The embattled program, administered by the National Park Service, remains under attack by the current administration. We also sought support for a new appropriation to continue the program into the future.

Enacted in 2006, the JACS program has granted nearly \$1.9 million to help the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation build its Interpretive Center and restore some of the facilities at our site. It is vital to building not only Heart Mountain but the nine other sites where Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II.

Not only did Pelosi agree to support the JACS program but so did most of the other members of Congress our delegations met with during the last week of February. It was, as Stan Shikuma of the Tule Lake Committee said, the largest meeting of Japanese American groups since the redress efforts of the 1980s.

Our delegation from Heart Mountain received strong support from Wyoming's two senators—Mike Enzi and John Barrasso—and Representative Liz Cheney. All are Republicans, as are many of the members of Congress our groups met. This does not have to be a partisan issue, and for us in Wyoming, it has not been.

That is why I feel optimistic

about the JACS program despite the two attempts by the administration to eliminate the funding. Our allies in Congress realize that our work is important, that it preserves the memory of a vital part of our history and that it boosts the local economy of northwestern Wyoming.

That's a testament to the hard work of our staff and the commitment of the Foundation members. While some of the other groups tied to confinement sites have had intermittent success with their local communities, the ties between Heart Mountain and the Wyoming communities of Cody and Powell are strong.

It's easy in such a polarized political environment to lose track of the values that all Americans, regardless of political affiliation, share. While there may be issues, such as immigration and border separations, that can divide us politically, many do not. Respect for each other and the idea that the United States is still a beacon of freedom unite us.

That is why all of our delegations met with members of all parties with the same message. That paid off in last year's battle over JACS funding, and in the efforts of other confinement sites to get federal help for their efforts.

For example, the two senators from Colorado, one a Democrat and the other a Republican, along with a Republican representative have come together to preserve the camp at Amache and encourage the building of a museum there.



Three generations of Heart Mountain leadership converged at the Japanese American National Museum's gala in Los Angeles in April. Pictured here are Hanako Wakatsuki, Kris Horiuchi, Norman Mineta, and Shirley Ann Higuchi. Prentiss Uchida, Darrell Kunitomi, Bacon Sakatani, and Vanessa Yuille also attended the event. At the gala, Heart Mountain representatives met with other key leaders in the community and promoted the Foundation's work.

We need to build on that shared spirit.

That's the spirit we see every year at our annual Pilgrimage in late July.

This year will be no different. It will be the best Pilgrimage we've had in terms of guests and the presentations we'll feature. We will have educational sessions on the draft resisters and their legacy, authors on the incarceration, memories of Heart Mountain with Sam Mihara, and the "Seeds of Our Grandmothers' Dreams" by a group of feminist artists.

We will also have multigenerational discussions, which never fail to elicit emotional memories and shared experiences. There will be a screening Friday evening of a new documentary about the Crow Nation's connection to the land around Heart Mountain.

On Saturday, we will have Judge Lance Ito, the son of Jim and Toshi Ito, as our keynote speaker. Lance has always been a dedicated supporter of Heart Mountain, as were his parents.

Another longtime supporter, newscaster and author Tom Brokaw, will receive the third annual LaDonna Zall Compassionate Witness Award because of his dedication to the Heart Mountain cause. We're excited to have him with us again this year (see page 6).

One result of our recent Washington trip will be the presence of the Japanese ambassador to the United States, Shinsuke Sugiyama, and the consul general in Denver, Midori Takeuchi, at the Pilgrimage. We have steadily built our ties to the Japanese government through meetings in Washington and elsewhere, and we are honored that they will spend the weekend with us.

In a first, the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) will have its annual convention the week after the Pilgrimage in Salt Lake City. This will give our leadership another chance to keep building the strong



Salt Lake birthday gathering and three past recipients of Order of the Rising Sun incarcerated at Heart Mountain recognized.


*Front row (L-R): Bill Collier, Angie Collier, Nan Kline, Amelia Collier, Adele Collier, Theresa Bruce, Jeanette Misaka, Consul General Takeuchi, Honorable Judge Raymond Uno, Hanako Wakatsuki, Yoshiko Uno, Vanessa Yuille, Janis Seils, Emily Higuchi, Pat Higuchi, Jim Higuchi, Kathy Yuille, Mia Russell; Back row (L-R): Derek Dodd, David Bruce, Lucas Yuille, Kevin Yuille, Katrina Yuille, Ray Locker, Dani Laufer, Mike Holland, Rex Seils, David Ono, Becky Higuchi, Bob Higuchi, Julie Abo*

relationship between the Foundation and JACL, which we saw again during our February trip to Washington. For the first time, the Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium (JACSC) and its members will play a part in the JACL convention, furthering the strengthening ties between the two groups.

Salt Lake also has a long and storied connection with Heart Mountain. We saw that on March 16 when I celebrated my 60th birthday with my father, William Higuchi, on what was also his 88th birthday. We were joined by two other members of his class at Heart Mountain—Jeanette Misaka and Raymond Uno. All three had received the Japanese governments' Order of the Rising Sun for their work with Japan and aiding the Japanese American community (see page 19).

All of these events during February and March further emphasized my feeling that we are continuing to grow and improve. Our Washington meetings exceeded our expectations. Our preparations for the Pilgrimage show that our team is getting bigger and stronger every time we do this.

We're going to need this unity and upbeat spirit if we're going to continue to stave off the attacks on the programs that help us tell our stories. We'll do that by continuing to reach out to everyone, regardless of their political beliefs, to show that what happened at Heart Mountain and elsewhere must not happen again.

I am inspired. I hope you are, too. 

*Shirley Ann Higuchi*

# THE OLD WAY

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAKOTA RUSSELL



Most people think about tradition around the winter holidays. For me, though, it's always been spring. That may be because I come from the Ozarks, where planting season is equally governed by the actual conditions outside and a complex mish-mash of superstitions going back to the 1800s. Most of these old practices are silly ("plant corn when the oak leaves are as big as squirrel's ears"), but they are observed nonetheless. I think it's less about belief than it is about continuity. Following the old traditions reminds us that we are only the current custodians of the land, the most recent in a line stretching way back into the past.

This issue of *Kokoro Kara* is, appropriately, also concerned with tradition. I recently finished Duncan Williams's new book, *American Sutra* (see page 12 for our author interview). In reading it, I was strongly reminded how the goal of the US government was not just to incarcerate Japanese Americans, but to cleave them from their Japanese heritage and cultural tradition. It is a testament to the Japanese American community, and especially to the Issei keepers of that tradition, that the culture endured. Two of those

Issei, the Zen teacher Nyogen Senzaki and the poet Shinjiro Honda, are profiled in this issue (on pages 26 and 23, respectively).

The Nisei inherited this tradition, and they used it to plant their own seeds, growing the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. Some of the leaders of that generation are represented in these pages, as well (on page 19, to be exact). And new seeds are sown each season. During last year's Pilgrimage, I met Casey Coe, a Yonsei, who told me about an amazing discovery his family had made just days before (see his story on page 15). Casey already appreciated what his grandparents and great-grandparents had been through, but his first visit to Heart Mountain made their stories more urgent and powerful.

We don't own tradition, we just carry it for a time. Here's to the strong backs that came before us, and the young shoulders bracing to take on the load. It's spring again, so let's keep planting. 🌱

*The Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation board created the Heart Mountain Institute to explore new ways to expand the reach of our mission. The Heart Mountain Institute will focus on publishing, filmmaking, education, and innovative technology to bring the incarceration story to new and larger audiences. The **Institute Corner** will feature the latest news about this exciting new initiative.*

As one of its first projects, the Institute is in the early stages of developing an augmented reality tour of Heart Mountain. Using a smartphone app, visitors will be able to walk around the site and access additional materials to enhance their visit, including animations, stories from former incarcerated, and historical photos.

This six-stop tour will give visitors a better sense of what life was like at Heart Mountain during World War II, and encourage visitors to further explore the landscape around the Interpretive Center. We hope it will also serve as a model that other confinement sites can use in developing their own tours.

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# 2019 HEART MOUNTAIN PILGRIMAGE

**O**ur 8th annual Heart Mountain Pilgrimage is almost here! This year, we are expanding our offerings, welcoming a number of special guests, and providing some unique opportunities for participants. On Thursday, July 25, we are adding three new pre-event activities: a workshop on preserving family histories and artifacts with the staff from Densho; a reflective writing session with Tani Ikeda of Japanese American Women Speak; and, a cartooning masterclass with legendary Nisei animator Willie Ito. All of these activities are included with Pilgrimage registration. Email Dakota Russell at [dakota@heartmountain.org](mailto:dakota@heartmountain.org) to reserve your spot.

Also on Thursday, filmmakers David Ono and Jeff MacIntyre will be recording interviews with a limited number of former incarcerated. Participants will receive a copy of the interview to share with their families. If you or your loved one is interested in participating, please contact Julie Abo at [juliea@heartmountain.org](mailto:juliea@heartmountain.org).

Friday's activities include screenings of the documentaries "Norman Mineta and His Legacy: An American Story" and "Return to Foretop's Father," as well as a wide variety of educational sessions exploring different aspects of the incarceration story. We will also host multigenerational discussion groups on Friday afternoon. Events on Saturday include tours of the Heart Mountain site, a keynote speech by Judge Lance Ito, and the presentation of the LaDonna Zall Compassionate Witness Award to journalist Tom Brokaw.

The Pilgrimage will conclude on Saturday evening with the Sayonara Banquet and cocktail and dessert receptions, a time for socializing and reflecting back on the weekend. During this time, attendees can also bid on some of the fantastic items included in this year's silent auction (see page 11 for more information). We hope that you will join us for the 2019 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage! 

**There's still time to REGISTER!**  
**Go to [heartmountain.org/pilgrimage](http://heartmountain.org/pilgrimage)**  
**and reserve your spot today!**





Members of the Consortium get ready for Congressional visits. L-R: Prentiss Uchida (HMWF), Darrell Kunitomi (HMWF), Katharine Hirata (JACL Fellow), Mia Russell (Friends of Minidoka), Larry Oda (NJAMF), Brian Liesinger (Consortium), Ann Burroughs (IANM), Sam Mihara (HMWF)

Photo by David Inoue

## Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium Meets in Washington, D.C.

By Ray Locker

The Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium (JACSC), a group of sites and organizations working to preserve and tell the incarceration story, is more united than ever, leaders said during a three-day meeting in Washington, D.C. in February. Consortium members used the meeting as an opportunity to meet with their legislators, hold a congressional briefing, and discuss the organization's future sustainability.

### Legislative Visits

Representatives of the Consortium met with members of Congress on February 27 to seek support for the continued funding of the National Park Service's Japanese American Confinement Sites (JACS) grant program. The current administration has routinely de-funded the program in its proposed budgets. Fortunately, Congress has always restored the funding. Advocacy for the JACS program was a major theme as members fanned out across Capitol Hill for a day's worth of meetings with legislators.

Created in 2006, the JACS program dedicated \$38 million in funding toward various programs to preserve confinement

sites and to educate the public about the incarceration. Grants awarded in 2018 ranged from \$13,464 for the Friends of Minidoka to digitize items in their collection, to \$398,272 for Full Spectrum Features to produce two short narrative films about the Japanese American experience.

As of 2018, about \$27 million of appropriated funds have been spent. The appropriation will last about three more years at the current funding level. Norman Mineta, former Cabinet secretary, House member and Heart Mountain incarceree, acts as an advisor to the Consortium. He suggested that the Consortium look beyond preserving the initial appropriation and also begin lobbying Congress to back a new JACS authorization.

Consortium members called their meetings with their delegations encouraging. Members of the



Members of the Consortium meet with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Photo by Julio Obscura



# CONSORTIUM

Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation said that Wyoming's three-person congressional delegation, all Republicans, supported continuing JACS funding. They each pledged to do whatever they could to help the Foundation.

A larger delegation, composed of Consortium members from several sites and organizations, met on February 28 with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-California. Pelosi voiced her support for continued JACS funding and efforts to highlight parallels between the incarceration and present-day threats posed to immigrant groups.

"What happened to the Japanese Americans is something we must own up to," Pelosi said about the incarceration and efforts to preserve the confinement sites. She told Mineta that she was honored to vote for the Civil Liberties Act, which compensated former incarcerated, during her first term in Congress in 1988.

After the February meetings, the administration again proposed cutting JACS funding, which led to a unified response from Consortium members. Representatives from each group contacted their legislators to sound the alarm that help was needed. By March 30, more than fifty House members had signed a letter supporting the continued funding, including Representative Liz Cheney, R-Wyoming.

## Congressional Briefing

The comparisons between Japanese American incarceration and the forced separation of immigrant families at the border were at the center of a congressional briefing held by the Consortium and the American Psychological Association on February 28 at the Capitol Visitors Center. Arthur Evans, the president and CEO of the American Psychological Association, joined Consortium members and Representative Mark Takano, a California Democrat whose family members were incarcerated at Heart

Mountain to discuss the long-term impacts of incarceration, especially on children.

"I never thought that my being in Congress and my parents being in internment camps would be so relevant now," said Takano, who is also the chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. "What you're doing here is so important. Takano added that it is essential that the lessons of the incarceration "get out more and more to the American public."

Evans compared the Japanese American incarceration with the plight of immigrants to the United States who have been placed in internment camps while they await their claims for asylum. The incarceration, Evans said, broke up families, which had serious effects on children as they grew older. The trauma, he said, is similar to that experienced by children separated from their families at the border.

"The bond established with a parent is important, particularly early in life," Evans said. "When that attachment is disrupted, children experience anxiety and depression." Evans visited Heart Mountain last October and said the experience affected him profoundly. "Many things struck me there," he said. "How can our government do this? How we can make other people 'the others' is how we can do that."

Sam Mihara, a Heart Mountain incarcerated as a child, talked about the incarceration's effect on his family, including how his grandfather's colon cancer was mistreated, causing his premature death. "In two weeks, I saw him wither away to skin and bones," said Mihara, a member of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation board of directors. "He was like a Holocaust survivor." Mihara said he has visited multiple detention camps for immigrants, where he saw children treated poorly. "They are given a poor diet, lots of bread and pasta and few fresh vegetables and protein."

## Support from Japan

The Japanese embassy hosted a February 27 reception for the Consortium at the old ambassador's residence next to the embassy. Embassy officials also attended a February 26 reception at the Hogan Lovells law firm, which hosted the first day's Consortium meetings. Through these events, the

Consortium continued to strengthen its connection to the government of Japan.

Kazutoshi Aikawa, the embassy's deputy chief of mission, said the Japanese government was eager to work with Consortium members to highlight issues from the incarceration and to raise awareness of it in Japan. Embassy ministers said they planned to attend some of the pilgrimages at the various confinement sites this year.

## Consortium Sustainability

During its business meeting on February 26, Consortium members concentrated on the long-term sustainability of the organization. The Consortium needs between \$45,000 and \$55,000 annually to sustain its core efforts, said Doug Nelson, vice chair of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. The Consortium has historically been funded through JACS grants, but is working toward being self-sustaining.

"The question is not can we be sustainable, but how we can be sustainable," said Ann Burroughs, president and CEO of the Japanese American National Museum and Consortium chair. Nelson proposed that member organizations pay one percent of their annual operating budgets in dues to the Consortium. Attendees tentatively approved the measure. The dues, Nelson said, would not begin until next year, after the boards for various coalition members had time to review the proposal. Nelson also urged members to look for major donors willing to support long-term financial stability for the Consortium, but acknowledged it may be difficult to find funders

willing to provide annual operating grants on an ongoing basis.

The Consortium has worked to promote unity and common cause among various member organizations since its first gathering in Washington in May 2016. This most recent meeting serves as concrete proof these efforts have been successful. In addition to discussing future sustainability, members also discussed plans for the next meeting, to be held in Salt Lake City, Utah, in conjunction with the Japanese American Citizens League's national convention. The convention will take place July 31–August 4. The Consortium is also planning to hold an educational workshop in 2020. Details on that event are still being finalized. 🏞️

## JACSC Members

Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, Amache Historical Society, Friends of Manzanar, Friends of Minidoka, Poston Community Alliance, Topaz Museum, Tule Lake Committee, Gila River Memorial Committee, Tuna Canyon Detention Station, Manzanar Committee, Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee, Densho, Fred T. Korematsu Institute, Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, Japanese American Citizens League, Japanese American National Museum, JAMPilgrimages, Japanese American Service Committee, Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, Kizuna, National Japanese American Historical Society, National Japanese American Memorial Foundation, Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies, National Veterans Network, National Park Service, and the Oregon Nikkei Endowment

Shirley Ann Higuchi makes a toast at the reception at the Embassy of Japan. L-R: Midori Mukai, Minister Kenichiro Mukai, John Tobe (NJAMF), Larry Oda (NJAMF), Shirley Ann Higuchi (HMWF), Doug Nelson (HMWF), Dakota Russell (HMWF), Ann Burroughs (JANM), Secretary Norman Mineta, Haruna Minoura (Embassy of Japan), David Inoue (JACL).





# 2019 DAY OF REMEMBRANCE events



Photo by Julie Abo

Smithsonian curator of religion Peter Manseau, author Duncan Ryūken Williams, musician Kishi Bashi, and Smithsonian museum specialist Noriko Sanefuji participate in a panel discussion for the Smithsonian 2019 Day of Remembrance event.

Attendees of the Smithsonian Institution's annual Day of Remembrance ceremony on February 19 got a taste of what visitors to the annual Heart Mountain Pilgrimage will see this July. The event, held at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, included a performance by Kishi Bashi and a reading by Duncan Ryūken Williams.

Kishi Bashi, who performed at the 2018 Pilgrimage, is working on a new album and film, both titled *Omoiyari*, reflecting on the Japanese American incarceration story. Accompanied by cellist Emily Hope Price, Kishi Bashi played selections from *Omoiyari* and screened footage from his travels to various confinement sites, including Heart Mountain. Kishi Bashi will release *Omoiyari*, the album, on May 31.

Williams, a religious studies professor at the University of Southern California, read from his new book, *American Sutra: A Story of Faith and Freedom in the Second World War*, and talked about the role of Buddhism in the incarceration. Many Buddhist leaders were considered possible subversives and were detained and placed in Justice Department sites for the duration of the war.

The son of a Japanese mother and a British father, Williams grew up in Japan and came to the United States to study at Harvard University. He said he learned more about the incarceration and its effects

on the Buddhist community by reading papers written by the father of his mentor, Dr. Masatoshi Nagatomi. It was then he realized the depth of the incarceration experience, Williams said.

Williams will participate in a panel of authors at the Heart Mountain Pilgrimage. Other panelists will include: Andrea Warren, the author of a young adult biography of Norman Mineta; Bradford Pearson, the author of a book about the football team the Heart Mountain Eagles; and Shirley Ann Higuchi, the chair of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation.

So far, *American Sutra* is striking a chord with readers. It was recently on the Los Angeles Times bestseller list.



Kishi Bashi performs with cellist Emily Hope Price during the Day of Remembrance event at the Smithsonian.

Photo by Julie Abo

# Private Art Collection Benefits Heart Mountain

By Julie Abo



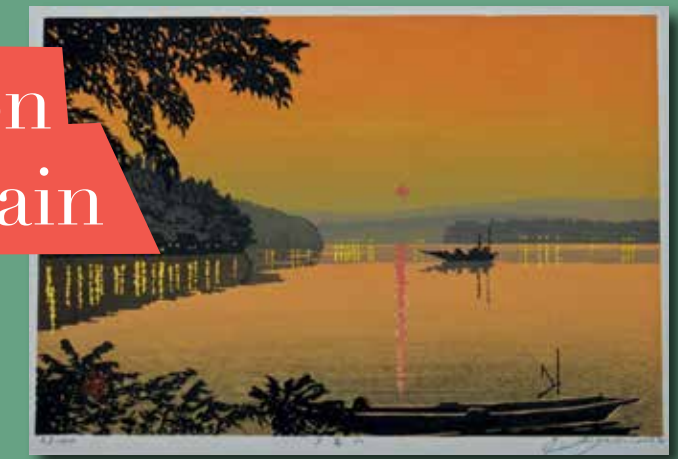
When Sammi Shultz agreed to be the executor of the estate of her friend, Joseph Sanchez, she believed he would live for decades more. But when Sanchez died of a heart attack while scuba diving, a passion that had taken him around the world, Shultz

found herself with a great responsibility. She was left to settle her friend's estate, including 43 pieces of contemporary Japanese art that hung on all three floors of his Odenton, Maryland home.

The Sanchez collection included prints from popular contemporary Japanese artists such as Ryohei Tanaka and rare pieces from Japanese printmaker Hiroshige. They depict scenes of old Kyoto, such as Tanaka's "Shimogamo Shrine" and modern minimalist brushstrokes like Haku Maki's "E-3."

"When I asked my niece what to do with the artwork, she said, 'What about Heart Mountain?'" Shultz said. Shultz, a Cody native, moved to Washington, D.C. in the late 1970s, when her mother went to work for recently elected Wyoming senator Alan Simpson. Heart Mountain "was always a part of the community," Shultz said, "and I grew up hearing Al's stories. I went to the 4-H meetings there" in the old administration building on the camp site.

Sanchez specified only that his art collection should benefit charity. While Shultz knew her friend's collection would not fit Heart Mountain's artifact collecting goals, she reasoned that

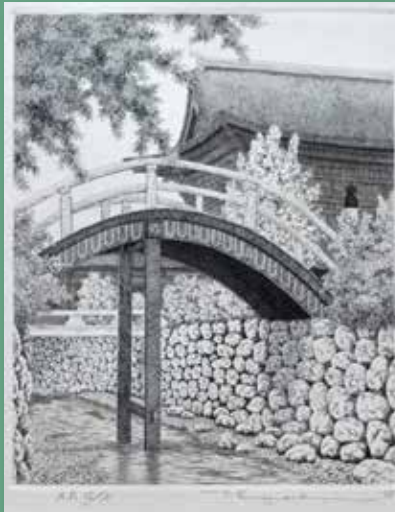


she could donate the pieces as assets to be resold, with the proceeds helping to finance the Foundation's many projects and goals.

Shultz believes Sanchez would have been pleased with this outcome. He was a dedicated volunteer in his community, a devoted member of his church, and had even been a volunteer at a school in Haiti. He worked four, 10-hour days at the IRS in order to have Fridays off, which he spent working at a local food bank and animal shelter. "Joe was one of the smartest and most compassionate people I know," Shultz said. "[He] loved to be engaged in supporting human rights and treating people with respect, dignity and equality."

The Foundation is incredibly grateful for this donation and would like to extend a warm thank you to Sammi Shultz and the Joseph P. Sanchez Estate. Four pieces from the Sanchez Collection will be available for purchase in the silent auction at the Pilgrimage in July (these pieces are pictured in this article).

The generosity of this donation serves as a reminder that there are many ways to help the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation through planned giving, including the donation of art and other assets. We encourage members to talk to their estate planning professionals about their options.



Artwork pictured will be included in the silent auction at this year's Pilgrimage. Top to bottom: #14 *Yugure* by Shufu Miyamoto; #29 *Shimogamo Shrine* by Ryohei Tanaka; #12 *E-3* by Haku Maki; & #25 *Nishiyama* by Ryohei Tanaka.



A STORY OF FAITH AND FREEDOM  
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

# AMERICAN SUTRA

Photo courtesy of Duncan Ryūken Williams



Photo courtesy of Duncan Ryūken Williams

**Duncan Ryūken Williams** is Professor of Religion and East Asian Languages & Cultures at the University of Southern California and Director of the USC Shinso Ito Center for Japanese Religions and Culture. In his new book, *American Sutra*, Williams reveals how, even as they were stripped of their homes and imprisoned in camps, Japanese American Buddhists launched one of the most inspiring defenses of religious freedom in our nation's history, insisting that they could be both Buddhist and American.

**Kokoro Kara** sat down with Williams to discuss *American Sutra* and the history of Japanese American Buddhism in the United States.

\*KK = Kokoro Kara

**KK:\*** You have been working on *American Sutra* for several years. What did you find so inspiring about this subject?

**DRW:** This story of Buddhism and the WWII Japanese American incarceration took over 17 years of research and writing to put together. What kept me going was the inspirational lives of those who persisted in their faith when they were told they did not belong; those who found spiritual liberation in the midst of incarceration.

**KK:** Your work relies on such a wide variety of sources, from unpublished diaries to interviews with former incarcerated. What are a few memories that stand out from your time researching the book?

**DRW:** I remember interviewing many people in their eighties and nineties, who kindly shared their stories with me. Among them was a Buddhist priest who had returned to Japan after the war's end. Interviewing him in Osaka, Japan, I received a perspective from a ninety-year-old that was so different from a certain kind of English-speaking Christian Nisei telling of the incarceration story and it propelled me to discover a variety of voices and experiences that could provide a fuller picture of the wartime experience.

**KK:** We often think of Japanese American incarceration as a story about civil rights in America. Your book reminds us this is also a story about religious freedoms. How was the American experience—and the incarceration experience—different for Buddhists?

**DRW:** If one view of American belonging is to elide into an Anglo-Protestant normativity, Japanese American Buddhists were doubly excluded. They found themselves a target of the initial arrests after Pearl Harbor in a way that Christian leaders were not; in the Assembly Centers, Japanese-language books like Buddhist scriptures were banned (but Christian Bibles in Japanese were not); on the 1943 leave questionnaire, if one answered “Christian” on question sixteen about religious affiliation, one got “plus two” points, while Buddhists received “minus one” point. So at every turn, being Japanese American and Buddhist found one the target not only of racial animus, but religious animus.

**KK:** The resilience of the Buddhist priests, many of whom were incarcerated well before the rest of the Japanese American population, is impressive. What drove them to keep the faith during this tumultuous time? Are there any stories of resilience that stand out to you?

**DRW:** One of the Buddhist priests arrested in his robes on the day of Pearl Harbor had not been afforded the opportunity to even return to his home to pack a suitcase with a change of clothes. Months after his arrest, he delivered a sermon at the April 1942 Buddha's birthday service in one of the Army/Department of Justice camps. He noted that his robes had become dirty after being unable to change clothes, but that despite its dirtiness, he could turn to his faith to discover something pure and beautiful despite his outer garments. This story exemplified for me the Buddhist teaching that purpose and meaning comes from within and beyond the surface-level aspects of one's karmic situation.

**KK:** Some of the most striking historical photos from Heart Mountain are of the Obon Festival. To what degree were religious activities like this restricted in the camps?

**DRW:** By 1943, many of the early obstacles to Buddhist gatherings and practice had lifted, including the very large numbers of people who assembled to honor those who had passed away, both recently and as ancestors, during the annual summer Obon Festival. The War Relocation Authority recognized by then that the vast majority of community were Buddhists and that it would be too much of a contradiction to deny religious freedom when President Roosevelt framed the



Obon Festival at Heart Mountain





war against the Axis powers in terms of the “Four Freedoms”, which included religious freedom.

**KK:** Amazingly, one of the hardest fights for religious recognition was the one faced by Buddhist soldiers in the U.S. Army. Can you tell us a bit more about that?

**DRW:** The majority of those who served in the 100th Battalion and 442nd Regimental Combat Team (and the vast majority of those who served in the Military Intelligence Service in the Pacific) were Buddhists,

but they were told in various ways that the U.S. Army did not recognize their faith. For example, Buddhist chaplains were not assigned to the segregated 100th/442nd and dog tags could not accommodate recognition of Buddhism as a formal religious affiliation. It would not be until after the war that chaplains were assigned and an effort from the camps called the “B for Buddhism” campaign, that began among the parents and siblings of those who served during WWII, managed to put pressure on the military to offer the ability to put “B” on the dog tag. The sacrifices of those who served in the military certainly had a big role in this shift in the government’s attitude that it was possible to be both Buddhist and American at the same time.

**KK:** Has the incarceration experience had any long-term effects on Buddhist tradition in the United States?

**DRW:** Some of the efforts to assimilate towards what seemed like an Anglo-Protestant normativity—such as designating Buddhist temples as “churches” or calling Buddhist priests “reverends”—emerged from within the World War II camp experience and continued on after the war. Additionally, the forced removal from the Pacific Coast and the post-war hostility to the return of the Japanese Americans in the immediate postwar led to the closure of quite a few temples. The longer-term question of whether Buddhism was un-American, or perhaps even anti-American, has also played a role in destabilizing Buddhist temple communities in the decades after World War II.

**KK:** What is your favorite Heart Mountain story from *American Sutra*?

**DRW:** The establishment of the Wyoming Zendo (Zen meditation hall) in December 1942 by a Zen priest, Nyogen Senzaki,\*\* is one of my favorite stories. He designated his barracks as the perfect place to walk the Buddhist path. He wrote a temple dedication verse that reads in part:

*In this snow-covered desert of internment, a Wyoming plateau  
He has nothing to do with the trivialities of the dusty world  
He rather prefers to sit alone, burning the lamp of Dharma  
Than to receive any insincere visitors and waste time.*

It’s a wonderful statement about letting the light of Buddhism shine brightly in the very midst of incarceration. 🙏



\*\*Read more about Nyogen Senzaki in our feature on page 26

As a Yonsei, or fourth generation Japanese American, I took an early interest in my family's history at the Heart Mountain incarceration camp. My grandmother and her siblings told me stories of being forcibly removed from their home in California, living through the frigid winters of Wyoming, and the effect the camp had on family life. Despite the stories and family mementos, it was during my first visit to Heart Mountain, in the summer of 2018, that my connection to camp was greatly deepened. As my family and I explored the site, we found my great uncle's name etched into the side of a monument, where he had drawn it in wet cement nearly 75 years prior.

The Oka family, from San Jose, California, were successful sharecroppers in the San Francisco Bay Area. After Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and then Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, their lives were forever changed. Forcibly removed from their home, the Okas spent several months incarcerated at the Santa Anita racetrack in Southern California, while waiting for Heart Mountain to be completed. They were finally sent to the Wyoming confinement site in the late summer of 1942. Most of the family would

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## a little boy



## BEHIND BARBED WIRE

by Casey Coe

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stay in the camp through the duration of the war.

For the Okas, like so many other families, trying to keep the family dynamic intact while at Heart Mountain proved difficult. My great-grandfather was a strict man and had firm control of family matters when they were in California, but that control soon faded with the disruption of life in camp. The children found new freedom to roam and do as they pleased, without their parent's authority to regulate their activities.

James "Mogo" Oka, my great uncle, was just nine-years-old when the family arrived at Heart Mountain. He and his brothers formed a "gang" and became somewhat infamous for their ability to create trouble and cause a ruckus. They were often referred to as *yanchan*, the Japanese word for mischievous or naughty kids. This being so, it doesn't come as much of a surprise that in 1944, Mogo decided to make his mark on the camp—literally.

That summer, a new project was underway to give reverence to those men from Heart Mountain who served in the armed forces during WWII. The Honor Roll, constructed in front of the flagpole at the camp's main administration building, listed the names of each person who volunteered or was drafted





Opposite page: Mogo at Heart Mountain shortly after arrival.

Above: Mogo and little brother Tadashi in front of their barrack at Heart Mountain.

Top right: The Oka family before World War II.

Right: Young Mogo Oka.



a lovely, emotional, and eye-opening experience. I had never been in a place with so many others who had experienced life in the camps or knew what it was like to be associated with Heart Mountain. We were all part of a unique family brought together by an unfortunate time in history.

After a tour of the camp, my family and I found ourselves at the Honor Roll. We took in the

importance of what this monument meant and began to look for anything in the concrete base that did not belong. Then, while standing in the hot Wyoming sun, we stared down at what we could certainly make out to be 'Mogo' and about a foot below that, 'Oka.' The names on the old rough concrete were worn faint with time, but despite the decades of Wyoming winters and intense summer sun, there was certain proof that my family was once here. Two generations after that wet cement was the irresistible temptation of a rambunctious little boy, I stood witness to what was part of our story.

This physical emblem of my family's time in Heart Mountain created an emotional response that I was not prepared for. For the first time, it was no longer just about stories or education, but a realization that this place was a part of me, as well; a direct link from the past to what I have become today. It was

into service. The Honor Roll would eventually bear the name of Mogo's older brother, George. Mogo, because it was fun to be mischievous, determined to add his own name to freshly poured cement of the monument's base.

Much of Mogo's recollection of Heart Mountain has now faded, but the memory of writing his name in the wet cement continues to live on. I'm sure he wasn't alone in this singular rebellious action, leaving his autograph on the camp for posterity. But I don't think he could ever have imagined that, nearly three-quarters of a century later, his family would come looking for that inscription.

Regretfully, it wasn't until after the passing of my grandmother, Mogo's older sister, that I had the chance to visit Heart Mountain with my family. We came to attend the annual Pilgrimage in 2018. It was



a waypoint of my family's story that I was now tapping into. This tiny square-foot space on the side of the Honor Roll at the Heart Mountain incarceration camp from 1944 had become part of the Oka family story for another generation.

The incarceration of my family and 126,000 other Japanese Americans is history that continues to educate me. Despite the dark nature of this time, I feel proud to be part of a people who not only persevered through such challenging and unfair times, but flourished in their own paths after camp. After their time in Heart Mountain, Mogo and his other six siblings created wonderful families and fulfilling lives. My great-uncle married, came back to San Jose, became a successful engineer, and raised two lovely girls.

But in 1944, the Oka siblings were all just kids, trying to make an incredibly disruptive and trying time as normal as possible. My uncle's actions are a perfect example of this. Before the war, he would have written his name on the neighbor's new driveway or the fresh sidewalk on his block. He was still a normal little boy, but because of a unique and tragic time in our history, he was behind barbed wire.

My family's history of their time in the camps has been a complex intellectual knot for most of my life. Coming to Heart Mountain, I wasn't sure what to expect or feel. It is a period in my family's history, and the history our country, that is a stain on our collective memories. Still, the happiness, joy, connection, and insight that I brought away from Heart Mountain is what continues to inspire me. Seeing those names on the old concrete let me understand



Top & middle: Hiking to Heart Mountain in July 1944.  
Bottom: Casey, Aaron, Judy, David, & Caity Coe hiking to Heart Mountain in July 2018.





Above left: Aaron, Casey, & Judy Coe look at the Honor Roll at Heart Mountain.

Above: The carvings at the base of the Honor Roll (top: "Mogo" bottom: "Oka").

Far left: Judy Coe with her uncle, Mogo Oka, in January 2019

Left: Young Mogo Oka

that even in such turbulent times, kids will always be kids.

This story is a small piece of a much larger puzzle that is the incarceration of the Japanese Americans during World War II. Only a few, until now, have ever been aware or even seen the inscriptions on the side of the Honor Roll. These signatures illustrate the human determination to take challenging times and make them as "normal" as possible, and they show the beauty and innocence in children. Mogo's name gives me a reason to believe that in today's challenging times we can continue to be strong, hold on to our innocence, and keep a bit of our own inner *yanchan* alive. 🌱



Casey Coe is a Yonsei Japanese American from Wheatland, California who now lives in Denver, Colorado. His Grandmother's family was incarcerated at Heart Mountain where he first visited during the annual Pilgrimage in the summer of 2018. Casey works for Huckleberry Coffee Roasters in Denver as their Director of Warehouse Operations.



Shirley Ann Higuchi, William Higuchi, Consul General Takeuchi, Jeanette Misaka, & Honorable Judge Raymond Uno in Salt Lake City, Utah.

# THREE RISING SUNS



*in Salt lake City*

*by Ray locker*

Jeanette Misaka didn't know William Higuchi while they were in the same grade in school at the Heart Mountain "War Relocation Center," but she knew his reputation. "He was the brains," she said. Those brains helped Higuchi, now 88, earn a doctorate in Pharmaceutical Sciences and teach at the universities of Michigan and Utah, where he led the pharmaceutical sciences department for 30 years. His contributions to science led the government of Japan to award him its Order of the Rising Sun with Gold Ray and Neck Ribbon in 2012.

Higuchi was the first of a trio of former classmates at Heart Mountain to receive one of the variations of the Order of the Rising Sun. Misaka, a Ph.D. in Special Education and emeritus professor at the University of Utah, received it in 2016. Raymond Uno, the first Asian American judge in Utah, received it in 2014. All three now live in Salt Lake City, where they gathered on March 16 for a birthday celebration for Higuchi and his daughter, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation chair Shirley Ann Higuchi, who also turned 60 that day.



Higuchi lived with his parents, three brothers and younger sister, Emily, on a 14.25-acre farm in San Jose, in what is now the heart of Silicon Valley. Misaka and her three sisters also lived in that area, where her father, Henry Mitarai, was a farmer who pioneered the use of mechanized farm equipment. Uno was born in Ogden but moved to Southern California's San Gabriel Valley with his family in 1937. All three families lost their livelihoods after being incarcerated at the outbreak of World War II.

Together, the three former classmates helped build the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and pushed for the creation of the award-winning museum there. Higuchi's wife, Setsuko Saito Higuchi, was a fellow classmate and another driving force behind creating the Foundation. Saito Higuchi passed away in 2005, as plans for the Interpretive Center were just beginning to come together.

## William Higuchi

When the war broke out, two of the older Higuchi brothers, James and Takeru, were grown and living elsewhere. James was a doctor in the Army, while Takeru was studying for his doctorate in pharmaceutical sciences at the University of Wisconsin. Kiyoshi, the second brother, remained in San Jose—his education had been slowed by a four-year bout with pleurisy.

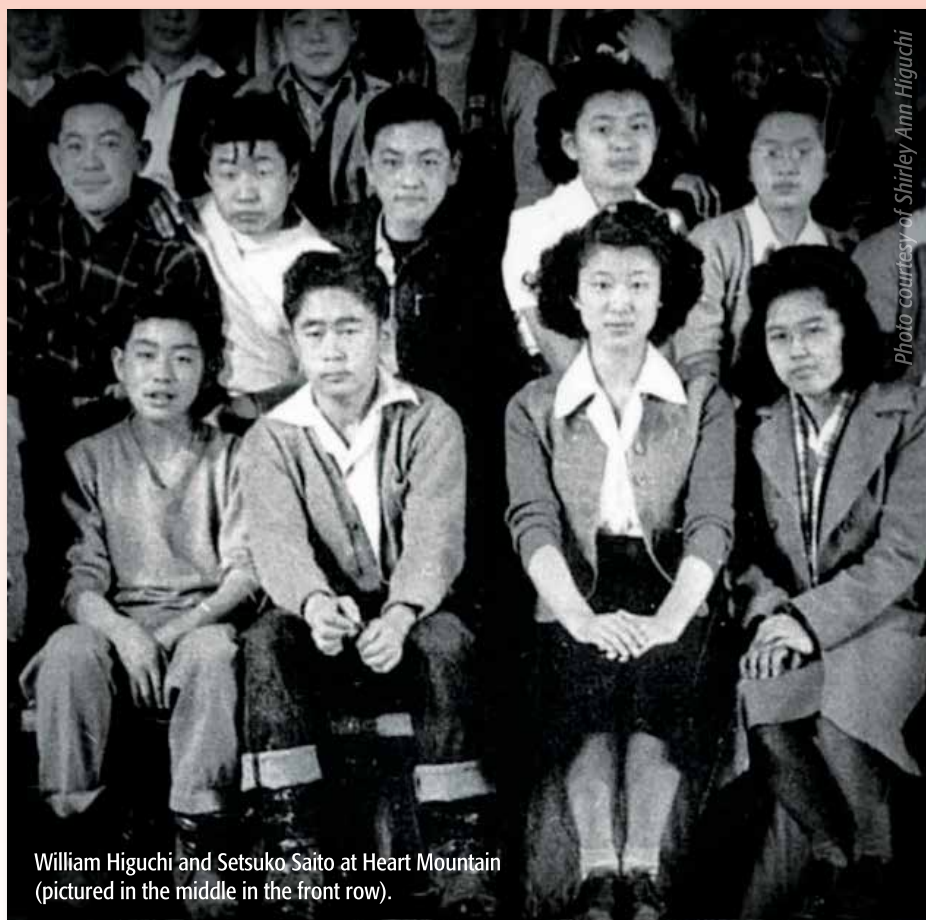
The Higuchis were forced to sell their farm to a neighboring family at a significant loss before they went to the assembly center in Santa Anita and then to Heart Mountain in September 1942. Iyekichi Higuchi, who had immigrated to the United States in 1915, thought he was having a heart attack upon arrival at Heart Mountain. Doctors at the rudimentary hospital determined it was a gastrointestinal disorder.

While at camp, William Higuchi excelled at school. He and Setsuko Saito

were ranked in the A class of students at the high school, which had high-achieving students from across the West Coast who had been yanked from their schools. In 1945, Higuchi's father suffered a heart attack, just days before he was set to return to San Jose to find a new home and farm. He recovered, and by 1946, the family had saved enough money to buy a new farm in San Jose.

William Higuchi went to graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, where he bumped into his former classmate Setsuko Saito while walking near one of the campus tennis courts. They were married in 1956. He held teaching jobs at the University of Wisconsin and worked in private industry before joining the University of Michigan faculty in 1962.

Higuchi joined the University of Utah faculty in 1982 and guided dozens of Japanese students through their work in pharmaceutical sciences. He co-founded three pharmaceutical companies: TheraTech, Lipocine, and Aciont. The Japanese



William Higuchi and Setsuko Saito at Heart Mountain (pictured in the middle in the front row).



Photo courtesy of the Mitarai Family

L-R: Henry, baby Elaine, Helen, Pat (in front of Helen), Jeanette, & Shirley Mitarai at Heart Mountain in the spring of 1943.

government awarded Higuchi the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon in 2012 for his contributions to pharmaceutical education in Japan through his work at Michigan and Utah.

“It was a great honor to receive the award,” William Higuchi said. “I only wish my wife was there to see it, because she wanted so much for it to happen.”



## Jeanette Misaka

Jeanette Misaka’s father, Henry Mitarai, started arranging to leave Heart Mountain not long after the family arrived. Mitarai’s two business partners in California found land that the family could farm in Sigurd, Utah, and Henry left camp in 1943. His wife and daughters joined him on the new farm the next spring.

Jeanette Misaka said she was nervous about being the only Japanese American in her Utah high school, but her mother would not allow her to stay home. On her first day, the principal held an assembly in which he announced, “We have a new student. She’s an American, just like you.” Misaka attended the University of Utah and then started teaching at local schools before joining the University of Utah faculty, where she is an emeritus clinical professor in the department of special education.

She met her future husband, Tatsumi “Tats” Misaka, after he returned from the Korean War in the 1950s. He was the brother of University of Utah basketball star Wat Misaka, who was the first non-white player in what became the National Basketball Association. Misaka received the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays in 2016 for her leadership in the Japanese American Citizens League and for keeping alive the memory of the Japanese American incarceration.






## Raymond Uno

Along with his parents, brother, and sister, Raymond Uno was forced from his home in California and sent first to Pomona and then to Heart Mountain in 1942. His father, Clarence Uno, immigrated to the United States and then served in the U.S. Army in World War I. Although U.S. law prohibited Issei from becoming citizens, Clarence earned his citizenship through a special law passed for World War I veterans in 1935. Clarence died at Heart Mountain in January 1943, after attending a U.S.O. meeting in camp to discuss how to help troops serving overseas.

After Clarence's death, the Uno family returned to Ogden, where Raymond Uno finished high school, worked on the railroads during the summer, and then entered the Army. He served in intelligence units in Japan during the Korean War. Uno earned a law degree and eventually became the first Japanese American judge in the state. He became president of the Japanese American Citizens League in 1970

and pushed for the payment of reparations to those incarcerated during the war. Congress passed a law providing such payments in 1988, which President Ronald Reagan signed into law. Uno received the Order of the Rising Sun with Rosette in 2014 for his work with the JACL and for supporting the Japanese American community in Utah and throughout the nation.

"The three of us were given the Japanese Foreign Minister's Commendation, and the three of us were given the Order of Rising Sun," Uno said of his fellow classmates. "That's three of us in the same class, in Salt Lake City. I don't think that's happened in any other camp."

Shirley Ann Higuchi is writing a book about the incarceration. In her research, she has uncovered many details of her family's history, including their relationships with Misaka and Uno, that were never shared with her as a child. "It's a testament to their dedication and commitment that they accomplished so much to merit receiving these awards," she said. 



Yearbook photo of the 1944 eighth-grade class at Heart Mountain High School. Raymond Uno is pictured on the far right, seated in the front row. Also pictured is William Higuchi's future wife, Setsuko Saito (second row, fourth from left).





# SHINJIRO HONDA

## A Poet Remembered in Stone

*by Paula Johnson*

This is a winding story about three carved stones honoring a poetry master. The threads of the story stretch from Yakima and Seattle in Washington State, to Heart Mountain, to Washington, D.C. and Hamamatsu, Japan. The end of the story has yet to be told, at least to me.

Heart Mountain is home to the first of the stones to be carved. The stone honors poetry teacher Shinjiro Honda. It was erected by the Heart Mountain Senryu and Shigin Club, the poetry society that formed at Heart Mountain. The stone was discovered in the Spring of 2012 on Les Bovee's farm. It is a rounded column carved in *Kanji* on three faces. It is thought to have marked Mr. Honda's grave from 1942–1945. Today visitors can find it along the path between the Interpretive Center and the replica guard tower.

Mr. Honda was living in Seattle with his daughter Teresa Honda when Executive Order 9066 was issued. They both worked for a wealthy family and Teresa was a sophomore at the University of Washington. Mr. Honda was a widower and Teresa had lived with the Murata family in Yakima during her high school years. Shinjiro and Teresa Honda returned to Yakima and were sent to the Portland Assembly Center and then on to Heart Mountain. Mr. Honda was very ill and was apparently hospitalized most, if not all, of his time in Portland. He died at age 65 on September 3, 1942,

*Photo courtesy of Paula Johnson*



just days after arriving at Heart Mountain. He was the second person to be buried in the Heart Mountain cemetery.

Teresa left Heart Mountain for Ohio in May 1943; she worked as a secretary and attended college. As part of closing Heart Mountain, the burials in the cemetery were exhumed in 1945. Mr. Honda's remains were cremated and sent to Teresa in Washington, D.C. The stone was apparently abandoned and was not rediscovered until 2012.

In 2015, I was contacted to assist a landowner in Seattle after a carved stone was found in the backyard of a home in the Chinatown/International District. The yellowish-tan oblong stone was carved on one side in English "*Shinjiro Honda/Died Sept. 3, 1942/ Age 65*", and with *Kanji* script on the reverse which translated to "*September 3, 1942/This is the grave of the deceased Shinjiro Honda/Lived 65 years/Shizuoka prefecture, Hamamatsu city*".

Under Washington State law, anyone finding a marker like this must stop and determine whether it might be a burial, which is protected from disturbance. The landowner needed the assistance of an archaeologist to evaluate whether the stone marked a burial; I was retained to provide a report on the find.

With Shinjiro Honda's name and date of death, I was quickly able to learn with an internet search that he had been incarcerated at Heart Mountain. I called Heart Mountain's archives, speaking to an incredibly helpful archivist who mentioned that Heart Mountain too had a stone carved for Shinjiro Honda. I was curious—who was Shinjiro Honda? He must be important to have multiple stones carved in his honor.

The former landowners' daughter reported that the stone in the Seattle backyard was a memorial to Mr. Honda, placed to honor the family patriarch's poetry teacher. Knowing that Mr. Honda was a poet opened a research avenue that proved intriguing.



Shinjiro Honda was born in 1877 in Hamamatsu, Shizuoka Prefecture, Japan. As a second son, he would not receive an inheritance, which may be why he immigrated to Seattle in 1905 at age 28. He worked in the towns of Wapato, Yakima, Tacoma, and Seattle. He married a Japanese woman by 1913. Teresa was born in 1923 in Yakima. By 1927 Mr. Honda was widowed. He and Teresa spent a year in Japan, probably to return his wife's ashes to her family. When Mr. Honda came back to the US, he formed a poetry society named Hokubei Senryu Gosenkai; this poetry group still exists today in Tacoma, Washington.

As I learned from a publication by Teruko Kumei of Shirayuri College in *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, Shinjiro Honda was a leading figure in senryu poetry circles under his poet name "Kaho". Honda was the editor of *Hokubei Senryu*, published in 1935 by Hokubei Senryu Gosenkai; a copy of this 320-page book is held at University of Washington Libraries. It is the first volume of senryu published in the United States. An annotated bibliography compiled by Yuji Ichioka indicates the volume commemorates the fiftieth meeting of Hokubei Senryu Gosenkai—remarkably, this represents roughly eight meetings per year for people with limited leisure time. Kumei also notes that the group



Lakeview Cemetery in Seattle, Washington, which contains a Nisei memorial and a third stone honoring Shinjiro Honda.

Left: Stone found in the backyard of a home in Seattle.

Opposite page: The carved stone honoring Shinjiro Honda at the Heart Mountain National Historic Landmark site in Wyoming.

held an exhibition in Seattle in 1938, organized by Shinjiro Honda.

Senryu is a Japanese poetry style that follows a 17-syllable structure. In Japanese, the poem is often one line or one sentence; in transcription to English it is often phrased in three lines of 5-7-5 syllables. Senryu is wry and witty; it is more about the human experience than the better known haiku, a form that traditionally recalls nature. As a result, senryu is not seen as a high form of poetry in Japanese culture. Senryu, as practiced by Japanese immigrants was a simple but clever folk art and also an important type of oral history. Ayaka Yoshimizu of Simon Fraser University notes that many senryu would assume status as proverbs.

The landowner decided to leave the stone in place so it was documented as a cemetery and my project concluded. My fascination with senryu and Shinjiro and Teresa Honda continued however, and I conducted more research on my own. I learned there is a third stone honoring Mr. Honda in the Lakeview Cemetery in Seattle at the Nisei Memorial. I wrote an academic article and then a reflection for a literary website about Shinjiro Honda.

In the winter of 2018, the Seattle landowner had decided to redevelop their property. They needed to confirm whether Mr. Honda's ashes were buried beneath the stone. I directed an investigation which determined that there were no ashes beneath

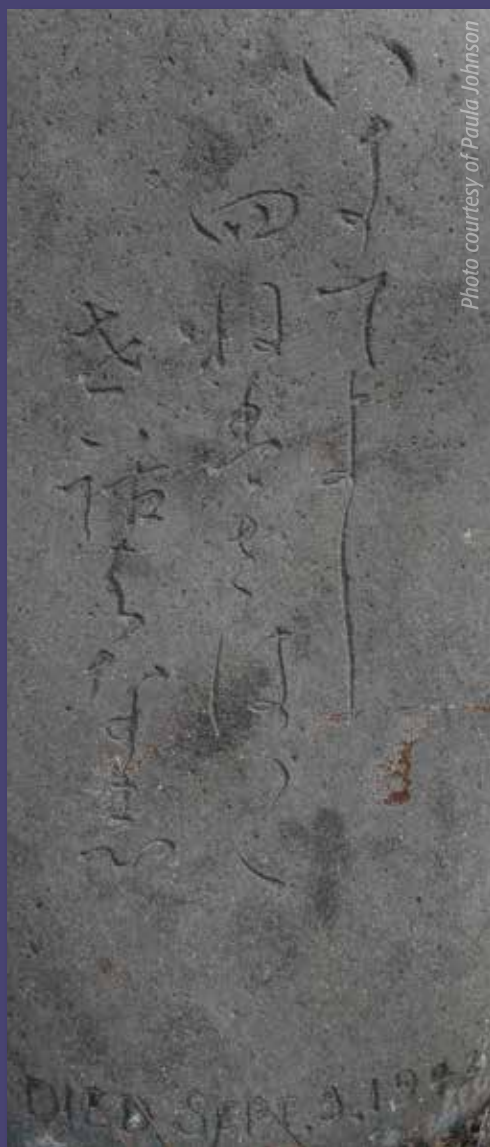


Photo courtesy of Paula Johnson

the stone. The stone was donated to the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience in Seattle. Shinjiro Honda's final resting place remains unknown to me.

Last month I went with a reporter from our local NPR station and a native Japanese speaker to look at the senryu poetry book that Mr. Honda edited. It was a thrill to find his name and to hear his poems. I learned more about the poetry society's meetings, and that they had themes for each session.

I am grateful for what I have learned so far. Yet many questions still spark my interest. I would like to find out more about Teresa Honda. Some of my research suggests she married and lived in Maryland. I would like to know Mr. Honda's final resting place, and perhaps speak with his students and fellow poets. I hope to come to Heart Mountain to see the first stone.

*To live! That is good...  
But to die, released from care—  
Is that not good too?*

Above: detail of carving on Heart Mountain stone.

Right: stone in Lakeview Cemetery in Seattle.

Poem: Translation of the senryu description on both the Heart Mountain and Seattle stones carved in honor of Shinjiro Honda.



Photo courtesy of Paula Johnson

Paula Johnson is an archaeologist in Seattle.



Photo courtesy of Paula Johnson



# Nyogen Senzaki

## a Paintbrush Sutra



by R. Douglas Dumbrell

See a man before you with a sprig of Indian paintbrush in his hand. He smiles faintly, places the sprig on the ground at his feet, and walks off. You may later encounter his poem, which speaks of “tiny flowers of the wild” and “curious stones of ancient ages.” The poem’s stationery bears an ink drawing of Heart Mountain and beautiful, mountainous calligraphy on the ground beneath. You are encountering Nyogen Senzaki, Wyoming’s first Zen monk, a prisoner of the United States Government at the Heart Mountain “Relocation Center” from 1942 to 1945.

Senzaki’s journey did not begin or end at Heart Mountain. The years spent there were not a bitter bondage for him. He complains only that, “The life in this center is a little too luxurious for me.” That is surely possible for a man without parents, without a family name or a trade, who describes himself—more than once—as a mushroom living on some unknown mountain.

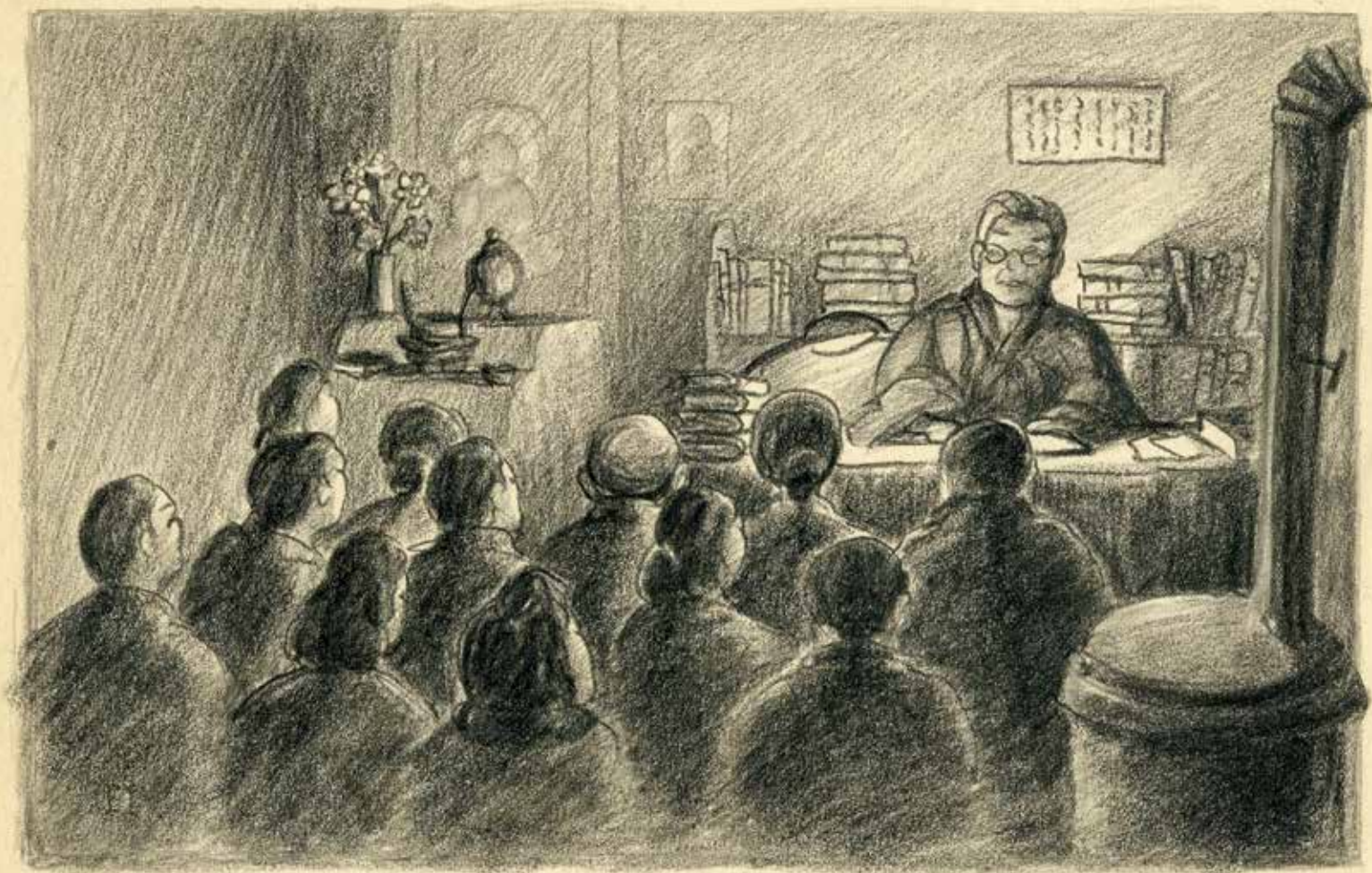
The man known to Heart Mountain as Nyogen Senzaki was, ironically, not exactly Japanese. He was born in Kamchatka, a far eastern Russian peninsula area, in 1876 and was abandoned as an infant without ever knowing his natural parents. His foster father was a “scholar-monk” but apparently was not related to him. Nevertheless, he was registered in his foster father’s temple as the first-born son of the ‘Senzaki’ family. It is not hard to understand that this

orphaned child would see himself as naturally, maybe even intentionally, untethered from most of the usual lifetime attachments.

Senzaki was, however, not a person unable to form strong relationships. His foster father and others at the temple, apparently very concerned with young Senzaki’s future, educated him in Buddhism, Christianity, and in modern western science and philosophy. The accounts of Senzaki’s early years seem somewhat confused. This may be due to his non-traditional childrearing situation, coupled with his tendency to be cryptic and his disdain for chronology generally. There are, however, some salient junctures in Senzaki’s young life, which contribute to his ultimate career and his sojourn in Wyoming.

When Nyogen was sixteen his “grandfather” (foster father) passed away. In his last words to the young man, he warned him not to join the ranks of Buddhist priests, whom he regarded as “a pack of tigers and wolves.” Senzaki decided to become a doctor, but while attending medical school, he was filled with a feeling of obligation to the monks and lay people who had provided for him as a child. The course of repayment he chose was to become a Buddhist monk, and he was ordained on April 8, 1895.

At that time, he was given what turned out to be the prescient name, “Nyogen” which means “like a Phantasm.” In Japan, Senzaki was already adopting a paradoxical approach to Buddhism, in which



*A monk teaching Buddhism*

"A monk teaching Buddhism." Drawing by Estelle Ishigo.

he chose to express traditional orthodoxy with an independent, earthly zeal. He gravitated to the then revolutionary "Kindergarten" movement as an expression of his conviction that the Buddhist concept of "loving kindness" was meant to be extended to children, and that the highest expression of his ideals came by teaching the fundamental practices of life.

Senzaki's own mentor and Zen teacher, Soyen Shaku, found his protegee no less than inspiring. The Zen tradition is a strict discipline, with a commonly feigned attitude of indifference of the master to student. With that in mind, imagine the relationship that resulted in this open testimonial from Senzaki's master:

*When he raises his hand, it becomes the hand of compassion; when he stretches his feet, they become a Moses basket of generosity. When he sees young boys*

*and girls it is as though they are his own children; if he sees handicapped people, it is as though they are himself; although he has no wife and children, he makes a family wherever he goes and teaches the true Dharma to all who come to him...among ten thousand Buddhist priests, how many are like this? Here is a monk named Nyogen. He is poor. He has no position, no fame, but he has a vow stronger than fame. His Dharma treasure is worth more than any material wealth. He has compassion which is higher than any position.*

Senzaki's teacher was no rustic, nor was he a mystic hermit. In addition to teaching Senzaki, Soyen Shaku Roshi was also deeply involved in the education of the more famous Zen Buddhist, lay scholar D.T. Suzuki, whose explanatory writings pioneered the introduction of Zen to American readers. Suzuki and Senzaki remained associates in America and were



occasional collaborators during their lives.

In 1893, Soyen Shaku traveled to the United States, to participate in the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. When he returned again to America in 1905, he invited Sensaki to join him. Due to an illness, Sensaki was delayed, and only came to his master later. It seemed clear that from the start Sensaki was not intended to be a traveling companion or aide in America, but an independent force. He spent only a limited time in America with his master and D.T. Suzuki. Instead, he began the labors of a wandering monk. His master instructed him to observe, to participate in the experience of American life, but not to teach Zen for at least seventeen years.

This is an idea far removed from the brassy proselytizing of western religious figures in Asia, but it represents a certain genius applied to the development of Sensaki. The observation period seems calculated to amplify Sensaki's natural reticence regarding personal attention, and it may have restrained and reformed his tendencies toward dogmatism. He emerged with a deep confidence that the most treasured of his values were applicable and necessary in his new culture.

Although Sensaki had very little background in the English language when he arrived, he was well educated in Western philosophy and religion, thanks to the forward-looking efforts of his teacher. As far as we know, Sensaki did not pursue collecting alms, the traditional sustenance of the Buddhist (and Christian) traveling monk. Instead, he set himself into a grueling work schedule of menial jobs. Either his instincts from a "peasant" background or his understanding of Zen principles from Shaku kept him in the role of the working poor, rather than pursuing charity, which his new countrymen would almost certainly perceive as indolence or hucksterism. Yet the economic strain was so great that even the usually stoic Sensaki was driven to complain:

*Nowadays I work from 7 p.m. throughout the night as a telephone operator and bookkeeper for this hotel. Then from 7 a.m. to 11 a.m. I work as a housekeeper with three American women and one Italian man as assistants. The only time I can sleep is from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and when it is too busy, sometimes I don't*

*sleep for two or three days. Between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m. the telephone rings less often and during that time, I study...Nevertheless, I am still having financial problems...I work so hard; why can't I save any money?*

It would be easy, one could imagine, to put spiritual concerns aside completely in this kind of a daily survival struggle. It seems almost like attending law school or medical school, except that Sensaki's true focus and goal would not allow for him to receive the benefit of his herculean efforts. Yet many of the descriptions of the practice of Zen Buddhism indicate it might be the best religion to pursue deeply while a person mops floors or does dishes:

*...we Buddhists aim to become Buddhas, not in heaven or paradise, or in the lotus land hereafter, but in this actual everyday life, in our own living world. Buddha is not a concept. It is our own mind, an achievement of our own experience.*

One more aspect of Sensaki's life before incarceration seems particularly salient to his practice, and consistent with his lifetime goals. Beginning in 1922, Sensaki rented a small room and began lecturing on Zen. By 1928, he had begun active meditation with a small group. He was remarkably unconcerned with the slow pace of his efforts. In 1931, he moved to Los Angeles. There he befriended a Japanese family who operated a laundromat. He received laundry services in return for helping them care for their son, Jimmy Tanahashi, who had Down's Syndrome. Jimmy was initially unable to speak and used a wheelchair. Tanahashi and Sensaki formed a special lifelong relationship. Tanahashi's mother, Shubin, became Sensaki's first, and perhaps most devoted, disciple in America. It is typical of Nyogen Sensaki that his interest in bringing an understanding of Zen to this country is inseparable from his earliest practice of caring for and educating children and the disabled.

We are close to the jumping-off point for the Wyoming part of this story. Nyogen Sensaki's Heart Mountain experience is, in true Zen fashion, totally ordinary and totally unique. The bombing of Pearl

Harbor sent its tsunami of fear across the West Coast in December 1941. In early 1942, Nyogen Sensaki was imprisoned as a Japanese national. He was originally incarcerated in Santa Anita, California and then transported by rail to Heart Mountain, Wyoming. The facts of his time in Heart Mountain are recorded mostly as times and dates, but also through some exceptionally beautiful calligraphy, poetry, and letters. One of the best examples is this poem, which contains sentiments and experiences any Wyomingite could identify with:

*No spring in the plateau—  
Having sleet and rain every day  
Timid hills sprinkle green by themselves  
Whenever they meet the peeping sun  
All in sudden, the summer came.  
Days are too hot to stay home  
The evacuees go out in the field  
Wearing their light dresses once again  
And pick up tiny flowers of the wild  
While they search curious stones of ancient ages.  
(third week of June, 1945)*

The use of Sensaki's adopted language is, by this time, not only competent but artful, and his awareness of so much of what lifelong residents appreciate about the land is probably attributable to a spiritual sensibility which prizes "awareness" above all else.

Historians, at their best, are reverse-visionaries. They sometimes have the luxury of actually knowing what happened, but they remain troubled by deep questions of causation and significance. Sensaki found himself imprisoned at Heart Mountain because he was Japanese and was living in America in a time of world war. Yet, ironically, he was such an orphan child it would be difficult to prove he was Japanese at all. He was raised by Japanese people, yet at the time most of us are cementing our native identities in studies and emotion, Sensaki was engaged in an active struggle to let them go. He is often quoted referring to himself as "a mushroom, without a very deep root, no branches, no flowers, and probably no seeds."

He had very little regard for the Buddhist establishment in Japan or America. He seems always



Nyogen Sensaki at Heart Mountain.

to have remembered his adoptive grandfather's admonition not to join the priestly class. He was critical (to the same extent as Latter-Day Saints or Baptists) of the vices of drinking and smoking, and he expected Buddhist monks to single-mindedly deny themselves marriage and the customs of family life, just as monks and nuns of many religions do. He remained committed to his life in the United States. "I determined from the beginning," he wrote, "to stay in this country the rest of my life. America is my adopted country."

He seems a completely unique prisoner. But the premise of the American concentration camp system, as Sensaki's case and thousands of others demonstrates, stemmed from deep, intentional generalizations; the same generalizations which always form the rationale for institutionalized racism. It was a diabolical injustice. However, to Nyogen Sensaki the impacts and consequences of internment were basically negligible. You simply cannot imprison



a human being who is intensely, inherently free.

Senzaki was assigned to live with a Buddhist family in the “Relocation Center.” Their shared space was “twenty by twenty feet in size,” and his visitors to classes or meditation had to bring their own chair or take a space on the floor. He describes his group as ten or so of the “happiest and most contented evacuees in this center.” Senzaki himself best illustrates his day-to-day-life at Heart Mountain:

*I never have a day off and every day is a holiday for me...I do not want permission from any authority for religious role. If anyone forces me to stop my recitations, I will simply meditate in silence. I dislike discussing politics, but I am free to talk about ethics and religion with my visitors.*

There is a belief common to the philosophy of contemplatives, which a practical man might simply dismiss as deluded. Senzaki would express it, “*Shu jo mu hen sei gan do*”—“However innumerable all beings are, I vow to save them all.” Or, as the Christian monk Thomas Merton says, “The hermits’ retreat is not for his own salvation but that of all sentient beings.”

While this may seem an illogical rationalization of a spiritually indulgent life, the temporal sacrifices made by someone like Nyogen Senzaki certainly put to the test the sincerity of his belief that his life was dedicated to mankind beyond any assault.

So Senzaki’s stay in Wyoming was just as he has said it was, no more. Somewhere in the Buddhist canon, it is written that it requires a vast amount of accumulated virtue to make a human being. Senzaki’s contribution to Wyoming is that he was here, present in his own way, and deeply aware. Here, he realized his *koan* and ours. He reconciled the sacred and the mundane, fame and obscurity, and the remoteness of a place at the center of the world. We can be proud that he was among us, no matter what the circumstance.

Regarding the circumstance, we should ask, “What is it in war which causes us to spend all our bravery on just killing and staying alive?” My mother, a girl in the days of the camps, explains them by saying, “We were all so afraid.” Yet, when I was a boy, I saw

true bravery in service of civil rights, even in the face of war. If the suspension—and likely permanent damage—of all bravery in service of the best of mankind’s ideals is a consequence of war, this is one on the long list of compelling reasons never to bring ourselves there again.

Nyogen Senzaki returned to California after the war and continued his long fruitful career of teaching, writing, and meditating. He died in 1958, but is remembered and venerated to this day. His epitaph exhibits the Zen master’s unique way of saying stuff your dad told you in a way that sounds like ancient wisdom: “Friends in the Dharma be satisfied with your heads. Do not put any false heads above your own. Then, minute by minute, watch your steps closely...” 🙏



Doug Dumbrill was born and raised in Newcastle, Wyoming. He earned a Bachelor of Science in law enforcement and a Juris Doctor degree at Brigham Young University. After practicing general law in Sundance and Gillette, Wyoming for more than twenty-five years, Mr. Dumbrill became a municipal judge for Gillette, Newcastle, and Pine Haven, Wyoming. He also works as a C.N.A. and an adjunct professor of Government at Gillette College.

Mr. Dumbrill is a long-time practitioner of Shotokan Karate, and participates in the Gillette Community Band and Collegiate Choir. He is also a writer of poetry, short stories and, recently, a children’s book for the grandkids. He is married to JaNel Farnsworth-Dumbrill who is an author of children’s books and a newspaper cartoon, “Gwamma.”

Dumbrill’s interest in Zen arises from a lifelong love of archery, sports and martial arts, and the artistic practice of ‘doodling.’ His most recent project borrows heavily from Zen and Buddhist ideas; it is a two-part lecture series sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Campbell County Library entitled “Truth in Political Discourse.”

# DUSTED OFF

## Highlights from the HMWF Collection

Half of the 126,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated during World War II were children. Resources for children at the camps were inadequate, environments were harsh, and the times were uncertain. Despite all this, education for school-aged children still continued and graduating high school seniors often went off to college. In 1942, students first arriving to Heart Mountain were met with classrooms in barracks with no desks and no books until later in the year. In 1943, the school environment improved with more

incoming supplies and the completion of the Heart Mountain High School. Built by the incarcerated, the high school included classrooms, a library, and an auditorium/gymnasium. These features made it one of the most impressive buildings in the camp.

Heart Mountain holds many artifacts of education in the camp its collections. Featured here are pieces from two recent donations: the collection of Momoko Murakami, a former student at Heart Mountain; and the collection of Joy Kattner-Wilson, a Caucasian teacher here. 🏡

If you have a story related to your time or passed down from a family member's time in school at Heart Mountain, please share it with us by emailing [archives@heartmountain.org](mailto:archives@heartmountain.org). We may share these stories on our website at [www.heartmountain.org](http://www.heartmountain.org)!



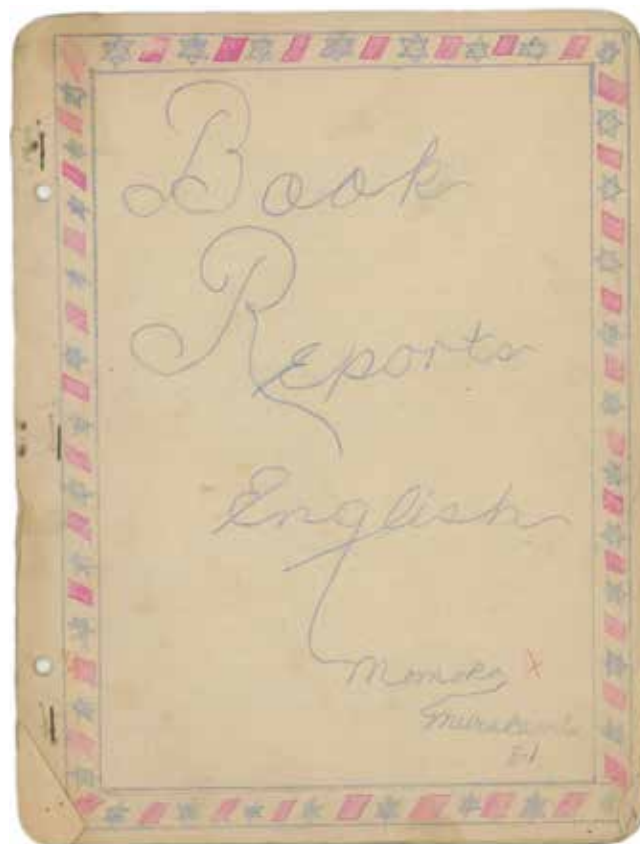
L-R: Alberta Kassing, Lillian Kawashima, & Joy Wilson (August 9, 2007)  
*Image courtesy of Robert Wilson*

In memoriam  
Eleanor Joy Kattner-Wilson  
(1922-2018)

Eleanor Joy Kattner-Wilson passed away on February 7, 2018 at the age of 95. Joy attended college and earned her Master in Education in Greeley, Colorado. During WWII, she was an elementary school teacher at Heart Mountain. Joy is survived by her son, Tim; three stepsons, Robert, James and Gary; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Joy had been an early and continuous supporter of the HMWF.



In this English assignment, Momoko reviewed three different books. Her review summarized the book, broke down the main characters, and identified the climax of the plot. Momoko also gave her personal opinion of the books, saying "Rather boring book in the middle but exciting toward the end..." of *The Secret of Doctor Kildare* by Max Brand, which her teacher praised as "good criticism." Literature was sent to Heart Mountain from churches and libraries, as well as wartime book programs like the Victory Book Campaign.



Book Report  
HMWF 2019.001.001  
Gift of Momoko Murakami

Students were still expected to be present and on-time for school and to receive good grades. Stanley Hayami, a high school student while at Heart Mountain, ended his November 29, 1942 diary entry with, "Well that's about all for now I guess. Gotta get up early tomorrow & get braced for the great bad news ~~ Report cards."

Heart Mountain Public School  
Progress Report & Report Card  
HMWF 2019.001.009, 2019.001.026  
Gift of Momoko Murakami

HEART MOUNTAIN PUBLIC SCHOOL

Heart Mountain, Wyo.

PROGRESS REPORT

Of: Murakami, Momoko

1942 - 43

Sent to: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: Block 15

Grade: 4th

A Message to Parents:

Pupils who are absent or tardy frequently cannot do good work. It is always helpful to have parents call and visit the principal and teacher of the school at any time. Best results can be obtained when the home and school work together.

Sincerely yours,

Ivan L. Johnson  
Teacher

P. J. Christensen  
Principal

Remarks by the Teacher:

GRADE STANDARDS

93-100	Superior	A
86-92	Above Average	B
78-85	Average	C
70-77	Below Average	D
Below 70	Failing	F
Work incomplete		Inc.

Parents are invited to confer with the teachers at any time concerning their children's grades.

Signature of Parent

4. K. Murakami

5. K. Murakami

6. K. Murakami

WHA HT MT #175



Image courtesy of the family of John K. "Jack" Corbett  
& Clarissa Jensen Corbett

Clarissa "Criss" Corbett was the Chief Teacher in the Home Economics Department at Heart Mountain. She and her husband Jack Corbett came from Southern Wyoming in the summer of 1942 when Jack accepted the job of Principal at the Heart Mountain High School. "One difficulty we had was getting the school records from the schools that the students had previously attended. Most of these schools were cooperative, but it did take time and in many cases we had to assign students to classes without any knowledge of what they had already taken. For example, we felt that every senior should have a class in American History and Government. We could not tell if they had already had such a course so we gave it a little different name such as Senior Civics and put them all in it." - Jack Corbett, Heart Mountain High School Principal

The HMWF is dedicated to caring for these important artifacts. Donations to the Collections Care Fund go towards the preservation and management of our collection, like the conservation of the above painting. If you are interested in donating, please use the form below or go to [www.heartmountain.org/archives.html#donations](http://www.heartmountain.org/archives.html#donations) for more information.

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Method of Payment: ☐ Cash ☐ Check (please make checks payable to the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation) ☐ Credit Card (Visa/AmEx/MC)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
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HEART MOUNTAIN WYOMING FOUNDATION, 1539 Road 19, Powell, WY 82435



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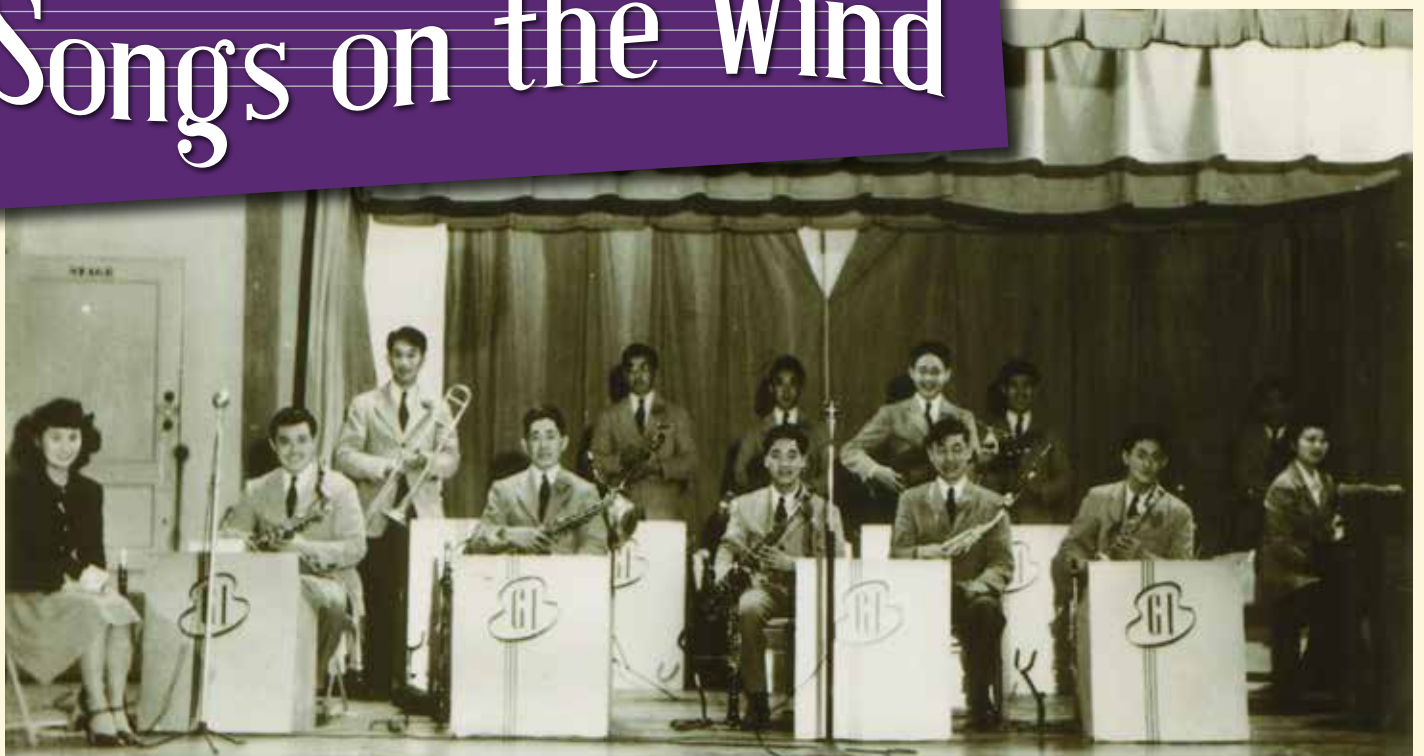
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# Songs on the Wind



NEW EXHIBIT!

"Songs on the Wind" explores the role music played at Heart Mountain  
On display May 18–November 30