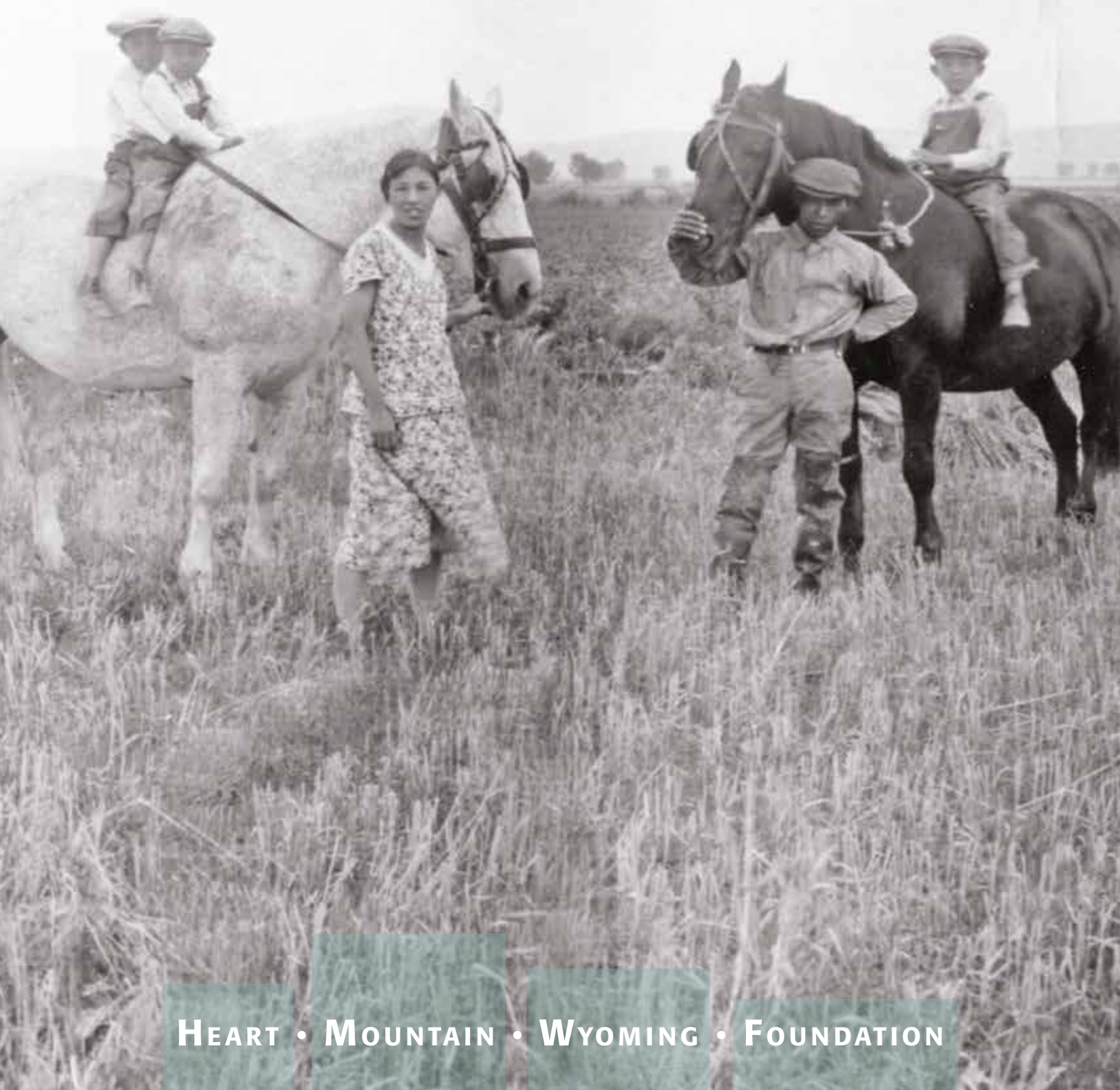


KOKORO KARA

"from our heart"

WINTER/SPRING 2021



HEART • MOUNTAIN • WYOMING • FOUNDATION



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Cover image

The Ujifusa Family on their Washakie County, WY farm.
Read about the Ujifusas and other pioneers on page 13.

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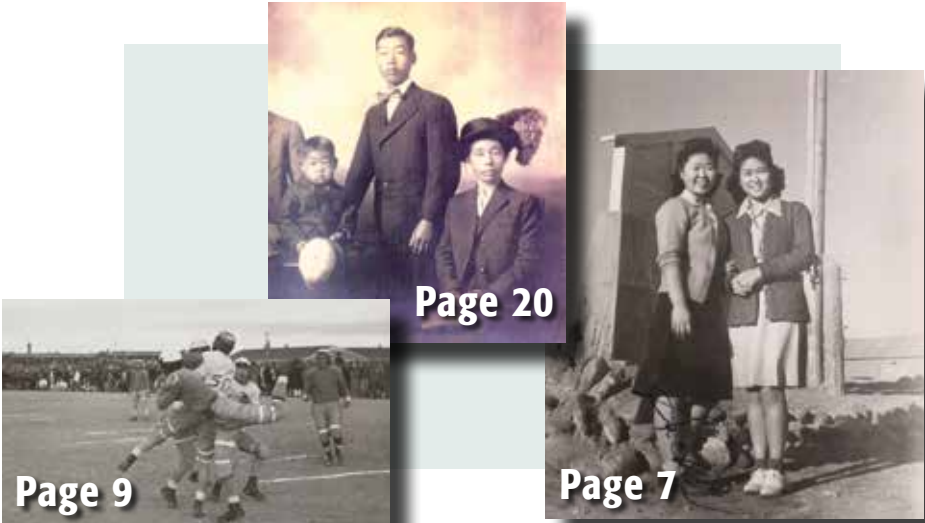
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website to read all past issues of *Kokoro Kara*!
www.heartmountain.org/kokoro-kara-magazine

KOKORO KARA
Volume 10, Issue 1

Editor/Designer: Kate Wilson

Have an idea for an article?

Would you like to be a contributing writer?
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
before/during/after the war, or an act
of kindness from a non-incarcerated,
just to name a few.
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Change of address?

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IT IS TIME TO HONOR THE COMMITMENT OF NORMAN MINETA AND ALAN SIMPSON

CHAIR SHIRLEY ANN HIGUCHI

From the moment the creators of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation first discussed building something at the former site of the camp, Norman Mineta and Alan Simpson were there. Norm and Al initially met at the camp as Boy Scouts in 1943. Norm was a young Heart Mountain incarcerated from San Jose, and Al was part of the lone scout troop that visited the camp to meet their Japanese American counterparts. Many years later, Norm and Al would reunite while serving in the US Congress. Though they belonged to different political parties, they often crossed the aisle to work together, including to build support for Japanese American redress.

Norm and Al's ability to keep partisan blinders off while working on solutions for all Americans was a model for good governance while they served in Congress. It is also the inspiring legacy we hope to honor by creating the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain. The Institute will expand our facilities at Heart Mountain Interpretive Center and allow us to develop new programming that will take our mission beyond Wyoming and out to the rest of the world. As we start the serious work of raising money to build the Institute, it is more important than ever to remember and lift up what Norm and Al have done for our country and our Foundation.

We hope to hold our ribbon-cutting for the Institute in two years. We have already received a generous contribution from the family foundation of Margot Walk, whose father Maurice resigned from his position as a lawyer for the War Relocation Authority in protest over the government's treatment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The Aratani Foundation has also stepped in with a major gift. Margot was part of our initial efforts to build the interpretive center, while Linda—whose father George was incarcerated at the camp in Gila River, Arizona—has been a champion for the development of our site and of our ability to reach larger audiences and educate them about the incarceration.

The support of these two major donors, along with substantial pledges from every member of our board, has given us a solid grounding for reaching out to other major

institutional donors, including national philanthropies and other institutions like the National Endowment for the Humanities. In May, we applied for a large NEH infrastructure grant that will provide critical help in finishing the institute. Of course, we will also be turning, as we always have, to individuals and families who believe in the mission of the Foundation and in the leadership legacies of Alan Simpson and Norm Mineta.

To advance our fundraising efforts, we have created a steering committee consisting of leaders from our foundation, the greater Wyoming community, and across the country. Ann Simpson and Deni Mineta, who know the most about the contributions of Al and Norm, are honorary co-chairs, working with two board members, Kathleen Saito Yuille, who was born at Heart Mountain, and Claudia Wade, longtime leader of the Park County Travel Council.

Our ancestors came to the United States with visions of a better future for themselves and their families. And while those dreams were tragically derailed in 1942, our community has endured and thrived even in the face of continuing bigotry. Like Al and Norm, we still believe in the promise of the American dream.

Over the course of the coming year, we will be sharing more details with you about our plans for the Mineta-Simpson Institute. We will also be asking for your help in raising the necessary funds to make those plans a reality. We hope our members and supporters will join us in donating to honor Norm and Al's joint rejection of hate and shared commitment to justice, the Constitution, and human rights.

Stay inspired, Shirley Ann Higuchi



Photo by Bryan Smyer

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

In Memoriam

Miyeko (Mickey) Azeka Kubota (1922–2021)



George & Frank Hirahara Collection, Washington State University

Mickey Azeka Kubota passed away on January 6 after a short illness. During her time at Heart Mountain, Mickey was known as an avid performer. She helped organize and lead the dancers at the camp's Bon Odori festival and was a regular player in traditional

kabuki dramas at Heart Mountain. In photos of these plays, she is often heavily made up as a male protagonist. "I always took man's part," Azeka later recalled in the documentary *Hidden Legacy*. "Never took women's part. Man's part was fun to do, anyway." Mickey's father, Taketaro Azeka, was known for his poetry, and carved one of his haiku into a large stone which he buried at Heart Mountain before leaving the camp. It was later discovered by homesteader LaVerne Solberg. Mickey helped to facilitate Solberg's donation of the stone to Heart Mountain, so it could be seen by visitors from around the world.

Grant Will Help Create Online Interactive Map of Camp

The LDS Foundation, the charitable arm of the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, has awarded us a \$25,000 grant to begin work on an exciting new project to trace the journeys of Heart Mountain incarcerated and their families.

This grant will fund the first stages of creating an interactive online map, showing where each incarcerated family lived while in camp, where they lived before incarceration, and where they went afterward. When completed, this project will show the sweep of our community and its connections around the world. The first phase of the project will involve creating a digital database of all Heart Mountain incarcerated, using records from the National Archives and our own archives.

Heart Mountain board members Lia Nitake and Prentiss Uchida conceived the project, together with Executive Director Dakota Russell and Editorial Consultant Ray Locker. Floyd Mori, former president of the Japanese American Citizens League, connected Heart Mountain with the LDS Foundation. Mori, a member of the Latter Day Saints church, lives in Salt Lake City, where the foundation is headquartered.

INSTITUTE

CORNER

We created the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain to target new audiences and expand the reach of our mission. Inspired by the lives and careers of Norman Mineta and Alan Simpson, the Institute aims to encourage education, dialogue, and cooperation between people of different backgrounds and experiences, in the hope of preventing future injustices. The **Institute Corner** features the latest news about this exciting initiative.

ADAPTATION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DAKOTA RUSSELL

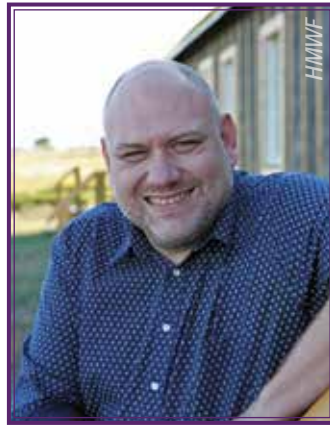
I've learned a lot this past year about adapting to change. Here at the interpretive center, we had to quickly respond to shifting health and safety regulations to remain open. As our revenues from admissions dropped, we had to explore new funding sources and find solutions to reducing expenses. We also had to adapt much of our live programming and move it into online spaces.

In this issue, we highlight two new programs which demonstrate the type of flexibility and creativity that helped us through the pandemic. Our new virtual field trip program, designed by VISTA museum educator Genesis Ranel and sponsored by Ito En North America, has helped us reach students during a challenging school year. You can learn more about it on the next page. A CARES Act grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities allowed us to bring aboard Rob Buscher, the head writer and host of our new podcast series, *Look Toward the Mountain*. His work is showcased on page 9.

The immigrant generation of Japanese Americans, the *Issei*, were masters of adaptation. We've certainly tried to channel their resourcefulness and indomitable spirit in the past months. We have also been fortunate, with the

support of the Embassy of Japan in the United States, to highlight some of their stories. Starting on page 13, you can read the stories of some of Wyoming's own Japanese American pioneers. You can find more articles and videos in this series on our website.

We've all shown a lot of resilience this past year. But there are things we cannot—and should not—ever adapt to. Incidents of violence and discrimination against Asian Americans have risen at unprecedented rates during the pandemic. Both President Biden and the US Congress have recently taken first steps to combat this trend, but much more work remains to be done. We pride ourselves on adapting to the world we live in, but we must also know when to stand firm and do the hard work necessary to make the world change for us. 🦋



Welcome!



Join us in welcoming **Deni Hirsh**, our new Membership & Development Manager. A nonprofit professional with over 30 years of fundraising experience, she earned her BA in Theatre Arts and has worked professionally as an actress and hosted a local public access TV show in her hometown of Memphis, Tennessee. She has conducted many training seminars for various organizations, including "The 7 P's of Public Speaking," "The Art of Knee-to-Knee Solicitation" and "Arts + Community: Show Me the Money!" Her previous experience includes senior development roles at Volunteer Memphis and the Germantown Performing Arts Center in the Memphis area, the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, and Intiman Theatre, the Stroum Jewish Community Center and Junior Achievement of Washington in Seattle.

Deni and her husband, Ron South, moved from the Seattle area in late 2020 to put down roots in the Cody community. She has a great view of Heart Mountain from her neighborhood and wanted to learn about the mountain. Her Google search led her to information about the Japanese American

incarceration during World War II. "Growing up in Memphis, Tennessee, I learned very little about that shameful part of American history, so I was surprised to learn that there had been a camp here. I delved into the fascinating history of the camp and, looking for more, came across the job posting for Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation. I've always believed in following the signs presented to me in life, and I jumped at the opportunity to work for an organization that's focused on preserving the past in order to learn from it and find better ways to deal with discourse and fear in the future." 🦋

by Genesis Ranel

I came to Heart Mountain in June 2020 as an AmeriCorps VISTA. AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) is a federally funded volunteer program with a mission to alleviate poverty and increase program capacity and sustainability at various sites and partner organizations. My goal was to improve the museum's educational programming and remove financial barriers that prevented students from accessing the museum. Because of the coronavirus pandemic and continued distance learning in schools, I had to change my methods for achieving this goal. Instead of improving the in-person tours and creating additional learning resources for teachers, we decided to create an entirely new branch of the museum's educational outreach. Thus, Heart Mountain Interpretive Center's virtual field trip program was born.

Before my work at Heart Mountain, my museum education experience was in visual thinking strategies, an informal teaching strategy common in art museums. Visual thinking strategies is an object-based learning approach that encourages students to form narratives and conclusions based on prior knowledge and information gathered from artworks or artifacts. Heart Mountain's education program was vastly different. Rather than completely reimagining how the museum conducts tours, I kept the pre-COVID approach of guiding students through a set narrative. However, I also utilized existing museum resources to add aspects of visual thinking strategies into the new virtual field trip program, through student activities, lesson plans, and digital content.

We wanted the program to be interactive and to not lose the importance of place, so we conduct parts of the virtual field trip live. Teachers can register for one of several thematic tour options: Life at Camp, Military Service and Draft Resistance, Women of Heart Mountain, Art and Culture, Children of Heart Mountain, and Meet a Former Incarceree. These live components complement online resources such as pre-recorded interviews with former incarcerated, documentaries, creative works about the Heart Mountain experience, and a variety of learning materials and activities. Teachers can use these resources to diversify their lesson plans and build a complete field trip experience, whether their students are in the classroom

VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP



Genesis Ranel

or attending school virtually. All tours and resources align with Wyoming Department of Education Standards and Common Core Anchor Standards.

While all the tour themes are great for students, Meet a Former Incarceree is the most interactive option. In this program, students have the opportunity to meet virtually with one of our team of volunteers to ask questions and learn about the incarceration experience firsthand. This is a unique opportunity not offered by many historical museums and institutions. Being able to speak with former incarcerated directly can be a meaningful and highly beneficial experience for students.

Heart Mountain depends on field trip fees to support its in-person programming, but the pandemic has created unanticipated expenses for schools and tightened already limited field trip budgets. Because of this, and because the VISTA program emphasizes eliminating financial barriers to education, it was important to us that the virtual field trip program be offered free of charge. Through the generous support of Ito En North America and the Mason Vitamin Group, we are now able to offer the program free of charge to all students.

The virtual field trip program has also eliminated geographical barriers to our educational efforts. Because Heart Mountain Interpretive Center is in a relatively remote location, we can only reach a limited number of schools each year. With the virtual field trips, teachers from across the country can set up a tour and learn about Heart Mountain and the Japanese American Incarceration of World War II.

My term as a VISTA service member with Heart Mountain will end in June, but Heart Mountain's joint effort with the AmeriCorps VISTA program—made possible through the Powell Economic Partnership—will continue for another two years. A new service member will rotate into my position each summer. Through their work, the virtual field trip program will continue to grow and expand, reaching more students every year.

For more information about Heart Mountain's Virtual Tour Program, please visit the interpretive center's Education Page (heartmountain.org/education) or contact us at info@heartmountain.org. 🦋

Dorothy Itsuko Tsuruda

...Not Forgotten

Cathy Dumont pays tribute to her mother Dorothy, a former Heart Mountain incarcerree:

I feel motivated to write this letter in a time that is filled with much fear and confusion. We watch and wait, not knowing what will happen. Seems familiar, as I say it. I think about December 7, 1941.

My Mother was 18 years old in 1941. She was young, beautiful, and full of ambition, having just graduated from West Covina Union High School in California. Her plan was to attend a junior college. Life can change so quickly, and her college plans were interrupted.

A train brought my mother to Heart Mountain on August 19, 1942. With her freedom taken away, she began a new way of life within a fenced compound, quietly, and without drawing attention to herself. Two of her brothers joined the Army and fought with the 442nd...that must have generated some confusing thoughts. I wonder how she felt about that situation.

After two years at Heart Mountain, she was released and moved to Idaho Falls, Idaho, where she was able to find work and begin a new life. Our mother always had such a strong will to work hard and prioritized taking care of her family and making a home in Idaho. She had a difficult life though, and



Dorothy and friends at Heart Mountain on the steps of a barrack and at the Honor Roll.



All photos courtesy of Cathy Dumont

Dorothy Itsuko Tsuruda
July 9, 1923–August 21, 1976



endured so many hardships. On October 13, 1948, she experienced the loss of twin daughters, born prematurely. They only survived one day.

I am grateful to the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and similar organizations for keeping the memories and experiences of the incarcerrees alive. Because of the work to honor those affected by this part of our history, there are actual places to visit where we can explore and remember where my mother and so many were wrongfully imprisoned. The first time I walked into the interpretive center, I was flooded with so many feelings. It is so hard to express what they were—my heart was racing and I started crying.

As I noticed the sign that read "I am an American," I was overwhelmed. I searched for my mother's name in the roster book that listed all the incarcerrees at Heart Mountain. There it was, Dorothy Itsuko Tsuruda, right next to her family number, 12066.

I looked at the pictures as we walked through the center... many were of the incarcerrees standing together. I thought, "she's in there somewhere—is that her? I think it might be her." I walked the path on top of the hill between the Honor Roll and the chimney at the hospital, and imagined Mom walking the same steps.

My sisters and I always appreciated our mother's strength and determination. However, as we watched her health decline in her early 50s, we realized that some things cannot be changed—such as the past—and some things are out of our control—such as the future. She fought a long battle with crippling arthritis and cancer, and passed away at age 53. Gone too soon, but not forgotten.



Dorothy had three daughters: Sharon Johnson, Jody Scovill, and Cathy Dumont (pictured right with Dorothy in 1961); seven grandchildren, thirteen great grandchildren, and three great, great grandchildren.

*View our website at heartmountain.org/kokoro-kara-magazine for an expanded version of this article!

2021 DAY OF REMEMBRANCE event

By Ray Locker & Julie Abo

The architects of the Japanese American incarceration, authorized 79 years ago on February 19, may have had the intention of "erasing" Japanese culture from many people's lives; however, taking a closer look, members of a panel led by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation discovered a persistence of Japanese culture in the camps and their own appreciation for what it means to be Japanese American today. The virtual panel discussion took place this past February 18.



NORIKO SANEFUJI
Museum Specialist,
National Museum of American History

"In my early days in America, I definitely felt like an international student, but twenty years later, I definitely feel more Japanese American/Asian American. I'm still on that journey." Born and raised in Japan, it was only after Sanefuji moved to the United States for college that she learned about the incarceration. She has remained in the United States since then and now sees her identity as *Shin Issei* and as part of the global Nikkei community.



TAKASHI HOSHIZAKI
Former Heart Mountain incarcerree

"One thing that tied me more closely with Japanese culture, was the Japanese language school right after our regular school. It was just a couple blocks from where I lived. Monday through Friday from 3pm to 5pm, I was at the Japanese school. I felt very close to the students and community there and I also went to a very diverse grammar school. Even through high school, as I drifted away from that community, I always felt Japanese American." Hoshizaki was 16 when he and his family were forced from their home in Los Angeles and sent to Heart Mountain, where he remained until 1944. He was one of 63 young men convicted of resisting the military draft and sent to prison.



CLEMENT HANAMI
Vice President of Exhibitions & Art Director,
Japanese American National Museum

"I didn't know my mother was a hibakusha (a survivor of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in August 1945) until I was in college when I began to learn more. My father was a Kibei, Sansei, looking for records for Redress...I had no idea...It's amazing how a lot of the Japanese Americans chose not to burden their children with it (the trauma). Once I discovered my parents had gone through these experiences, the curiosity set in and I sought out to learn more...Our identities are constantly evolving. Looking at this panel, I feel a great sense of pride in being Japanese American. I see Erin and I see the future. I see so many good things that being Japanese American represents today. We have this event of incarceration that allows us to consider what can happen when democracy fails. It is fragile and it can be applied to any group. I look at it with great pride."



SHIRLEY ANN HIGUCHI
Chair,
Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation

"The federal government plan succeeded in fragmenting the Japanese American community and forcing us to assimilate into wider society...growing up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, I never really felt Japanese American. However, I'm coming into my own now, with my work with the community of Heart Mountain and my book, *Setsuko's Secret: Heart Mountain and the Legacy of the Japanese American Incarceration*."



ERIN AOYAMA
Heart Mountain descendant

"I realize I have a privilege of being 'white passing' and I have a responsibility because of my knowledge of this history to call people out who are being racist. There have been many 'moments of reckoning' during this pandemic. The resurgence of racism and the Asian as the 'perpetual foreigner' is part of white supremacy culture and has shaped the history of the United States. There are also these conversations we should be having across communities of color. There are threads we can pull across the fabric of history. We should be cognizant in this moment we are living in, other than just accepting it for how it is but working on how we can make it better." Aoyama is half Japanese American and half Irish (her term). Her father, whose family was incarcerated at Heart Mountain, said little about that experience during her childhood, and it took years for her to learn more about that part of her heritage. She now teaches about the incarceration at Brown University.

The Preserving Identity and Culture panel was moderated by HMWF executive director Dakota Russell, and supported by the Embassy of Japan in the United States.

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN

STORIES FROM
HEART MOUNTAIN
INCARCERATION CAMP

by Rob Buscher

When I first visited Heart Mountain during their annual Pilgrimage in the Summer of 2018, I would not have guessed that several years later I would be given the opportunity to produce a podcast series about the camp. Then again, so much of the last year has become unpredictable with the ongoing COVID pandemic, that resulted in both a spike in anti-Asian violence, and civil unrest in our country.

Amid such circumstances, society is quickly adapting to our new virtual world in ways that allow even the most disjointed communities to again become whole. Last summer's *Tadaima! Virtual Pilgrimage* was a testament to the fact that Japanese Americans from around the country are seeking ways to connect and stay engaged with their community.

Like many organizations, Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation (HMWF) was planning a robust summer season of programs as part of their annual Pilgrimage in Summer 2020. These plans were sadly canceled given the social distancing safety guidelines, but they were able to join together with the more than sixty organizations who helped produce *Tadaima!* under the joint leadership of the National Park Service and Japanese American Memorial Pilgrimages. Thus, the funding that HMWF was planning to use for their Pilgrimage workshops and other

activities became reallocated for a variety of multimedia educational tools.

Despite the many challenges that COVID has wrought on our society, it has also opened up new avenues of opportunity. A year ago, it would have been unthinkable for me, a Philadelphia resident, to be working on a project based in Wyoming. Yet over the past six months, I have had the privilege of hosting and producing a podcast series telling the stories of Heart Mountain incarcerated in a degree of detail that has never been done in the podcast format before. Titled "Look Toward The Mountain," the name comes from a phrase used in Heart Mountain's camp newspaper the *Heart Mountain Sentinel*, in its inaugural edition on October 24, 1942. The editorial team revealed how they came up with their name in the following excerpt:

"Where did they turn for inspiration? They obeyed the age-old adage—"Look toward the mountains," Heart Mountain, of course, the natural source of spiritual and artistic inspiration."

We chose this title because it references a unique story from Heart Mountain, as the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* played an important role in daily camp life and is generally acknowledged as the highest quality newspaper published in the ten War Relocation Authority (WRA) camps.



Podcast episodes focus on themes such as commerce in camp and crime and punishment.



The editorial team's reasoning also encapsulates the overarching theme that I am hoping to capture through this podcast.

The forced removal and wartime incarceration were clearly unjust, racially motivated violations of our civil liberties that traumatized generations of Japanese Americans. But the camps themselves, and particularly Heart Mountain it seems, were places where community existed and even thrived, demonstrating the best of Japanese American innovation, creativity, and resilience.

This series is not meant to tell the comprehensive story of wartime incarceration from start to finish, but rather to focus on the individual experiences that add depth to the understanding of what daily camp life was like for the people who lived through it.

We do this by integrating audio samples from oral history recordings housed in the Densho collection along with some new interviews with Heart Mountain incarceration survivors. Inspired by the radio plays of the 1940s that would have been popular at the time of the incarceration, many written documents such as court testimonies, business and personal correspondence, newspaper editorials, and diaries have been incorporated into the series with the help of HMWF Board Member Darrell Kunitomi. Darrell is a Heart Mountain descendant,



and also a member of the Grateful Crane Ensemble, a musical theater performance troupe based out of Los Angeles Little Tokyo who has helped source voice actors to bring the many text-based additions to life.

Ray Locker has been my partner in crime when it comes to researching and writing the scripts for narrating each episode. Ray has a background in journalism as a political correspondent at USA Today and has been a member of the HMWF team for several years. Ray's journalistic approach helped to unearth a treasure trove of lesser known stories from the camp years, and others that deepen our understanding of well-known topics.

For my part, although I have spent much of my professional career studying and writing about topics related to the wartime incarceration, this was the first project I have worked on that necessitated such a detail of research into daily life in camp. I have come away from it with a more nuanced understanding of the period and am equipped with even more reasons why this issue was such a travesty of justice. It has also given me great joy to make use of my skills as a musician to do some light soundtrack work on the series, including the theme song that features both guitar and shamisen instrumentation—in what I hope evokes a blend of Japanese and Western tradition reflected in the lives of many incarcerated.

This project has not been without its challenges. For starters, living in a busy city like Philadelphia, finding ways to record high quality audio without interruption from neighbors' construction projects and passing traffic proved difficult. As someone who typically works in the written word these were issues I had never dealt with previously. Not to mention the fact that my wife Cathy and I welcomed our first son Mateo Masaki into the world in mid-October. Finding time to record and edit each episode around his naps, feeding, and changing schedule has also been a challenge.

This project also challenged me to confront certain blind spots that I had in my knowledge of the camps, which was largely remedied by working with a variety of subject matter experts who lent us their perspectives whenever needed. I don't want to give too much away,

but I offer the following brief synopsis of some key topics discussed in the series.

Beginning with the first two episodes we explore the origins of the Japanese American community—their immigration stories and first decades in the country prior to forced removal and mass incarceration at Heart Mountain, profiling the regions they came from and certain key individuals whose stories will be further expanded on throughout the series. We also devoted an entire episode to the history of Northwestern Wyoming in the Bighorn Basin where Heart Mountain was located. Exploring the stories of the indigenous peoples who first inhabited the land and the white Americans who pushed them out during the Westward Expansion (including Wild West legend Buffalo Bill Cody), to better contextualize the setting of the stories to come.



Podcast episodes explore subjects such as sports, arts & culture, food in camp, the Fair Play Committee, and the 442nd.

Episodes 3-5 of the series detail how the incarcerated population established some sense of normalcy amidst the deeply traumatic experience by recreating daily routines from their lives outside of camp. Things like school, work, worship services, shopping, and the like that give life its usual rhythm. One of my favorite episodes is the fourth titled “Prison Food,” in which we do a deep dive into food culture at camp, and the many creative solutions



incarcerees found to produce dishes that resembled their pre-war diet.

Two episodes in the middle of the season presented my greatest personal challenge, as it required me to be objective in my description of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL)'s wartime collaboration with the WRA. Episode 6 explores the organized resistance to the draft by Heart Mountain's Fair Play Committee, while Episode 7 tells the story of volunteers and draftees who enlisted to serve in the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. I can think of few better locations from which to tell this story, given that Heart Mountain was both the only camp with a formal committee of draft resisters who were jailed en masse, and also the only camp with its own USO center.

In these and other episodes, I was also confronted by my

own bias related to a pivotal figure at Heart Mountain—Bill Hosokawa editor-in-chief of the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* newspaper. Although I never met Bill, he was a friend of my family for many years. Reading through his editorials while conducting research on camp life, I came to realize that I would have likely disagreed with many of his viewpoints, which during his years at Heart Mountain at least were decidedly assimilationist and generally touted government propaganda lines.

In addition to the episodes exploring the divisiveness that the government sowed with their so-called Loyalty Questionnaire and subsequent military draft, Episode 8 titled, “Crime and Punishment,” paints a somber picture of camp life as it investigates crimes that incarcerated members of their own community.

The final two episodes of the season tell slightly more upbeat stories about how the community pursued creative interests in the arts and music that both helped to pass the time, while also helping many to process the traumatic events they were living through. We also discuss the role that team sports and particularly football had in unifying the Heart Mountain incarcerated around a common goal, encouraged by camp administrators who saw it as a means to further “Americanize” their inmates.

Even with ten episodes that each run about an hour in length, we are still barely scratching the surface, with many stories left to tell.

A version of this article originally appeared in the *Pacific Citizen*.



Rob Buscher is a film and media specialist, educator, arts administrator, and published author who has worked in non-profit arts organizations for over a decade. He serves as President of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League and chairs the editorial board of *Pacific Citizen*, the organization's national newspaper.

“Look Toward The Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp” podcast series is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The series is free and available to the public through Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Pocketcasts, and other major podcasting platforms.

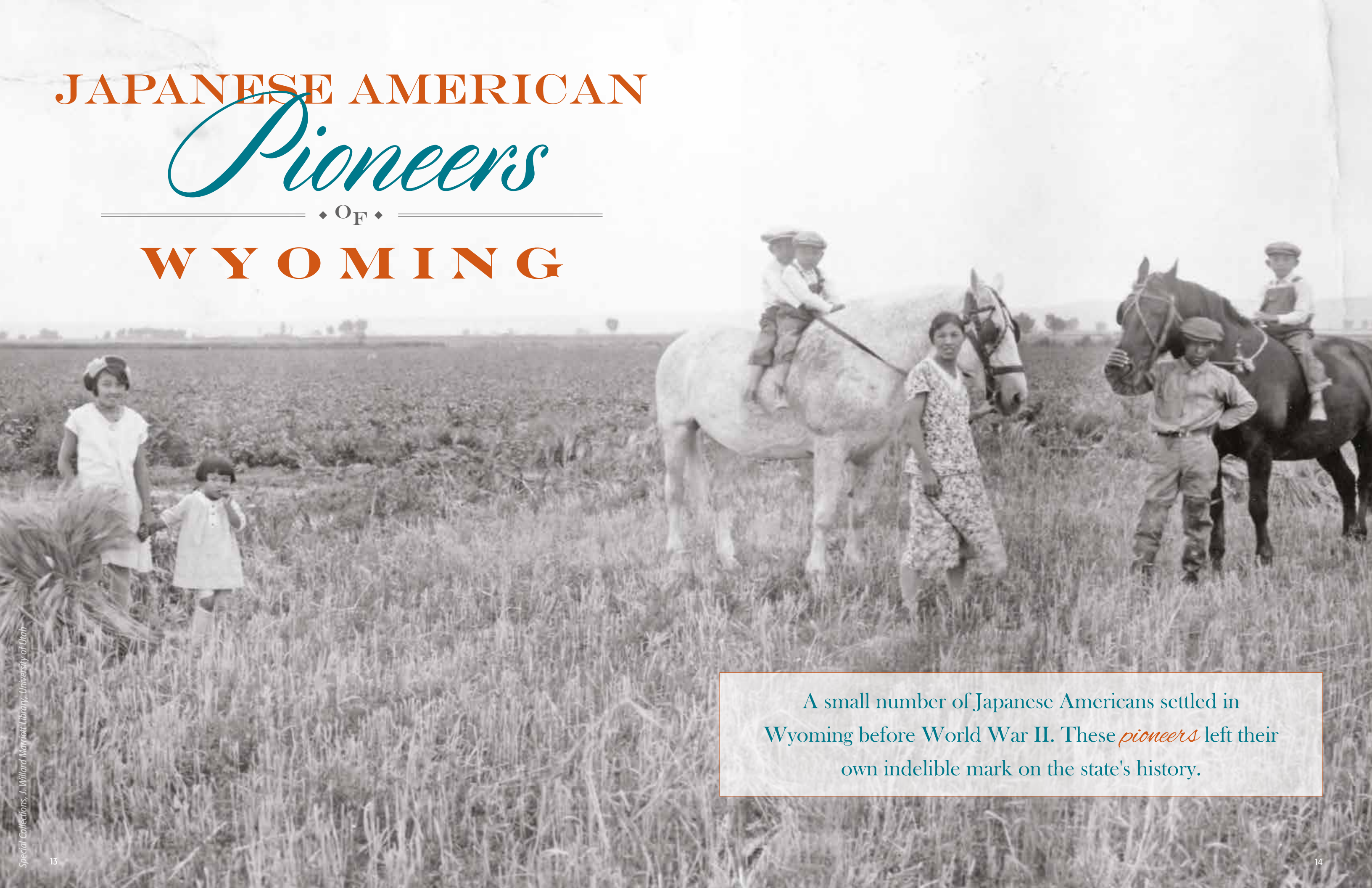
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JAPANESE AMERICAN

Pioneers

♦ OF ♦

WYOMING



A small number of Japanese Americans settled in Wyoming before World War II. These *pioneers* left their own indelible mark on the state's history.

Pioneers of THE BIGHORN BASIN

by Dakota Russell

Heart Mountain will always dominate any conversation about Japanese American life in Wyoming. That's no surprise. In 1940, only 645 Wyomingites identified themselves as being of Japanese ancestry. The arrival of Heart Mountain's incarcerated population pushed that number to over 11,000. Still, the stories of Wyoming's Japanese American pioneers, who settled in the state before World War II, should not be overshadowed.

When President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, the Japanese Americans were heavily concentrated on the West Coast. Only 15,000 or so Japanese Americans lived outside of the "exclusion zone" created by the order. The federal government concluded that this population, spread thinly across the country's interior, did not constitute a threat. Even as the government forced West Coast Japanese Americans into Heart Mountain under armed guard, Japanese Wyomingites were allowed to remain on their farms and in their homes.

Though they were never incarcerated in Heart Mountain, nearly every Japanese American living in northwestern Wyoming was affected by the camp's existence. Their lives—both personal and professional—intertwined with the lives of the people imprisoned at Heart Mountain. Many of these early pioneers are still remembered well by Bighorn Basin locals and former internees alike.

Shuichi Sam Ujifusa

Many Japanese Americans took up farming and ranching after settling in Wyoming, but few came here for those reasons. Most arrived as employees of the state's coal mines or the railroad. Shuichi Ujifusa, who came to the Bighorn Basin as a line foreman for the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad in 1906, was among the first to make northern Wyoming home.

Ujifusa, like many young men in early 20th century Japan, immigrated to America as a way to improve his financial fortunes. His family, once prosperous farmers, lost much of their land and wealth as power was concentrated under the Emperor during Japan's Meiji era. Ujifusa was welcomed into San Francisco's growing Japantown, but soon had to leave it. After an altercation with some of the community's shadier characters, the elders advised Ujifusa to relocate for his own safety. They found him the railroad job in Wyoming.

Between railroad work, Ujifusa earned extra money working sugar beets, one of the state's largest cash crops. Eventually, he purchased land and started a farm of his own outside of Worland, Wyoming. Later in life, he joked with his grandchildren about his decision to put down roots there. "You have to be careful in life," he told them, "because you come from a dumb family. I voluntarily chose to settle in a part of the world to which 11,000 people were involuntarily removed. Think about it." Jokes

aside, Ujifusa loved Wyoming, and was a tireless promoter for the state. By the 1940s, he had convinced two of his brothers to join him in Washakie County.

Not everyone in Worland accepted the Ujifusa family, especially after the United States entered into World War II. Shuichi Ujifusa's great-nephew, Harry, remembered that some Washakie County farmers started suggesting the Ujifusas be sent to Heart Mountain and their land given to white residents. Attorney Charles Harkins led a larger group of locals

The Ujifusa family poses in front of their farmhouse outside Worland in 1926. Shuichi Ujifusa and his family are gathered around the car on the left.



Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah



Special Collections, J. Willard Marriott Library, University of Utah

The Ujifusa Family on their Washakie County, Wyoming farm.

in pushing back. "These people were born here, they're raised here, they've homesteaded here," Harkins told the antagonists. "You're the people that moved in here, you're the people trying to take the land away, I think it's time that you leave."

Shuichi Ujifusa saw the camp at Heart Mountain for the grave injustice it was, but also as an opportunity to encourage Japanese American settlement in Wyoming after the war. As early as December 1942, he was holding a public talk inside the camp. His main object was to help workers avoid exploitation by the beet companies once the government began granting work releases, but he also "gave useful hints as to types of flowers and shrubs that can be grown in this area" and "warned the people about Rocky Mountain spotted fever and gave hints to residents on how to take care of themselves in cold weather."

Ujifusa was not only one of Heart Mountain's earliest visitors, but one of its most frequent. At least once a week, he would wake at dawn, milk his cows, and set off in his

car toward Heart Mountain. The drive was over 70 miles, but Ujifusa would arrive like clockwork at 8 a.m. The guards became so accustomed to his visits that they didn't even stop him at the gates. When he left at 3:30, in time to get home for the evening milking, the guards would barely look up as they waved him out.

Once the administration allowed it, Ujifusa and his brothers regularly hired farm laborers, cooks, and housekeepers from Heart Mountain for temporary help. Incarcerated lived like family at the Ujifusa farm. Legends were told around Heart Mountain about the bountiful and delicious meals served there. A typical ad from Ujifusa in the *Heart Mountain Sentinel* saw him looking for "2 farmers, preferably Washingtonians." It was well known that the people from Washington's Yakima Valley were the most skilled farmers in camp. Employment at his farm was so highly sought after that Ujifusa could afford to be choosy.



Courtesy of Grant Ujifusa

Shuichi Sam Ujifusa, far right, poses with his children and grandchildren.



Shuichi Ujifusa holds his infant grandson, Grant. Grant Ujifusa would go on to become a star quarterback for the Worland Warriors high school football team, and a leading voice in the national fight for Japanese American redress.



Courtesy of Grant Ujifusa

“Doc” Minol Ota

While Ujifusa was building his farm in Worland, Minol Ota was growing up in the small, but close-knit, Japanese American community in Cheyenne. Ota’s father, Chikahisa, immigrated to the United States in 1907, and soon found reliable work with the Union Pacific Railroad in Wyoming. Ota was born in the Equality State in 1916. When he was just three years old, Ota’s mother took him and his siblings to Japan, where he attended school until he was ten. Although a native Wyomingite, Ota struggled to learn English after he returned to Cheyenne.

As a teenager, Ota fell in love with the game of baseball. He played for a local team with mostly white players in Cheyenne, and for the Wyoming Nisei—a Japanese American club that challenged other such teams throughout the West, from the Tijuana *Nippon* to the Vancouver *Asahi*. When not in school or on the baseball field, Ota worked as a gandy dancer for the railroad. The brutal work turned him against a career in hard labor. After graduating high school, he applied to the School of Veterinary Medicine at Texas A&M and was accepted. He was the program’s only Asian American student.

When Ota heard in 1941 that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, he sensed that Japanese Americans might be blamed for the attack, and immediately called to check on his family in Cheyenne. The Union Pacific fired his father not long after the attack, along with every other Japanese American in their employ. Administrators at Texas A&M talked of expelling Ota, but the Dean of Veterinary Medicine stood up for him. He was able to complete his degree.

Ota remembered the “fearful and humiliating” trip home to Wyoming for the rest of his life. “At each of the train stops from College Station, Texas to Denver, Colorado, I was met by police and interrogated about my status.” Ota was a lifelong resident of the West, but his native region had seemingly turned hostile overnight.



Minol Ota (front row, third from right) played in both Japanese American and racially integrated semi-pro baseball leagues in Wyoming before the war.



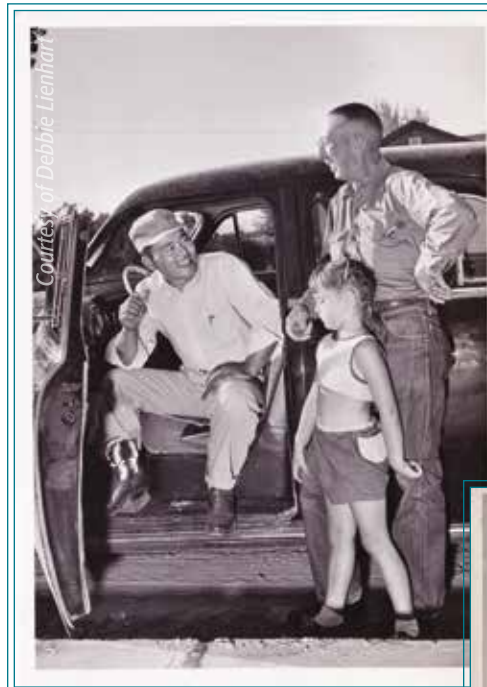
Back home, Ota began to look for work prospects. His sister Hisa had recently married Yutaka Numoto, an Issei farmer near Powell. She thought there might be a need for a vet in her neighborhood. Ota moved in with the couple and found work assisting Dr. W.H. Lee, serving farms and ranches in a 100-mile radius around Powell.

In August 1942, Ota watched the first trainload of incarcerated arrive at Heart Mountain. “I felt strange and awkward,” he remembered, “because I did not suffer the indignity they were going through.” By the next spring, the Heart Mountain agriculture department had started a fledgling livestock program, and Ota successfully lobbied to become the project’s veterinarian.

A friend winkingly described Ota’s duties at Heart Mountain as looking after the “physical welfare of the project hogs and social welfare of the unattached Nisei females.” One young woman at the camp did catch Ota’s eye. After he met Masako Masuda at a Heart Mountain party, Ota started making stops by the camp’s reports office—where she worked—a regular part of his visits. Ota and Masako were married in 1944, and she was granted an indefinite leave clearance to live with her husband in Powell.

Shortly after his marriage, Ota determined to set up a practice of his own in the nearby town of Lovell. The predominantly Mormon community was more friendly to

Japanese Americans than some other local towns. There was still some unease about the new vet, but it quickly dissipated as Ota charmed the locals with his impressive knowledge and familiar Western manners.



“Doc” Minol Ota quickly gained the trust and friendship of his adopted community in Lovell, and is fondly remembered there to this day.



After graduating as the only Asian American student from Texas A&M’s School of Veterinary Medicine, Minol Ota returned home to Wyoming and established a practice in Lovell.



The Ando & Kawano Families

Besides the Otas and Numotos, only five other families of Japanese ancestry lived in the immediate vicinity of the camp. Two of those families, the Andos and the Kawanos, interacted the most with the camp. Both families had lived outside of Powell for a decade or more and had established successful farms.

Muragi Ando immigrated to the United States in 1907, arriving in Seattle on the *Aki Maru*. Two years later, he was settled in Joliet, Montana and working as a farmhand. In the early 1930s, Ando, his wife Miyono, and their six children relocated to Park County, Wyoming, where he purchased a farm of his own.

The government built Heart Mountain virtually in Ando’s backyard. The 65 year old Issei and his adult sons became regular visitors at the camp. Corporal Tachio John Ando of the US Army Coast Artillery Corps was especially beloved by the Heart Mountain community. Corporal Ando had joined the Army in October 1941, before the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Though many Japanese American soldiers were discharged after the attack, Corporal Ando was allowed to remain at his post in the Caribbean. Whenever he came home on leave, the Heart Mountain incarcerated hailed him as a returning hero.

Another of Muragi Ando’s sons, Chuck, began taking over farming operations for his aging parents during the war years. He occasionally hired temporary workers from the camp to assist him. When his mother took ill, Chuck hired a young woman, Marguerite Takaki, to cook and clean the house. “She was a pretty good housekeeper,” Chuck later noted dryly. “I finally married her.”

Another local Issei, Yonosuke Kawano, often joined Muragi Ando on his visits to Heart Mountain. In early 1943, the *Sentinel* announced the pair would be giving a talk on how to grow victory gardens. The newspaper glowingly described them as “pioneer farmers who have contributed invaluable aid to the [camp’s] agricultural department.” Kawano had lived in the Bighorn Basin even longer than Ando, settling near Powell around 1922 and raising a family of twelve children. In addition to lending Heart Mountain farmers his advice, Kawano also donated them some of his seed stock—fifty pounds of adzuki beans and 100 pounds of string beans.

White locals in the Bighorn Basin did not look on the Kawano and Ando families with the same suspicion as they viewed the Japanese Americans incarcerated at Heart Mountain. After the Pearl Harbor bombing, Governor Nels Smith ordered all Wyoming sheriffs to send lists of Japanese aliens living in their counties to the FBI, and to restrict travel for Japanese American families. Park

County Sheriff Frank Blackburn dutifully reported the Japanese Americans living in his jurisdiction, but argued that tracking innocent farmers was a waste of his limited resources. By the time Heart Mountain was built, Park County Japanese Americans could go anywhere they wished. This difference in treatment sometimes led to bad feelings between the Heart Mountain internees and local Japanese Americans.

Enduring Legacy

By the war's end, most of the Japanese American families in Park County were fully integrated into their local communities. Everyone in Powell celebrated with the Kawano family when star halfback Eddie Kawano—Yonosuke's grandson—helped win the state championship for the Panthers in 1957. Everyone mourned with Chuck and Marguerite Ando when their son Curtis was killed by friendly fire in Vietnam. Many descendants of the Andos and Kawanos still live and farm in the Bighorn Basin today.

Minol Ota also became a beloved pillar of his community. For many years, he managed Lovell's semi-pro baseball team, and even founded the town's little league program. In 1972, he left Wyoming, but he is still fondly remembered by longtime residents of Lovell.

In Washakie County, Shuichi Ujifusa discovered oil on his farm in 1951, allowing him not only to ensure a comfortable life for his family, but give back to the local community that had become his home. Ujifusa's dream of a huge wave of former Heart Mountain internees settling in the Bighorn Basin never came to pass. Discriminatory laws passed in the Wyoming legislature in the waning years of the war signalled to the camp's residents that the



Miyono & Muragi Ando, photographed in Powell in the 1930s with their daughter, Miyako Mickey, and five sons: Masao Jack, Toshio Charles "Chuck", Tachio John, Shiro, and Koe.

state was not hospitable to them. Even so, a handful of families followed Ujifusa down to Worland after their release. By the 1950s, the town even had its own local chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League.

For Japanese Americans living in Wyoming outside the camp, life during World War II was remarkably different than it was for those incarcerated. Many whites in the state supported longtime Japanese American residents, often at the same time as they spread lies and hatred about Heart Mountain internees. But even longtime pioneers of Japanese ancestry faced racism and prejudice. Railroads and mines fired entire crews of workers simply because of their race. The accounts of Japanese Wyomingites are littered with stories of being accosted at work, school, or on the street during the war.

Wyoming's Japanese Americans understood that their relative privilege was only a quirk of geography, and that any change in the course of the war could easily result in their own incarceration, or worse. It was important, then, to help the people of Heart Mountain in the small ways they could, and to foster relationships between the internees and the state's larger population. These pioneers should be remembered not only for their contributions to building Wyoming, but for supporting their fellow Japanese Americans in a time when much of the country was against them.

Research for this article was made possible through the support of the Embassy of Japan in the United States. Special thanks to the Washakie Museum & Cultural Center for the use of their oral history collection.

Ota was the manager and centerfielder for the Lovell baseball team, and also founded the town's first little league program.

Pioneers of ROCK SPRINGS

by Don Aoki

Fifteen members of my family called Rock Springs, Wyoming home during the first two decades of the Twentieth Century. Rock Springs was an Old West mining town, full of saloons, a stop on the transcontinental railroad, a haven for sharpshooters like Calamity Jane and outlaws like Butch Cassidy, who worked as a butcher's apprentice.

The Union Pacific Coal Company produced most of Wyoming's coal from mines around Rock Springs, powering America's railroads. After completing the transcontinental railroad in 1869, thousands of Chinese laborers lost their jobs. Many became coal miners in Rock Springs. As bachelors, the Chinese accepted living in large groups to save on rent, allowing them to obtain lower wages. White miners attempted to unionize, but their strikes were repeatedly broken by Chinese who were willing to work for lower wages. In 1885, resentment and race prejudice erupted into mob violence—the Rock Springs Massacre. The white miners killed 28 Chinese (the number was likely larger), burned Chinatown to the ground, and drove out all 650 residents.

In response, the Union Pacific Coal Company recruited immigrant workers speaking different languages, expecting they would be less likely to organize into unions. By 1910 Rock Springs counted 56 nationalities among 5,778 residents.

The first Japanese arrived in 1892 to work on the Union Pacific railroad and in the coal mines. By 1907 there were 383, including six women and four children. Most lived in what others called "Jap Camp," where drinking, gambling, and prostitution ran rampant. A cinema showed Japanese movies. One former resident recalled knowing only five men who didn't gamble and one who didn't drink. The last residents left in 1964.

My great-grandparents, Shichigoro and Shima Hirayama, arrived in Rock Springs in 1904 with their daughter Haruye, born on a Maui sugar plantation. Plantation overseers imposed harsh fines and whippings for talking, smoking, or pausing to stretch in the fields. The Hirayamas left Hawaii, as plantation life was brutal.

Shichigoro became a miner for the Union Pacific Coal Company. The work was dirty and dangerous



(L-R) Nikichi Hamada's children Hatsuki (child in the middle), Mutsue (child on the left), and Momoye (child on the right) pictured here with Nikichi's parents Eka (far left) & Jihei (far right) in Kumamoto, Japan on April 25, 1907. The children and mother Asa would join Nikichi in Rock Springs seven years later, in September 1914.

but preferable to plantation work. Off duty, Shichigoro entertained the miners by reciting newspaper articles from memory and telling amusing stories. Many were illiterate, but Shichigoro could read and write, skills learned from monks at a Buddhist temple where he swept floors as a child.

Shima prepared meals for the miners at a boarding house: rice, vegetables, and fish soup. When not cooking, Shima was having babies—by 1913, she had five daughters and a son.

While Shichigoro and Shima were getting established, my great-grandfather Nikichi Hamada arrived in town, leaving his family in Japan to seek opportunities overseas. He joined a Union Pacific rail crew. It was a dangerous job, as falls and mishaps with heavy equipment were common.

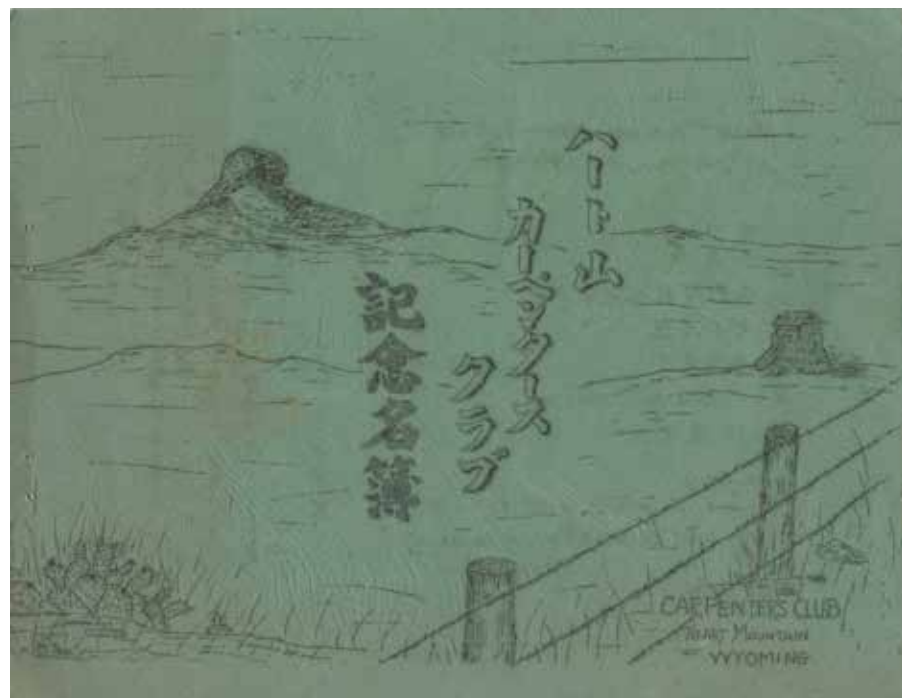
The trackman or crew leader was usually the strongest man. One day a loaded cart rolled down a hill, and the



DUSTED OFF

Highlights from the Heart Mountain Collection

When families arrived at Heart Mountain in 1942, they were given a single, desolate room to make their own. Limited to only what they could carry, that task became nearly impossible. They barely had clothes, much less simple furnishings like chairs, dressers, or tables. However, one element of the story of Japanese American incarceration is the adaptability of the people. Skilled carpenters helped their fellow incarcerated people to make these spartan rooms livable.



2013.030.001
Gift of John and Beverly Toyama



Just like teachers, doctors, and farmers, carpenters brought their trade to the camp with them, working on many of the construction projects run by the War Relocation Authority. They also created their own club for anyone interested in carpentry, holding the first meeting in December 1942.

Carpenters at Heart Mountain were kept busy creating furnishings for people in need. They relied on scrap wood — much of it left over from the construction of the barracks — to make the chairs, chests of drawers, desks, tables and other furniture that allowed people to live slightly more comfortably in the barracks.



2020.008.002
Gift of Florence Garrett —
In memory of Kichizo and Kane Umino



2020.008.001
Gift of Florence Garrett —
In memory of Kichizo and Kane Umino



2020.005.001
Gift of Norio Uyematsu —
In memory of Niroku and Shitsuyo Uyematsu

The carpentry club was very involved with the Heart Mountain community. In August 1943, brothers Shinzaburo and Gentaro Nishura led the carpenters in constructing a large *butsudan* — a Buddhist altar — for the church in Block 30. The altar, including the stand, stood over 8 feet tall. It is now in the collection of the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles. On a much smaller scale, some families crafted their own *butsudans* in camp, like this one created for the Uyematsu family.

One of the biggest obstacles for everyone at Heart Mountain was the lack of tools and supplies. The carpenters were nothing if not creative, though, and would sometimes make the tools they needed themselves, such as this block plane.



2018.015.001
Gift of Scott Caturia

2015.021.001
Gift of Cathy SanFilippo—
In honor of K.T. Roes



A lot of the furniture made at Heart Mountain is strictly utilitarian. Chests of drawers may be stained, but without any other decoration. Some pieces, however, were more elaborate; such as this mirror, with its intricate carvings and painted features.



Leaving Heart Mountain could be even more complicated than arriving. When incarcerated relocated at the end of the war, they often could not carry everything they acquired during their time at camp with them. In one last service for the Heart Mountain community, the carpenters made crates like these, so families could ship all of their belongings to their next destination. This crate was made for the Kushino family, and carried their possessions to a hostel in Minnesota.

2018.010.002
Gift of Richard Kushino—In memory
of Kiyoko Marguerite (Kay) Kushino

Life at Heart Mountain looked nearly impossible when the first Japanese Americans arrived in 1942. Incarcerated had to band together and utilize their individual skills to make the best of this horrible situation. Just as other professionals and tradespeople lent their skills to assist the camps, Heart Mountain's carpenters helped turn barren barrack rooms into places people could actually live.

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