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Have an idea for an article? Would you like to be a contributing writer? We’re interested! Write to Krist Jessup with your story ideas—these could include a profile of a former internee, a specific aspect of the Japanese American experience before/during/after the war, or an act of kindness from a non-internee, just to name a few.
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A Mineta-Simpson Call to Action: Getting Families Involved

Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi

N
o other Japanese American confinement site organization has an inspirational story to match that of Norman Mineta and Alan Simpson. The pair met as Boy Scouts 79 years ago, made it to Congress, helped to convince the United States to apologize for a great wrong, and played key roles in building our award-winning museum in Wyoming. We are building the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain as a testament to the lives and careers of these two great Americans. Norm and Al have shown that political, ethnic, and geographical differences should not stop us from tackling the problems we face as a nation and making life better for millions of Americans.

As we continue to raise money for the Institute, we have been blessed by other unlikely pairings who have come together to help us turn this dream into reality. Margot Walk grew up in Chicago as the daughter of Maurice Walk, a successful attorney who resigned his position with the War Relocation Authority because he opposed the government’s treatment of Japanese American incarcerees. Margot’s vision and her support through the Maurice Walk Foundation helped us kickstart our plans for building the Institute.

While Maurice Walk was resigning in protest, George Aratani was on the other side of the barbed wire, incarcerated at the Gila River camp in Arizona. After the war, Aratani founded the Mikasa china brand, whose products adorned tables across the country. His daughter, Linda, and the Aratani Foundation have made generous grants to boost fundraising for the Institute, support restoration of our root cell, and create the augmented reality tour. Together, the support of the Aratani and Walk families is making the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain a reality.

Doug Nelson and I are another pairing that came to this place from very different backgrounds. More than 50 years ago, I was in school in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the child of two former Heart Mountain incarcerees who said very little about their camp experience. At the same time, Doug was a graduate student at the University of Wyoming, who was discovering what had happened on the barren ground between Cody and Powell. Today, Doug and I are both published authors with books about Heart Mountain and guiding a board of dedicated volunteers working to make our Foundation a leader in telling this story.

That’s the beauty of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation: despite our nation’s often turbulent and divisive politics, we work together to preserve history and to tell the accurate story of what happened at our site, to ensure it doesn’t happen again to anyone else. That story has been told beautifully once again, by another remarkable team—broadcaster and documentarian David Ono and filmmaker Jeff Machttyre. If you have not already, I encourage you to visit the Foundation’s web page and watch their new six-minute film about the Mineta-Simpson Institute. It truly demonstrates why it’s so important to continue this work.

We have experienced a lot over the course of the pandemic, and I have missed seeing all of you at our annual Pilgrimages. But we have continued undaunted, drawing strength from our community and inspiration from Norman Mineta and Alan Simpson. We will be back this summer with our biggest Pilgrimage yet, and we will mark the occasion by breaking ground on the Mineta-Simpson Institute. I can’t think of a more fitting way to emerge from the challenges of the last two years.

You can help us make our vision of the Mineta-Simpson Institute a reality. This spring, we will be launching our new family matching program. Some of our larger donors have agreed to match the donations made by Heart Mountain families. We are currently seeking family “captains” to organize their relatives and raise as much as possible. I am working with the Higuchi-Suto families, and the Kunitomi-Fujiokas, Matsumura-Sunadas, Missakas, and Unos are also on board.

Stay inspired. —Shirley Ann Higuchi
Coming Attractions

Executive Director Dakota Russell

Normally in this first issue of the year, I use this space to wax poetic about the year gone by. There is plenty to say about 2021 and all that we accomplished in that time—I'd encourage you to flip to page 6 for the highlights—but I'd like to do something a little different here, and preview what's coming up at Heart Mountain in 2022.

Bob Kuwahara & the Nisei Animators

Our newest exhibit at Heart Mountain Interpretive Center opens on May 11 and highlights the role that Japanese Americans played in the Golden Age of animation in the United States. Through original artwork, animation, and storytelling, the exhibit follows Bob Kuwahara from his hiring at Disney’s first “story sketch man,” to his incarceration at Heart Mountain, and finally to his creation of the character Hashimoto-San, the first positive portrayal of Japanese culture in American cartoons. We have designed this exhibit to appeal to the whole family, and I hope many of you will be able to visit the interpretive center and see it in 2022. And if you’d like to learn more about our current exhibit, Dusted Off, check out registrar Brandon Daake’s column on page 15.

Children’s Day Festival

We will also be unveiling a brand new event this year on Saturday, May 14. Our Children’s Day celebration not only honors the traditional Japanese holiday of Kodomo no hi, but opens a window on what childhood in the camp was like, via stories, activities, and games. We expect this to be a popular festival for years to come.

Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp

You may have noticed on page 4 that we have already marked a major achievement this year—the republication of Solly Ganor’s Light One Candle. This is just the first of several new books we are working on publishing. Next up this summer will be a new printing of Douglas Nelson’s Pulitzer Prize nominated book, Heart Mountain: The History of an American Concentration Camp. Look for it in the museum store and on our website this summer!

Irei Names Monument

For several years now, historian Duncan Williams has taken on the daunting task of documenting the names of every man, woman, and child of Japanese ancestry interned or incarcerated during World War II. You can read more about this work on page 7. Just this month, the Mellon Foundation announced that they will be working with Williams to bring an exciting new dimension to this work—physical monuments at incarceration sites across the country, including Heart Mountain. We’ll have more news about this important remembrance in future issues.

2022 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage

There could never be any bigger event happening at Heart Mountain than the return of our annual Pilgrimage, slated for July 28-30. We are excited to return to a full event this year, featuring a screening of Kishi Bashi’s new documentary Omoiyari, the groundbreaking ceremony for the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain, and much more. Enthusiasm for the event is at an all-time high, so I encourage all of you to register early. You can find out how to register on page 14.

As you can see, this will be a big year for us. I can’t wait to share it all with you.

Heart Mountain Interpretive Center welcomed over 14,000 visitors. The second half of the year even saw the return of in-person school groups and coach tours.

The Center engaged even more people through virtual field trips, special programs, digital exhibits, podcasts, and other online content. We partnered with the Japanese American National Museum, the National WWII Museum, the National Japanese American Historical Society, and many other organizations in our digital education efforts.

We hosted two educator workshops through a National Endowment for the Humanities’ Landmarks of American History and Culture grant. Seventy-two teachers from across the country attended these virtual workshops, and we received a second grant to host in-person workshops this summer.

Given the continued challenges of the pandemic, we hosted a hybrid Pilgrimage in July, with a small group onsite and many more watching from home. Our 2021 Pilgrimage videos have been viewed more than 3,000 times.

Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi held virtual book talks for her memoir Setsuko’s Secret throughout the year, discussing this history with diverse audiences all around the country and beyond with virtual programs with Japanese universities.

In response to the rise of violence against Asian Americans during COVID, we developed the physical and digital exhibit History Often Rhymes, which explored how disease has been racialized throughout American history. Architectural and engineering plans for the original 1943 root cellar were finalized and work on designing the exhibit began. We also continued restoration and exhibit development of the original barracks. Currently, it is planned for both structures to be open to the public in 2023.

We continued our groundbreaking work with the Japanese American Confinement Sites Consortium: planning a virtual education conference in October; serving on the advocacy team for creating Amache National Historic Site; and promoting the Japanese American Confinement Sites Education Act, which will reauthorize National Park Service grant funding for national parks and confinement sites.

Finally, we kicked off our capital campaign to build the Mineta-Simpson Institute at Heart Mountain, a new wing of Heart Mountain Interpretive Center for workshops and programming designed to foster empathy, courage, and cooperation in the next generation of leaders. So far, we have raised close to $3M towards our goal.
WHAT’S IN A NAME?

by Duncan Ryuken Williams
Each of the over 14,000 individuals who were incarcerated in Heart Mountain had a name. But in their forced removal from their homes into concentration camps, they were treated by the U.S. government as an undifferentiated and inescapable mass of " Orientals," assumed to be perpetually un-American, if not outright anti-American.

The main difference between the U.S. government’s selective internment of Japanese, German, and Italian nationals and the mass incarceration of the entire West Coast Japanese American community was the lack of attention to the humanity of each person as an individual. Whether one was an American citizen or not, a newborn baby or an infirmed grandmother, anyone with "a drop of Japanese blood"—as Colonel Karl Bendetsen put it—was removed from their homes and herded en masse behind barbed wire. Despite the United States also being at war with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, there was no mass round up of the entire German American or Italian American community during WWII; only the Japanese American community was so targeted.

This smearing of an entire ethnic group as a threat to the nation, undeserving of the Constitutional guarantees of due process, was part of a much longer history of differential treatment of immigrant communities in America, especially those that crossed the Pacific from Asia. When the first Japanese immigrated to work on Hawaiian sugar plantations, the plantation overseers—unable to pronounce the names of the workers—simply called them out by their numbers, commonly stamped onto a metal disk called "Bango" (literally "number" in the Japanese language) attached to the migrant workers. Of course, this practice of dehumanization by the erasure of names has an even longer history with enslaved Black Americans on the cotton plantations of the American South.

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The Irei Names Monument project is my attempt to repair this history of discriminatory racial exclusion and marginalization—with a goal to, for the first time, recall the names of all persons of Japanese ancestry who experienced incarceration during WWII in the various types of confinement sites. In the case of Heart Mountain, over those facilities run by the Army, the Department of Justice, the Wartime Civil Control Administration, and the War Relocation Authority. As it turns out, compiling an accurate and comprehensive list of names is rather daunting. It’s not a simple matter of merging camp rosters, incarcerated-created directories, and transfer lists. Due to the use of aliases, clerical errors by government types, multiple romanization systems for Japanese names, and inconsistent rendering of names (such as flipping first and middle names), we must study traditional Japanese naming culture, practices of Anglicization and abbreviation amongst Japanese Americans, and nomenclature conventions of the 1940s. Thousand and thousands of names on forms are either misspelled or in need of verification, and government records often render the same person’s name differently in the documents from the period.

Take, for instance, the famous actor and social activist George Takei. His name is rendered in the Final Accountability Roster of the Rohwer camp as "Hosato George Takei." Since his family transferred to the Tule Lake camp in 1943, he is also listed in that camp’s Roster, but this time as "Hozato George." So how should we list him in our names monument? The Japanese kanji characters for his first name in the rosters can be romanized as either "Hosato" or "Hozato." Technically, both renderings are plausible. In this case, I just asked him. He affirmed that "George Hosato Takei" would be most appropriate. In line with honoring the preferences of incarcerated camp survivors over government listings (especially when he never recalls having ever used "Hozato" with the "z") and that fact that his birth certificate lists his name as "Hosato Takei," makes good sense to choose the Rohwer rendering over the Tule Lake one. Furthermore, he related to me how the name "George" was added to his official birth name: "I remember my father telling me when I was a boy in the Rohwer camp in Arkansas that I was named after George VI of England. My father was an Anglophile who had all the Kings and Queens of England memorized. He thought it was propitious that his son would be born just before the new King of England was to be crowned in 1937. I was born two months before the actual coronation."

Thousands more individuals, most of them less well-known than Takei, have these types of discrepancies in the government rosters. Creating an accurate list means resolving these issues. George Makoto Fujita (b. 1927), found in Heart Mountain’s Final Accountability Roster, provides a good example. Fujita was also incarcerated in Jerome, where he was listed without a middle name, and in Tule Lake, where he was listed as Makoto George. We resolved this particular case by referring to his wartime draft card, which has "George Makoto Fujita" in his own handwriting, affirming the Heart Mountain rendering.

To determine authoritative names, beyond standardizing nomenclature conventions, it’s helpful to understand naming culture among Japanese Americans of the period. In general, Japanese have a broader variety of surnames than other East Asians. For example, the majority of Koreans share just four surnames—Choi, Kim, Lee, and Park. However, certain family names were common among Japanese immigrants to the U.S. In Heart Mountain, for example, the most popular family names were: Yamamoto (179 individuals), Nakamura (138), Tanaka (117), Yoshida (111), Sakamoto (106), Nakano (97), Ito (94), Watanabe (90), Shimizu (83). Hashimoto (79), Uyeda (78), Matsumoto (74), Kato (67), Yamashita (62), and Suzuki (61).
It is not surprising that Issei immigrants from Japan carried across the naming practices from Meiji-period (1868-1912) Japan, the era of the initial emigrations out of Japan. Certain types of Japanese first names that may have sounded archaic to younger Japanese Americans dominated the older generation. In Heart Mountain, the oldest individual listed in the Roster at the time of its compilation was the 93-year old widow Eka Inouye, who had lived in Los Gatos, California before the war. Female names of the older generation in the Wyoming camp like Kiko, Kyō, and Tama tended to be two-syllable names. Younger Japanese women often had three-syllable names with the female "-ko" ending, like Kimiko, Masako, or Yuriko. Male names often ended with "-ichiro" [lit. "first son"] (Genichiro, Yachihiro), "-jiro" [lit. "second son"] (Arajiro, Enjirō, Kinjirō, Masajirō, or Takejirō), or "-taro" [lit. "eldest son"] (Kentarō, Kunitarō, Kyutarō, Shintarō, or Shōtarō). These types of names were most common among the members of the community in their 80s and 90s in Heart Mountain.

The Meiji government tried to abolish—unsuccessfully—certain names associated with the older regime. Name endings such as "-suke," for instance, corresponded to government ranks from earlier periods. But a survey of Heart Mountain Issei includes elders named Hirokaze, Kichisuke, Tatsunoike, and Toranosuke.

In stark contrast to those who kept such archaic names, one Issei in this oldest demographic, Joe Negishi (b. 1864), simply adopted an Anglo name. Others, such as George Genichirō Kobayashi (b. 1867) and George Yonekichi Kitasako (b. 1869), combined their given Japanese

The Heart Mountain Final Accountability Roster, from 1944, provides a mostly complete listing of each individual at the camp. However, due to mistakes and inconsistencies, records like these are often only the first step in determining an individual’s preferred name.
birth names with an Anglo name that they adopted in immigrating to the U.S. For Issei who immigrated from Japan later, as well as for Nisei, this hybrid Anglo-Japanese system of first and middle names was quite common. One way of pairing the first and middle names was to find Anglo names that matched the Japanese name either by sound or by meaning. Heart Mountain incarcerees Meriko Mary Nishiyama, Roy Rioichi Shundo, Kunio Coonio Shimizu, Tom Tsutomu Sakamoto, and Sam Isamu Ohira all adopted Western names that sounded approximate to their Japanese names. On other occasions, names would be paired by meaning. Lilly Yuriko Namba and Lily Yuriko Oka are examples of associating “Yuri” (the Japanese word for the flower species “lily”) with Lilly and Lily.

Especially with Nisei, another form of Anglicization of Japanese names that non-Japanese had trouble pronouncing was the practice of abbreviation. Mitsuki Shimamura went by “Mits” and Shigeo Sumihiro became “Shig.” Mits and Shig not only played into the culture of informality and nicknames practiced broadly by Americans and specifically by the Nisei, but also made their multi-syllabic Japanese names more accessible to white Americans.

So what’s in a name? Behind each name are family stories and cultural heritage. For the Irei Names Monument project, to create a comprehensive and accurate names list of all persons of Japanese ancestry who experienced incarceration during WWII, is to remember and repair. The Japanese word “Irei” means to console the spirits (of those who’ve gone before) and we do so by recalling their names—in our project, in the form of a book of names, a website, and a physical installation.

In the Japanese Buddhist tradition, we have a practice called “nenbutsu”, which is typically understood as the practice of chanting the name of the Buddha. But in its earliest meaning, it was the practice of visualizing and recalling (nen) the absent Buddha (butsu)—an act of imagination to manifest that which had become distant through the passage of time. As the immigrant generation (Issei) and their U.S.-born children (Nisei) pass away from Japanese America, their journey of belonging in our nation as immigrant families must be honored. When we recall Japanese American names from Heart Mountain and the other confinement sites, we enliven and remember individuals who had their human dignity erased by our government.

The Nisei tendency to abbreviate first names can be seen throughout the 1944 Heart Mountain High School yearbook. Here, Osamu “Ham” Miyamoto and Shigeto “Shig” Otani pose as part of a spread on the basketball team.

The author leads a traditional Buddhist blessing at the 2019 Heart Mountain Pilgrimage.

www.heartmountain.org/pilgrimage

This year’s Pilgrimage will explore overlooked Nikkei contributions to pop culture, single out voices striving for representation today, and dig into what it means to be Japanese American in the 21st century. All the while, we will continue to reflect on and remember the experiences of those who were incarcerated here during World War II.

Registration open NOW through June 15:
As fire protection chief, Rumley had an important job. Fires were frequent in the hastily built barracks and devastating to families who had already lost nearly everything when they left the West Coast in 1942. In response to this ever present danger, the Heart Mountain Fire Department worked tirelessly and efficiently. The fire department was largely run by the incarcerees and was split into four teams, each responsible for a section of camp. They were so proficient within the camp that in 1944 they were recognized as the best fire department in the state of Wyoming. Heart Mountain firefighters would wear helmets, such as the one pictured here, as a part of their equipment.

As museum collections are always growing. Sadly, only a fraction of a collection is on display at any one time and recent additions may take years to be integrated into permanent exhibits. In November 2021, our temporary exhibit, Dusted Off, opened at the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center highlighting some of the donated artifacts we have received over the last three years. For many incarcerees, art was an important pastime. Numerous accomplished artists were incarcerated at Heart Mountain and their works have featured prominently in past exhibits including Estelle Ishigo, Jishiro Miyauchi, Joe Nakanishi, and Bob Kuwahara, to name just a few. Some of these artists took it upon themselves to teach their craft in camp to their fellow incarcerees. These art classes garnered wide popularity, as it allowed people to make furnishings for their barrack rooms, gifts for friends and family members, or as a means to express their emotions about their forced removal and incarceration.

A n embroidery class taught by Issei artist, Professor Isaburi Nagahama, was particularly popular. Over 650 students attended weekly classes where they worked from designs selected by Nagahama, often drawing inspiration from the landscape and natural world around them. These embroidery pieces were made on heavy linen fabric and often featured a subtle, almost three-dimensional effect thanks to the blending of colors from single strands of thread. This particular embroidery was made as a going away gift for Glenn B. Rummley, the fire protection officer from 1943 to 1944, when he left Heart Mountain to join the military.

Another important aspect of the Heart Mountain Fire Department’s work was the Annual Fire Prevention Week hosted by the camp administration. The week would include educational talks, an essay writing contest for high school students, and demonstrations, such as how to use fire extinguishers on small fires.
When the site for Heart Mountain was chosen by the government in 1942, one of its major advantages was its proximity to an existing railroad line. This railroad line, which still exists today, was used to transport thousands of Japanese Americans from temporary assembly centers on the West Coast to Heart Mountain. As incarcerated began leaving the camp in 1943 the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad, owner of the line, established a depot at Heart Mountain, known as the Vocation Building.

In September 1945, the station manager of the Heart Mountain depot, Richard Mills, used this telegraph key to relay the "end of war" message on V-J Day. Although the use of telegraphy was waning by the 1940s, many railroads still used telegraph keys to relay messages over great distances between stations. For Mills, the message was personal. His son was fighting in the Pacific Theater. After relaying the message Mills cut the wire and kept the key for the rest of his life.

Today, with the camp closed and the land divided into homesteads, the memory of the camp lives on through survivors and the physical items that were created, used, and saved by the nearly 14,000 Japanese Americans that were incarcerated here and the white staff employed by the War Relocation Authority. Every item in the HMWF’s collection is a treasured fragment of the history of Heart Mountain. Unlocking and telling these stories grants us insight into what life was like in Wyoming’s concentration camp.
Join us for a fun-filled day of games, crafts, & sweet treats!