

Footprints

Impressions from where we were to where we will be

The Newsletter for the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego

Winter Issue 1994

Volume 3, Number 4

Go for broke



Harry Kowase, Hank Mukai, Frank Wada, Abe Takehara, Ted Wada

So many of them went to war as kids. They all came home as men.

They were veterans of the famed 442ND Regimental Combat Team, the all-Nisei fighting force that did themselves—and us—proud.

This is one man's story. He asked that we not use his name. Some of you may recognize him anyway, as he is a quiet, unassuming father and grandfather today...like so many of those vets.

He was 20 and living in the South Bay area when World War II started.

Many Japanese-Americans went to the Army recruiting office to volunteer for service but they were told the government was not accepting Japanese-American volunteers then.

San Diegans wound up in Poston, Arizona,

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In memory of Clara Breed

*This issue of **Footprints** is dedicated to a community treasure whom we lost this year, Miss Clara Breed. The former head librarian for the San Diego central library passed away this year at the age of 88.*

Our Japanese American community owes her a great debt of gratitude. During the war years, she was a steadfast friend to dozens of children who were interned at Poston. The following article is one person's recollections of this remarkable woman.

Editor

What a privilege to be asked to remember Miss Clara E. Breed, former Librarian of the City of San Diego.

Pleasant memories come flooding back—the upstairs children's library on 8TH and E Streets where I first met the nice prim librarian who, in a friendly, pleasant manner, introduced me to the magical world of books. I recall the windows that enabled us to look into the past and present, in fact and fiction. Miss Breed quickly dispelled my timidity and "enryo" and I soon was literally devouring the books.

It was summer vacation time from school, so I was at the library daily reading as many books as I could and then taking home the maximum number allowed to be checked out. What an ironic fortune I had to be a "neglected child." My mother had died when I was five and my father was working sixteen hours a day. I was on strict orders not to stray and get into trouble. Thus, I became a bookworm. I started at one corner of the library and went along one shelf to another indiscriminately. When summer was over and school started, I found the school library. However, when summer vacation came again, I was back at the children's library downtown. All the while there was Miss Breed quietly, gently, and kindly shepherding me.

Eventually, the too-small children's library was moved to larger quarters at 9TH and E Streets.

See "Miss Breed" page 5

Poston Pilgrimage

The JAHSSD is sponsoring a pilgrimage to Poston, AZ, on March 20, 21, 22, 1995. We plan to journey by bus to Laughlin, Nevada, on Monday morning, March 20, and stay 2 nights at the Flamingo Hilton in Laughlin. On Tuesday, March 21, we will make the pilgrimage to Poston where we will view the Poston monument and visit the Camp III site. On the way back to Laughlin, we plan to stop for lunch (on your own) and do a little sight seeing in Havasu City. The bus will leave Laughlin for the return trip to San Diego around noon on Wednesday, March 22.

Cost of the trip is \$90.00 (based on double occupancy), and includes 2 nights at the Flamingo Hilton and the round trip bus fare to Laughlin and Poston. Please call Ben Honda at 277-8082 or Yukio Kawamoto at 286-8203 to make your reservation, or for more information.

JAHSSD urges all members, their families and friends to visit the site of a large part of our history. At the same time, have some fun in Laughlin. There will be plenty of time to try your luck in the casinos.

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another kind of camp. In 1943, the Army began accepting volunteers from camp and many went. "I was 22. My parents were in camp, but I didn't ask their permission. I didn't need it."

Trained in Mississippi. "We (trainees) were all very close, like a family. Our NCOs were all Niseis." Training ended. They boarded ships and landed in Naples, Italy. A lot of San Diegans were there, as he recalled—Harry Kowase, Nob Takashima, Harry Kawamoto, Abe Takehara, Yas Nakamoto, Hank Mukai, Hank Hashiguchi. A brother came over later. "Even met an old neighbor from Redlands."

Landed in Naples after the fall of Rome. Went up the Arno River to Pisa, Italy. Ah! The Leaning Tower. But this was no time for touring. Up and down hills. Dog tired, or was that "dogs" tired? Mission completed.

Mess Sergeant from Utah wanted apples. Directed him to a tree below the Arno. After shimmying up the tree to fetch the apples, Germans began shelling. He never sought advice here again.

On to Southern France. Hit on October 16, 1944, with shrapnel in the arm, leg and back during the liberation of Bruyeres. Back to Naples to recover.

Missed the "Lost Battalion" rescue. Rejoined outfit in Southern France.

First day in combat, a young kid in the squad will not make it home.

A young replacement joined the outfit and gleefully said, "If I knew it was this much fun, I would have joined earlier." Grizzled old vets glared.

VE Day! War in Europe is over! Still have to earn enough points to get home.

Florence, Italy. While preparing to come home, a Japanese-American kid died in an accident. He survived war and dies after it's over. Tragic.

Home. First, New York. Then Long Beach. Then home to Mom in Redlands. What an emotional experience!

Fear? The kids-who-became-men were too tired to be scared.

"But you wonder if you will die here. Every evening, you wonder if you will see the sunrise. Every morning, you wonder if you will see the sunset."

You remember the San Diego sunsets as being the prettiest anywhere in the world. They still are.

By Mitch Himaka

Why Poston?

Occasionally, when discussing the relocation experience, the question will come up, "Why Poston?" "How did that name come to be used?" In fact, the official name of the three camps located within the confines of the tribal lands of the Mojave and Chemehuevi's Colorado River Indian Reservation was the Colorado River Relocation Project.

Almost immediately, however, the camps became "Poston I, II, and III" because of the project's proximity to the small hamlet of the same name located just outside the gate and across the Ehrenberg-Parker Road. So who or what was Poston?

Charles Debrille Poston, often called "The Father of Arizona," was born on April 20, 1825, near Elizabethtown, Kentucky. Like so many Americans of his time he was possessed of a peripatetic spirit and spent much of his life on the move. Educated in the public schools, he later moved to Nashville, where he was employed in the office of the Clerk of the Tennessee Supreme Court. In 1850, he moved to California, where he gained employment in the United States Customs House in San Francisco.

Poston became interested in silver mining and moved to what was then known as the Territory of Arizona and New Mexico, in 1854. There, he became involved in the politics of the

territory and established a reputation as a strong supporter of both the recently formed Republican party and of the Union. As a consequence, shortly after his election in 1860, President Abraham Lincoln appointed Poston to be Superintendent of the territory's Indian Affairs, and in 1863, when the Arizona territory was separated from New Mexico and formally organized, Poston was elected to represent the interests of the area before the 38th Congress.

Once he was sworn in, Poston proposed an appropriation bill requesting \$150,000 for an irrigation canal in Arizona. In 1868, Secretary of State William H. Seward sent Poston to India to study the irrigation methods used there which had enabled arid sections of that country to support large populations since pre-historic times. Later, he studied law and was admitted to the bar in Washington, D.C.

In 1876, President Hayes appointed Poston as the Registrar of the United States Lands office in Florence, Arizona. In 1878, he became the United States Consular agent at El Paso, Texas.

Poston died in Phoenix, on June 24, 1902, little realizing that forty years later his name would become emblazoned in Nikkei history. The "Father of Arizona" was buried in the Arizona State Cemetery. On April 26, 1925, on the centenary of his birth, his remains were reinterred on the Summit of Poston Butte, overlooking the city of Florence, Arizona.

By Don Estes

Footnotes

Several suggestions have been received to return to our original newsletter format and publish articles covering various subjects, rather focusing on one theme. Since "variety is the spice of life," we will do so. However, we need your help to make this format work. Please send us your articles, stories, pictures, and contributions so that **Footprints** can be a publication you find interesting and useful. Our goal is to share material not only from Poston, but from other times as well as tomorrow, so anything you have to share is valuable. Remember, yesterday is dead and gone, tomorrow will never come, today is all the time we have so use it wisely. Help us preserve our heritage. Contact me or any board member to submit your items to the newsletter.

By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea, Editor



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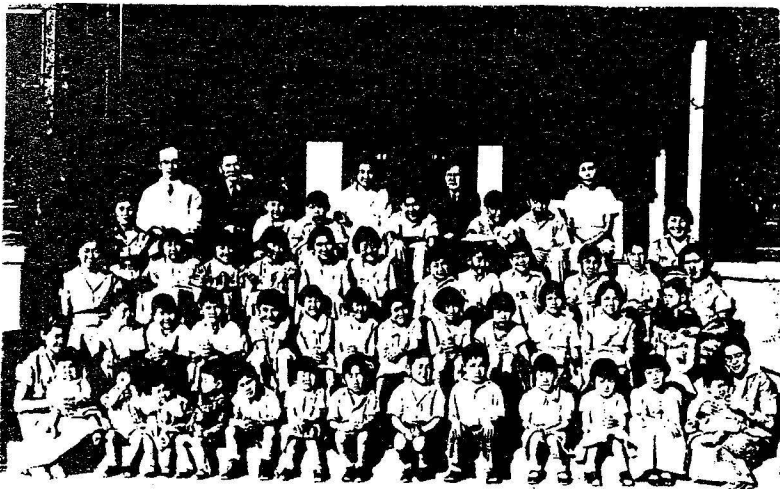
Miracles never cease

Mary Mariko Sakaguchi Yamamoto recently returned to San Diego to visit her family, including her sister Michiko Okuma and Mary Wada Marumoto, who worked at the *Shonien* from 1932 to 1935, during the early years of Mary's life.

The *Shonien*, or Japanese Children's Home, was off Sunset Blvd., between Los Angeles and Hollywood and was called an orphanage, but many of the children living there had lost only one parent and were not eligible for adoption. Besides Mary Yamamoto, other San Diego children resided there.

During her recent San Diego visit, Mary Yamamoto shared her extraordinary story, which began in 1931, when her mother Tomi Sakaguchi died; Mary was 8 months old. Mary's father, Tomekichi Sakaguchi was a San Diego commercial fisherman and was unable to care for an infant daughter who was very sick, and whom doctors feared was dying. Mary was unable to eat and was dehydrated from vomiting and diarrhea. Mr. Sakaguchi took Mary to the Japanese orphanage where a young woman named Helen Matsuoka worked. Helen desperately tried to feed the baby various mixtures of milk and sugar, none of them worked. Finally, in desperation, she tried a diluted mixture of rice and water, but she never knew the results of her experiment because she left almost immediately. She always assumed that because Mary was so ill she had died.

More than 50 years later, Mary was presenting her experiences in Camp III at the 1982 National Meeting of United Presbyterian



Mary Wada Marumoto (bottom row, first person left side), Mary Mariko Sakaguchi Yamamoto (bottom row, second child from left side)

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Women at Purdue University, and she roomed with Dolas Koga, wife of the pastor of a Japanese Presbyterian Church in Watsonville. When Mrs. Koga learned that Mary had spent most of the first ten years of her life in a Japanese orphanage, she mentioned that Helen Matsuoka, an elder in her husband's church, had worked briefly as a nursemaid in such an orphanage and that Helen was attending the conference.

Mary and Helen met and as they reminisced about the past, Helen recounted her story about the baby named Mariko and when she asked Mary if she had ever heard of a baby named Mariko, Mary said, "I was the baby Mariko. You saved my life. Thank you." As the two women clung together, crying, Helen replied that there was a compelling reason that she took such good care of baby Mariko: God wanted the baby to live. Much later, Mary was diagnosed with a severe milk allergy.

Mary stayed at the orphanage until she was 10 years old, returning to her family in San Diego in 1940.

Mary and her husband, Dr. Richard Yamamoto, live in Davis, California. Richard was a professor in the Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine Dept. at UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. They have seven children.

(Sources for this article include personal interviews with Mary Yamamoto, Mary Marumoto, and Davis Enterprise article by Sandy Sokolow.)

By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea

Oh what an improvement it was! With large windows it was light and cheery, and, of course, there were more books.

As the years went by, I crossed paths with Miss Breed as high school and college introduced me to a whole new world. However, there was a common thread: it still involved books. That world came crashing down when illness forced me to quit college during my first semester. Letters from Miss Breed did much to keep my spirits up during that time!

After recovering, I became a barber to help my father who had started a barber shop at 13th and Market Streets in 1935. An old shoulder injury suffered during my junior high school days became infected and required major surgery. The doctor saved the arm and was able to reconstruct the shoulder which allowed me to have reasonable use of the arm. The operation was done in June 1941. The cast was removed on December 10, 1941. Boy, did the orderlies cutting off the cast have fun with me, vowing to get even for Pearl Harbor!

My arm was still in a sling when the Executive Order for evacuation occurred. My first thought at the time was that the order permitted people to take to camp only what they could carry. Unfortunately, I could not take my own small library which was contained in a small apple box. I had accumulated a variety of books—college reference text books on mathematics, chemistry, language, plus a few trade journals and how-to books. However, Miss Breed became my personal library custodian. I put a lid on the box and she took care of it until I returned to San Diego!

The letters Miss Breed sent to "her children" during the war years helped all of us keep the faith. I am sure those of us who were touched by her avoided the bitterness over our fate.

While I was in Poston, I kept thinking surely I could, in my small way, repay Miss Breed for her kindness. It was then that I noticed some enterprising artisans were making small name pins using mesquite wood. By cutting away the yellow sapwood and exposing the darker corewood the names could be spelled out. I remembered the small commercial nameplates that were on the desks at the library. So, instead of a lapel pin, I made a name plate. I found a nice branch of mesquite wood, and using a pocketknife, I roughed out the nameplate. I took the bark off the center portion, leaving the bark to frame the name in script form. The pocketknife blade proved too big to make the

See "Miss Breed" page 7

Board Splinters

Message from the Secretary

Your Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego continues to grow and is becoming widely known as the source of historical information about Japanese Americans in San Diego. Three recent events prove this fact.

One was the Family Expo sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum. The Family Expo featured displays by residents on the relocation camps. Babe Karasawa, an ex-Postonite, was appointed by the Museum to chair the Poston display. He asked the JAHSSD to set up the display for Poston. JAHSSD accepted and is proud to have taken part in the Family Expo.

The event was held at the Los Angeles Convention Center, November 11-13, and featured photos of the departure from San Diego for Santa Anita, life and scenes in Poston, and the 1992 dedication of the Poston monument. One of the most popular parts of the exhibit was a census of all three Poston camps, listing all residents, as of March 31, 1944. The census was donated to JAHSSD by Masami Honda and will be displayed at our next annual meeting. (As of press time, the photo exhibit shown at the Family Expo is on display for a limited time at the Southwestern College library in Chula Vista.) A big thank you goes to Don Estes for setting up the exhibit—you did a great job again Don! Helping to set up and take down the exhibit at the Expo were Babe and Mary Karasawa, Jeanne and Bill Elyea, my wife, Mits, and myself.

The other event which testifies to our legitimacy as the source of local Japanese American history was the filming of a documentary by the Japanese broadcasting company, NHK. The film features the life of Archie Fujimoto's mother. Archie is a resident of Encinitas. His family lived in San Diego before World War II and was evacuated to Poston I. The filmmaker wanted to film old photographs which depicted life in pre-War San Diego and in Poston. Their production company turned to the JAHSSD for use of our photo collection and filmed selected pictures in October.

Since its formation, the JAHSSD has been asked by various schools, libraries, and other groups for an exhibit on Japanese Americans—another example of our position as a valuable resource for Japanese American history in San Diego. It became apparent that a portable display that could be easily transported and set up at

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Membership Renewal

It's time to renew your membership for 1995. Our membership year runs from January to December. Your dues enable us to continue to document the history of Japanese Americans in San Diego and to educate the community at large about our history through exhibits, panels, speakers, etc.

Please fill out the membership application in this issue and send it in with your dues. Your continued support is sincerely appreciated. All renewals should be received by the end of January. This will be the only renewal notice we will be sending out.



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various sites should be made. JAHSSD applied for and received a \$2,000 grant from the California Council for the Humanities to build such an exhibit. We are currently in the process of designing and putting together the exhibit. It is expected that the exhibit will be available in early 1995. Again, Don Estes is the major player in this project.

Annual Meeting was a success

And now for some notes about our annual meeting, held October 1; it was another successful one. Due to other activities going on that day, we did not have as big a turnout as we had at last year's meeting. Nevertheless, we had a fine turnout. The meeting was held at Southwestern College's student dining facility, which turned out to be a very nice place to hold our annual meeting. A display which featured old photographs of pre-War Japanese town and some artifacts were set up by Don Estes, with help from John Rojas. After a bento lunch, Don gave a talk on family history. We thank all those who came out for the meeting. But our thanks go especially to the irrepressible twosome, Jeanne Elyea and Elaine Bowers, for chairing the event. Additional thanks to Jeanne for arranging for the meeting place, Don for use of his photo collection and for setting up the display, the merchants and others who donated the door prizes, Bill Elyea who oversaw the security, and all the others who helped with the meeting.

By Yukio Kawamoto, Secretary

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intricate cuts required by the script form. I needed a small chisel to shape the letters. I removed a spring from the metal cot I slept on and straightened it out and fitted it into a small piece of wood for a handle, using a cement slab and a stone. I shaped and sharpened the other end and I had a chisel that actually worked! Over the years, people have asked me how I managed to make the nameplate so distinctive. With Miss Breed as the inspiration, it was easy!

When I returned to San Diego, Miss Breed showed me the nameplate on her desk. Later, I was happy when she was named Head Librarian of the City of San Diego. When I visited her in the old Carnegie Library, she showed me the nameplate still on her desk. Then, she fought hard for the new central library. When it was completed, I visited her again to congratulate her. She smiled and showed me the nameplate on her desk. My cup was full. I felt that I had indeed repaid in a small way part of the debt I owed her.

In recent times the United States has come on hard times economically and socially. There is a disturbing group of people under the liberal banner of "Diversity" slowly tearing apart the essence of what made America great. We are not hyphenated Americans. If ethnicity is important, use it as an adjective modifier of Americans. With the "dumbing down" weakening our educational system, alarming numbers of children are coming out illiterate, lacking education, unable to better themselves, burdening the country with sub-cultures based on welfare and/or criminal activity. Miss Clara Breed was truly a great lady who lived her Christian faith, believed Americans with literacy could obtain an education, better themselves and their society. I, too, hold that belief—true yesterday, today and tomorrow. Thank you dear Miss Breed.

By Tets Hirasaki



Aileen Oya

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50th Anniversary of the Liberation

The 50TH anniversary of the liberation of Bruyeres and Biffontaine and the "Lost Battalion" was attended by 600 Nikkei and 200 hosts and friends, including over 300 Nisei veterans of the 100TH/442ND Regimental Combat Team (RCT) in Bruyeres, France, over the October 14-16, 1994, weekend.



Shinkichi Tajiri with Friendship Knot No. 2, Bruyeres, France

"Donated to the citizens of Bruyeres by the 100TH Bn Club, the 442ND Club, Hawaii and the 100TH/442ND Veterans Association, USA. Dedicated the 19TH October 1994 for the 50TH anniversary of the Battle of Bruyeres."

Artist: Shinkichi Tajiri Co. M. 442ND RCT

This is the inscription on the "Friendship Knot" created and donated by Shinkichi Tajiri, noted artist, which was the realization of his long time dream to do something for Bruyeres. Shinkichi's older brother, the late Larry Tajiri, helped originate the idea for the monument. The Tajiri family is from San Diego and they were interned at Poston, Arizona.

Among the over 300 Nisei veterans at the Bruyeres' celebration was James Yamate and his wife, Yuri. James (as reported in our Fall 1994 issue) was in the all caucasian 44TH Infantry Division. He said he was grateful for the opportunity to see first hand the unprecedented courage and enormous losses these "gentlemen-soldiers" endured as they did the impossible. James said he could not imagine climbing the sheer cliffs and covering the heavy terrain under heavy fire. When the American headquarters had a hopeless situation, they ordered the Japanese units to take over and they paid the price in blood and lives.

Those of you who went to the Bruyeres/Biffontaine in October or who were there in 1944, please share your experiences.

By Jeanne Marumoto Elyea

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