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Newsletter: Fall 2013

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Letter from the Superintendent

by Judy Geniac, Superintendent

It's humbling to be a new superintendent. This is particularly true when asked to oversee:

- Minidoka National Historical Site – the camp lands in Idaho set aside by the President and Congress,
- Nidoto Nai Yoni ("Let it not happen again") memorial on Bainbridge Island – Minidoka's site in the state of Washington, and
- Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument – a historical and scientific site in Idaho.

It's a challenge that I accept with gratitude and diligence in mind.

I'm told that I was selected in part for my focus on partnerships. A significant portion of my career has been spent working closely with organizations that are vital to the support, understanding, and future of national parks and other federally managed lands. Friends of Minidoka is an organization that arose to that level of importance the moment it was established.

I'm gaining an understanding of how pivotal words are at Minidoka. When my youngest son was small, we had a conversation about the importance of words. I told him that words can start wars and they are always the final thing used to end wars – in the form of peace treaties. While I know that words are important anywhere, the sites of Minidoka are showing me a more heightened importance, intensity, and awareness to perspectives and meanings. People see things through the lenses they've been given and the lenses that continue to metamorphose via their experiences. I fear that my current level of ignorance with regard to such sensitivities may lead to unintentional offenses. At this time, my greatest consternation is not knowing whether to refer to the site in Idaho as a relocation center, an internment camp, a concentration camp (as, I've read, did President Roosevelt), or an incarceration site. It appears it is being called all of these things, and that many people are discussing (debating?) what words should be used. So for now, I will refer to it as "the camp" with a hope that together we can find a unifying way to focus on the many meanings and words that make this site so important.

I will never be able to fully place myself in the shoes of those who have gone through this almost unbelievable chapter of history, nor in the shoes of their descendants. Still, I will strive to understand, to help ensure that the history is not lost, and that the meanings are shared. Together, we can make a difference in the future and reach the broadest national and international audience. National Park Service staff have witnessed – within minutes of walking the lands of the camp or the Nidoto Nai Yoni memorial – that people become deeply interested in understanding the past and the future. This is true with regard to the sites themselves, but also in regard to the broader context of the world and mankind. I've seen this at the camp. I hope to travel to Nidoto Nai Yoni soon.

Seeing these sites is only the first step in overseeing the management of them. I know that I have a great deal to learn, and I'd like to begin with listening. I am meeting with staff, and I plan to meet with all partners as soon as possible. While I understand that a federal agency is responsible for setting its priorities, there is a significant responsibility to gain an understanding from and in working with our partners, communities, the public, and others. I need to ensure that we are focused on common goals and priorities, that timelines are in place to focus our efforts, and that we reach and celebrate our successes together.

It's clear that the sites are historically important. That's significant in and of itself. But this is expounded upon by the context of the entire chronicle of excluding Japanese American citizens, the truth and falsehoods behind this, and its meaning for future U.S. conflicts, for the future of our citizens, and for civil rights around the world. These sites are nationally and

internationally significant. The world is our visiting public – whether they physically visit these sites or virtually visit them, there is so much to learn.

The “CAFO” options are being examined. We could not have gotten this far without Friends of Minidoka. The replica guard tower project is underway, and credit is due to all involved. Thank you. I’m looking forward to beginning the collaborative process of establishing a visitor center at the camp, one that will utilize the historic Tire Shop building. This will be key to ensuring that the area has care-takers on site. It will be helpful to have people to facilitate conversations that translate words like exclusion, sacrifice, fortitude, reverence, and comprehension into indelible meanings. Together, we’ll focus on other priorities too.

With regard to the Nidoto Nai Yoni memorial, much has been accomplished, and again, credit goes to partners. More is planned. We’ll begin with collaboration on a sign, and focus on strategy and priorities. We’ll focus on what ties-together the memorial site and the camp. I’ll also be addressing needs at Hagerman Fossil Beds. I’m open to letting anyone know what that might entail. So, I’m rolling-up my sleeves. I’m learning. And most of all, I’m looking forward to working together with you.

*Judy Geniac, Superintendent
Minidoka National Historic Site & Hagerman Fossil Beds National Monument*

Feedlot Owners in Discussion with the Conservation Fund and NPS

by Emily Hanako Momohara

This summer and fall, dairy owners have been in discussions with the National Park Service and the Conservation Fund about the proposed cattle feedlot 1.2 miles from Minidoka. Although no agreement has been made, the three groups have set a timeline for the proper data to be gathered for a possible resolution. In the spring, more information will be available and FOM will make sure you are informed.

Options are varied and complex. The land on which the dairy feedlot is proposed was not part of Minidoka, which ties the hands of the National Park Service significantly. It is also difficult for organizations like the Conservation Fund to purchase land that has no historic significance even though the feedlot will damage historic assists and hinder visitor activities. Currently, both organizations are thinking creatively to find a solution that will meet the needs of Minidoka.

2013 Pilgrimage

2013 Minidoka Pilgrimage participants (photo by Ryan Kozu)



During the weekend of June 20-23, 2013, 217 pilgrims gathered together in Twin Falls, ID for the 11th annual Minidoka Pilgrimage. Throughout the weekend, former incarcerated, families, and friends came together to share their stories and experiences about their time in Minidoka with each other.

Pilgrims outside of a barrack relocated to Block 22 at the Minidoka National Historic Site (photo by Ryan Kozu)



This year, we were fortunate to have many multigenerational families participate, with many of the Nisei able to share their stories with their Yonsei grandchildren. For the second year, we were able to provide scholarships to any person over the age of 80 and who was incarcerated in any of the camps; we were fortunate to have 27 Senior Scholarship recipients this year.

Three generations of the Sato family point to Bob Sato’s name, listed on the Honor Roll (photo by Ryan Kozu)



On Friday, pilgrimage participants were able to attend the second day of the Civil Liberties Symposium at the College of Southern Idaho. Speakers such as David Adler and Larry Matsuda presented stories and issues revolving around the theme Immigrant Nation.

Saturday’s session included a site visit to the Minidoka National Historic Site. Participants this year were finally able to enter the barrack and mess hall that have been placed into Block 22. Thank you to the National Park Service staff for their hard work over the past year in getting

these two buildings restored and making them safe for us to enter.

Participants shared powerful stories during the Legacy Session, both about personal experiences in Minidoka and stories from the Sansei and Yonsei about how even seventy years later, it still forms and shapes their identities. Our pilgrimage was brought to a close by a powerful closing ceremony at the Minidoka National Historic Site followed by the closing luncheon. Bif Brigman shared some very meaningful words about what the pilgrimage means to him and Anna Tamura gave a very powerful talk entitled, *Okage Sama De: I am what I am because of you*. She also shared about what this pilgrimage means to her and to honor the people who inspired her and have since passed away.

We thank everyone who attended this year's pilgrimage and helped to make this such a great event!

The Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee and Seattle University will host the fifth annual Day of Remembrance Taiko Festival on February 23, 2014 in Pigott Auditorium on the campus of Seattle University. Festival and Ticket information are to be announced.

www.minidokapilgrimage.org 

2014 9th Annual Civil Liberties Symposium: "Religion and Civil Liberties"

The 2014 Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium will be on the College of Southern Idaho campus June 19-20, coinciding with the Minidoka Pilgrimage event.

The conference, sponsored by the College of Southern Idaho, Friends of Minidoka, National Park Service, and Boise State University, will focus on religion and civil rights and involve several prominent academic, political, and legal experts. The symposium will focus on the role various churches played in the removal and incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. Sessions will examine other cases in history where civil rights, the Constitution, and religion intersect.

The planning committee looks forward to seeing everyone next summer in the Magic Valley for a stimulating analysis of this important topic.

New Board Member Profile: Ron James

In October, FOM board members voted Ron James in as a new 2013 board member. He immediately joined the Civil Liberties Planning Committee.

Ronald James currently teaches English and Advanced Placement Literature and Composition at Canyon Ridge High School in Twin Falls, Idaho and is an adjunct Cultural Anthropology instructor at the College of Southern Idaho. He received his M.A. in Anthropology from the University of Idaho in 1993. Ron has done extensive archaeological and ethnographic research on the Chinese and Japanese contributions to southern Idaho history. His thesis, *Ruins of a World: Chinese Gold Mining in the Snake River Canyon* was published in 1993. Other publications include *Secrets of the Magic Valley and Hagerman's Remarkable Horse* (2002) in which he contributed chapters on the Native American, the Astorians and mining.

Ron has traveled, worked, and studied in China and Japan. Between 2001 and 2004, Ron assisted with the start-up of the Minidoka Internment National Monument and was one of the founding members of Friends of Minidoka. He is also a member of the Twin Falls County Historic Preservation Commission.

Guard Tower Reconstruction Project

By Emily Hanako Momohara

Woman and soldier watching sun set behind Minidoka watchtower (photo by Joe Tanaka, *Minidoka Irrigator*, December 23, 1944 issue)




The Minidoka Guard Tower Reconstruction Project is well under way! Located at Minidoka's entrance, the Guard Tower will be an amazing addition to the site. Visitors will see the Guard Tower from a distance as they approach Minidoka, which will significantly alter the authenticity of their experience. NPS plans to use the Guard Tower as a central educational component in their tours and school group curriculums.

Friends of Minidoka (FOM) is overseeing the project work. FOM board member and former Superintendent of Minidoka, Neil King is the project manager. All the historic architectural expertise is being provided by the National Park Service (NPS). The Guard Tower is currently being designed by the Boise State University Construction Management graduate students with assistance from Cole Architects. On September 14th, the students and faculty traveled to Minidoka to gather information in preparation for the installation. They will be constructing the Guard Tower in segments and transporting them to Minidoka for installation in Spring, 2014.

The Guard Tower Reconstruction Project is fully funded! Last month, we began an online crowd funding campaign where the remaining \$5,614 was raised. This was added to the 2012 \$280,378, 2-for-1 matching grant awarded by the NPS Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program. Just this fall, FOM was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Bower Trust located in Idaho. Boise State University and Cole Architects are donating their time to create plans and construct the Guard Tower. Additionally, numerous generous donations from individuals have come in over the year. Thank you for your support. The Guard Tower will be an amazing feature at Minidoka!

Friends of Minidoka Loses a Great Friend

by Alan Momohara

On October 28, Friends of Minidoka (FOM) Board Member Bill Vaughn passed away. In August, he was diagnosed with Mesothelioma and was told he only had a relatively short time to live. 

Bill's family owned a farm in Idaho during World War II. He recalled fond memories of interactions with the Nikkei incarcerated at Minidoka, who worked on his family's farm, harvesting crops. One of his favorite memories was, as a boy, watching George Nakashima whittling on their lunch breaks. The two men rekindled their friendship as adults when their professional lives crossed paths. Nakashima went on to be an international architect and furniture maker and Bill an architect.

Bill joined the FOM Board in 2005 after being approached by former Superintendent Neil King. Neil recalled that when he asked Bill if he would be interested, Bill didn't think he had anything to contribute. Despite his reservations, Bill joined the Board and contributed greatly.

Bill will never be forgotten for his leadership and work on the recreation of the Honor Roll at the Minidoka National Historic Site. The Honor Roll respects and pays tribute to those from Minidoka who served in the United States Armed Services during WWII. As project manager, Bill worked closely with National Park Service (NPS) staff, prepared detailed architectural plans, advised the fabricators and oversaw installation. The dedication of the Honor Roll at the 2011 Pilgrimage was a proud achievement for Bill and FOM. I personally saw tears in his eyes.

I, along with FOM Board members Neil King, Janet Keegan, Hanako Wakatsuki, and accompanied by Carol Ash of the NPS visited with Bill and his family in September. All things considered, Bill was doing well and was in good spirits. We told him how much we appreciated him and thanked him for his service to FOM.

We will miss Bill, but he will remain in our memories and we will see his smile every time we look at the Honor Roll.

Congressional Gold Medal Tour

Since our last newsletter, the historic Smithsonian Institute and National Veterans Network (NVN) tour of the Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) awarded to the Nisei veterans of World War II has traveled to San Francisco, Portland and Chicago. The final city on the tour is Houston and opens on December 21st at the Houston Holocaust Museum.

The exhibit opening at the de Young Museum in San Francisco included Congresswoman and Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi, Daphne Kowk from President Obama's Asian Pacific American Islander Commission, and Konrad Ng from the Smithsonian. The Oregon Nikkei Endowment and the Oregon Historical Museum worked together to launch the Oregon exhibit on August 24th. Secretary Shinseki was the keynote speaker for their luncheon, along with Senator Ron Wyden and Anna Cohn, Director of the Smithsonian Institute Traveling Exhibition Service.

Chicago's CGM exhibit opened on October 19th in partnership with the Chicago Nisei Post at the Chicago History Museum. A special reception allowed guests to talk with Nisei veterans about their experiences during their distinguished service. Unfortunately, due to the government shutdown, representatives from Washington D.C were unable to attend.

The NVN, in partnership with the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, has developed 3rd-12th grade curriculum based on the history of the 100th, 442nd and MIS. This curriculum is aligned to the new Common Core standard that will be adopted in 45 states. Teachers nationwide now have an opportunity to teach this story that promotes character development in America's youth, inspired by the courageous Nisei Soldiers. San Francisco Unified School District Board has approved the introduction of NVN's CGM Curriculum into their school for the 2013-2014 school year.

The curriculum along with character-based video resources are available both at cgm.si.edu and [Smithsonian's History Explorer](#) under "Congressional Gold Medal Experience."

Support is needed to ensure that the 100th, 442nd and MIS curriculum and resources are shared with teachers nationwide. The NVN is raising needed funds to assure the Nisei veteran story lives on. For more information or to donate, please visit: www.nationalveteransnetwork.com

Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission Seeks Stories From World War II Farm Labor Camps

The Oregon Cultural Heritage Commission is producing a new exhibition, entitled *Russell Lee in the Pacific Northwest: Documenting Japanese American Agricultural Labor Camps*. The exhibition will debut at the Four Rivers Cultural Center in Ontario, Oregon in September 2014. It will subsequently travel around the West Coast and to locales beyond the region.

The exhibition will feature fifty-five photographs of four labor camps located near the towns of Nyssa, Oregon and Rupert, Shelley, and Twin Falls, Idaho. The Farm Security Administration (FSA) and the War Relocation Authority (WRA) organized these camps during the World War II incarceration of Nikkei. Recruited from assembly and incarceration centers, namely Minidoka, Manzanar, and Tule Lake, the Japanese Americans provided labor for crops like sugar beets in Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Utah. During the summer of 1942, FSA photographer Russell Lee documented four of these camps, producing hundreds of images. His photographs provide a glimpse into Japanese American confinement sites, outside of the major incarceration centers.

The project recently received a National Park Service Japanese American Confinement Sites grant. This funding join grants received from the Idaho Humanities Council and the Malheur County Cultural Trust.

A large component of the exhibition is the recording of oral history interviews. Project director Morgen Young has been interviewing individuals who lived in the camps, recording their firsthand accounts. Sansei have also been interviewed, sharing their parents and grandparents' experiences in these labor camps. The Oregon Cultural Heritage Center is seeking additional memories and stories that relate to the labor camps. If you or your family lived in one of these labor camps or you know someone who did and are willing to share your recollections, please contact the project director at 503-333-4914 or morgen.young@gmail.com. To learn more about the project, visit www.ochcom.org/Lee.html.

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