



Minidoka NHS News

December 2015

Breaking News

Correction

In the October/November issue of the Newsletter, the headline introducing the story about Min Yasui should read, "Presidential Medal of Freedom to be awarded to Min Yasui." It incorrectly said "Medal of Honor."

Japanese American Appreciation Week

The Embassy of Japan honored the contributions of Japanese Americans to the United States during the week of December 14 at the Japanese Information and Cultural Center in Washington D.C. They also commemorated people who received recognition for their achievements by the Government of Japan.

A panel discussion entitled "Legacy of Japanese Americans in the U.S. Military" was presented on December 14. The next day a panel discussed the "Internment of Japanese Americans: Past, Present, and Future. Panelists included: Dan Sakura, Vice Chair of the Friends of Minidoka; Jean Kariya, incarcerated from Topaz; and Shirley Higuchi, Chair of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation.

National Japanese American Memorial Foundation Digital Project

The Foundation is seeking up to ten culturally diverse high school students to create short digital stories, under 5 minutes long, about each of the ten confinement sites. The ten stories will convey the unique stories of each confinement site and capture the backgrounds of those incarcerated there. The process of researching (Continued on p. 3)

Life in the Minidoka Fire Stations

If you had visited Fire Station No. 1 at the Minidoka Relocation Center, Hunt, Idaho, you might have noticed a mounted hawk glowering down at you just to your left as you entered the station.

Much of what we know about life in the two fire stations comes from a small memoir by Norio Mitsuoka. In *Nisei Odyssey: The Camp Years*, he describes how the station got the hawk, traveling to Shoshone for chicken and beer at a Japanese owned restaurant, and noted the importance of "books as a source of enjoyment, knowledge, and a bond in communication."

He describes responding to a fire alarm at Block 23, "...our crew consisting of Captain – Flax Sao and Firemen – Fred Mori, Mits Abe, Shiro Iwana and I, as driver, jumped into our boots with our turn-out suit pants folded down over the boots. Pulling up our suspenders, prepared us from the waist down. Running to the Fire Truck and grabbing our turn-out coats and fire helmets hanging there in just a few moments we were outfitted and on our way."

The fire crew also had a victory garden. "Our victory garden furnished fresh corn along with some other vegetables.... Picking the corn right outside of the Fire Station and rushing

it to a pot inside probably gave us corn the likes of which you will not find even in the best of restaurants."

In addition to fighting brush and grease fires at the camp, the fire crew assisted local fire departments in fighting structural and wildland fires in the area. S. Shosuke recalls that when neighboring towns would ask for assistance, the crew got fifty cents an hour. He noted, "And on top of that, they liked our work so much they said, 'You're the best firefighting crews we've ever had.'"

The *Minidoka Irrigator* and the *Twin Falls Times News* reported that an all-female fire crew of nine was being trained to help staff Fire Station No. 2. The *Times News* article noted, "They man one of the two fire stations, carrying out all duties from driving a truck to holding the nozzle of a high-pressure hose, which is a job grown men don't master without training."



The photo above shows seven women in front of Fire Station No. 2. They are not named and there is no mention that they are the female fire crew. We would love to have help identifying the people in the photo and if they were part of the fire crew. Please contact Carol Ash at carol_ash@nps.gov if you have information related to the photo or about the women on the fire crew.



Minidoka Irrigator Headlines December 1943

Each month this column will feature headlines from the *Minidoka Irrigator* during the same month in 1943.

December 4: **Project Farm Yields Over 1,00,000 Pounds of Vegetables During 1943**

Over 415 people worked on the farm during the harvest peak.

December 4: **Hunt Thumps Shamrocks in Season Opener 34-22**

Over 900 spectators braved the cold to see Hunt's ex-Wolverines defeat the Tulean Shamrocks in basketball.

December 11: **31 Persons Involved in First Major Camp Auto Accident**

Four persons were hospitalized as a result of an accident at the intersection of the main road and the road between Blks 34 and 36 toward the big farm.

December 11: **Father Tibesar Receives Replies in Hunt Article**

Comments pro and con were received following an article written by Father Tibesar on evacuee life in Hunt that was published by the *Seattle Times*.

December 18: **Stafford PTA Meeting Held**

At the meeting held on December 10 in D.H. 32 it was announced that the membership drive was very successful with 193 members.

December 18: **Charter Vote Set for December 28**

Residents 18 years and older will be able to vote at Block Polls for ratification of the Community Charter.

December 25: **Variety of Events Mark Second Christmas at Hunt**

Block 28 was honored with the coveted first place in the Christmas Dining Hall Contest. Blk 17 was second with Blk 1 taking 3rd place.

December 25: **Two Skating Rinks Completed by CA**

Volunteers are cleaning up the proposed rinks on the northeast side of Blk 7 and the field below and east of the warehouses in preparation for flooding and ice skating.

Golf in the Desert

by Andy Dunn
Idaho State University
Minidoka NHS Intern

A golf course was promised to Minidoka residents almost from the beginning of the camp's opening. Finally started on April 10, 1943, it was built entirely by volunteer labor. The original plans called for a 9 hole course and cover an area just over a quarter square mile, but the land for three of the holes was re-purposed for project farm land.

The remaining six holes were located in the area north of blocks 29, 31, 35, and 37. The first tee box was located by the watchtower north of block 29. The process of clearing the holes for the golf course was similar to the way they cleared the land for farming. Since farm machinery was largely nonexistent, the labor was done almost entirely by hand.

Although the course was only a par 23, it was quite difficult because the entire fairways were made of dirt and covered in sagebrush, the exact things most golfers try to avoid! Each hole had its own tee box but the greens were made out of sand. Hunt had its own 20 member golf team that traveled for tournaments in Twin Falls and Burley. Unlike the baseball teams, the golf team wasn't very successful.

Golf club membership dues were 25 cents per year. The Sports and Recreation Programs also installed miniature golf courses throughout the camp.

Community Activities Section conducted multiple hole-in-one golf contests. Participants were allowed 3 shots for a dime. To go to the final match they had to get within 2 yards of the pin, which would win a \$1 award. C.A. would give \$16 to anyone that got a hole in one, \$5 for closest to the pin, \$3 for second place, \$2 for third, and \$1 for fourth. Clubs and balls were provided.

There was a golf committee that ran the daily operations of the course. W. Nakamura was the chairman.



Ads from neighboring Twin Falls stores were common in the *Irrigator*.

Hunt Golf Team members included: Walter Kipp, I. Ishikawa, Tom Aoki, M. Nakamura, N. Kashimi, Shogi Suko, M. Kawaguchi, Paul Tsunehara, Takara Tanabe, Tom Watanabe, George Teraoka, Yoshito Harada, George Nakamura, John Kayatsu, Kaz Nakayama, M. Kawamoto, T. Ogami, Yoshio Harakawa, Mrs. Kashimi, and Henry Miyake.

If you have information about the golf course – layout of the holes, their appearance, or other information – please contact Carol Ash at carol_ash@nps.gov or Andy Dunn at dunnandr@isu.edu.



The only picture in the *Irrigator* depicting any part of the golf course.

Museum Artifact

Recent additions to the Minidoka museum collection include two small wooden boxes made by Kotaro Iwanabe in April 1945. According to the Final Accountability Roster, Mr. Iwanabe was born on August 11, 1890 and was living in Los Angeles at the time of his forced removal into a War Relocation Center.

One box is approximately 10" x 8" x 10" while the other is 12" x 10" x 12." There is a small tag in the bottom of the larger box with Mr. Iwanabe's name and date.

Each artifact in the Minidoka museum collection tells a story – about the maker, about the materials, and about the item's function. They help describe everyday life in the camp. How the park acquired the boxes is

another part of the story. They were found at the World Relief office in Seattle. Chris Liss and his supervisor recognized that these boxes had historic value and contacted the park. JoAnn Blalack, the park's curator, is currently accessing and cataloging this set of boxes.



Wooden boxes made by Kotaro Iwanabe

Continued from page 1

oral and written histories, writing the video narrative, and learning the videography will provide a profound educational opportunity for the students involved. A history teacher will oversee the research portion.

The deadline for student/teacher applications is March 1, 2016. For more information, check the Foundation's website at www.njamf.com or contact Beth Kelley at NJAMFstudentproject@gmail.com.

The National Japanese American Memorial to Patriotism in WWII is located in Washington, D.C. The Memorial tells a story of American patriotism, perseverance, and posterity – a story of triumph over tragedy.

In Next Month's Issue

- Baseball Field Update
- Book of the Month
- Fire Station No. 1 Structure Update
- Recent Museum Collection Donation
- George Nakashima
- A Diamond Story

If you have information you would like to share or topics you would like to see discussed, please email Carol Ash at carol_ash@nps.gov.

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



Book Corner: *Nikkei Baseball*

Samuel O. Regalado

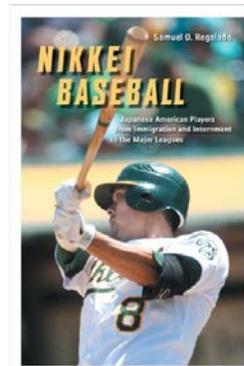
Japanese American baseball served a meaningful socio-economic role and entertainment lifestyle for this closely knit ethnic group on the wrong side of the tracks.

Fred Oshima

Nikkei Baseball highlights Japanese American players from immigration through incarceration and into the Major Leagues. Regalado states that the book is "about the game's relationship to the Japanese community....and why the game was important in the construction of their identity."

Chapter 1, "Baseball in Nikkei America," describes the first major league tribute to Nisei baseball on July 20, 1996 at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. Baseball's introduction into Japan and then Hawaii is highlighted in Chapter 2, "The New Bushido."

In "Transplanted Cherries," Regalado traces the growth of baseball among the Issei which resulted in baseball leagues up and down the west coast. In Chapter 4, "Baseball Is It," the Nisei embraced the baseball euphoria and expanded its role in their communities. Chapter 5 is devoted to the "Courier League" in Seattle.



Hey, you guys, take your [baseball] uniforms and whatever you have.

Robert Ohki, on the eve of incarceration, 1942

Baseball during incarceration is presented in Chapter 6, "Barbed Wire Baseball." Beginning almost immediately in the Detention Centers such as Puyallup in Seattle, baseball and softball remained very important once people had relocated to the ten WRA camps.

Chapter 7, "Catching Up," notes that baseball came to a virtual standstill as the Nikkei transitioned from camp to home. It then highlights Japanese American and Japanese National players and managers who have made their mark in the Major Leagues.

Published by Univ. of Illinois Press.

Rohwer Matters Seventy Years Later

In his remarks at the 2013 dedication of the Jerome-Rohwer Interpretive Museum and Visitor Center in McGee, Arkansas, George Takei noted, "Places like the museum and the Rohwer camp exist to remind us of the dangers and fallibility of our democracy, which is only as strong as the adherence to our constitutional principles renders it...we understand how quickly cherished liberties and freedom may slip away or disappear entirely."

George and his family were among the 8,475 people from Los Angeles and San Joaquin counties in California incarcerated at Rohwer War Relocation Center after spending time at the Santa Anita and Stockton Detentions Centers.

Rohwer opened on September 18, 1942 and closed on November 30, 1945. Located five miles west of the Mississippi River, the camp was in a swampy area intertwined with canals, creeks, and bayous. Betty Matsuo recalls, "When the rains came in Rohwer, we could not leave our quarters. The water stagnated at the front steps....The mosquitos that

festered there were horrible, and the authorities never had enough quinine for sickness...Rohwer was a living nightmare."

Published twice a week, the camp newspaper, *Rohwer Outpost*, covered camp events and included a four page Japanese language supplement. Among the events covered were sports competitions and dances held in conjunction with nearby Camp Shelby, Mississippi, the training camp for the 442nd Regimental Combat Team.

A concrete water reservoir, two monuments, and smokestack remain from the historic camp along with a 1992 National Historic Landmark marker.



Barrack area at Rohwer

Gaman/我慢、がまん

A new dance/theater work entitled *Gamen* was presented by the CORE Performance Company of Houston, Texas on November 13, 2015 at McGee High School in Arkansas. The performance of contemporary dance, art, and music honored and remembered the Japanese Nikkei who were incarcerated during World War II, including at the two Arkansas Camps, Rohwer and Jerome.

Gamen was meant to interpret the human element rather than official history, inform the present and future rather than judge the past, and bring audiences to a subject that is relevant today.



Cast of *Gamen*

This newsletter is published monthly for our friends and partners across America.

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The Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial on Bainbridge Island is a unit of Minidoka NHS. It is managed by Klondike Gold Rush NHP.

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Season's Greetings from the Minidoka Irrigator Staff 1943

