Minidoka NHS News

July 2015

Highlights: 10th Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium 13th Minidoka Pilgrimage

Minidoka Civil Liberties Symposium: Citizenship: Rights and Responsibilities

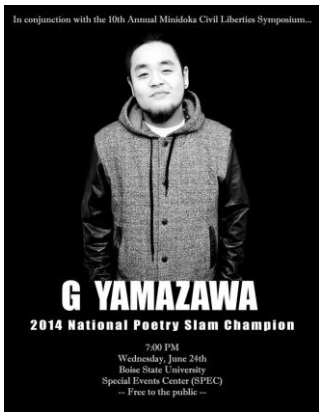
Several changes highlighted this year's Minidoka Symposium which was held at Boise State University for the second time in four years. The symposium moved from a Thursday-Friday to a Wednesday-Thursday event and was moderated by local television commentators. This year's event included a Wednesday night performance.

Several exhibits, including "The Empty Chair" from Juneau, Alaska, provided additional insights into the incarceration experience.

Tom Ikeda, director of Densho, opened the symposium with stories from the Redress Movement, "Righting a Wrong." Sessions throughout the two days addressed the women's rights movement and access to full citizenship, race and citizenship in American history, voting rights, internment to 911, non-violent civil disobedience, and citizenship – the core of a democratic society.

JoAnn and Larry Sims presented a special Wednesday luncheon session entitled "Seeking Justice" recalling their journey from Hiroshima, Japan to several states in the United States promoting peace and justice.

Symposium participants were treated to a special Wednesday evening performance by G. Yamazawa. Mr. Yamazawa is a National Poetry Slam Champion and Individual World Poetry Slam Finalist. His poetry brought tears to many eyes and smiles for everyone.



Minidoka Pilgrimage

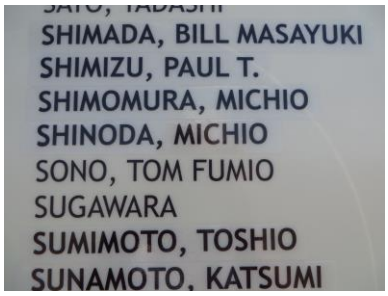
Minidoka NHS participated in this year's Educational Program on Friday, June 26 in several ways. Superintendent Judy Geniac presented a session, "Making a Difference." Park staff had several exhibits, information about the site, and a sales area. Resource Manager JoAnn Blalack exhibited several Minidoka artifacts from the park's museum collection.

Several changes greeted pilgrims as they toured the site on Saturday morning. A 1940s era fire truck welcomed visitors to Fire Station No. 1 (See article on page 4). A new spur trail took pilgrims from the fire station to the Water Tower No. 2 foundation.

Balls and bats were available for those who wanted to hit a few balls in the proposed Center Field. Photo by Kay Endo

A new trail also took the pilgrims down onto Center Field. Maintenance staff had prepared the field with bases and all the field markings. Balls and bats were available for anyone who wanted to "play ball."

Twenty-seven names were added to the right panel of the Honor Roll. Special thanks to Ada Takahashi for her suggestion to add temporary vinyl names to the Honor Roll. Please continue to contact the park with additional names.



A section of the Honor Roll where names were added.

Minidoka Irrigator Headlines July 1943

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

July 3: ***Volunteer Fire Crew Lends Valuable Service***
The signal for the grass and brush fire crew to assemble is two blasts of the project siren at intervals of two minutes.

July 3: ***Gala Fourth of July Outdoor Stage Show Tonight***
Tura Nakamura served as master of ceremonies with A.Hayashi and Koich Hayashi heading the Japanese and American entertainment respectively.

July 10: ***Hostel Set Up in Cleveland By Mission Group***
The Baptist Home Mission Society has set up a hostel for center residents planning to settle in the Cleveland area.

July 10**: *Group Leaves for Summer Assembly***
Forty girls and boys left the project for the Sawtooth National Forest as part of the Baptist and Methodist summer assemblies.

July 17: ***Two Hundred-Six Seniors Receive Diplomas at Commencement Friday.***
The Hunt High School commencement exercises will be held Friday evening, July 23 at 7:30 at the outdoor amphitheater below Block 22.

July 17: ***Center Population Hits New Low Point***
The center population hit a new low as of Thursday when it dropped to 7,492. As of that date, 1,548 persons are out on indefinite leave, 1,037 on group leaves, and 71 on short term leave.

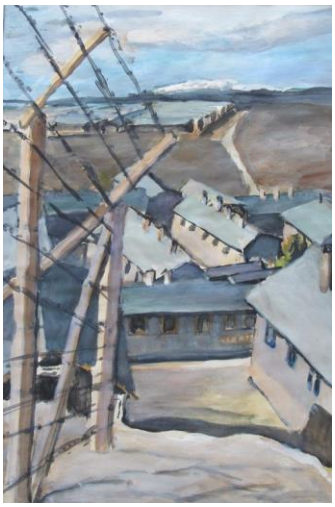
July 24: ***WRA Picks Tule Lake As Segregation Center***
Tule Lake Relocation Center was chosen as the center set apart for persons of Japanese ancestry who have indicated that their loyalty lies with Japan.

July 31: ***Minoru Yasui Released Thursday***
Yasui was re-inducted into the Minidoka project after being released for credit for time served on a curfew violation.

Takuichi Fujii: Minidoka Impressions

By Barbara Johns

As you open the Minidoka Interlude, you'll find six drawings of Minidoka and six of the Puyallup Assembly Center on the inside cover. They show rows of barracks, Lt. General John DeWitt's orders posted at the front gate, sentries and barbed wire, the mess hall kitchen, a work crew clearing land at Minidoka, and more. Only by turning to the section titled "Activities" can you find that the artist is Takuichi Fujii. An Issei, Fujii was among a volunteer staff of twelve who produced the 180-page book in 1943.



Barbed wire fence near Block 24
Collection of Sandy and Terry Kita

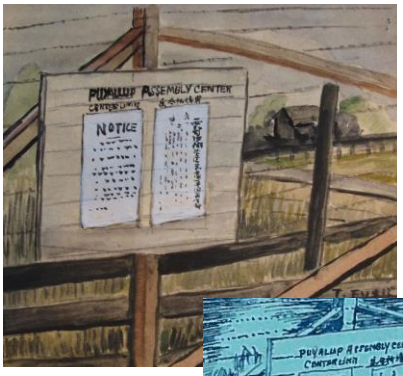
Fujii was a well established artist in Seattle before the war. Having immigrated as a teenager in 1906, he became a fish merchant and by 1930 received his first recognition in the mainstream art community. He exhibited his paintings in the American realist style of the time in Seattle, San Francisco, New York, and Chicago. His painting colleagues included Kenjiro Nomura, Kamekichi Tokita, and George Tsutakawa. Only a month before December 7, 1941, his watercolor of the eastern Washington landscape hung in the Seattle Art Museum.

With the declaration of war and the U.S. government's decision to incarcerate all of Japanese descent on the West Coast, Fujii began an illustrated diary, which opens with preparations for leaving Seattle and ends with the closing of Minidoka. In nearly four hundred pages of text and ink drawings, he surveys his surroundings at Puyallup and then Minidoka. From his Puyallup barrack, he sees the barbed wire fence, a sentry, and on the hillside beyond, a machine gun with soldiers resting nearby. "When war comes," he asks, "do people become wretched like this?" The sense of oppression is evident in repeated views of the fence, guard towers, and narrow corridors.

He depicts the indignity of communal latrines, lines to the mess hall, and soldiers monitoring the inmates' movements from one area to another. Throughout, he represents himself as a witness: drawing from a rooftop or inside his barrack, or seated before an easel on the Minidoka desert. His practice became the basis of his participation in the Minidoka Interlude. Six of the diary images of Puyallup comprise one endpage of the book. Those of Minidoka are fresh images that are not found in the diary. The section title pages include yet more.

In addition to this work, Fujii produced nearly one hundred seventy watercolors and larger ink drawings related to the diary, as well as several oil paintings and wood carvings. After the war he moved

(Article continued on page 3)



Above: Kita Collection

Right: Minidoka Interlude

2015 JACS Grants

On June 16, the National Park Service announced 20 grants totaling more than $2.8 million to help preserve and interpret World War II confinement sites of Japanese Americans. NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis noted, "As stewards of our nation's history, the National Park Service recognizes the importance of preserving these confinement sites. They are poignant reminders – today and for future generations – that we must be always vigilant in upholding civil liberties for all."

The Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program is in its seventh year and will support projects in eight states and the District of Columbia. The 2015 grants ranged from $16,000 to $400,000. This year's grants will bring the program's total awards to more than $18 million since the program was started in 2006.

Grants from the JACS Grant Program can go to the ten War Relocation Authority Centers established in 1942 or to more than 40 other confinement sites. The goal of the program is to teach present and future generations about the injustice of the World War II confinement history and inspire a commitment to equal justice under the law.

One of the grants awarded in this cycle was to the National Trust for Historic Preservation: "*Left Behind: Documenting the Japanese American Collections at Seattle's Panama Hotel*" The collections will be inventoried, catalogued, and photographed.

Belongings left behind at the Panama Hotel in 1942

For more informations about the 2015 grants, visit: http://www.nps.gov/JACS.

Continued from page 2: Takuichi Fujii

to Chicago, and from then until the end of his life in 1964, he experimented broadly with various styles of abstraction. He showed his work publically only once again, an exhibition of his wartime watercolors at a community center frequented by Nikkei. Years later his grandson found the collection, which his mother, Fujii's daughter, had stored away.

The Hope of Another Spring: Artist Takuichi Fujii by Barbara Johns, University of Washington Press, will be published in 2016. An exhibition will open at the Boise Art Museum in October 2016, where programs are planned in conjunction with the centenary of the National Park Service.

In Next Month's Issue

- Baseball Field Update
- Arkansas Camps
- Book of the Month
- Fire Station No. 1 Update
- Herrmann House Rehabilitation Update
- Visitor Center Update
- Japanese Americans Stranded in Japan
- List of Names Added to Honor Roll

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

Book Corner: *Dust of Eden*

Mariko Nagai

We held our breath for three
years. We did not have anything to call

our own except for the allowed number
of bags: two. We did not have anything

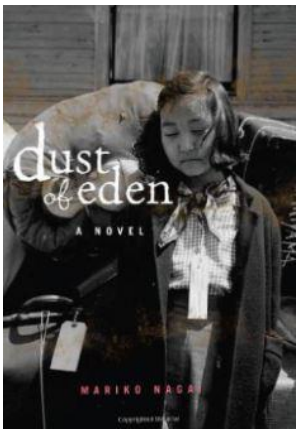
except for a rose garden my grandfather
made from hard earth and spit.

We lived behind a barbed wire
fence under a stark blue sky that could
break

your heart (as it did my grandfather's).
We lived under a sky so blue

In Idaho right near the towns of Hunt and
Eden
But we were not welcomed there.

Through her poetry, Mariko Nagai traces the story of 13 year old Mina Tagawa and her Japanese American family from the forced removal from



their Seattle home in April 1942, to months at "Camp Harmony," and later on to Minidoka Relocation Center in August 1942.

The book is published by Albert Whitman & Company of Chicago. For further information check the company website: www.albertwhitman.com.

Diamond Stories: Bainbridge Island

Many people have shared their stories about playing baseball at Minidoka since we started the "Rebuilding Center Field" Project. One of the most memorable stories involves a game played in March 1942 on Bainbridge Island just a week before 227 Japanese Nikkei were forced to leave their homes.

Paul Ohtaki was one of the Islanders who went first to Manzanar and later to Minidoka. He became a correspondent for Walt and Milly Woodward, publishers of the Bainbridge Review, and reported news from both camps. Years later, he put together a collection of articles, letters, and interviews chronicling the actions of the Woodwards during and after World War II entitled *It Was The Right Thing To Do.*

In his memories of those first few days, Ohtaki recounts the following story:
" I shall also always remember Coach Pop Miller, our Bainbridge High School baseball team coach. Just a week before we were ordered to leave the island, Bainbridge High School's baseball team was to open the season by playing a strong North Kitsap High School's team on our home diamond. Coach Miller put in all six Japanese Americans from the beginning of the game even though some were not on the first squad. Despite errors and players not hitting, he let us play the whole game even though Bainbridge High was losing badly. Coach Miller didn't care about the score, he just wanted all of the Japanese Americans to play their last game for Bainbridge and enjoy themselves. We lost 15-2. "Pop" Miller's kindness too will be remembered."

The April 2, 1942 issue of the Bainbridge Review reported, "F*ive Japanese Americans players bowed out in the game as it was their last appearance before being evacuated. How they wanted to leave with a victory! And how their fellow teammates wanted to win for them!"*

The story of that last game is captured on the wall of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Exclusion Memorial.

Images and Stories Needed

As we move forward with "Rebuilding Center Field," we need your assistance in locating images of baseball/softball being played at Minidoka. We welcome stories about the people who played, memories of the field and its associated structures (scoreboard, backstop, bleachers, etc.), the types of equipment used, and the ways in which baseball/softball impacted peoples' lives. Email Carol Ash at carol_ash@nps.gov with images and stories.

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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Pilgrimage Surprise!

When rangers opened Fire StationNo. 1 on Saturday, June 27 to place exhibits in the station for the day's upcoming Pilgrimage tours, a wonderful surprise greeted them. A 1949 Ford fire engine occupied one of the apparatus bays.

Special thanks goes to local farmer and park friend Dean Dimond who worked with the Eden Fire Department and the mayor of Eden to bring the engine to Minidoka for the Pilgrimage. The engine was built four years after the camp closed but it provided a sense of what the fire station would have looked like with an engine in one of the bays.

This surprise appearance of the engine was the result of a conversation with Mr. Dimond about the park's desire to locate a fire engine that is typical of engines of that time period. Of course, it would be great to actually locate an engine that served Hunt Camp!

From the book, *Nisei Odyssey*, written by Norio Mitsuoka, who was a firefighter and lived in Fire Station No. 1, we know that the following engines served the station during the three years of the camp: a Seagreave truck; a Ford conversion fire truck; and a US Army issue Boyer vehicle. Are any of those trucks still out there???

Eden Fire Engine: 1949 Ford Truck