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Newsletter: Spring 2013

Posted May 26, 2013

Minidoka National Historic Site Update

by Emily Momohara

2013 started with a flurry of change. In February, Superintendent Wendy Janssen accepted a Superintendent position at the Appalachian National Scenic Trail. We thank Wendy for all the work she has accomplished at Minidoka and wish her well in her new position.

Christine Smith from the Sequoia Kings Canyon Park is Minidoka's new Acting Superintendent through June 30th. She joins us with over 22 years of experience at the National Park Service (NPS). In her tenure, Christine has worked at 10 parks before coming to Minidoka. She has been impressed with the level of community involvement and willingness of former incarcerated to tell their stories. Christine emphasized how important first hand stories are to sharing Minidoka with visitors.

NPS is in the process of hiring a permanent Superintendent. Currently, the application phase has closed and they will begin reviewing them shortly. Hopefully, a selection will be made by the end of summer.

Unfortunately, the Visitor Center project timeline has been delayed; budget cuts are affecting the funding timeline for many NPS projects, including the funding for the planning and design of Minidoka's Visitor Center, which we are hopeful will happen in fiscal year (FY) 2014. At this time, the restoration of the Farm-in-a-Day Residence is formulated for FY 2014 and the Firehouse is scheduled for FY2016.

Continued preservation of the Firehouse, Farm-in-a-Day home and out-buildings will commence in June. The Grand Teton National Park Preservation Crew will come to Minidoka for a month to work on these buildings.

New building identification signage will be installed at foundations throughout Minidoka this summer. If you plan on attending the Pilgrimage, you will see this project in process.



NPS is engaged in finding a solution regarding the CAFO (Confined Animal Feedlot Operation) to be built near Minidoka. The Feedlot would have been built by now if the Friends of Minidoka, its non-profit partners and the Dimond family had not challenged the building permit in court. Thank you to everyone who gave for the legal defense.

The Minidoka Guard Tower project is well underway. Please see Hanako Wakatsuki's article on page 4. NPS will be holding a meeting at Minidoka to share project details and give locals an opportunity to hear first hand the importance of this project. The meeting will take place at Minidoka's entrance area on June 1st at 9am. All are welcome.

Civil Liberties Conference VIII: IMMIGRANT NATION

June 20-21, 2013 at the College of Southern Idaho

An interdisciplinary conference that examines the relationship between immigration and civil liberties in American history and today with Featured speakers: Dr. John Bieter, Dr. Paul Watanabe, Dr. Dave Adler, Dr. Edit Szanto, Dr. Errol Jones, Ernest Hoidal, J.D., Stuart Ishimaru, Reyna Grandeand, and others.

Registration Information: \$70 (includes both days of conference, 2 continental breakfasts and 2 lunches) To Register for Non-Credit, call CSI Community Education at (208) 732-6442 or go to minidoka.org for a link.

Fred Choate, Minidoka
relocation Center: Hunt, ID
1943, detail, Oil on Canvas,
2013



Speaking Up! Democracy, Justice, Dignity

July 4-7, at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel, Seattle, Washington, the Japanese American National Museum is hosting a National Conference commemorating the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988.

Join us with family and friends to explore the historic and contemporary implications of the Japanese American experience on democracy, justice, and civil rights. Participants of all ages will enjoy an exciting slate of programming from multi-generational, multiethnic speakers to key historic site visits and other thought-provoking activities. Highlights include a panel about the camp pilgrimages that will include Gloria Shigeno, who will be representing the Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee. And come visit the Friends of Minidoka booth.

Documentary Film About May Namba

By Emily Hanako Momohara

May Namba is a 91 year old inspiration. Her experiences have chronicled many of life's hardest and most endearing hallmarks: war, incarceration, freedom, discrimination, love, family, generosity, patriotism and perseverance.

May was born in 1922 to an Issei couple in Seattle. After high school, she took a job with the Seattle School District as a clerk. In 1942, she was forced to resign by the school district because of a parental out-cry against Japanese American women working with the children. The fear was that one of the clerks might poison the students.

Shortly after, May was sent to Minidoka with her family and would meet her future husband there. After May's fiancé returned from fighting in the European theater in the 442nd Regiment, they married and had five sons.

May went on to be involved with the Seattle Chapter Japanese American Citizens League, Friends of Minidoka, the Minidoka Pilgrimage Committee and other non-profits. Her dedication to education and the community is stunning. She also mentored many people, including myself.

I'm honored that she has agreed to let me into her life so that I can capture her journey in film. This short documentary, which is yet to have a title, will humanize the Japanese American WWII experience as well as capture May's inspirational story. For more information like the film on Facebook or visit ehmomohara.com/MayNambaFilm.html 

2013 Pilgrimage: June 20-23

by Ann Fuji-Lindwall

The annual Minidoka Pilgrimage is now in its 11th year (June 20-23, 2013), having witnessed many new additions to tell the story of the experience at the Minidoka National Historic Site. In 2011, the Honor Roll was unveiled listing the names of the 1,000 individuals that enlisted in military service from behind the barbed wire. And for 2013, visitors will be able to enter an original barrack and mess hall in the former location of Block 22, as well as visit an original warehouse, fire station and root cellar.

Our pilgrimage package will include options for a self-guided or organized tour of the site. A

special bus tour will be available for those who do not wish to walk the site.

Included in your Seattle package is all transportation from Bellevue College to Idaho, most meals and admittance to the Minidoka National Historic Site. The Twin Falls package includes transportation from the Red Lion hotel in Twin Falls, ID to the Minidoka National Historic Site and most meals. For more information please review each package description on the website: www.minidokapilgrimage.org 

This year the Civil Liberties Symposium will be at the College of Southern Idaho (CSI) in Twin Falls, Idaho. The symposium is an opportunity to hear presentations by noted scholars, educators, former Japanese American child incarcerated, and learn about other civil liberty issues. This year, the Minidoka Pilgrimage will attend the second day of the Civil Liberties Symposium on Friday, June 21st. Some people choose to come a day earlier to attend the entire Civil Liberties Symposium.

This year, we are pleased to once again offer "Senior Scholarships" to those individuals that are 80 years old and above and were incarcerated (at any of the concentration camps). Scholarships include the full cost of registration, meals and accommodation with both the Seattle package, or for those traveling on their own the Twin Falls package. Please make sure to complete the special Senior Scholarship registration form to be eligible.

For those who do not have access to a computer or the internet, we will be happy to mail you the forms. Please leave your contact information with Ann F. Lindwall, 206-367-8749.

Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community

by Frank Kitamoto

In conjunction with the Bainbridge Island Historical Museum we've had many docent led tours of the Memorial Wall. Among them were students from Salmon Bay and Tops School from the Seattle School District, Seitoku High School students, Tokyo, the former Vice- President of Taiwan and graduate students from IslandWood.



The Japanese American National Museum (JANM) is having its fourth National conference July 4-7th at the Seattle Sheraton, and over 100 of the participants will travel to Bainbridge for a special tour on Sunday, July 7. In conjunction with the conference, a number of field trips are being offered, and Bainbridge has the honor of hosting one of the trips. The tour begins at Walt and Milly Woodward Middle School, where Frank Kitamoto will welcome the group and give an overview of the history of the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community. Tour participants will visit historic sites, including Blakely Harbor/Yama, Bainbridge Gardens, where Donna Harui will share the Harui family history, Suyematsu Farm, and the Japanese American Exclusion Memorial. At Sonoji Sakai Intermediate School, the Nakata family will share their story, while participants enjoy lunch with food from local farms.

Old friendships will be renewed and new ones made at the biannual BIJAC picnic to be held Saturday, August 3rd at Battle Point Park shelter on the Island from 11:00a.m. - 5:00p.m. It's BYOB, Bring Your Own Bento. We'll once again put our bento together to share not only stories but food.

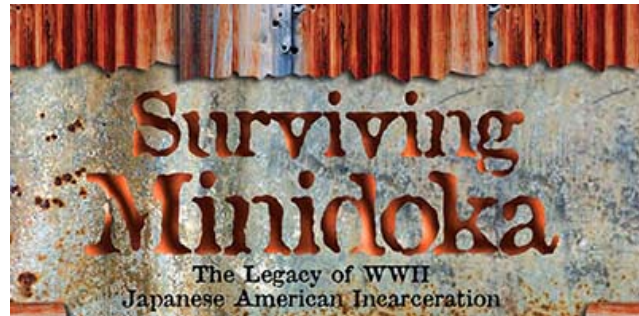
Our annual Mochi Tsuki celebration was again a success with over 800 people attending. The Seattle Kokon Taiko once again were wonderful. People had the opportunity to "pound" and form mochi the old fashion way. Next years Mochi Tsuki is scheduled at IslandWood for Saturday, January 5th, 2014.

Power point presentations have been give recently at the Japanese American Historical Society teacher's workshop, the Tops School Seattle, Rolling Bay Presbyterian Church, and the Cherry

Blossom Festival Seattle. Panel discussions were done at Fairhaven Bellingham Library, Sumas WA Library, and Sakai School. Anyone interested in having a presentation or panel can contact Frank Kitamoto at 206-842-4772 or fkitamoto@kitamotodoc.com

Book: *Surviving Minidoka, The Legacy of WWII Japanese American Incarceration*

The book *Surviving Minidoka* will include the creative arts and essays inspired by the Civil Liberties Symposiums of the past. Professor Russ Tremayne of the College of Southern Idaho, and Friends of Minidoka board member, edits the book. It will be available in July from the Boise State University Press and on the Friends of Minidoka website.



Guard Tower Reconstruction Project

By Hanako Wakatsuki

The Friends of Minidoka was awarded a two-for-one matching grant from the 2012 Japanese American Confinement Sites Grant Program for \$280,378 to reconstruct a guard tower at Minidoka. Only 17 projects were selected. The guard tower project is a two-year project that will restore the entrance of the camp to more closely resemble what former incarcerated witnessed when confined at Minidoka. The tower will be constructed with the same materials as originally created and placed near its historical location. Boise State University's Department of Construction Management will oversee the construction and installation with the help of National Park Service staff.

We are working with two faculty members at Boise State University's Department of Construction Management, Dr. Rebecca Mirsky and Dr. Casey Cline. They will develop a class to research, construct, and install the guard tower at the Minidoka National Historic Site. This class is scheduled to take place in the fall semester with Boise State students and construction for the project will be completed spring 2014.

The Friends of Minidoka is fundraising for this project. We have to raise \$16,200 for this project to meet our match requirement for the grant. We need your help to make this successful! If you can, please help us out by donating at minidoka.org or using the form in this newsletter we will be closer to completing this project. Thank you for your support!



2013 Day of Remembrance Taiko Festival

By Ryan Kozu

On February 17th, 2013, the Minidoka Pilgrimage Planning Committee, Friends of Minidoka and Seattle University held the fourth annual Day of Remembrance Taiko Festival on the campus of Seattle University.

Over 400 spectators came to Pigott Auditorium to watch 10 different Taiko groups from the Seattle and Tacoma area perform. Taiko group participants included: Seattle Matsuri Taiko, Inochi Taiko, Kaze Daiko, Ringtaro Tateishi School of Taiko, Seattle Kokon Taiko, Northwest Taiko, One World Taiko and Okinawa Kenjin-kai. First-time taiko group participants in this year's festival included the Stadium High School Taiko Club and Tacoma Fuji Taiko. During the three-hour taiko festival, each group performed 2-3 pieces and then all ten taiko groups took the stage together to perform the grand finale piece, Pulse-Eight, composed and arranged by Gary Tsujimoto of One World Taiko. A special reading by Mohammed Alturki of a poem he wrote after he went on the 2012 Minidoka Pilgrimage, was also a highlight of this taiko festival.

In addition, taiko festival spectators were able to view a couple of exhibits: Seattle University's, Ancestry is not a Crime: A Tribute to Gordon Hirabayashi and Johnny Valdez y Uno's photography collection, My Minidoka in the Paccar Atrium.

Proceeds from this event went towards funding 2013 Minidoka Pilgrimage scholarships for any person who is 80 and over and incarcerated in one of the American Concentration Camps.

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