

Japanese American Citizens League

NEWSLETTER

TWIN CITIES CHAPTER

January, 1989

Editor: Sam Honda

I'm disappointed no one wants to take over this newsletter. With unptity dumpity members who are very capable of writing, you're gonna be stuck with an editor who can't write for another year. Oh well, nuff said.

I wasn't going to put out this newsletter till later this month, but since there's going to be a showing of "The Color of Honor" on Wednesday, January 11th, 8:00 pm on channel 2 (KTCA), I want everyone to see this documentary film on Japanese American Youth in wartime America. This is a revised version made for television.

THE COLOR OF HONOR

Written, Produced and Directed
by Loni Ding

Foot note: Most of you probably can't make heads or tails out of my writing (sometimes my typing) anyway.....Japanese American Youth I'm speaking of Nisei(s). We (Nisei) were once young, althou looking at us it's hard to believe. Wartime... you may ask, "which war?" Its been a long time since 1941-45like the Indians would say, "many moons have past."

If there are more than one foot note is it feet notes? Sounds logical to me. Crazy English? Speaking of English, let me give everyone a lesson on addressing a letter. If the letter is to a women, it must be Ms if you use the women's first name. The only time you use Mrs. is when you use the husband's name. Mrs. John Smith. Miss is used for teenagers and pre-teen. For a man anything....Mr., Hey you or ho-jo whatever. If in doubt, don't put anything in front of the name.

Here's a bit of news I received some time ago and may be of interest. Two hundred and ten people, among them 126 classmates, attended the June 25 reunion of the Lodi High School Class of 1938 at the Woodbridge Golf and Country Club. (Where's Lodi?, the city is near Stockton....Where's Stockton? Well, it's in northern California Home of the tokay grapes. Boy, ya readers are getting alot of good information this month) Anyway, 89 of the class members still live in the Lodi area, although others from out-of-state came from Salt Lake City and Ogden, Utah; Sedonia Ariz.; Missoula, Montana; Fort Worth, Texas; and Reno, Nev. The person who travelled the greatest distance to attend was Sam Shimada from Minneapolis. 1938 to 1988 that's got to be 50 years. I could say that's got to be an old Nisei, but I wouldn't say a thing like that.

Happy New Year from the Newsletter staff of one. (Sometimes two)

President Reagan had come to New Jersey to tout his Administration's record of fostering economic growth, but as his limousine sped across the northern part of the state, it was the man riding with him who was making the sales pitch. Republican Gov. Thomas H. Kean was trying to persuade Reagan to erase a black spot on America's past. He urged Reagan to provide restitution and an official apology to Japanese-Americans who were interned during World War II.

"I used whatever persuasive powers I could," Kean said in a recent interview about that conversation in October 1987. He reminded the President that in 1945, when Santa Ana, Calif., would not allow a Japanese-American soldier heroically killed in action to be buried in the local cemetery, a young actor named Reagan had the courage to participate in a ceremony awarding the Distinguished Service Cross to the young man's family.

"The President was favorably inclined," Kean said, "but he wanted questions answered. So I got him the answers." In a follow-up letter, Kean enclosed a note from the soldier's sister and snapshots of the ceremony. He also pursued the matter in a telephone conversation with then-White House deputy chief of staff Kenneth M. Duberstein.

The lobbying paid off this year. On Aug. 10, overriding advice from the Justice Department and the Office of Management and Budget, Reagan signed redress legislation, saying that "the internment of Japanese-Americans was a mistake . . . a grave wrong."

"Without the President's support, I don't think it would have happened," said Grant Ujifusa, the legislative strategist of the legislative education committee of the Japanese American Citizens League (JACL).

And, most observers agree, the foundation for that support was laid by Kean's talk with Reagan—a talk that was no accident. "I'm an historian by profession, and I've always felt that particular episode was one of the few things in American history I was ashamed of," Kean said. Ujifusa, who had edited a book written by Kean, knew the governor's feelings and asked him to intervene with the President.

It was a master stroke, and it turned a page in Asian-American political history. A group long on the outside demonstrated that it could play the inside game—and win.

This does not mean the work on the grass-roots level was not important. Your letter writing and visit to your congresspersons are always needed. The long and hard work by all the organizations played a significant role in getting congress to pass our redress bill. From the card game of bridge, you might say that Grant Ujifusa had the trump card.

Looking back on Redress.....Back in 1984 when I was on WCCO-TV news a question was asked, "How many persons in Minnesota would be eligible for compensation?" I said, around 75 persons. I received many comments, since I haven't been in Minnesota as long as most of you, I was wrong on the 75 figure. The correct figure is more like 150 plus. At that time, I based it on the contribution I received towards our redress program. I received 38 donations and 12 of that are from persons who were not in camp. Breaking it down to Mr./Mrs. the contributions received comes to 64 persons, however, those contributors who were not in camp came to 16. Only 48 persons eligible for compensation contributed towards our redress fund. So, that's where I came up with around 75. In 1986, fund drive didn't make much difference....only the contributions were larger. If my figures are right 57 percent of the people who were in camp didn't believe in our redress program enough to contribute. I hope everyone who is eligible for compensation will apply. All of us who contributed and worked to get our redress bill passed didn't do it for the apology part of the bill.

peace