



# Greater Los Angeles Chapter *Japanese American Citizens League*

Newsletter no. 439

April 2022

## **VIRTUAL MEETING/PROGRAM**

**Sunday, April 10, 2022**

**1:00 pm**

**Program: 1:00 pm Look to the Sky: America's Concentration Camps (Part 2)**

**Speaker: John Tonai**

**2:00 pm or after the end of the program: Business Meeting**



John Tonai

For a Zoom link to the program, email Layne Sakamoto at [greaterlajacl@gmail.com](mailto:greaterlajacl@gmail.com)

“Look to the Sky: America’s Concentration Camps” is a documentary photography project by John Tonai depicting the contemporary physical conditions of the 10 WWII War Relocation Authority camps. The initial project took place from 1990-1992. Since that time, Tonai has revisited most of the sites and recorded the changes that have taken place.

On February 13 in Part 1, John Tonai showed photos from his documentary photographic exhibit “Look to the Sky” of camps Amachi, Gila, Heart Mountain, Jerome, and Manzanar. Tonai’s commentary of each black-and-white photo shown was interesting, informative and enlightening. One looked at the photos with new eyes.

In Part 2, Tonai will show photos of camps Minidoka, Poston, Rohwer, Topaz and Tule Lake.

John Tonai recently retired as an Associate Professor of Photography at University of Northern Colorado. He currently works at the Japanese American National Museum as a Production Coordinator and Collections Photographer.



### **YAG Clothing Drive**

The Greater Los Angeles Young Adult Group would like to thank all those who contributed to the Winter Clothing Drive. The donations were presented to LAC+USC Medical Center on 02/22/2022 by Layne Sakamoto. All of the donations will be distributed to patients in need of warm clothing during the cold winter months. Approximately 30 bags of clothing were donated to the hospital in total.

The donors to the YAG clothing drive were: Toshi Abe, Yumi Gruhn, Doug Ikemi, Joyce Inouye, M. Kadogawa, A. Okada, Layne Sakamoto and Louise Sakamoto.

*report by Andrew Gruhn*



## Furusato (Home Sweet Home): Japanese Community on Terminal Island before World War II



Screen shot: Barbara Tamura, Mary Tamura, Katsumi Izumi

The March virtual program was a panel with former Terminal Islanders Mary (Izumi) Tamura and her brother, Katsumi Izumi, and Mary's daughter, Barbara Tamura. The panel was assembled and moderated by Mitchell Matsumura, GLA JACL Co-President.

In a slide presentation, Barbara Tamura showed pictures of the former Japanese community on Terminal Island before WWII and pictures of her family. Mary Tamura and Katsumi Izumi shared stories of life on Terminal Island.

GLA did not have permission to show publicly the 2007 film "Furusato: The Lost Village of Terminal Island." The director himself did not have copyright to the music in the film.

A recording of the panel discussion is accessible in Programs on the GLA website [glajacl.org](http://glajacl.org) and on YouTube. Also attached in the website is the report of the April 2018 program with Mary Tamura and Barbara.



Mary Tamura

### Mary Tamura: Biography

Before World War II, 3,000 people of Japanese ancestry living on Terminal Island formed a unique "Japanese fishing village." Growing up there was one of the happiest periods of my life. Fathers went fishing, mothers worked in the canneries, everyone looked after each other, and we celebrated holidays together like one big family. I attended grade school on the island, then took a ferry to San Pedro Jr./Sr. High School. I played the piano at church, sang in the choir, and learned Ikebana. On Dec 7, 1941, the Issei community leaders were arrested. On Feb 2, 1942, the FBI did a gigantic roundup by arresting 400 Issei men who went to Federal Prison. On Feb 25, 1942, remaining women and children were given 48 hours to leave their homes. The notice did not say

where or how, so we wondered where can we go and who will take us? Fortunately, some Quakers, the Baptist church, Buddhist temple, and volunteers came and drove people to stay in their churches, private homes or wherever there was space. We lived with 5 other families in a house in Venice, and my best friend lived in the LA. Buddhist recreation hall with 20 families. Since we did not know where our fathers and friends were, it was the most sad and sorrowful time in my life. In 1942 April/May, former Terminal Islanders went to WWII incarceration camps. We went to Tulare Assembly Center, before interned in Gila Relocation Camp in Arizona where I graduated HS and worked at Gila Hospital, then signed up to leave camp to obtain nurse training under the U.S. Cadet Corp. at Rochester, MN. In 1947, I graduated from St. Mary's School of Nursing, passed the State board examination, became a Registered Nurse, and returned to California to join my family.



In 1950, I married Robert Asaka Tamura. After he graduated from Art Center School of Design from a GI Bill he got after he served in the US Army MIS. We moved to New York City on our honeymoon, Bob worked as a graphic artist at Paramount and other studios before becoming a freelance artist in San Francisco. We resided in San Mateo for 19 years, raised David and Barbara, and in 1978, Bob accepted an Art Director job at Mattel in El Segundo, so we moved to Torrance. After 11 years, Bob retired. We traveled around the world, visited many museums and art shows before Bob was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and lived to be 91 years old. I still love to travel, so I took my children to Peru, New Zealand, and Japan, but now with COVID restrictions, I am content to stay at home remembering all the adventures and the good life I have been blessed with.

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Katsumi Izumi

#### **Katsumi Izumi: Biography**

Our Terminal Island community was like a big family where neighbors watched kids when parents worked at the cannery or fished, and we rarely heard of robberies or assaults. We lived in homes without individual bedrooms or bathrooms - the narrow buildings had a hallway leading to rooms equipped with electricity and a wood burning stove with a 15' pole that hoisted a wire cage used to salt and dry fish. We attended Japanese school after English school, and when I was 10, Dad took me to Kendo lessons at 5am. The head instructor Fuji Sen-Sei was also my dentist. My hobby was collecting stamps found in bins we searched off huge docked ships. We loved fishing on skiffs with 100 hooks on the line my friend's father had, and caught king fish, tom cods, mackerels, smelts, etc., then sold them to a man who would fillet, salt, and sell them to farmers.

We worshipped at the Baptist church and many friends attended the Buddhist Church. I was 13 when I left Terminal Island, after the FBI agents came to our home the night of Dec 7 1941 and took my father to jail with other Issei's. We had to turn in our flashlights and pocket knives, while soldiers with guns and bayonets walked up and down the street. We had a family grocery store that was locked up. Later, the government gave a 3-day notice to leave. We thank God for friends not living on Terminal Island who came and helped. Many greedy merchants came with trucks to buy anything; offering only a quarter for an ice box, piano, etc. In 1946 I graduated North Denver High School, then was accepted to USC School of Engineering, but I lacked a Trigonometry course, so I went to LA City College and University of California San Francisco. In 1950 I enrolled in Dentistry School. The Selective Service notified me to report in 1951, but the school Dean wrote letters to have a deferral until graduation. In 1954 I joined the Dental Corp U.S. Army; after graduation, discharged after 1957, I began my Long Beach dental practice in 1958. I married Hatsune, and we had 3 children Steven, Nancy, and Kenny. I have been retired for 26 years, and am in good health. I still play par three golf course in Long Beach and go to the driving range almost daily.

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Barbara Tamura

#### **Barbara Jean Tamura: Biography**

I was born and raised in San Mateo, California, and met most of my Japanese American friends through a small Christian church I attended weekly. In 1978, my dad accepted a job at Mattel, so we moved to Torrance. After high school, graduated CSU Long Beach with an Education/Minority Studies degree. My brother David illustrated the book "When Justice Failed, the Fred Korematsu Story" by Steven A. Chin. Before working in the auto industry, my parent's love of service to underprivileged people influenced me to teach at an inner-city school in Watts. I invited professional Asians and people of color to share their success stories to my students, teaching the kids art, writing, and history lessons by showing how discrimination shaped them to become positive compassionate individuals, despite their journey where they lost homes, were placed in

internment camps, and later volunteered to enlist in the US Military. I feel blessed to have an amazing Mother willing to share a story of courage, her love of community, and strong motto that matches the tagline "Patriotism in Spite of Prejudice" which is shown on the book cover Mom appears on, entitled "Nisei Cadet Nurse of WWII" by Thelma M. Robinson.



## Rally at Wintersburg, March 19, 2022

### Stand up to anti-Asian Violence

and all racial & gender based violence

### Support Historic Wintersburg

Fire burns Japanese American church, a National Treasure

February 25, 2022. The fire that destroyed 2 of 6 historic buildings is under INVESTIGATION for possible ARSON. Republic Services, owners of the Historic Wintersburg property, demolished both buildings several hours after the fire, destroying evidence for the investigation. Owners previously applied to demolish all 6 historic buildings so they can develop or sell. In the lead up to the fire, Historic Wintersburg volunteers have been attacked by racists on social media, stalked, photographed and been subjected to other acts of intimidation against the preservation project.



**Demand an independent investigation into the FIRE!**

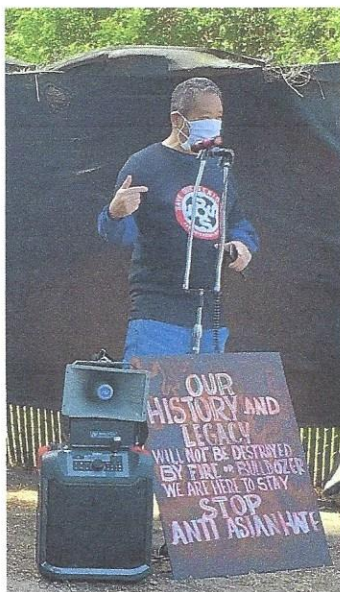
For more information: [info@progressiveasians.org](mailto:info@progressiveasians.org)

### Rally to Support Wintersburg

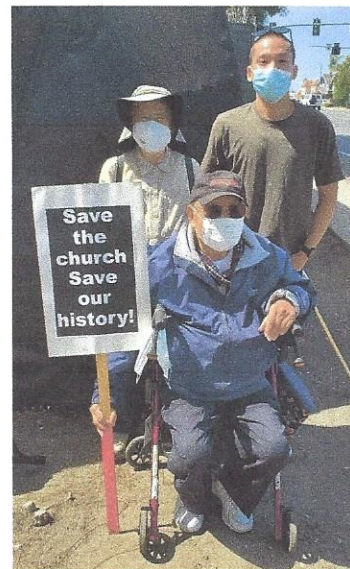
Sat • March 19 • 12N-1pm

7642 Warner Ave SW cor. Warner & Nicholas Ln. Huntington Bch, CA

Support Historic Wintersburg (SHW) ad-hoc coalition for the March 19th event: This action supports & includes Historic Wintersburg Preservation, Preserve Orange County, Heritage Museum of Orange County, Progressive Asian Network for Action (PANA), Neighborhood Safety Companions, AAPI vs Hate South Bay, Japanese American Citizens League- Greater LA, Sasei Legacy, Save Our Seniors Network, API-RISE (Re-entry through Inclusion Support, Empowerment)



Mitchell Matsumura, one of several speakers



Kanji Sahara, Louise Sakamoto, Layne Sakamoto