

KOKORO

the heart and soul of our community
san mateo chapter Japanese American citizens league feb 2009
www.sanmateojacl.org
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San Mateo JACL is dedicated to promoting the historical and cultural understanding of the Japanese American experience and to protecting and advancing the human and civil rights of our multi-ethnic society through educational and community programs.

Articles must be submitted before the first Friday (one month prior to publication) and in electronic format [Microsoft WORD, Calibri font] to katemotoyama@sanbrunocable.com

PASSAGES IN 2008

Jeff Yang, who writes a column on Asian American culture, presented a synopsis of some of the passages in 2008:

A bow of the head to those who left us, including:

Rocky Aoki, founder, Benihana; Robert Asprin, SF/fantasy author; Kim Chan, actor; Hisao Inouye, co-founder, SF Cherry Blossom Festival and Kimochi Home; Dith Pran, photographer; Gopal Raju, founder, India Abroad; William T. Liu, Asian American psychiatry pioneer; Mo Marumoto, founder, National Japanese American Memorial Foundation; Dr. Thomas Tam, founder Asian American/Asian Research Institute; Gerald Tsai, financier.

HAPPY YEAR OF THE OX!



January 26, 2009 was the Lunar New Year (Chinese: 春節, 春节, Chūnjié; 農・新年, 农历新年, Nónglì Xīnnián; or 過年, 过年, Guònián. Board Members Lisa and Misa Sakaguchi wish you a very happy Year of the Ox!

PDFS OF KOKORO TO THOSE WHO HAVE EMAIL ADDRESSES ON FILE

In 2009, we will make our newsletter *Kokoro* available in pdf form for those who have email addresses on file and discontinue mailing paper copies in order to save costs and to be more green. However, if you receive *Kokoro* electronically but would prefer to receive hard copy, we are happy to mail it to you. Please contact Kate at 650-574-6676 for newsletter questions or concerns. Thank you very much. Just a reminder that deadlines for material should be well in advance of one month prior to the date of expected publication of our newsletter. Thank you again for your continued support of our newsletter.

OBAMA PICKS SHINSEKI TO LEAD VETERANS AFFAIRS

*"People are central to everything we do in the Army.
Institutions don't transform, people do.
Platforms and organizations don't defend the nation, people do. . . .
Without people in the equation, readiness and transformation
are little more than academic exercises."
-General Erik K. Shinseki*

In an article in the *Washington Post* [December 7, 2008], Philip Rucker reported that President-elect Barack Obama selected retired Army Gen. and career military officer Eric K. Shinseki, 66, as his nominee to head the Department of Veterans Affairs. The nomination must be confirmed by the Senate.

Shinseki, a four-star general and 38-year veteran retired shortly after the fall of Baghdad in 2003. Obama said Shinseki agreed to join the incoming administration because "both he and I share a reverence for those who serve." Rucker reports that Shinseki was Army chief of staff when he publicly disputed the Bush administration's determination to invade Iraq with a relatively small force. In his opinion, the postwar peace could only be maintained by "something on the order of several hundred thousand soldiers"—an assessment belittled by Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld and Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul D. Wolfowitz. Yet Shinseki had been twice wounded in battle (and awarded a Purple Heart both times) and had worked his way to the top, observed Retired Army Gen. Colin L. Powell, who was President Bush's secretary of state at the time of the Iraq invasion and former chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Three years later, in 2007, Gen. John P. Abizaid, chief of U.S. Central Command and the main architect of U.S. military strategy in Iraq, stated, "General Shinseki was right." President Bush then ordered tens of thousands of U.S. troops back into Iraq to stabilize and secure the country.

Rucker includes the comments of Juan Cole, a University of Michigan history professor who writes about the Iraq war and Islam; Cole called Shinseki's appointment "ironic:"

If Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and [former undersecretary for defense Douglas J.] Feith had listened to Shinseki, there wouldn't be as many wounded veterans to take care of. I think this [nomination] is a way of saying, "Here was a career officer who had valuable insights who was shunted aside by arrogant civilians, and we're not going to make the same kind of mistakes."

Like Obama, Shinseki was born in Hawaii, and, as a Japanese American, he is the first Asian American nominated to Obama's Cabinet.

PLAYERS, COACHES CITE RACE FACTORS

*"I hear everything: 'Go back to China. Orchestra is on the other side of campus. Open up your eyes.'
They're yelling at me before, during and after."
-Jeremy Lin, Harvard junior guard from Palo Alto on away-game crowds*

Jeremy Lin, writes Bryan Chu, in an article published in the *San Francisco Chronicle* [December 16, 2008] has been called too short, too skinny, "picked last," "Asian." Despite the popularity of basketball among Asian American leagues, club teams, and evidenced on courts outside of schools, churches, and temples, of 4,814 Division I men's basketball players in 2006-07, there were only 19 Asian Americans (including Pacific Islanders and ethnically mixed). That is 0.4 percent. Chu writes:

Players, coaches and sociologists cite stereotypes and cultural factors as reasons that percentage might not rise very much in the foreseeable future. At the same time, there are players and coaches making inroads to mainstream, high-profile basketball and there's a feeling of pioneer spirit among them.

Chu adds that, despite Palo Alto High's winning Division II finals in 2006 and Lin's being named to All-State and Northern California state teams as well as The Chronicle's Metro Player of the Year—and with his senior stats [15.1 points, 7.1 assists, 6.2 rebounds and five steals]—Lin received no scholarship offers from Division I teams.

Other Asian Americans in the game currently include Kelvin Kim, starting guard, UC San Diego; Blake Wallace, junior forward, USF; Bobby Nash, swingman at Hawaii who signed with the Shiga Lakestars of Basketball Japan; Derrick Low, former Washington State guard, who signed with the Sydney Spirit in Australia's National Basketball League; and USF coach Rex Walters and Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra, who also is the first Filipino American to reach this position.

Chu also investigates the angle that, beyond racial bias, the values of an Asian family in the United States focus on education and certain professional occupations (not that of professional athlete). Despite the inroads of

Asian American players from the 1940's such as Wataru Mikasa, 84, the first ethnic minority to play in the NBA (known as the Basketball Association of America) and Willie "Woo Woo" Wong, deceased, a member of USF's 1950 NIT championship team and the first Chinese American to play in Madison Square Garden, Asian Americans have far to go in the collegiate and professional sport of basketball.

A SAD CHANGE: THE END OF *ASIAN WEEK* NEWSPAPER

Asian Week has been a part of our lives since 1979. The longest-running English-language Asian American newspaper is no longer published as of January 2, 2009 because of declines in readership and advertising revenue. Ted Fang, editor and publisher, said that special editions may be put out, but the broader Asian American community has lost a vehicle of communication and unity.

Although in 2007 the newspaper was criticized for having published an opinion piece by a contributor titled, "Why I Hate Blacks" [the contributor was fired, an apology issued, and Fang said it was a mistake to have published the column], it had been a paper with a circulation of 60,000 that helped educate the community about issues such as campaigns against hepatitis B, immigration reform, and voter registration drives.

The paper was established in San Francisco in 1979. It was available for free at various newspaper dispensers throughout San Francisco and the Peninsula, as well as at markets and stores that carried Asian and Asian American merchandise. Vernaculars such as *Asian Week* provide a complement and counterstatement to mainstream media—which effortlessly shapes everything we know of current events in the world.

NEW SAN MATEO JACL PRESIDENT AND CHAIR OF MAJOR FUNDRAISING



New president Kate Motoyama and Chair of our Burger Booth, Kevin Wong, set their sights on a great 2009.

FUNDRAISING FOR OUR JACL YOUTH: PLEASE READ THIS APPEAL AND HELP OUT!!

Both Jenn and I as NCWNP Co-Youth Representatives have been **assigned to raise \$1,000** for this year's 2009 JACL National Youth Conference and we need your help. **Jenn and I can't do it alone** and so we're asking for all of our NCWNP Chapters and members to help us with this daunting task.

The "**Otoshidama for Youth**" Gift Drive is asking all NCWNP Chapters and members to donate **\$50.00** or more to this year's Youth Conference and District Youth Programs in the Japanese tradition of Otoshidama. **Otoshidama** is the Japanese tradition of giving envelopes of money to children for the new year.

Japanese American Citizens League
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So please, help us raise our goal amount and a little extra for youth district activities. We have a lot to do this year for our NCWNP Youth!!

*If you have any questions, please contact either Jenn or myself and we'd be happy to answer them. **This gift drive will end March 1st**, so please spread the word quickly!!*

All donations can be sent to:

*Otoshidama for Youth Gift Drive
c/o Megumi Kaminaga
7233 Geary Blvd. Apt 1
San Francisco, Ca 94121*

Checks can be made out to "NCWNP JACL."

Happy New Year everyone and be safe!

Sincerely Yours,

Megumi Kaminaga & Jenn Suzuki



JACL
HealthBenefitsTrust

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