



Come to the Topaz Pilgrimage, Aug. 2 in Delta



Over 400 people participated in the first Topaz Pilgrimage last year. Make plans to join your friends and family on Aug. 2.

Because the Topaz Pilgrimage was such a success last year, the committee has decided to roll out the carpet again, inviting former internees and other interested people to attend.

The event begins Aug. 2, 2003 with a bike ride to Topaz, 16 miles one way. The route is flat and accessible to all riders over 15 year old. Last year people who rode to camp were able to talk with fellow riders and had an enjoyable time.

Although the theme, "Ties that Bind," is the same as last year, the programs will be different and sure to please all who attend.

Tours of the site will go on all day, helping people to understand or recall what life was like at Topaz. Tours of buildings in Delta that were once barracks will show, in part, how the camp affected Delta.

The Great Basin Museum will be open so that people can walk in the restored recreation hall.

Once again Taiko drummers will perform. Quilters from Delta will sew and then raffle off a quilt as well as have quilts to tie, again in keeping with the theme.

Videos will run all day in the air conditioned building on the park site. Displays will be mounted in the Delta City Library.

Two programs will give more formal accounts of the history of the camp. The program in the park at noon will feature those who were born at camp and those who were in school. Displays of photos of school classes will remind visitors of the children who were in camp.

The program at the camp site will focus on soldiers who served their country while their families were interned.

Those veterans whose names are engraved on the Millard County War Memorial will also be honored. Each Nikkei name on the plaque will have a rubbing made that will be available for the soldier or family members.

The Topaz Museum Board, sponsor of the event, will be collecting memories of the camp so that the scripts can be used in the future Museum. (See article on Page 3.)

People will be able to buy copies of books relating to internment and the committee is hoping to be able to have vendors who will

sell Japanese food. Rounding out the day will be the big band "Jivin' Highway," which played for the Olympics.

Pilgrimage springs from community action

After the Topaz marker was vandalized in March 2002, Deltans were disturbed by the senseless act. Some people took flowers to the site, others voiced their sorrow regarding the action. One person, Susan Stefanoff believed in healing the wounds by having a Pilgrimage, encouraging former internees to talk about internment with Deltans and anyone else who is interested in the history.

The summer was spent organizing and publicizing the events of the day. The committee and high school students made over 600 paper cranes, attached them to dowels and handed them out at the July 4 parade. Community minded volunteers were trained to give tours at camp and tours in town. JACL was invited to dedicate the new marker they placed at the site in June.

Over sixty volunteers put together a day that began at 7:00 a.m. with a bike ride to Topaz. Only 17 people participated in the jaunt, but they included riders from all around the state and the Kato brothers from California.

Once at the site the riders toured Block 22 of the camp, talked about the history, filled up with liquid and headed back to the Delta City Park where more tours and events were being held.

The day was filled with bus tours around town to see homes that had once been barracks at camp, photographic displays, video screenings, a quilt and art show in the Delta City Library. The quilt made by Nikkei women in California was loaned to the committee for the day. It was brought to Delta by Fumi Hayashi, one of the quilters.

A bus arrived with former internees and friends from the Bay Area. The bus ride was organized by Toru Saito, former resident of Block 4 who currently lives in Berkeley. Two busses came from Salt Lake full of JACL members. (See article on Page 2.)

A program at noon introduced the audience to various players in the internment story. After a welcome by the Mayor of Delta, Gayle Bunker, Homer Petersen's daughter told the story of why Delta was chosen as a camp site.

People bought pizza by the slice and some brought bento lunches.

At 4:30 p.m. the crowd caravanned to the camp site for the JACL dedication of the new marker. Shade provided by four National Guard tents did not accommodate the entire crowd.

John Tateishi from the National JACL office and others told the history of the camp. Following the program JACL provided hot dogs and hamburgers back in the park. People sat at picnic tables and

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became acquainted.

After the dinner Jivin' Highway, a big band that played for the Salt Lake Olympics, played until eleven o'clock. Some danced; some just enjoyed the music.

More than 400 people attended the event.



Last year's bus group that came from California.

Saito to sponsor bus to August Pilgrimage from Bay Area

Toru Saito was a hero for the Topaz Pilgrimage committee last year because he organized a bus from the Bay Area. Thirty-five people hitched a ride and sported bright yellow t-shirts when they got off the bus in Delta.

This year, Toru has promised the same itinerary. The bus will leave from the Bay Area on Fri. Aug. 1 and arrive in Ely, Nevada that night. Early the next morning the bus will cover the 150 miles from Ely to Delta for the Pilgrimage.

After a full day of touring and talking and dancing, the bus riders will sleep in Delta and then head to Reno on Sunday morning, arriving home on Monday.

Total cost for the bus and lodging is around \$350.00.

Call Toru Saito at 510-526-8432 for reservations.

New members bring fresh outlook to Topaz Board

Three new members have joined the Topaz Museum Board. Steve Koga, Lorlei Draper and Susan Stefanoff bring a wealth of community service to the board as well as enthusiasm for seeing the Topaz Museum built in Delta.

The Topaz Museum Board had dwindled due to a death and a resignation. Koga, Draper and Stefanoff bring the number of board members to nine, including Rick Okabe, Salt Lake City; Bill Sugaya, San Francisco; Chuck Kubokawa, Palo Alto; Grace Oshita, Salt Lake City; Jane Beckwith, Charlotte Morrison, Draper and Stefanoff, all from Delta. Steve Koga lives in Ogden, Utah where he is a CPA. He will take over the treasurer's position on the Board.

Draper and Stefanoff began their association with the Topaz project last year during the first Topaz Pilgrimage. Stefanoff was the co-chair, pulling considerable resources from community volunteers. She returns as co-chair of the second Pilgrimage which will be held on Aug. 2 at the Delta City Park. (See Pilgrimage article Page 1.)

Susan enjoyed working on the Pilgrimage committee last year especially talking with former internees about their experiences at Topaz. Her focus continues to be fostering a good relationship between former internees and those who are interested in their history. She will spearhead a program for veterans during the Pilgrimage.

Lorlei Draper was also part of the Pilgrimage. This year she will head a quilt project during the Pilgrimage as well as fulfilling other assignments on the committee.

All of the board members are committed to help preserve the history of Topaz and see the completion of a Museum in Delta.

Crib donated to Topaz Museum

Last year at the Pilgrimage Otto Riding, Delta resident, brought a baby crib to donate to the future museum.

He said that he had obtained it from a farmer who had been using it as a crib to feed sheep. Riding recognized the significance of the crib by the markings hammered on it which read, "WRA 11880," the family internment number.

The crib measures 26" x 49" x 41" and is made of wood, stained a dark color. The piece was decorated with decals on the foot and head of the bed, but it is not clear if it had been made at camp.

Student catalogs Topaz death records soon available on web

Katrina Perkins, senior at Delta High School, finished cataloging the death records from camp just before school ended in May.

The records were obtained from the local mortician, Albert Nickle, in Delta. His father ran the only mortuary in town during the war. Albert began working with his father about the time the war broke out. Since they were the only mortuary in Delta, they maintained the all death records from Topaz as well as Delta.

According to Nickle's records, 156 people either died at camp or had a funeral arranged through his office. 102 men died at Topaz.

Several people died of tuberculosis and heart attacks.

Perkins listed some of the key information from the records on a spreadsheet that will eventually find its way to the Topaz website at www.topazmuseum.org.

The records contain the name of the deceased, date of death, sex, age and cause of death. Some of the records include the deceased's address at camp, attending doctor, funeral expenses, religious affiliation and place of birth.

One of the most compelling records is the entry for Hatsuaki James Wakasa who was shot at camp. Loren Bell, a camp official, informed the mortuary of the death. Wakasa was 63 years, one month and 18 days old when he died. He was Buddhist and his wake was held on April 18, 1943 at 8:00 p.m. Services were at block 32 (outside the high school) at 2:00 p.m. The attending physician was the C.O. of the Army [at] Topaz. He was born in Ishikawa-ken and his occupation was a chef. The expense for his funeral was \$95.25, including white gloves for the attendants.

Nickle remembers the incident and says that Wakasa had on layers of clothing at the time of his death, including a sweater with his legs through the armholes. That is his recollection and is not in the recorded mortician log.

Two new books feature Topaz

Julie Otsuka's "When the Emperor Was Divine" received wonderful reviews in the national press. The book is her debut novel about a mother, son and daughter interned at Topaz.

A blurb describing the novel called it "a small tour de force" ... "spare intimate, arrestingly understated."

Otsuka lives in New York City, but was raised in California. Her grandmother, mother and uncle had been in Topaz during the war.

She visited Delta on Jan. 18, 2003 and gave a reading to students and townspeople. Later she toured the camp site for the first time. In Salt Lake City she also read from her book.

Tristi Pinkston is a local Utah writer with a deep interest in internment. After much research she based her novel on a character who was also incarcerated in Topaz. Her extensive bibliography lends credibility to her work, "Nothing to Regret."

She has been generous in supporting the Topaz Museum Board's effort to build a Museum for Topaz.

Both of these novels will be available for purchase at the Topaz Pilgrimage on Aug. 2.



One of the photos from Eleanor Gerard Sekerak's photo album that will appear on the website.

Website makes information available

Topaz now has its own website at www.topazcamp.org or www.topazmuseum.org. Thanks to a grant from the Utah Office of Museum Services we have developed a website which provides information, photographs and resources about Topaz. Designed and programmed by Rick Okabe and David Cuman Cropper, former Delta resident, now living in New York City, this is the most extensive resource about Topaz on the Internet.

The website includes a brief history of the camp and information about the Topaz Museum Board's purchase of over 500 acres of the original site and its efforts to build a museum in Delta, Utah.

On the site are images of the camp during WWII as well as photos of the site today, along with photos of related artifacts which have been donated to the museum.

In the Resources section there is a list of books and videos about Topaz and links to other information. The same section will take you to Eleanor Sekerak's photo album digitized by the University of Utah. Click on Resources and then Archive.

On the Current Events page we will post information about the upcoming Topaz Pilgrimage. Check there for periodic updates.

Future plans may include making the Topaz Times available to website visitors. One of our board members, Steve Koga, has a complete set of the newspapers. It is hoped that we can obtain a grant to allow us to digitize the collection.

The Topaz Board is pleased to provide this resource as part of its mission to detail the Topaz story.

Mother lived in Delta; father in Topaz

One of the most interesting stories revealed at last year's Pilgrimage was Judi Nihei's. She called for information prior to the event and said that her mother grew up in Delta and her father had been interned in Topaz.

Her mother was one of the Imai children living in Delta prior to the war. Judi's grandfather had worked for the railroad for over thirty years when the war broke out and then he lost his job and was forced to leave Delta. The family went to Salt Lake City.

Later when Judi's father left camp he met his future wife in Salt Lake.

A quick look in the Delta High yearbook archive found pictures of Judi's mother and also an autograph she wrote to the school principal who had donated his yearbooks to the archive.

There were three Nikkei families living in the Delta area prior to the war. Two worked for the railroad and one family farmed in the Hinckley area.

Bring the family to the Topaz Pilgrimage on August 2.

Museum Board asks for personal experiences of camp

Park Rangers at Manzanar implemented a program to collect abbreviated oral histories from former internees. The Topaz Museum Board recognizes that these stories, no matter how short, will be invaluable in the future to help Museum visitors connect with former internees.

The Manzanar group has published small pamphlets that they give to school children when they visit their site. Each pamphlet in the group is different, so the students get a more private view of those who were incarcerated.

We would like to have as many people as possible file answers to the following questions so that the responses will be available to those who want to hear personal accounts of internment.

Take a few minutes to write the answers to these questions, then send your response to: Topaz Museum, P.O. Box 241, Delta, UT 84624. Each answer should give enough detailed information so that the reader gets an authentic sense of what camp life was like.

1. Write a brief history of your family history. How old were you when you went to camp?
2. Talk about what you missed after you left your home. What personal belongings did you take with you? How did you and your family feel about evacuation? What do you remember about the day you left your home?
3. Write about a memory or two you have of camp. Talk about hobbies you started, about school, or the weather. How long were you in camp? What was the most difficult thing about camp life? Was there anything that made the experience tolerable?
4. Describe your life after camp. Where did you go? What were your feelings about leaving? What sort of job did you have after camp? How did the experience of camp affect your life?
5. What do you want people to remember about this period of United States history?

National Archive JA Internee database now available online

According to the Japanese American National Museum individuals can access some of the National Archival records on the website at www.archives.gov.

Follow these steps to access the War Relocation Authority Japanese American Internee Data File:

1. Go to the website
2. Click on "Research Room"
3. Resources: Access to Archival Databases (AAD)
4. Access to Archival Databases: AAD search button (red)
5. Select a Series/File Unit: All series
6. List All Series: Title: Japanese American Internee File, 1942-1946
7. Series Description: [Japanese American Internee Data File], 1942-1946
8. File Unit Description: Click here to search this data table
9. Search: File Unit Title: [Japanese American Internee Data File], 1942-1946
10. Search Results Page 1. Results Page(s): 1. Check box in Select Record column for the correct name of internee. Click: Show Selected Records box
11. Record Detail: Click: Print-Friendly Version

Golf, bike, renew friendships, teach your children, see the past. Call Best Western for motel reservations at 435-864-3882.

Make plans to attend the Topaz Pilgrimage

*August 2, 2003
Delta City Park*

***Play a round of golf on Friday
Early morning bike ride
Tours of the camp site
Educational program
Videos
Displays
Quilt raffle
Luncheon
Taiko drummers
Big band concert and dance***

Topaz Museum
P.O. Box 241
Delta, UT 84624



Place
refrigerator
magnet here.

Reminder:

Plan to attend the Topaz Pilgrimage

Call the friends and family and have them meet us in Delta, UT on August 2, 2003 for the Topaz Pilgrimage. Spend the day talking and learning about Topaz.

Friday	Play golf
7:00 a.m.	Bike ride to camp (16 miles one way)
9:00 a.m.	Tour the site all day
10:00 a.m.	See barracks recycled into houses Walk in the restored recreation hall
All day	Displays, art, quilts, memorabilia
All day	Videos
Noon	Program featuring students and children born at camp
All day	Program featuring veterans Food
2:00 p.m.	Taiko drummers Win a quilt
7:00 p.m.	Dance to an Olympic big band

Show the children and grand children where internees lived during the war.

Ties that Bind

Topaz Pilgrimage
August 2, 2003
Delta City Park
Delta, Utah

For more information call:

435-864-2279 Susan Stefanoff

435-864-2098 Jane Beckwith

Toru Saito for bus reservations 510-526-8432