

# TOPAZ TIMES THE CITY

Volume 95 Number One

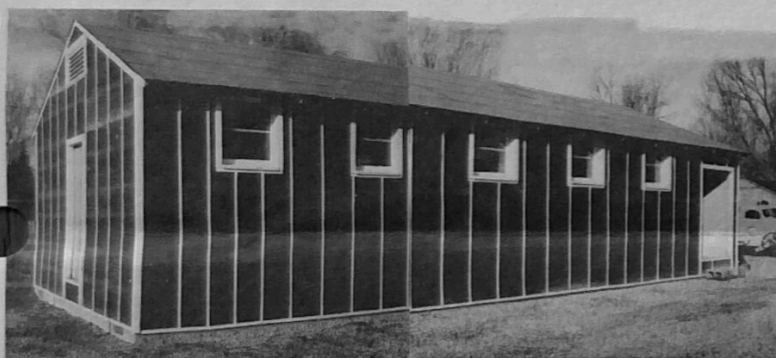
March 1995

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## RESTORATION OF TOPAZ BARRACK ALMOST COMPLETE *Jane Beckwith*

After fifty years of use as a farmer's out-building and more than fifty years of weather, the recreation hall sags and bulges here and there. Nothing will change that. However, the twisted boards, dry and brittle with age, have been covered with sheetrock and new tarpaper, taking the structure back to nearly its 1942 look.

When the building was donated to the Great Basin Museum in 1991, it was moved from the Eldro Jeffery family residence where it was a storage building, to the museum compound and placed on

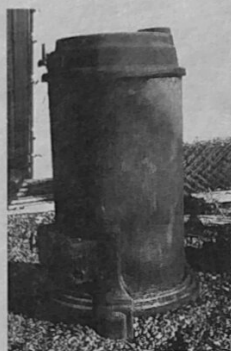


cinder blocks. Thanks to the Great Basin Museum board, an ad hoc committee was formed to oversee the restoration of the building. At first it was thought that the old rec hall could be used to house a museum dedicated to the Topaz camp. However, the building originally was so badly constructed that no permanent display would have been sufficiently protected. The plans had to broaden to not only restore the building, but also to construct a new facility for the Topaz Museum displays.

The Topaz committee hired the construction company of Norm Henke to complete the work. Overseer for the Great Basin Museum was Glen Swalberg.

Once the rec hall was moved to a permanent foundation that would ensure less stress to the building, workers striped it of construction that was added by the Jeffery family including partitions and the metal roof. Much of the original sheetrock or gypsum board was replaced with 1942 style board without beveled edges. None of the boards were taped or painted, although the original structure showed evidence of having been painted during its life at camp.

New windows similar to the original were placed on wooden tracks following the original construction. Later plexiglas will have to be installed to prevent leakage around the inch wide cracks that were there since 1942.



Other corrections will be made on the restoration because the battens on the tarpaper were inadvertently painted white.

They will be replaced with natural battens.

Several people in Delta have coal stoves that were originally from the camp. Two will be installed in this building. The Topaz Committee decided to place a temporary partition in the building to indicate the dimension of a typical 20' x 14' barrack. That will be furnished as a stark reminder of camp until the new Topaz Museum will be constructed. A few other changes will be implement before the building is open to the public. A dedication ceremony is being planned during the summer. The Topaz committee will send letters giving more information.



## TWO LARGE GRANTS ADD FUNDS TO MUSEUM COFFER *Jane Beckwith*

The regional office of American Express Company and its Philanthropic Program awarded \$5000 to the Topaz Restoration/Museum project in January. After speaking with Phil Evans, division vice president of American Express, at the JACL convention in Salt Lake City in August, I wrote a proposal to be reviewed by a local committee. The Topaz Museum received word of acceptance just before Christmas.

Earlier in the summer, Ted Nagata and Tom and Chiyo Morita all from Salt Lake City and I, met with the Utah Centennial Commission as part of their grant process. At that meeting we reviewed the plans for the Topaz Museum and how the work was currently moving along. We also made a case for the Topaz Museum becoming a Centennial project.

We were also successful with this grant and later received \$5000.

Utah's Centennial projects are currently underway throughout the state and will climax during the 1996 celebration. The JACL convention opened other possibilities for grants which we will pursue as soon as school is out.

## **EDITORIAL** Joe Mori, Editor

It is time to report to the former Topaz residents and interested friends and relatives of what has transpired since we last took pen in hand to publish the first issue of the New Topaz Times.

I, personally, want to thank Jane Beckwith and other Topaz Museum board members and any other people who were involved in the effort of producing the "tape". Also thanks to Dave Tatsuno for the use of part of his historical camp movie and to others whom I do not know for allowing copies of their tapes to be made to complete the tape. I understand there were some unforeseen production and logistics problems which caused the long delay and I apologize for having misled you with the expectation of delivery of the tape within eight weeks. My projection for availability of the tape was overly optimistic.

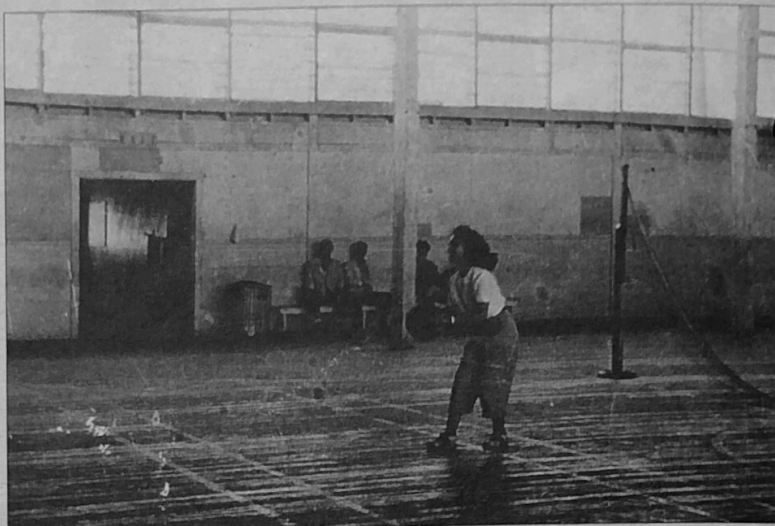
The "Barrack" is now on its permanent foundation. There is still much to be done and funding is an ongoing need. I know that we all give moral support to the Topaz Museum Board and have a hard time getting more involved and giving of ourselves but consider how you can get more involved and help the Board reach its goal of having a Topaz Museum in Delta. All the help you can give in time and money is appreciated.

Topaz is the only Camp that I know of that is having a Museum established close to its site. The LA JANM Family Expo had obtained a barrack from Heart Mountain Camp and in short order had it dismantled, shipped and erected in time for the Expo across from the Museum in Little Tokyo.



I heard nothing but good things about our effort in producing the first issue of the "New Topaz Times". Such accolade makes all our effort worthwhile. There may be some negatives which we have not heard about but regardless it means that all you people at least looked through the issue and found most of it to your liking. Let us hear from you. And thank you.

I understand that the Topaz group had a successful participation at the JANM Family Expo on November 11, 1994 weekend. Good show.



## **With apologies to Dave Tatsuno and George Nomura** Jane Beckwith

When Dave Tatsuno offered to donate footage from the historic film he took at Topaz during internment, I was thrilled because I remembered how excited I was when I saw it about ten years ago.

Every time I have seen the film since then, I have enjoyed looking at every detail. Seeing the barracks in color is remarkable, but the actual filming, the technical merit of the film, is also wonderful. The meticulous planning of the footage shows that Dave must have taken shots that were very meaningful to him. His allowing us to see those tender moments are always moving. The dust storm, the snow, the isolation of the one skater, all tell an immediate story that few can recreate any other way.

I know that Dave in his modest way, wanted the film to be edited to delete footage of his family. But I just couldn't do it. I know that the pictures of his daughter and his brother seem too personal to him, but they too tell important stories of the hardships of internment and the will to conduct a "normal" life with dignity and grace. For any discomfort caused to Dave by my leaving those episodes in, I sincerely apologize.

I also must apologize to George Nomura for failing to give him credit for footage he took of the Pilgrimage to Topaz in 1993 which was included on the tape.

Dave is currently working on another video, an amalgamation of reunions and the Pilgrimage which will be available through the Topaz Museum. Once again Dave shows his dedication to preserving the history of former Topaz internees. Thanks so much, Dave, for your continued support. I hope those who received the tape enjoyed it as much as I have. (By the way, there are only 85 left, if anyone would still like one.)

**MAILING LIST** If you know of anyone who is not receiving this newsletter, please let us know so that we can expand our mailing list to include all internees and friends. Photographs are always interesting to view, if you have any we can reproduce, please send them. They will be returned. Incidentally, each issue of the Topaz Times is very expensive to produce, print and mail. Any donation you can give to offset these costs would be appreciated.



IN MEMORY

**MR. & MRS.  
TAKASHI Y. MURAMOTO**

The families of  
Mr. & Mrs Tosh Muramoto  
Mr. & Mrs. Miyoko Muramoto Smith  
John Muramoto

Perhaps  
a 100  
or more  
plaques  
such as  
this  
sample  
will be  
placed  
on the  
Donor  
Board  
at the  
Museum

**TOPAZ MEMORIAL DONOR PLAQUES  
TO BE ESTABLISHED** Ted Nagata

The opportunity to memorialize parents or loved ones and to recognize friends and internees who have given generously in support of the Topaz Museum, will begin with this issue of the Topaz Times. Donors who have contributed \$500 or more will be recognized on a permanent donor board to be placed at the Museum. Further recognition will be afforded by publishing donor names on the back page of each issue of the Topaz Times. A list of 30 donors already qualify.

The Memorial plaques will be mounted on a large oak frame. Each plaque will measure approximately 2 x 3.5". Memorial verbiage might be as depicted in the sample above. The exact wording of the message will be left up to the donor.

Two families may donate together (\$250 each) for inclusion on a single plaque. Messages will be limited to 25 words per plaque. For those who already qualify for the plaque, please send us your plaque memorial message. Unless we hear from you, the donor's name will be placed on the plaque. For those who would like to be included on the plaque, additional donations may be made to bring your total up to the \$500 level. A form for donors is included below.

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Please accept this donation in support of the Topaz Museum project.

- ☐ General    ☐ For inclusion on the Topaz Memorial Plaque (\$500)  
☐ For the Topaz Times    ☐ For a copy of Dave Tatsuno's tape (\$100)

Send to Topaz Museum, PO Box 550, Delta UT 84624

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**FINANCIAL CONDITION OF MUSEUM  
IMPROVES EACH WEEK** Jane Beckwith

According to the Great Basin Museum treasurer, volunteer Sharron Lamb, the Topaz Museum currently has \$45,295.49 in the bank.

Work is almost completed on the restoration of the recreation hall which will require a bit more of that capital, but so far the Topaz Museum has raised \$64,730.45 toward the restoration and construction of a permanent Museum.

This money has come from individual donors plus two \$5000 grants. Over 300 people have donated, some several times, toward the \$150,000 goal set by the Topaz Committee in 1993. Donations

from individuals was the first phase of the fund raising efforts. Of course that will continue, but the Committee hopes to be successful with more grants and corporate donations.

Anyone who would be willing to extend help to the committee in these areas would be welcome. Before Frank Ogawa died, he had begun to seek corporate help for the Museum. He and his work are greatly missed. The greatest incentive for donations, so far, has been Dave Tatsuno's footage that he took at camp. Many people donated \$100 just to receive a copy of the video tape. One person donated \$101, perhaps just to make sure he was in the right category. We know from that and from all the notes we received reminding us to send the tape that donors were all looking forward to receiving the incentive gift.

There are still approximately 85 more copies of the tape for those of you who haven't yet donated \$100. We have received several donations from Japan, one for \$1000. None of the Japanese donating were former internees, but just interested in the history. To all of you, no matter the size of your donation, the widow's mite or otherwise, they are all largess to the Museum. A new fundraising project establishing a Topaz Memorial Donor Board is described at left.

**HISTORIC MEETING  
TAKES PLACE IN DELTA** Jane Beckwith

The Smithsonian Institution's SITE's program is bringing a special display to Delta in May and June of 1995. Delta is one of 25 towns in America hosting this trial run.

Strangely enough the topic for the display is World War II war posters. The title of the accompanying programs is "Produce for Victory: Posters on the American Home Front, 1941-1945."

As part of the Great Basin Museum's year-long focus on the display, an historic panel on Topaz brought former internees and local Deltans together on the same program, for the first time in Delta.

On one of the snowiest nights of the year, Ted Nagata and Rick Okabe braved blizzard conditions driving 7 hours to participate on the panel. With them were three Deltans: Homer Petersen, the realtor who sold the Topaz land to the government early in 1942; Beth Brown, who as a young high school graduate worked as a secretary at Topaz; and Roger Walker, who returned from the Navy as a pilot in the Pacific and worked to help close the camp.

A fairly large crowd, considering the weather, watched a segment from Dave Tatsuno's movie before Homer Petersen gave his recollection of dealing with the government. He talked about having



Topaz Museum committee meeting at the Utah Historical Society board room. Back l-r: Ted Nagata, Don Hartley, Chuck Kubokawa, Glen Swalberg, Grace Oshita, Jane Beckwith, Charlotte Morrison

to travel 60 miles to Eureka just to use the telephone, so that the likelihood of someone listening on a party line would be reduced.

He quoted facts and figures about the water rights before saying that in his opinion, incarcerating Japanese Americans was unnecessary. Beth Brown told about how difficult it was for her to work at the camp, at first. She said the resentment she felt from her co-workers who were interned caused her to shed tears until one Japanese American woman talked with the other secretaries. Later



All photographs except the barrack photos were donated by Tokuye Sato, shown here enjoying a root beer float in the Canteen with wife Sally on his right.

Mrs. Brown said she became good friends with many of her fellow secretaries.

Roger Walker's story included history about his father's land becoming eminent domain. As a Navy flyer he was disturbed that the freedoms he was fighting for were being violated in his own country, and, what's more, on what used to be his family's land. His work at camp included being a fireman and later dismantling the barracks. He and his brother stripped the pine off the frames or else made the buildings ready to be moved. He raised a family in what was a remodeled half of a barrack. Ted Nagata recalled his experiences as a young boy in camp and Rick Okabe told of his parents incarceration.

After questions from the audience that ranged along the typical reactions, the meeting ended. Rick and Ted made it home after a four-hour drive through the same blizzard conditions. The time between Delta and Salt Lake City is usually two hours.

TOPAZ TIMES Spring 1995

Joe Mori, editor; Ted Nagata, design & layout

Contributors: Joe Mori, Jane Beckwith, Ted Nagata, Charlotte Morrison

Photo credits: Topaz barrack - Jane Beckwith

All others: Tokuye Sato Printed in Delta, Utah

## TOPAZ MUSEUM

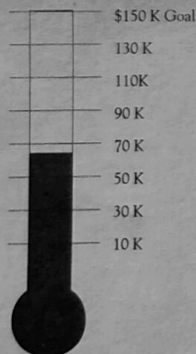


### Great Basin Museum

TOPAZ TIMES  
BOX 550 DELTA, UT 84624

#### Topaz Museum Board

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Charlotte Morrison, Delta  
Dave Tatsuno, San Jose  
Ted Nagata, Salt Lake City  
Grace Oshita, Salt Lake City  
Leonard Arrington, Salt Lake City  
Chuck Kubokawa, Palo Alto  
Rick Okabe, Salt Lake City



## From the Great Basin Museum

Charlotte Morrison

The long awaited restoration project of the Topaz recreation hall is nearing completion. Many delays have prolonged the project from contractor delays, the search for certain materials and the weather. We will be happy to have the building done and ready for visitors this spring and summer. Coming in May is a travelling Smithsonian SITES exhibit. It is being shown in only 5 states and in only 5 towns in each of those states. The exhibit is a series of WWII posters, funded by the Utah Humanities Council and Rockefeller Foundation. We are very honored to host this exhibit which will run from May 8th to the end of June.

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Delta, UT 84624

### Topaz Memorial Plaque Donors

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