

TOPAZ TIMES THE CITY

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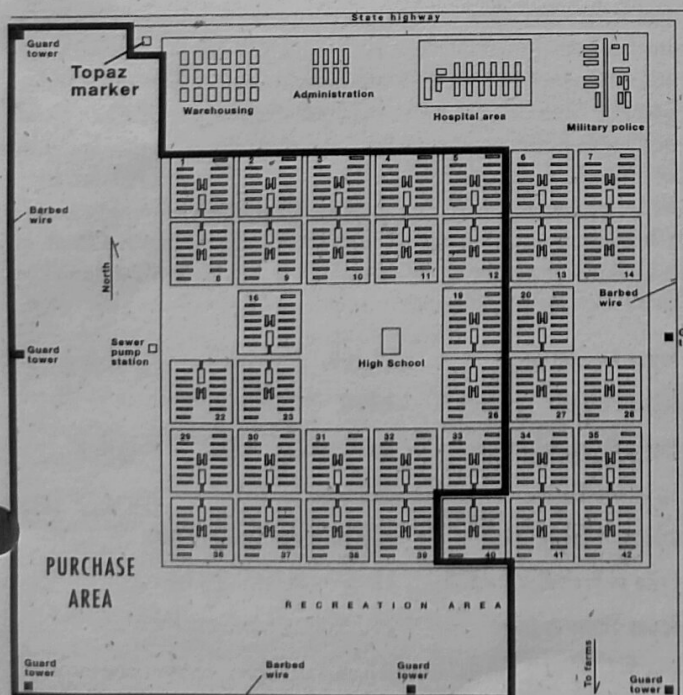
March 1998

Published by the Topaz Museum Board

Topaz Museum purchases Topaz Site

Until 1993, the Topaz site looked much as it did in 1946. True, greasewood had over-run the property, punching up through the desert floor almost any place it chose, but the historic nature of the site was mostly intact. Now at least 400 acres have been purchased by the Topaz Museum, helping to ensure that the site will not be destroyed. • In the 1950s two changes altered the site. The military police area was made into a loading dock for mines located to the west in the Drum Mountains and a small frame house was constructed on block 42. For years the camp remained in that condition. • In 1976, the Bicentennial Year, the Japanese American Citizen League in Salt Lake City bought an acre of land to place a commemorative marker at the site, just outside of the camp proper in the northwest corner. The property was inside the barbed wire of the original site, but outside the area that had been the residential section. • The frame house that had been built on block 42 was occupied sporadically until 1991 when the most recent tenant had had enough and moved to parts unknown. Deltans had always marveled that anyone would want to live in such a desolate place with the ever-present infestation of mosquitoes and scorpions, constant wind, lack of services, and isolation -- all serving as constant reminders of the looming Great-Basin desert and the dramatic history of the site. • Still there had always been rumors in town that "someone" wanted to turn Topaz into a sub-division, but who could take that seriously? The county couldn't provide fire

Topaz site purchase area, dark outline, approximately 415 acres



protection. The telephone company charged hundreds of dollars to run lines and the site was hardly inviting. However in 1993, one family placed a modular home on the mess hall foundation of block 28, and that paved the way for more development. Now three trailers and three homes dot the southeast corner of the Topaz site. • Because there was no guarantee that the development would stop, the Topaz Museum

Board recognized the desperate need to purchase as much of the site as possible. Of the 640 acre section, about 500 acres had been used as



Day of Remembrance speaker, Bill Lann Lee, associate Stuart Ishimaru visit Topaz site with Jane Beckwith and television / newspaper reporters.

part of the residential area, including 100 acres for the warehouses, administration buildings, hospital and the military police area. The land purchased includes the western half of the camp, approximately blocks 1 through 4, south to the last row of blocks. (See map) That portion of the site has retained its historic flavor with the exception of the vegetation and ant hills. The Museum board will study a land use policy for the site so it will continue to teach visitors about the history of internment.

Last Topaz Reunion '98 San Jose, May 29-31, 1998 Chuck Kubokawa

The Topaz '98 Reunion Committee, cordially invites you to attend the "Last Topaz Reunion" on May 29 - 31, 1998 at the Doubletree Hotel in San Jose, California in the heart of Silicon Valley. The Committee, so far has spent a year in planning this reunion for your enjoyment, pleasure, and education relating to the wartime internment. We warmly welcome and look forward to seeing many new first time attendees as well as those who have attended the previous reunions. We have pared down the reunion cost to the lowest possible, aware that service prices increased since the Burlingame Reunion six years ago. We will do everything possible to make your attendance enjoyable, worthwhile and memorable. • You can enjoy the opening night Friday Night Buffet Mixer with entertainment and dancing to DJ Dan Itatani, Saturday Dinner Dance Banquet and Program with George Yoshida's Band and ending with the Sunday Sayonara Buffet Brunch. • To make this reunion unique we have invited our Nikkei friends from across our borders north and south to share their untold internment experiences with us. Five

outstanding Nikkei speakers are featured for the Saturday afternoon panel on "The Lasting Effects of the Internment." You too can share your experiences and insights as we gather together to relate memorable stories with friends and new acquaintances. Other related activities include: • Continuous video showings of recent documentaries on Tanforan, Topaz, 442nd, Previous Reunions, Return to Topaz, Return to the West Coast post Topaz, etc. Camp Art Show of paintings and crafts by famous camp artists. • Computer search of individual camp records, and a workshop on retrieving data for completing genealogical material for a family tree, by The Japanese American National Museum, of Los Angeles. • Take a personal tour to visit Japantown, Japanese Gardens, sculpture by Ruth Ozawa, depicting the San Jose Nikkei History, Kelly Historical Park, Museums, etc. • We encourage you to invite your non-Topaz friends and family members so they too can interact and enjoy all the programmed activities and the many local points of interests in San Jose. After this reunion experience, "You will know the way to San Jose". • This reunion is providing you the opportunity to renew or make new friendships to spark your future activities, but can only be worthwhile if you join us, making the time and effort we have spent planning this reunion a success. The bottom line is: help us we need your presence and support! • The Topaz Reunion '98 Chair: Chuck Kubokawa, Committee: Tomi Takakuwa Gytoku, Fumi Manabe Hayashi, Mary Mori Hiromoto, Bill Hirose, Yone Kato Ito, Mimi Kawashima - Iwatsu, Helen Yamanashi Kato, Mas Kawaguchi, Jamo Momii, Joe Mori, Sam Nakaso, Moses Oshima, Daisy Uyeda - Satoda, Alice Mori Shibata, Min Shinoda, Anah Yamanashi Sugiyama, Paul Takata, and Bob Utsumi. For information & registration forms contact Tomi Gytoku, 826-38th Avenue, San Francisco CA 94121.

Arrington's Book on Topaz Reprinted *Ted Nagata*

Through a Civil Liberties Public Education Fund (CLPEF) grant written by board member Rick Okabe, the Topaz Museum has reprinted Dr. Leonard Arrington's history of Topaz, "The Price of Prejudice." It was the first scholarly report on Topaz. As part of the \$25,000 CLPEF grant provisions, the Museum is currently distributing the book free of charge to schools and libraries throughout Utah and the San Francisco Bay area for educational purposes. • In 1962 Professor Arrington was selected to give the prestigious honors lecture at Utah State University in Logan, Utah where he taught economics. His topic was Topaz and his research included general history about internment and specific information about Topaz. For many years, this was the only source

book about internment where information such as population figures, costs of internment, relocation demographics, assembly centers, budgets, dates, hospital, schools, employment and other data could be found. •

Bill Lann Lee discusses civil rights with Utah's governor, Michael Leavitt.



"When my classes began studying Topaz in 1982 this was about the only information we could find to tell us background and history, except for primary sources," said Jane Beckwith, journalism teacher at Delta High and now president of the Topaz Museum board. "I remember the strong reactions my students had to the shocking information about internment, including Gen. John DeWitt's racially charged statements. I made copies of Prof. Arrington's booklet, and it was required reading for the class. We are indebted to him for his research and scholarship." • The booklet was long out of print and available only by making Xerox copies of the original. Dr. Arrington graciously allowed the Board to make a second printing to raise money for the Museum. He is a member of the Topaz Museum Board. The books used for fundraising were paid for by the Museum. • Ted Nagata, graphic artist and Museum board member, designed the reprint. He was able to round up over a hundred photographs and utilized most of them. (the original manuscript contained no photographs) An addendum by Jane Beckwith recounted the years after internment and progress of the Topaz Museum. Rick Okabe began the distribution of books to libraries and schools in February 1998: For individuals interested -- books are available for a \$25 donation including shipping. Make checks to the Topaz Museum, c/o PO 241, Delta, UT 84624.

Renewed Fundraising for Topaz Museum/Site *Ted Nagata*

With the recent purchase of the Topaz campsite, a renewed fundraising campaign will be needed to pay for the purchase. The window of opportunity for the site purchase came about quickly and with housing development already taking place at the Topaz site, the Board felt it had to act immediately. A volunteer professional land group headed by Mr. Aaron Peskin assisted us in the transaction. Without their expertise and personal help, it would not have been possible to make the purchase. The Board feels the relatively small amount paid for the campsite (approx \$50 per acre) will be exceeded and would like to use it as a springboard for additional fundraising for the museum building. We now have the opportunity to leave the Topaz campsite protected from development, with all its historic significance and allow younger generations and visitors to experience first hand what their forebears endured. Much can be done with the site, some possibilities are: establishing it first as a State park and later as a National park, this would preserve it into perpetuity. Small groups can visit the museum, walk and experience the site, and search for artifacts. The latter would not be possible if residential development had continued. We have talked of building or restoring a barrack on the site for a hands-on internment experience. Please consider the future of the site possibilities and Topaz Museum in your giving by filling out the enclosed card. Thank you.

Topaz Benefactor	\$2,500
Topaz Patron	1,000
Topaz Memorial Plaque	500+ plaque & newsletter listing
Buy Your Block	250 multiple buyers
Friend of Topaz	100 includes Tatsuno tape
Price of Prejudice book	25 ea includes shipping
Topaz Times sponsor	25 help pay for the newsletter

Buy Your Block - will list several names per block, not just one buyer

The following stories were taken from *Deseret News* coverage of Utah's Day of Remembrance program. They are reprinted with the newspaper's permission.

Visit marks anniversary of wartime order

By Jason Swensen, *Deseret News* staff writer

TOPAZ INTERNMENT CAMP, Millard County—It's tough to fathom a California-born civil rights lawyer kneeling in an alkaline-rich wasteland near Delta and discovering his history. But as Stuart Ishimaru wandered the stark remains of Utah's Topaz Internment Camp, perhaps he caught a distant, desert echo of his parent's childhood home. • A shard of soda bottle, a child's marble and a rusted Spam key were half-buried reminders found Thursday on soil



Topaz Museum barracks visited by Mr. Lee, acting assistant chief of Civil Rights, U.S. Attorney General's office.

that once housed Topaz barracks block 29, where Ishimaru's mother spent her World War II years. • Ishimaru joined a convoy of Topaz visitors Thursday including U.S. civil rights chief Bill Lann Lee. The excursion marked Utah's first "Day of Remembrance," designed to mark the 56th anniversary of Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidential order that prompted the imprisonment of over 110,000 people of Japanese descent—most of them American citizens. • Ishimaru's parents, Kenzo Ishimaru and Toshiko Suzuki, were Bay Area teenagers when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. • Government and military leaders, overwhelmed by wartime hysteria, hastily decided folks of Japanese ancestry needed to be "relocated" inland to foil sabotage. • Weeks later, Kenzo and Toshiko were herded onto a train and "relocated" at Topaz, a Millard County barracks community of 8,000 that became Utah's fifth-largest city during the war years. • Thursday was Stuart Ishimaru's first trip to Topaz. "But growing up, I would frequently hear stories of camp," Ishimaru said, recalling how he had enjoyed thumbing through his dad's Topaz High School yearbook. • Yes, his parents' lives were "disconnected" almost overnight, Ishimaru admits, but they collected themselves and spliced a life in Topaz—dubbed "the jewel of the desert" by their detainers. "This is a treat to be here today," said Ishimaru, recognizing the irony of his current post as a civil rights attorney with the Department of Justice. "It was a sad time in our history" that stands as a witness to compromised human rights, he added. • Salt Lake resident and Topaz survivor Ted Nagata remembers being a child in his Berkeley, Calif., living room listening to the news of the Pearl Harbor bombing. "Suddenly we were cast as the enemy," said Nagata, whose American-born parents were interrogated by the FBI, placed under surveillance and ordered to observe a strict curfew. • Eventually, Nagata and his family were ordered to Topaz. As their train cut across the desert, they were told to pull the shades on their windows "so people wouldn't know who was in there," he said. • Armed guards initially patrolled Topaz, even shooting and killing one internee who drifted too close to the barbed-wire border, recalled Nagata. The guards disappeared after a few

months when camp administrators realized their charges had nowhere to go. • "And we made the best of a bad situation," said Nagata, who spoke at Thursday evening's "Day of Remembrance" program. Nagata's father helped build a small golf course, and Topaz High's sports teams soon earned a reputation for producing the area's best athletes. When the war ended, Topaz quickly became a ghost town. "We left camp with nothing and began rebuilding our lives," Nagata said.

Lee fears lessons of camp will be lost

By Jason Swensen, *Deseret News* staff writer

The first days of World War II evoked the best and worst in Americans, said U.S. civil rights chief Bill Lann Lee. The country rallied against its Axis enemies but turned on many of its own by imprisoning more than 110,000 Japanese-Americans. "It seems beyond comprehension, yet it happened," said Lee, who keynoted Utah's "Day of Remembrance" program Thursday at Cottonwood High School. The day's events marked the 56th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, which led to the wartime incarceration of Americans of Japanese ancestry. • Lee recalled visiting the remains of Topaz Internment Camp earlier in the day. He was awed by its starkness. "It was as close to the middle of nowhere that I have ever been," said the longtime human-rights lawyer. He recently was appointed the U.S. assistant attorney general for civil rights. • Topaz's reluctant residents were locked up because they happened to look like the enemy, "yet, like other Americans, they made the best of a bad situation," Lee said. • Lee added the internment experience rankles his attorney instincts because due process was ignored and loyalty questioned simply because of race. "Without vigilance, it can happen again," said Lee, recalling his recent horror when gulf war calls were made to round up Americans of Arab descent. • The son of Chinese



Bill Lann Lee, keynote speaker at Utah's Day of Remembrance program. Crowd was estimated at 750. Yas Tokita, DOR chair at left.

immigrants, Lee said his family was dealt the blows of prejudice when his father returned from World War II service and was denied an apartment: "During the war, he felt like an American, when he returned he was denigrated," he said. Amid the horrors of discrimination,

America enjoys a tradition of protecting human rights, Lee said. The abolishment of slavery, the civil rights movement, the redressment of Japanese-American internees and the Persons with Disabilities Act are rich examples. "We must all invest in each others' civil rights," Lee said. • Lee has been the subject of recent local news after Utah's Sen. Orrin Hatch opposed his civil-rights nomination because of affirmative action views. Thursday, Lee told the *Deseret News* that he's enjoyed a good relationship with Hatch in the past. "We both recognize the importance of enforcing civil rights," said Lee, adding he intends to speak with the senator about civil-rights issues.

Financial Report

Ted Nagata, treasurer as of 7/97

Beginning MMKT account 7/2/97	\$64,528.86
Income 7/2/97 to 2/5/98	
Donors, book sales, interest	10,022.16
CLPEF book grant	25,000.00
Expenditures	-51,094.56
Checkbook balance	1,962.03

Total Museum funds, 2/5/98 \$50,418.49

Major expenditures

Airfares, board meeting	358
Exhibit design fee, Consortium West	3,500
Newsletter	1,601
Postage	712
Site purchase, approx 415 ac	20,442
Monthly rent/utilities, \$150 per mo.	800
Prejudice book reprinting, 4,000	24,014

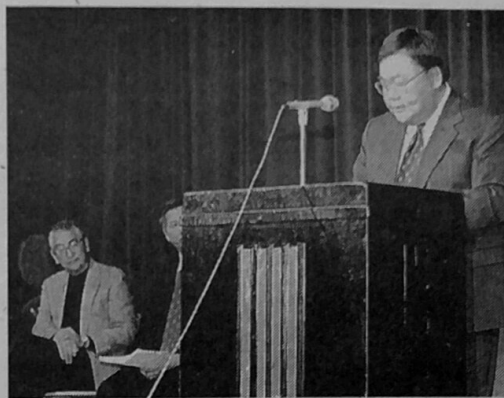
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Bill Lann Lee visits

Delta and Topaz Jane Beckwith

Seldom do national figures request a visit to the Topaz site, so when Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, asked to visit Topaz the excitement was contagious even though his visit was slated for 8 am on February 19. • Because of the controversy surrounding his appointment, headed by Utah's senior senator, Orrin Hatch, the statewide media covered the event to the point of saturation, almost all of Utah's TV stations visited the Topaz exhibit in Delta. All the newspapers were represented. • Mr. Lee arrived on time at the Great Basin Museum and was greeted by Mayor Dale Roper, who said that Topaz was an important part of Delta's history. Several other city councilmen were in attendance as were the Superintendent of Millard School District,



Salt Lake County Commissioner Randy Horiuchi introduces Mr. Lee. Ted Nagata is next to Mr. Lee.

Kenneth Topham; county commissioners John Henrie and Tony Dearden. Mr. Dearden wore his "Return to Topaz 1993" baseball cap, remembering when he drove, former internees to their blocks in 1993. Others in attendance

were the county attorney, LeRay Jackson and townspeople and students. • Tim Johnson, senior music Sterling Scholar candidate for Delta High, played portions of a symphony he is writing for Topaz entitled, "Symphony of Memories." The piece will recount the camp experience in music. Part of his inspiration has come from poetry written by former internees, Yoshiko Uchida's mother and Toyo Suyemoto Kawakami. • The Topaz Museum Board presented Mr. Lee and his aide Stuart Ishimaru with shadow boxes displaying artifacts found at Topaz, framed with wood taken from a barrack that was being torn down. They were made by Karen Shurtz, a Delta resident. • After the reception in the Great Basin Museum, the group toured the restored recreation hall and then drove to the Topaz site. Stuart Ishimaru's parents had lived at Topaz as teen-agers, his mother, Toshiko Suzuki Ishimaru lived in block 29 and his father, Kenzo, in block 13. After seeing the marker placed by the Salt Lake City JACL in 1976, the group drove to block 29 to walk the area. People found remnants from internees, a marble, an eraser, bottles and a skeleton key which they gave to Mr. Ishimaru. He said that he grew up hearing stories of the camp, but this was the first time to visit the site. He said, "This is a treat to be here, but it is ironic that now I work as a civil rights attorney with the Department of Justice."



Topaz Museum

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Topaz Museum Memorial Plaque

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