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. • Deltas 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 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 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 warm heartedly 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 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 Takakawa Gyotoku, Fumi Manabe Hayashi, Mary Mori Hironoto, Bill Hirose, Yone Kato Ito, Mimi Kawashima - Iwatsu, Helen Yamanashi Kato, Mas Kawaguchi, Jamo Momii, Joe Mori, Sam Nakas, Moses Oshima, Daisy Uyeda - Satoda, Alice Mori Shibata, Min Shimoda, Anah Yamanashi Sugiyama, Paul Takata, and Bob Utsumi. For information & registration forms contact Tomi Gyotoku, 826-38th Avenue, San Francisco CA 94121.

“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 book, 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.

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.

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 Tatsumo tape
Price of Prejudice book 25 ea includes shipping
Topaz Times sponsors 25 help pay for the newsletter

Buy Your Block - will list several names per block, not just one buyer
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 ranks 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 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 10,022.16
Donors, book sales, interest 25,000.00
CLPEF book grant -51,094.56
Expenditures 1,962.03
Checkbook balance 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

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 state-wide 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,

Topaz Museum
BOX 241 DELTA, UT 84524
TEL 435 864-2098 801 363-7935

Topaz Museum Memorial Plaque
Lily Akiko • American Express Philanthropy Program • Jane Beckwith • Frank A. Beckwith • Children of Topaz
Reunion • Cervin Dowle • Takako & Tatsuki Endo • Teru Fujikawa • Kyoko Tsuchiya
Hull • Bette Hamachi • Arthur Tad & Fumi Hayashi • Machiko Hayashi • William
Horne Family • Lillian Tashima & Saburo Hur • Lillian Y. Horie Reunion Class • Ann Y.
Hori • Topaz Class • Ken & Junichi Kanai • Sekikawas, Joe & Nan Inoue • Edward &
Yukiko Ishida • Elroy Jeffery Family • Kinchis & Mako Kasa • Mitsugu Kasa • Joe
Kawakami • Toyo S. Kawakami • Kenzo Kawanishi • Edward & Tama Koda • Soichi
Kojima • Glenn & Yoshiko Komakau • Millard County Historical Society • Millard County
Centennial Corp. • Sadako, Bruce Mars • Toshiko Minamoto • Tamemitsu & Chiyo Mori
• Toshio Mori • Tom Monta • Naru Cony/Mr. Atsumi JACL • Ted & Yoko Nagata
• James G. & Yoko Nagata • Terrell & Leah Nagata • Nakamura Family • Hank Okuyama
• Rick & Karen Okabe • Mine Okabe • Topaz Reunion '92 • Return to Topaz '93
Shoji Onuma • Ben & Grace Onuma • C.N. Pace • Eleanor Gruud, Emil Sekirak
Georgi Genasko Shimamoto • Mary Harue Shimamoto • Gibber Smith, Larry McKown
Anna E. Sundwall • Michio Suzuki Family • Yuki & Nobuchika Takayama • Gihers
& Sabi Takeshi • Dr. Shin Takeda • Alice & David Tatsuno • Donito Tott • Topaz Cruise
1996 • Dr. Hamosh & Lamu Tsumori • Utah State Centennial • Robert & Yoko Usmami
• Man Yamashita & Family • Motonici & Doretha Yamasaki • Toshiko Sugimoto Yoshida
• Sandra & Joe Okabe • Mike Ross Inscription • Kiyohi Tashima • Junse & Ito
Hitoshi • Thomas & Mary Ann Hibiho

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 townspersons 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 Togyo Suemoto 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 barracks 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 senior citizens, his father, Toshiro 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 internment, 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."