



# TOPAZ TIMES THE CITY

Volume 04

Number One

February 2005

Published by the Topaz Museum Board



*Men who served in the 442nd and from Delta's American Legion Post officiated at the 2003 Topaz Pilgrimage. The theme for that day was to honor soldiers as well as remember Topaz.*

## Pilgrimage scheduled for June 11

Make plans now to return to Delta for the sixtieth anniversary of the closing of Topaz on June 11 Pilgrimage.

Bring your children and grand children. Now is the time to join as an intergenerational community.

Topaz closed on October 31, 1945. Come and commemorate that closing with the theme "Never Forget."

Show your family the block where you lived. Although the barracks have been moved, there are still foundations, gardens, walkways, front porch steps and artifacts reminding people of the city that housed more than 8300 people.

There will be tours of the site, a commemorative program, tours of the barracks that were moved from the site and converted into houses and garages.

Renew your friendships with other internees.

Besides tours there will be displays, picnic lunch, programs and entertainment for a full day dedicated to remembering Topaz.

Call Toru Saito in Berkeley at 510-526-8432 for bus reservations. For the last two Pilgrimages Toru has helped boost the

attendance of people from the Bay Area providing transportation and an enjoyable trip for his passengers.

Motels in the area will accept reservations by calling 435-864-3882 for Best Western, 435-864-4533 for Budget, 435-864-2041 for Diamond D, or 435-863-2741 Rancher Motel and Café.

Delta invites you all to come to visit, learn and remember the history of Topaz.

### Topaz Museum Board taps two new members

Two people who have had a long interest in Topaz have been voted onto the Topaz Museum Board.

Scott Bassett, who grew up on a farm with a Topaz building on it, will be a welcome addition to the board. He now works at the Millard Co. School District Office as an administrator, but was the Delta North Elementary School principal for many years.

Lance Atkinson is also a teacher in Delta, but for a while he lived in Taiwan and is fluent in Chinese. He was one of the students who began studying Topaz in 1983 in Jane Beckwith's class. His interest in Topaz was also part of his family's history since his grandfather, Mel Roper, taught arts and crafts at the camp.

Topaz Pilgrimage June 11, 2005  
Call Toru Saito for bus reservations  
510-526-8432



Albert Mizuhara was 12 years old in camp. He returned to teach students about his experience.

## Former internee meets with 250 students from across the county

Fourth grade Topaz History Day, organized by Susan Stefanoff, was held at the Delta South Elementary School for over 250 students from three schools.

Former internee Albert Mizuhara came from San Mateo to tell the students about his incarceration in Topaz. Students were fascinated by his stories.

Jane Beckwith gave a presentation on tolerance and civil rights; Scott Bassett talked about his research on Topaz. Lance Atkinson did a chalk barrack activity using biographies of former internees. Board member Steve Koga came from Ogden for the program.

After lunch the children boarded buses to the camp site, to see what the camp looked like, hear about eating food at the mess halls, and see the foundations of the latrines and laundry rooms.

The last stop for the day was at the Great Basin Museum where the children saw artifacts and walked into the restored recreation hall.

Susan said, "The students and their teachers learned a lot about Topaz and the people who lived there. They are looking forward to this year's History Day in April."

## Looking for an old friend

We received a note from Gordon and Katherine Baugh from Washington asking for information about a friend, Harold Nanto, "who was taken away from the small town of Oriva, near Gillette, Wyoming." The letter went on to say that the boy was the son of Sam Nanto who left the town in 1941.

They would appreciate any information about the family. If you know what happened to this family please write to Topaz Museum, P.O. Box 241, Delta, UT 84624.

## Plans are underway for a museum complex in Delta

By the time you read this, the Topaz Museum Board should have purchased land on Delta's Main Street where the Topaz Museum and the Great Basin Museum will be constructed.

Prime land "kitty korner" from the Delta City Park will be an impressive location for a museum complex and city center.

Delta's Mayor, Gayle Bunker, has worked tirelessly toward getting the property, involving the city council and encouraging the Millard County Commission to support the effort.

Both the Great Basin Museum and the Topaz Museum Board have met with city fathers and the county commission to recommend the project to them. Each governmental agency has supported the plans.

The Topaz Museum Board hopes to unveil plans for the building at the Pilgrimage on June 11. But if the plan is not ready then, everyone will be able to see the property that will soon house the museum complex.

## Board meets with museum advisors

The Topaz Museum Board members have been meeting with museum consultants in an effort to ensure that the Topaz Museum building, displays and programs will be top of the line.

Dan Burke and Jerrie Clark from the Office of Museum Services took a tour of the site last summer. It was a first visit for both of them. They were impressed with all the artifacts left at the site, as well as the large amount of acreage owned by the Board.

They suggested that we talk with Don Hague, the past director of the Utah Museum of Natural History on the U of U campus. In November he came to Delta and spent two days looking at the site, seeing the barracks that were moved into town once the camp was closed, and discussing the possibilities for the Topaz Museum.

His suggestions and expertise confirmed the direction the Topaz Museum Board is taking regarding fund raising and programs for the new museum.

Topaz Board member Steve Koga attended a state-wide museum conference and was able to hear more information regarding planning.

**The Topaz Museum is a non-profit organization:  
To donate send a check to:**

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



Two signs like this one were found at the Antelope RV park in Delta. They were used in the horseshoe pit.

## Topaz signs found at RV park

by Jane Beckwith

In September I had a call from a couple staying at an RV park in Delta. The woman, Betty Lou Leonard from Lebanon, Oregon, identified herself as a retired school teacher and felt that what she had found that morning while walking her dog should be in a museum, not out in the open.

Full of curiosity, I went to her RV, and she walked with me to the horseshoe pit. There, being used as a backstop for the horseshoe pit, were two signs that had once been warning signs hung on the barbed wire at Topaz.

It said, "Abraham Relocation Camp." Both of the signs were wired to posts at the end of the horseshoe pit.

One of the signs was in fairly good shape. The other was illegible, but still could be of use in the Museum.

Mrs. Leonard was astute in believing that the signs were of value.

This is the type of sign that Chiura Obata featured as the focus for his 1943 painting entitled, "Keep-Away Sign at Topaz."

I called the owner of the RV park, Vince Lopez, and he gave me permission to remove the artifacts for safekeeping to my garage until we have a building to house them.

*This is a special invitation to the Tachiki family and James Satake and his family to return to Delta on June 11 for the Topaz Pilgrimage. James and his family lived in Delta during the war, hauling coal and working for local farmers. Both families have fascinating stories.*

## NPS study calls for comments

In response to the National Park Service's Theme Study which was published for review last fall, the Topaz Museum Board collected support from various elected officials to refute the NPS's recommendation that Topaz NOT become an Historic Landmark.

The conclusion roused support from Senators Bob Bennett and Orrin Hatch, Congressmen Jim Matheson and Chris Cannon, and Governor Olene Walker. Local governments including Delta mayor, Gayle Bunker, and the Millard County Commission, also supported the Topaz Museum's position that there is a lot of history at the Topaz site that should not be overlooked.

Despite the fact that the Topaz Museum Board owns 522 acres of the site, the NPS recommendation was for the camp to acquire more land. Oddly, the Topaz Board owns more property at the site than many of the other camps which received the recommendation to become a Landmark.

The final report should be released for public view in February. If the NPS has changed its view, the Topaz Museum Board will still have to make a formal application for Landmark status.

For a satellite photo of Topaz go to [www.terraservert.microsoft.com](http://www.terraservert.microsoft.com) and search for "Topaz." Of course the photo doesn't reveal the myriad artifacts left at camp, the gardens, pathways, doorsteps, personal items such as combs and toys, but it does reveal the fact that the camp has not been farmed or destroyed in a major way.

Jane Beckwith, Topaz Museum Board, said, "I am always surprised when people say there is nothing left at Topaz. All you have to do is walk around the site for a few minutes, and you will see that even though the barracks have been moved, so much has been left. If you walk by the schools, you may find pencils and erasers. If you go to Block 5 there are intricate gardens. Each block is like a mini community."

## Topaz Reunion held in Burlingame

Stuart Ishimaru was the featured speaker at the Topaz Reunion held in Burlingame in October. It was good meeting friends. Although fewer people attended than at the last reunion held in San Francisco, still there were interesting stories and new faces, making for an enjoyable day.

Three Board members represented the Topaz Museum Board, Hisashi "Bill" Sugaya, from San Francisco, Susan Stefanoff and Jane Beckwith from Delta.

Susan announced that there will be a Pilgrimage in Delta again this summer. The date will be June 11, 2005.

Thank you to those who planned the reunion.

## Artwork on Topaz to be displayed in Salt Lake City

Josef Ostraff and three other artists, two photographers and a cinematographer, will display an installation about Topaz at the Rio Grande Art Gallery in Salt Lake City from March 18 to April 29.

The opening of the show will be on March 18 from 6-8 p.m. and the artists' reception will be on April 15 from 6-8 p.m. The title of the exhibit is "Topaz: Re-opening an American Internment Camp."

Ostraff lived near Kitsap Peninsula in Washington state. While going to work he noticed an abandoned nursery which he later found out had been owned by Nikkei who were incarcerated during WWII. Later, when he was living in Utah, he read an article in a newspaper about Topaz and began visiting the site.

"It was the desolation and the sound of gravel under my feet I remembered most." From his visits at the site, his art evolved. He said, "The camp is not re-opened, it is my heart that is opened."

## Topaz Museum Board joins with Utah Valley State College's public history program

For over a year, the Topaz Museum Board and history professors from UVSC have worked together to form a partnership.

UVSC has wanted to begin a public history program to train their students in designing, curating and running museums. They will utilize the Delta area for their students to do internships gathering oral histories, archiving materials and planning public programs.

Last year Chervin Lyon, a history teacher, brought students to Delta to interview residents about their experiences during World War II, to visit the Topaz site, and to get a feeling of what it is like gathering history from primary sources.

Now after further consultation and planning, the two groups are moving toward a more formal plan to integrate their programs.

Look for both students and professors to come to the Pilgrimage on June 11.



Scouts from Northern Utah volunteers to help preserve the Topaz site for an Eagle Scout project. The signs urge visitors to respect the historic property.

## Boy Scouts erect signs at Topaz site

Brian Namba and other Scout leaders from northern Utah brought nine Boy Scouts from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to Delta last summer. They came to help one of the boys finish his Eagle Scout project.

The Topaz Museum board provided four signs explaining to visitors that Topaz is a historic site to be respected.

The boys, ranging in ages from 12-15 years old, attached the signs to poles, dug holes with a posthole digger and then cemented the signs into the ground.

While they were working Clair Ostlund Peterson, her husband John, and her brother happened to visit the camp. Clair's parents had taught at the camp, so she talked with the boys about what she remembered. She told them about the Iwaki family who took care of them while their parents were teaching. The couple thanked the boys for the work they were doing to preserve the camp.

The young men have plans to do more projects at the site.

*Plan a family reunion for the Topaz Pilgrimage. Activities for the whole family. Bentos. Music. Tours. Displays of artwork and artifacts. Learn about Topaz.*

*June 11, 2005 at 10:00 a.m.  
Delta, Utah*

## JANM honors camp teachers in LA

Thirty-two teachers from Topaz were honored on Feb. 5 at the gala dinner sponsored by the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles.

Although more Topaz teachers could have been recognized, the 32 represented a wide-range of educators at camp. Some were part of the art school, and some in the regular school system. Each had a story of how they came to become teachers at Topaz.

Those honored included Ella Black, who lived in Delta; Elouise Sundquist Carlton, a junior high civics instructor; Sara Crosbie Conway, algebra teacher; Joseph R. Goodman, "a man of principles and discipline"; Jessie Haroun, sixth-grade teacher; Ed Harris, high school science teacher; George Hibi and his wife Hisako, art teachers;

Norman Hirose, chem teacher; Lillian Yamauchi Hori, kept a diary for her third grade class which later inspired the book "Children of Topaz"; Sayuri Ishida Iwamoto, English instructor; John Izumi, "best math teacher" according to his students;

Tomio Katsura, science instructor; Kojiro Francis Kawaguchi, "urged us to go to college" said his student; Barbara Loomis, music instructor; Robert Maggiora, seventh-grade math; Betty H. James Mathews, civics instructor; Mary "Mac" McMillian, returned from Japan during the war to teach in Topaz; Laura Merrill, came out of retirement at age 65 to be a librarian at Topaz; Joe Mori, math teacher;

Teruko Mary Nagura, science teacher; Chirua Obata, founder of the art school; Rose K. Watanabe Oshima, math instructor; M. Palecek, "encouraged us to study"; Wanda Robertson, elementary principal; Melvin Roper, saved much of his students' artwork; Eleanor Gerard Sekerak, "a dedicated teacher, friend and believer";

Muriel Matzkin Shapp, high school science instructor; Dave Tatsuno, English teacher; Mary S. Uchiyama, still a teacher to this day; and Motoichi Yanagi, math and science teacher.

## Music dedicated to Topaz now available

Paul Cardall, a pianist from Salt Lake City, is a sensitive and thoughtful composer who has written a song entitled "Topaz" with two variations.

Susan Stefanoff, a Topaz Board member, produced the CD. Cardall has agreed to donate all the proceeds from the sale of the CD to the Topaz Museum building fund.

The endnotes of the CD state that the music encourages people to remember all the Americans of Japanese ancestry incarcerated in Topaz and the other nine internment camps. The copy continues, "This was one of the worst violations of civil rights in the history of the United States."

If you would like to buy a copy of the CD, go to Paul Cardall's website at [www.paulcardall.com](http://www.paulcardall.com) or wait until June 11 at the Topaz Pilgrimage in Delta.

## Rep. William Thomas sponsors camp preservation bill

If you have been reading Nikkei newspapers, you may have seen the article about federal legislation sponsored by the Japanese American National Heritage Coalition (JANHC) that will authorize funding for the preservation of internment sites.

Gerald Yamada, whose wife Nancy was interned in Topaz, has been coordinating efforts to introduce the legislation into the House of Representatives by William Thomas (CA-22), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee.

Yamada said, "This is significant legislation because the preservation of the sites is so important in educating the American public and future generations about the unconstitutional treatment inflicted upon Japanese Americans or any minority based on their ethnicity."

The bill is H.R. 360 and is supported by a full-range of camp committees and others.

## Possible projects between UVSC and the Topaz Museum

### 1. Build a dynamic museum in Delta

Collect and display artifacts

Curate artifacts

Design programs to bring people to the museum (tourist and local)

Host community events

Build a coalition with other museums and heritage tourism

Art shows

Upgrade website

Involve Delta High students

Move recreation hall to museum area

### 2. Preserve the site

Purchase the remaining property

Conduct tours

Publish a driving/audio tour

Build a visitors' center

Place signs at the camp

Archaeology work

Move barracks buildings back to the site

Provide programs at the site

### 3. Document barracks that were moved from the site

### 4. Record oral/video interviews

People who worked at the camp

Former internees and their children

### 5. Provide programs

Teachers's workshops

Student/children activities

Pilgrimages

Local history programs



*The Maxfield children from Delta hosted a birthday party for their neighbors, including the Tachiki children during WWII. The Tachikis lived in private housing in Delta and operated a farm instead of being interned.*

## Stories have Delta connections

New information about the history surrounding Topaz surfaces whenever people who were living in Delta during that time talk about their memories.

Last week the Delta Library book group read "When the Emperor Was Divine," by Julie Otsuka. That prompted Lois Maxfield to bring a photo of a neighborhood birthday celebration which included her children and four Tachiki children, Bill, Norman, Leslie and Roy.

Prior to internment the Tachiki family had moved from Gilroy to Utah and were hired by Max Thomas, who had farms in the Delta area. Later the family moved to Spanish Fork, Utah.

At the same book group, Diane Mecham, said that her husband was delivered by a doctor from Topaz because the local doctor was not available.

James Satake attended the Topaz reunion in Burlingame and told about living in a house in Delta during camp. His family had relocated to Wendover, Nevada and then to Delta. His family hauled coal from the Price area and did farmwork in Delta.



*About 20 teachers learned about the history of Topaz in a workshop. Three former internees returned to Topaz to tell their experiences, Jean Kariya, Ed Narahara and Grace Oshita.*

## Teachers' workshop sponsored by State Office

A State Office of Education grant provided the funding for a teachers' workshop for 20 teachers last summer.

Three former internees, Jean Kariya, Ed Narahara and Grace Oshita came to the workshop to tell the teachers their memories of Topaz. This was Jean's first time back to Topaz since she left during the war. She was in high school when she first went to camp. Both her father and Grace Oshita's had been taken from the Bay Area prior to evacuation.

Both of them had been in the same graduating class, but didn't know each other during camp. Their experiences were completely different. Grace stayed in Utah after camp and has been living in Salt Lake City and telling her wartime experiences to students for years.

Ed Narahara was in Miss Yamauchi's third grade class that wrote the Topaz Diary. His stories recounted his life as an interned child, melting metal in the laundry boiler, getting lost and being found by soldiers, and swimming at the pig farm.

He and his son came to the workshop together and then made a trip to the pig farm to see how the swimming hole had changed.

After the workshop he returned to the canal he had played in, almost by instinct. Once there he was disappointed to find that the wooden structure that carried the irrigation water over the drain had been replaced by a cement culvert. But as with other former internees who return to camp, his memories tumbled out.

Professor Bill Daynes from BYU gave a presentation about the political ramifications of camp. They also watched the video "Conscience and the Constitution."

The workshop was video taped by Murray Tripplett. Each of the teachers were given a library of books to use as reference books in their classes. The teachers traveled to the Topaz site with Ed and Jean walking the blocks where they lived.

The teachers had favorable comments about the workshop.



Six students from Delta High represented the Topaz Museum while talking with Rep. Richard Wheeler at the State Capitol.

## Students speak up for Topaz Museum

Students from Delta High School were invited to represent the Topaz Museum at the State Legislature in January. Six students studied up on Topaz and then lobbied on behalf of all museums in the state for an on-going appropriation of \$1 million to be divided between the museums in Utah.

The students learned the delicate procedures of calling out representatives from their chambers, presenting their requests and listening to the debates taking place.

This is the fifth year that students from Delta High have been invited. Usually the museums display artifacts or bring attention to their museum. This year the state capitol building is being renovated so there was no area available.

Two of the students, Amy Ipson and Kathryn Draper, helped with the Pilgrimage held in 2003.

## Book about Topaz to be part of Seattle's City Reads program

Julie Otsuka's book "When the Emperor was Divine" was chosen to be the next book that all of Seattle will read. For several years, librarians and book lovers have chosen books to recommend to the entire city population. This year Seattle and Topeka, Kansas will read about a family who came to Topaz.

Otsuka was born in Palo Alto where her issei father was an aerospace engineer. She graduated from Yale and then enrolled in the MFA program at the University of Indiana studying art.

When her professional plans changed, she moved to New York City and began writing while sitting in her favorite café, a novel that came from her grandmother's experience during WWII.

She visited Delta High in 2002 because she was reading the first chapter of her book at the Sundance Film Festival.



Topaz Museum Board members Rick Okabe, Jane Beckwith, Steve Koga and Susan Stefanoff met with Cong. Mike Honda and SL County Mayor Peter Caroon at the Day of Remembrance in Salt Lake.

## SLC Nikkei hope to preserve J-town

JACL chapters in Utah focused their attention on the plight of Salt Lake City's Japan town on Feb. 19 Remembrance Day.

Congressman Mike Honda was the featured speaker. People enjoyed bento lunches at the Japanese Church of Christ, then walked across the street to the Buddhist Temple's auditorium to hear the program.

Salt Lake's J-town was demolished in 1960 by the construction of the Salt Palace, now expansion of that facility threatens the landscape once again. Prior to the Salt Palace, J-town was a thriving area with 93 businesses run by Nikkei in 1949.

Judge Raymond Uno is spearheading the effort to preserve what is left of the community.

## Interned Scouts to be honored in San Jose

One of the untold stories of the internment camps is that of the role played by Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

The impact of these Scout troops cannot be overestimated. 2005 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the closing of the camps. It is an appropriate time to celebrate the Scouts of the internment camps. The reunion will be held on June 9, 2005 at McEnery Center in San Jose, California beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Proceeds will be used to sponsor the Japanese-American Scouts who attend the program as well as San Jose Scouting.

For more information contact Ron Schoenmehl at 408-280-5088 or by e-mail at RonS@sccc-scouting.org.

*Come to the  
Pilgrimage June 11*

Plan to attend the **Topaz Pilgrimage** on  
June 11, 2005 10:00 a.m.  
in Delta, Utah  
Commemorate the 60th anniversary of  
the closing of Topaz  
**Never Forget!**

*Currently the Topaz Museum is sharing space with the Great Basin Museum. Please make a donation so that we can construct a building worthy of the Topaz history it will contain. We are a non-profit organization, so your donations are tax deductible. Send a check to:*

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