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Ms. Susan Uyemura, CEO

(714) 278-4483

suyemura@jalivinglegacy.org

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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58th California State Nisei VFW Reunion

I pick my heroes very carefully. I am not easily swayed to hero worship but when you stand in a room full of men who served our country in times of inequality and injustice, you wonder to yourself, what would I do in their situation. My heroes.

Welcome to the 58th Annual Nisei VFW Reunion held at the Sands Regency Hotel/Casino in Reno, Nevada. Over 100 veterans, spouses, friends and family gathered to honor the California Nisei Posts. In attendance was the VFW Commander-in-Chief, George Lisicki, along with VFW Department Commander Dave Norris and Ladies Auxillary President Marilyn Vernon. Each of the Nisei VFW Posts were represented which included: Post 1629 Monterey – Jim Suzuki, Post 1961 Gardena – Bobby Yoshioka, Post 3670 Kazuo Masuda – Jim Masaki, Post 4140 San Fernando Valley – Frank Tanaka, Post 5869 Hanford – John Randall, Post 8499 Fresno – Donald Wakida, Post 8985 Sacramento – Loren Ishii, Post 9879 San Francisco – Glenn Akagi, Post 9938 – Robert Hayamizu and Post 9970 San Jose – Henry Wadahara.

Friday began with a busy day of buses arriving from Sacramento and Los Angeles as well as visitors coming from all over the west coast including the Hawaiian islands. Everyone was greeted at the registration desk with a packet and directions to the hospitality suite. Snacks, drinks, and puu puus kept everyone fed and happy. After a night of gambling (and most of us donating to Reno's economy) we woke up to an earthquake measuring 4.7 on the Richter scale at 4:30am. Since most of us are native west coasters, the rumbling and shaking didn't do much except give us a unrequested wake-up call. The VFW held their annual meeting and it was business as usual with Commander Robert Hayamizu, Los Angeles Post 9938 volunteering to host the 59th California State Nisei VFW Reunion in La Mirada, California. Hayamizu explained how each of the Southern California Nisei VFW posts would work together to host this event in 2009. Commander Loren Ishii responded with agreeing to host the 60th reunion back in Reno, Nevada. After the meeting the slot tournament began with the President of the Ladies Auxillary, Marilyn Vernon taking first place. Congratulations Marilyn! Saturday concluded with a beautiful banquet dinner and keynote address given by the Honorable Vincent H. Okamoto, Superior Court Judge, Vietnam Veteran, Distinguished Service Cross Recipient and Ranger Hall of Fame. His speech titled, "Old Soldier" touched the hearts of

all the veterans as Judge Okamoto honored them for their military service. His speech earned him a standing ovation. The banquet finished with entertainment provided by Thelma and Clarence Suzuki, Northern California VFW Posts Ukelele groups and hula dancing. Paul Ito sang an impromptu song and the evening ended with everyone headed for the slot machines or the hospitality room.

The three day event concluded on Sunday with the Memorial Day service; silence honored those we remembered as participants in each of the posts. Ken Kudo's rendition of "Go For Broke Tribute" was played for everyone to hear.

We said our farewells; hugs were given to those we hoped to see at the next reunion and we boarded our respective buses home. The 2009 59th California State Nisei VFW Reunion will be held at the Holiday Inn in La Mirada on February 20-21-22, 2009. For more information, please contact Robert M. Wada at robertm@rwadainc.com.

Japanese American Living Legacy is a nonprofit (501c3) organization based out of California State University, Fullerton. All of the board of directors, staff and advisors are volunteers. For more information on Japanese American Living Legacy, please visit their website at www.jalivinglegacy.org or call them at (714) 278-4483.

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