



The real story. Japanese American History told by those who lived it.

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NEWS RELEASE
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Nisei 2009, Come and Gone

What memories does Nisei Week hold for you? If you grew up along with Nisei week your memories consist of hot summer days, crowds and no parking, and watching the parade and dancers until dark. 2009 marks the second time in over 20 years, I have returned to relive my youth. I return with somewhat of a different mission. No longer are my days spent shopping, playing games and eating - it is now filled with a different purpose. To reconnect with my community.

This year, Japanese American Living Legacy along with the Loft Restaurant co-sponsored Ms. Nikki Masuda , Miss Tomodachi in the Nisei Court.

This year, I spent the entire day at Memorial Court at the JACCC plaza with the veterans. Veterans from WWII, Korea, Occupied forces, Vietnam and current soldiers stopped by throughout the day to honor their fallen comrades. Once again, the Japanese American Korean War Veterans hosted a hospitality suite open to all veterans. The Korean War wives made sure the refreshments were available to all of the veterans all day long.

Sunday began at Memorial Court greeting the visiting Nisei Week courts from out of state. Ken Hayashi, Vietnam Veteran along with other veterans presented Seattle, Hawaii and San Francisco courts with engraved dog tags and complimentary educational packets provided by Americans of Japanese Ancestry World War II Memorial Alliance. Each packet contained a CD Rom titled "Echoes of Silence" which contains the names and stories of those Killed in Action in World War II. The DVD tribute was produced by Japanese American Living Legacy and had a short video on each memorial.

Toward the late afternoon, one particular memory will haunt me for a long time. I was sitting next to the court when I noticed an older woman sitting on the steps crying. I watched for a long time as she continued to stare the World War II honor roll. Finally, I got up the nerve to walk over and asked her if she would like to do a floral tribute. She nodded her head yes, and took the flower. Her hand gently touched the "S's" but I did not see which name she touched - as this was her moment, not mine. She bowed at the wall and went back to the steps. After a few moments, she gathered her belongings and came over to where I sat. She graciously said thank you and left. While I was interested in her story, it was her private time with the soldier whose name was on the wall. For me, this lady represented every soldier's family and friend. I decided to do my own floral tribute. Listed on the Korean War Honor Roll

is my mothers cousin. He was killed long before I was ever born but this lady reminded me that it wasn't important I did not know him personally. His sacrifice is our family's loss and he should not be forgotten. I laid the flower on the ground and said a quiet "thank you."

Next came the parade. While most of the crowds were on First and Second Street, we had learned that the shade and more importantly, room to sit was still available on Los Angeles Street. There is where Japanese American Living Legacy set up our banner. In 2008, the Vietnam Veterans marched for the first time as an organized group. In honor of their participation, we had a banner made "Welcome Home." This year, we were proud to display it again as the Vietnam Veterans grew in participants. For the World War II and Korean War Veterans one side of our banner had, "Thank you for your Service." Korean War veterans Francis Yasutake and Tom Tanaka from Hawaii participated in the parade. Medal of Honor recipient, Hiroshi "Hershey" Miyamura and his wife Terri segway the veteran groups So another Nisei Week has come and gone. A lot of new memories to add to the past and a lot to think about the future. JA Living Legacy will be back next year along with our banner. It's a very small way to say thank you to those who served our country. Welcome Home.

Japanese American Living Legacy is a California nonprofit 501.c.3 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 (657) 278-4483.

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