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BY ABBY MULLER

On Saturday, December 3, members of the Bar Association of the District of Columbia (“BADC”) gathered in the Great Hall of the Library of Congress for the association’s 140th Annual Banquet, an event that this year prominently featured the Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center. Among those attending were representatives of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, there in recognition of the Honorable Norman Mineta, who was receiving an award from BADC for his leadership in the creation of the Interpretive Learning Center. In addition to Secretary Mineta and his wife Deni, those attending on behalf of and in association with the foundation were Shirley Ann Higuchi, Bill Collier, David and Kathy Yuille, Ieshia Haynie, Eric Muller and daughter Abby, and Julia Ishiyama. Additionally, two-thirds of Wyoming’s congressional delegation was in attendance; both Mrs. Cynthia Lummis, Wyoming’s member of the House of Representatives, and Senator Mike Enzi and wife Diane were present.

The evening began with a reception. Stepping into the Library’s ornate, marble-walled Great Hall felt like walking onto the set of a lavish movie. A string trio was playing in the background while waiters inconspicuously wove through the tuxedo- and gown-clad guests offering hors d’oeuvres. A white-tableclothed bar to one side served cocktails. Staircases wound upwards to either side of the hall, and in the center an elegantly decorated Christmas tree stretched towards the painted ceilings. The walls were decorated in richly colored murals featuring the names of influential authors and philosophers in gold leaf. As the reception portion of the event came to a close, the United States Marine Corps Brass Quintet played a series of patriotic marches on the upper floor of the Library. The guests began to migrate upwards to where tables were set for them, and soon they had all been seated.

Wyoming Congressional Delegation with the Honorable Norman Mineta. (L-R) Cynthia Lummis, Norman and Deni Mineta, Mike and Diane Enzi.

PHOTOS BY DON TANGULIG

(L-R) Dave and Kathy Yuille, Shirley Ann Higuchi, Representative Cynthia Lummis, Julia Ishiyama, Abby and Eric Muller.
The dinner opened with a call to order by William Atkins, the BADC Foundation President. The US Marine Corps Color Guard marched in to present the colors, halting in front of the main podium while the brass quintet played *The Star-Spangled Banner*. After this dedication, the BADC President, Gregory Smith, made introductory remarks, calling on Reverend Peter Vaghi for the invocation. The first course, a delicious bisque, was served, and the first speaker was introduced. During this introduction, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation’s own Shirley Higuchi (who has held numerous leadership positions within the DC legal community over the last 25 years) was recognized for her work in planning the event.

An award for Young Lawyer of the Year was presented to Amy Yeung, and the entree course was served. Then came a highlight of the evening: the east-coast premiere of Academy-Award-winning director Steven Okazaki’s “All We Could Carry,” the ILC’s introductory film. It beautifully tells the story of those who were confined at Heart Mountain in their own words. During the screening, the clinking of cutlery gradually gave way to silence, and at the end of the film some of those watching had tears in their eyes.

After the film ended, the program transitioned back to the awards. Shirley Higuchi presented The Honorable Annice M. Wagner Pioneer Award to Secretary Mineta in honor of his leadership of the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation in the creation of the Interpretive Learning Center. Secretary Mineta spoke about his experiences behind barbed wire at Heart Mountain. He concluded his moving story with an all-too-real example of the importance of teaching tools like the ILC. As Secretary of Transportation on September 11, overseeing the grounding of all air traffic, Secretary Mineta made it a priority to avoid racial profiling even as the frightened public began to call for anti-Arab and anti-Muslim measures.

After Secretary Mineta’s moving speech, the remaining awards were presented: Kathryn Ruemmler, the White House Counsel, was named Lawyer of the Year, and the Honorable Merrick B. Garland, a judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit who is widely rumored to be on President Obama’s Supreme Court shortlist, was recognized as Judicial Honoree. After concluding remarks, the group adjourned for dessert and dancing in the lobby area.

HMWF Chair Shirley Higuchi said of the event, “It was such a thrill to be able to share the ILC and Steven Okazaki’s ‘All We Could Carry’ with such an incredible group including Wyoming’s congressional delegation and the leading figures of the bar in the District of Columbia. We hope that this will build enthusiasm and support for the Foundation.”
I remember the spring of 1942. I had just turned 9 years old and the armed United States military came to our neighborhood in San Francisco. The guards escorted our family of four—my father, mother, brother and myself and all others of Japanese ethnicity in the area—out of our homes and placed us into buses. My grandparents and other relatives were also on the buses. No one described our destination, but we found ourselves at the Los Angeles County fairgrounds in Pomona, Calif., where we were placed in temporary housing that consisted of one room per family. We were fortunate in that our room was a regular office-type room. Others were forced to sleep in horse stalls with mattresses stuffed with hay.

After a few months in Pomona, we were placed onto a train guarded by the U.S. military. We were told to pull down the shades and never look out the windows for the duration of the trip. We had no idea where we were headed or how long we would be traveling.

I remember riding the train and it stopping at a siding in the wilderness after several days. It was Aug. 25, 1942, and we had arrived at our final destination. The weather was very windy and very cold for late summer. As we got off the train, we were surrounded by even more guards and herded onto the open back of an Army truck. The trucks made their way across dusty roads, through a barbed wire gate and into a makeshift city made up of many tar-papered barracks. We were at Heart Mountain, Wyoming, a barren, windy, cold and desolate place located between Cody and Powell.

Our family was assigned to Block 14, Barrack 22, Unit C (I call it “Cell C”). It was a stark room measuring 20 by 20 feet square. There were four single military beds as well as a pot-bellied stove. The room was not insulated and the wind whistled through the cracks in the siding. This room was our home for the next several years—we were an entire family living in one room with no dividing walls or partitions.

That winter the temperature sank to a record minus 28 degrees F. We were still in California clothing and not prepared for this extreme climate. We did our best to keep warm using coal in the stove, but it was difficult keeping up with the very cold wind. We had to go outside to use the community bathroom. In summer, the temperature climbed to 96 degrees and staying cool was challenging.

Life in the camp settled down to very dull routine—schools for the young, camp work for some and socializing for others. The food was terribly boring and unappetizing. Sometimes we had fried rice for several consecutive meals.

Life was routine until grandfather became seriously ill with cancer, was not treated properly in camp and suffered a very difficult passing. I remember that the local undertakers in Cody would not take his remains for processing, or accept others deceased in camp. So a mortuary in Montana came and took his body to Billings for preparations. The body was brought back to camp for the funeral service in a barrack and then returned to Montana for cremation. The final remains were returned to our family at the camp and were ultimately taken to the family plot in San Francisco.

After a few years at Heart Mountain, there came a time when the camp administration allowed some internees to sign out and visit Cody and Powell for a day. This was on a non-escorted, trust basis with the internees promising to return to camp by nightfall.

I can remember my father taking us to Cody for a short visit to get away from camp and try to find some decent food. I vividly remember walking down Sheridan Avenue and seeing signs posted on the outside windows of restaurants and stores with the words “No Japs” and “Japs not welcome.” The locals would not talk to us or even look at us. Dad said, “This is not a good place. People here do not like us.” We returned to camp dejected about how the local residents treated us.

We finally departed from Heart Mountain on June 28, 1945. We tried resettling in Salt Lake City, but eventually returned to San Francisco. Our belongings left behind in San Francisco had not been well stored or protected and we suffered losses to our possessions.

I graduated from high school, went to UC Berkeley and then UCLA graduate school, majoring in aeronautical engineering and business. I was hired by Boeing and enjoyed a very happy and rewarding 42-year career working to help launch communications satellites and the GPS constellation into
orbit. Along the way, I was married, had two daughters and two grandkids.

For over 60 years since leaving Heart Mountain, I wanted nothing to do with it or the Cody and Powell area. After our bitter experience, especially how the people of Wyoming treated us, I had no interest in returning to such a hostile environment.

In the summer of 2009, I had an opportunity to return to Heart Mountain. A tour bus stopped at Cody on the way to Yellowstone. I called ahead and asked for someone to escort a few of us former internees around what remained of the camp. When we arrived at Heart Mountain, there was a petite lady waiting for us on the access road to the site. As I walked up to her, she smiled and said, “Are you Sam? Welcome. My name is LaDonna Zall. I am so glad you came. Let me show you around.”

We saw the remaining brick and mortar of the high school and hospital. We walked along the remains of barbed wire fences. LaDonna asked, “What was your block and barrack number?” She had prearranged permission with the farmer to walk on the farm property and showed me exactly where my barrack once stood.

Recently, in August 2011, I returned to Heart Mountain for the grand opening of the Interpretive Learning Center. The opening ceremonies were very impressive with key speakers who included Tom Brokaw, Senator Alan Simpson, Senator Daniel Inouye and Congressman Norm Mineta. Who I really wanted to meet, however, were the people of Cody and Powell. I wanted to see if there had been a change in their attitudes toward us.

I was surprised. We received treatment not given to every visitor. As we walked down Sheridan Avenue, all along the street, signs in storefronts said, “Welcome Japanese Americans.” People welcomed us, talked with us and made us feel that we belonged. I arranged for a Cody Trolley tour. The owner greeted us and showed us the highlights of Cody, and dropped us off anywhere we wanted. At the Cody Dam, the staff greeted us with a warm welcome, offered our bus driver a choice parking position close to the entrance and gave us rental headsets for touring the dam at no cost. In Powell, we visited the Homesteaders Museum and the cemetery. At the museum, the curator greeted us, showed us the museum’s highlights, and as a special treat, dug into her files and found a photo from 1942 of internees getting off the train, being forced under guard into the army trucks and being taken to barracks. What a memorable gesture, revealing evidence of the start of our internment at Heart Mountain. This was the first time I saw such a photo. At the cemetery, the caretaker greeted us with a warm welcome, offered us select parking for our bus, provided cold refreshing water and a clean toilet to freshen up. He showed us the gravesites of three internees who were buried after the graveyard at camp was eliminated. The gravesites were located at the premium front location of the cemetery and were immaculately maintained with well-groomed landscaping. The evening before we departed Cody for the long trip home, again I was greeted with a warm welcome at the Cody Albertson’s grocery store. I was looking for lunch supplies. I described our past meals coming to Cody as boring sandwiches and said we wanted something different. She said she had just the perfect picnic. She suggested their tasty fried chicken accompanied by delicious macaroni salad and cole slaw. She prepared the food fresh, chilled it overnight and put it in a picnic container packed with dry ice to keep it all fresh. Everything was ready when our bus came by in the morning to pick it up for the trip home. What a departure treat and friendly attitude.

The point of all this is that the people of Cody and Powell and surrounding areas are dramatically different compared to the 1940’s. This change made my lifetime memories of Heart Mountain and Wyoming turn around completely and end on a very positive note. I look forward to experiencing the positive welcomes and friendly attitudes of the great residents of Wyoming in future visits.

For more information or to provide feedback, please contact Sam Mihara at SMIHARA@socal.rr.com.
Message from the Chair: Shirley Ann Higuchi

The successful grand opening of the Interpretive Learning Center (ILC) surpassed everyone’s expectations and as such, 2011 will be a year that the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation (HMWF) community will never forget. In the months to follow – the thank you letters, congratulatory emails, telephone calls and personal meetings have continued to express immense gratitude for making the dreams of many come true.

I am still astounded that we were able to execute a star-studded, logistically complex, three day, multi-venue event, largely through volunteer efforts. As most of you know, to accommodate the over 1400 attendees over that weekend, we had to BUILD our own temporary venue to host the pilgrimage and celebratory dinners. Our leadership stepped up to the plate and made this project their full time jobs for months leading up to the opening.

We successfully galvanized the local community, largely due to the efforts of our effective area manager Christy Fleming, who gathered a level of volunteer commitment that I have never personally experienced in my 30 years in Washington, DC.

Our dedicated board and staff did not miss a beat after the August event. There were media calls, interviews and press coverage as well as continued visits to the ILC from patrons who had heard about the historical grand opening. The ILC served as the meeting space for the board meeting this past November for the first time, where we welcomed our newest board members, Allyson Nakamoto from the Japanese American National Museum and Claudia Wade Director of the Park County Travel Council.

We also honored Peggy and Mike Fuson for their dedication and countless volunteer hours as Treasurer and volunteer financial consultant respectively.

Following the first day of our November board meeting, the HMWF board hosted a “thank you” reception at the ILC for the local volunteers that inspired us with their support leading up to, during and following the grand opening. Capping this important year, HMWF board members, supporters, and the Wyoming delegation gathered at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC to honor Secretary Norman Mineta for his support in building the ILC hosted by the Bar Association of the District of Columbia (BADC). The plaque presented to Norm by BADC read in part:

“Our deep gratitude to Secretary Norman Y. Mineta for his leadership of the successful effort to create the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation’s Interpretive Learning Center at the site where he and thousands of other Japanese Americans were wrongfully imprisoned by their own country during WWII. Your selfless dedication to public service and commitment to upholding the rights of all Americans will help ensure that such an injustice never happens again.”

Also highlighting that evening was the East Coast premiere of Steven Okazaki’s film, “All We Could Carry,”

As we begin the New Year, the HMWF looks forward to continued success in 2012. Steve Leger, our Executive Director works closely with the Executive Committee, in developing and planning the February 2012 board meeting to be held in Salt Lake City, UT. At this meeting the Board will continue to work on the Foundation’s next milestone – ensuring its financial sustainability with a keen eye towards maintaining the spirit of the ILC mission and vision.

The Board will continue to refine its plans for establishing an endowment, increasing our membership from the broadest base possible and establishing ourselves as leaders in the areas of social justice, education and research. Collaboration will be a key to our success—I hope to strengthen our ties with other organizations that share our resolve for protecting basic civil and constitutional rights of those that experience unfair discrimination. Our vision is to collaborate with others on what the best practices should be for our communities, when defending these rights, during stressful and challenging times.

In defense of this resolve and for our continued success in telling the stories of the Issei and Nisei generations – we must use this time to reach out to our younger generations, both from the Japanese American community and from Wyoming. We must challenge our younger generations to build on this legacy, this foundation – the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation.

I look forward to celebrating our future successes with all of you and wish you a Happy New Year!

HONORARY ADVISORS
Norman Y. Mineta
Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation
Alan K. Simpson
U.S. Senator (ret)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Shirley Ann Higuchi - Chair
Douglas W. Nelson - Vice-Chair
Claudia Wade - Treasurer
Rick Ewig - Secretary
Takashi Hoshizaki - Dr. Pete Simpson
Alan Kumamoto - Shigeru Yabu
Prof. Eric Muller - Kathleen Saito Yuille
Allyson Nakamoto - LaDonna Zall

STAFF
Steve Leger - Executive Director
Christy Fleming - Deputy Executive Director
Kim Barhaug - Volunteer Coordinator
Myth #4 Japanese and Japanese Americans living on the West Coast were removed from their homes and incarcerated in camps to protect them from vigilante violence.

The searchlights on the guard towers surrounding the War Relocation Authority’s 10 “relocation centers” faced inward, not outward.

Myth #5 The culpability for the harsh conditions of Japanese Americans’ confinement lay with the federal government.

While the decision to force Japanese Americans away from the West Coast was a federal one, the actual circumstances of the long-term confinement of Japanese Americans were as much a product of state and local pressures as federal ones. The War Relocation Authority, the civilian agency that took custody of the removed population from the military in the spring of 1942, hoped that Japanese and Japanese Americans might be welcomed in open-gated communities in the country’s interior where they could do work helpful to the war effort. The political leaders of the Mountain states – Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Arizona, and others – flatly refused such an idea and said that their states would host the removed population only if they were kept under guard behind barbed wire and forced back out at the war’s end. Townspeople near the various camps generally wanted the newly arrived Japanese and Japanese Americans to be kept in the camps except to work as low-wage laborers in the local economy.

Do You Know? Questions From Our Archives

As we collect information and artifacts, several questions and objects leave us stumped. We would love your help solving some of the mysteries. If you can answer the following questions, please email Christy at flemingchristy@heartmountain.org or LaDonna at lzall@wir.net.

Last newsletter we asked about a rock with “Jan. 1944, 335 MPEGDET” written on it. We received 2 emails. Both thought the rock may have been related to the 335th Military Police Escort Group Detachment. In that edition, we also asked about barrack mailboxes. What did they look like and where were they located. We are still interested in learning more about these items.

Question: In July of 1977, this badge was found with a handful of similar red badges, under a house in Powell that was being renovated. It was recently donated to the ILC by Tynell Soladay and Bonnie Jensen. There are a few white badges in the archives and in the exhibit, but no red. What did the different colors mean and were there more than just the two colors?
The winter has a firm hold on Wyoming and the Interpretive Learning Center with blowing snow and frigid temperatures. It is cold here, but our hearts are greatly warmed by the generous financial support of hundreds of individuals, families, foundations and business that made possible the opening of the Heart Mountain Interpretive Learning Center. Visitors still brave the cold to visit the ILC and our hearts are also warmed by reactions to their visits like, “This exhibit is beautifully done. My hope is that we take to heart these lessons from our history and never allow this to be done to our fellow citizens again.” Weekly we have school groups coming to the ILC to learn about our history, to be inspired by the people who persevered here, and to learn more about tolerance and fairness to others.

As HMWF Board member Pete Simpson says “the timeliness of the Heart Mountain story and its relevance to circumstances in our day calls out for long term support. If one child can be taught the harm caused by intolerance and dehumanization of other people, the Center’s work will be justified; if every child who visits the center becomes aware, the world tomorrow will have cause to hope.”

We are grateful for the support of our many generous donors who make it possible for the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation to continue our important work. In the words of Pete Simpson “The lessons brought alive in the Interpretive Learning Center at Heart Mountain are the lessons for this century carried over from the last. To revive those lessons and maintain them far into the future is more than an undertaking. It is a calling - one we are honor bound to heed.”

From The Executive Director: Stevan Leger
The HMWF board meeting will be in Salt Lake City, Utah, February 17th and 18th. Board members are grateful to be able to attend the luncheon hosted by the Congressional Gold Medal Committee at the Little America Ballroom in Salt Lake City, Utah, on February 18, 2012. During the luncheon the World War II veterans who were members of the 100th Infantry Battalion, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) will be honored. They are the recipients of the Congressional Gold Medal which Congress has commissioned as its highest expression of national appreciation for distinguished achievements and contributions. Only 141 Congressional Gold Medals have been awarded by Congress since 1776.

This event is expected to be one of the last large gatherings of Japanese Americans and friends in Utah. The committee has promoted and received extensive national and local publicity for the 100th/442nd/MIS receiving the Congressional Gold Medal. They intend to perpetuate the legacy left to us by these brave veterans for future generations.

An exhibit will be on display at 11:00 am with lunch at 12:00. A special speaker is being planned and will be announced very soon. Replicas of the Congressional Gold Medal will be given to those honored veterans in attendance. Medals will also be presented to families of veterans who are deceased.

Since August, Heart Mountain staff has been busy presenting several programs to schools and organizations both on-site and off. With fourteen school groups and nine organizations, a total of 700 people have participated in these programs and faced the history of internment during WWII.

One of the most memorable programs to date was a collaborative effort with Colleen Whalen’s Facing History Class. Colleen has been teaching Wyoming Facing History classes for several years at the Wyoming Indian School in Ethete, Wyoming. The community night class involves 9th through 12th grade students in the study of culture and group interaction. They study case histories of past injustice and hope to inspire students to be “upstanders”, never allowing social injustice to happen again. This last semester, students took the class as an elective credit and studied the history of the internment of over 110,000 Japanese and Japanese Americans during World War II. Colleen stated that, “The kids were struck with the similarities of the relocation of their ancestors and the Japanese Americans. They noticed the strength of the parents and grandparents to hold the families together, making a bleak place seem like home while trying to protect the children from feeling the tragedy of their situation.”

On November 4, 2011, to complete the semester’s studies, the class toured the facilities and presented a short program. The program began when students sang “The Flag Song” in Arapaho. In their culture, this song, like “The Star-Spangle Banner,” honors the United State flag and those who have fought for our country. A poem written by the students for this occasion was read, saying of the Heart Mountain internees, “They were Americans.” The program concluded with a performance of a grass dance in traditional costume by Gabriel Spoon Hunter.

ILC staff continues to cultivate relationships with schools and organizations. Our hope is to grow the education program by collaborating on programs similar to the one mentioned above, presenting in classrooms, adding special programing for adults, and offering on-line resources for groups that are not able to visit Heart Mountain.

If you are interested in helping grow the educational program, we are looking for internees that are interested in sharing their stories with school groups through letters and phone interviews. If this is something you would like to help with, please contact Christy at flemingchristy@heartmountain.org or Kim at KimB@heartmountain.org.

Peggy Fuson completed her board term and Treasure’s responsibilities at the end of December. HMWF thanks Peggy and her husband Mike for their many hours of work and dedication to the Foundation. They went well beyond the call of duty to make sure that all the HMWF funding was in order to ensure the ILC would be completed on time, and were also instrumental in the organization and registration for the Grand Opening. The Foundation is grateful for their service.
Show Your Support: Giving Opportunities

BUY-A-BRICK: Put your name in history for only $250 per brick. Commemorative bricks are inscribed and placed permanently at the entrance to the ILC. Each brick is 4” x 8” and will be permanently etched. Maximum of 3 lines per brick, 17 characters (alphabet, number, and symbols such as &, -,) per line. All letters will be capitalized. Each line will be centered unless otherwise specified.

DONATIONS: Yes, I want to do my part to help sustain the Interpretive Learning Center at Heart Mountain, Wyoming.

MEMBERSHIP: Thanks to our generous donors, the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation officially opened our Interpretive Learning Center August 20, 2011. We need your help to continue our journey toward assuring a world-class Interpretive Learning Center. We invite you to join our membership at the most generous level with which you feel comfortable.

General Membership Benefits
- Free Admission to the ILC
- Subscription to the newsletter
- Free admission for receptions and previews
- 10% discount on ILC store purchases
- Senior/Student ($30)
  - General Membership benefits for one
- Individual ($53)
  - General Membership benefits for one
- Family/Dual Membership ($60)
  - General Membership benefits for two adults at the same address and children or grandchildren under the age of 18
- Friend ($100)
  - All the benefits of Family/Dual plus:
    - 2 one-time-use guest passes
- Contributing ($250)
  - All the benefits of Family/Dual plus:
    - 5 one-time-use guest passes
- Sustaining ($500)
  - All the benefits of Family/Dual plus:
    - 10 one-time-use guest passes
    - Discount on use of Multi-purpose room (by appointment)

*(Valid for one year and renewable annually)

- Heart Mountain Circle ($1,000-$4,999)
  - All the benefits of Family/Dual plus:
    - 20 one-time use guest passes
    - Recognition on the Annual Giving Wall
    - Discount on use of Multi-purpose room (by appointment)
    - Behind the scenes collections tours by appointment
- Kokoro Kara Circle ($5,000 and above)
  - All the benefits of Heart Mountain Circle plus:
    - Any-time admission for 2 member accompanied guests
    - Free use of Multi-purpose room (by appt)

Name: _______________________________________________________________________________________________________
Name: _______________________________________________________________________________________________________ 
Mr. Mrs. Ms.
Address: __________________________________________________________________________________________ City: __________________ State: ___________ Zip: ___________
Phone: __________________________ Mr. Mrs. Ms.
H W C Email:__________________________________________________________________________________________

Membership contribution: $ ______________ Method of Payment: □ Cash □ Check □ Visa □ Mastercard

# of bricks _________ x $250 : $ ______________
Additional tax deductible gift of: $ ______________
Total contribution: $ ______________

Name: ____________________________________________________________________________________________
CC#: __________________________ _____________ Exp Date: __________
Signature: __________________________________________________________________________________________
This gift is in □ memory □ honor of: __________________________

Mail forms to: Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation, 1539 Road 19, Powell, Wyoming 82435. (307) 754-8000.
Plans are being made for a Heart Mountain Pilgrimage on Friday, August 10 and Saturday, August 11, 2012 with a focus on bringing in the younger generations to help preserve the efforts of the HMWF. Please watch for more information about the event in our next newsletter and on our website at www.heartmountain.org.