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Resolution ACR 32 Gives Impetus to Soko Bukai Lawsuit

BY CAROLINE AOYAGI
Executive Editor

The message from the Japanese American community to the San Francisco YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) has been loud and clear for close to three years now: give back the YWCA building to its rightful owners — the JA community. And now the state of California is echoing that same message.

With a unanimous vote in the Assembly and the Senate, the California legislature on April 29 passed ACR 32, a resolution spearheaded by Assemblymember Mike Honda (D-San Jose) in response to the San Francisco YWCA situation. ACR 32 calls on the state of California to repeal any vestiges of the racist Alien Land Law, enacted in 1913 and repealed in 1956, and to enforce any trusts brokered under that law.

The resolution, also cosponsored by Assemblymembers Carole Migden and Kevin Shelley and Senator John Burton, states in part, "That the Legislature of the State of California declares that it shall be the policy of the state to eradicate any vestiges of the racism of the California Alien Land Law and to take steps to ensure the enforcement of charitable trusts created in response to that law."

For over a year now the Soko Bukai, a group of Japanese

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JA Community Mourns Death of Historian and Activist Michi Weglyn

BY SACHI SEKO
Special to the *Pacific Citizen*

Into the darkness, she has gone, taken by death. I would grieve and understand if she had lived her allotted three score years and 10. But she was only 17 and that is too young to die.

My friend and I, ignoring the incursions of sickness and age, were perpetually 17, someplace in our hearts. Good friends are few and hard to come by. When one dies, there is never a replacement, only an empty space. It is by remembering them that we give them eternal life.

Michi Nishiura Weglyn's great adventure in life came to an end on Sunday, April 25, in New York City. Long before her terminal illness, I said I would not write her eulogy. There are others more deserving and better qualified for that task. They are the activists, academics and achievers who will know the right words and proper phrasing.

Michi and I had a friendship that lasted for over 55 years, stretching from adolescence into widowhood and old age. It all be-

gan at Gila River, perhaps a most unlikely place and yet the most appropriate place.

Gila was the enduring bond between us, two distinctly different women with conflicting likes and dislikes. But on the values that mattered most, we were in per-

material through each other. I had to laugh at my absurdity and knew if she were here, she would laugh even louder and longer. Neither her smile nor the sound of her laughter ever changed. That was part of being 17. I think at that age, your character is carved.

You are either a giver or taker for life. Perhaps that is why high school sweethearts and high school reunions and high school friends remain so cherished.

Michi was a giver from the first candy bar we shared at Gila. She and Walter were philanthropists. There were also many private contributions that never appeared on donor lists. But I think the essence of

Michi's charitable heart is knowing that when she could least afford it, she emptied her purse to help people she barely knew. Her simple explanation: "They were worse off."

Her modesty, and it was not contrived, was her most endearing characteristic. Given her place as an icon in the Japanese American community and as a respected historian/writer in the

See WEGLYN/ page 12



PHOTO: CORKY LEE

Walter Weglyn and Michi Nishiura Weglyn in a 1992 photo.

fect accord. Further, we were friends in the truest sense of mutual affection and esteem. So it is as one of her oldest friends that I am writing this piece.

Yesterday morning, after completing the first draft, I thought I must run this through Michi, automatically reaching for the phone. And then caught myself, remembering she is dead. It is an old habit we had, of processing

General Shinseki Nominated for U.S. Army Chief of Staff

By *Pacific Citizen* Staff
and Associated Press

Four-star general Eric K. Shinseki was recently nominated by President Clinton to be the United States Army chief of staff, the highest position a Japanese American has held in the Army's history.

A decorated 33-year Army veteran and current vice chief of staff since November, Shinseki was considered a front-runner for the top position by military insiders who said that he is well-respected and highly qualified. It now falls to the Senate to ratify the decision.

The appointment comes at a time when Asian Pacific Americans are assuming higher positions of power in government than ever before.

Bob Sakaniwa, JACL's Washington, D.C., representative, expressed his earnest support of this appointment. "It's great for Japanese Americans and Asian Americans in general to see Gen. Shinseki being nominated for the chief of staff because he becomes one more role model for Asian Americans to strive, to aim for the position he's reached."

"I mean, this is one of the most American of American positions, one that Gen. McCarthur and

See SHINSEKI/page 10

New Millenium Focus of PSW/NCWNP/CCDC Tri-District

BY MARTHA NAKAGAWA
Assistant Editor

In keeping with the theme, "Moving into the New Millennium," an inter-generational panel of JACL members discussed the

Northern California/Western Nevada/Pacific District Council, Central California District Council, and the host of the event, the Pacific Southwest District Council.

Panelists included (in alpha-

with the university's Tomo no Kai Japanese cultural club and Jodaiko taiko group; Ken Kamei, a Sansai who works at Asian Americans for Community Involvement in Santa Clara County; and Tomoko Doi, a member of the Gila

'Loud and Proud': MAVIN Gives Voice to the Mixed Race Experience

BY TRACY UBA
Writer/Reporter

Call Matthew Kelley "young" and he's likely to laugh and sigh at the same time. He's heard it he-

That may be an intimidating prospect to some, but to a growing number of others the infant mag is more than just another pretty face — it represents the voices of a

Community Mourns the Passing of Michi Weglyn

(Continued from page 1)

larger academic and intellectual circles, she could have engaged in breast-beating. And I would have loathed her. But she never sought center stage, courteously but firmly declining many invitations to address select groups. Her real pleasure was in working behind the scenes, so to speak, engaging in research.

She was generous in sharing information. Some writers and academics prefer to hoard their material, but she was never that way. One of her silent legacies will be the generous support and encouragement she gave to younger writers and historians. Her valuable time was spent in making suggestions and corrections, writing letters of recommendations and examining proposals. She paid a heavy price for this generosity, jeopardizing her delicate health and sacrificing her own work, possibly two more great books. Why did she permit this invasion? Her sense of history was strong, and she thought it vital our written record continue. After all orations are said and long forgotten, the written word remains, confirming "we were."

Some have wondered why a woman who could have enjoyed a life of leisure and luxury would torment herself by becoming involved in seeking redress for victims of incarceration. Her seminal work, "Years of Infamy," was a vital contribution in our collective case against our government. She proceeded to participate in seeking redress for families of railroad workers and Latin American hostages. To our disgrace, I think her work went largely unacknowledged by ordinary people. It would have been nice if a few more individuals could have written a short note of thanks. The small gestures, not the plaques and awards, meant much to her. Her sense of value never wavered. We cannot say the same of ourselves.

The work closest to her heart went unfinished. She envisioned a reconciliation between the resisters of conscious during World War II and the national JACL. Again, it was her sense of history that cried for correction.

Her case against the government was based on moral integrity. It was the same in her embrace of the resisters issue. Even as she was dying, her body decaying, her fertile mind was working, seeking

dress was impossible, she believed it obtainable. She was right. Michi truly believed that one day the resisters would be an honored part of our history.

I think a most appropriate tribute to the memory of a woman who gave so much to the entire JACommunity, asking nothing of herself, would be the resolution of this issue. This was her unfinished work. Now, who will do it? We need a knight in shining armor before darkness takes us all.

There has been speculation about the length and nature of Michi's illness. It began in the summer of 1998 when she complained of a swelling in her stomach. After her father's death from stomach cancer many years ago, she obtained his medical records, intuitively thinking the same dis-

friendship. We agreed to limit our contact, saying everything that needed to be said had already been said. Previously, we talked once a week, sometimes twice or three times. Using the phone was so convenient, we had rarely written letters to each other for about 20 years. Besides, I wrote lousy letters. For the past four months, I wrote Michi at least once a week. I would not attempt it for anyone else.

When she originally resisted traditional medical intervention, I respected her wishes. We used to josh about how we were going to die. She even prepared an elaborate scenario of being clothed in her favorite teal robe, reclining on the sofa, closing her eyes and entering eternal sleep to the accompaniment of classical music. Then in a phone conversation, she said,

Michi was our bright, shining star. Now that she has fallen, will there ever be another?

ease would eventually claim her. Michi and her late husband, Walter, were advocates of alternative medicine. When the doctors at Sloan Kettering suggested she have exploratory surgery, she declined. One of her fears was the excessive use of anesthetic. She was convinced a previous anesthetic overdose had impaired her memory permanently.

Rejecting traditional medicine, Michi opted for psychic surgery in the Philippines. Although I had grave reservations about the procedure, I made no attempt to deter her. She was the most obstinate person I ever knew. Her tenacity served her well in intellectual pursuits, but often worked against her in practical matters. On her return, she was euphoric, believing she had obtained the perfect medical solution, what I called, "a quick fix."

Grateful for this reprieve, she plunged into several projects demanding attention. Her work was never done. "I have so much to do," she said. However, her euphoria was short-lived. In early December, she complained about uncontrollable diarrhea. Nutrition escaped from her body as though through a sieve. Exhausted and uncomfortable because of her swelling stomach, she was house-

"Death isn't bad. It's getting there that's hell."

I knew it was time to call Art because her discomfort was becoming overwhelming. Art Sasahara is a special friend, also from Gila. He is a distinguished professor of medicine emeritus of Harvard Medical School and a world acclaimed cardiologist and researcher. I explained Michi's situation, and Art quickly offered to call her. Through his professional persuasion and personal charm, he was able to eventually convince Michi that she could not delay traditional medical assistance if she wanted relief. Art wanted her to be comfortable as she died.

In the few remaining months, Art was an invaluable source of support and information. He was the intermediary between Michi and her doctors. His impressive credentials facilitated access to health professionals who unanimously respected and admired him. Michi looked forward to Art's weekly phone calls. Memories of a youthful infatuation, I am sure, contributed to the genuine and girlish joy she expressed on hearing his voice. And he conscientiously kept her advised of his traveling schedule because he is in great demand as a lecturer here and abroad. In a surprising ges-

Michi, with her usual solicitation for me, sent photographs of that reunion. It was typical of her to make this gesture of inclusion. For a woman so proud of her beauty, it was a generous concession, allowing me to see the encroachment of death on her face.

For more than two months, Michi required private nurses around the clock. She wanted to die at home. Her financial resources permitted the fulfillment of that wish. But there are some things beyond monetary purchase. They are priceless. Michi's daily support was a gift from her friend, Kimie Ito. At the forfeiture of her private life, Kimie was a constant companion, who ran the necessary errands, prepared foods Michi craved and was also the telephone contact for many of us. I was embarrassed to make thrice weekly calls so late at night, but Kimie always brushed aside any apologies, sensitive to my concerns. Michi repeatedly said, "Kimie is a saint. She brightens my room with her radiant smile."

I know observing Michi die was most difficult for Kimie, given her sweet and sensitive spirit. For me, even acknowledging from a distance that my friend was slipping away was fraught with anxiety and pain. So I can imagine, but can never appreciate precisely, the pervasive sadness and feeling of futility that Kimie experienced watching Michi die, day after day. Cancer is a cruel and invasive disease. For Michi, it was also loathsome and humiliating. But she endured it with courage and dignity. She died at home as she wished. Kimie said, "She looked like a sleeping beauty."

The last time I talked with Michi was April 15, less than two weeks before her death. She called me twice that day. She spoke slowly but her voice was strong and she tried to intimidate me, just like old times. Except the old times, the good times were going, going, gone.

I prefer to defer revealing the nature of our last, long conversation. However, I mention it because I realize Michi would want her friends and acquaintances to know she was perfectly lucid to the end. She never lost her intelligence or her quirky sense of humor.

In the last few weeks, it was difficult for Michi to read, so either a nurse or Kimie read all the wonderful letters and cards to her. They brought a smile to her face

Michi's Timeline

1926-1999

- 1926 Born in Stockton, Calif., to Tomojiro and Hisao Yuwasa Nishiura. The family later moved to Brentwood, near Salinas, where the Nishiura family farmed tomatoes, cantaloupes, cucumbers and apricots.

- 1942 The Nishiura family was evacuated to Gila River Relocation Center in Ariz. In camp, Weglyn became president of Girls' League and Girl Scouts. Weglyn left camp with a full scholarship to Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. But her education at Mount Holyoke, and later at Barnard College and Fashion Academy was interrupted by chronic health problems. In late 1940s, she moved to New York City.

- 1950 Married Walter Weglyn, a chemist and refugee from the Netherlands who had been one of the few Jewish children from his hometown to survive the Nazi Holocaust.

- 1952 Found a job as a costume designer for the Roy/Theater.
- 1956-1966 Worked on NBC's "Perry Como Show" as costume designer.

- 1964 Started Michi Associates, a costume manufacturing and rental business. When the "Perry Como Show" moved to Burbank, Calif., Weglyn started a new career as a writer. Her first manuscript was tips on grooming, but was never published.

- 1973 The Political Public Relations Center in Tokyo published an early version of "Years of Infamy," under the title, "America: Kyosei Shuyoyo" (America's Concentration Camp). Weglyn was forced to turn to a Japanese publisher after every American publisher she contacted turned her manuscript down.

- 1976 Published "Years of Infamy: The Untold Story of America's Concentration Camps" through the help of Howard Cady at William Morrow. The book was the culmination of eight years of fact finding. Research done by the likes of Weglyn and Aiko Yoshinaga Herzog provided vital facts needed for a redress movement. That same year, the book received the Anisfield-Wolf Award in Race Relations, and Weglyn received JACL's Biennium Award, JACL's highest commendation.

- 1980 Quill re-issued "Years of Infamy."

- 1988 Civil Liberties Act was signed into law, but despite this, Weglyn continued to fight for redress on behalf of the Japanese Latin Americans and their chil-

hostages. To our disgrace, I think her work went largely unacknowledged by ordinary people. It would have been nice if a few more individuals could have written a short note of thanks. The small gestures, not the plaques and awards, meant much to her. Her sense of value never wavered. We cannot say the same of ourselves.

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Her case against the government was based on moral integrity. It was the same in her embrace of the resisters issue. Even as she was dying, her body decaying, her fertile mind was working, seeking a solution so the issue could be resolved in this millennium.

Michi thought we wasted too much time, even on matters as recent as railroad redress, by being anecdotal. Her intellect instructed a separation of emotions from fact. When everyone else thought re-

the Philippines. Although I had grave reservations about the procedure, I made no attempt to deter her. She was the most obstinate person I ever knew. Her tenacity served her well in intellectual pursuits, but often worked against her in practical matters. On her return, she was euphoric, believing she had obtained the perfect medical solution, what I called, "a quick fix."

Grateful for this reprieve, she plunged into several projects demanding attention. Her work was never done. "I have so much to do," she said. However, her euphoria was short-lived. In early December, she complained about uncontrollable diarrhea. Nutrition escaped from her body as though through a sieve. Exhausted and uncomfortable because of her swelling stomach, she was housebound. By Christmas, her deterioration accelerated.

"I'm dying," she said.

"I know," I responded.

Maybe others would have found comforting words of hope, even if false or imagined. But that was never the nature of our unique

suasion and personal charm, he was able to eventually convince Michi that she could not delay traditional medical assistance if she wanted relief. Art wanted her to be comfortable as she died.

In the few remaining months, Art was an invaluable source of support and information. He was the intermediary between Michi and her doctors. His impressive credentials facilitated access to health professionals who unanimously respected and admired him. Michi looked forward to Art's weekly phone calls. Memories of a youthful infatuation, I am sure, contributed to the genuine and girlish joy she expressed on hearing his voice. And he conscientiously kept her advised of his traveling schedule because he is in great demand as a lecturer here and abroad. In a surprising gesture, Michi invited Art to visit her. She ordinarily discouraged visitors although she courteously received some who appeared uninvited. On March 28, it gave me inordinate pleasure to know my two most brilliant friends enjoyed one last brief encounter.

sleeping beauty."

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In the last few weeks, it was difficult for Michi to read, so either a nurse or Kimie read all the wonderful letters and cards to her. They brought a smile to her face and lifted her spirit. She appreciated the flowers and fruits and gifts of food. And also the telephone messages conveyed through Kimie.

As one of her oldest friends, I consider it a privilege to write on her behalf and thank all of you for your kindness and good wishes that she received with much appreciation. I know, too, that she wanted me to pay public tribute to Ms. Kimie Ito of New York City and Dr. Arthur A. Sasahara of Newton, Mass. Wrapping her richly in robes of friendship, they walked beside her to the end of her mortal journey and then let go. Michi was our bright, shining star. Now that she has fallen, will there ever be another? ■

by a Japanese publisher after every American publisher she contacted turned her manuscript down.

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•1980 Quill re-issued "Years of Infamy"

•1988 Civil Liberties Act was signed into law, but despite this, Weglyn continued to fight for redress on behalf of the Japanese Latin Americans and the railroad and mine workers.

•1992 Awarded an honorary doctorate from Hunter College in New York.

•1993 Received an honorary doctorate from California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. The university also established a \$1 million endowed chair in multicultural studies in Walter Weglyn's name. Mount Holyoke College also bestowed on Weglyn an honorary doctorate.

•1995 Walter Weglyn passed away.

•1996 University of Washington Press re-issued "Years of Infamy"

•April 25: Michi Nishiura Weglyn passed away quietly in her New York City apartment. ■



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16. Japan Summer Tour & Hiroshima Extension	6/21-6/30	Ray Ishii	2,520
17. Alaska Discovery/Land & Cruise	6/29-7/5	Yuki Sato	3,302
18. Hawaii Islands Cruise	6/12-6/19	Bill Sakurai	from 2,293
19. Nebuta & Tanabata Festivals & Onsen	8/3-8/13	Tracy Taguchi	
20. Summer Festivals, Bon Dance & Onsen	8/8-8/18	Tracy Taguchi	
22. Kazeno Bon Festival & Kusatsu Onsen	8/26-9/6	Tracy Taguchi	
23. China Special & Hong Kong Tour	9/29-10/12	TBA	2,495
24. Canadian Rockies/Cruise	9/17-9/26	TBA	2,099
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27. Japan Hokkaido Tour	9/24-10/3	Galen Murakawa	3,395
28. Great Trains of Europe	9/23-10/5	Toy Kanegai	3,512
29. Japan Alps/Ura-Nihon	9/13-9/25	Ray Ishii	3,330
30. Japan Furusato Meguri <small>(Waiting List)</small>	10/11-10/21	Roy Takeda	3,095
31. Takayama Festival & Gero Onsen	10/7-10/18	Yuki Sato	
32. Japan Fall Foliage & Hiroshima Extension	10/25-11/5	Ray Ishii	3,100
33. Autumn Festivals & Onsen	10/14-10/25	Tracy Taguchi	
34. Chichibu Yomatsuri & Onsen	11/25-12/6	Toy Kanegai	
35. Ozarks/Branson Christmas Tour	12/1-12/6	George Kanegai	

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Travel meetings are held on third Sunday of each month beginning at 1:00 p.m. at Felicia Mahood Center 11338 Santa Monica Blvd. in West Los Angeles.

1999 ESCORTED TANAKA TOURS

TAUCK YELLOWSTONE/MT TETON NTL PARK (10 days)	MAY 30
CANADIAN ROCKIES/VICTORIA TOUR (Banff, Lake Louise, 8 days)	JUNE 16
TAUCK CAPE COD & THE ISLANDS (8 days)	JULY 24
PRINCESS SCANDINAVIA/RUSSIA CRUISE (Book by 2/14 for group rate, 15 days)	JULY 27
CRYSTAL CRUISE PANAMA CANAL (Book early for group rate, 11 days)	SEP 16
BEST OF HOKKAIDO & TOHOKU	SEP 27
EAST COAST & FALL FOLIAGE (11 days)	OCT 3
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