

KOKORO KARA

Summer 2014

HEART MOUNTAIN WYOMING FOUNDATION

“from our heart”



Witness Film Screening Highlights L.A. Events

When Patti Hirahara told ABC7 Reporter David Ono that she had a story for him, Ono did not want to work on another “Asian story.” He and producer Jeff MacIntyre had just finished a piece about the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. As an anchorman in a city as diverse as Los Angeles, Ono felt an obligation to show the rest of the community that he cared about their stories as well. But when Patti Hirahara called, he heard a Heart Mountain story that he could not resist.

Thus began what would become *Witness: The Legacy of Heart Mountain*, a moving film about triumph and tragedy behind barbed wire at Heart Mountain. He teamed up once more with MacIntyre, who was a self-proclaimed “Japanese American internment dummy” at the time, and they traveled around California and to Cody, WY, to research this piece.

On February 22, 2014, their hard work was on display at the Tateuchi Democracy Forum at the Japanese American National Museum (JANM). The Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation held a Town Hall Meeting and a film premiere there in an effort to reach out to its Los Angeles constituents. The events were packed, with more than 200 people attending one or both of the events. Many former internees and their families were in attendance.

While the events were enjoyable, the HMWF leadership had also traveled to Los Angeles for meetings as well. With JANM as their hosts, the board and members and the advisory council gathered for two days of meetings. Over the course of the weekend, members of the board also met with leaders in the Japanese American community in Los Angeles to trade insight and discuss the future. Some of the people they met with were Dr. G. W. Kimura, JANM President and CEO; Christine Sato-Yamazaki, Chair of the National Veterans Network; and Go For Broke Chair Bill Seki and Executive Director Don Nose.

“We were thrilled to see so many friends and to make new ones while we were in Los Angeles,” said Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi. “Thanks to JANM and to all who came out to show their support.”

At the Town Hall Meeting, Congresswoman Judy Chu (D-Calif.) gave remarks and presented the Foundation with a certificate in honor of its upcoming 2014 Pilgrimage. She commended the Heart Mountain Interpretive Center for educating the public about the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. “Let’s continue to fight and advocate for the stories of the API community,” she said.

The Foundation recognized Advisory Council Member Nancy Araki for her dedication as well. Araki recently retired from her position as the Director of Community Affairs at JANM. She was presented with an original brick from the Heart Mountain World War II Japanese American Confinement Site.

“Few people have done as much as Nancy Araki to support the thoughtful preservation, research and education around the World War II experience of Japanese Americans,” said HMWF Vice-Chair Doug Nelson. “The Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation Board is especially indebted and grateful to Nancy for the steadfast friendship, personal support and wise counsel that she has brought to our work at Heart Mountain over these last fifteen years.”



Jeff MacIntyre and David Ono lead a panel discussion at the Japanese American National Museum’s Tateuchi Democracy Forum in February. The panel consisted of (from left to right) HMWF Board Chair Shirley Ann Higuchi, Darrell Kunitomi, Toshi Ito, Patti Hirahara and JANM President and CEO Dr. G. W. Kimura.

The HMWF Board addressed questions from the audience and then many headed over to the film screening in the Tateuchi Democracy Forum. Ono and MacIntyre spoke to the audience about the experience of creating the film, which had many members of the audience in tears by the time the credits rolled.

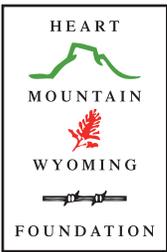
The film screening was followed by a panel discussion that featured Higuchi, Kimura and Hirahara, as well as Darrell Kunitomi, son of Heart Mountain internees, and Toshi Ito, a former Heart Mountain internee and HMWF Advisory Council Member. Ono and MacIntyre moderated the discussion.

Hirahara told the story that started this project: how her father and grandfather dug a darkroom underneath their barrack at Heart Mountain in which they would develop more than 2,000 photographs. Since photography was originally not permitted in the camps, their collection is the largest created by internees at Heart Mountain. Hirahara has dedicated years to researching, cataloguing and spreading the word about their photographs.

“We’re trying to get this story across the country,” she said. “It’s a great story and I’m glad that Jeff and David with their beautiful camera work, editing and writing will forever be my friends.”

Many expressed gratitude to Ono and MacIntyre for sharing this story—for choosing to tell one more “Asian story” to the world. Screenings of the extended version of *Witness* later showed in Portland, OR, and in Washington, D.C. The story was also aired in Los Angeles on May 10 and San Francisco May 31.

“We know this story is an important Japanese American story,” said Kimura. “Even more important, we need this story to be understood as an important American story.”



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Bowls pay homage to Heart Mountain ceramics studio

The ceramic rice bowls pictured here were created by local artist Herli Wight of Cody and have recently been added to the Interpretive Center gift shop.

Herli takes her inspiration from traditional rice bowl shapes and celadon glazes that have been popularized by their heavy use in Japan and other Southeast Asian countries. She adds a unique touch to each piece creating small holes for chopsticks.

These pieces also pay homage to ceramics pieces created in the “Heart Mountain Relocation Center” during the Japanese American confinement. There was a small ceramic studio in operation at Heart Mountain. The War Relocation Authority made plans to expand the studio to a full production facility to supply the WRA and the armed forces with tableware. The plan was abandoned in March 1943 after months of planning, due to a “change in WRA policy.” Ceramics training continued in the studio, however, until the camp closed, and many beautiful pieces were created.

The bowls are now available in the Interpretive Center gift shop and on-line at shopheartmountain.org.



PHOTOS BY SHARYL MCDOWELL