

From the Director: Tom Ikeda

I was recently invited to speak at an awards luncheon of the Phoenix Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League. A couple of days before my talk, Arizona Governor Jan Brewer signed into law a controversial immigration bill that targets illegal immigrants.

With this in mind, I turned my speech into a historical look at how fear was such a strong factor during World War II in the government's decision to remove and incarcerate Japanese Americans. I showed video clips from the Densho collection that put a personal and painful face on what it was like as a U.S. citizen of Japanese ancestry to be denied entrance to a swimming pool, or to be confused with the Japanese enemy. I then discussed the vicious false reports about Japanese Americans being saboteurs (while showing a racist political cartoon by Dr. Seuss), and traced how these rumors generated a climate of fear and hate towards Japanese Americans. This growing fear swayed politicians and military officials to act on rumors -- not evidence. (An excellent book that discusses this in detail is *A Tragedy of Democracy* by Greg Robinson.)

The stories from the World War II incarceration of Japanese Americans are rich with lessons that can help us today and in the future.



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From the Archive

Exceptions That Prove the Rule: Interracial Nisei Marriages

"The first generation was, you might say, narrow-minded...The second generation didn't marry out. But when it came to third generation and fourth, they had more freedom."

-- Takashi Matsui

To examine Japanese American history is to encounter generalizations about generations. Familiar characterizations emerge from the family stories of Densho interviewees: tradition-bound Issei, bicultural Nisei, and integrated Sansei. Marriage stories follow the same route: Having established a foothold in the United States, Issei fathers brought back brides from the home country. Upon leaving camp for military service, college, or careers, Nisei sons and daughters married other Nisei sons and daughters. After Nikkei communities dispersed in the 1950s and 1960s, growing numbers of Sansei and Yonsei grandchildren married other Asian Americans, Caucasians, and occasionally African Americans or other ethnicities. And now we have Shin-Issei narratives -- new families bound to the old country. All of which raises the question, is Japanese American identity being developed or diluted?

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Interview Program Intern Position

Densho is seeking a summer intern to assist with the transcription, planning, and conducting of oral history interviews. This position is ideal for a current or recently graduated college or graduate student. It involves transcribing videotaped life history interviews, as well as assisting Executive Director Tom Ikeda with planning and conducting interviews in Seattle. This summer internship is 20 to 40 hours per week at \$14 per hour, no benefits. Telecommuting for a portion of the work is an option. The ideal candidate will be detail-oriented with strong spelling and grammar skills and accurate typing ability. Knowledge of Japanese American history is welcome but not required. Funding for the intern comes from a 4Culture Heritage Special Projects grant.

To apply for the position, you must submit a transcription sample. Please download the mp3 file and create a verbatim transcript. Please send your resume (Word, PDF, or Plain Text), a cover letter, and your sample transcription file to dana.hoshide@densho.org by Wednesday, May 19. All applications will be held in confidence. All submissions and questions should be sent via email -- please no phone inquiries.

>> [Download the mp3 file \(6 MB\)](#)

>> [Visit the 4Culture website](#)



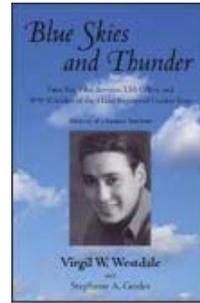
Book Event: 442nd Veteran Virgil Westdale

Densho is bringing World War II veteran Virgil Westdale to Seattle to be interviewed and give a free author talk on Saturday, May 22, at the Densho building from 3:00pm to 5:00pm. Westdale's book *Blue Skies and Thunder*, coauthored with Stephanie Gerdes, traces his life from boyhood in rural Indiana, to service with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team in Europe, to postwar careers as inventor, businessman, ballroom dancer, and TSA officer. During World War II, Westdale was demoted from Air Corps flight trainer to Army private because his father was a Japanese immigrant. With the 442nd he helped push the Nazis out of France and assisted survivors at Dachau. He was among the veterans honored as camp liberators in an April ceremony at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. No tickets are required for the book event.

>> [Learn more about this event](#)

>> [Read more about Virgil Westdale](#)

>> [Volunteer for the event](#)



Teacher Workshop Project

Densho has been awarded a Heritage Education grant from 4Culture to conduct a teacher-training workshop on Japanese American history and Densho's social studies lessons. The pilot workshop will be presented in fall 2010 for Seattle Public School teachers. The content developed for this project will then be made available from Densho's website so that educators around the country can have easy access to these materials. With additional support from the National Park Service, Densho will produce 3,000 teacher CDs containing refined and expanded lessons on constitutional issues, immigration conflicts, and critically assessing sources of information. We will adopt recommendations from 12 teachers who taught the lessons in a 2009 evaluation project: shorter modules, more primary sources, and multidisciplinary student activities. The date and registration information for the workshop will be announced in a summer edition of the eNews.

>> [Visit the Densho Learning Center](#)

>> [Visit the 4Culture website](#)



New Japanese-Language Website

In conjunction with a television miniseries about Japanese



Americans being filmed for broadcast in Japan, Densho is starting production of a Japanese-language website that will promote the five-part drama and offer an educational resource to Japanese viewers. A grant from the United States-Japan Foundation supports the writing, translation, and design of the website, which will be launched in fall 2010 when the miniseries airs. The storyline follows the fictional Hiramatsu family, whose patriarch immigrates to the Pacific Northwest to build a successful farm before the outbreak of World War II. As happened to many families in real life, the extended Hiramatsu family is separated by siblings being sent to live in Japan, internment of the Issei, incarceration in an "assembly center" and War Relocation Authority camp, and conflicting positions on the loyalty oath and military service.

- >> [View a news story about the filming in Seattle](#)
- >> [Learn more about the United States-Japan Foundation](#)



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Archive Spotlight

Small Town Segregation: Louie Watanabe

An interview with Louie Watanabe of Walnut Grove, California, is among a group of oral histories Densho recently collected in partnership with the nonprofit organization Preserving California's Japantowns. Louie describes the segregation of Chinese and Japanese, across the river from the white neighborhood where wealthy bankers and farmers lived. For lower grades, the Asian children from the town and nearby farms were bussed to the segregated Oriental School. Even if they could walk to the white school, they were forbidden to attend. The local high school was integrated, but the racial groups didn't mix. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Louie's family was removed to the Merced Assembly Center, California, and then the Granada incarceration camp, Colorado. After leaving camp, Louie worked briefly in the Midwest before returning to Walnut Grove.

- >> [See the featured sample from the Densho Digital Archive](#)
- >> [Learn more about Preserving California's Japantowns](#)



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National News and Events

Minidoka Pilgrimage and Civil Liberties Symposium

The 2010 Minidoka Pilgrimage to Twin Falls, Idaho, will take place June 24-27. The annual pilgrimage provides an opportunity for friends and family to share memories, ask questions, and learn more about the World War II confinement at the Idaho camp. The program includes a guided tour of the former incarceration camp, a visit to an original barrack, a commemorative ceremony, and a group dinner with speakers. Please reserve your space by June 10. A two-day symposium on civil liberties and art in the camps will take place prior to the pilgrimage at the College of Southern Idaho.

- >> [Register for the pilgrimage](#)
- >> [Learn more about the Civil Liberties symposium](#)



Honouliuli Internment and POW Camp Archaeological Field School

Located on the island of O'ahu about 15 miles west of Honolulu, this project will focus on the Honouliuli Internment Camp, where American civilians, resident aliens, and prisoners of war were incarcerated during World War II. Sponsored by the



University of Hawai'i, West O'ahu, the field school will be held July 6 - 23. Students will learn the fundamentals of archaeological survey, mapping, excavation, site recording, and photography. The focus will be on archaeological techniques for investigating large twentieth-century sites, adapting methods to research questions, and considering formation processes and site types in research design. The Honouliuli site provides an excellent opportunity to demonstrate the integration of archival information, oral history, and archaeology. Students would be involved in several phases of research that will have practical applications in the future management and interpretation of the site. For questions, contact Dr. Suzanne Falgout at falgout@hawaii.edu.

>> [Read more about the archaeological field school](#)

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