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Former internee Jimi Yamaichi stands inside of the jail he supervised building at the Tule Lake segregation center in Tule Lake.

Northern exposure: Covering issues of Northern California

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Tule Lake jail is symbol of a dark past

TULE LAKE Jimi Yamaichi was 20 years old and a prisoner when he built a single-story concrete jail at the Tule Lake Segregation Center. Now 91, Yamaichi is working to restore it.

His labor contract in 1944 was for “in-house construction,” he says, managing a chortle over what many consider one of the darkest chapters of United States history. Yamaichi was among the 25,000 Japanese Americans incarcerated at the prison camp during World War II.

Tule Lake was the largest of the 10 relocation camps built to incarcerate Japanese Americans forcibly removed from their homes. It was the most repressive, housing inmates from the other nine centers considered disloyal in the system’s only maximum-security facility. The jail was used from 1944 until March 1946 to detain dissident inmate leaders.

Yamaichi, one of 27 prisoners of conscience who resisted their incarceration, has campaigned for decades for recognition of the unique role Tule Lake played in this infamous history. In 2008, the [internment camp](#) was one of nine World War II sites designated for protection as national historic monuments.

The jail is the most familiar of the buildings now part of guided tours offered by the [National Park Service](#), which owns the site and is asking for public input on the restoration.

Along with Yamaichi and the Tule Lake Committee he helped found, the jail restoration is driven by the injustice it represents, said [Mike Reynolds](#), superintendent of [Lava Beds National Monument](#) and the Tule Lake Unit.

Construction could start as soon as late 2015. “I might make it,” Yamaichi said.

Pot industry’s new hazard: explosions

UKIAH On a normal day, Wayne Briley protects the public from hazards by cleaning up chlorine spills or blocking creeks from leaking oil. Lately he’s been dealing with exploding butane canisters and pressure cookers blasting shrapnel into kitchen ceilings.

Briley, head of Mendocino County’s Redwood Empire Hazardous Incident Team, is inadvertently on the volatile edge of an expanding marijuana industry producing new and different kinds of concentrated cannabis.

Honey oil, alcohol hash – by any name, production probably uses flammable butane oil, Briley said. Because butane is denser than air, when it’s released through an indoor process called “open blasting,” a spark as innocent as static electricity can ignite an explosion.

Enter Briley and his hazmat team. This spring the Mendocino region had seven fires in seven weeks, all of them from illegal drug manufacturing. If he gets there first, he treats the accident site as a crime scene, Briley said.

His experience has made him the go-to man for environmental health departments from Redding to Sacramento. He also teaches a class at an annual hazmat workshop in Sacramento.

Among his official titles is deputy health officer, but Briley spends more time responding to blown-up drug labs. “It’s just part of what we do these days,” he said.

Redding resident starts smile campaign

REDDING Smile! It could make your community safer.

That's the philosophy behind a one-woman campaign in this city center. Tired of the panhandling, break-ins and brazen shoplifting, Valerie Ing decided to engage with the people most longtime residents blame for pushing the downtown community toward an unsavory edge.

"I've decided to smile," said Ing, a program coordinator for Jefferson Public Radio.

A [Gallup poll](#) recently ranked Redding among the worst 10 cities for overall well-being. Recently the police chief held a town hall meeting to discuss public safety and crime.

Ing's low-tech campaign is a conscious effort to look people in the eye and acknowledge them: the woman on a bike careening down the sidewalk toward her; the man she was sure was about to ask for money. She left both encounters still smiling – even chuckling, she said.

"I don't want the good people of our city to give up on it," she said, "so I decided the best place to start is being someone else's positive experience."

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