CITY PROPOSAL TO BUY AND CONVERT S.F. J-TOWN’S BUCHANAN HOTEL DRAWS FIRE PG. 3
Perspectives

Tribute to Jan Mikritanu

By BRENDA WONG AOKI

Jan died on my birthday. She called me while I was still in the hospital. "How ya doing?" I poured my heart out. It'd been a very stressful month.

For over an hour she listened, comforted. You know how she is. Then she said, "Oh, I have some bad news... I know how much you care about me, but I must say, this is a bit of an undertaking for you. I will die in a very few months."

I said, "Oh, I love you." And those were the last words she ever said to me.

I will miss her — Every Osagahata, when she'd make pots of the best ammi in San Francisco, will remember the old boy from Bobby and her husband Ben Kondo.

And I promise to blast Chaka Khan's "I'm Every Woman" whenever I get rung without you.

Do you hear me, Jan?

Jan was my first and only Obon, the Festival of the Dead. When the Ancestors come to visit and go, they do it respectin'. I have no Obon. Obon is also the time U.S. dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and in one hot flash, made us 200,000 new ancestors.

That says it all. Hitler was in Germany, but they weren't nuked. How did Asians somehow become the forever enemy of the West? — Japan, Korea, Vietnam, China,... now Asian women.

I wonder what Jan is telling us, dying during Obon? 

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I've done over 10 performances for Jan and Cecil. My husband Mark and my boyfriend KK, too. Once, about 10 years ago, when our son, KK, was 3 Mark and I were doing a Glenda event to honor Blaine Feinstein. We went on stage at a fancy hotel downtown performing for hundreds of people. I'd talk to KK with my girlfriend. I looked out from the stage to see how my baby was doing and my girlfriend pantomimes that she doesn't know where he is.

Do you see that to a room, when you've lost your child in a room full of strangers?

Just then, the double doors burst open and striding down the red carpet, each holding one of KK's chubby little hands, is Jan and Senator Feinstein.

As we perform, we go to Jan's and Cecil's table to fetch KK. He's sitting there tears down while cheek pressed against his face.

"Mama, I wanted to be with Cecil and you but I was too much a little girl with a mouth!"

I said, "I love you, Jan!"

Janice Mikritanu passed away on July 28. photo by Alvin McLaughlin

18x43 (continued on page 14)

Letters

Wakasa monument statement from the Friends of Topaz

August 30, 2021
To the Japanese American Community,

We are the Friends of Topaz, a group of predominately Japa-

ese American descendants of World War II Topaz concentra-
tion camp internees, living in the San Francisco Bay Area. We
exist to support the Topaz Museum because we believe in their mission to preserve Topaz stories and to educate the greater public about this tragic chapter of American history, including the devastating impact the concentration camps had on its Japanese American survivors. We continually draw inspiration from the courage, resilience, and selflessness of our community, generations later.

In understanding the current controversy surrounding the Museum’s decision to unear and reinter the unmarked and unmarked remains of James Wakasa and his daughter2, we were shocked and saddened. We knew that the remains were the last remains of at least four generations to be buried in the Topaz camp. We also knew that the removal of the remains was done without the approval of the remaining family members. The friends strongly believe that the remains should be returned to their rightful place and that a proper ceremony should be held to honor the memory of the internees.

The Friends of Topaz works very closely with Topaz Board President, Jane Beckwith, on outreach and fundraising to support the Museum and its successful work over the past 25 years. The Board has now purchased the 640 acres of the camp’s original site, built the Topaz Museum in the town of Delta, and has priced in hundreds of Utah school children, and worked with the public to educate and share our descen-
dants’ stories, in order to prevent a recurrence of a similar denial of American civil rights in the future.

We believe that the restoration of this site is a symbol of the embrace of a vibrant and diverse community of Asian American descent and a testament to the power of memory and the strength of community. We stand in solidarity with the Friends of Topaz in our advocacy to respect the wishes and rights of the remaining family members.

(continued on page 14)

JA 'offended' by 'decession' of James Wakasa's 'final resting place'

Editor's Note: The following letter was sent in response to the column entitled "The 'decession' of sacred ground at Topaz" that appeared in the September 19, 2021 issue of the Nichi Bei Weekly.

Dear Editor:

I have just learned they discovered the secretly buried bones of James H. Wakasa, a 23-year-old Japanese American monu-
mental newspaper worker. Mr. Wakasa was a neighbor of our family in Block 30, Topaz concentrat-

tion camp in Utah. Our ad-

dress was Block 36, Barrack 6, Units C and D, his was Barrack 7, Unit D. We ate with and socialized with the common lavatory and the common facilities. I was there when he was killed. His death was kept unknown from us all almost