

**JA LIVING LEGACY. ORG**

The real story. Japanese American History told by those who lived it.

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NEWS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Photo: Clarence and Thelma Suzuki pose with Judge Okamoto at his signing of Wolfhound Samurai

### **59<sup>th</sup> California State Nisei VFW Reunion**

Last year at the 58<sup>th</sup> California State Nisei VFW Reunion the rooms were crowded and the laughter and talking made it difficult to hear the person sitting next to you. Although the attendance was lower than expected this year, spirits were soaring high. Old friends who have not seen each other in over 50 years, gathered around the hotel to catch up on old memories. It was amazing to see that men who only served together for months or possibly weeks managed to reconnect and share so many memories.

This year, the Holiday Inn Select in La Mirada, California hosted the 59th California State Nisei VFW Reunion. Over 200 Veterans, spouses, friends and family gathered to once again, honor those who served our country. Southern California Nisei VFW posts sponsored this event. Robert M. Wada managed the event and orchestrated everything from meeting the guests, to being a VIP escort, and was the master of ceremony for the main banquet on Saturday night. Richard Gonzales and Gerald Shue coordinated many

details keeping the event in order.

It has been a tough year for all the posts. Memberships declined due to lack of transportation, bad weather, and poor health conditions. Despite these conditions, however, this year's reunion crowd continued the tradition of fun and fellowship. Each of the Nisei VFW posts were represented including: Post 1629 Monterey – Jim Suzuki, Post 1961 Gardena – Ryu Marumoto and Women's Auxiliary president, Sue Watanabe, Post 3670 Kazuo Masuda – Geoff Chow, Post 4140 San Fernando Valley – Frank Tanaka, Post 5869 Hanford – Dick Kisue, Post 8499 Fresno – Donald Wakida, Post 8985 Sacramento – Gary Shiota, Post 9879 San Francisco – Glenn Akagi, Post 9938 – Robert Hayamizu and Post 9970 San Jose – Robert Getubig and past State Commander, Henry Wadahara.

Other special guests included: World War II Medal of Honor Recipient George Joe Sakato, Korean Medal of Honor Recipient Hiroshi Hershey Miyamura, Joseph Anello Ex POW, Tohoru Isobe, past president of Japanese American Korean War Veterans, Akio Sawada, president of the Disabled Veterans Association, Carl Miyagishima of Sadao Munemori American Legion Post, Natalia Yamashiro, president of JA Living Legacy, Sam Shimoguchi with the Japanese American War Memorial Court Preservation Fund, Kenneth Hayashi, Japanese American Vietnam Veterans Memorial Committee and Hawaiian Korean War Veterans – Tom Tanaka and Francis and Grace Yasutake also attended this event.

Friday began with visitors arriving from Northern California and the surrounding cities of Los Angeles as well as visitors arriving from the Hawaiian Islands. Kings Hawaiian Bakery and Gardena Coffee Shop provided the ongoing puus puus. Alan and Karen Ishii of VFW Post 3670 and their youth group made the hospitality suite one of the highlights throughout the entire reunion.

Book sales provided by Nikkei Writers Guild, a division of JA Living Legacy, and SOPHI'S (South Orange County Philanthropic) held quite the literary audience! On hand to personally autograph books were Medal of Honor recipients George T. Sakato (WWII E company) and Hiroshi Hershey Miyamura (Korean War Veteran). Other autograph opportunities included "*Fighting Spirit*" by Ansho Mas Uchima (Occupied forces MIS and Korean War Veteran) and Ranger Hall of Fame recipient, Vincent H. Okamoto and his novel, "*Wolfhound Samurai*." Tom Graves, professional photographer and director/producer of *Heroes All!*, was on hand to show his preliminary documentary on the history of the California Nisei VFW Posts.

Saturday's fun started with a bus trip to Pechanga (where most of the "complaints" were about the "donated funds" left at the casino). Some of the women embarked on a local pilgrimage to the Citadel Outlet Mall. The banquet on Saturday night featured Kiley Onoe Tchang singing the National Anthem, the El Rancho High School ROTC Color Guard, and other professional performances providing mixed entertainment with songs in both English and Japanese. The staff of the Holiday Inn helped make the event memorable by providing outstanding service throughout the weekend events.

The three day event concluded on Sunday with the Memorial Day service; a moment of silence honored those we remember as participants in each of the posts. Although some of the VFW members/comrades in arms have left us now, we are comforted with the knowledge they have been reunited by good friends waiting for them on the other side.

We said our farewells; hugs were given to those we hoped to see at the next reunion as we parted ways. The 2010 60<sup>th</sup> California State Nisei VFW Reunion will be held in Reno, Nevada – tentatively set for April 2010. Please contact JA Living Legacy for more information.

Japanese American Living Legacy is a nonprofit (501c3) organization based out of California State University, Fullerton. All of the board of directors, staff and advisors are volunteers. For more information on Japanese American Living Legacy, please visit their website at [www.jalivinglegacy.org](http://www.jalivinglegacy.org) or call them at (714) 278-4483.

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